



UNVEILING THE EXPERIENCES OF PRIVATE SCHOOL HEADS IN MENTORING TEACHERS

Karen F. Casilac ¹
Henry C. Ligan ²

¹ Basic Education Department, St. Lorenzo Ruiz Academy of Tagum, Inc., Tagum City, Philippines
² College Department, UM Tagum College, Tagum City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the mentoring experiences of school heads in private schools in Tagum City, focusing on the challenges they encountered, the coping mechanisms they employed, and the insights they gained in guiding teachers. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that only school heads with direct mentoring experience were included. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that mentoring is a demanding responsibility shaped by complex realities, including high teacher turnover, diverse attitudes and professional needs, and persistent constraints related to time, processes, and instructional challenges. These conditions required school heads to engage in direct, hands-on mentoring practices to sustain teacher development. To address these challenges, school heads adopted adaptive strategies centered on personalized mentoring, capacity building, and instructional modeling. They effectively balanced multiple leadership roles, sought external support, and aligned mentoring practices with institutional goals and core values to ensure consistency and sustainability. The study further revealed that school heads view mentoring as a continuous and structured program that must be grounded in purpose and supported by a collaborative culture. They highlighted the importance of fostering continuous improvement, enhancing teacher competence, and recognizing individual differences to tailor mentoring approaches. Overall, mentoring emerged not only as a leadership function but also as a transformative practice that strengthens teacher resilience and contributes to institutional growth. The findings underscore the critical role of school heads in advancing mentoring as a strategic and values-driven component of professional development.

Keywords: *Educational Management, mentoring teachers, school heads, private schools, phenomenology, thematic analysis, Tagum City, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring teachers is a critical responsibility of school leaders, serving as a mechanism to strengthen collaboration, enhance instructional quality, and support professional growth. In private schools, mentoring is often aligned with institutional philosophies, ensuring that teachers receive personalized guidance in their career development. Despite its importance, mentoring practices remain challenged by limited time, high teacher turnover, and the absence of structured training programs. School heads frequently report difficulties in balancing tight schedules, addressing resistance to innovation, and managing poorly designed mentoring systems.

Globally, ineffective mentoring programs have been linked to weak instructional leadership and insufficient career development support. In Nigeria, concerns about teacher quality have negatively affected student achievement and the overall standard of education (Bambi & Bakari, 2021). In Virginia, schools have struggled with teacher shortages and high attrition rates, with many educators resigning within their first five years of service. Research highlights that effective mentoring depends on four key themes: positive mentor-mentee relationships, strong support systems, adequate teacher preparation, and recognition of the complexities of teaching (Purwana, 2023). Similarly, in Indonesia, principals have been found to require specialized training to strengthen their mentoring skills and confidence in guiding teachers (Ferayanti et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, particularly in junior and senior high schools in Maguindanao, mentoring remains underdeveloped due to the absence of formalized programs for beginning teachers. While administrators conduct classroom observations, the lack of systematized mentoring structures limits their ability to provide sustained professional support, thereby affecting instructional quality and contributing to teacher attrition (Ponce, 2019). In private schools, such as those in Tagum City Division, mentoring practices directly influence teacher performance, professional growth, and the overall quality of teaching and learning. Insufficient mentoring often results in difficulties in policy compliance, adaptation to new pedagogical approaches, and responsiveness to diverse student needs. These challenges negatively impact student learning outcomes, increase teacher stress, reduce job satisfaction, and contribute to lower teacher retention.

Although previous studies have highlighted the importance of mentoring in supporting novice teachers, limited research has examined how private school heads perceive and experience mentoring within their institutions. Addressing this gap, the present study explores the reflections of private school heads on their mentoring practices, providing insights into their strategies, challenges, and leadership approaches. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for strengthening teacher training, enhancing support systems, and improving mentoring practices in private schools. Moreover, the findings contribute to the development of more effective mentoring programs, which in

turn foster teacher effectiveness, elevate student learning outcomes, and strengthen the overall educational system.

This study offers practical implications for the Department of Education, school administrators, and educational leaders in designing and refining mentoring programs. By linking stronger mentoring practices to improved teacher quality and professional development, the study highlighted the role of mentoring in creating positive learning environments. Dissemination of findings through conferences, workshops, webinars, and private school networks ensures that decision-makers can readily access and apply these insights, ultimately contributing to the advancement of education in the Philippines.

