

# The Role of Mentorship in Shaping Professional Confidence Among Pre-Service Teachers

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## Abstract:

*This research explores the impact of mentorship on pre-service teachers' professional confidence development. The study examines how mentorship experiences influence confidence, identifies effective mentorship aspects, and investigates pre-service teachers' perceptions of mentorship's impact on their professional development. The theoretical framework draws on social learning and self-efficacy theories. The study focuses on three key areas: mentorship in teacher education, professional learning experiences, and professional confidence of pre-service teachers. Mentorship quality is influenced by trust, respect, and collaborative problem-solving. Professional learning experiences include reflective practice, classroom exposure, and collaborative inquiry. Professional confidence encompasses teaching self-efficacy, classroom management skills, and instructional competence. The research is grounded in Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. Contextual influences such as institutional support, mentor preparation, and time allocation are considered. A mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews will be used to gather comprehensive data on mentorship experiences and their perceived impact on professional confidence. The findings aim to provide insights for improving teacher education programs and enhancing the preparation of confident, competent pre-service teachers.*

**Keywords:** Mentorship, Pre-service teachers, Professional confidence, Teacher education, Self-efficacy, Experiential learning

## 1. Introduction to the Framework

The role of mentorship in shaping professional confidence among pre-service teachers is a critical aspect of teacher education. Mentorship, defined as a supportive relationship between an experienced educator and a novice teacher, plays a pivotal role in guiding pre-service teachers through the complexities of the teaching

profession. Professional confidence, encompassing self-efficacy and a sense of competence, is essential for pre-service teachers to effectively navigate classroom challenges and develop their teaching skills. Despite the importance of professional confidence, many pre-service teachers struggle to develop this crucial attribute during their training. Factors such as limited practical experience, anxiety about classroom management, and uncertainty about their teaching abilities can hinder the development of confidence. Mentorship has the potential to address these challenges by providing guidance, support, and constructive feedback to pre-service teachers.

This research aims to explore the relationship between mentorship experiences and the development of professional confidence among pre-service teachers. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do mentorship experiences influence pre-service teachers' professional confidence?
2. What specific aspects of mentorship are most effective in fostering confidence?
3. How do pre-service teachers perceive the impact of mentorship on their professional development?

The study draws upon social learning theory and self-efficacy theory to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the mentorship-confidence relationship. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, will be employed to gather comprehensive data on pre-service teachers' mentorship experiences and their perceived impact on professional confidence.

## **2. Core Construct: Mentorship in Teacher Education**

Mentorship in teacher education plays a crucial role in developing preservice teachers' skills and practices. The quality of mentor-mentee relationships is essential for effective mentoring, requiring trust, respect, and collaborative problem-solving (Hudson, 2016). Positive relationships are built through sharing information, resources, and expectations, as well as demonstrating professionalism and enthusiasm (Hudson, 2016). The frequency and duration of mentoring interactions can significantly impact the effectiveness of mentorship. Regular contact between mentors and mentees is associated with higher relationship satisfaction, particularly when mentor-mentee pairs share similar psychological attributes or when mentors display cultural awareness (Pedersen et al., 2022; Tuma & Dolan, 2024). Constructive feedback is a vital component of mentorship, though its quality can vary among mentors (Hudson, 2013). Emotional support, or psychosocial support, is also crucial and is enhanced when mentors and mentees share similar psychological characteristics (Pedersen et al., 2022). Modeling professional behaviors and classroom practices is an important aspect of mentorship. Video-recorded classroom observations can be particularly effective in facilitating discussions and analysis of teaching practices (Ceven McNally, 2015). Collaborative lesson planning and co-teaching opportunities, such as coauthoring, can strengthen the mentor-mentee relationship and increase mentees' commitment to pursuing STEM research careers (Pedersen et al., 2022). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for flexibility in mentoring approaches, with e-mentoring and peer mentoring becoming more prevalent (Haidusek-Niazy et al., 2023). In conclusion, effective mentorship in teacher education requires a multifaceted

approach that combines quality relationships, regular interactions, constructive feedback, emotional support, modeling, and collaborative practices

### **3. Dimensions Constructs: Professional Learning Experiences**

Reflective practice and critical self-assessment are crucial dimensions of professional learning experiences for teachers. These practices enable educators to critically examine their teaching methods, beliefs, and assumptions, fostering continuous improvement (Ho et al., 2025; Kuh, 2015). Classroom exposure and supervised practicum provide essential hands-on experiences, allowing teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings and develop practical skills (Ho et al., 2025; Williams & Grierson, 2016). Dialogues around pedagogy and teaching challenges are vital for professional growth. Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) and collaborative inquiry models offer structured conversations that focus on improving practice and student learning outcomes (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016; Kuh, 2015). These dialogues help teachers navigate complex issues and develop innovative solutions to classroom challenges. Opportunities for collaborative inquiry and peer feedback enhance professional learning experiences. Peer review processes and collaborative self-study approaches enable teachers to learn from each other, share best practices, and critically reflect on their teaching (Fletcher & Bullock, 2014; Gaynor, 2019). These experiences foster a culture of continuous improvement and collective growth within the teaching community. Supportive learning environments, both institutional and interpersonal, are essential for effective professional development. Job-embedded learning opportunities and school-based collaborative inquiry can significantly impact teachers' self-efficacy, instructional practices, and assessment strategies (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016). Additionally, virtual learning environments and online platforms can provide meaningful learning experiences, especially during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic (Fletcher & Bullock, 2014; Korucu-Kış, 2021). In conclusion, these dimensions collectively contribute to a comprehensive and effective professional learning experience for teachers, promoting reflective practice, critical thinking, and continuous improvement in education.

