

Running head: THE ROLE OF MENTORING IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

The Role of Mentoring in Teacher Professional Development

Yelena Koroleva

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To grant approval for this study subject to minor changes, to be discussed with supervisor

Approval subject to minor changes: The study is approved subject to minor changes.

Reviewers' comments:

Anonymity: Suggestion - Change the last sentence under from "All information gained during the interviews will be used for scholarly purposes only" to "The names of the schools and identity of participants will not be used in the thesis or subsequent publications or conference proceedings".

Before starting your data collection, you need to discuss these changes with your supervisor, revise your proposal accordingly, and then ask your supervisor to check the revised proposal.

Sincerely,

NUGSE Research Committee

Abstract

The role of mentoring in teacher professional development

School teachers in Kazakhstan, both newly hired and those with longer tenure, enhance their teaching skills and competencies through attending various professional development programs, both inside and outside their schools. One such professional development program that happens inside the school is ‘mentoring’ where a newly hired or less experienced teacher works with a more experienced teacher for an extended period. This study examined the role of mentoring in teacher professional development, focusing on how mentoring is understood / perceived and practiced in two schools in Kazakhstan. Qualitative research method was used to conduct the study, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and supplemented with a document analysis of school policies and other documents related to mentoring. A total of eight participants were interviewed, representing mentors, mentees and mentor program coordinators. The findings revealed that despite time concerns, occasional mentor and mentee mismatch and different attitudes towards mentoring, it has a positive impact on the professional development of teachers. Teachers associate mentoring with advancement of subject knowledge, acceleration of professional development, smooth induction, opportunities for individual consultation and recognition by senior management team. As the first study of its nature completed in Kazakhstan, Kazakhstani educational stakeholders including parents, students, teachers, educational administrators and policymakers may benefit from the findings of this research. As part of the changing educational landscape in Kazakhstan, mentoring can be implemented as a low-cost, rapid and successful addition to schools’ professional development programs.

Абстракт

Мұғалімнің кәсіби дамуындағы тәлімгерліктің ролі

Қазақстанда мектеп мұғалімдері (мектепке жаңадан қабылданғаны да тәжірибелі ұстаздар да) ұстаздық әлеуеті мен құзіреттілігін әртүрлі мектепшілік немесе мектептен тыс кәсібилікті дамыту бағдарламаларына қатысу арқылы арттырып отырады. Кәсіби шыңдалуға бірден-бір үлес қосатын бағдарламалардың бірі-тәлімгерлік, жаңадан қабылданған немесе тәжірибесі аз мұғалім ұзақ уақыт бойы неғұрлым тәжірибелі мұғаліммен бірлесе жұмыс істейді. Қазақстанның екі мектебінде жүргізілген бұл зерттеу жұмысында тәлімгерліктің мұғалімнің кәсіби дамуына қалай әсер ететіні зерттелді, ерекше назар тәлімгерлікті мұғалімдер қалай түсінеді / қабылдайды және қалай жұмыс істейтіндігіне аударылды. Сапалы зерттеулер әдісін қолдана отырып деректер жартылай құрылымданған сұхбат арқылы жинақталды және тәлімгерлікке байланысты мектеп саясатына және басқа да құжаттарға талдау жасау арқылы зерттеу жұмысы толықтырылды. Тәлімгерлер, тәлім алушылар және бағдарламаны үйлестірушілер жалпы саны 8 қатысушылардың пікірлері сұралды. Алынған зерттеу қорытындыларына сүйенсек уақытша кедергілер, кездейсоқ кісінің тәлімгер болуы немесе тәлімгерлікке деген әр түрлі көзқарастарға қарамастан, ол мұғалімдердің кәсіби дамуына оң ықпал ететіні анықталды. Пән мұғалімдері тәлімгерліктің көмегі ретінде пәндік білімді тереңдету, кәсіби дамуды жеделдету, жеңіл бейімделу жеке консультациялар алу мүмкіндіктерін қарастырады. Зерттеу Қазақстанда өткізілгендіктен оның нәтижесін ата-аналар, студенттер, оқытушылар, білім беру әкімшілері мен саясаткерлері, оның ішінде қазақстандық білім беруге мүдделі тараптар пайдалана алады. Қазақстанда білім беру саласы жиі өзгеріске

ұшырап жатқанда, тәлімгерлікті мектептің кәсіби даму бағдарламаларында құны төмен, тез іске асыралатын және табысты қосымша ретінде қолдануға болады.

Абстракт

Роль менторства в профессиональном развитии учителя

Учителя в казахстанских школах, как молодые специалисты, так и имеющие уже определенный опыт работы улучшают свои навыки преподавания и компетенции через посещение различных курсов профессионального развития внутри школы и за ее пределами. Одной из таких программ профессионального развития, осуществляемых в рамках школы, является менторство, когда вновь прибывший или менее опытный учитель работает в паре с более опытным учителем на протяжении длительного времени. В данном исследовании изучена роль менторства в профессиональном развитии учителей через акцентирование внимания на том, как данный процесс понимается/воспринимается и практикуется в двух школах Казахстана. Для проведения исследования был использован качественный метод исследования, в котором сбор данных производился с помощью полуструктурированных интервью, изучения и анализа политик школы и документов, относящихся к теме исследования. Всего восемь участников, представляющих менторов, подопечных и координаторов программ по менторству были опрошены для данного исследования. Результаты показали, что несмотря на недостаток времени, несовпадение темперамента ментора и менти, а также различающееся отношение к менторству, сам этот процесс оказывает положительное влияние на профессиональное развитие педагогов. У учителей менторство ассоциируется с улучшением предметных знаний, профессиональным ростом, безболезненной адаптацией, возможностью индивидуальных консультаций и признанием администрацией. Так как исследование проводилось в Казахстане, его результаты будут полезны для лиц, связанных со сферой образования, включая учителей, родителей, учащихся, администрацию школ, политиков. В

изменяющемся образовательном пространстве Казахстана менторство может стать недорогим, быстрым и успешным дополнением к программам профессионального развития педагогов.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Author Agreement..... | ii |
| Declaration..... | ii |
| NUGSE RESEARCH APPROVAL DECISION LETTER | iii |
| Abstract | iv |
| Абстракт (Kazakh)..... | v |
| Абстракт (Russian) | vii |
| Chapter 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Purpose of the Study | 3 |
| 1.3 Statement of the Problem | 4 |
| 1.4 Significance of the Study..... | 5 |
| 1.5 Definitions of Key Terms | 6 |
| Chapter 2. Literature Review..... | 8 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 8 |
| 2.2 Professional Development and Mentoring | 8 |
| 2.3 Mentor Selection | 11 |
| 2.4 Benefits of Mentoring | 13 |
| 2.5 Challenges..... | 16 |
| 2.6 Conceptual Framework | 18 |
| 2.7 Summary..... | 19 |
| Chapter 3. Methodology..... | 21 |
| 3.1 Introduction..... | 21 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 3.2 Research Design..... | 21 |
| 3.3 Sampling..... | 22 |
| 3.4 Data Collection | 22 |
| 3.5 Data Analysis | 23 |
| 3.6 Procedures..... | 24 |
| 3.7 Ethical Considerations..... | 24 |
| 3.8 Summary..... | 26 |
| Chapter 4. Findings | 27 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 27 |
| 4.2 Participants' Perceptions about Mentoring | 27 |
| 4.3 Implementation of Mentoring | 30 |
| 4.4 Challenges of Mentoring | 33 |
| 4.5 Benefits and Opportunities of Mentoring..... | 36 |
| 4.6 Suggestions Made by Participants | 40 |
| 4.7 Summary..... | 41 |
| Chapter 5. Discussions | 42 |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 42 |
| 5.2 Mentoring and its Implementation | 42 |
| 5.3 Role of Mentoring in Teacher Professional Development | 44 |
| 5.4 Challenges..... | 46 |
| 5.5 Summary..... | 48 |
| Chapter 6. Conclusion | 49 |
| 6.1 Conclusions..... | 49 |

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| 6.2 Recommendations | 52 |
| References | 57 |
| Apendices | 63 |

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1.Introduction

Professional development is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. In order to be an effective pedagogue and educator, a teacher should constantly improve his/her teaching methods and techniques through lesson reflection and collaboration with other colleagues (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Student success and achievements are often correlated to how their teacher performs, as the development of learners is guided using the traditional relationship between teachers and students. In order to sustain teacher performance and to ensure that new and emerging theories, practices, knowledge and perhaps divisive content is delivered, it suffices to say that a teacher must not stagnate. Hence, a focus on ensuring that a teacher can adapt to new contexts can be assumed to be beneficial for all parties involved. Being a teacher, I have always had a need to grow professionally and from the very beginning of my teaching career I have asked myself how I could accomplish it.

When I first started to work at school several years ago, I had no teaching experience and I faced challenges such as creating lesson plans, conducting lessons and completing myriad reports. My school assigned me a mentor who was supposed to guide me and help me to overcome the difficulties of managing multiple tasks. However, she was not happy to do this job as it was time-consuming and not recognized as an advantage in career promotion. She was my mentor on paper but in practice she did not work with me. I felt frustrated and even had thoughts of quitting the profession, but I stayed. This is a good example of how a negative mentoring experience can lead to detrimental consequences. On the other hand, being a teacher now and having read a great bulk of literature on mentoring, I realize how my first mentor might have felt

when she was assigned to be my mentor. The role of mentor was imposed by the administration and added more responsibilities to her workload that she had to implement for free.

A few years later, I changed schools and in my new school the mentoring system worked rather well. Novice teachers were supported by experienced mentors, who conducted seminars for new-comers, observed their lessons and provided constructive feedback: they gave new teachers a helping hand. I have had a chance to observe how confident novice teacher became and how their teaching practice improved as a result of their engagement with mentors. It made me think mentoring could be an effective and efficient way of providing teacher professional development and even retaining teachers in schools. Moreover, I started thinking about whether mentoring as a tool for professional growth was useful merely for mentees or for mentors as well. In my personal experience and observation of other colleagues, I have noticed that both mentors and mentees improve their professional repertoires through the mentoring process. Thus, these thoughts gave birth to my research study in this area.

To begin with, I read literature (Long, 1997; Hudson, 2013; Trubowitz, 2004) that discussed mentorship and its influence on mentor and mentee. These studies provided evidence that, like in my own case, mentoring can become both a very positive and a very challenging and frustrating experience for both mentors and mentees. While searching for sources on mentorship, I found that there is a lack of research on this topic, particularly in the Kazakhstani context. Therefore, I strongly felt that there was a genuine need for studying how mentoring works as a way of professional development for teachers and others in schools in Kazakhstan. By conducting this study, I would like to contribute to existing knowledge about mentorship within the country because I have had experience as both a mentor and a mentee.

1.2.Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the role of mentoring in teacher professional development in Kazakhstan. Based on empirical evidence and review of relevant literature, this study aimed to identify if or when mentoring plays a significant role in the professional growth of mentors and mentees; if so, how effective this method is and how it influences teacher continuous professional development. The study also attempted to identify how mentoring programs at two schools are implemented, what opportunities these programs may provide for mentors, mentees and senior management team and what challenges all parties may experience.

