A Mentoring Experience: From the Perspective of a Novice Teacher

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Abstract

Beginning teachers experience a variety of challenges and difficulties as they struggle to develop and progress in their teaching career. The following qualitative case study focused on a novice teacher's perceptions concerning the mentoring experience she received in her practicum course at the American University in Dubai. The study was guided by the following two research questions: (1) What difficulties and challenges did the novice teacher face during her first year of teaching? and (2) What were the novice teacher's perceptions of the mentoring strategies implemented in her practicum course? A questionnaire was sent to the participant during the summer break, and she was asked to answer demographic questions regarding the school and classroom she was teaching in. She was also required to answer in-depth questions regarding the difficulties and challenges she faced as a beginning teacher, the follow up sessions with her mentor, and her perceptions of the mentoring experience. Analysis of the data revealed three themes: difficulties and challenges of a new teacher, lessons from a mentoring experience, and characteristics of an effective mentor. The findings associated with this study are crucial in raising the awareness of school leaders to the needs of beginning teachers. This is an essential step towards working on designing and implementing effective mentoring programs that meet the needs and concerns of beginning teachers.

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Introduction

Novice teachers. Why do some of them stay in the profession, while others decide to leave? Why do some enjoy what they do while others find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle characterized by hopelessness, despair, and desolation? Is it because the latter are overloaded with different challenging responsibilities and duties? Or is it the fact that some novice teachers might not be receiving adequate mentoring programs that address their needs, wants, and difficulties?

Teachers are arguably the most important assets of any educational organization. They are expected to maintain classroom routines and management, plan effectively, know their students and accommodate their different learning styles and needs, implement effective teaching strategies, understand how to use the different components of a curriculum in planning instruction and assessment, work collaboratively with other teachers and colleagues, and communicate effectively with parents. With so many roles to serve, they often face numerous challenges and concerns. This is particularly the case with beginning teachers. Before inquiring into the nature of challenges and difficulties novice teachers encounter, it is essential to consider how researchers define the term, novice. Farrel (2012) believes a novice could be anyone who is teaching something for the first time. There is no consensus on how many years of teaching are necessary to end a novice stage (Karatas & Karaman, 2013). For example, Kim and Roth (2011) consider any teacher with less than five years of teaching, a novice teacher, while Haynes (2011) refers to a novice teacher as a teacher with up to two years of teaching experience. What is it that really makes a novice teacher's first few years, the most difficult and stressful?

Retaining enough teachers to serve the growing numbers of students has become a key challenge in education today (Lynchet al., 2016). Fry and Anderson (2011) explain that "in an era of increased teacher accountability, new teachers are encountering unprecedented challenges" (p. 13). According to Goodwin (2012), a teacher's first year on the job is often difficult, as many beginning teachers feel ineffective and are left isolated in their classrooms with no support or guidance (Arends & Kilcher, 2010). Novice teachers, who experience an intricate transition from the teacher education institutions to life in real classrooms, often do not feel well prepared for the difficulties they face in their first years of teaching (Senom, Zakaria, & Sharatol Ahmad Shah, 2013). Varela and Maxwell (2015) stress the fact that teacher preparation programs do not do enough to tie theory to practice. That is one of the reasons why beginning teachers find it challenging to: balance classroom management and workloads with survival and performance (Fletcher, 2013), assess student performance (Poth, 2013) and learn which particular features play a key role in improving teaching practices and student learning (Beck, Kosnik, & Roswell, 2007).

Beginning teachers are in need of teacher preparation programs that include mentoring opportunities. Womack-Wynee et al. (2011) explain that combining a mentoring process with an effective induction process can often result in providing a minimum of a year-long period of nurturing and support for teachers who are need of it. Mentoring is perceived as an effective method for supporting novice teachers as it aims at fostering a relationship of ongoing support and facilitating collaboration and the development of knowledge and skills that translate into improved teaching strategies (Cook, 2012). Mentoring is valuable for the retention of new teachers and ensuring they stay in the field (Pogrund & Cowan, 2013). Beginning teachers need effective teacher mentoring programs to assist them in exploring, reflecting upon, and developing in their career. Participating in such mentoring programs can positively affect the retention rate of beginning teachers (Grossman & Davis, 2012) and hence lead to beginning teachers staying in the teaching profession (Steinke & Putnam, 2011).

