

# The Impact of Mentorship in The Fostering Leadership Growth at A Primary School

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## Abstracts

This research explains the results of a study that investigated the impact of mentorship in fostering leadership growth at a selected primary school. The research has adopted a mixed methods explanatory sequential design. The quantitative data was administered through survey questionnaires to 80 respondents. The qualitative data was collected using a semi-structured interview with selected participants (seven principals and three vice principals). Survey questionnaires were administered with thirteen-item questions with demographic information and a few open-ended questions to collect quantitative data. The study used descriptive statistics to depict the mean and standard deviation. This study adopted purposive sampling to a sample size of seven principals, three vice principals, 22 teachers, and 48 students from grade six in the current year. The findings of this study confirmed that mentorship impacts the fostering of leadership growth for both students and teachers. Thus, this study recommended all leaders examine the impact of mentorship in schools.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

This study was undertaken to learn the impact of mentorship in fostering leadership growth at a primary school in Bumthang district. Today, the Ministry of Education and Skills Development recognizes the significance of mentoring and has extended implementation to entire schools in the country. Additionally, Bhutan Baccalaureate affiliated schools have started mentor-mentees since 2021. For instance, in Australia, mentoring has become a much more effective strategy for promoting leadership development (Waniganayake et al., 2012). Mentoring of trained and untrained teachers has been used as a solutions strategy to overcome challenges at times of conflict or crisis when intervention by someone with authority and experience is required. This approach is additionally supported by government regulation where mentoring is linked with the National Quality Framework (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011).

Mentoring is an ancient practice that has existed in numerous forms across cultures and societies for centuries. Bhutan, a country with a rich cultural heritage and traditions, mentoring relationships have been present for a long time, historical records might not explicitly document the formalization of mentoring programs (Kapur, 2021). Bhutan is known emphasizing values such as compassion, wisdom, and community. Additionally, the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) has initiated the Future Leaders Mentoring Programme (FLMP) for the civil service as one of the programs under the Civil Service Well-being reform (RCSC, 2017). The purpose of the FLMP is to guide the development of young civil servants early in their careers. The necessary guidance to help develop their full potential.

## Problem Statement

Despite the recognized importance of leadership development in primary schools, there remains a gap in understanding the precise influence and effectiveness of mentorship programs in nurturing leadership growth among educators and administrators. Some Bhutanese school principals face challenges in the running of their schools. Additionally, the challenge arises from principals' lack of formal training in providing effective mentoring within the school (Msila, 2011). Furthermore, the inherently time-intensive nature of mentoring relationships, requiring a substantial period for meaningful understanding and relationship-building, presents an additional hurdle. This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring the actual influence of mentorship on leadership development in primary schools and identifying potential barriers posed by principals' limited mentoring experience and time constraints.

## Objectives

The research objectives are:

1. Assess the current state of mentoring programs.
2. Study the role of mentorship in leadership development.
3. Identify barriers and challenges in the mentorship process.

## Research Questions

1. How can mentorship programs in primary schools be optimized or improved for leadership growth?
2. What are the challenges encountered in implementing effective mentorship programs for leadership development?

## Significant of the research

The study will aim collectively to guide the research endeavour, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the impact of mentorship on leadership growth in primary schools and its broader implications for education and personal development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Thousands of years ago, the term mentoring was used in Homer's epic poem, *Odyssey* (Savickas, 2007). While Odysseus prepared to leave for battle, he requested his friend, Mentor, to guide his son. Long after *Odyssey*, learned interest in mentoring started with Levinson's seminal work, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (Levinson et al., 1978). One of the findings from lifespan human development among 40 men revealed the importance of mentoring relationships, stating that not having a mentor or having an ineffective mentor was the because of poor parenting in childhood.