Building on this context, existing literature further emphasizes the strategic role of mentoring in education. Mentoring differs from supervision in that it prioritizes developmental support and professional growth rather than compliance (Tokalic, 2023). Principals who integrate mentoring into instructional leadership foster supportive environments that improve teacher competence and reduce attrition (Roberson, 2019; Reitmar & Karge, 2019). Studies confirm that mentoring enhances lesson planning, instructional delivery, and classroom management, while also increasing job satisfaction, resilience, and organizational commitment (Okumo et al., 2023; Kutsyuruba, 2020; Feng et al., 2019; Hudson, 2019; Ingersoll & Strong, 2018).

National frameworks such as the NCBTS and PPST highlight the need for mentoring to address learner diversity and inclusivity (Basilio & Bueno, 2021; Santiago, 2020). Likewise, the PPSH and PPSS emphasize reflective practice and instructional leadership, urging principals to embed mentoring into supervision (Delos Santos, 2022; Cruz, 2019). Effective mentoring oversight requires careful mentor selection, often involving veteran teachers, and sustained support throughout the school year (Berg & Conway, 2020; Wilhelm et al., 2020; Woodhead, 2021; Ikemoto, 2022). International evidence reinforces that retaining experienced mentors sustains instructional quality and reduces turnover (Gu et al., 2025).

Further evidence suggests that mentoring becomes most effective when grounded in careful mentor selection, structured approaches, and sustained reflective practice. Research highlights the importance of choosing mentors with both expertise and relational competence to ensure program success (Hayes & Pridham, 2019; Woodhead, 2021). Frameworks such as GURO AT GABAY emphasize guidance, encouragement, and transformative relationships (Galvez & Azarias, 2024). Structured approaches like induction programs, peer collaboration, and reflective supervision enhance teacher learning and leadership growth (Islam, 2020; Swaminathan & Reed, 2020; Virella & Cobb, 2022). Embedding mentoring within Continuing Professional Development (CPD) systems and systematically evaluating programs through feedback and monitoring further ensures sustainability and long-term effectiveness (Okumu et al., 2023; Department of Education, 2021; Munir & Amin, 2020; Sezgin et al., 2020; Gonzaga, 2024).

Mentoring approaches range from value transmission and collaborative teamwork to reflective dialogue (Berinšterová, 2020; Hudson, 2019). Contemporary models

emphasize adaptability, resilience, and collaboration (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Yet challenges persist, including unclear standards, controlling mentor behaviors, disengagement due to tight schedules, and conflicts with administrators (Munir & Amin, 2020; Okumu et al., 2023; Gumarang, 2021). Private schools, in particular, often struggle with unstructured programs that waste resources and discourage participation (Gupta & Gupta, 2021). Continuous, well-maintained relationships are crucial for sustaining teacher motivation (Alegado & Soe, 2021).

Digital mentoring offers solutions to distance challenges but raises concerns about confidentiality and relational depth (Clutterbuck, 2020; Nababan et al., 2020). However, blended approaches that integrate technology with traditional methods enhance efficiency and collaboration (Kim et al., 2019; Panigrahi, 2019; Hamzah et al., 2021; Querol, 2025; Pesina, 2025). Local initiatives such as the Collaborative Learning Action Cell (CLAC) in Iloilo and division-led mentoring in Pasig City demonstrate contextual adaptation and institutionalization (Sumbilla et al., 2022; Sibayan, 2019). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) further link mentoring to teacher performance and student outcomes (Stein, 2022; Dai, 2023).