The current study is guided by the following questions:

Main Question:

What is the role of mentoring in the professional development of teachers in two secondary schools in Kazakhstan?

Sub Questions:

How do mentors and mentees perceive mentoring?

How is mentoring recognized and implemented in the schools?

What are the opportunities and challenges for both the mentors, mentees, and members of senior management team?

The participants were selected from teachers who were involved in mentoring programs: mentors (experienced teachers) and their mentees (less experienced in-service teachers or beginning ones). The secondary participants included the coordinator of the mentoring program

in the school. The total number of participants required for the current study was eight. The study was conducted in two secondary schools in Kazakhstan. These schools develop and implement mentoring programs and were willing to cooperate in the study.

1.3.Statement of the Problem

Professional development is a pivotal part of **the** educational process and the quality of teaching and consequently student performance directly depends on teacher's professionalism (Pons, Amoroso, Herczynski, Kheyfets, Lockheed & Santiago, 2015). The challenge of teacher professional development is essential for Kazakhstani schools as "teachers themselves identify a lack of teacher qualifications as a barrier to effective teaching and learning" (OECD, 2014, p.159). Hence, enhancement of teacher professional development might be rather costly. Schools cannot always afford to allocate money for PD courses or send all teachers to study abroad. International studies (Hudson, 2013; Trubowitz, 2004) claim that mentoring is one of the cost-efficient ways of enhancing teacher professional development. Mentorship may provide a possibility to obtain professional knowledge in a workplace without any additional expenses.

Moreover, mentoring provides a significant opportunity to retain young teachers in schools and increase job satisfaction (Long, 1997). Currently, Kazakhstan is facing an issue of teacher shortage (OECD, 2014), as university graduates choose other, more lucrative professions. Low salaries and a lack of prestige or public support for the teaching profession are reasons for why young people choose not to enter the profession. Though there is limited research in Kazakhstan, countries including Australia and the United States have found that, troublingly, many new teachers who enter the profession leave it within three years (Backes & Backes, 1999; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial that Kazakhstani school administrators and government officials create a positive, supportive environment, which

encourages teachers to develop their methodological and practical skills and stay in the profession. Research has shown that new teachers who have the opportunity to work with more experienced mentors report better outcomes in professional and personal spheres and are more likely to remain in the profession past the three-year mark. However, according to Cook (2012) only 20% of new teachers receive mentoring support during their first teaching year. Exploring different ways to expand mentorship programs in schools, with tangible benefits for both mentors and mentees could help reduce the number of novice teachers lost from the school system each year in Kazakhstan.

Nonetheless, there is limited research-based evidence regarding to the extent which mentoring programs are being implemented in different schools in Kazakhstan, their effectiveness and what role mentoring plays in a teacher's professional development (OECD, 2014). Thus, there was a need to investigate the perceptions and experiences of Kazakhstani mentors and mentees towards mentoring, and its role within professional development. Although mentoring is being practiced in many schools throughout Kazakhstan, not much is known about how it is implemented or the best practices and issues involved in mentoring.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings and results of this research may contribute to the existing body of knowledge about mentoring as a model of professional development and may be beneficial for the Kazakhstan state education departments, schools' administration, and both experienced and newly hired teachers. The study explores how mentoring plays a significant role in teacher professional development; how it actually works; what opportunities and challenges are there for both the mentors and mentees to engage in a professional development activity. The education departments might pay more attention to the development of new mentoring programs or the

establishment of mentor training courses. Experienced teachers might be more interested in being involved in mentoring programs, as they will be able to see the opportunity to advance their own professional skills and competences while helping others to improve their professional repertoires. Consequently, new and less experienced teachers will have more support and it may help them to overcome many challenges they may face in the first years of teaching. Students will also benefit from this study as their performance directly depends on quality of teaching and improvement of teachers' practicum (Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Scheerens, 2010). Furthermore, the study explores some useful practices developed and used by mentors and makes those known to others. Similarly, the study also identifies some challenges and issues faced by schools, mentors and mentees and suggests ways to address them.

As for me as a researcher and a mentor, this study contributes to the development of my research skills and deeper understanding of the role of mentoring as a professional development model. I am confident that the study enables me to develop a sound understanding of how and when mentoring works best, and what role I can play in developing a robust mentoring program for my school.

1.5. Definitions of Key terms

Professional Development

The acquirement of new skills, techniques, pedagogy and competences and their continual upgrading, are referred to collectively as "professional development" (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Mentoring

According to Anderson and Shannon (1988) mentoring is "nurturing process in which a skilled or more experienced person teaches, sponsors, encourages and counsels a less skilled or

less experienced person for purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development" (p.40).

Based on a review of related literature, with regards to education context, this study considers mentoring as a process in which a more experienced teacher (mentor) shares his or her professional knowledge, experience and practices in their area of expertise with a colleague interested in improving his /her own knowledge in this specific area (mentee or protégé).

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature and its aim is to provide a theoretical basis for my research study, summarize the key findings of previous studies and identify gaps and limitations in the existing literature. Most of the studies reviewed are from international sources, mainly scholarly articles written in English and published in peer-reviewed journals.

The reviewed literature reveals connection between student academic performance and the level of teacher professional knowledge, and discusses mentoring as a way of professional development for both mentor and mentee (Hudson, 2013; Long, 1997). It summarizes information about opportunities and challenges mentors and their mentees may face while participating in mentoring programs as well as the positive and negative consequences of this process.

This chapter is divided into themes and discussions on the key concepts and issues concerning the topic of the current study. In the beginning of the chapter, the importance of professional development and its influence on student achievements is discussed. The following discussion is on the notion of mentoring and its role within professional development. The next section provides information about the selection procedure of mentors. Another topic here discussed is the positive outcomes of mentoring. However, several studies revealed not only benefits, but also negative aspects of mentoring and the following section reviews them as well. At the end of the chapter, I summarize all key points and discuss areas that have not been investigated yet or have certain limitations.

2.2. Professional development and mentoring

Student progress directly depends on the quality of the teaching staff: the better the teacher's knowledge and pedagogical skills, the higher the students' academic performance (Pons et al., 2015). In order to meet student needs teachers should obtain the necessary skills and knowledge to empower students in their education. Therefore, constant enhancement and improvement of staff professional knowledge and skills becomes one of the most important aims of senior management team as they endeavor to increase school effectiveness and gain higher results in state examinations (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999).

In order to understand best the role of mentoring in teachers' professional development, it is first important to provide a definition of what professional development is and its importance in the educational context. A teacher's professional development is defined as "the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically" (Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p. 11). In other words, professional development is an improvement in knowledge, skills, practices, competences and teacher expertise throughout one's professional life. Professional development plays a vital role in retention of novice teachers in schools (McKenzie et al., 2005) and has a positive impact on students' achievement (Chapman et al., 2012). Thus, it goes without saying that professional development may affect all participants. Concerning the enhancement of teacher professional practices, national and international organizations have agreed that promoting teachers' professional development should be supported more effectively (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

According to the Kazakhstan Education Strategy 2011–2020, the country needs to develop "the training system and professional development of the pedagogic staff of Kazakhstan" (Wilson, Turner, Sharimova, & Brownhill, n.d); while a number of techniques can be used to accomplish this goal, mentoring has been identified by experts as one way to

systematically develop teachers' professional skills (Hudson, 2013). While professional development, specifically through mentoring, is often directed at new teachers, it is important to provide opportunity for growth throughout their careers. According to Shunkeyeva and Yeskazinova (2014), "As teachers continue through their careers they will need guidance on new skills and professional understanding" (p.31). Mentoring can benefit both participants, assisting in increasing understanding for both mentor and mentee. In the last few years, there has been a growing interest in mentoring as a way of professional development for both mentors and mentees as it is believed that mentoring contributes to professional and personal development of the dyads. Many international studies have proved mentoring to be an effective method of professional development (Hansford et al., 2003; Hudson, 2013; See, 2014; Serrat, 2009).

Being one of the formal activities to enhance professional development for both mentor and mentee (Ganser 2000; Hudson, 2013), this process has drawn much attention of many international research teams. Traditionally, mentoring is a process in which a more experienced professional shares experience and practices, provides support and guidance for another professional who is less experienced to ease the induction into the profession (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Trubowitz, 2004; Tareef, 2013; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Many studies tend to depict mentoring as an interaction between two people (Hobson et al., 2009; Tareef, 2013), but others suggest that this process appears not only in the form of one-to-one support, but can also be implemented by group in the form of peer mentoring (Geeraerts et al., 2014 ;Long , 1997; Salleh & Tan, 2013). One-to-one mentoring is a traditional form of work whereby beginning teachers are assigned a mentor and it "covers all aspects of teaching, such as discussion of teaching materials, lesson observations and critiquing, teaching methods and the setting and marking assignments" (Salleh & Tan, 2013, p. 154). Another form of mentoring is group

mentoring and it includes several participants (from five to ten) who collaborate formally and informally to achieve common goals and improve teaching practice (Geeraerts et al., 2014; Salleh & Tan, 2013). Both of these forms promote collaboration, identity construction and induction into the professional community (Korhonen, Heikkinen, Kiviniemi & Tynjälä, 2017). However, according to Long (1997) “group mentoring allows for more efficient use of resources as for example, the mentor’s time and expertise has the opportunity for greater influence and allows the development of more individuals” (p. 128).

Mentoring is generally considered to be a short-term process and is aimed at the induction of beginning or newly hired teachers (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). This trend is true for Kazakhstan as well. The period of induction and mentoring programs lasts up to one year (OECD, 2014). The first three years of teaching are crucial for beginning teachers and likely to affect their decision whether to stay in the profession or not, therefore, one year of mentoring support might not be enough. However, in some countries, for instance China, mentoring programs for novice teachers are a long-term process, which can last up to five years in the form of group mentoring (Salleh & Tan, 2013).

2.3. Mentor Selection

The effectiveness of a mentor’s role in a mentee’s professional development to a great extent depends on why and how they were assigned for mentorship (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2014). Thus, it is important to understand motives that drive mentors to participate in mentoring programs as they may affect the way mentors provide assistance and build relationships with mentees (Maor & Mc Conney, 2015). Participation in mentoring programs is a rather time-consuming process (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2014; Ryan, & Hornbeck, 2004) however; recent studies propose that the reasons some teachers are willing to participate are

influenced by professional and personal interests. The findings of these studies suggest that the main reasons why mentors want to be involved in mentoring programs are an altruistic desire to support novice teachers and improve their own school, sharing professional experience, aid in their own professional development, potential career promotion and improving listening and communication skills (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Maor & Mc Conney, 2015). Essentially, mentors are more likely to be effective if it was their initial desire to be involved in the program, rather than if they were forced by senior management staff (Trubowitz, 2004). The value in voluntary participation extends to mentees as well as mentors; despite the availability of mentoring programs in Kazakhstan, they are considered optional and mentee or less experienced teachers may choose whether or not they wish to accept this support (World Bank, 2013).