Moreover, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, researchers have devoted and examined the term mentoring (Bearman et al., 2007). However, the researchers could not make a consensus on one definition of mentoring for more than five decades (Burke, 1984). Nevertheless, Eby and Allen (2008) discuss four attributes common among definitions of mentoring: (a) mentoring is a relationship between a person with more experience and a person with less experience; (b) although the mentoring relationship is often reciprocal, the mentoring pair focuses on growth in the mentee; (c) mentoring relationships are ever-changing; (d) mentors are different from other notable relationships, such as coaches and teachers. In this study, we define mentoring can be described as a development that occurs within the bond between an individual with much experience and another individual with less experience, all to foster growth and advancement in the mentee (Bearman et al., 2007; Eby & Allen, 2008).

Mentoring and leadership development literature has evolved from skill development to include psychosocial support, personal and leadership capacity (Campbell et al., 2012; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000).

Allen and Poteet (1999) stated that mentors require listening and communications skills, alongside patience and goal setting, which were the most helpful characteristics of effective mentoring for leadership development. Similarly, a review of leadership development practices found that emotional intelligence and the mentor's emotional quality with the mentee as essential for effective leadership development (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2009). Many studies demonstrate that mentors take on several roles when mentoring for leadership development: motivator, coach, tutor, role model, and sponsor (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018). Likewise, Solansky (2010) found mentees in leadership development more approachable to mentors who initiated the relationship and emphasized coaching than mentors who ensured their mentees followed the program.

According to Reyes (2003), participation in effective mentoring programs is one avenue used to provide the support necessary for developing leaders. Mentoring programs encourage and assist experienced principals with beginning principals. Mentors provide guidance and feedback to develop a capacity to fulfil the new roles and responsibilities (Daresh, 2004; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Reyes, 2003). While research has validated the effectiveness of administrator mentoring programs, little research has connected the development of specific instructional leadership skills with participation in mentoring programs.

Similarly, many experienced that mentoring plays a significant role in leadership development in the workplace and higher education (Hastings et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2016; Parker et al., 2008; Thompson, 2006). Workplace mentoring to build leaders is rooted in apprenticeships with well-documented results in research and practice (Middlebooks & Haberkorn, 2009). Colleges and universities use formal and informal mentoring programs for leadership growth as personal and skill development (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Wisner, 2011). Further, multiple studies have shown that mentors experience personal growth and skill development consistent with leadership development (Walters & Kanak, 2016). So, researchers continue to call for more research on how mentoring relationships impact the mentor (Ramaswami & Dreher, 2010). There is no mentor-mentee program being implemented in schools in the country earlier. Thus, this study proposes to explore the impact of mentorship in fostering leadership growth at a primary school in Bhutan.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study used a convergent parallel research design. It is a mixed methods research approach where qualitative and quantitative data are collected independently and then compared and contrasted research problem (Creswell, 2013). Similarly, the researchers gather qualitative and quantitative data to analyze them separately and then combine the findings to gain deeper insights into the research question.

In this design, one data plays a supportive role to another form of data. The second form of data supports the primary form of the data (Greene, 2006). For instance, the quantitative data collected supports the qualitative data. Thus, the triangulation of one set of finding with another enhances the validity of inferences.

### Sampling

The sample data were collected from school principals, vice-principals, teachers and students from primary schools. The study was selected nine schools out of 12 primary schools in Bumthang. The data were collected through a simple random probability sampling technique from different locations.

## Instruments

The instruments in this study were used survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The senior colleagues from the different schools had validated the instrument questions. In addition, the survey questionnaires were consisting of four sections: demographic information, mentorship experience, perceived impact on leadership, and overall satisfaction and recommendation. The maximum number of items of the questionnaires were adapted from (Le Comte & McClelland, 2017). In this study, 11 Likert scales and two open-ended questions have prepared. It used to measure leadership growth through mentoring help students at school. Likewise, McClelland (2017) had used a five-point Likert scale response format. For each statement, participants will ask to indicate whether they “Strongly Agree (SA)”, “Agree (A)”, “Neutral (N)”, “Disagree (D)”, or “Strongly Disagree (SD)”. For analysis purposes, the value like 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 were assigned to “Strongly Agree”, “Agree” (A), “Neutral (N)”, “Disagree” (D), and “Strongly Disagree (SD)” respectively.