The purpose of the following qualitative case study is to shed light on a beginning teacher's perceptions of a teacher mentoring program. It also aims at contributing to the body of research related to the challenges and difficulties novice teachers encounter and the ways in which teacher preparation

programs can be tailored to meet the needs of new teachers and ease their transition into the classroom. The study is guided by the following three research questions:

1. What difficulties and challenges did the novice teacher face during her first year of teaching?

2. What were the novice teacher's perceptions of the mentoring strategies implemented in her practicum course?

Mentoring: Defined

The literature provides an extensive range of definitions for mentoring that differ based on the context in which mentoring is taking place and the interpretation of the process (Cook, 2012). Green-Powell (2012) asserts that the term 'mentor' and the model for its use originated in Greek mythology:

"When Odysseus went off to the Trojan War, he charged his household manager, mentor, with the development of his son, Telemachus. After the war, Odysseus was condemned to wander vainly for 10 years with his attempt to return home. In time, when he became an adult, Telemachus went in search of his father. He was accompanied on his quest by Athena, Goddess of War and patroness of the arts and industry, who assumed the form of mentor" (p. 100).

According to Green-Powell (2012), the first mentor was an older, more experienced individual who took an active interest in developing a younger person in every aspect of his/her life. Barrera, Braley, and Slate (2010) elaborate on the definition and explain that mentoring occurs when "a senior person (the mentor in terms of age and experience) provides information, advice, and emotional support to a junior person (i.e., the mentee) in a relationship lasting over an extended period of time" (p. 62). Therefore, mentoring can be described as a particular mode of learning where the mentor not only supports and guides the mentee, but also challenges them productively so that progress is attained (Smith, 2007).

Within an educational context, a mentor is a veteran teacher who works with a novice during the beginning teacher's early experiences in the classroom. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) define mentoring as the personal guidance provided by seasoned veterans to beginning teachers in schools, for purposes of planning, application, and evaluation. Nam, Seung, and Go (2013) explain that after mentoring was introduced in education, the concept of mentoring and the role of the mentor have been expanded to include "changing from simply transferring skills and knowledge to encouraging professional development and emphasizing reflection on practice" (p. 816).

The two terms, teacher induction and mentoring, have been used interchangeably in research. However, it is important to consider the difference between the two terms. Teacher induction includes, but is not limited to mentoring, as Lozinak (2016) notes an induction program, "includes differentiated professional development activities, multiple support personnel, study groups, and strong administrative support" (p. 13). With regards to the research questions, the present case study will only focus on mentoring.

Benefits of Mentoring Programs

Mentoring programs have been on the rise in recent years owing to compelling testimonials by teachers who have themselves benefitted from the mentor/mentee relationship (Green-Powell, 2012). Womack-Wynne et. al. (2011) assert that "the mentoring process, combined with an effective induction process, can provide a minimum of a year long period of nurturing and support for those who need it the most" (p. 3). Mentoring plays an important role in the development of beginning

teachers, as such programs are intended to help novice teachers handle challenges within the classroom and the school environment (Roff, 2012). Therefore, when beginning teachers participate in teaching mentoring programs, they are learning to become teachers through their experience of the mentoring relationship (Nguyen, 2016). Cook (2012) elaborates on the notion and explains that the "overall goal of teacher mentoring is to foster a relationship of ongoing support, collaboration, and the development of knowledge and skills that translate into improved teaching strategies" (p. 3). Brannon et al. (2009) have previously noted that mentoring programs address new teachers' survival skills, such as: school procedures, behavior management, parent communication, and basic curriculum. According to the researchers, when such survival skills are addressed at the beginning of the year, new teachers tend to feel more confident and focus on pedagogy and best practice. Stanulis and Floden (2009) conducted a study that examined the impact of mentoring programs on teacher improvement. The results of their study coincides with previous research and indicates that with mentoring, beginning teachers can improve in areas of teacher effectiveness.

Researchers have also studied the effect of mentoring programs on teacher retention. The results of a study that has been conducted by Pogrund and Cowan (2013) reveal that effective mentor programs contribute to the recruitment and retention of teachers. Similarly, Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) mention that mentoring programs have a positive impact on teacher retention, as they boost teacher satisfaction and confidence, reduce their isolation, and enhance their professional growth. Therefore, teachers who participate in mentoring programs are more likely to stay in teaching positions (Steinke & Putnam, 2011). Yirci (2017) expands on that notion and adds that a mentor's psychological guidance aims to strengthen a teacher's self esteem and competence, while their vocational development support aims to improve a teacher's profession. As a result, novice teachers adapt to their roles, develop a sense of belonging, and remain in the teaching profession.