In Kazakhstani schools, mentors are assigned by the principal and selected from the best teachers of first or highest category (OECD, 2014). Mentors and mentees identify weak and strong sides of a novice teacher and create a development plan. Mentors' responsibilities include providing support, classroom observations, providing feedback and evaluating his/her mentee's progress (OECD, 2014). Generally, participation in induction and mentoring programs is realized on a free basis that may also influence the mentor's wish to be involved in the program. Unfortunately, OECD (2014) describes merely the generally accepted process of assigning a mentor for inexperienced teachers in Kazakhstani schools but there is limited or no research about whether the mentor selection procedure takes into consideration the mentor's desire to complete this work or what opportunities or challenges participation in such programs might create.

The primary role of a mentor is to provide necessary support for newcomers but can all experienced educators be mentors? Rajuan et al., (2011) state that, "not all experienced teachers

have supervision and leadership skills necessary to guide new teachers through their first difficult year” (Rajuan et al., 2011, p.172). In many cases, the position of a mentor takes a person who is more experienced but not necessarily one who has taken a special course or training. Trubowitz (2004), claims that mentors should go through some training programs that will be able to prepare them for this work otherwise they may view their role as simplistic and mechanical. The study conducted by Ambrosetti (2014) concluded that preparation of mentor teachers to implement their mentoring roles alter their attitude and practice. Those experienced teachers who take a mentoring course are more likely to view mentoring as a complex process and realize that it involves a wide range of roles to utilize (Hansford et al., 2003; Helleve, et al., 2015).

2.4. Benefits of mentoring

Previous studies indicate numerous benefits of mentoring programs for mentors and their mentees. Researchers claim that such programs facilitate professional and personal growth for both parties (Long, 1997; Hudson, 2013; Cook, 2012; Smith & Nadelson, 2016). The results obtained by Hudson (2013) suggest that mentoring enhances communication and leadership skills and advances pedagogical knowledge of both members of the dyad. Another study conducted by a group of researchers in Finland concluded that mentoring (peer-group mentoring) contributes to the teacher professional development in three areas: professional, personal and social. The participants of the study reported the importance of mentors’ support throughout their career as it develops their professional skills and knowledge, increase their self-confidence and improves the work in the community (Geeraerts et al., 2014).

While mentoring programs provide a wide range of positive outcomes for both parties, Hansford et al., (2003) analyzed 159 articles relevant to the topic and concluded that the

proportion of positive outcomes is significantly higher for mentees than for mentors and accounts for 82,4% and 47,8% respectively. The most frequent mentee responses were that they “benefited from support, empathy, encouragement, counseling or friendship” (Ehrich et al., 2002, p.11). Thus, as it is clearly seen from the research mentoring brings positive experience to both parties when it is done appropriately.

In terms of benefits for mentors, mentoring is seen as an opportunity to improve mentors’ teaching practice by self-reflection (Hansford et al., 2003; Helleve et al., 2015; Hudson, 2013). About 60 % of mentors who participated in the study conducted in the United States reported that participation in mentoring programs improves their reflective skills on both teaching practice and content they teach (Smith & Nadelson, 2016). Reflecting on their mentee’s practice, mentors see an opportunity “to have a look on their own way of teaching” (Helleve et al., 2015), in other words, to do something that they might rarely do. Furthermore, reflection was not the only practice reported by mentors that could be improved through interacting with their mentees, “mentoring allowed for engagement with new practices (e.g. lesson intentions, ICT usage and creative lesson ideas) to assist them in their own teaching practices” (Hudson, 2013).

Personal satisfaction obtained from supporting and assisting their mentees is also stated as an important positive outcome from being a mentor (Hansford et al., 2003). “The pride mentors experience when they see that the mentees become self-sufficient due to their contribution as mentors” adds more enjoyment to the implementation of their mentor’s role (Helleve et al., 2015, p.329). The opportunity to improve communication and leadership skills, learn about self and gain new knowledge from-mentees enhances mentor satisfaction, reduces burnout and increases retention (Nasser-Abu et al., 2014). Another research study confirms that such positive outcomes as advancement of problem solving skills, learning from beginning

teachers by sharing ideas and insights are frequently reported by experienced teachers who participate in induction and mentoring programs (Maor & Mc Conney, 2015).

One third of beginning teachers leave the profession in their first three years. Borsuk (2000) reports that “teachers are nearly twice as likely to leave after their first three years of teaching if they do not have mentoring or other induction programming at the start of their careers” (as cited in Yohon, 2005, p.23). The problem of novice teachers’ attrition is of immediate interest worldwide and mentoring can be seen as one of the effective solutions to this issue (Yohon, 2005). In the beginning of their career path, novice teachers face myriads of challenges and mentoring programs are crucial for beginning educators (McKenzie et al., 2005).

Once young teachers come to work at a school, they experience a shock from the mismatch of knowledge they obtained in university and real teaching practice (Veenman, 1984). Consequently, the initial confidence they might feel will erode in their workplace if they do not have any professional and psychological support. “Mentoring program was found to increase the confidence and effectiveness of beginning teachers which result in greater job satisfaction and self-efficacy” (Ingersoll, 2002 p.74). In other words, participation in a mentoring program is essential for developing young teacher professionalism and their successful adaptation to a new workplace. The studies have shown that mentees feel more confident from the mentor’s support and it contributes to their retention (Jones, 2013). In other words, emotional support provided by mentors helps beginning teachers to overcome stress when they enter the teaching profession.

Apart from emotional support, they gain professional assistance such as help with classroom management, teaching materials, planning, strategies, feedback and constructive criticism (Hansford et al., 2003). These areas are related to building professional content

knowledge. Mentors teach their mentees how to manage the class, work with parents, share teaching strategies and acquire materials (Trubowitz, 2004).

In addition to the positive effects experienced by the mentor and the mentee, mentoring has shown to be beneficial throughout the learning community. Administrators see the benefits as mentoring is considered one of the most cost-effective methods of professional development (Hudson, 2013). Stability is also improved when beginning teachers, who were mentored, are more likely to be retained in the profession (Long, 1997; Parker et al., 2009; Trubowitz, 2004). Students can benefit as well, as increases in student achievement and behavior have also been demonstrated in schools with successful teacher mentoring programs (Maor & Mc Conney, 2015).

2.5. Challenges

Researchers argue that mentoring is not always a positive experience, it may also have so called “dark sides” (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999; Long, 1997). There are cases of ‘negative mentoring experiences’ among mentees. The participants of the study conducted by Eby et al., (2000) reported such concerns as lack of mentor’s competency, dissimilarity of attitudes, values and beliefs which differed, mentor neglect and manipulative behavior from which the mentees suffered.

Mentors influencing pre-service teacher’s identity formation is another challenge and if this happens it may “dismantle student teachers’ ideal identities and create new ought and feared identities, which impinge on their professional learning and growth” (Yuan, 2016, p.196). In other words, mentors may impose their own ideals, prescribe what and how to teach and take away a mentee’s sense of autonomy. Trubowitz (2004) supports this point of view and claims that “... a mentor giving in to a need to maintain a sense of superiority may retard a mentee’s

professional development” (p.62). However, a mentee’s expectations may differ: some novice teachers would like to have freedom and test their ideas in the classroom while others prefer to be consistently guided (Izadinia, 2015).

Mentors may also feel unsatisfied if they are assigned to be a mentor for mentees who lack commitment, have poor performance, cannot take criticism positively or do not follow the mentor’s instructions (Hansford et al., 2003; Long, 1997). This therefore indicates that successful matching of mentors and mentees is essential for productive work.

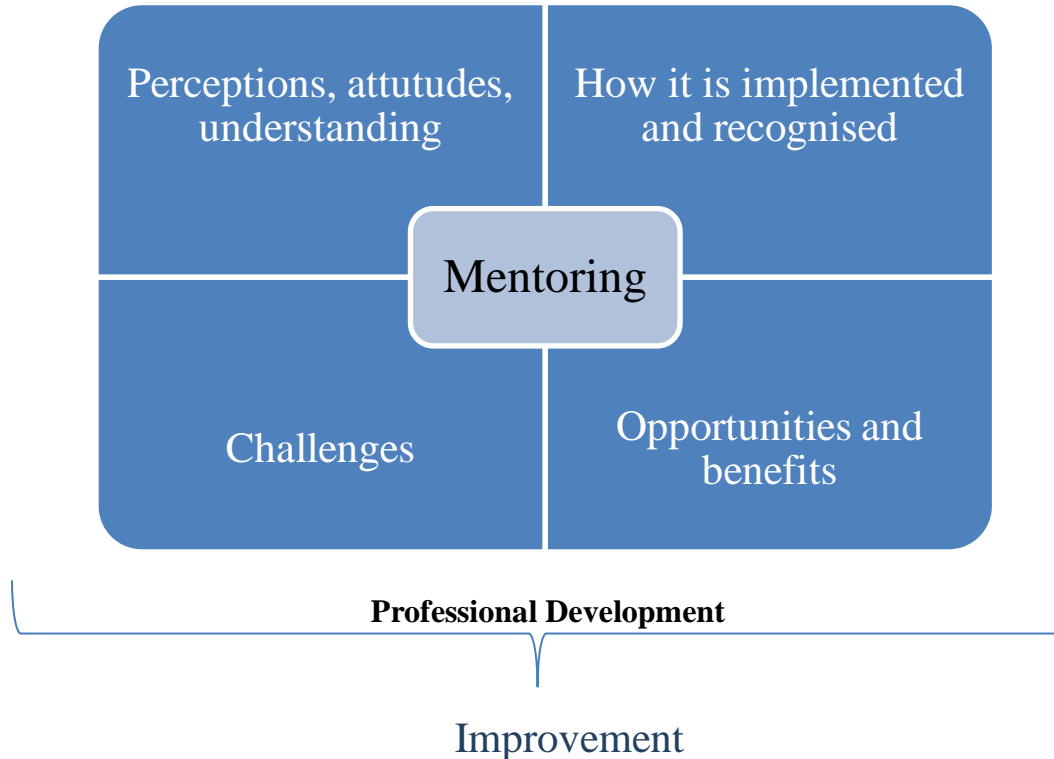
Another challenge mentors may experience is lack of time. Mentoring is a rather time-consuming process and adds more responsibilities to a mentor-teacher and “may also challenge previously unsolved difficulties concerning the teacher’s role” (Rajuan et al., 2011, p. 187). Hudson (2013) supports this claim and states that mentors complain about “inadequate time for mentoring because of teaching workloads” (p. 782). Mentors may feel overloaded and perceive their responsibilities formally or stress themselves in attempt to implement their work in two areas simultaneously: teaching and mentoring. Consequently, if mentoring work is devoted insufficient time, it may negatively affect a mentee’s experience that can be expressed in lack of support, little or no contact with the mentor, unavailability of the mentor due to implementing off site duties or feeling that the mentor’s role was imposed (Cook, 2012).