Similarly, a semi-structured interview was administered after the survey questionnaire. two volunteer participants had selected for the interview. This study adopted a semi-structured interview as a second tool to understand in-depth of mentorship fosters leadership growth.

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 and MS Excel from the Microsoft Office package. SPSS was used for paired sample t-tests and descriptive analysis to find Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), and frequencies. Composite values will be compiled for each theme and categorized into three levels (Low, Medium, High) based on combined Mean. MS-Excel helped prepare to form tables and graphs.

Similarly, the semi-structured interview (qualitative) had been transcribed and analyzed based on the approaches of Creswell’s thematic coding technique (Creswell, 2014). Similar codes were combined and categorized into different themes to help answer the research questions.

## Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations in research are the mandate principles for researchers to adhere to a code of conduct when collecting data. The data collection involved research approval and ethical procedures (Creswell, 2012).

Firstly, the teacher researchers got an approval letter from the Chief District Education Officer (CDEO) and the school's Principal to allow for data collection. Secondly, the researchers oriented the student respondents and participants about the purpose of the study. Similarly, the participants were informed of the right to withdraw from participation if they were insecure. Finally, the teacher researchers ensured that the information or identity given by participants would maintain utmost confidentiality.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic profile of the participants

The population involved in this study consisted of seven principals, three vice principals, 22 teachers, and 48 students. There were nine principals and three vice principals. Only seven principals agreed to take part in the survey questionnaire and interview. Similarly, three vice principals, 22 teachers, and 48 students were selected purposefully to provide a cross-section of the demographic population.

Demographics of participants who had participated in the mentoring program are in Table 1. Categories included gender, age, and years of experience. Participants were divided into fairly equal distributions of male and female students and teachers. About 87% of teachers had between 5 and 18 years

of teaching experience. Furthermore, grade six students were chosen intentionally as participants due to their enhanced ability to comprehend questionnaires and provide insightful responses. Numbers in parentheses in Table 1 indicate the demographics of the interview participants (principals and vice principals).

**Table 1**  
Demographic Information of Teachers Responding

Demographic	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	17 (10)	53.1
	Female	15	46.9
<b>Age</b>	20-30	6	18.8
	30-40	19	59.4
	40-above	7	21.8
<b>Year of Experiences</b>	1-4 year	4	12.5
	5-8Years	6	18.8
	9-12Years	10	31.3
	13-17 Years	7	21.9
	18 Years above	5	15.6

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate interview participants.

Table 2 shows the demographic information of students responding from different schools. Categories included gender, age, and school they are from. Respondents were selected from almost equal number of males and female from each school.

**Table 2**  
Demographic Information of Students Responding

Demographic	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	24	50
	Female	24	50
<b>Age</b>	11	1	2.1
	12	31	64.6
	13 above	16	33.3
<b>Gyatsa PS</b>	Male	2	33.3
	Female	4	66.7
<b>Chumey HSS</b>	Male	4	66.7
	Female	2	33.3
<b>Zungnye PS</b>	Male	3	50
	Female	3	50
<b>Wangdicholing LSS</b>	Male	3	50
	Female	3	50
<b>Zangtherpo PS</b>	Male	3	50
	Female	3	50
<b>Kharsa PS</b>	Male	3	50

	Female	3	50
<b>Chokortoe PS</b>	Male	3	50
	Female	3	50
<b>Gangrithang PS</b>	Male	3	50
	Female	3	50

**Analysis of the Questionnaires on Teachers and Students**

The six items questionnaire were administered to gather the mentorship experiences with students and teachers. The questionnaires were developed using a 5-point Likert-type scale to assess the mentoring process. These aspects included duration of their involvement in mentoring experiences, the frequency of their interactions with their mentees, any participation of workshops or training sessions, and their willingness to share their experiences. Respondents were provided with statements to rate their agreement on a scale 1 to 5. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaires, respondents were briefed and oriented on the purpose and nature of the inquiries, ensuring a clear understanding of the context and objectives.

