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MENTOR TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS TOWARD MENTORING PROGRAMS IN K-12 EDUCATION IN SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

Krystle Womack

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by

Krystle Womack

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Committee:

Dr. David E. Lee, Committee Chair
Dr. Kyna Shelley
Dr. Thomas O'Brien
Dr. Lilian Hill
Dr. Richard Mohn

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ABSTRACT

The teaching profession relies heavily on mentor programs to promote teacher retention, to reduce attrition and to increase the quality of new teachers. Teachers grow professionally through gaining knowledge. Mentor teachers show professional growth through knowledge gained from mentoring programs and serving as mentor teachers.

There is a significant gap in mentoring research in that the mentoring literature is limited in perspective. Research focuses solely on the perspectives of the beginning teacher or the person being mentored, but the perspective of more than one stakeholder is needed to give the full picture of induction and mentoring. This study uses a mixed-methods research design to examine administrators' and mentor teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards mentoring programs. The researcher began the study with a self-created survey in order to gain quantitative data. That data was then used to conduct phone or zoom interviews for qualitative data. The researcher chose this research design in order to gain a deeper understanding of mentor programs and the effect they have on administrators and mentor teachers.

Teachers are not entering the field at a high rate, and from those that do, about 50% of them will leave before five years of service (Goering, 2013). The results of this study could provide valuable information to schools as they face the challenge of filling teacher positions and retaining the teachers they already have.

Based on the synthesis of the findings from the quantitative surveys and follow up qualitative interviews, it is noticeable that mentor training is a perceived weakness of mentoring programs along with time. Mentor teachers and administrators alike said they would volunteer for mentor programs in the future, even though they felt there might not

be enough time or that they were not trained properly Overall, the analysis of mentor

programs supports the evidence that mentor programs are beneficial to all parties

involved and with a little extra training and time allotted to mentoring programs they can

be even better.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

To Greyson, you are my greatest joy and my best accomplishment. Everything that I do in this life, I do for you. I hope that as you grow up you remember how hard I worked every day to make not only my dreams come true but to afford you the opportunities for you to make yours a reality as well. My prayer for you is that I have instilled in you the drive to achieve your dreams no matter how many obstacles may stand in your way. I cannot wait to see the man that you will become but my baby you will always be.

To mom, I wouldn't be anywhere close to where I am today without you. You showed me from an early age what it meant to not only survive but flourish. You raised me with little to no help, and you did it all while remaining a badass. You taught me that you don't quit. You taught me that you don't give up. Thank you for always being there for me no matter what. Thank you for your unwavering support and love. You are the absolute strongest person I know and my rock. This is for you mom. Your girl is a doctor!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MDE   Mississippi Department of Education

NTPS   The National Teacher and Principal Survey

USM   The University of Southern Mississippi

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

The United States is facing drastic teacher shortages (Martinez, 2004). One in every three new teachers will leave their first teaching assignment within the first three years, and of the ones that leave 25% of those will not wait until the end of the teaching year (Sparks, 2018). Teachers are not entering the field at a high rate and those that do about 50% of them will leave before five years of service (Goering, 2013). The thought is the more classroom experience a teacher has the more effective he or she will be for his or her students (Hanson & Moir, 2008). One of the goals of school districts is to keep experienced teachers in the profession. Because of teacher shortages and teacher effectiveness, there is an increased enthusiasm for the use of mentoring programs (Martinez, 2004). Schools use mentoring programs to help beginning teachers to adapt to a school's climate and become effective teachers and to keep those effective teachers in the educational field.

Background of the Problem

According to the New Teacher Center, as of the year 2016, 29 states require some form of support for beginning teachers; 15 of those states require support for year one and two, and only nine states require any form of support past two years. Sixteen states across the United States provide funding just for induction programs. Only nine states provide induction funding to all school districts within the state. Three states provide funds exclusively for mentor stipends. Nearly 30 states have standards in place that express which educators are eligible to serve as mentors, and a majority of states have policies in place to structure or guide teacher-mentor selection. More than 30 states

provide or require initial mentor training, but only 18 also require ongoing professional development for mentors. Twenty-three states require time out of the classroom in order for mentors to conduct classroom observations and provide support during the school day. Twelve states establish a minimum amount of weekly or annual mentor contact time for beginning teachers. The United States is making strides towards implementing mentoring programs in schools; however, 21 states still have no requirement for support for all new teachers (New Teacher Center, 2016).

Teacher retention is a major problem in the educational system. In the 2018-2019 school year thousands of teachers participated in strikes across the country this affected the stability of the educational system and cost U.S. schools $7.3 billion (about $22 per person in the United States) in losses per year (Mulvahill, 2019). Some administrators place unrealistic expectations on first-year teachers. Beginning teachers are expected to perform to the same level of expertise and efficiency of veteran teachers, and those beginning teachers often have unrealistic expectations about the way their first year will go. New teachers often feel unsupported, overworked, and underpaid. Teachers are challenged by the enormity of the job (Mulvahill, 2019).

As the amount of teacher shortages have risen and teacher retention rates have plummeted over the years, the Department of Education has put programs and studies in place in order to track the current state of schools across the United States. The National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) (2017), includes a series of questionnaires that provide descriptive data about elementary and secondary education while also giving policymakers a variety of statistics on the current condition of education in the United

States. The thought is that if more is known about why teachers leave, then more can be done to eradicate the problems that make teachers leave. The NTPS is designed to collect data on important topics such as teacher preparation, school characteristics, and teacher demographics. The survey is conducted every two years. Each time the NTPS is administered, one of three important education topics is also included: professional development, working conditions, or evaluation. The year after administering the NTPS, a follow-up teacher survey is administered to collect data on the number of teachers who remained at the same school, moved to another school, or left the profession. The NTPS was administered for the first time in the 2015-16 school year with the expectation that if more is known about the patterns of teacher retentions within specific schools, then interventions such as mentor programs can be put into place to help new teachers from the first day (NTPS, 2017).

Research conducted in the 1980s and 90s has shown that mentoring has a positive effect on the mentor as well as the person receiving the mentoring (Gaston & Jackson, 1998; Godley, 1986; Odell, 1990; Warring, 1989). Teachers grow professionally through gaining knowledge. Mentor teachers show professional growth through knowledge gained from mentoring programs and serving as mentor teachers. Appointing a mentor is a very important job, this can be done through principal nominations, but more often than not mentor teachers appoint themselves. Appropriate mentors are those who are willing to take on the job and take it seriously. Appropriate mentors are approachable, appropriate mentors show integrity, appropriate mentors listen to mentees, appropriate mentors are sincere about helping, appropriate mentors are enthusiastic, and appropriate

mentors are willing to spend the time needed with their mentees (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). Mentors are very important to today's educational system. New teachers need a support system to rely on so they do not feel alone or unsure of themselves. Asigning mentors to new teachers is the right thing to do and those that do mentor will experience benefits that far outweigh the costs for all parties involved (Noddings, 2012).

Good teaching leads to higher levels of student achievement. Therefore, schools must examine their mentoring opportunities to make sure the needs of every teacher are being met. Participating in a mentor program is not only good for novice teachers but also for veteran teachers and administrators as well. Participating in a mentor program affects participants' teacher efficacy or the beliefs they hold about their ability. The higher a teacher's efficacy the more beneficial the students' learning environments seem to be (Yost, 2002). The more beneficial the students' learning environment is, the more successful the school will be overall.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

The teaching profession relies heavily on mentor programs to promote teacher retention, to reduce attrition and to increase the quality of new teachers. For the past 30 years significant research has been conducted about teacher induction and mentoring (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Chapman, 1983; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Sweeney, 1987). Researchers know new teachers who receive mentoring are more likely to stay in the profession, and those who receive mentoring are more committed to the profession. However, there is a significant gap in mentoring research. The mentoring literature is mostly limited in perspective. Much of the current research has focused on the

perspectives of the beginning teacher or the person being mentored, but an update on the perspective of more than one stakeholder is needed to give the full picture of induction and mentoring (Alexander et al., 2014).

Kwan and Lopez-Real (2010) found it necessary to focus on the effect mentoring has on mentors. They believe people's identities are formed through performing new tasks and gaining new understanding. Mentors and mentee teachers come to their relationships, each with their own set of beliefs. It is impossible to have a complex mentoring relationship without some of those beliefs transferring over to the other party. When mentor teachers prepare new teachers for their own classrooms, novice teachers will go through a learning process that will lead them to the formation of their teacher-mentor identity (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010). Therefore, mentoring has an effect on the mentor as well as the person receiving the mentoring.

Mentoring opens a whole new set of challenges for mentor teachers and administrators. Administrators must be cognizant that they are putting mentors in positions that really want to be there and will do the job to the best of their ability. Mentors face the challenge of showing new teachers how they have done things for years. It is hard to teach a new teacher in a short amount of time the strategies that experienced teachers have invested years to acquire. There are also the issues of time and training. Mentor teachers need training in order to be effective mentors and time to mentor in order to be useful to novice teachers. Mentoring is helpful, important, and essential to education, but mentoring programs have to be effective. Effective teacher mentoring meets both the mentor and mentee teacher's personal and professional needs. Mentors are

often seen as experts who are expected to run their own classrooms and also help new teachers run theirs; however, mentor programs are not always adequately funded or effective. Second, proper training is not always offered to mentors. When mentoring is not effective, teachers do not receive the proper training, and they are more likely to leave the profession thus completing the vicious circle of more teacher shortages (Martinez, 2004). For mentoring to be effective, mentors must be properly prepared for the job of mentoring. Therefore, training should be provided. Some possible training topics can address helping new teachers who are struggling, building trust with mentees, managing a classroom, teaching effectively, gaining observation skills, or boosting teacher development (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). Not much is known about administrator and teacher attitudes toward this added set of challenges and their beliefs in general towards mentoring programs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward teacher mentoring programs.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward teacher mentoring programs. What do administrators expect of a mentor teacher? What do mentor teachers perceive their job to be as mentors? The following research questions will be used to gain insight into that topic:

1. What are mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward the strengths and weaknesses of teacher mentoring programs?

2. What are mentor teacher beliefs and attitudes about the challenges faced in their teacher mentoring program?

3. What are mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes towards the influence mentoring has on them?

This study aims to demonstrate the rewards and challenges faced by mentor teachers and administrators and indicate the perceived strengths and weaknesses of mentoring programs. This is important because effective mentoring programs and mentors are needed.

Justification

Teaching is an ever-changing field. The student population is constantly changing, standards and curriculum change often, textbooks change to keep up with curriculum, and there are frequent new state or district policy changes. Not one of these factors is static (Cothran et al., 2005). These factors make it hard for teachers to contend with all their own responsibilities much less the responsibilities of mentoring a co-worker, but that is exactly what is asked of mentor teachers. Schools are having an increasingly harder time finding and keeping mentor teachers. Experienced mentors sometimes leave the profession altogether or at the very least do not wish to keep up with their mentoring duties on top of their own responsibilities. Furthermore, the teachers who do have the experience to be a mentor teacher often do not want the job (Goering, 2013).

More comprehensive studies are needed to further explore the attitudes and perspectives held by administrators, mentor teachers, and veteran teachers who may or may not become mentor teachers. The relationship between a mentor and mentee is

complex, and it is expected that the relationships are affected by multiple factors and beliefs that need further exploration. Several studies have documented the cost versus benefits of mentoring for the mentee teacher (A'Amato & Quinn, 2005 and Ebanks, Hellsten, Lai & Prytula, 2009; Gordon & Maxey, 2000); however, research on the cost versus benefit of mentoring activities for the mentor teacher is limited. Also, information on the combination of mentor and teacher roles is scarce. Little is known about mentor teachers' feelings about the combination of teacher roles and mentor roles. The way people feel about something can strongly influence their behavior (Jaspers, Meijer, Prins & Wubbels, 2014). Looking toward the future of education, the profession of teaching itself may only be as good as the mentors available to guide the way for new teachers (Goering, 2013). If more is understood about administrator and mentor teacher beliefs and attitudes towards mentoring, it will be easier to design mentoring programs that reduce the load on mentor teachers. The thought is this load reduction will make it easier to find willing mentor teachers, train mentor teachers, and place mentor teachers where they are needed most. By placing mentors where they are needed most, schools can help to break the cycle of the revolving teacher door. Teachers will stay in the profession to become better teachers, and the students will reap the rewards of having an effective teacher. Understanding the impact of mentoring on the mentor teachers' beliefs and attitudes will have a far-reaching impact on education, schools, and more importantly the learning of children.