Long (1997) cites a number of studies and comes out with the list of concerns about mentoring. These concerns are poor planning of the mentoring process, unsuccessful matching of mentors and mentees resulting in misunderstanding between them, reproduction of the mentor’s work by mentees, and creation of work tensions. The findings of these studies indicated that there usually are few available mentors in schools and this leads to overuse of those available. There also exists a gender imbalance where female mentors are few as compared to male (Long,

1997). It is clear that the challenges mentors and mentees may experience are still on the front burner and Douglas (1999) attributes this to be cost associated, lack of organizational support and hardships in coordinating the programs.

2.6. Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework emerged from the reviewed literature and the set research questions. The central phenomenon, which is the role of mentoring in teacher professional development, is studied through the participants' perceptions, attitudes, understanding and practices in the mentoring programs. The study looks into the mentors' selection procedures, their duties, protocols and policies that are required for a successful mentoring program. The proposed framework incorporates the significant factors including advantages, opportunities, and challenges associated with mentoring that can influence teacher professional development within schools. Once the connections between mentoring and teacher professional development were established, the study makes some recommendations for further improvement of mentoring programs. The following figure depicts the conceptual framework of this study.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

2.7. Summary

Most of the studies reviewed here originate from outside Kazakhstan and not much is known about mentoring models, practices and issues in Kazakhstan. Therefore, this study may contribute to bridging this gap. However, the studies conducted outside Kazakhstan and some of the lessons learned by foreign researchers may still be relevant to the Kazakhstani context.

While there are both advantages (such as improving of teaching practice for the dyad, personal satisfaction, emotional support, building reflection and leadership skills, reducing teacher attrition rate and promoting collaborative culture), and disadvantages (such as unsuccessful matching, lack of time, mentor manipulative behavior), mentors/ mentees and their administration can proactively create an environment better designed for success by carefully

selecting mentors, setting aside time for mentoring responsibilities and creating opportunities for group mentoring .

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology employed for exploring the role of mentoring within the professional development of mentors and mentees. The purpose of this Chapter is to clarify the design of the research, describe the procedures of the sampling, present information about how the data was collected and then analyzed. Furthermore, it discusses ethical consideration that had been addressed prior to conducting this study in order to ensure that the potential risks for the participants are minimized.

3.2. Research design

The study examined the role of mentoring in professional development in two Kazakhstani schools. In order to obtain in-depth understanding of mentoring effectiveness and its impact on professional growth of both mentor and mentee, the qualitative method of inquiry was applied in this study. The proposed method was chosen as it endeavored to deepen understanding and explain the behavior of participants based on their lived experiences in a specific social context (Gay et al., 2011).

In the context of this research, case study approach was selected as it is “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (Robson, 1993, p. 146). The aim of the research is to investigate how mentoring affects teacher professional development in the school context. The study focuses on mentoring which is considered to be a unit of the study and is bounded within cases in two schools, located in different parts of Kazakhstan. The two schools where this study was conducted were located in different parts of

the country but they offered the similar curricula and models of mentoring programs. According to Blaxter et al., (2010), case study ideally suits when a researcher endeavors to “illustrate problems or indicates good practices” (p. 73). As the research questions of the current study were focused on opportunities and challenges that mentoring presents, the case study approach was thus the most appropriate for this research.

3.3. Sampling

Purposive sampling approach was adopted in this study, as it is appropriate for the intentional selection of a small number of participants who are able to contribute to better insight into and understanding of central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The research was conducted in two schools in Kazakhstan. The participants were selected from among teachers who were or had been involved in mentoring programs: mentors (experienced teachers) and their mentees (less experienced in-service teachers or beginning ones). Furthermore, the convenient sampling was chosen for this study as the selection of the participants was done through negotiations with the school management and teachers known to the researcher. Recruitment Flyers / invitation letters (Appendix 3) were distributed among school staff as well. The number of primary participants was three from each school (a mentor and two mentees). The primary participants were selected from mentors and mentees willing to take part in the study or attracted by the recruitment flyers. The secondary participants included the coordinators of mentoring program in each school. The selection of the secondary participants was done in accordance with their involvement in the implementation of mentoring programs and their own volition to contribute to the research. The secondary participants are responsible for the overall mentoring program, and who have an

understanding of the overview of the mentoring program in the senior management team. Thus, the total number of participants selected for this study was eight.

3.4. Data collection

The data was collected by mainly semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were well fit to the current study as they allowed the interviewer to “modify the format or questions during the interview process” (Ary et al., 2013, p. 466) in order to collect detailed information about the phenomenon. This qualitative interview format endorsed use of open-ended questions that required extended answers. Semi-structured interviews with mentors, mentees and school administrative staff aimed to explore how participants perceived the role of mentoring in the professional development context. These interviews helped me explore the participants’ perceptions, beliefs, preferred practices of mentoring and their justifications for those practices. As a part of document analysis, I also looked through some documents such as work plans of the mentees, mentors as well as mentee’s notes of what had been done and how the mentoring work was organized. The researcher also looked at the mentoring program handbook and other materials and the school policies related to professional development (PD) of teachers and the mentoring program. In order to be able to discuss the contents as part of the semi-structured interviews this work had been done in advance of the interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded. As one of the chosen schools was located in a different region, the researcher had no opportunity to conduct face-to-face interviews in this school, and all conversations with the participants were done and audiotaped online, via Skype.

3.5. Data analysis

Once data had been collected, the information was converted from recording devices into text and translated into English when it was necessary. The researcher became familiar with the

data “to get an initial sense of the data” (Gay et al., 2011, p.468). As soon as the first segment was completed, the ongoing analysis took place. This process allowed the researcher to be focused on research questions, detect gaps and conduct additional interviews to bridge the gaps in the data. Data analysis required multiple readings of and listening to collected data. The next steps in analyzing data were coding (marking or labeling units of data) and identifying themes /categories, topics and general patterns (Gay et al., 2011). In order to deepen understanding of how mentoring programs are implemented in two schools, policy on mentoring were reviewed as well. To increase the credibility of data and validate findings, participants were asked to conduct a member check. “Member checking is a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259).

3.6. Procedures

The data for this research was collected in accordance with ethical norms. Thus, ethical protocols and interview questions were presented to NUGSE Research Committee for approval. As soon as the researcher obtained the approval, meetings with gatekeepers (principals) were organized to get permission for conducting research in their schools. The next step was meeting with the participants of the study in order to get their consent for voluntary participation followed by making a schedule for the interviews. The interview schedule was worked out in a manner that it did not interfere with the educational process and routine work in the schools. The participants received an invitation letter in which they were informed about the aim of the research, a brief description of the study and interview procedure. They were also provided with an informed consent form, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1.

3.7. Ethical considerations

The study strictly followed NUGSE Ethical Protocols in order to guarantee respect for people's rights and to safeguard the anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the research sites and participants. Prior to the conducting the study, the proposed research was reviewed and approved by NUGSE Research Committee to guarantee the protection of participants' interests (Gay et al., 2011). The participants received an Information letter that included detailed information about the purpose and nature of the study, its duration, a brief research description and requirements for participants. Participation in the study was based on participants' free will. The researcher considered the participants' schedule and did not impose on them her own preferred time. The time and the place for conducting an interviews were chosen by the participants. Rights to privacy were protected by confidentiality. Therefore, the names of participants and schools were not disclosed and pseudonyms were used for schools and participants. Although participation in the project may or may not have posed a minimal risk for participants, they were also asked to sign informed consent forms to confirm their agreement and be ensure that their rights were protected (Creswell, 2012). The participants were informed that all interviews would be recorded and only the researcher and her/his supervisor would have access to the information. As soon as the research was completed, all recordings were deleted.

The research site belonged to a limited number of secondary schools in Kazakhstan; therefore, there was a minimal risk of the schools being identified. In order to further minimize the risks, all possible identifiers of the schools were removed from all papers and documents generated by the study. School names were coded as School A and School B. Furthermore, since participants were working with me during school hours, it was possible that other staff at the school may have noticed us working together and thus may have deduced the participants' identity. To ensure this did not happen, I did not discuss with anyone anything about the research

and participants at the schools. All identifiers were removed from the research tools, transcripts and subsequent documents / thesis. At the same time, the participants were required not to communicate any information discussed during the interview.

Another possible risk of the study was that participants may have felt emotional discomfort being interviewed about their colleagues and their work. However, I assured them and gained their trust that all their responses would remain confidential and no one from the school or outside would ever have access to those responses. The informed consent form also provided participants with sufficient details about the nature and purposes of the study. It was explained to them that the consequence of their participation would not affect their employment and their anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. The information gained during the interviews was not reported to their colleagues or senior management team. They were free to choose not to respond to a question or to withdraw at any stage of the study.

3.8. Summary

The chapter provided information about the methodology employed in this research study. It explained the rationale of choosing the qualitative method of inquiry and particularly case study approach. The sampling techniques and the procedure of selecting primary and secondary participants were described as well. The researcher explained the process of data collection chosen for this study and the way in which the collected information was analyzed and grouped. Finally, the chapter discussed the ethical issues and the steps of gaining approval from NUGSE

Committee and the participants to conducting the research. The potential risks for the participants and the measures the researcher had taken to keep anonymity and confidentiality were also discussed in this chapter. The following chapter discusses the findings derived from the current study.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study obtained from interviews with the research participants as discussed in detail in the previous chapter. Keeping in view the purpose of the study, i.e., to explore the role of mentoring in teacher professional development, this chapter discusses how the participants perceived and understood mentoring, its significance in their professional development, how the schools implement mentoring programs, and what challenges and opportunities are attached to the mentoring program and processes in the schools. This study was guided by the following research questions:

Main Question:

What is the role of mentoring in professional development of teachers in secondary schools in Kazakhstan?

Sub Questions:

- 1) How do mentors and mentees perceive mentoring?
- 2) How is it recognized and implemented in the schools?
- 3) What are the opportunities and challenges of implementing the mentoring program in the schools?

To answer these questions, I organize the discussions on the findings into participants' perception of mentoring, implementation of mentoring program, opportunities and challenges of mentoring, and ways to improve mentoring process.

4.2. Participants' Perceptions about Mentoring

In order to understand how the participants perceive mentoring, they were asked a number of questions about mentoring and mentor's functions which helped to elicit their opinion and understanding of this process. The findings on perception of mentoring emerged the following subsidiary topics:

4.2.1. Adjustment to new environment

At the initial stage of working in a new school, new teachers face numerous problems and challenges of adjustment, acclimatization, and adaptation. In this case mentoring comes to help them adjust to new working conditions and withstand the challenges novice teachers meet when they come to school. The majority of participants viewed mentoring as a process in which a more experienced teacher/colleague assists a less experienced teacher in overcoming challenges that the latter may face while entering new working environment, as one of the mentees stated:

When a young person, young teacher comes to our school, this teacher is assigned to a mentor (more experienced teacher from his or her department) and this person has to help to overcome different challenges, problems this young colleague has at the initial time of his/her experience here (Mentee 1).