**Mentorship Experiences**

Table 3 displays the details of each item with frequencies of respondent and respondent agreement under each score (SD=Strongly Disagree), (D=Disagree), (N=Neutral), (A=Agree), (M=Mean) and (SD=Standard Deviation). The Mean of each item ranges from 3.51 to 4.50 and falls under the agreed category. It revealed that respondents (principals, vice principals, and teachers) found mentorship was imperative in the school system. However, many respondents shared in the open-ended questions they had inadequate education on mentoring programs in the school system and were not provided any training as such. All respondents (teachers) mentioned it was six months in the school system.

**Table 3**  
Mentorship Experience for Respondents (Teachers)

Indicators	N	Mean	SD	Degree of perceptions
My Mentor/Mentee provides valuable guidance for leadership growth.	32	3.88	0.83	Agree
The mentorship program has positively impacted my leadership skills.	32	3.66	1.04	Agree
Over All		3.77	0.15	Agree

Level of Perception: 0.00-1.5 strongly disagree, 1.51-2.50 Disagree, 2.15-3.50 Neutral, 3.51-4.50 Agree, 4.51-5.00 Strongly Agree

Table 4 shows overall mean (M=3.61) and standard deviation (SD=0.04). The mean of each item ranges from 3.51 to 4.50 and falls under the agreed category. It revealed that mentorship helped in building relationships and communication skills with mentees. Moreover, respondents had experienced they were confident to use leadership skills and problem-solving skills. However, about (M=3.44) and (SD=0.67) respondents were neutral in decision-making abilities.

**Table 4**

Perceived Impact on Leadership Growth with Mentorship (Teachers)

Indicators	N	Mean	SD	Degree of perceptions
Decision making abilities	32	3.44	0.67	Neutral
Communication skills	32	3.69	0.74	Agree
Problem solving skills	32	3.63	0.71	Agree
confidence in leadership skills	32	3.56	0.76	Agree
Collaboration with colleagues	32	3.75	0.76	Agree
Over All		3.61	0.04	Agree

Level of Perception: 0.00-1.5 strongly disagree, 1.51-2.50 Disagree, 2.15-3.50 Neutral, 3.51-4.50 Agree, 4.51-5.00 Strongly Agree

**Figure 1**

Overall Perceptions Leadership Mentoring with (Principals, Vice Principal & Teachers)