Researchers Ragins and Kram (2007) recognize that there is a significant amount of research on the effects of mentoring on the mentee, but little is known about the effects

mentoring has on administrators and mentor teachers. School districts across the United States and overseas are utilizing mentoring programs as a means for retaining teachers, boosting teacher effectiveness, and helping to advance students learning and ultimately test scores (Mullen, 2011). A mentor's role is organizational and supportive. Mentors provide opportunity for development and encourage development (Dikilitas & Mumford, 2016). While mentoring programs are being used in school districts throughout the world often times school districts do not provide proper training or incentives for mentoring teachers. A mentoring program is only as good as the mentors guiding their mentees. Barlin (2010) claims there are three critical factors of a good mentoring program. The first is finding the right teachers to be mentors. A mentor's effectiveness determines if a program's goal will be accomplished: supporting teachers to help students succeed. Successful mentors are exceptional educators with a track record of student gains in achievement. Many districts do not conduct the research that is needed to put these exceptional educators in mentoring positions. There is also some resistance to taking these exceptional teachers away from their classrooms. However, school districts that conduct the research and put their exceptional teachers in mentoring positions are noticing the greatest gains in student learning. The next critical component of a mentor program is aligning instructional-support efforts. If a new teacher is expected to navigate many different perspectives, standards, and advice he or she may get overwhelmed and quit the profession altogether. Programs must be delivered in a way that makes expectations clear to the teacher, and the teacher can then synthesize the information in a way that is useful to students. The last critical element to a mentoring program is

principal interaction. When mentoring programs involve school administrators it ensures that all parties involved in mentoring are on the same page. When mentoring programs are successful schools are transformed into successful learning communities where teachers and students succeed. It is imperious to increase knowledge of administrators' and mentor teachers' experiences in order to increase the effectiveness of teacher mentor programs.

Methodology

For this study the researcher makes use of a mixed methods research design to examine administrators' and mentor teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards mentoring programs. The researcher chose this research design in order to gain a deeper understanding of mentor programs and the effect they have on administrators and mentor teachers. According to Creswell and Clark (2011) a mixed methods study uses philosophical assumptions along with other methods of inquiry. Creswell and Clark's book *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* states the following about mixed methods research:

> Mixed methods research is a research design with a methodology and methods. As a methodology, it involves collecting, analyzing, and mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches at many phases in the research process, from the initial philosophical assumptions to the drawing of conclusions. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. It is premised on the idea that the use of quantitative

and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of

research problems than either approach alone. (p. 18)

More detail on methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

The terms used within this study have been defined by the researcher.

1. Teacher Induction- The systematic processes embedded in a healthy school
    climate that support and guide novice teachers in the early stages of their
    careers (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2009).

2. Teacher Retention- Ability to reduce teacher mobility and provide more stable
    learning conditions in schools. Teachers remaining in the field of education.
    A teacher who stays in the profession at the school, district, or state level for a
    given period of time. The rate at which new teachers remain in the profession.
    (Hanson & Moir, 2008).

3. Teacher Attrition- Teacher turnover rate, specifically how many teachers
    leave their position and/or the teaching profession altogether (Ingersoll &
    Smith, 2003).

4. New Teacher Center- A non-profit organization dedicated to improving
    student learning by helping to train new generations of educators. The New
    Teacher Center designs programs (mentoring) that schools can put in place in
    order to help develop school leaders (New Teacher Center, 2016).

5. NTPS- The National Teacher and Principal Survey is a series of
    questionnaires that provide descriptive data about elementary and secondary

education while also giving policymakers a variety of statistics on the condition of education in the United States (National teacher and principal survey, 2017).

Delimitations

The sample for this study is limited to certified kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) public school administrators and teachers who have participated in a mentor program and have five years' experience. The participants are selected based on their willingness to participate. All school districts within the study are located in Mississippi. The state of Mississippi was chosen because it is currently facing extreme amounts of teacher shortages and is listed by *US News* as 46th in the United States for education. Therefore, Mississippi would likely benefit from the use of effective mentoring programs. The study is a mixed-methods research design conducted using surveys and interviews. Therefore, the study is quantitative and qualitative in nature in order to expose administrator and teacher attitudes and beliefs. The survey is researcher-created and therefore has been run first as a pilot study. To conduct the pilot study the researcher administered the survey through an online teacher forum. This pilot study was conducted in order to identify any problem areas and the validity of the research instrument (Hassan et al., 2006).

Assumptions

The following assumptions are present in this study:

1. all of the respondents were honest

2. all of the respondents understood the survey instrument

3. all of the respondents understood what was being asked

Summary

Chapter one of this study discusses the explanation and need for this study. To institute a firm base for the study, chapter two provides a review of related literature. The researcher will discuss Social Exchange theory (Homans, 1958), Lev Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism, and Nodding's (1984) and Gilligan's (1982) Ethic of Care theory as the basis for the study. A review of teacher mentor roles, characteristics of effective mentor programs, and current mentoring research will be discussed. Chapter three will explain the methodology that will be used in conducting this study.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes and beliefs mentor teachers and administrators involved in mentoring programs possess about mentoring and teacher induction. Hanson and Moir (2008) suggest what administrators and teachers have always thought: the longer a teacher stays in the profession, the better instruction that teacher delivers to his or her students. In recent years, mentoring programs have been used to increase teacher retention by providing support to new teachers to improve student achievement (Hanson & Moir, 2008). In order for these mentor programs to be effective and for novice teachers to feel helped to gain new knowledge and skills, effective mentor teachers are needed. Little research has been done to answer the question why a veteran teacher would want to be a mentor. Understanding why veteran teachers take on extra roles may help leaders to understand how to better support mentors during the mentoring process. As administrators search for ways to retain teachers, it is essential to gain an understanding of experienced teachers' motives behind mentoring (Garza et al., 2009).

In order to better understand mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes towards mentor programs, a review of the current literature was required. The following literature review will identify what is currently known about mentoring and identify gaps in the literature that need further exploration. The review begins with the history of mentoring, the purpose of mentoring, mentoring programs and their attributes, followed by current research.

History of Mentoring

In *A Brief History of Mentoring,* Barondess (1995) elaborates on the first-time mentoring was mentioned in literature over 3,000 years ago in Homer's legend of the Trojan War, *The Odyssey*. Mentor, Odysseus's confidant and friend, was left behind in Ithaca to take care of Odysseus's wife, Penelope, and child, Telemachus, when Odysseus went to fight in the Trojan War. Odysseus was the King of Ithaca and had no choice but to leave his wife and son to fight in the war. Mentor was responsible for Telemachus' education and helping to shape him into a man. At one-point Athena, the supreme Greek goddess, took the form of Mentor. In a way, this symbolizes Mentor as a gift sent from the Gods. Telemachus saw Mentor as a teacher with some paternal and maternal qualities which helped to define the modern term mentor.

Daniel Levinson (1978) explored mentoring hundreds of years later in his book T*he Season of a Man's Life.* In a time when most early mentoring research was focused on the medical field, Levinson was one of the first researchers to study mentoring out of the context of the medical field (Barondess, 1995). Levinson's study of human development was about mentoring in the business world (Levinson & Darrow, 1978). In 1985, Kram published a book entitled *Mentoring at Work*. According to Barondess (1995), this book is credited with making mentoring a household word and mentoring research a legitimate field of study. Kram and Levinson saw mentoring as the relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of developing the protégé's career. Mentoring is a developmental relationship that is embedded within the career context. The primary reason for these mentoring

relationships is career development and growth (Ragins & Kram, 2007). This concept applies directly to the education world. Beginning teachers need the support and guidance of experienced mentors to develop their knowledge and skills (Hanson & Moir, 2008).

Through reading the published research there is no one consistent definition of mentoring that is accepted by those who study mentoring or are involved in mentoring programs. Although many have attempted to provide exact definitions of mentoring, definitional variety continues to distinguish mentoring literature. The literature also reveals that the function of mentoring is not clearly understood, leading to confusion as to just what is being measured to account for success. The meaning of mentoring varies depending on the situation (Merriam, 2014). For instance, mentoring has one meaning to developmental psychologists, another to business people, and yet another to those in academic settings. This display of diverse mentoring definitions supports Merriam's (2014) notion that mentoring will vary as a function of multiple factors. Despite the variety of meanings, one consistent aspect is that a mentor is a source of knowledge and support. A Buddhist Philosopher Daisaku Ikeda said:

> One who refuses to seek the advice of others will eventually be led to a path of ruin. A mentor helps you to perceive your own weaknesses and confront them with courage. The bond between mentor and protégé enables us to stay true to our chosen path until the very end.

Theoretical Frameworks

Theories are constructed in order to explain relationships and behavior. Mentoring is rooted in the ethic of care theory, the social constructivist theory, and the social

exchange theory. It is important to explore the reasons why mentoring relationships exist and how individuals within those relationships behave.

Ethic of Care Theory

The ethic of care theory was founded by Noddings (1984) and Gilligan (1986). Both researchers see the ethic of care theory as a moral theory that implies there is a moral importance in relationships to provide care. Ethic of care theory emphasizes empathy and compassion. The ethics of caring are being attentive to or recognizing the needs of others in order to respond to those needs, responsibility or taking the initiative to respond to those who need care, competence or following through with enough adequacy that the care will be effective and responsiveness (Care Ethics, n.d). Noddings (2012) identified two stages of the caring process: caring for and caring about. Caring for is doing things for people that they cannot do for themselves. Caring about is when one helps to nurture caring ideas to teach another how to care for themselves. Noddings said that those who are capable of a reciprocal relationship of caring will have the strongest relationships.

Mentoring requires a veteran teacher to recognize that their fellow novice teachers are in need. Mentor teachers sometimes are appointed but more often they take it upon themselves to care for their novice colleagues. Veteran teachers are competent in their jobs and adequately respond to their novice colleague's needs. Novice teachers respond to the care by becoming better teachers. Mentors serve the purpose of helping new teachers make meaning of their new positions. They help new teachers to assimilate into the culture of a school. Barlin (2010) said when mentors are well-selected (whether

formally or informally), well-trained, and well scheduled they can help fellow novice teachers become great teachers.

Social Constructivist Theory

Social constructivism is not a new idea. Social constructivism is described as socialization or the process of acquiring skills, knowledge, and dispositions that enables an individual to participate in society. Socialization consists of reciprocal interactions and joint construction of meaning by individuals in the social context (Sivan, 1986). Social constructivist theory is the idea that people make meaning of knowledge within social contexts from people around them (Robinson & St. George, 2011). According to Sivan (1986), three elements of the constructivist theory are cognitive activity, cultural knowledge, and assisted learning. Cognitive activity is the process of making meaning of one's environment. Cultural knowledge consists of features of a group such as beliefs, social form, and knowledge. The final element is assisted learning. Assisted learning is the process of socialization. Social Constructivist theory focuses on interaction over observation. It is the socialization that enables people to participate in their social group (Sivan, 1986). Vygotsky (1934) stated cognitive development stems from social interactions through guided learning within the zone of proximal development. Mentors serve the purpose of helping new teachers make meaning of their new positions. They help new teachers to assimilate into the culture of a school

Social Exchange Theory

Mentoring also has roots in social exchange theory. Cherry (2018) defines social exchange theory as a model for interpreting interactions in relationships based on the

estimate of reward or punishment. Relationships are evaluated using a cost-benefit

analysis. People will abandon a relationship if they perceive that relationship as costing

too much. If the cost outweighs the reward, many people will not stick around. Costs are

things people see as negatives: money, time spent and effort. The benefits are what one

gets out of a relationship: for example, fun, friendship, and social support. People weigh

the benefits versus costs to see if a relationship is worth it (Cherry, 2018). Goering (2013)

found that veteran teachers were reluctant to be mentors because they were reluctant to

assume one more responsibility. Beginning teacher candidates spend on average about

1,000 hours a school year with their mentor teachers, and that is only time within the

normal school day. Mentor teachers know it takes many hours to serve as a mentor

teacher, and they simply do not have the time. It is hard to convince experienced mentor

teachers to take on one more job when they do not have enough time to do their own jobs

(Goering, 2013). Many veteran teachers do not see the benefit or reward of mentoring as

worth the of cost of giving up more of their personal time.

<center>Purpose of Mentoring Programs</center>

Mullen (2011) defines mentoring as advising or training someone. Mentors are

trusted guides. Veteran teachers are often asked to be mentors to their novice colleagues

to help them embrace their new positions with as little hardship as possible. Teachers

learn that being a mentor is about being a friend, counselor, caretaker, advocate, adviser,

listener, and reality checker. Mentors provide emotional support and guidance for new

teachers. Wong (2018) sees an effective teacher as a teacher who has good classroom

management skills, teaches for mastery, and has positive expectations for student success.

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A teacher's expectations of his or her students will greatly influence those students' success in class and in life. Every teacher can be effective, and every teacher has the potential to be a better teacher then they were the day before. Better teachers are made through effective mentor programs.