Effective Characteristics of Mentors

Effective mentors are described in the literature in many ways. Throughout his career, James Rowley has helped school districts design mentor based, entry-programs for beginning teachers. He has learned about mentoring programs by listening to mentors and beginning teachers and observing what seems to work best in a mentor-mentee relationship. As such, Rowley (1999) strongly believes that a good mentor is committed to the role of mentoring, accepting of the beginning teacher, skilled at providing instructional support, effective in different interpersonal contexts, a model of continuous learning, and communicates hope and optimism. McKimm, Jollie, and Hatter (2007) delineate the values and principles of effective mentors as: recognizing that people can change and want to grow, understanding how people learn, recognizing individual differences, inspiring capability, developing competence, and encouraging collaboration not competition.

Researchers, Cheryl Torrez and Marjori Krebs (2012), have previously examined student teachers' perceptions of their mentors. They indicate that teacher candidates perceive a successful mentor as someone who is a good teacher and purposefully models good teaching, creates a positive relationship with the teacher candidate, provides opportunities and support, and is honest, trusting, and responsible. Similarly, the data from Izadinia's (2016) study suggests that effective mentors offer encouragement and continuous support, engage in open communication, and provide feedback. Another study conducted by Brannan and Bleistein (2012) revealed that novice teachers expect their mentors to listen to them, offer help, and share their personal experiences with them.

Methodology

In order to learn about the difficulties/challenges a novice teacher faced during her first year of teaching and uncover her perceptions of a teacher mentoring experience, a qualitative exploratory case study design was implemented to gather and analyze data.

Context and Participant

In order to maintain confidentiality, the pseudonym, Rola, was adopted. Rola was born in India and brought up in Dubai. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Sports Science and Biology from the UK. After graduating, Rola started working in a school as a teaching assistant, where she discovered her interest in pursuing a field in education. She decided to join the Masters program at the American University in Dubai.

As part of the degree fulfillment requirements, student teachers enrolled in the program at the American University in Dubai are required to enroll in the Education Practicum course, which is a six credit mentored experience that takes place over the course of the semester. The University Supervisor observes, meets with and provides formal feedback to the student teacher, for a minimum of five times per semester. During her practicum course, Rola was assigned a third grade classroom at a school in Dubai. She was asked to fill in for the class teacher who had left for her maternity leave. At the onset of the practicum course, Rola reported a number of difficulties and challenges she faced in the classroom, which resulted in her supervisor visiting her classroom. After the first visit, a strong need for mentoring was identified. Rola's University Supervisor became her mentor teacher. He arranged three classroom visits per week for a period of fifteen weeks. During that time, he modelled and conducted demonstration lessons, co-taught with Rola, and held debriefing sessions to provide support, suggestions, and feedback.

Rola and her mentor met twice a week for debriefing and reflection purposes. If Rola needed support, inquiry, or guidance, her mentor was also available over the phone. They would meet on a weekly basis in the office and engage in detailed debriefing sessions.

The school adopts the American Common Core State Standards (New York State Standards) and a variety of curricula. Examples of such curricula include: Stem-scopes for Science, Eureka for Maths, and Expeditionary Learning for English. The philosophy of the school focuses on combining academic rigor and Islamic faith in students.

The third grade classroom included 20 students from different cultural backgrounds. There were seven students in the classroom who were bilingual and could speak both Arabic and English. The classroom was diverse in terms of ability, as some students shared different educational backgrounds. For example, Rola had four students who were previously enrolled in an IB curriculum. On the other hand, she had students who were home-schooled and it was their first time attending school.

Design and Procedure

Creswell (2012) explains that "qualitative research can lead to information that allows individuals to learn about phenomenon or to an understanding that provides voice to individuals who may not be heard otherwise" (p. 206). A case study, which included an in-depth interview was selected to guide the study's research questions.

The interview included 12 open-ended questions for the purpose of collecting and analyzing relevant data. The questions were open-ended to encourage the participant to provide elaborate responses. For the first research question, the following questions were considered:

1. What are the challenges/difficulties you face as a beginning teacher?

2. What do you do to overcome such challenges/difficulties?

As for the second research question, the following questions were considered:

1. What did you learn from your mentor that helped your teaching practice?

2. Did the mentoring experience help you overcome some of the challenges/difficulties you previously mentioned? Provide support to your answer.

