

Teacher Mentoring: A Synonym for Teacher Professional Instruction and Guidance

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Abstract

Teacher preparation is an issue that has attracted the concern and interest of scholars for some time now. Current research has established that an effective teacher has a great influence on what students learn and how they learn it and that the effective teacher is a product of effective initial teacher preparation. Driven by research findings, schools of education have been forced to re-examine, refine and implement teacher education courses that will make their student-teachers effective in practice. Among the new processes that have been introduced in teacher preparation to improve the effectiveness of student-teachers is mentoring. It is a truism that teaching is a dynamic and challenging job that demands that the teacher seeks and acquires the support of a colleague or colleagues. This situation is true for the practicing teacher, but more so for the student-teacher whose first real encounter with their profession is during practicum or teaching practice. Literature on mentoring in professions concur on the view that mentoring is useful in the provision of one-on-one professional instruction and guidance, that is further linked to how long one stays in the profession and their love for it. Non-educational organizations have embraced mentoring and provide evidence of the benefits that emerge from the process for both the employees and the organization. Recent developments in some university schools of education worldwide and even in Kenya require student-teachers to be in a mentor-mentee relationship. However, scant attention has been paid to the issue of mentoring for practicing teachers. This positional paper will examine teacher mentoring for both the practicing teacher and the novice teacher, from selected literature and studies. The discussion will provide useful insights to education stakeholders on teacher mentoring and its usefulness in supporting continuing staff development.

Key words: *Mentor, Mentee, Mentoring, Initial teacher preparation, practicing teacher, novice teacher.*