Finally, mentoring benefits both teachers and school heads. For teachers, it fosters competence, confidence, and career growth (Islam, 2020; Hundey et al., 2020). For school heads, it cultivates resilience, reflective practice, and leadership development (Swaminathan & Reed, 2020; Sezgin et al., 2020; Hayes & Mahfouz, 2020). Despite misconceptions that leaders do not need mentoring, studies show that continuous learning and two-way mentoring strengthen leadership effectiveness (Irby, 2020; Gul et al., 2019). Local studies confirm that mentoring strengthens instructional quality, sustains teacher motivation, and prepares future leaders (Cortez, 2025; Umbal, 2026; Ortiz Jr. et al., 2024). Altogether, mentoring emerges as a strategic leadership function essential for sustaining teacher effectiveness, professional resilience, and organizational stability.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of the school heads in mentoring teachers in private schools?
 - 1.1 What specific examples of successful mentoring you have had with teachers in your private school? What were the outcomes of these mentorships?
 - 1.2 What is/are the hardest part of mentoring teachers you have experienced? Can you cite scenarios?
 - 1.3 How do the unique needs of individual teachers affect your function in mentoring?
 - 1.4 How do you adjust your mentoring strategies to meet the varied needs of teachers?
 - 1.5 What particular rewarding experience have you had as a mentor to teachers?
2. How do private school heads cope with the challenges they encounter in mentoring teachers within their institutions?

- 2.1 What strategies did you employ to address the challenges encountered in mentoring teachers?
 - 2.2 What innovative approaches in mentoring teachers have you implemented?
 - 2.3 How do you prioritize and manage your time effectively to address these challenges while balancing other responsibilities as a school head?
 - 2.4 How do you ensure that your coping mechanisms for addressing challenges in mentoring teachers align with the overall goals and values of your institution?
 - 2.5 In what instances do you seek external support or resources to help you cope with the challenges of mentoring teachers?
3. What are the insights and aspirations of the private school heads in mentoring teachers that they can share with others?
 - 3.1 What are your aspirations for the mentoring program within your private school?
 - 3.2 What insights would you offer to other private school heads who are implementing mentoring programs for teachers?
 - 3.3 How do you plan to achieve your goals and objectives in mentoring teachers?
 - 3.4 How do you envision a program in mentoring that will contribute to the overall growth and success of your school community?

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was used in this study, specifically a phenomenological approach, which means that it used words instead of numbers in exploring the experiences of a person or group of people on a specific topic or issue (Tandon, 2021). Additionally, this qualitative research revealed more about the way private school heads think, feel, and experience as they conduct mentoring for the teachers, which truly captured their personal perspectives and stories. This approach helped in revealing the complex realities of mentoring, which include the challenges, achievements, and different strategies, thus showing how these school heads support the teachers' professional growth.

This study was conducted in selected private schools in Tagum City, Philippines. A qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, was employed to explore the lived experiences of school heads in mentoring teachers. This approach enabled the researcher to capture participants' thoughts, feelings, and perspectives while setting aside personal assumptions (Tandon, 2021). It was deemed appropriate as the study sought to understand the essence of mentoring experiences, including challenges, strategies, and insights in supporting teacher development.

The participants consisted of eight (8) private school heads selected through purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria required that participants: (a) were currently employed as school heads in private schools within Tagum City, (b) had at least three

years of leadership experience, and (c) had direct experience in mentoring teachers. The sample size aligns with phenomenological research standards (Creswell, 2013) and supports in-depth exploration and data saturation (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

Data were gathered through one-on-one in-depth interviews (IDI) using a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide composed of open-ended questions with follow-up probes. The instrument was validated by research experts before use. Interviews, lasting approximately one hour, were conducted in quiet and private settings, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. Responses in mixed languages were translated into Standard English while preserving meaning.

Ethical protocols were strictly followed, including approval from the Research Ethics Committee and informed consent from participants. Confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were ensured, with participants allowed to withdraw at any stage.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-step process: familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, supported by adviser validation and data triangulation.

The study focused solely on private school heads in Tagum City, which may limit generalizability. Additionally, findings relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal bias. Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into mentoring practices within the private school context.

RESULTS

Lived Experiences of School Heads in Mentoring Teachers in Private Schools

Table 1 captures the experiences of the private school heads in mentoring teachers in private schools, revealing four major themes: (a) experiencing fast turnover of teachers, (b) dealing with different attitudes and needs of teachers, (c) engaging direct and hands-on mentoring interactions, and (d) grappling with time, process, and learning challenges in mentoring. Together, these themes will describe the unique experiences of the private school heads in mentoring, the challenges they face, and the valuable outcomes they observed that can help teacher development.