3. What do you wish you learned from your mentor that you hadn't?

4. How would it have been different if you hadn't had the mentoring experience?

5. As a summary, reflect on the mentoring experience.

The interview also included questions related to the participant's background and experience. Questions related to the logistics and frequency of meeting during the mentoring process were also included.

The interview was sent via email to the participant in June, 2017. She had a period of 3 months to reflect on the questions. The participant was given a period of 3 months to ensure she would provide in-depth and thorough responses supported by examples and evidence. In September, the participant sent her responses to her mentor. Once received, the interview responses were read several times. The data provided was summarized and coded. Finally, relevant themes were identified.

Findings

Data collected from the open-ended interview was categorized into three themes: challenges and difficulties of a beginning teacher, characteristics of an effective mentor, and lessons from a mentoring experience.

Theme 1: Challenges and difficulties of a beginning teacher. Rola identified three areas she found challenging during her first year of teaching. The first area was related to classroom management. Rola found it extremely difficult to set classroom rules, routines, and procedures. She mentioned, "*I had to approach my mentor for advice because I started my first week of teaching without setting any classroom rules, routines, and procedures.*" She struggled with keeping the children on task, managing behavior, and getting through a lesson on time.

The second area was related to lesson planning. Rola faced the challenge of designing differentiated lessons. She believed that most of her lessons were not challenging enough for the high ability students, and they lacked support and scaffolding for lower ability students. Rola explained, "*For example, in Maths, I always found it hard to manage behavior because I had the higher ability students who were able to finish the task quickly whereas the lower ability students required my attention.*"

The third area was related to curriculum development. Rola found it demanding to learn and inquire about different curricula and keep up with the pacing of the lessons. This was evident when she clarified the following: "*Beginning teachers struggle to complete lessons on time with the Exit Ticket as we have so many lessons to plan for. It is a challenge I faced that I personally felt I was not able to complete an entire lesson.*" Rola also reported that she struggled to teach the Math curriculum, as she encountered difficulties in using manipulatives and hands on activities to help her students understand mathematical concepts: "*I feel Math is an area of weakness that I need to tackle. I learned my students had many gaps in their learning and my instructional material was not very easy for them to understand.*"

Theme 2: Lessons from a mentoring experience. According to Rola, the mentoring experience helped her develop self-awareness, implement effective instructional strategies, design a successful classroom management plan, and build strong student-teacher relationships.

Throughout the mentoring experience, Rola became more aware of who she was as a teacher. She was able to engage in self-reflection and understand her strengths and weaknesses. There were times when she would doubt herself and would want to quit her job. However, with her enhanced self-esteem, confidence, and determination, Rola learned to challenge difficult and demanding times: *"but my mentor's belief in me taught me to be resilient."*

The debriefing sessions Rola had with her mentor helped her improve and develop her instructional strategies. She recognized the importance of presenting information in a simple manner: *"The biggest takeaway from this teaching experience has been keeping it simple for students to understand. I learned to present information in an easy manner so students can process what they are expected to do."* Rola provided a variety of visual examples to scaffold learning and allow students to internalize learning: *"For instance, when I was teaching students about main idea and key details, I gave them the example of a house where the roof is the main idea and the rooms are the key details."* Rola also learned that modelling is imperative in teaching. She had thought modelling would hinder students from inquiry. She realized that at times it is important that teachers do talk and engage in lecturing: *"I have learned that sometimes it is important for teacher talk where I have to model or lecture to the students for them to understand a concept."* Rola understood the importance of knowing students' prior knowledge before adding to their learning: *"For instance, when I was working on a science PBL, students did not understand the concept of food webs and chains. The next day, I had to use a PowerPoint to help them learn the concepts. I realized how vital pre-assessment is."*

The mentoring experience helped Rola work on and improve her classroom management skills: *"I learned that classroom management is extremely important and it should be fostered right at the beginning. I learned it the hard way."* Rola asserted that her mentor pinpointed which areas in classroom management required work and provided guided steps and strategies to help her manage her classroom. She mentioned: *"After my first informal observation, I learned that I had to establish clear rules, routines, and procedures. For example, I co-constructed the classroom rules with the students. I gave every child a post-it and asked students what should be the rules of the classroom. The class rules were generated as a class and we all agreed on the rules."* Rola came to realize the importance of allowing students to generate their own classroom rules, which reinforces a feeling of ownership.

