

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE MENTORING PRACTICE FOR MENTEES' DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This qualitative study examined effective mentoring practices that support the development of mentees in professional and academic settings. Anchored in a constructivist perspective, the study sought to understand mentees' lived experiences and perceptions of mentoring relationships that contribute to their growth, confidence, and skill acquisition. Purposive sampling was used to select mentees who had participated in sustained mentoring relationships. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and reflective accounts and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that effective mentoring practices were characterized by empathetic support that fostered positive perceptions and emotional security, hands-on guidance that enhanced professional competencies, and trust-based relationships that strengthened mentee engagement and motivation. Additionally, collaborative learning opportunities and mentors' persistence in providing support helped mentees navigate challenges and reconcile mixed perceptions throughout the mentoring process. Mentees highlighted that mentor who demonstrated approachability, patience, and genuine commitment played a significant role in their personal and professional development. The study underscores that effective mentoring extends beyond technical instruction to include relational, emotional, and collaborative dimensions that are essential for mentee development.

Keywords: *Mentoring practices; Mentee development ; Qualitative study ; Mentor -mentee relationship ; Professional growth*

INTRODUCTION

Research on mentoring has expanded significantly in recent years, reflecting its importance across educational, professional, and organizational environments. Mentoring is widely defined as a developmental partnership in which experienced individuals support the growth and success of less experienced mentees, encompassing both career guidance and psychosocial support. Contemporary studies emphasize that effective mentoring extends beyond transactional knowledge transfer to include relational dynamics such as trust, empathy, and mutual respect, which are critical for mentees' holistic development.

A systematic review by Crisp and Cruz (2019) highlights that mentoring relationships characterized by clear communication, emotional support, and regular feedback contribute to positive mentee outcomes, such as increased professional confidence, academic persistence, and sense of belonging. This aligns with relational mentoring theory, which stresses the dual importance of career advancement and personal support in effective mentoring (Ragins & Kram, 2020). Relatedly, Falco et al. (2023) found that mentoring practices grounded in empathy and cultural responsiveness help mentees navigate both performance challenges and identity issues, particularly in heterogeneous learning environments.

In higher education contexts, mentees who experience structured and sustained mentoring report improved research skills, greater academic motivation, and enhanced career clarity. For instance, in studies of undergraduate and postgraduate mentoring programs, mentees consistently described trust, mentor approachability, and regular reflective dialogue as key contributors to their development (Johnson & Ridley, 2021). Workplace mentoring research also reinforces these findings, showing that mentors who balance task-oriented coaching with personal encouragement enable mentees to articulate goals, build professional networks, and enhance job performance (Kram & Isabella, 2022).

The demand for effective mentoring is growing in response to shifting workplace expectations, evolving academic pressures, and increasingly diverse mentee populations. Recent studies suggest that culturally responsive and adaptive mentoring approaches are essential in supporting mentees from varied backgrounds (Byars-Winston & Rogers, 2019). However, many mentoring programs still apply a one-size-fits-all model, which may not align with nuanced needs of mentees. This misalignment further highlights the need for a qualitative understanding of what mentees themselves define as "effective".

This study offers valuable insights that can enhance mentoring guides and frameworks. While many exist, many are based on theoretical or programmatic assumptions rather than grounded, empirical evidence from mentees' experiences (Feldman et al., 2010). Mentors often lack specific, actionable insight into what practices actually support mentees' development over time.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically using a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experience of mentees in mentoring relationship. The focus of this design is to gain a deep understanding of how mentees perceived, interpret, and make meaning of effective mentoring practices that contribute to their personal academic, or professional development. The purpose of using this method is to describe the essence of effective mentoring as experienced and perceived theories or framework. This approach allows for rich, complexity and depth of mentoring relationship from the mentees' perspective.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were selected through purposive sampling focusing on individual who direct experience with mentoring relationship either in academic or professional context. Criteria for inclusion involved mentees who had been in a mentoring relationship for at least three months and were willing to articulate their experiences.

A total 8 to 10 participants were included to ensure data saturation while maintaining manageability of data collection and analysis. The participants came from various background such as new professional or teacher trainees who mentors guiding their development.