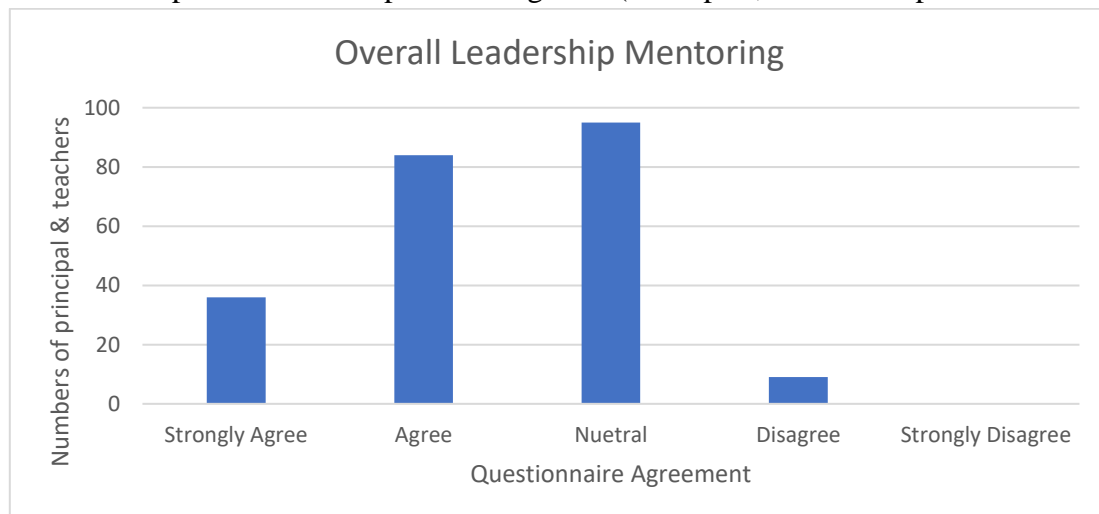


Table 5 indicates overall mean (M=4.59) and standard deviation (SD=0.04). The mean of each item ranges from 4.51-5.00 and falls under the strongly agreed category. It revealed that mentors provide valuable guidance and experience a positive impact on their leadership growth. Almost all student respondents were for the mentorship in the school.

**Table 5**

Mentorship Experience for Respondents (Students)

	N	Mean	SD	Degree of perceptions
My Mentor/Mentee provides valuable guidance for leadership growth.	48	4.77	0.52	Strongly Agree
The mentorship program has positively impacted my leadership skills.	48	4.4	0.57	Agree
<b>Overall</b>		4.59	0.04	Strongly Agree

Level of Perception: 0.00-1.5 strongly disagree, 1.51-2.50 Disagree, 2.15-3.50 Neutral, 3.51-4.50 Agree, 4.51-5.00 Strongly Agree

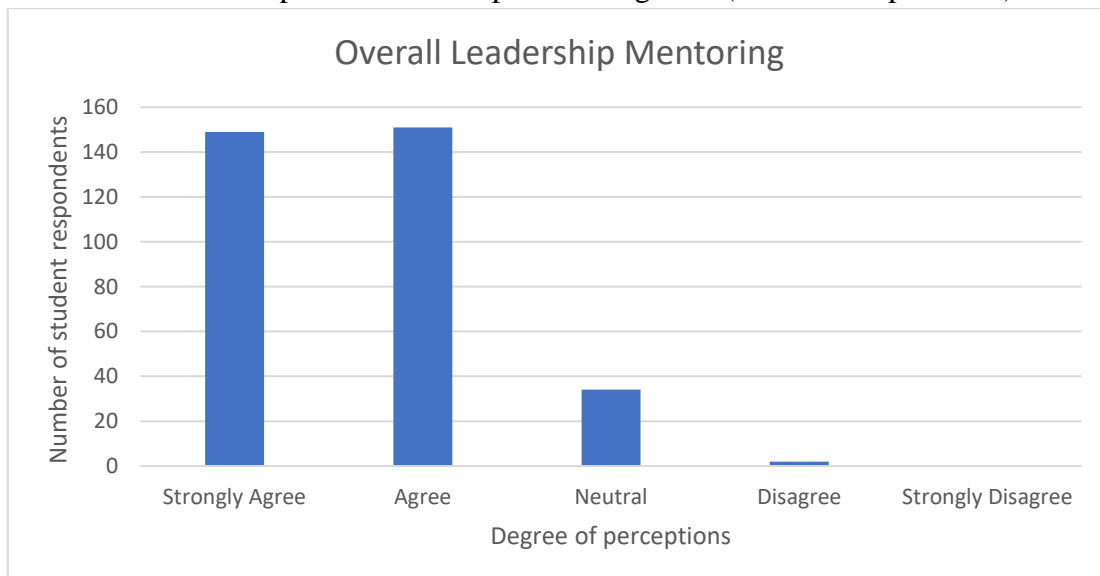
Table 6 shows overall mean (M=4.23) and standard deviation (SD=0.05). The mean of each item ranges from 3.51 to 4.50 and falls under the agreed category. It revealed that mentorship enhances their decisions abilities and communication skills. Moreover, respondents had experienced they were confident to use leadership skills and problem-solving skills. Additionally, about (M=4.54) and (SD=0.62) respondents strongly agreed that mentoring helped build relationships with friends.