Mentoring Functions

According to Ragins and Kram (2007) mentoring is thought to provide two functions to those receiving the mentoring: career functions and psychosocial functions. Career functions are seen as behaviors shown by mentors that help new employees to learn the ropes and prepare them for career advancement. These behaviors are coaching, sponsoring, increasing exposure, and offering protection to new employees. Psychosocial functions are behaviors such as offering acceptance, counseling, friendship, and positive role modeling that builds on trust, intimacy, and relationship bonds between a mentor and a protégé. These behaviors help to enhance a new employee's professional and personal growth, self-work and self-efficacy. Career functions may affect the mentor and protégé's position within the company while psychosocial functions may affect emotional bonds and psychological attachments. No two mentoring relationships are alike. Some mentoring relationships function on only a career level while other relationships function in order to feed the psychosocial soul. Ragins and Kram (2007) reflect on mentoring as a relationship that can change the course of lives:

> At its best, mentoring can be a life-altering relationship that inspires mutual growth, learning, and development. Its effects can be remarkable, profound,

enduring; mentoring relationships have the capacity to transform individuals,

groups, organizations, and communities (Ragins & Kram, p.3).

Teacher Shortages

In a survey conducted by *The Guardian,* teacher shortages are at an all-time high

across the United States (Betancourt, 2018). *The Guardian* contacted the department of

education in every state in the United States; 41 states responded while the remaining

nine declined to provide any data. The survey showed 28 of the 41 states are experiencing

teacher shortages while 15 of those states say the shortages have been more drastic in

2018. Some states are turning to emergency licensure to help put more teachers in the

classroom. Many officials are concerned about this because this puts less qualified

teachers into the classrooms. With less qualified teachers possibly being put into

classrooms, effective mentor programs are becoming even more important.

Teacher Retention

For years, the American public has been reminded that there are severe teacher

shortages throughout the United States (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). However, Hollywood

has promoted an unreal image of teachers for decades. Hollywood portrays teachers as

people who become successful no matter the odds they are against. Two such Hollywood

teachers are Michelle Pfeiffer in 1995's *Dangerous Minds* and Hilary Swank in 2007's

Freedom Writers. Both movies portray these teachers as those who built life-changing

relationships with their students no matter the limitations presented to them. That is not

reality. New teachers are not prepared for the lack of assistance they get in their own

classrooms or the overabundance of assistance if the school is micromanaged. New

teachers are also not prepared for the sheer number of students they will teach every day, and many of those students can be rather challenging to teach. University education programs are faced with the daunting job of getting new teachers ready for their own classrooms while monitoring their mastery of content knowledge (Simos, 2013).

New teachers are enticed to enter the educational field with alternative certification programs, teacher recruitment fairs, sign-on bonuses, student loan forgiveness, and housing assistance. In the past, researchers have blamed the teacher shortage on more students enrolling and teachers reaching retirement age, but the data also shows the larger part of the teacher shortage is caused by attrition of newly qualified teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Many new teachers leave the profession because of the difference between their expectations and the reality of teaching. Stage theories suggest that teachers progress through a series of stages in their careers with the first two years being referred to as survival (Ebanks et al., 2009). A teacher's first professional experience is a strong indicator of the likelihood of staying in the profession (Boccia & McMackin, 1998). The implementation of a good mentor program and a mentor teacher help beginning teachers make it through the "survival years." However, many new teachers leave the profession because of the difference between their expectations and the reality of teaching.

New teachers are often expected to attend lengthy training and orientation programs for no extra pay. Many new teachers also leave the profession because of state testing. Student success is measured on state tests, and teacher success is measured through those students' test scores, which present a great deal of pressure especially for a

new teacher (Simos, 2013). New teachers leave the profession for the lack of pay compared to the amount of work. Teacher pay varies state by state and district by district. According to [Murphy](#) (2018), South Dakota and Mississippi teachers are the lowest paid in the United States. Murphy also cites a study done by the Economic Policy Institute showed that teachers earn just 77% of what other college graduates make (Murphy, 2018). The teaching profession suffers from a higher turnover rate than many other occupations, and the turnover seems to be present in beginning teachers. Within the first five years of teaching up to 50% of new teachers leave the profession (Goering, 2013).

The 2021-2022 Mississippi Department of Education data indicates that 17% of teachers left the profession altogether or transferred to a different school. Of that 17%, 3% planned to leave education entirely, and 5% planned to retire from education. That number is up from 15.7% in the 2012-2013 school year and 13.5% in the 1988-1989 school year. Obviously, teachers are leaving the profession, and they are doing it in large numbers. In 2021-2022, only 73% of all teachers planned on staying in their current schools (Mississippi Department of Education, 2022). Ingersoll claimed that the exodus of teachers early in their careers has led to a shortage of experienced teachers. The root of the teacher shortage is the inability to retain new teachers rather than the inability to recruit and hire new teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). That is where mentor programs become essential.

Professional Identity

A person's professional identity comes from that person's position within society, their interactions with others and their interpretations of their experiences (Sutherland et

al., 2010). A person's professional identity is reflected in the way he or she performs his or her job within the field. The way we perceive ourselves influences the things we do and the judgments we make. Understanding a teacher's identity is important to help understand teachers' motivation, effectiveness, and the likelihood of retaining a teacher in the educational field (Hong, 2010). Beijaard (2004) explored four characteristics of professional identity. First, professional identity is not a fixed mindset. Professional Identity changes based on the experiences faced throughout the career and the individual's career goals. Next, professional identity forms from a person's knowledge within his or her career community. Thirdly, professional identity is formed from a person's self-perception of what a teacher is and being seen by others as a teacher. Lastly, a teacher's professional identity is made up of sub-identities that are unique to each person and help to make up each individual's identity (Sutherland et al., 2010).

Hong (2010) identified six factors of professional identity: commitment, emotion, value, micro politics, efficacy, and overall professional identity. Teachers who left the teaching profession reported very low scores for each factor. These teachers reported they were burned out, and this was connected to every factor of professional identity. One of the major sources of burnout was classroom management. Classroom management is something that has to be learned within the classroom, and cannot be taught. Because classroom management takes some time and trial and error, many new teachers get frustrated when dealing with misbehaviors within the classroom. Handling students' misbehaviors can lead to emotional burnout. It is so important to build a community of supporting, encouraging, and collaborative teachers, so new teachers feel like they have

an ally when they become frustrated or doubt themselves. When teachers collaborate with their colleagues, they have the chance to reflect on their practice and improve as teachers (Hong, 2010). It is important to support new teachers in order for them to develop a positive professional identity that will help to keep them in the teaching profession for years to come (Hong, 2010). New teacher support can be given in the form of teacher mentor.

<div align="center">Teacher Mentor Programs</div>

Assigning an appropriate mentor is one of the most important tasks of beginning teacher induction programs (Rowley, 1999). Egan (1985) developed a definition of mentoring after interviewing many beginning teachers and their mentors:

> The mentoring of teachers is an empowering process characterized by availability and approachability on the part of an experienced educator, and receptivity by the neophyte. Through this process, a beginning teacher receives technical assistance, career advice, and psychological support from an experienced person. This assistance and support is transmitted through observations, ongoing discussions, questionings, and planning together in an adult learning mode. During this process, the experienced educator acts as a role model, teacher, and counselor to the beginner. The influence of the experienced person is pervasive and enduring, while still honoring the autonomy of the neophyte teacher. (p. 197)

The literature on teacher mentoring programs often tries to assess the effectiveness of mentoring programs on the teachers involved and the school within the mentoring takes place. One study reported on by D'Amato et al. (2005) sought to

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determine if there was a significant difference between the amount of support received by first year teachers with a mentor, with a mentor assigned by a principal, or with no mentor at all. First year teachers reported to receive more support from mentors, whether assigned or not, than those with no mentors. In the 2001-2002 school year, 135 first year teachers—who worked in a district that serviced over 60,000 students—responded to a 20-item questionnaire. The items all centered around levels of support that first year teachers perceived they received. The questions included everything from personal or emotional support to ideas about dealing with parents and parent conferences. Items were scored on a scale from one to six. One represented very strongly disagree, and six represented very strongly agree. A one-way ANOVA was run in order to answer the research questions. ANOVA results showed significant differences in the amount of support first-year teachers reported they received based on their mentor assignments. First-year teachers with a mentor assigned by the school mentor program showed that those teachers received significantly more support than first-year teachers with no mentor. The study also found interesting outliers: three first-year teachers with no assigned mentor had extremely high support scores. Those teachers were questioned by the researchers and they reported that even though their mentors were not specifically assigned they had several unofficial mentors throughout the school which caused their high support scores.

According to Roth (2012) in 2004, the state of New York passed a mandatory mentoring requirement. The mentoring requirement stated that all New York teachers must complete a mentoring program in the first year of teaching. New York also made its

districts responsible for incorporating mentor experiences into each district's professional development plan. Mentoring programs had to include detailed instructions for choosing mentors, training mentors, activities for mentors and mentees, and places and times for activities. Once the requirement was put into place, a qualitative case study was used to gain insight into the teachers' perceptions of the mentor programs. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis was used to analyze the experiences of 16 participants in two different school districts in New York State. The data collected indicated that the mentor programs held many strengths. Mentees thought their mentors provided support without being judgmental. Mentees felt that they had mutual trust with their mentors and felt comfortable going to them with questions. Mentors also described instances when they learned from their mentees. One drawback mentioned by mentees and mentors alike was the lack of time to spend together. These studies are extremely important to the mentoring literature because they show the positive correlation between mentor/mentee relationships and mentoring programs.

Effective Programs

For the past two decades, The New Teacher Center (2016) at the University of California, Santa Cruz has been helping districts and states develop new mentor programs. From the development of these mentor programs, three critical factors have emerged in determining the effectiveness of mentoring programs. The first is finding the right teachers to be mentors and training those teachers. A mentor's effectiveness determines if a program's goal will be accomplished: supporting teachers to help students succeed. Successful mentors are extraordinary educators with a record of student gains in

achievement. Many districts do not do the research that is needed to put these exceptional educators in mentoring positions. There is also some resistance to taking these exceptional teachers away from their classrooms. However, school districts that do the research and put their exceptional teachers in mentoring positions are noticing the greatest gains in student learning (Barlin, 2010). Furthermore, mentors are often not trained, and therefore, they are not adequately prepared for their new role. They may not be sure what is expected of them or what they should do for their mentee. From this it is clear that training should always be provided (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). The next critical component of a mentor program is aligning instructional-support efforts. If a new teacher is expected to navigate many different perspectives, standards, and advice, he or she may get overwhelmed and quit the profession altogether. Programs must have a consistent and aligned delivery so that teachers are able to make sense of the information they receive and synthesize it in a way that is useful to them. The last critical element of a mentoring program is administrator interaction. When mentoring programs involve school administrators, it ensures that all parties involved in mentoring are on the same page (Barlin, 2010). Schools are transformed into successful learning communities where teachers and students succeed and mentoring programs are successful.

Every mentoring program is put in place in order to meet certain goals: to increase teacher retention, to promote novice teacher well-being, to improve teacher competence, to satisfy mandated requirements, and to improve teacher performance, which will then improve student achievement (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Quality mentor programs should take into consideration the critical components of mentor selection mentor incentives, and

mentor preparation. Quality mentors should have three or more years' experience in the classroom, content knowledge excellence, a commitment to personal and professional growth, good communication skills, empathy towards novice teachers, and a commitment to the mentoring cause. According to Vittek (2015) the state of Louisiana requires mentors to have a minimum of ten years' experience as a full-time teacher, a master's degree, and a three-hour training course before becoming a mentor. The risk of mentoring also needs to be worth the reward for mentor teachers. If veteran teachers are going to spend hours of their personal time, there must be some form of reward such as time release, university credits, or stipends. Finally, mentors must be prepared. Mentors must participate in professional development to help develop knowledge and strategies for helping novice teachers. Administrators play a huge part in mentor programs. Principals must also approve time and resources for mentor and mentee collaboration, time to discuss student work, observe novice teachers, collaborate with novice teachers and their mentors, and foster formal and informal interaction (Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

A quality mentor program can change the lives of those involved in the program. Odell and Huling (2000) summarized the characteristics of a quality mentoring program:

- It helps new teachers to teach using the standards and curriculum.

- It is tailored to help each individual teacher.

- It will change as the teacher or students' needs change.

- It views learning as a practice that happens continuously.

- It involves all stakeholders.

- It contributes to positive school culture and attitude.

Administrators

The principal of a school has a direct impact on the culture of a school. Administrators build trust among their stakeholders in order to create an environment where everyone works towards the same goal. Researchers Correa and Wagner (2011) suggest that effective administrators support a positive school climate, are instructional leaders, and support mentoring programs. However, some scholars argue that the responsibility for an effective mentor program should not fall solely on the principal's shoulders (Heller & Sindelar, 1991). Heller and Sindelar (1991) claim that the responsibility for an effective mentor program starts at the very top. The board of education is responsible for providing resources such as personnel, time, materials, and even funding. The board should also make sure to hold administrators accountable for the mentoring programs and should request progress reports. The superintendent is responsible for being well informed, allocating resources, and promoting mentor programs. While the aforementioned administrators have specific jobs to help mentor programs run smoothly, principals are the heart of the mentoring programs. Principals are responsible for fostering collaboration, and mentor programs do not run effectively without collaboration.