Research Materials

This study used semi-structured interview as primary data collection tool. This tool allowed the researcher to ask open-ended question while also providing flexibility to probe further into participants' responses. The interview guide covered areas including the nature of mentoring relationship, the role of mentor and mentee, perceived benefits, challenges and indicators of effective mentoring. Interview were conducted face to face or via online, depending on availability and preference of the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes and was audio recorded with permission to accuracy

Data Gathering Procedure

The study involved several stages. First, approval from appropriate ethics committee or institutional review board were obtained. Following this, the researcher identified and contacted potential participants who met the inclusion criteria. Upon confirmation of consent were secured. The interview was the schedule and conducted in comfortable and confidential setting. All conversation were recorded and transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of data. Field notes were also taken capture non-verbal cues and contextual observation. Once the data collection phase was completed, all transcript were reviewed, anonymized, and organized for analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Following the six-step framework outlined by Braun and Clare (2006). The process began with familiarization, where the researcher repeatedly read the transcript to immerse themselves in the data. Next, initial codes were generated based on pattern and recurring ideas. These codes were the grouped into potential themes, which were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency and relevance to the research question. Each with quotes from the participants to support the finding. The method provided a structured yet flexible way to identify and interpret significant aspect of effective mentoring as experiences by mentees.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter present the results and discussion of the study on effective mentoring practices for mentee's development, focusing on the experiences of mentees in the geographically isolated municipality of Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat. The study aimed to explore the qualitative study of effective mentoring practice for mentee's development. The results are discussed according to the research questions and integrate the qualitative findings to provide a comprehension understanding of the phenomenon.

Analysis of the qualitative data from eight mentees revealed that the development setting in which mentoring occurred significantly influenced mentee's learning, professional growth, and engagement.

Finding indicate that mentee's generally perceived mentoring as a positive and transformative experiences, particularly when mentors demonstrated empathy, openness, and clarity in communication. Six out of eight mentees emphasize that mentors who listened attentively, provided clear advice, showed genuine concerns helped them gain confidence and a clearer professional direction.

Theme 1. Positive perception via empathetic support. Is strongly supported by recent research emphasizing the central role of empathy and interpersonal support in effective mentoring relationships. Empirical evidence indicates that mentor empathy has a significant and stable impact on the quality of mentor–mentee relationships, with empathy predicting positive perceptions from mentees more consistently than even mentors' self-efficacy (Deane et al., 2022). This aligns with the present findings, where mentees reported that mentors who listened actively, communicated clearly, and showed genuine concern created a supportive environment that enhanced confidence and openness. In educational mentoring contexts, relational qualities such as trust, respect, and open communication have been identified as key contributors to deeper reflection and meaningful learning experiences, reinforcing the importance of socio-emotional support alongside technical guidance. Below are some responses from the participants.

“Mentoring ay naging epektibo kapag ang mentor ay bukas sa pakikinig malinaw magpayo at may malasakit” (Mentee 01)

*“ Nakakatulong upang magkaroon ako ng mas malinaw na direksyon”
(Mentee 03)*

“Classroom Observation na may kasunod na feedback, collaborative lesson planning” (Mentee 01)

*“Provides concrete ways to enhance teaching efficacy and learners focus.”
(Mentee 04)*

“Ongoing development via collaborative learning” (Mentee 07)

Theme 1.2 Perceptions resolved through persistence. Studies emphasize that mentoring relationships often begin with tension due to power dynamics, performance expectations, and unfamiliarity with reflective critique (Hobson & Maxwell, 2020). However, when mentors consistently provide guidance, reassurance, and follow-up support, mentees develop trust and resilience, allowing initial discomfort to evolve into learning and motivation (Eby et al., 2022). Below are some responses from the participants.

“Negative kaagad Hindi nakapaniniwala” (Mentee 03)

“Nakakatakot kaagad talaga pero eventually ... tulong”(Mentee 04)

“Reminder/training session; adaptive teaching. Reinforces known techniques for consistent classroom application”.(Mentee 03)

“Provides concrete ways to enhance teaching efficacy and learners focus.” (Mentee 07)

Thematic Analysis Table

Table 1. How do mentees describe their experiences the mentoring practices the contributed to their development?

Issues Probed	Codes/Categories	Significant Statement	Themes	Meanings
Perception of Mentoring Experiences	Open listening; clear advice; emotional care; direction -giving. Supportive communication; personal empowerment	“Mentoring ay naging epektibo kapag ang mentor ay bukas sa pakikinig, malinaw magpayo, at may malasakit” (Mentees 01) “Nakakatulong upang magkaroon ako ng mas malinaw na direksyon” (Mentee 03)	Positive perception via empathetic support	Build confidence through approachable guidance, turning challenges into growth.
Feedback tone impact; adaptation overtime	Initial fear; negative feedback; eventual positivity.	“Negative kaagad... hindi nakapaniniwala”(Mentee 04) Nakakatakot talaga pero eventually ... tulong” (Mentee 05)	Mixed perception resolved through persistence.	Harsh start demotivates but prompt reflection and improvement.