**Table 6**  
Perceived Impact on Leadership Growth with Mentorship (Students)

	N	Mean	SD	Degree of perceptions
Decision making abilities	48	4.13	0.67	Agree
Communication skills	48	4.25	0.67	Agree
Problem solving skills	48	4.06	0.67	Agree
confidence in leadership skills	48	4.17	0.75	Agree
Collaboration with colleagues	48	4.54	0.62	Strongly Agree
Over All		4.23	0.05	Agree

Level of Perception: 0.00-1.5 strongly disagree, 1.51-2.50 Disagree, 2.15-3.50 Neutral, 3.51-4.50 Agree, 4.51-5.00 Strongly Agree

**Figure 2**  
Overall Perceptions Leadership Mentoring with (Student Respondents)



**The Semi-Structured Interview (with Principals and Vice Principals)**

Semi-structured interviews serve as a valuable method for confirming additional information and clarifications from diverse participants. These interviews help in validating and complementing the quantitative data collected. Likewise, from the researcher's perspective, semi-structured interviews are essential for gathering in-depth and meaningful insights, as emphasized (Merriam, 2009). In this study,



ten principals and three vice principals agreed to participate in the interviews. However, three principals later withdrew from the interview process. On average, each interview lasted about 16 minutes for every participating individual.

The interview was audio recorded with the participants and transcribed to facilitate data analysis. To maintain the confidentiality of the principal participants, they were assigned codes (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7), while the vice principal participants were denoted as V1, V2, and V3. The transcriptions were based on their responses to the interview questions. The themes grouped into three were the participants' perceptions of mentorship leadership growth, its impact, and challenges.

The study based on semi-structured interviews revealed that all participants shared similar perceptions that the mentorship program has been most beneficial in fostering leadership growth. P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, V1, and V3 shared positive about the start of the mentorship program in the school. They found mentorship could build strong relationships between teachers and students. Further, P7 shared his experience in mentorship,

I've been involved in the mentorship program for six months. The program has provided great support to our students, recognizing their potential for personal growth and academic success. Witnessing the positive impact on students' behaviour and engagement has been incredibly rewarding. This program has strengthened the school community, fostering trust and accountability. I am motivated and feel a safe space for students to seek guidance, share concerns, and set goals.

The second theme is the impact of mentoring on leadership growth. The participants view that mentoring enhances leadership growth. For instance, S2 stated that

The mentorship program has significantly contributed to my personal and professional growth, particularly my leadership skills. It has refined my ability to connect with students on a deeper level, understand their unique needs, and provide guidance. This experience has enhanced my communication skills, as I have learned to convey information effectively and empathetically.

A similar opinion shared by P4, P5 and V2:

Participating in the mentorship program has significantly boosted my confidence as an efficient leader. It refined my understanding of individual needs, improved communication, and instilled a sense of responsibility. Moreover, witnessing positive outcomes reinforced my belief in the program's impact.

The third common theme is the challenges in the mentorship program. Many participants (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, and V3) shared that "The mentors often have busy schedules, making it difficult to allocate sufficient time for effective mentorship". Supposedly, V2 "Mentors faced lack of education or adequately trained to provide guidance, and there might be a lack of resources to support the program". P7 added, "Effective communication between mentors, mentees, and school staff can be challenging, and miscommunication can hinder the mentorship process".

## DISCUSSION

### **The mentorship in leadership development in primary schools and challenges in the mentorship process**

The findings of this study suggest that mentorship in leadership development at primary schools has a significant impact on the building of relationships between students and teachers. The researcher observed that the mentees expressed feelings of guidance and support from their mentors that resembled a parental role within the school environment. According to Reyes (2003), effective mentoring programs are an avenue used to provide the necessary support for cultivating future leaders. These programs promote

and help experienced principals in guiding and mentoring novice principals. Additionally, this finding was consistent with Solansky (2010) study revealed that mentees involved in leadership development programs were more receptive to mentors who initiated the relationship and emphasized coaching, as opposed to mentors who focused on ensuring their mentees followed a prescribed program. Mentors offer invaluable guidance and help build capabilities to excel in new leadership roles and responsibilities (Daresh, 2004; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Reyes, 2003). Moreover, this research confirmed the effectiveness of mentoring programs in enhancing the distribution of administration work within schools.