According to Correa and Wagner (2011), principals who properly support mentoring programs carefully match mentors and mentees, provide time for planning, and allow time for mentees to observe well established teachers. Principals are the managers in charge of running the mentor programs with the program's success or failure mainly falling on their shoulders. Principal's multiple roles are very challenging.

A study was conducted in 2005, consisting of five first year special education teachers. The study was conducted on special education teachers because they often leave the profession at a higher rate than general education teachers. Out of the five teachers, three resigned after their first year. They stated that a lack of support from their principal and mentor helped them make their decision to the leave the profession. Only one educator chose to retain his position in special education and stated he did this due to the immense support he received during his first year. Mandating mentoring programs at the state and district levels is not enough to assure these programs will run effectively. Principals must actively participate in the mentor programs and support mentors, mentees, and ongoing professional development (Correa & Wagner, 2011).

Mentors

Ragins and Kram (2007) elaborate on the importance of mentoring relationships in our lives:

> When asked to contemplate relationships that have made a difference in our lives—relationships that have given us the courage to do the things we think we cannot do, relationships that have guided our professional development or even changed the course of our lives—many of us think of mentoring relationships. (Ragins & Kram, p. 3)

Mentors are experienced teachers who teach the same subject or grade level. Mentors are responsible for observing their mentees, providing curriculum guidance, providing help with classroom management, and helping to complete daily tasks such as lesson planning, grading, attendance, and phoning students' parents (Roth, 2012). Good

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mentors are very important to any effective mentoring program because mentors are committed to the cause. A good mentor is highly committed to the task of helping beginning teachers find achievement and fulfillment in their new work. Committed mentors know that they cannot give up on the job in order to be successful. Good mentors are accepting of their mentees. They put their personal values and judgments aside in order to accept that person as a growing professional (Rowley, 1999). Mentors show they have respect for their mentees by listening to them and taking their ideas seriously. Long (2014) contests that respect has to be mutual; it will not happen overnight. Respect takes time, but once respect is fostered, the mentor/mentee relationship will flourish. Mentors truly listen and get to know their mentees. Mentors push their mentees into thinking in new ways in order to foster growth. Mentors and mentees collaborate with each other to work towards one common goal. Good mentors celebrate their mentee's success. Good mentors tell the truth even if it is hard to hear. Honesty is the foundation of a good relationship. Criticism helps people to become better. Mentors should make their mentees feel safe to make a mistake. Finally, a good mentor remembers that their mentees are human. They will make mistakes. They will grow. A good mentor can make a teacher feel like he or she has the courage to explore things he or she has never done before. Mentoring can change the course of our lives. Mentoring relationships inspire growth, learning, and development (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Informal and formal mentors. Mentor teachers are often appointed by an administrator, but they may also volunteer. Sometimes a relationship can form naturally between a veteran teacher and a novice teacher. These relationships lend themselves to a

mentor relationship. The two teachers already know each other, and each knows the other is non-judgmental and empathetic, or they would not have formed that initial relationship. Being non-judgmental and empathetic are two of the most important characteristics for a mentor to possess according to McKinn, Jollie, and Hatter (2007). These characteristics come only behind wanting to be a mentor. Informal mentoring has very little structure and is based upon the chemistry between the teachers involved in the mentoring relationship. These types of relationships have no specified goals, and the outcomes are unknown but can morph into long-lasting relationships. Research suggests that first year teachers prefer and benefit the most from informal mentoring (Vittek, 2015). However, because these mentor/mentee relationships are not school appointed, school districts will likely not provide training or support. Formal mentoring is structured; it is measured based on the outcome. Goals are established in formal mentoring; participation, training and support are needed to meet the goals. These relationships are likely to only last for the duration of the mentorship. Formal and informal mentors are essential to mentoring programs (Management Mentors, 2015).

Mentor Leadership Theories

Mentoring is an excellent way for a more experienced employee to share knowledge and skills with a less experienced employee. In the case of teaching, first year teachers often need a great deal of extra help to complete all of the duties put on them. Mentoring will help to unlock a new teacher's potential if it is done properly. If the mentoring relationship is carried out correctly, the mentor and the mentee can both gain from the relationship. The similarities between leadership styles and mentoring require an

examination of leadership theories and how they can apply in mentoring situations (Ebanks, Hellsten, Lai & Prytula, 2009).

Transformational leadership. According to Lawrence (2012), Transformational Leadership is a leadership style in which leaders motivate employees to create change within the company that will affect the future success of the company. This is accomplished through enhancing motivation, morale, and performance through a variety of different methods. These methods include connecting the employee's sense of identity to the mission of the organization. There are four elements of transformational leadership. The first is individualized consideration. Individualized consideration in terms of a mentor relationship is the degree at which the mentor listens to the mentee's concerns and needs. The mentor gives support and keeps communication lines open. The next element is intellectual stimulation. Intellectual stimulation is the degree to which the mentor takes risks and tries to obtain the mentee's ideas. The following element is inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation is the degree to which a mentor articulates a vision that is inspiring to a mentor. Finally, the last element of transformational leadership is idealized influence. Idealized influence is a mentor providing a model of high ethical behavior and gaining a mentee's respect and trust.

A transformational leader is a leader who has mentoring qualities and skills while a good mentor is someone that could be a good transformational leader. Transformational leaders and mentors will emulate behaviors that inspire others to be the best they can be on a personal and professional level. These leaders take pride in watching the growth of their followers.

Situational leadership. Situational Leadership is a leadership style that adapts depending on a company's goals and circumstances. Leaders are called to evaluate their team members and workplace variables in order to put a leadership style in place. The situational leadership concept was developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard. Situational mentoring is built upon situational leadership. A successful mentoring program requires a mentor to share knowledge and skills with their mentee. The Blanchard Model of situational leadership highlights four delivery styles: directive, coaching, supportive, and delegating. A mentor is likely to be better in one or two delivery styles than the others. Situational leadership is particularly practical because it takes the development level of the mentee and pairs him or her with the best mentor. The best intent of a well-implemented mentor program is identifying key leaders who are willing to share knowledge and time with the next level of potential leaders (mentees). Situational mentoring can be a win-win for the mentor, mentee, and the supporting school ("A Situational Approach," 2012).

Effect on Beginning Teachers

Entering the teaching profession is a major life transition. The first year for a teacher is when he or she learns to take the theoretical knowledge he or she was taught in college and apply it to the real world. First-year teachers may struggle with the challenges of the profession. Teachers realize very quickly that it is a necessity to learn at work, and one can become emotionally exhausted fairly quickly (Dicke et al., 2015). Most educators realize how hard the job can be in the first couple of days or weeks; others struggle for months and even years at their jobs. Guidance through these times is

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important; to have a support system and to feel a sense of belonging (Roth, 2012).

Mentor programs help the transfer of communication and the development of skills

between veteran teachers and beginning teachers.

Research has found that a mentor's support positively influences teacher

satisfaction, and teacher satisfaction leads to higher levels of teacher retention (Ebanks,

Hellsten, Lai & Prytula, 2009). Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson (2008) have

identified several benefits to beginning teachers involved in mentor programs:

- Most effective form of supporting professional development of new teachers

- Reduced feelings of isolation

- Increased confidence and self-esteem

- Professional growth

- Improved self-reflection

- Emotional and psychological support

- Classroom management skills

- Time and workload management

- Socialization of novice teachers

Effect on Teacher Retention

Robinson and George (2011) paint a picture of why teachers leave the profession.

Many new teachers obtain a college degree along with $80,000 in student loan debt only

to enter a career that is characterized by low pay, low status, and endless demands. The

education system is grossly underfunded every year, which leads to a lack of teacher

materials, lack of up to date educational resources, and outdated buildings. America's teachers are overworked and underpaid (Robinson & George, 2011).

The teaching profession suffers from high turnover rates. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) reflect on the percentages of teachers who leave and why they leave the profession. Teachers across the United States were asked at exit interviews why they left teaching 42% said for personal reasons, 39% left to pursue another job, and 29% left because of job dissatisfaction. The final two reasons play a major role in two-thirds of beginning teacher attrition. What can schools do in order to change these numbers? Teachers need increased support from administration. This support may be in the form of mentors (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Data from the 2012-2013 teacher follow- up survey (Mississippi Department of Education) shows improved data for new teachers who are a part of an induction or mentoring program during their first years of teaching. Improving teacher support can help contribute to lower rates of teacher turnover, therefore improving school performance.

Mentoring in Mississippi

For years, Mississippi has been identified as lagging behind the rest of the country in terms of education. In 2010, Mississippi had the second lowest graduation rates in the country. In 2013, Mississippi ranked 48th in academic gains. One of Mississippi's largest problems has been the inability to keep quality teachers. According to the State Department of Education, one out of every three school districts in Mississippi is labeled as having a critical teacher shortage area (Harris, 2019). Many high poverty school districts in Mississippi have teachers in the classroom who are not certified to teach what

they are teaching or are teaching on emergency teaching certificates because qualified

teachers are not available (Mississippi Department of Education, 2014). According to a

Clarion Ledger article, 17% of Mississippi teachers lack credentials or are teaching

outside of their subject area (Henderson, 2015). According to Harris (2019) not only is

there a severe teacher shortage in Mississippi, but there is also a lack of qualified teachers

coming out of college. In 2013, the Mississippi Department of Education issued 3,447

licenses and in 2018 the agency issued only 1,624. Over the past five years the number of

education candidates graduating from universities has dropped by 40%. As of 2018,

Mississippi ranked last in teacher pay (Harris, 2019). The teachers of Mississippi are not

the only people being underpaid; 24% of Mississippi's population live below the poverty

line (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Mississippi has the third highest child poverty

rate in the nation (Harris, 2019).

Because of this severe lack of qualified teachers working within Mississippi

schools, the Mississippi Department of Education has implemented a mentoring program

(Mississippi teacher mentor program, n.d.). The program is not mandatory like other

states across the United States, but schools are strongly encouraged to enroll their mentor

and beginning teachers in the program. The MDE website offers training for mentees on

the website in the form of modules and videos. The MDE website (n.d.) states:

> Research shows that grounding novice educators with awareness and tools,
>
> coupled with scaffolding skills through teacher mentor training, increase success
>
> and retention of new teachers. YOU have been identified as an expert,
>
> experienced teacher to mentor and coach a beginning teacher because "novice

teachers have gaps in skills and knowledge, but also in areas of expertise; they

learn alongside experienced teachers in a community of learners that is

continually evolving"

The first module of the MDE Teacher Mentoring Orientation Module Series is

focused on training the mentor using a power point guide with printable handouts

including mentor roles and responsibilities. The module also includes suggestions on

mentor and new teacher interactions, effective communication techniques and a mentor

rubric. The second module focuses on supporting the new teacher. This module also

provides a power point guide with printable materials to help new teachers complete the

transition from college to their own classrooms. The phases of first year teachers, MS

teaching standards, and an M-Star overview are some of the necessary materials included

in module two for new teachers. The third and final module of the MDE Teacher

Mentoring Orientation Module Series is focused on scaffolding the new teacher as a

colleague using a power point guide with printable handouts on each of the Mississippi

Teaching Standards. The Module concludes with a section of helpful references that can

be used by mentors and first year teachers.

<div align="center">Current Research</div>

Cost-benefit Analysis

School-based mentoring programs are put in place in order to support preparation

and induction of new teachers. Considerable time, energy, and money are currently being

used in order to develop effective mentor programs (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez &

Tomlinson, 2008). Villar and Strong (2007) conducted a cost-benefit analysis on the cost

of mentoring versus the rate of return over five years. Most states have mandated and some fund some form of support for new teachers. Most school districts choose to use mentoring programs. Many school districts hesitate to implement mentoring programs because the cost can be quite high especially if resources are required for training, recruitment, and hiring of new teachers to replace veteran teachers. Mentor programs are usually paid for up front, and the return on that investment comes over time. Several school districts in California that used the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) were used to analyze the costs versus benefits. The mentoring program costs about $13,000.00 per teacher, but the return on that one teacher after five years was $21,500. That school did not have to spend any money for finding, recruiting, and hiring a new teacher for five years, so each teacher that stays within the district for five years saves the district about $8,600 (Villar & Strong, 2007).

New Mentor Program Trend

A new type of program in mentoring is the full release mentoring program. Mentoring programs are used as drives to increase teacher retention in order to support a new teacher, which in turn, improves student achievement. Most traditional mentoring programs involve part-time assignments that may change from year to year with little in the way of training for mentors. Recently new mentoring programs have come about called full release mentoring programs. These programs relieve teachers fully of their classroom teaching duties for a period of time, usually two to three years. During that time mentors solely work with new teachers. This is highly risky for school districts because there is no guarantee that these released teachers will come back into the

classroom, but mentors in these full release programs report four main areas where mentoring has made significant contributions to their professional lives. The first contribution was mentoring helped to broaden their own views and views about their profession. The next contribution was mentoring helped to deepen the mentor teachers understanding of teaching and learning. The third main area of contribution was mentoring helped to cultivate leadership in the mentors. Finally, the last contribution was mentoring supports communities of practice (Hanson & Moir, 2008). Yost (2002) examined a study of four veteran teachers that were released from teaching for an entire year. Their classes were turned over to novice teachers and the veteran teachers became full-time mentors. The program was studied using interviews, document collection, and observations. The mentors who participated in the program became more aware of their teaching. The fact that they were chosen at all affirmed their worth as teachers. These mentor teachers could see what was happening with their students. They were on the outside looking in and they could see the positive effect their lessons and leadership was having on the novice teachers and also their classes. The veteran teacher's careers were rejuvenated and they were revitalized.