Although, most participants perceived mentoring as assistance to young teachers who are just entering the profession, other participants mentioned that even experienced teachers need support to resolve the problems they may face when they change school. One of the mentees, who had appropriate teaching experience when he came to work at the school, shared his experience:

All these terms such as “assessment criteria, formative and summative assessments...” were unknown for me and it took time to clarify it. Previously, I worked in higher educational institution so here I had to deal with absolutely different age group. My mentor has helped me a lot to cope with the challenges I faced (Mentee 3).

Interview participants identified and explained that they perceived mentoring as the assistance to both teachers new to the profession and those entering a new type of school to adapt in a new workplace at the initial stage.

4.2.2. Professional development

Apart from assistance and support in overcoming challenges, mentoring is seen as a powerful tool for professional development. Sharing resources, lesson observation, mentor's feedback improved mentees' professional skills. This opinion was stated by four respondents and also prevailed among mentors and coordinators. As the findings show, the respondents also observed the improvement of their teaching practice through collaboration with their colleagues "Mentoring is an excellent way of professional development in schools because it is very effective for both partners and develops the values of lifelong learning and continuous collaboration in the professional learning communities" (Mentor 1).

Furthermore, participants speculated about the mentor's functions. The work conducted by mentors is closely related to their own perceptions of mentoring as it is based on their experiences of participation in mentoring programs of both partner. Most answers were similar and supported the claim about the assistance in professional development. This finding can be illustrated by the following quote: "Mentor's functions are to help colleagues with professional development, to share experience during collaboration, to improve teaching practice of the mentee" (Mentee 3).

Among the other frequently reported functions performed by mentors were lesson observations, providing feedback, collaboration and writing reports. This point of view was the most common among mentees as well as mentors. One of the mentors described how she

understood her work: “Mentors observe their mentee’s lessons, give a certain advice on improvement of teaching methods, analyze the progress and make reports on work that has been done” (Mentor 2). Both mentors and mentees ultimately had a similar understanding of the function of professional development in the mentoring relationship. Both groups identified valuable insight, which could be gained through mentorship, and the positive effects it has on their own professional skillset.

4.2.3. Building relationship

Good relations amongst pairs or teams are crucial for successful work. In order to build relationships for further collaboration, mentors should possess certain personal qualities that matter for their mentees. Three mentees emphasized that personal characteristics of mentors played a vital role in building foundation for productive work. They portrayed a good mentor as a responsible person who was ready to help them at any time. In addition, the relationship with their mentors was among the major factors that led to successful work. One mentee describing her mentor pointed out:

She is a tactful, reliable and responsible person, ready to help, experienced and attentive teacher. It was very important for me since I think the psychological component of relations is on the first place. If you feel comfortable dealing with your mentor, you will understand the main points quicker from the very beginning (Mentee 2).

In other words, mentees felt more confident and less stressed if they managed to build good relationship with their mentors. As mentors and mentees had to work side-by-side during the academic year, the personal characteristics played a crucial role in building good relationship.

4.3. Implementation of mentoring

The findings reveal that both schools implement mentoring programs as a part of teachers professional development. However, only School B has a policy on mentoring program that

regulates mentors and mentees' rights and responsibilities. Although the mentorship is realized in School A, the policy on mentoring has not been developed yet.

The duration of mentoring programs in both schools is approximately one academic year. It starts with identifying teachers who need some professional support. Then the senior management team appoints mentors to newly hired teachers. Mentor selection procedure is directly related to implementation of mentoring programs at schools. Once mentors and mentees have been matched, they develop an action plan and make a schedule of meetings and lesson observations. The dyads work together according to the developed plan during the academic year and at the end, they share the results of their work in forums or whole staff meetings.

Assigning a mentor to a new teacher is the initial step in utilization of mentoring support. The findings demonstrate that the process of mentor selection is top down. Only one respondent stated that his mentor was selected by mutual agreement in his department. In seven cases out of eight, the mentors were assigned by the heads of departments or deputy principals. One of the mentees stated, "Our mentors were assigned by the head of our department. We were familiar with the staff a little bit, so we didn't think to challenge the choice of our colleague" (Mentee 4).

Thus, the mentees did not have an opportunity to choose their mentors. Hence, the mentors stated that they were assigned to be mentors without an initial altruistic desire to perform this job. One mentor expressed her feeling when she was appointed for this position, "Of course, I wasn't eager. I didn't ask to become a mentor. So, it's a deputy principal who assigns the teachers with experience and they ask us "Can you be a mentor?" if we say "Yes" so we are in the role" (Mentor 2).

Despite the fact that mentors are assigned from the top, the procedure of mentor appointment does not happen randomly or by chance. Senior management team observes the lessons taught by new teachers, analyzes strong and weak points in their lessons, and then matches mentors and mentees. One of the mentors explained:

In our school at the beginning of each academic year Vice Principal of Educational Affairs and Head of Departments analyze the staffing, talk to teachers and make these pairs of mentors and mentees usually based on the experience and lesson observations (Mentor 1).

From the mentees' perspective, this top down approach of assigning a mentor does not bring any negative consequences. When a new teacher comes to school, he or she may know only few people and therefore, mentees are not able to choose an appropriate mentor to work with. One mentee revealed, "I think that independent choice at the initial stage could result in certain inconveniences, because due to the tight schedule not every person would agree to train new staff" (Mentee 4).

From the mentors' point of view, although it would be better if mentors and mentees had a choice of who to work and collaborate with, previous experience proves that top down approach of mentor appointment is inevitable:

As mentorship is a unique process and depends much on the two people's temperament and professional vision, it obviously would be preferable not to use a top down approach in assigning mentors. Ideally, these two colleagues should agree to collaborate themselves and to realize that it's a win-win partnership, which will bring benefits to both parties. But practice shows that teachers often avoid accountability and senior management team or heads of department need to push them into the project (Mentor 1).

Notwithstanding that mentors are selected by senior management team, the participants who worked in School A claimed that undertaking the mentor's role as well as mentee's is available for any member of the school staff no matter how much teaching experience they have. Teachers are free to share their experience with their colleagues. "At our school, everyone can

act as a mentor or mentee. It is enough just to show your desire. After that mentor and mentee design working plan and act according to this plan” (Mentee 3).

Coordinator 1 commented that teachers, who have attended some professional development courses may also act as mentors because the school invested money in their professional development and expects them to collaborate with other teachers, share their obtained knowledge with others and help them to develop professionally. This collaborative work is viewed as mentoring as well. Once mentors are assigned, they develop the action plan and make schedule for weekly meetings together with their mentees. During the academic year, mentors observe lessons of their mentees; give them constructive feedback, serving as a “critical friend” for their new colleagues. In the end of the year, dyads demonstrate the results they have been able to achieve in forums or other organized staff meetings. During such meetings, mentors and mentees are awarded with Letters of Appreciation.

4.4. Challenges of mentoring

Although most participants stated that they had positive mentoring experience, some obstacles and challenges were reported as well. The data reveals three key constraints: time constraints and discrepancy in schedules, mentors and mentees’ mismatch, and attitudes towards mentoring.

4.4.1. Time constrains and discrepancy in schedules

The main concern mentioned by all participants was the time. They complained that due to the various tasks and duties that they had to fulfill as part of their daily routine, it was hard to find time for meetings and discussions. Both novice teachers and their mentors feel that they are overloaded with their primary responsibilities i.e. teaching. In addition to their increasing workload, the participants also stated that it was difficult for them to find time for meetings with

mentees because of the mismatching schedules of mentors and mentees: “The lack of time both for visiting lessons, and its further analysis (between mentor and mentee) is a problem. The reasons are overwork and discrepancy of timetable” (Mentee 2). Another participant also noted: “The only challenge is finding time and coordinating meetings, because we have different schedules” (Mentor 1).

These two challenges were also mentioned by the coordinators as well. Therefore, the time constraints and mismatched timetables of mentors and mentees seem to be a serious obstacle for them to engage in productive mentoring process.

4.4.2. Mentors and mentees' mismatch

Another challenge that emerged from the conversations with the interviewees was the unsuccessful matching of mentors and mentees and opposing views about teaching. Different values and beliefs, if not managed timely and appropriately, may cause tensions and contradictions between mentors and mentees. Despite the fact that the majority of respondents emphasized their positive relationship in their dyad, some also highlighted a mismatch of temperaments and different viewpoints as potential obstacles that mentors and mentees may experience. As one of the mentors explained:

Cases in school show that much depends on the character and personalities of the two colleagues. And real life unfortunately proves that it's often still challenging for two persons to get to a consensus and common understanding. A mismatch in the mentor and mentee's temperament or character leads to a lack of progress (Mentor 1).

Mentees believe that sometimes their mentors attempt to impose their style and ideas on them, which leads to misunderstanding and disagreements. It causes some inconveniences in work:

Truly speaking, it [work with a mentor] is a little bit difficult for me because sometimes we have different points of view, and very frequently, I don't agree with my mentor

because I want to do this work in my own way but she advises me how to do it from her own perspective. That is why sometimes we have some contradictions (Mentee 1).

Although, most of the respondents did not complain about their partners, the concerns they expressed demonstrate that cases of unsuccessful mentors and mentees' matching occur and may lead to misunderstanding and unproductive work.

4.4.3. Attitude towards mentoring

Attitude towards mentoring and personal characteristics of the mentoring program participants may also result in creating some problems. For example, the issues may appear because of mentees' ambitions. Some young teachers feel that they possess enough knowledge and are able to manage their work on their own. They refuse to follow mentors' advice and do not take seriously the help provided by mentors. However, in the end of their trials they have to reach out to their more experienced colleagues. According to the coordinator:

Young teachers with ambitions think that they know not less than their mentors, but when they face the first challenges, such as teaching methods, assessment, contact with class, with certain student, mentor comes to help and mentee recognizes him/her to be more experienced (Coordinator 2).

The mentees also mentioned that sometimes mentors might be negligent in their work. In other words, they perform their role only on paper and are not interested in challenges their mentees face. As one mentee noted:

Sometimes mentor and mentee's work is only seen in the documents. You are assigned a mentor, you know who your mentor is but in reality you don't work with your mentor or this work is not enough for your development....Some mentors just ask you "Is everything OK? I will do my own work because I am pressed on time and I have to work with my papers" (Mentee 1).

The issue of attitude to mentoring was not only true for the mentors and the mentees but for the coordinators as well. Some experienced teachers always complain about time pressure and are not willing to share their knowledge with younger colleagues. One coordinator shared

that she faced the problem of teacher' low motivation to implement the role of a mentor, as mentors did not see any benefit for themselves:

There are some moments when [senior] teachers have no motivation to be a mentor. They ask: "What will I gain in the end?" Perhaps, they have already passed attestation procedure and they do not have to hurry. I think, they just don't want to share their knowledge (Coordinator 1).