### **4. Outcome Construct: Professional Confidence of Pre-Service Teachers**

Professional confidence of pre-service teachers is a multifaceted construct encompassing several key indicators. Teaching self-efficacy, or the belief in one's teaching capabilities, is a crucial component that predicts teacher practice and student outcomes (Poulou, 2007). This self-efficacy is influenced by factors such as self-perceptions of teaching competence, personal characteristics, and motivation for teaching (Poulou, 2007). Confidence in managing classrooms and student behavior is another vital aspect, particularly when including children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Main & Hammond, 2008). Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in this area are generally high but may not always correspond with knowledge of effective strategies for challenging behaviors (Main & Hammond, 2008). Competence in instructional planning and delivery is reflected in pre-service teachers' ability to engage with digital technology (Lemon & Garvis, 2015) and implement inquiry-based instruction (Lakshmanan et al., 2010). The quality of teaching behavior, including classroom management and clarity of instruction, is strongly related to pupil engagement (Maulana et al., 2016). The development of a strong professional identity is influenced by field teaching experiences,

with intrinsic value identity typically increasing after such practices (Zhao & Zhang, 2017). This identity development is closely linked to professional commitment and emotional evaluation of the teaching profession (Zhao & Zhang, 2017). Readiness to transition into an independent teaching role is characterized by professional knowledge, practice, and engagement (Manasia et al., 2019). However, there are concerns about pre-service teachers' preparedness in areas such as managing disruptive behaviors, customizing learning, and self-regulating teaching emotions (Manasia et al., 2019).

## 5. Theoretical Foundations

The framework is grounded in three well-established educational theories:

- **Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory** – The framework is rooted in three established educational theories, with Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory being a key component. This theory posits that an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations significantly influences their behavior and motivation. In educational contexts, self-efficacy affects students' confidence, persistence, and willingness to engage in challenging tasks. It suggests that students with high self-efficacy are more likely to set ambitious goals, exert effort, and persevere in the face of difficulties. The theory emphasizes the importance of mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional states in shaping self-efficacy beliefs.
- **Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory** – Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory posits that cognitive development is fundamentally shaped by social interactions and cultural context. Central to this theory is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which represents the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. Vygotsky emphasized the role of language as a critical tool for thought and social mediation. He argued that higher-order thinking skills are internalized through social interactions, particularly with more knowledgeable others. This process, known as scaffolding, involves providing temporary support to learners as they develop new skills. The theory underscores the importance of cultural tools, social relationships, and collaborative learning in cognitive development and education.
- **Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory** – Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory posits that learning is a cyclical process involving four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Learners engage with new experiences, reflect on them, form abstract concepts, and apply these concepts in new situations. This cycle emphasizes the importance of hands-on experience and reflection in the learning process. Kolb's theory suggests that individuals have preferred learning styles based on their tendencies within this cycle. The theory has been widely applied in education, professional development, and organizational learning, providing a framework for designing effective learning experiences that cater to diverse learning preferences.

## 6. Contextual Influences

Contextual influences play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of mentoring relationships. Institutional support and a culture of mentorship are foundational elements that create an environment conducive to successful mentoring. When institutions prioritize mentorship, they allocate resources, establish clear



guidelines, and recognize the value of these relationships, fostering a supportive atmosphere for both mentors and mentees. Mentor preparation and training are essential components that directly impact the quality of mentoring interactions. Well-prepared mentors possess the necessary skills and knowledge to guide their mentees effectively, addressing various challenges and providing appropriate support. Training programs equip mentors with strategies for effective communication, goal-setting, and conflict resolution. The time allocated for mentoring interactions significantly influences the depth and quality of the mentoring relationship. Sufficient time allows for meaningful discussions, skill development, and the establishment of trust between mentors and mentees. Institutions that prioritize mentoring ensure that both parties have dedicated time for these interactions within their schedules. The attitudes of both mentors and mentees greatly affect the mentoring process. Positive attitudes, characterized by openness, enthusiasm, and commitment, contribute to a more productive and engaging mentoring experience. Conversely, negative attitudes can hinder progress and limit the benefits of the mentoring relationship. The availability of structured practicum opportunities provides mentees with hands-on experience and practical application of their learning. These opportunities allow mentees to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings under the guidance of their mentors, enhancing their professional development and skill acquisition.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The proposed framework offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the impact of mentorship on pre-service teachers' professional confidence development. By integrating key components such as the quality of mentor-mentee relationships, professional learning experiences, and theoretical foundations, the framework provides a holistic view of the mentorship process in teacher education. The core construct of mentorship emphasizes the importance of quality interactions, constructive feedback, and modeling of professional behaviors. These elements, combined with collaborative opportunities and emotional support, create a foundation for effective mentoring relationships. Professional learning experiences, including reflective practice, classroom exposure, and collaborative inquiry, complement the mentorship process. These experiences provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge, engage in critical self-assessment, and develop practical skills in supportive learning environments. The framework's outcome focuses on the development of professional confidence, encompassing teaching self-efficacy, classroom management skills, instructional competence, and the formation of a professional identity. This multifaceted approach to confidence-building prepares pre-service teachers for the transition to independent teaching roles. Grounded in established theories such as Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, the framework provides a solid theoretical foundation for understanding the mentorship process and its outcomes. Contextual influences, including institutional support, mentor preparation, and time allocation for mentoring interactions, are recognized as crucial factors that can impact the effectiveness of mentorship programs. By proposing that effective mentorship enhances experiential learning and reinforces professional confidence, this framework offers valuable insights for teacher education programs. It highlights the potential for well-structured mentorship experiences to significantly contribute to

the preparation of confident and competent pre-service teachers, ultimately benefiting the education system as a whole.

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