Vittek (2015) cites a new mentoring trend as electronic mentoring or e-mentoring. E-mentoring is the use of computer communications for mentors and mentees to interact. This may be done through e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, or web conferencing. This is helpful because it allows for immediate attention. E-mentoring allows for the mentor and mentee to speak at any time and from any location. This also provides the opportunity to mentor more than one person at a time.

These findings provide clear evidence that mentoring has many positive implications beyond just the mentoring relationship. Mentor programs help those involved to gain new knowledge and skills that help to positively influence teachers, positively influence students, help school organizations to save money, and ultimately benefit the whole teaching profession.

Mentor Program Benefits/Disadvantages

Researchers have spent the last two decades exploring the impact and advantages/disadvantages of mentoring and continue to struggle with understanding the complexity of this pivotal, life-altering relationship (Ragins & Kram, 2007), but researchers have identified many benefits and disadvantages for mentors and beginning teachers alike.

Benefits. Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2008) contest first-year teachers who are a part of effective mentoring programs report reduced feelings of isolation, increased confidence and self-esteem, increased professional growth, improved self-reflection, feelings of emotional and psychological support, increased classroom management skills, and better time and workload management. Some advantages mentors experience in effective mentor programs are the positive effect they have on learning, the opportunity they have to reflect on their own teaching, and the renewed excitement for their careers to develop new ideas and new perspectives.

School-wide benefits are also felt from effective mentoring programs. Schools experience gains for the teacher, pupils, and schools. Improved teacher retention leads to

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less teacher turnover and more teacher stability. Better stability breeds better school cultures, better school cultures encourage student achievement (Hobson et al., 2008).

Disadvantages. Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2008) acknowledge that no program is perfect. Every mentoring program has its disadvantages. Some disadvantages perceived by novice teachers are that their mentors fail to provide the support needed, mentors are too tough, mentors act as bullies, or they feel like their mentor expects too much out of them which stresses them out in an already demanding profession. Disadvantages for mentors are little evidence of professional growth for novice or veteran teachers, dependency by the novice teacher, increased or unmanageable workloads, and the feeling of isolation with no support in their roles. Another disadvantage of mentor programs that may be felt on both sides is ego problems (Heller & Sindelar, 1991). For a mentor having someone depend on them can be very ego enhancing; so much so that when the protégé becomes less dependent it can be hard for the mentor to let go. Also, if a protégé feels they are very capable they may challenge the mentor. If either of these situations occur they may cause a serious ego problem for both parties.

Even though the best mentoring programs have disadvantages, the good they provide far out weights any disadvantage; if the disadvantages of programs are identified and adjusted those mentoring programs will continue to become more effective (Hobson et al., 2008).

Summary

Villar and Strong (2007) explain that beginning teachers come out of college with a certain level of expertise, but they are not finished products. They need a little help molding and shaping their professional identities in order to become effective teachers. School districts can greatly increase the rates of teacher retention and enhance the quality of a teacher's first year with an effective mentoring program. Mentoring is an investment that produces high levels of return for school districts financially and through increased levels of student learning.

Every two years the New Teacher Center publishes the mentoring guidelines by state. According to the New Teacher Center (2016), 29 states require some form of support for beginning teachers, 15 of those states require support for year one and two, and 9 states require some form of support past two years. Sixteen states across the United States provide funding just for induction programs. Nine states provide induction funding to all school districts within the state. Three states provide funds exclusively for mentor stipends. The United States is making strides towards implementing induction programs in schools; however, twenty-one states still have no requirement for support for all new teachers.

Numerous mentoring studies have been included in this review, and all have been referenced. The research reviewed was research that was most relevant to the study. This chapter explored history of mentoring, theoretical frameworks, the purpose for mentoring, and effective mentoring programs and the impact those mentor programs have on mentor teachers and beginning teachers. The research indicated the need for further

research in regards to the attitudes and beliefs administrators and mentor teachers involved in mentoring programs possess about mentoring and teacher induction. Ragins and Kram (2007) stated,

> As we progress in our understanding of variations in the quality and processes of developmental relationships, we have also begun to acknowledge that these outcomes may be more difficult to measure yet are critical for understanding the full impact of mentoring on individuals, relationships, and organizations (Ragins & Kram, p.668).

While most school districts recognize the need for mentoring programs, many do not provide the training and support needed to mentors (Goering, 2013). Gordon and Maxey (2000) state mentor selection may be based on the mentor's years of experience or the fact that they teach the same subject as their mentee. These mentors should be offered extensive training, but little assistance is offered to these mentors and the expectations for them are not always clearly stated. When this happens mentors, who are expected to handle a full teaching load as well, often provide inadequate support for their mentees.

According to Mullen (2011) many mentor programs began implementation in our schools, but are not successful because there is no follow through from administrators and /or mentor teachers. Also, according to Goering (2013), schools are having increasingly harder times finding and keeping mentor teachers. The teachers who do have the experience to be a mentor teacher do not want the job, citing a reluctance to take on one more role (Goering, 2013).

The literature on the subject of mentoring reveals the need for effective mentor programs. Literature about new teachers indicates that teachers leave jobs when they feel unsupported (Robinson & George, 2011). Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2008) identified several benefits of effective mentor programs: professional growth for all parties involved, new ideas and perspectives, gains for students, gains for pupils, gains for schools, and improved teacher retention. After reviewing the literature, the researcher decided to focus on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of mentor programs according to mentor teachers and administrators; as well as benefits of mentoring programs for mentors and administrators.

CHAPTER III – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology process used in this study. In order to measure mentor teachers' and administrators' attitudes and beliefs towards mentor programs the research study explored mentoring programs that were in operation. For this study the researcher selected a mixed methods research design to examine administrators' and mentor teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards mentoring programs.

Research Design

This study consists of an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach (see Figure 1) for data collection and analysis. An explanatory sequential mixed methods approach consists of two phases. The first phase is quantitative data collection which is then analyzed and used to plan the second phase, or the qualitative phase. The purpose of this research design is to use the qualitative data to help explain the initial quantitative data (Creswell, 2015). The researcher used both statistical trends in data (quantitative data) and interviews/personal experience (qualitative data) approaches in the study (Creswell, 2015). The researcher began the study with a self-created survey in order to gain quantitative data. That data was then used to conduct phone or zoom interviews for qualitative data.
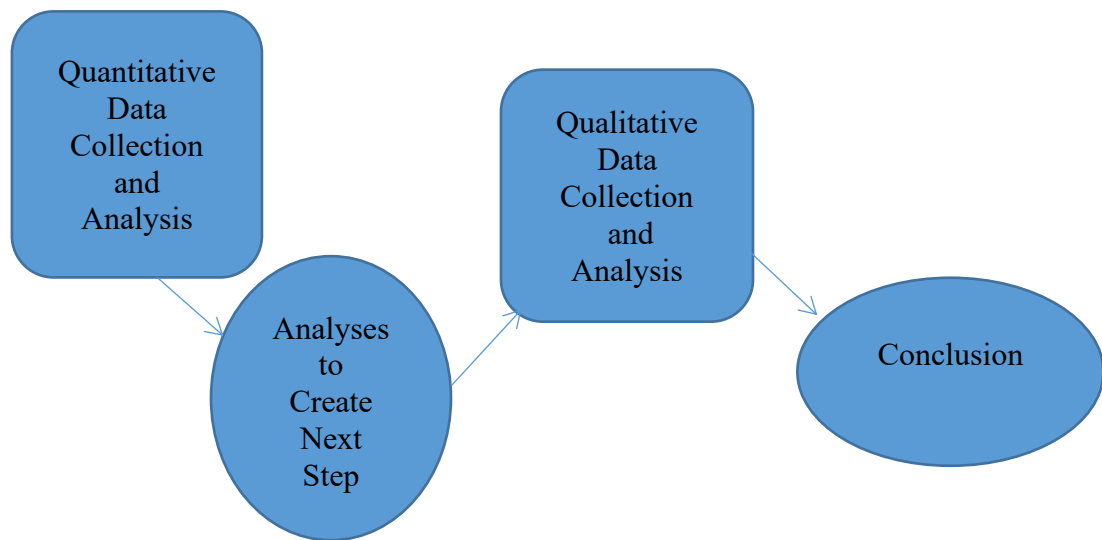
Figure 1. Research design.

Created following guidelines from Creswell (2015).

Research Questions

Based on information revealed in the literature the following research questions were answered from the perspective of mentor teachers and administrators.

1. What are mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward the strengths and weaknesses of teacher mentoring programs?

2. What are mentor teacher beliefs and attitudes about the challenges faced in their teacher mentoring program?

3. What are mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes towards the influence mentoring has on them?

Positionality

At the time of this study, the researcher has been teaching in Mississippi public schools for 15 years. The researcher was mentored herself in her first full year of teaching by an informal mentor. The researcher credits much of her teaching success to her mentor. Her mentor helped her with school procedures, classroom procedures, and classroom management.

The researcher acted as an interviewer during this study. At the time of this study, the researcher is employed as an English teacher at one of the schools identified in the study, but in an effort to reduce bias, the researcher chose not to interview subjects whom she worked with as part of the mentoring program in her district.

Participants

Participants were chosen from purposive or deliberate samples consisting of instructors and administrators at standard public schools in the south Mississippi who have been teachers with five or more years' experience and those that have previously served as a mentor teacher. The study does not include teachers and administrators from vocational, alternative, or charter schools. According to Etikan (2006), "The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience" (p.2). This approach is referred to as purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling occurs when people are selected who have the attributes of importance to the study (Creswell, 2009). Purposive sampling was used because participants were selected according to the needs of the study, and applicants who did not meet those needs were rejected (Etikan, 2006). Because in this

study the perception of mentor teachers and administrators is investigated, purposeful sampling is necessary to include mentors in Mississippi schools. Merriam (2014) stressed the importance of selecting a sample that gives a researcher the most relevant information in which the most data can be extracted. In the case of this study, teachers or administrators with five or more years of experience and mentor teacher experience are considered most relevant to the study. Teachers or administrators who do not have five or more years of experience and have not served as a mentor teacher at some point in their careers are rejected from the study. Teachers with five or more years of experience are chosen because according to Bickmore and Bickmore (2009) teachers that leave the field are likely to do so within the first five years. Therefore, if a teacher makes it past the five-year mark they are more likely to stay in the profession. Administrators who were invited to participate in the study were those that had previously served as a mentor teacher at some point in their career.

The population this study focused on was teachers and administrators from standard public K-12 schools in south Mississippi. However, this study only selected a sample from this population that is roughly representative of K-12 schools in south Mississippi. To begin the study, mentor teachers and administrators from the following three different Mississippi school districts were invited to participate: Harrison County, Long Beach, and Hancock County. These three school districts were chosen from the coastal region of Mississippi. All schools are standard public schools that are not considered a career vocational school or alternative school. School districts that were used for the study were chosen based on their geographical position within the coastal

region of Mississippi, the extreme differences in district size, and different district demographics. School districts are not located next to each other and are spread out across the coastal regions of the state. Superintendents that were invited to participate were listed on each school district's website. Once district superintendents gave the researcher consent to conduct the study within his or her district, each principal was sent a link to an online consent form, linked to the online survey. All principals were reached through their publicly available e-mail addresses. Principals were then asked to distribute the survey link to his or her teaching staff. In the email that seeks consent, the voluntary nature and purpose of the study are explained. Each participant had the right to refuse participation in the study or to withdraw all together from the study at any point. Potential participants were assured that their real names and school locations were NOT being used in order to protect their identity. Confidentiality is of utmost importance before, during, and after the study. If a participant agreed to an interview, an audio recording of the interview was transcribed and kept in a secure location. Interview findings were reported accurately in an honest and truthful manner.

According to *The National Center for Education Statistics* (2021-2022 school year) website there were approximately 1,370 teachers in the three school districts, Harrison County, Long Beach, and Hancock County and approximately 84 administrators (Public School Review, 2020). Based on the number of teachers and administrators from these districts a sample size of at least 152 teacher participants and at least 57 administrator participants was recommended for the best effect. This was calculated using a 95% confidence level and a 7.5% margin of error.

For the second phase of the study, the qualitative phase, of the teachers and administrators who completed the online survey and consented to be interviewed for this phase, an administrator and teacher were randomly selected from each region and were contacted for a 30 to 45-minute phone or Zoom interview. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. There is a total of five interviews: three from teachers, and two from administrators. No incentives were offered for this phase.