As per the findings shown in Table 5, the overall mean ( $M=4.59$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD=0.04$ ). The student respondents felt that their mentors provided valuable guidance and positive experiences in their leadership growth. Similarly, the qualitative data collected from a semi-structured interview also supports the efficiency of mentorship in school. Participants were positive about mentorship but needed adequate training and education on mentoring. Likewise, P7 shared his view:

“The mentorship program impacted my decision-making abilities across various aspects of my role at the primary school. It has fostered a culture of mutual support and strengthened our efforts for students' well-being”.

Additionally, this finding was similar to DePaul (2000), one of the interviewees shared:

When I got this opportunity to be a mentor, it was an opportunity to see how I could use my professional experience to nurture other students' careers. As principal, I feel I am learning much from the mentees; I could reflect on myself.

Further, Parks (2005) stated that many participants saw their mentors as models of characteristics they wanted to imitate. Participants also noted the consistency and passion of their mentors. These attributes contributed to the participants' idea of how they could live their lives and gave them examples of the sort of lives to which they could aspire. Studies of mentoring and school leadership by Msila (2012) at the University of South Africa, College of Education, conclude a successful mentoring leadership approach implemented. It also observed that their leadership role empowers others to lead. The Wallace Foundation Report (2007) on mentoring contends that the primary goal of mentoring should be to provide principals with the knowledge, skills, and courage to become leaders of change who put teaching and learning first in their schools.

Nevertheless, Figure 1 shows the highest number of neutral (respondents: principals and teachers) with about ( $M=3.44$ ) and ( $SD=0.67$ ). This graph revealed that the teachers had inadequate ideas for mentorship. Participants mentioned that they had not received formal training in mentorship. One of the interviewees (P6) expressed his concern that

It is too early to state that engaging in mentorship has personal benefits. However, I believe there is an advantage to this, as it has allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of our students. Before this program, we made assumptions about knowing them, but after implementing mentorship, we have genuinely learned more about them.

Furthermore, teachers who participated in the survey questionnaire expressed that one of the primary challenges they encountered was the limitation of time. They found the available time insufficient for effectively conducting mentor-mentee activities. In addition, some respondents stated that the school administration did not consistently offer adequate guidance and resources to support the mentorship program within the school.

The impact of mentorship was apparent in the present study from many participants. The participants were adequate support, pushed them to develop personally, and gave them a broader

perspective on themselves and the world. Moreover, mentorship could enhance leadership attributes with teachers and students at primary school (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008). The mentors served as a resource and model to the participants. Finally, the mentoring promotes forming the participants into the leaders that they have become. The participants integrated their leadership into their identity, approached leadership as a relational endeavour, and were able to follow their interests in their roles. As these elements of mentoring and leadership development are intimately intertwined, this research proves to promote a larger quantity and quality of mentoring relationships for students in the future.

## LIMITATIONS

Although the research was carefully prepared, the researchers are still aware of its limitations and shortcomings. The following are three limitations of the study: First, the study was conducted only in eight schools in a district, and therefore, the findings may not be justifiable in generalizing results to a whole school in the country. Secondly, the data was collected total of 80 respondents from eight different schools. Finally, the study did not employ a separate group as a principal and teacher during survey questionnaire data collection.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This finding encourages all principals to research the impact of mentorship in fostering leadership growth in the coming years. Mentorship is the new system implemented at schools in our country. Further, future researchers should increase the sample size and find for grade levels to produce additional proof.

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