Further, she continued talking about problems mentors have with their mentees:

They [mentors] told me: "I teach and teach and teach them [mentees], show them how to do this or that, but they do not listen to me and don't understand. This is the problem. They do not develop themselves, they stagnate" (Coordinator 1).

Thus, the main challenges that the participants of this study faced were the lack of time, mismatch of mentors and mentees, personality difference in and attitudes towards mentoring program.

4.5. Benefits and opportunities of mentoring

Talking about the advantages of mentoring for mentees, almost all participants highlighted the positive impact of mentoring on their professional life. This section begins with describing the benefits and opportunities for mentees, further down it discusses advantages for mentors as well.

4.5.1. Advancement of subject knowledge

The most frequently reported benefit gained by mentees was the improvement in their professional knowledge. When newly hired teachers come to school, they are expected to conduct lessons and possess subject knowledge. In this context, the finding reveals mentoring to be an effective way to direct mentees in subject content, use of concepts and lesson planning.

One mentee noted:

She [mentor] helps me a lot with subject content and she not only visited my lessons I also come to her lessons and observe them, I learn many concepts, ideas she uses during

her lessons that's why she makes valuable contribution to my experience as a Biology teacher (Mentee 1).

4.5.2. Acceleration of professional development

Alongside with the assistance in learning subject matter and pedagogy, almost all mentees remarked that mentoring accelerates their professional development. They revealed that they benefited from the opportunity, as they were able to access their mentors at any time and to receive immediate professional help.

In terms of value of mentoring for mentors, the mentors stated that participation in mentoring program facilitates their own professional development. In order to help mentees overcome challenges and to be a good advisor, the mentors had to read local and international literature on mentoring in order to know how to work with mentees. The literature helped them enhance their knowledge about best practices in mentoring and professional development. Communication with the mentees, observation of their lessons and further reflection improved mentors' own teaching practice. During this processes, the mentors learned something new for themselves, which positively affected their professional development. Mentor 2 highlighted: "You know, if you teach someone you also learn from them". This finding was also confirmed by Coordinator 1 who stated, "Those teachers, who participate in mentoring programs and are willing to improve their practice and share, demonstrate professional growth. It is very noticeable how they grow professionally". Thus, mentoring processes do offer good opportunities to both mentors and mentees for their professional development and improvement of professional practice.

4.5.3. Smooth induction

Another important aspect of mentoring, which was considered as a positive impact on mentees' successful induction into a new working environment and mentioned by three mentee-respondents, was emotional support. Such support is crucial for mentees and it helps them to overcome challenges they face in the beginning of their teaching career. For instance, one of the participants stated, "My personal experience includes strong moral support that is the key help for me. My mentor is always ready to help me and I am very grateful for this" (Mentee 4).

The respondents asserted that when young teachers come to school, it is rather difficult for them to adapt and navigate in a new environment. One mentee shared her initial concerns "I had to study the theory, methods, teaching approaches, school system and its policy quickly and almost at once to apply this knowledge in practice" (Mentee 4).

The help with the content knowledge and strong emotional support from mentors facilitates mentees' adaptation to the new workplace and its culture. Collaboration within the dyad accelerates the understanding of key terms, teaching methods and approaches. According to one participant "At our school, it [mentoring] is so-called pedagogical cooperation. It has allowed me to adapt to the new school faster" (Mentee 3). Can you connect this paragraph and the one before it?

The mentors also noted the personal growth and opportunity to think wider as an advantage of participation in mentoring program. Mentoring helps teachers start thinking not only about how they can benefit from this experience, but look at their work as the way to enhance the work of the whole school community:

Mentoring helped me to be better at facilitating a professional dialogue and taught me to be more responsible about a colleague, not to be focused on my own teaching but to look for ways to improve teaching in the school (Mentor 1).

4.5.4. Individual consultations

While comparing participation in mentoring programs with other professional development courses, the majority of respondents considered mentoring to be a better option for professional growth. They proposed a number of reasons why they would prefer to have or be a mentor to a traditional training.

First of all, mentoring provides opportunity for individual work and assistance without delay. Whereas professional development courses often occur in groups and leave space for unanswered questions, mentoring allows participants to receive more individualized, custom-made, and immediate help. Mentees have a chance to access their mentors at any time and discuss any questions they might not be courageous to ask during a group work. Thus, the findings depict that mentoring is a better approach to professional development than formal training. One mentee said:

Usually trainings are unilateral conversation and in most cases, questions are left without answers while individual consultation gives the chance to discuss diverse options of outcomes or any certain aspects that it is undoubtedly more effective method for me (Mentee 4).

The other respondent supported this claim “I think having a mentor is more useful because this person is working with you individually, you can ask this person every time you want and this person will help you any time” (Mentee 1).

4.5.5. Recognition of mentoring

Although the school administration does not allocate special time for mentors and mentees’ meetings, they are supported by schools in terms of equipment, resources and venues. It is recognized as an activity that contributes to professional development. Moreover, participation in mentoring programs is an advantage and even the requirement for teachers who undergo attestation in order to obtain a higher qualification. The Coordinator 1 explained,

“Those teachers who want to be a teacher-moderator or teacher-expert i.e. to obtain a higher position, they have to be mentors and teach their colleagues. It is a qualification requirement”. In the end of academic year, best mentors are rewarded with Letters of Appreciation, which will document their successful participation in mentoring program and can be used during the attestation process.

4.6. Suggestions made by participants

In the end of the interviews all participants were asked about how they would like to improve the existing mentoring practice at their schools. They made a number of suggestions for enhancing the quality of current mentoring program. From participants’ perspective, these suggestions might solve the problems they faced in implementation of mentoring program and help the stakeholders to improve the existing policies and practice of mentoring.

One of the concerns that was mentioned before and the respondents would like to address was the lack of time due to conflicting schedules and increased workload. According to the participants, there should be time allocation by the senior management team for mentoring sessions and meetings. Furthermore, the respondents believe that it is impossible to perform all duties well. They assert that mentors should be exempted from some lateral responsibilities in order to provide more support for mentees. A mentee stated, “Perhaps, the quality of mentor's help would improve if a mentor was exempted from some projects or other duties and had an opportunity to help and direct us [mentees] more actively” (Mentee 4).

Another suggestion for enhancement of mentoring work was to conduct research on mentoring. Several interviewees stressed that it would be useful to explore the main challenges mentors and mentees experience and “to develop a special program consisting of certain steps, collaboration stages and then evaluate those implemented actions” (Mentee 4).

As the participants raised the problem of unsuccessful matching, they would also like to address it. They stated that teachers should have more flexibility in choosing partners for mentoring. In their opinion it will increase the productiveness of the partnership.

4.7. Summary

This chapter presented the findings pertaining to the research questions of the current study. The obtained information indicated that the participants perceived mentoring as assistance in adjustment to a new working environment for newly employed teachers, an opportunity to develop professionally and build relationship. The following section of the chapter described how mentoring was implemented in both schools and the process of mentor selection. Furthermore, the study identified a number of constraints and obstacles mentors and mentees face in implementing mentoring programs in their schools. These challenges are as following: time constraints and discrepancy in schedules, mentors and mentees' mismatch and negative attitude towards mentoring. Alongside with challenges, this chapter reported the benefits and opportunities that mentoring programs bring to their participants. The findings revealed that the respondents viewed mentoring as an opportunity for advancement of subject knowledge, acceleration of professional development, smooth induction, individual consultation and recognition. In the end of the chapter, suggestions made by the participants were presented. The findings described here, which address the research questions, will be further analyzed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the interpretations and implications of the findings presented in the previous chapter. The findings are discussed in relation to the existing literature on the current topic. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the research questions posed in the current study and discuss how the results obtained correspond to the existing knowledge. The chapter is organized into two main sections, focusing on the benefits and challenges of the mentoring process in schools.

5.2. Mentoring and its implementation

Most international studies define mentoring as a process in which a more experienced teacher shares his/her expertise with another teacher who is less experienced to facilitate the latter's adjustment to a new workplace (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Trubowitz, 2004; Tareef, 2013; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The data obtained in this study demonstrates that respondents share this view as well. They believe that participation in mentoring programs facilitates new teachers' induction and enables their ongoing professional development. Numerous studies confirm this point of view that mentoring is an effective tool for the enhancement of teaching expertise and new teachers' acclimatization (Hansford et al., 2003; Hudson, 2013; See, 2014; Serrat, 2009).

In two schools that have been studied, mentoring programs have a number of similarities and differences. One of the first common features is that in both schools mentors are assigned from the top i.e. by the deputy principal or principal. In other words, participation in mentoring programs is encouraged by the senior management team. Although a few participants from

School A stated that if any teacher demonstrated an altruistic desire to share his/her experience and become a mentor for colleagues, the school would support such initiative, neither mentors nor mentees reported that in their school mentors were assigned in accordance to their free will. This shows that the matching of mentors and mentees is done by the school management rather than by the mentors and mentees themselves. Ehrich and Hansford (1999) argue that the form of mentoring in which mentor appointment depends on individual choice of parties is professional mentoring. In contrast to School A that has no documents regulating mentoring programs, School B has a school policy on mentoring which reflects the aims of mentoring programs, the mentor selection procedure, mentors and mentees' rights and responsibilities. Such programs are referred to as formal mentorship and become "a compulsory and core component within an organization's staff training programs" (Ehrich and Hansford, 1999, p.4). Therefore, despite the fact that both schools have many similarities in terms of what is aimed to be achieved from mentoring program, there are some differences in the way mentoring is seen, approached and implemented in these schools.

Another similarity between the two schools emerged from the findings, and which is in line with international studies, is functions performed by mentors. According to respondents' common perception, assistance in professional development is the mentor's primary responsibility. Mentors are in charge of sharing their practices, observing lessons, giving feedback, providing resources and collaboration. International practice shows that mentoring duties do not differ from Kazakhstani practicum and contribute to mentees' professional development. For instance, Salleh (2013) claims that "mentoring process covers all aspects of teaching, such as the discussion of teaching materials, lesson observation and critiquing, teaching methods and the setting and marking assignments" (p.154). Hence, once again, in School B the

mentor's functions are regulated by school policy, while mentors from School A are driven by their own teaching experience and coordinator's instructions.

5.3. Role of mentoring in teacher professional development

The study shows that mentoring plays an integral role in teacher professional development and brings benefits for all parties. Both mentors and mentees of the study highlighted that they advanced their professional knowledge through collaboration, reflection on their practice and ideas exchange. Hence, as Hansford et al. (2003) state and the current research confirms participation in mentoring programs provides more positive outcomes for mentees than for mentors. Indeed, benefits for mentees are numerous. Beginning with their earliest days at school, mentees participating in mentorship programs experience a smooth induction, receive moral support, and feel more comfortable in building relationships with their new colleagues (Hansford et al., 2003; Yohon, 2005). Emotional support from mentors as reported by mentees was one of the main benefits of participation in the mentoring program that helped incoming teacher enter and navigate in a new workplace. After beginning to settle in to a new environment, participants explained that mentoring enabled them to rapidly increase their own professional knowledge, as well as to learn more effective classroom practices, such as lesson planning and classroom management. Salleh (2013) confirms this statement by saying that mentoring "helps novice teachers become successful in their teaching" (p. 153). Mentees were able to receive accelerated professional development, in one-on-one sessions, at mutually convenient times. This is supported by Cook (2012) who highlights that the possibility to approach mentors at any time, receive a personal consultation, and mentors' familiarity with content area contributes to a positive mentoring experience. Hence, some of the respondents felt they could achieve the same

results independently or taking traditional training courses, but it would have taken more time and resources.