<p align="center">Instrumentation</p>

During the quantitative survey phase, two similar researcher-developed questionnaires that address the research questions and based on the literature were created. One of the questionnaires was designed for the mentor teacher, and one was designed for administrators. (See Appendix A.) The questionnaires were delivered via email in a google form. The the questions on the questionnaires used a five-point Likert scale aimed to measure respondent's attitudes, opinions, or perceptions and to specify their level of agreement on five points.

In order to gain participants for the qualitative portion of the study, the interview process, a question was included on the phase one questionnaire so that participants could indicate their willingness to take part in the interview process. During the interview process, two researcher-developed semi-structured interview templates (see Appendix B) based on survey responses and the literature were used in order to gather data. Similar to the design in phase one, one interview questionnaire was designed for mentor teachers, and one was designed for administrators.

Each interview lasted 30 minutes to 45 minutes, was recorded and transcribed, coded for themes, and analyzed for reporting. Results of these analyses will report in Chapter 4.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Prior to formal data collection an initial test of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered to five mentor teachers chosen by the researcher. This helped to ensure content validity, and question clarity. Revisions were made based on the participants' feedback. Once revisions were made, a pilot test was conducted using a group of 30 participants chosen by the researcher, and Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure consistency and reliability of the survey instrument. The questionnaire consisted of 11 items and the value for Cronbach's Alpha was $\alpha = .78$. The 35 participants in the pilot study are not included in larger study.

Procedures

For the quantitative phase of the study, questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. Descriptive statistics included mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages. Mean was analyzed in order to assess mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward mentoring programs based on the research questions. Data for phase one of the study was analyzed using the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics.

During the qualitative phase of the study—the interview process—data was collected and analyzed using thematic analysis in order to identify common themes aimed

to provide further insight and understanding in to the attitudes and beliefs of mentor teachers and administrators.

By using quantitative and qualitative data the researcher was attempting to ensure validity through triangulation. Triangulation is achieved by using more than one method to collect data on the same topic (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A total of five interviews (3 mentor teachers and 2 administrators) were conducted in both telephone and zoom meeting settings

Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the research process careful steps were taken in order to follow University of Southern Mississippi's (USM) Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies regarding research with human subjects. Before conducting any research, a letter was sent to the superintendent of each school requesting permission to conduct research within their district. Once all the completed consent letters were returned they were uploaded to my USM IRB application. Care was taken to protect each participant's privacy and school location. All data collected throughout the study is password protected.

CHAPTER IV – PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study is to examine mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward teacher mentoring programs through the use of quantitative statistics and qualitative interviews. This chapter provides descriptions of data collected during the explanatory sequential mixed methods approach study. The chapter is organized into two sections: quantitative and qualitative findings. This mixed method approach was selected due to the limited amount of data and research found on mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes towards mentoring programs. In order to generate information, the researcher conducted surveys and interviews within three intentionally selected school districts on the Mississippi Gulf Coast to purposely selected educators who had five or more years' experience and a mentoring background in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What are mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward the strengths and weaknesses of teacher mentoring programs?

2. What are mentor teacher beliefs and attitudes about the challenges faced in their teacher mentoring program?

3. What are mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes towards the influence mentoring has on them?

The first phase of the study or the quantitative finding phase consisted of gathering numerical data through a researcher created survey. The survey was sent out to all principals within the three selected school districts. The principals then sent out the survey to every educator at each campus. The survey including a screening and demographics

portion were administered via email through a Google Forms link. The results were exported and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics). The respondents who agreed to be interviewed were then contacted if they fit the guidelines for the qualitative phase. The interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom. The videos were then analyzed by the researcher.

Quantitative Results

All three research questions were addressed in the quantitative phase by using different survey questions. What are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes of the strengths and weaknesses of teacher mentoring programs was answered through the mentor teacher survey questions: did you volunteer or were you appointed for your mentor position, I am satisfied with the way my school handles mentors and mentees, I enjoyed my schools mentoring program, I would volunteer as a mentor in the future, and I feel my mentee gained from the mentor/mentee relationship. The second research question, what are mentor teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the challenges faced in their teacher mentoring program, was addressed through I was trained for mentoring, I could have used more training, my mentor duties were clear, and I had appropriate time with my mentee. Finally, what are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes towards the influence mentoring has on them is answered through mentor teacher survey questions, I learned new things from my mentee, I had a positive relationship with my mentee, and I feel I gained from the mentor/ mentee relationship.

Research questions were answered in different ways in the administrator survey. What are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes of the strengths and

weaknesses of teacher mentoring programs was answered through the mentor teacher survey questions: do your mentors volunteer for the mentor program, are your mentors appointed as mentors, I am satisfied with my school's mentor program, I was trained to implement my school's mentoring program, I could have used more training, my administrator duties were clear pertaining to the mentor program, I had appropriate time to spend with my mentors and mentees and I feel my mentees gained from the mentor/mentee relationship. Google Forms was used as the online form of data collection.

A Profile of Respondents

A total of 1370 teachers from Harrison County School District, Hancock County School District, and Long Beach Schools were invited to take part in the study. From those 1370 teachers 124 agreed to participate in the mentor teacher survey with 9 quitting the study after the initial consent, and 12 administrators out of 84 participating. The reason for this number of respondents may have been because the teachers and administrators who declined were not five-year veteran teachers or never served as a mentor teacher. The majority of the teacher respondents were female (87%), and an equal mixture of men (50%) and women (50%) responded to the administrator survey. The majority (33%) of respondents to the mentor teacher survey were in the 26 to 35 age group with the age group 36 to 45 carrying the next highest number (30%). The lowest number of respondents was in the 20 to 25 age group (5%). In the administrator survey, the majority (42%) of respondents were in the 26 to 35 age group with the age group 36 to 45 carrying the next highest number (33%). In both the mentor teacher and

administrator surveys, respondents with master's degrees made up the majority. The

demographics of the participants are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 Mentor Teachers Demographics, Categorical Values (n=115)

Gender			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Female	100	86.9	86.9
Male	15	13.1	13.1
Total	115	100.0	100.0

Age			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
20-25	6	5.2	5.2
26-35	38	33.1	33.1
36-45	35	30.4	30.4
46-55	28	24.3	24.3
56+	8	7	7
Total	115	100.0	100.0

Table 1 Cont.

Highest level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid				
	Bachelor's Degree	40	34.8	34.8
	Doctoral Degree	4	3.4	3.4
	Master's Degree	67	58.3	58.3
	Specialist Degree	4	3.5	3.5
	Total	115	100.0	100.0

How long have you been teaching?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid				
	5-10 years	47	40.9	40.9
	11-15 years	25	21.7	21.7
	16-20 years	22	19.1	19.1
	21+ years	21	18.3	18.3
	Total	115	100.0	100.0

Table 2 Administrators, Categorical Values (n=12)

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Female	6	50.0	50.0
	Male	6	50.0	50.0
	Total	12	100.0	100.0

Table 2 Cont.

	Age		
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid 26-35	5	41.7	41.7
36-45	4	33.3	33.3
46-55	3	25.0	25.0
Total	12	100.0	100.0

	Highest level of Education		
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Doctoral Degree	3	25.0	25.0
Master's Degree	7	58.3	58.3
Specialist Degree	2	16.7	16.7
Total	12	100.0	100.0

	How long have you been an administrator?		
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid 1-2 years	3	25.0	25.0
11-15 years	2	16.7	16.7
3-4 years	1	8.3	8.3
5-10 years	6	50.0	50.0
Total	12	100.0	100.0

Mentor Teacher / Administrator Survey Results

The mentor teacher survey included 11 items to measure participants perceived strengths and weaknesses of mentoring programs, challenges faced in their school's mentor programs, and beliefs and attitudes towards the affect mentoring has on them using a 5-point Likert scale: 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The administrator survey included 10 items to measure

participants' perceived strengths and weaknesses of mentoring programs, challenges faced in their school's mentor programs, and beliefs and attitudes towards the effect mentoring has on them using a 5-point Likert scale: 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The range of interpreting the Likert scale mean score is as follows: 1.0-2.4 (Negative attitude), 2.5-3.4 (Neutral attitude), and 3.5-5.0 (Positive attitude) (Wanjohi & Syokau, 2021). The overall mean for the mentor teacher survey was 3.67 and 3.62 for the administrator survey which indicates an overall positive attitude towards mentoring programs

The mean of the respondents' answers to the survey items was used to rank them from highest to lowest. The highest mean on the mentor teacher survey was *I had a positive relationship with my mentee* (4.18). Likewise, the highest mean on the administrator survey was *I had a positive relationship with my mentors and mentees* (4.42). This item related to the third research question: What are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes towards the affect mentoring has on them. This result has positive connotations for mentoring programs. People weigh the benefits versus costs to see if a relationship is worth it (Cherry, 2018). Positive relationships help mentors continue being mentors. The mentor teacher survey contained two other items had a mean over 4.0. Those items were *I would volunteer to be a mentor teacher in the future* (4.12) and *I feel my mentee gained from the mentee/mentor relationship* (4.02) The administrator survey contained two items that were very close to a mean of 4.0. Those items were *I feel mentors and mentees gained from the mentee/mentor relationship* (3.92) and *I feel I gained from the mentee/mentor relationship* (3.83). All of these items

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positively relate to the third research question: What are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes towards the influence mentoring has on them.

The lowest mean 3.16 belonged to an item on training in both the mentor teacher and the administrator surveys. Both mentor teachers and administrators did not feel they were amply trained for their school's mentoring program. The administrator survey revealed a tie for the lowest mean in the item: *I am satisfied with my school's mentor program.* All of these items coincide with the second research question: What are mentor teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the challenges faced in their teacher mentoring program. It is evident that both mentor teachers and administrators alike find that one of the challenges with mentor programs is the training they receive in order to forge their mentoring relationship. A full summary of the survey results is presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 Means on Mentor Teacher Survey (ranked), (n=115)

Descriptive Statistics

Item

	Mean
I had a positive relationship with my mentee.	4.18
I would volunteer to be a mentor teacher in the future.	4.12
I feel my mentee gained from the mentee/mentor relationship.	4.02
I feel I gained from the mentee/mentor relationship.	3.96
I learned new things from my mentee.	3.65
I enjoy/ enjoyed my school's mentor program (whether formal or informal).	3.64
I am satisfied with my school handles mentors and mentees (current school).	3.55
My mentor duties were clear.	3.42
I was amply prepared (trained) for mentoring.	3.40
I had appropriate time to spend with my mentee.	3.27
I could have used more training.	3.16

Note. 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

The overall mean is 3.67.

Table 4 Ranking of Means on Administrator Survey (ranked), (n=12)

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean
I had a positive relationship with my mentors and mentees.	4.42
I feel my mentors and mentees gained from the mentee/mentor relationship.	3.92
I learned new things from my mentors and mentees.	3.83
I could have used more training.	3.75
I feel I gained from the mentee/mentor relationship.	3.67
I enjoy running my school's mentor program.	3.67
I had appropriate time to spend with my mentors and mentees.	3.33
My administrator duties were clear pertaining to the mentor program.	3.25
I am satisfied with my school's mentor program.	3.17
I was amply prepared (trained) for implementing the mentor program in my school.	3.17

Note. 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

The overall mean is 3.62.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative phase of the study aimed to follow up on the findings of the data from the quantitative phase of the research study. The qualitative phase also aimed to respond to all the research questions:

1. What are mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward the strengths and weaknesses of teacher mentoring programs?

2. What are mentor teacher beliefs and attitudes about the challenges faced in their teacher mentoring program?

3. What are mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes towards the influence mentoring has on them?

The individuals who participated in the qualitative phase of the study were invited based on their agreement to volunteer in an individual interview, and their responses on the initial survey.

Participant Descriptions

Five respondents were chosen for the individual interviews: three mentor teachers and two administrators. Dworkin (2012) states that a great deal of qualitative research and researchers suggest a sample size of 5 to 50 as an adequate interview sample size and five provides a broad spectrum of data to analyze. A profile of the five respondents is provided on table 5.

Table 5 Profile of Interview Participants

Participant	Category	Age Bracket	Years' Experience	Education Level
1	Mentor Teacher	36-45	11 to 15	Master's
2	Mentor Teacher	36-45	16 to 20	Master's
3	Mentor Teacher	36-45	16 to 20	Bachelor's
4	Administrator	46-55	5 to 10	PhD
5	Administrator	36-45	5 to 10	PhD

In the next section, the participants are described in more detail using data obtained during each participant's interview. Participants are identified by numbers.

Participant 1. Participant 1 is a 11 to 15-year veteran teacher with a master's degree who has served as a mentor teacher on four occasions. Participant 1 explained her school's mentor teacher program and highlighted that her school does not ask their mentors to volunteer to be a mentor teacher. Mentors are appointed. Although, she did not object because she enjoys helping other teachers. Participant 1 stated that the amount of time allotted to spend with her mentee was not adequate, and it was not always the quality that she would have liked. Often, the time she was given with her mentee was to be shared with too many other tasks such as paper work. Participant 1 was happy with the level of her administrator's assistance and did not believe anything could have been offered to make it better. During the interview, participant 1 indicated that she considered a strength of her school's mentoring program is that all parties felt comfortable, and there

was no judgement. A weakness of the program was time. Time was mentioned several times in participant 1's interview. Participant 1 felt through serving as a mentor teacher she gained a deeper understanding of her mentees and that learned not everyone thinks like her or does things like her.