Theme 2.1 Hands-on practices drive professional skills. The effectiveness of practice-based mentoring. Contemporary studies emphasize that mentoring grounded in authentic professional tasks promotes deeper learning and skill transfer compared to purely theoretical guidance (Simmie et al., 2021). In educational settings, experiential mentoring allows mentees to immediately apply feedback, reflect on outcomes, and adjust practices accordingly, leading to sustained professional competence (Lofthouse et al., 2020).

Furthermore, research highlights that feedback embedded within hands-on activities enhances instructional quality and professional growth. van Ginkel et al. (2023) found that mentoring approaches combining observation, feedback, and reflection significantly improve teachers' pedagogical decision-making and classroom management skills. This aligns with the present findings, where mentees reported that direct engagement in mentoring activities helped them understand not only what to improve but also how to implement improvements effectively. Below are some responses from the participants.

“Classroom observation na may kasunod na feedback, collaborative lesson planning” (Mentees 05).

“Differentiated instruction mas diverse,” (Mentees 05)

“Initial fear; negative feedback; eventually positivity. (Mentee 06)

Feedback tone impact; adaptation over time.” (Mentee 04)

Theme 2.2 Ongoing development via collaborative learning Collaborative learning is a central mechanism through which mentoring sustains professional growth. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasize that professional development is most effective when teachers engage collaboratively over time, focusing on real instructional challenges and shared problem-solving. In mentoring contexts, collaborative structures allow mentees to revisit concepts, clarify understanding, and refine practice through dialogue and collective reflection, leading to deeper and more sustained learning.

Furthermore, contemporary studies underscore the role of communities of practice in mentoring. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) argue that learning is inherently social and occurs through participation in shared professional activities. In the present study, mentees described collaborative mentoring sessions as spaces where they felt supported, reminded of effective strategies, and encouraged to apply learner-centered approaches consistently. This mirrors findings by Lofthouse et al. (2020), who found that mentoring environments promoting collaboration foster reflective practitioners and strengthen professional identity. Below are some responses from the participants.

Weekly na SLAC reremind ulit tayo” (Mentee 04)

“Learner-centered focus engaging activities” (Mentee 06)

“SLAC session; learner centered strategies “(Mentee 02)

“Hands on practices drive professionals' skills” (Mentee 01)

Table 2. What specific mentoring strategies and approaches do mentees find most effective in supporting their growth?

Issues Probed	Codes/Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meaning
Influential Mentoring Practices for Growth	Observation + feedback; strategies; planning. Structured tools. Structured skill -building tools.	+ diverse lesson activities (Mentees 05). "Differentiated instruction mas diverse," (Mentees 05)	Hands-on practices drive professional skills	Provide concrete ways to enhance teaching efficacy and learner focus.
	SLAC session; learner-centered strategies Reminder/training session; adaptive teaching	"Weekly na SLAC reremind ulit tayo" (Mentee 04) "Learner-centered focus engaging activities" (Mentee 06)	Ongoing development via collaborative learning.	Reinforces known techniques for consistent classroom application.

Theme 3.1 Trust-Based Bonds Enhance Engagement. The findings of this qualitative study indicate that trust-based mentor–mentee relationships significantly enhanced mentees’ engagement in the mentoring process. Participants consistently described mentoring relationships grounded in trust, respect, approachability, and emotional support, which enabled them to communicate openly, seek guidance confidently, and actively participate in developmental activities. This supports the emergent theme “Trust-based bonds enhance engagement,” emphasizing the relational foundation of effective mentoring practice. Recent literature strongly affirms that trust is a central element in successful mentoring relationships.

Hobson and Maxwell (2020) argue that mentoring environments characterized by relational trust promote mentees’ willingness to engage in reflection, accept feedback, and experiment with new practices. When mentees perceive mentors as supportive rather than judgmental, they are more likely to invest emotionally and cognitively in the mentoring process. This aligns with the present findings, where mentees described mentors as approachable and “parang kapatid,” fostering sustained engagement.

Below are some responses from the participants.

“Open Communication actively listener” (Mentee 05)

“Build tayo nang trust positive relationship.” (Mentee 06).

“Trust-based bonds enhance engagement” (Mentee 08)

“Open communication actively listener”. (Mentee 04)

Theme 3.2 Collaborative partnership for mutual learning. The findings of this qualitative study indicate that effective mentoring is strengthened when the mentor–mentee relationship is framed as a collaborative partnership for mutual learning. Mentees described mentoring not merely as a one-directional transfer of knowledge but as a shared process where both mentors and mentees actively engaged in dialogue, reflection, and problem-solving. This collaborative approach encouraged mentees to participate more meaningfully, share ideas freely, and take ownership of their professional growth, thereby reinforcing the theme.