While participants in this study agreed that mentees benefit the most from the mentorship process, mentors are able to benefit as well, in terms of improvement in their own communication, reflection, leadership and professional development skills. Mentors and coordinators both commented on their own personal and professional growth during the mentorship process; when mentors teach, they also learn. Experts like Nasser-Abu et al. (2014) and Maor and Mc Conney, (2015) agree that mentors improve their leadership skills, reflect more on their own teaching practice and take new ideas from their mentees.

Sometimes, a school supports mentors with certain types of recognition, which can range from certificates to payment. While teachers who act as mentors in Kazakhstan do not receive any additional payment, countries such as the USA and Israel frequently provide financial incentive for expert teachers to act as mentors (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Krueger, 1999; Mullinix, 2002). This might be one of the reasons why Kazakhstani teachers do not demonstrate the desire and self-motivation to participate in mentoring programs but they are assigned to engage in mentoring by the top management. During the interviews, it was felt that participants did not want to criticize their schools management or they might have felt shy to talk about the monetary rewards for their job. However, this financial aspect of mentoring might be beneficial for schools. In comparing mentoring programs, which are realized on a free basis with traditional training, they undoubtedly require fewer or no expenses. Hudson (2013) advocates the view that mentoring is a cost-effective tool for professional development. Indeed, schools might save money by not sending teachers to expensive professional training courses and use mentoring

programs as tools for teacher professional development. Hence, mentoring provides a cost effective way of professional development in the two schools in this study.

5. 4. Challenges

The main concern highlighted by all participants was lack of time. Both mentors and mentees felt that they could not allocate adequate time for meetings and discussions as the time this demands would result in a lack of productivity in mentors' core teaching responsibilities. Many international studies highlight that mentoring is a time-consuming process (Nasser-Abu et al, 2014; Ryan & Hornbeck, 2004). Mentoring requires much time and according to Hudson (2013) and Rajuan (2011) inadequate time assigned for this practice might negatively affect the implementation of mentoring programs as well as having a negative effect on teachers' attitudes towards mentoring.

Another concern, which emerged from the findings, is the general attitude towards mentoring. For instance, the mentees interviewed consider that due to time concerns, work overload or just personal characteristics mentors may perform their work only on paper and do not take their work seriously. Meanwhile, mentors may also experience some discomfort working with too ambitious mentees who do not wish to follow the mentors' advice and accept their help in professional development. In order to achieve success in the mentoring practicum, successful matching and building rapport between mentors and mentees are crucial (Draves, 2008, Izanidia, 2015; Long, 1997). Some respondents were concerned that personality mismatch between the mentor and mentee would lead to ineffective partnerships, and an overall lack of progress. Similarly, it was observed in this study that an overloaded schedule can contribute to friction between mentor and mentee, as mentors do not have enough time to support their designated mentees. Sometimes, this is driven by the mentor selection process; during the

current research, both mentors and coordinators mentioned that teachers did not volunteer to become mentors, instead being selected based on their skills, by the school principal. None of the participants stated that he / she decided to become a mentor nor did the mentees suggest that their mentors were assigned because of the mentor's altruistic desire. This seems to be problematic, as, according to Trubowitz, (2004), mentoring programs are more likely to be successful if mentors' roles were not imposed by the administration but were the initial desire of mentors themselves.

As opposed to studies of Rajuan et al. (2011), Schatz-Oppenheimer (2017), and Trubowitz (2004) which assert that mentors should take special training courses prior to being appointed for this position, teachers who participated in this study did not report any concerns with it. However, According to Ambrosetti (2014) participation in a mentor training course may change the mentors' attitude to the implementation of this work. Other international studies also support this idea and state that those experienced teachers, who had training, and better understanding of the complexity of the mentor role, are more responsible for their duties (Hansford et al., 2003; Helleve et al., 2015). Taking into consideration the issue of irresponsible attitude towards mentoring, the senior management team could consider mentor preparation courses as a way to improve the situation.

While mentors often cannot choose whether or not to participate, mentees similarly do not have an opportunity to choose their own mentors. The participants in this study suggested that mentor/mentee matching is done completed by the administration, which is in line with guidelines for mentor selection as discussed by OECD (2014). The Coordinators for the mentoring program at the school also confirmed that the school administration selects mentors and assigns mentees to them. Mentees recognized that particularly when entering a new school

environment, it is difficult for mentees (new teachers) to select their own mentors because they would not know the skill set of experienced teachers. Therefore, they think that it is necessary for the administration to assign mentors; however, after having experienced mentoring, they suggest that one way to improve implementation of mentoring programs was to permit more flexibility of partnerships, and to give more time to mentors and mentees to understand each other first and then choose to engage in mentoring. This suggestion is confirmed by the previous research that states, "...appropriate matching contributes trust and the building of the professional relationships" (Cook, 2012, p.9).

5.5. Summary

This chapter compared and contrasted the study's findings with existing literature that I was able to locate and review. While the findings of this study are generally in agreement with many other studies (about the benefits and challenges associated with mentoring processes), there were some situations in which the findings of this study differed. For example, while some countries provide additional payment for mentors and organize special training courses for mentors, this is not the case in the two schools in Kazakhstan. This lack of incentives may be a partial cause of mentors' reluctance to accommodate mentoring responsibilities in an already full schedule. Also, special training courses may also affect the issue of attitude toward mentoring.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1. Conclusions

In light of the study's findings presented and discussed in the previous chapters, this chapter draws certain conclusions and makes a number of recommendations for school leaders, teachers, policy makers, and future research. The study is guided by the conceptual framework as discussed in chapter two.

The study focused on exploring the role of mentoring in teacher professional development in two Kazakhstani schools through investigating how teachers perceive and implement mentorship and what were the benefits and challenges teachers faced while participating in mentoring programs. In order to answer the set research questions, eight semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted in two Kazakhstani schools. The results of the data collected from the interviews revealed that participation in mentoring programs is vital in the professional development of mentees as well as mentors. Issues that may arise from such partnership have also been identified in this study. The study mainly confirmed the existing literature concerning the role of mentoring in teacher professional development, the opportunities mentoring can offer, and the challenges that both mentor and mentee can face in the process. Based on the critical analysis of the findings, the following conclusions, having implications for policy and practice, are drawn.

1. Mentoring could mean different things to different people. While mentoring programs are implemented in many Kazakhstani schools, it seems that different stakeholders understand and describe mentoring in different ways. For instance, most mentees understand mentoring as an assistance that more experienced teachers extend to less experienced teachers / new comers in order to help the latter adjust to new environment and build relationship in a new workplace. As

for mentors, they view mentoring as an opportunity for professional development and lifelong learning for both mentees and mentors. Despite the fact that the respondents have different perceptions and assumptions about mentoring, it is clearly seen that both mentees and mentors perceive mentoring positively. They see many more benefits than disadvantages in mentoring.

Similarly there is no shared understanding and standard procedures for selection of mentors in both the schools. The selection is done rather on ad hoc basis in the absence of clear policy and processes. The study found out that most mentors in both schools were assigned their duties by the top management without any process or consultation with the mentors and mentees. This kind of mentor assignment by management has implications for mentors as some of them were not willing to undertake these roles or could not implement them due to their increasing work load or personal reasons (OECD, 2014). Even though they implement the decision from the management, they do not put their best to the mentoring process. Although the work of the dyad was to some extent regulated by the general school policy in School B, there was no clear procedure laid down for selecting mentors. At School A, there are no document or process for mentors selection and their work; it is controlled by the Coordinator or senior management team.

As no common understanding among educational stakeholders has been established, it proves the complexity of mentoring process and might affect the way the partners perform their roles. The international practice shows:

...being familiar with the roles in mentoring, having an increased understanding of what is required within each role and how the roles can be used in differing situations, can assist in creating a quality mentoring experience for the mentor and mentee” (Ambrosetti, 2014 as cited in Valeni & Vogrinc, 2007).

2. The second conclusion is that mentoring, if done properly, is one of the most viable and effective ways of professional development for teachers. In comparison to traditional teacher training courses, mentoring is more effective because teachers do not have to leave their students and workplace for centre-based trainings. Moreover, mentoring is more focused on individual needs of mentees and provides opportunities for immediate assistance in solving problems that new teachers face in a new working environment. The cases of two Kazakhstani schools illustrate that the partnership between mentors and mentees advances subject knowledge of new teachers and boosts teacher efficiency. Mentors and mentees grow professionally while observing each other's mannerisms, reflecting on their practice, sharing ideas, communicating, and collaborating. Participation in mentoring programs adds value to teacher work and is considered an advantage to teacher attestation process. Furthermore, mentors may not only share their expertise with incoming teachers but obtain new knowledge as well. For example, Hudson (2013) claims that mentoring can help mentors to "facilitate new understanding about teaching by engaging purposefully with their pre-service teachers, whether it is learning how to use an electronic whiteboard or the latest teaching strategies the pre-service teachers had encountered at the university" (p.781). Hence, as findings show, mentees enjoy more benefits than mentors. Mentees receive emotional support, which is crucial at the initial stage in their workplace as well as a guarantee to smooth induction. Thus in the context of Kazakhstan, where many educational reforms are being implemented and school curriculum is being revised and changed, teachers need professional support or specialized trainings to accelerate their professional knowledge and understand how to implement the educational reforms, and mentoring may become one of the ways of such support.

3. The third conclusion is that mentoring can become an unpleasant and frustrating experience for teachers if there is a mismatch between mentors and mentees and their priorities. The study's findings indicate that participation in mentoring programs might be challenging for both partners if not done properly and with due planning. The main concern associated with mentorship was the lack of time. The respondents highlighted that it was hard for them to find time for meetings and discussions because of discrepancy in mentors and mentees' schedules. Another issue was the unsuccessful matching of partners that caused tensions and misunderstanding between mentors and mentees. The study shows that attitude towards mentoring may also be a challenge. It was found that the mentor's low motivation to participate in the mentoring program and new teachers' ambitions might negatively affect the results of such partnership. Therefore, mentoring can become counterproductive and unpleasant experience, especially for mentees, who might feel frustrated of working with mentors who are not fully committed to their work. Mentors may also feel that this role was imposed from the top and not fairly recognised. In order to address the issues that may arise from mentoring, some recommendations for educational stakeholders will be suggested in the following section.