Rola's mentor modeled the importance of talking to students about issues and events outside the curriculum. As a result, Rola was later able to develop care for children and form strong student-teacher relationships. The strong bonds were a source of motivation to Rola's students. She mentioned: *"When you genuinely care about your students' learning, it reflects on to them and they also put in the effort to work hard to improve themselves."* In addition, the strong bonds Rola formed with her students, helped her to get to know her students better and understand what works best for each one: *"For example, simply by talking to children about what they enjoy to do, helped me to understand what type of learners they are. The students in my class who love sport and exercise are the one who need to move around."*

Rola asserted that without the mentoring experience, knowledge of teaching would have cased at the theory level: *"What I learned in theory at university is different than the actual classroom atmosphere."* She added that classroom management would have continued to be a struggle. Rola concluded by providing three strategies to best make use of mentoring. First, she believed it was important to build a relationship of trust and comfort with your mentor. Second, she advised beginning teachers to keep an open mind and accept constructive feedback. Third, Rola recommended that they stay positive with their mentor.

Theme 3: Characteristics of an effective mentor. Rola identified the effective qualities of her mentor that made the mentor/mentee relationship a successful one. The qualities may be organized into two general categories: attitude, interpersonal and communication skills, and professional competence and experience.

Rola provided a variety of characteristics that belonged to the first category – attitude, interpersonal, and communication skills. She believed her mentor was supportive, non-judgmental, helpful, encouraging, believed in all students, and showed positivity especially during challenging times: "He was non-judgmental, which made me feel comfortable. A very supportive mentor, who was always positive even when things did not seem like they were going the right way." Rola added that her mentor established a very comfortable and relaxed relationship, engaged in open-ended conversations, and maintained an open student-teacher relationship, similar to rapport between students and their class teacher. She noted: "I was very comfortable engaging in open ended conversations with my mentor because he made me feel relaxed during our feedback meetings. I think having a good student-teacher rapport like we have in the classroom is similar to one having with your mentor. We had an open student-teacher relationship. My mentor made sure to give me both positive feedback as well as areas that required improvement in a very professional way."

As for the second category – professional competence and experience, Rola described the mentoring relationship by listing several aspects of good mentoring practice. She believed her mentor provided both positive feedback as well as areas that required improvement in a professional way: "My mentor tackled the issue of classroom rules, student grouping, differentiation, and questioning." She felt her mentor pushed her to succeed and helped her reflect upon her experience: "Especially, the co-teaching and his weekly informal observations helped me to grow and become an effective teacher. There were times when I would doubt myself and wanted to quit, but my mentor's belief in me taught me to be resilient. He also provided strategies in a systematic way. Rola stated the following: "My mentor gave me a lot of classroom management strategies after every observation which helped a lot to improve behavior. It is key to have an experienced mentor who has taught in a primary classroom setting as he was able to pin-point exactly which areas in classroom management required work. He was able to give me a step by step plan on how to administer it." Finally, Rola asserted that her mentor modeled student-teacher rapport and mini lessons: "Watching my mentor communicate with the students in break time helped me understand the importance of talking to students about things outside the curriculum." and "Especially, when my mentor taught a mini lesson on modelling in Maths and English, I learned that I can also use it in Science."

Discussion

The participant indicated three areas she considered challenging during her first year of teaching. Her responses referenced classroom management, such as setting classroom routines, rules, and procedures; managing student misbehavior; and time management. The findings reported by the participant supported previous research concerning the difficulties and challenges beginning teachers face. In their research, Simonsen and Myers (2015) indicated that classroom management was a major challenge for beginning teachers and a source of frustration for experienced teachers. The results are also consistent with Fletcher's (2013) research, where results indicated that beginning teachers found it difficult to balance classroom management and workload with survival and performance. In their study, Beck, Kosnik, and Rowsell (2007) identified time management as a challenge for novice teachers: "most of the new teachers were quite surprised at the lack of time available to implement their program" (p. 63). This was evident in the participant's response, when she mentioned the difficulty she faced in getting through a lesson on time.

The next most frequently mentioned challenge was differentiating instruction for students. This finding supports the research by Beck, Kosnik, and Rowsell (2007), where they reported that a large portion of teachers highlighted the reality of dealing with the ability range in their classrooms. Roiha (2014) stated that teachers find numerous challenges in classroom differentiation including a lack of time, resources and knowledge of differentiation. This was also evident in the participant's responses.