 Participant 2. Participant 2 is a 16 to 20-year veteran teacher with a master's degree who has served as a mentor teacher two times. Participant 2 described her school's mentor program as a relationship appointed by the administrator to pair a veteran teacher in a specific subject with a new teacher in that same subject. Once again, the mentor was appointed and did not voluntarily give his or her time. Participant 2 dedicated a great deal of her personal time to her mentor/mentee relationship. While the school did not give the pair much dedicated time, their classrooms were close together so they were able to put in a good amount of time to the mentoring process. Participant 2 stated that she and her mentee had no administrator support. She figured out on her own how to best help her mentee, but she would have liked some kind of guidelines or expectations to be mapped out to her by her administrator. During the interview, participant 2 indicated that a strength of her school's mentor program was pairing mentors and mentees within departments or subject areas. A weakness was that there were no expectations set out for the mentor and mentee to accomplish, so essentially there was no accountability. Participant 2 feels she gained knowledge from the mentee/mentor experience that she could implement in her own classroom. She was able to see tasks from the eyes of someone who had no experience so it helped her to break the tasks down and make her expectations clear.

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Participant 3. Participant 3 is a 16 to 20-year veteran teacher with a bachelor's degree who has served as a mentor teacher one time. Participant 3 defined her school's mentor program as being comprised of pairing a veteran teacher with a first-year teacher. The two will collaborate when they can to help the new teacher be as successful as he or she can. Participant 3 stated a problem with her school's mentor program was time. She felt like there was really never enough time during the school day, and mentors and mentees were definitely not often given the time together that they needed. Often, they are not in the same grade level, which makes it nearly impossible to meet. However, when the mentor and mentee did meet, participant 3 felt the time was quality time spent. Participant 3 thought that her administrator could have been of more assistance by pairing two people in the same grade level. During the interview, participant 3 cited a strength of her school's mentoring program is that first year teachers can get real and honest opinions, ideas, and feedback from veteran teachers, while a big weakness was the time constraints of teachers. Participant 3 stated both veteran and new teachers are under so much pressure during the day to complete tasks required from their administration and the district.

Participant 4. Participant 4 is a 5 to 10-year administrator with several more years of experience spent as a classroom teacher with a doctorate degree. Participant 4 describes her school's mentor program as a work in progress. The program has had some success in the past but that has tapered off as the school has had more and more turnover. Participant 4 felt feels it is absolutely essential for every school to have a mentor program. Teachers need to have someone to go to on a daily basis for support and to just

vent sometimes. As an administrator, participant 4 appoints mentors and mentees based on the need of the mentee and the strengths of the mentor. Participant 4 said the times allotted to mentors and mentees at her school varied based on schedules, but there are some instances where classes can be covered so mentors are able to work with mentees in designated times during the day, and she supports her mentors and mentees by providing this uninterrupted time. During the interview, participant 4 stated the strength of a mentoring program is that both mentors and mentees have close relationships and feel comfortable talking and reaching out for support outside of school hours or whenever needed, but she feels a serious weakness is that there are not enough mentors to go around for the amount of people who need them. Participant 4 felt that not only the mentor and mentee can gain from a good mentor program, but the school can also gain through these mentoring programs. The school is able to maintain a level of consistency of expectations for all.

Participant 5. Participant 5 is a 5 to 10-year administrator with a doctorate degree with several more years of experience spent as a classroom teacher. Participant 5 describes her school's mentor program as a district appointed program where both mentors and mentees are sent to trainings in order to facilitate the mentor/mentee relationship. Participant 5 feels it is very important for every school to have some type of mentor program in place. Participant 5 stated that no one understands the classroom better than another teacher. Therefore, if a teacher who has experience in the classroom and the day to day struggles is paired with a new teacher, that new teacher has the support he or she will need to make it through those first crucial years of his or her career.

Participant 5 felt that as an administrator it was her job to make sure that mentor teachers are paired with mentees that they will get along with and feel comfortable with, while also paying attention to pairings that offer the most content and classroom knowledge. As participant 5 was being interviewed, she stated that her school's mentor program has dedicated days for mentors and mentees to spend time with each other. They are sent to workshops together, so the time they spend together is quality time. Participant 5 supports her mentors and mentees by making sure they have substitutes for their classes when necessary and is always available for anything they may need. Participant 5 believes the biggest strength of a good mentoring program is providing the much-needed support a new teacher needs. She also believes a weakness of any mentoring program is time. It seems time is an issue with everything that has to do with education. There are only so many hours in a working day, and if asked to do too much outside of those working hours teachers (new and experienced) become burned out and may leave the profession altogether. Participant 5 also believes a mentor program is so beneficial to a school. Good mentor programs help to reduce teacher turnover, and students need those experienced teachers. Participant 5 believes that mentor programs can become non-beneficial if they burn their teachers out.

Presentation of Qualitative Findings

After conducting interviews, transcripts were created using In-vivo coding or verbatim coding. In-Vivo coding was used to protect the integrity of the interview respondents spoken words (Manning, 2017). A thematic examination of the data was

collected in order to uncover themes among the data. The examination led to three major themes: relationships, expectations, and time.

Theme 1: Relationships

The five participants shared their perspectives on mentoring relationships. During the interview, participants were asked what they consider the strengths of a good mentoring program. The mentor teachers and administrators indicated the relationships that were formed throughout the mentoring process. Words such as support, comfort, and no judgement were mentioned. An administrator stated that having a mentor program was essential because of the relationships built. "Yes; I feel that it is essential to have a mentoring program because teachers need to have someone to go to on a daily basis for support and to just vent sometimes." The theme of relationships in mentoring programs addresses Gilligan's (1986) and Nodding's (1984) ethic of care theory. According to both researchers, the ethic of care theory is a moral theory that emphasizes empathy and compassion. The ethics of caring are being attentive to or recognizing the needs of others in order to respond to those needs, resp onsibility or taking the initiative to respond to those who need care, competence or following through with enough adequacy that the care will be effective, and responsiveness (Care Ethics, n.d). When asked about strengths of her school's mentoring program Participant 1, a mentor teacher, mentioned the "comfort of asking questions" and "no judgement." Participant 4, an administrator, mentioned "mentees and mentors have close relationships and feel comfortable talking." A good mentoring program requires a veteran teacher to recognize that their fellow novice teachers are in need and fulfill that need.

Theme 2: Expectations

The participants emphasized the importance of expectations in a mentoring program. Expectations are important when going into any relationship. It needs to be clear what both parties expect to get out of the relationship. Attitudes about mentoring are based on general beliefs and experiences. These beliefs and experiences are likely to influence future participation in mentoring programs. If expectations of a mentor program or mentor relationship are not clear there is a risk of one or both parties giving up on the program. From research, it is evident that those who participate in mentoring programs seek something from the mentoring relationship. The theme of expectations in mentoring is rooted in social exchange theory. Cherry (2018) defines social exchange theory as a model for interpreting interactions in relationships based on the estimate of reward or punishment. Relationships are evaluated using a cost-benefit analysis. People will abandon a relationship if they perceive that relationship as costing too much. If the cost outweighs the reward, many people will not stick around. If expectations are not clear, the mentor or mentee might find the relationship to costly and abandon it. When asked about her school's mentoring program, participant 2 stated the programs biggest weakness was the fact that there was "no expectations," and her administrator could have offered more support by "offering a list of expectations." Participant 4, a school administrator, saw a benefit of mentoring in a school as "maintaining a level of consistency and expectations for all." Participant 3 stated that the most beneficial part of the mentor program was, "I was able to see tasks from the eyes of someone who had no experience so it helped me to break them down more and make expectations clear."

Goering (2013) found that veteran teachers were reluctant to be mentors because they were unenthusiastic to take on one more responsibility. If expectations are not clear, being a mentor can seem like one more project that is just too big to take on.

Theme 3: Time

Time was mentioned by every participant. "Time is precious." There is never enough of it, and once it is spent, there is no getting it back. In order for a mentoring program to be successful there has to be adequate time for the mentor and mentee to develop the relationship they need. According to Goering (2013), beginning teacher's need to spend around 1,000 hours with their mentor teachers. If a school does not give mentors and mentees this time, it is taken out of these teachers' personal time. This makes mentor teachers shy away from mentoring. One mentor teacher participant listed time as one of the biggest weaknesses of his or her school's mentor program, "I think a big weakness is the time constraints of teachers. Both veteran and new teachers are under so much pressure during the day to complete tasks required from their administration and the district." All five participants mentioned time in the course of their interviews. Participant 1 used words like "not adequate" and stated the least beneficial thing about her school's mentor program was "the amount of time was rushed." Participant 2 stated "all mentoring was done on my own time." Both administrators, participant 4 and 5, were supporters of setting time aside for mentoring. They used statements like "designated work times" and "substitutes provided." The mentor teacher participants felt that time was a major factor in the success of the mentoring program at their schools. If time felt rushed, they felt they were less successful in fulfilling the mentor relationship.

Administrator participants also felt that time was important and even said there should be uninterrupted time set aside even if classes need to be covered so the mentor and mentee can work the mentoring program.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

In conclusion, the five participants shared their mentoring experiences. The data collected during the qualitative interview phase exposed three major themes: relationships, expectations and time. These themes helped gain insight into mentor teachers and administrators perceived strengths and weaknesses of mentoring programs, challenges faced in their school's mentor programs, and beliefs and attitudes towards the affect mentoring has on them. The themes produced in the individual interviews represent the perceptions of the sample of mentor teachers and administrators.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Synthesis

Based on the synthesis of the findings from the quantitative surveys and follow up qualitative interviews, it is noticeable that mentor training is a perceived weakness of mentoring programs along with time. Time is a theme seen throughout the qualitative interviews. The correlation of training and time makes sense. If there is not enough time, then mentor teachers and administrators are not being properly trained, as training takes time. While there were perceived weaknesses in mentoring programs, there were also positive results on the influence mentoring has on mentor teachers and administrators. Mentoring requires a veteran teacher to care enough to recognize the needs of novice teachers and respond to those needs. This is the moral theory of providing care in relationships or the ethic of care theory. This theory is based on empathy and compassion

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(Care Ethics, n.d). Throughout the data mentor teachers reiterated the importance of mentoring. Mentor teachers and administrators alike said they would volunteer for mentor programs in the future, even though they felt there might not be enough time or that they were not trained properly. This shows the value that mentor teachers and administrators put on mentoring. In the day to day activities of a school, there are several different procedures and routines teachers need to follow in order to make sure their students are getting everything they need. Veteran teachers and administrators may take all of these procedures and routines for granted because they have always done them, but how is a new teacher to know all of these things. Mentor programs offer rapid learning for novice teachers; that rapid learning provides a better school climate for students, increased student learning, and accuracy of day-to-day school practices (Bowman, 2014). Often according to Bowman (2014), "Schools that have mentoring programs have a strong effect on novice teachers, primarily in the areas of teacher retention, classroom instructional practices, and student achievement" (p.50). Businesses use mentoring programs to help increase productivity. Schools are essentially businesses; therefore, the implementation of mentoring programs in a school helps to increase the business of student productivity.

CHAPTER V – SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND DISCUSSION

Mentoring programs, when employed effectively, benefit students, teachers, and the overall school climate (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Mentoring was first mentioned over 3,000 years ago in *The Odyssey* by Homer (Barondess, 1995). In 1985, a book entitled *Mentoring at Work* was written and published by Kathy Kram. This book helped to bring mentoring into the mainstream and qualified mentoring research as an authentic field of study. According to researchers Wood and Stanulis (2009), mentor programs are put in place in order to increase teacher retention, to promote novice teacher well-being, to improve teacher competence, to satisfy mandated requirements, and to improve teacher performance, which will then improve student achievement. Mentoring is an investment that produces high levels of return for school districts. A good mentor can make a novice teacher feel like he or she has the courage to become the best teacher he or she can be. Mentoring relationships inspire growth, learning, and development (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Mentoring can change the course of lives. While most school districts recognize the need for mentoring programs, many do not provide the training and support needed to mentors (Goering, 2013). According to Mullen (2011) many mentor programs are implemented in our schools, but are not successful because there is no follow through from administrators and /or mentor teachers. Therefore, detecting mentor teacher and administrator attitudes and beliefs towards mentoring programs may assist schools in improving their mentor programs in order to positively impact the school overall.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine mentor teacher and administrator beliefs and attitudes toward teacher mentoring programs in standard K-12 public schools in South Mississippi. Three research questions directed the study. What are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes of the strengths and weaknesses of teacher mentoring programs? What are mentor teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the challenges faced in their teacher mentoring program? What are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes towards the influence mentoring has on them? The goal of this research project was to gain knowledge about mentor programs in order to make those programs more effective for students, novice teachers, veteran-mentor teachers, and administrators.