6.2. Recommendations

6.2.1. Implications for School Leaders

Study findings have identified a clear need for policy at the school level (or higher) related to mentoring. Mentoring policies should clearly identify and regulate mentors and mentees' functions, rights and responsibilities. Clarity of purpose, guidelines for selecting mentors/mentees, and a pathway for addressing mentor/mentee mismatches are all necessary components of mentoring policies. Policy could also include suggestions for meeting timelines,

reporting and regular (perhaps annual) evaluation of the success of the program in order to allow for regular review and improvement.

In order to make mentoring more successful for both mentors and mentees, the study has revealed several changes school management may implement. Specifically, study participants identified a shortage of time (due to the increased workload associated with mentoring) and a discrepancy in partners' schedules; one solution to this problem is for management to provide protected time dedicated to mentoring in order to better support these partnerships. Additionally, as participants suggested, it would be helpful to exempt mentors from some lateral duties to allow them offer more support to the newcomers.

Moreover, the issue of mentors and mentees' mismatch should be addressed. Senior management teams should thoroughly match the partners taking into consideration the personal characteristics and specializations of the mentors and mentees. In addition, it could be beneficial to provide an opportunity for the dyads to choose partners themselves. An opportunity to change mentors early in the process if a mismatch occurs would also help to improve the efficacy of the mentoring program for both mentors and mentees. Another suggestion that may solve the issue of the mismatch is a shift from traditional one-to-one formula of mentoring to a group mentoring in which mentors and mentees will be able to work with more than one partner. Such practice, according to Long (1997) "allows for more efficient use of resources as for example, the mentor's time and expertise has the opportunity for greater influence and allows the development of more individuals" (p.128).

The results further suggested that there is a necessity to assign mentors according to their altruistic desire to help new teachers rather than to appoint them from the top because of their teaching experience and qualifications. Teachers might be afraid to question the authority and

refuse to participate in mentoring programs even if they are too busy and have no time for mentoring. Those mentors, who are appointed from the top without their desire to be involved in the program, might perceive their role as additional unpaid work and perform it only on paper. Senior school leaders may take into account some incentives that can drive teachers to be a part of the mentoring program and encourage them to put their best to the program. Benefits for mentors (including recognition of the value of their work by the administration and the school community) could also act to increase mentors' interest in volunteering to participate. As international research shows that "principal's attitude towards mentoring in general and his or her degree of support and appreciation for the mentors affects the organizational environment in which mentors work" (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, p.60).

6.2.2. Recommendations for schoolteachers

Given that most educators admitted that mentoring facilitated their professional development, participation in mentoring programs should be continued and promoted among the school teachers. They should view mentoring as a fast and effective way to improve their teaching skills and subject content knowledge as it is grounded in school realities that are true to their particular school. Regular lesson observation, reflection on teaching practice and discussions about areas for improvement are undoubtedly beneficial for both partners. The results of the study show that participation in mentoring programs is recognized by the senior management team and can be an advantage in career promotion. Teachers should not be afraid of being overwhelmed by additional duties, but understand that mentorship can boost their expertise.

6.2.3. Recommendations for policy makers

One of the recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Science is to develop a policy for implementing mentoring in all schools in Kazakhstan. The policy makers may have a significant responsibility of guaranteeing the success of the mentorship programs through the policies they formulate. They may promote mentoring programs through providing the required policy support and associated incentives. As an example, they can establish training for senior teachers in order to improve the quality of help provided by mentors. Therefore, mentors would feel more confident in their positions of sharing their skills and experience with mentees. Furthermore, the policies should inculcate high standards for mentorship programs or for those participating in the programs through outlining their specific roles and duties. There is also a need to develop the mentor training programs and ensuring that they adhere to the proposed standards. While every school can have a certain autonomy in implementing mentoring programs, there should be a common understanding what is expected from mentoring and whether mentoring programs meet state standards in different schools.

Another recommendation is to provide a financial support for mentors. As participation in mentoring programs adds more responsibilities for mentors to their primary duties, their work should be recognized since mentoring is not subject to additional payment in Kazakhstan. An award scheme may be established to recognize the best mentors and offer all mentors formal academic recognition such as certificates and possible promotions at the state level. For instance, Hudson (2013) propose to recognize mentors through “library access privileges; awards for outstanding mentors nominated by their mentees; free attendance to particular university seminars; and other professional acknowledgements” (p.781). If mentors feel recognized for their contribution in mentorship programs, the number of qualified and experienced teachers who are willing to share their expertise would increase.

6.2.4. Recommendations for Future Research

Although the current research revealed the benefits of mentoring for enhancement of teacher professional growth and the challenges that educators face while performing their roles as mentors, some limitations and suggestions for further research are discussed here.

Firstly, this a small-scale study which was conducted in two schools with a small number of participants. It is recommended to have similar study with a larger sample covering large number of schools so the results obtained could be generalized to all Kazakhstani schools. A larger sample size would be more representative of the population of mainstream schools in the study area. Engaging more schools in the study will be essential for widening the range of data and forming a clearer picture for the mentoring programs in Kazakhstan. There is also a need to further investigate the efficiency of the peer and mentor teachers as trainers since this study majorly focused on professional development. Mentor efficiency is key in determining the success or failure of mentorship.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the study: The role of mentoring in teacher professional development in Kazakhstan

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a **research study** on the role of mentoring in teacher professional development in Kazakhstan. This study aims to identify how mentoring plays a significant role in professional growth of mentors and mentees; how effective this method is and how it influences teacher continuous professional development. You will be required to participate in a semi-structured interview and be asked to answer several questions on your experience in mentoring programs. All your answers will be recorded. All records and notes will be stored in a password protected computer or private researcher's safe and disposed after study is completed.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation in the interview will take approximately 1 hour. A follow up interview of about 30 minutes may be conducted with you, if required.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

The risks associated with this study are as following:

I will take every possible measure to mitigate the risks for you being identified. To safeguard anonymity and confidentiality of the school and participants I will use pseudonyms and will not disclose anything to anyone that may lead to deduce your identity.

- Since you will be working with me, other staff at the school may notice and deduce the identity. To ensure this does not happen, I will not discuss anything about research and participants at the school. All the identifiers will be removed from the research paper. At the same time, do not communicate any information discussed during the interview.
- You may feel uncomfortable being interviewed about your colleagues and their work. The information gained during the interviews will not be reported to your colleagues or senior management team. You are free to choose not to respond to a question or to withdraw at any stage of the study.

The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are as following:

- Policy makers may obtain some useful information and reference to whether mentoring should be implemented in schools across the country
- School administrators might wish to further improve their mentoring models / practices by using the findings and recommendations that the study may come up with;

- Mentors and mentees participating in this study may improve their mentoring practices and professional skills by reflecting on the questions posed to them during the interviews. They as well as other mentors and mentees may use the research report as an evidence of how to make mentoring as a vehicle for professional development in schools;

Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your employment.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your **participation is voluntary** and you have the **right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate.** You have the right to refuse to answer a particular question. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Mir Afzal afzal.mir@nu.edu.kz, or +77475276816

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

According to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. Any participant falling into that category should be given the Parental Consent Form and have it signed by at least one of his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

Appendix 2. Interview Guide / Questions

The following questions are ‘sample questions’ which were enriched and expanded by several other questions and probing based on the answers given by the participants:

Mentor

1. How do you see mentoring as a way of professional development in schools?
2. How would you describe your experiences as a mentee and a mentor, if you have had both?
3. How is mentoring implemented in your current school?
4. What does the mentoring work actually involve?
5. How have you been assigned for the mentoring work?
6. Do you feel that you add value to your mentee? How?
7. What / how exactly you do with your mentees and why?
8. Have you been able to discover or develop any particular model or techniques for working with your mentee?
9. Do you feel that mentoring facilitates your own professional development? (If yes, how?)
10. How are you facilitated / supported and incentivized by the school for the mentoring work you do?
11. Do you experience any challenges implementing this job? (if yes, what challenges?)
12. If you had the opportunity to improve the way teachers are trained, prior and outside of the mentor relationship, what would you change?
13. If you were to redesign the mentoring program and processes at these schools, what would you do differently?

Mentee

1. When did you join the school and what were some of challenges you have faced?
2. How do / did you overcome the challenges ?
3. How is mentoring implemented in your school?
4. What does the mentoring work involve?
5. How would you describe your experiences of working with your mentor in this school?
6. How were you assigned to work with the mentor? Did you choose the mentor or he/she was assigned to mentor you?
7. Do you think that having a mentor is needed and useful or would personal trial and error provide a similar effect?
8. Would you agree that having a mentor has been more valuable than the formal teacher training you have done? Why?
9. How would you describe your relationship, interaction, and communication with your mentor?
10. Does incorporating your mentors ideas and concepts develop your own teaching pedagogy?
11. Do you feel that mentoring facilitates your professional development? (If yes, how? If no, why?)
12. What are some of the challenges you may be facing while working with the mentor? (If any?)
13. How do you address these challenges?
14. If you had the opportunity to improve the way teachers are trained, prior and outside of the mentor relationship, what would you change?

15. If you were to redesign the mentoring program and processes at this schools, what would you do differently?

Principal / Vice Principal / Coordinator Mentoring program

1. How would you as the principal describe the mentoring program in your school?
2. How is mentoring implemented in your school?
3. What does the mentoring work involve?
4. How is mentoring assigned in your school?
5. How is mentoring work facilitated / supported and incentivized by the school?
6. Do you think that having a mentor is needed and useful for newly hired teachers? Why?
7. Do you feel that mentoring facilitates professional mentor and mentee's professional development? How?
8. What challenges do you face as a manager of mentoring program?
9. What challenges do the participants of mentoring program face while working together?

Appendix 3. Recruitment flyer**PARTICIPATE in RESEARCH!!!**

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF MENTORING IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?**DEAR TEACHERS!!!**

My name is Yelena Koroleva and I am a graduate student of Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education in Astana. As part of my Master degree, I am doing a research on the role of mentoring in teacher professional development in Kazakhstan. I invite and encourage you to take part as a participant in this research study.

What is this study is about?

- Teachers' perceptions of mentoring
- Teachers' experiences of mentoring (its opportunities and challenges)

Who can participate in the research?

- Any teacher who participates in school mentoring program (a mentor or a mentee)

What's involved?

- This study involves participating in a private interview only with me for about 60 minutes in January, 2017. A follow up interview of about 30 minutes may also be conducted, if required.

What are the benefits of participating?

- You will be able to contribute to further improvement of mentoring models/practices in schools in Kazakhstan
- You will be able to share your personal experience and express your own opinion on mentoring programs implemented in your school

Contact information: yelena.koroleva@nu.edu.kz

Please, contact me by December 30th, 2016

CONFIDENTIALITY and ANONYMITY IS GURANTEED!!!

YOU CAN REFUSE PARTIPICATING in the RESEARCH ANY TIME!!!

THIS IS FREE, VOLUNTARY and EXCITING!!!