The last mentioned challenge was curriculum development. The participant expressed her struggle in teaching Math and the difficulty she encountered in using manipulatives and hands on

activities to help students understand a certain mathematical concept while making the lesson more engaging. Rock and Brumbaugh (2014) reflected on the notion and reported that teachers usually face a number of challenges as they teach mathematics: how to effectively motivate students, present material in an interesting way, treat individual differences, and find applications.

As for the mentoring experience, the participant reported several positive outcomes. She maintained that the mentoring experience helped her reflect on her weaknesses and strengths, improved her instructional strategies, enhanced her classroom management skills, and empowered her to build strong student-teacher relationships. Such benefits had previously been addressed in the literature. In their research study, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) mentioned that novice teachers who participated in mentoring programs showed significant improvements in areas related to classroom management and teaching practices. Grossman and Davis (2012) strongly believed that to support beginning teachers, schools need to make sure the mentoring they provide addresses their difficulties, needs, and concerns. That same notion was evident in the participant's responses, when she emphasized that the mentoring program targeted her challenges and areas of need. The participant stressed the fact that without the mentoring experience, knowledge of teaching would have ceased at the theory level. In that case, what she had previously learned at university would have proved inapplicable in an actual classroom atmosphere. This is aligned with what Darling-Hammond (2006) explained: "there is nothing as practical as good theory and nothing as theoretical as good practice" (p. 154). Smith also considered the crucial role of mentoring and clarified that: "Effective mentoring increases teacher retention, develops teaching expertise and confidence, reduces isolation, and fosters beginning teachers' reflection and development" (p. 316). Some of these factors were reflected in the participant's responses where she mentioned that the mentoring experience increased her confidence, extended her thinking in news ways, developed her self awareness, pushed her further to work on her weaknesses, and allowed her to feel proud of her accomplishments. Other positive responses to the mentoring experience reported by the participant included the fact that she: was observed by her mentor, observed her mentor teaching, cotaught with her mentor, built a relationship of trust and comfort, accepted constructive feedback, and participated in debriefing sessions. Such responses coincide with previous research (Brannan & Bleistein 2012; Torrez & Krebs 2012; Izadinia 2016) and the three basic elements of mentoring model that were considered essential for the implementation of an effective relationship (Sowell, 2017). First, the mentor must build a trusting relationship with the mentee. Second, the mentor must support and guide the mentee in designing classroom environments that are productive and supportive of learning. Third, the mentor must support and guide the mentee in designing effective and appropriate instructional strategies.

While this case study sheds light on the difficulties, challenges, and needs of a beginning teacher, it is still important to note that these will differ according to several factors: school philosophy and culture, teacher's character and experience, and students' characteristics. Since the study focused on one teacher's experience, such factors were neglected. It is recommended that future qualitative studies investigate the effect of such factors on difficulties, challenges, and needs of beginning teachers. It is also significant that such studies follow up with beginning teachers to monitor their growth and inquire into their difficulties, challenges, and needs as they develop. On the other hand, the study considered the teacher's perceptions of her mentoring experience. Other factors were also neglected such as, mentor selection criteria, mentor training, and exemplary mentoring programs. It is also recommended that future qualitative studies investigate into mentor selection, training, matching to novices, and investigate how such factors affect the quality of teacher mentoring programs.

Conclusion

Mentoring programs support novice teachers, as they help them adjust to their new professional responsibilities and encourage them to remain in the teaching profession (Chesley & Jordan, 2012). The following case study contributes to the research that had been conducted in the teacher mentoring field. The findings provide a solid foundation for educational legislators to plan and design effective mentoring programs for novice teachers in the UAE. The difficulties that were

documented in this case study could provide insights to the challenges faced by beginning teachers and therefore assist school coordinators and administrators in implementing constructive workshops that address the needs and concerns of beginning teachers.

In order to implement successful mentoring programs in schools, some factors need to be taken into consideration. First, school administrators need to make sure they design supportive environments for novice teachers. Second, the mentoring program needs to include one-on-one mentor-to-mentee relationship. Third, the mentor-to-mentee relationships needs to reflect factors of trust, warmth, acceptance, and transparency. Forth, the mentoring program needs to include hands-on and practical workshops that address the specific needs to beginning teachers. With such strategies, first year teachers will feel productive, encouraged, empowered, supportive, and safe.

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