In the Fall of 2022, questionnaires were sent out to every teacher and every administrator from 4 public school districts on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. 127 (115 mentor teachers, 12 administrators) people responded to the questionnaire. The research design employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. The study used two similar researcher-developed questionnaires, one for mentor teachers and one for administrators, that addressed the research questions that were created, and for the qualitative phase of the study interviews were conducted using researcher created questions. Both questionnaires consisted of a demographics section and 13 questions for mentor teachers and 12 questions for administrators regarding attitudes and beliefs towards their school's mentoring programs. Those who agreed to be contacted for an

interview were contacted for the qualitative phase of the study. The interview transcript contained 10 questions to further investigate mentor teacher and administrator attitudes and beliefs.

Conclusions and Discussion

The results of this study confirm prior research (Ragins & Kram, 2007) and (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson, 2008) that while both mentor teachers and administrators alike agree that mentoring is valuable for both the mentor and the novice teacher, challenges exist. The challenges that were present were a lack of time and a lack of training. Many schools across the Mississippi Gulf Coast employ mentoring programs, but do not offer the adequate time needed to forge the best mentoring relationship. Also, schools are not training mentor teachers adequately. If mentors are not trained properly, they cannot be of the best help to their mentees.

Research Question #1

Research question 1 asked, "What are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes of the strengths and weaknesses of teacher mentoring programs?" The following sub questions helped address research question 1: "I am satisfied with the way my school handles mentors and mentees", "I enjoyed my schools mentoring program", "I would volunteer as a mentor in the future," and "I feel my mentee gained from the mentor/mentee relationship." The overall mean for these sub questions that addressed research question 1 was positive from both mentor teachers and administrators. An overall positive opinion of mentor programs shows that teachers and administrators see more strengths than weaknesses with mentoring programs. Questionnaire respondents

enjoyed their school's mentoring program and deemed it beneficial enough to volunteer in the future to be a mentor. These findings indicated that a majority of mentor teachers and administrators who responded to the survey see mentoring as more beneficial than not; however, some respondents did not see the benefits.

Research Question #2

Research question 2 asked, "What are mentor teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the challenges faced in their teacher mentoring program." The following sub questions helped address research question 2: "I was trained for mentoring", "I could have used more training", "My mentor duties were clear", and "I had appropriate time with my mentee." Overall, the mean for the sub questions for research question number 2 was neutral from both mentor teachers and administrators. A neutral attitude towards mentor program challenges is beneficial but also shows there are problems as well. There were respondents that reported an overall lack of challenges with their school's mentor programs. Some respondents had an overall positive opinion, but there were mentor teachers and administrators who reported an overall negative opinion as well. From the respondents' surveys and interviews it was reported that the challenges faced in Mississippi Gulf Coast schools' mentoring programs was lack of training and lack of time.

Research Question #3

Research Question 3 asked, "What are mentor teachers' and administrators' beliefs and attitudes towards the influence mentoring has on them?" The following sub questions addressed research question 3: "I learned new things from my mentee", "I had

a positive relationship with my mentee", and "I feel I gained from the mentor/ mentee relationship." The overall mean for these sub questions that addressed research question 3 was positive from both mentor teachers and administrators. An overall positive opinion of the effect mentor programs has on mentor teachers and administrators shows that teachers and administrators perceive mentoring programs as having an overall positive personal effect on them. These findings indicated that a majority of mentor teachers and administrators who responded to the survey see mentoring as more beneficial to themselves than not; however, some respondents did not see the benefits.

Findings related to Theoretical Frameworks

The ethic of care theory originated from the thought that there is a moral importance to provide care in relationships (Gilligan, 1986 & Noddings, 1984). In application the ethic of care theory requires mentor teachers to recognize the needs of novice teachers in order to respond to their needs. Mentor teachers are competent in their jobs and adequately respond to their novice colleague's needs. Novice teachers then respond to the care by becoming better teachers. Approaching mentoring through the lens of the ethic of care theory provides the opportunity for care and caring about: thus mentor teachers use caring ideas to teach another how to care for themselves (Barlin, 2010).

Social constructivist theory indicates that people make meaning of knowledge within social contexts from people around them (Robinson & St. George, 2011). Social constructivism is described as socialization or the process of acquiring skills, knowledge, and dispositions that enables an individual to participate in society. Mentor teachers

provide skills, knowledge and their qualities of mind and character to help novice teachers assimilate into the school's climate.

Lastly, mentoring has roots in social exchange theory. Cherry (2018) defines social exchange theory as a model for interpreting interactions in relationships based on the estimate of reward or punishment. Relationships are evaluated using a cost-benefit analysis. People will abandon a relationship if they perceive that relationship as costing too much. If the cost outweighs the reward, many people will abandon the relationship or decline the relationship before it starts. Mentoring is a perfect example of social exchange theory. Mentor teachers weigh the benefits of mentoring novice teachers such as caring for a fellow coworker versus the costs of spending time to care for that novice teacher. Results of the questionnaires and interviews in this study showed that mentor teachers and administrators found that the costs in mentoring relationships, most times, was worth the benefits received from those mentoring relationships. The data collected showed a very positive correlation to the social exchange theory. Mentor teachers and administrators both reported the cost of mentoring as being worth the reward.

Limitations

This study was limited to the school districts in South Mississippi from which the superintendents replied to the researcher with written permission allowing their district to participate in the study. The study was then limited to mentor teachers with five years of experience and a prior mentoring background and administrators with a mentoring background. Sample size was another limitation of the research. Based on the number of teachers and administrators that surveys were sent out to (over 1,300 teachers and 84

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administrators), a sample size of at least 152 teacher participants and at least 57

administrator participants was recommended for the best effect. This was calculated

using a 95% confidence level and a 7.5% margin of error. The questionnaire was sent out

via email to every principal within the 3 approved school districts, of those questionnaires

sent out 125 mentor teachers responded and 12 administrators. A better result may have

been obtained if each superintendent within the approved districts forwarded the email to

every employee.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

The entire United States is facing a teacher shortage (Martinez, 2004). One in

every three new teachers will leave his or her first teaching assignment within the first

three years, and of the ones that leave, 25% of those will not wait until the end of the

teaching year (Sparks, 2018). Teachers are not entering the field at a high rate, and from

those that do, about 50% of them will leave before five years of service (Goering, 2013).

The results of this study could provide valuable information to schools as they face the

challenge of filling teacher positions and retaining the teachers they already have.

Implications for Practice

Superintendents, districts and administrators could utilize this study's information

in order to help enhance established mentor programs or to secure funding to establish a

mentoring program where there may not have been one previously. Classroom teachers

are the most important factor in determining student success.

Administrators may benefit from examining the perceived strengths and

weaknesses of mentor programs as they are reported by mentor teachers and

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administrators alike. This information could be used to help appropriate training and time to mentor programs to make these programs more effective for mentor teachers and novice teachers. Participating in a mentor program is not only good for novice teachers but for veteran teachers and administrators as well. Participating in a mentor program affects participants' teacher efficacy. The higher a teacher's efficacy, the more beneficial the students' learning environments seem to be (Yost, 2002). The more beneficial the students' learning environment is, the more successful the school will be overall.

Future research related to this study could be conducting a study that follows mentor teachers of mentoring programs where they are first offered mentor training and specific time allocated to mentoring a novice teacher and mentor teachers who are not given these tools. Following both sets of mentor teachers would allow the researcher to evaluate the mentoring relationship in order to examine the differences between mentor and mentee success and challenges under both sets of conditions. These evaluations could then be used to develop effective mentoring programs that benefit all parties involved.

Mentor Teacher Background

Gender: Male   Female

Age: 20/25   26/35   36/45   46/55   56+

Highest level of Education:

Bachelor's Degree   Master's Degree   Specialist Degree   Doctoral Degree

How long have you been a teacher?

1-2 years   3-4 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   21+ years

How long have you been a teacher at your current school?

1-2 years   3-4 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   21+ years

Have you ever served as a mentor teacher?   Yes   No

If yes how many times? _____

---

1. When you were a mentor did you volunteer for the position?
   Yes   No

2. Were you appointed (without volunteering) as a mentor?
   Yes   No

3. I am satisfied with how my school handles mentors and mentees.
   Strongly   Strongly
   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

4. I enjoy/enjoyed my school's mentor program (whether formal or informal).
   Strongly   Strongly
   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

5. I learned new things from my mentee.
   Strongly   Strongly
   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

6. I would volunteer to be a mentor teacher in the future.

    Strongly   Strongly
    Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

7. I was amply prepared (trained) for mentoring.

    Strongly   Strongly
    Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

8. I could have used extra training.

    Strongly   Strongly
    Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

9. My mentor duties were clear.

    Strongly   Strongly
    Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

10. I had appropriate time to spend with my mentee.

    Strongly   Strongly
    Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

11. I had a positive relationship with my mentee.

    Strongly   Strongly
    Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

12. I feel my mentee gained from the mentee/mentor relationship.

    Strongly   Strongly
    Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

13. I feel I gained from the mentee/mentor relationship.

    Strongly   Strongly
    Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

Administrator Background

Gender: Male   Female

Age: 20/25   26/35   36/45   46/55   56+

Highest level of Education:

Bachelor's Degree   Master's Degree   Specialist Degree   Doctoral Degree

How long have you been an administrator?

1-2 years   3-4 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   21+ years

How long have you been an administrator at your current school?

1-2 years   3-4 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   21+ years

Have you ever served as a mentor teacher?   Yes   No

If yes how many times? _____

---

1. Do your mentors (at your current school) volunteer for the mentor program?
   Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always

2. Are your mentors appointed (without volunteering) as mentors?
   Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always

3. I am satisfied with my school's mentor program.
   Strongly   Strongly
   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

4. I enjoy running my school's mentor program.
   Strongly   Strongly
   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

5. I learned new things from my mentors and mentees.
   Strongly   Strongly
   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

6. I was amply prepared (trained) for implementing the mentor program in my school.

   Strongly   Strongly

   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

7. I could have used extra training.

   Strongly   Strongly

   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

8. My administrator duties were clear pertaining to the mentor program.

   Strongly   Strongly

   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

9. I had appropriate time to spend with my mentors and mentees.

   Strongly   Strongly

   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

10. I had a positive relationship with my mentors and mentees.

   Strongly   Strongly

   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

11. I feel my mentors and mentees gained from the mentee/mentor relationship.

   Strongly   Strongly

   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

12. I feel I gained from the mentee/mentor relationship.

   Strongly   Strongly

   Disagree   Dis-agree   Neutral   Agree   Agree

APPENDIX B – Mentor Teacher/ Administrator Interview

Mentor Teacher Interview

Background

Gender: Male   Female

Age: 20/25   26/35   36/45   46/55   56+

Highest level of Education:

Bachelor's Degree   Master's Degree   Specialist Degree   Doctoral Degree

How long have you been a teacher?

1-2 years   3-4 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   > 20 years

How long have you been a teacher at your current school?

1-2 years   3-4 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   >20 years

Have you ever served as a mentor teacher?   Yes   No

If yes how many times? _____

1. Describe your school's mentor program.

2. Why did you agree to be a mentor?

3. Was the amount of contact time with your mentee adequate? Why or why not?

4. Was the quality of contact time with your mentee adequate? Why or why not?

5. What did your administrator do to support you and your mentee in order to make

the mentor process smooth and successful?

6. What could your administrator have done to be of more assistance?

7. What do you consider the strength of the mentoring program?

8. What do you consider the weakness of the mentoring program?

9. What about the program was most beneficial to you?

10. What about the program was least beneficial to you?

<center>Administrator Interview</center>

Background

Gender: Male   Female

Age: 20/25   26/35   36/45   46/55   56+

Highest level of Education:

Bachelor's Degree   Master's Degree   Specialist Degree   Doctoral Degree

How long have you been an administrator?

1-2 years   3-4 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   More than 20

years

How long have you been a teacher/ administrator at your current school?

1-2 years   3-4 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   More than 20

years

---

1. Describe your school's mentor program.

2. Do you feel it is essential to have a mentoring program? Why or why not?

3. How do you appoint a mentor?

4. How much contact time are your mentors expected to have with their mentees?

5. Are mentors given time set aside from instruction to work with their mentees?

6. What do you do to support your mentors and mentees?

7. What do you consider the strength of the mentoring program?

8. What do you consider the weakness of the mentoring program?

9. What about the program is most beneficial to the school?

10. What about the program is least beneficial to the school?

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NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident submission on InfoEd IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22-149
PROJECT TITLE: Mentor Teacher and Administrator Attitudes and Beliefs toward Mentoring Programs
SCHOOL/PROGRAM School of Education
RESEARCHERS: PI: Krystle Womack
Investigators: Womack, Krystle N~Lee, David~
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited Category
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 26-Oct-2022 to 25-Oct-2023

Donald Sacco Jr.

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

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