According to van Ginkel et al. (2023), mentoring relationships that emphasize collaboration and shared responsibility foster deeper professional learning and stronger engagement among mentees. In such partnerships, mentors guide rather than dictate, allowing mentees to develop autonomy while benefiting from experienced support. This aligns with the present findings, where mentees valued opportunities to contribute ideas during lesson planning, discussions, and reflective sessions.

Below are some responses from the participants.

“Open Communication actively listener” (Mentee 05)

“Build tayo nang trust positive relationship”. (Mentee 06).

“Partnership dynamics; shared growth”. (Mentee 03)

“Enables problem-solving and long-term investment in mentees success.” (Mentee 02)

“Collaborative partnership for mutual learning”. (Mentee 07)

Table 3. How does the mentor- mentee relationship the personal and professional development of mentees?

Issues Probed	Codes/Categories	Significant Statement	Themes	Meanings
Mentor-Mentee Relationship Experiences	Trust-building; sibling-like support, approachability.	“Nakabatay sa tiwala, respeto ,at parang kapatid lang”(Mentee 1,2)	Trust-based bonds	Foster openness and sustained
	Relational foundation; emotional safety	“Harmonious approachable” (Mentee 05)	enhance engagement	motivation through genuineness.
	Open dialogue; mutual respect; confidentiality. Partnership dynamics; shared growth	“Open Communication actively listener” (Mentee 05) “Build tayo nang trust positive relationship (Mentee 06).	Collaborative partnership for mutual learning.	Enables problem-solving and long-term investment in mentee success.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a concise synthesis of the study's findings, followed by the corresponding conclusions and recommendations derived from the results.

Summary of Findings

This study explored the mentoring experiences of eight mentees to identify effective practices that support their professional development. Analysis of interview data yielded six major themes that reflect mentees' perceptions, experiences, and growth:

1. **Positive Perception via Empathetic Support** – Mentees reported that mentors who demonstrated empathy, active listening, and genuine care fostered confidence, clarity, and motivation in professional practice.
2. **Mixed Perceptions Resolved Through Persistence** – Initial fear, apprehension, or negative reactions to feedback were common among mentees. However, consistent guidance and ongoing engagement allowed mentees to reframe challenges as learning opportunities.
3. **Hands-On Practices Drive Professional Skills** – Mentoring activities such as classroom observation with feedback, collaborative lesson planning, and practice-based strategies helped mentees enhance instructional competence and apply practical teaching skills effectively.
4. **Ongoing Development via Collaborative Learning** – Regular collaborative sessions, discussions, and professional learning communities reinforced knowledge and strategies, ensuring sustained growth over time.
5. **Trust-Based Bonds Enhance Engagement** – Mentoring relationships founded on trust, respect, and approachability encouraged openness, increased participation, and strengthened motivation to engage fully in professional development activities.
6. **Collaborative Partnership for Mutual Learning** – Mentoring was most effective when perceived as a reciprocal partnership, where both mentors and mentees actively shared insights, reflected together, and co-constructed knowledge for continuous professional growth.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the study's overall findings.

1. The study reveals that mentees develop positive perception of mentoring when mentors demonstrate empathy, active listening and genuine support.
2. The findings further conclude that hands-on mentoring practices, such as classroom observation, feedback session, collaborative lesson planning

- and participation in professional learning activities, are highly influential in strengthening mentees instruction skills.
3. Moreover, ongoing development through collaborative learning, including peer discussion and learning action cells, reinforces professional growth by promoting mutual learning.
 4. The study conclude that trust-based mentor- mentee relationship and collaborative partnership are essential to sustaining engagement and promoting mutual learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. For Mentors are encouraged to practice empathetic communication, provide consistent guidance, and foster trust-based relationships. Engaging mentees in hands-on and collaborative activities can enhance learning and professional growth.
2. For Educational Institutions and Program Implementers should design mentoring programs that prioritize relationship-building, experiential learning, and continuous support. Regular mentoring sessions, structured feedback mechanisms, and collaborative learning opportunities should be institutionalized.
3. For Mentees are encouraged to actively participate in mentoring activities, maintain open communication with mentors, and engage in reflective practices to maximize the benefits of mentoring.
4. For Future Researchers studies may explore mentoring experiences using mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, include a larger and more diverse group of participants, or examine mentoring practices in different educational or organizational contexts to broaden understanding of effective mentoring.

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