Table 1

Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of School Heads in Mentoring Teachers in Private Schools

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Experiencing Fast Turnover of Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facing rapid teacher turnover • experiencing repeated cycles of hiring and retraining teachers • accepting teacher turnover despite mentoring efforts and other retention strategies
Dealing with Different Attitudes and Needs of Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognizing varied needs among teachers • understanding teachers' personal struggles and strengths • facing resistance to mentoring from proud and academically confident teachers and their unreceptiveness to repeated corrections. • managing indifferent attitudes affecting mentoring effectiveness • balancing authority and compassion in mentoring decisions
Engaging Direct and Hands-On Mentoring Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observing classroom teaching to identify issues • guiding struggling teachers in classroom management • conducting regular faculty meetings and feedback sessions • mentoring teachers in specific instructional tasks
Grappling with Time, Process, and Learning Challenges in Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experiencing resistance to unlearning old practices in order to adopt new strategies • facing time constraints in mentoring responsibilities • supporting COVID-era teachers with limited classroom experience

These experiences reveal that private school leaders strengthen the mentoring program by directly engaging in teachers' professional practice instead of concentrating only on the difficulties. This means that they are focused on delivering practical support and useful feedback that addresses classroom management as well as teaching strategies.

Coping Mechanisms of School Heads with the Challenges in Mentoring Teachers in Private Schools

The analysis of the data revealed that school heads encounter a range of challenges in mentoring teachers within their institutions. In response, school heads employ various coping mechanisms to navigate these challenges and maintain the continuity and effectiveness of mentoring practices. From the analysis, six major themes emerged: (a) strengthening teacher development and adaptive mentoring practices, (b) personalizing mentoring based on teacher needs and differences, (c) strengthening instructional practices through modeling and innovation, (d) managing roles and responsibilities effectively, (e) seeking support, resources, and external assistance, (f) aligning mentoring practices with institutional goals and values.

Table 2

Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanisms of School Heads With the Challenges in Mentoring Teachers in Private Schools

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Strengthening Teacher Development and Adaptive Mentoring Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting training programs for teachers • implementing walkthrough and clinical supervision with pre- and post-conferences • supporting teacher development through collaboration and feedback • using feedbacking and study groups
Personalizing Mentoring Based on Teacher Needs and Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeting mentoring on individual teacher needs • adjusting mentoring approaches based on teacher personality • tailoring strategies according to teacher learning style and preference • providing one-on-one mentoring support • building trust and rapport through personal interaction
Strengthening Instructional Practices Through Modeling and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing research-based teaching strategies in mentoring • demonstrating effective teaching strategies to teachers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting interactive and student-centered teaching approaches • encouraging peer mentoring and collaborative learning • modeling professional practices and mentoring informally
Managing Roles and Responsibilities Effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prioritizing urgent mentoring tasks over other responsibilities • structuring activities and schedules for mentoring and school tasks • collaborating with other school heads for shared ideas • delegating responsibilities to coordinators and experienced teachers • balancing multiple responsibilities through prioritization • allocating time based on teachers' needs and availability
Seeking Support, Resources, and External Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sending teachers to external trainings and seminars • asking for assistance from experienced professionals and colleagues • collaborating with administrators and leadership for support • engaging in professional networking and benchmarking practices
Aligning Mentoring Practices with Institutional Goals and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinforcing mission, vision, and institutional values in mentoring • ensuring alignment of decisions with school philosophy and policies • practicing proactive leadership and communication • evaluating practices and improving based on feedback

The responses of the school heads emphasize that effective mentoring is deeply anchored in the school's mission, vision, and philosophy, which serve as guiding frameworks for all instructional and leadership decisions. By consistently revisiting these core values, mentors ensure that teacher development remains aligned with the institution's identity and long-term goals. Moreover, the findings highlight the importance of proactive leadership, open communication, and the promotion of a culture of continuous learning in strengthening mentoring practices. Lastly, regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms further enhance mentoring by identifying best practices and areas for improvement, making the process more dynamic, reflective, and responsive to the needs of both teachers and the school community.

Insights and Aspirations of Private School Heads in Mentoring Teachers

This section presents the insights of school heads in mentoring teachers, highlighting how they understand and navigate mentoring as part of their leadership role within the private school context, as these themes capture how school heads interpret mentoring beyond formal processes, including how they respond to challenges, support teacher development, and sustain school improvement. From the analysis, five essential themes emerged, reflecting the shared experiences, perspectives, and practices of the participants.

Table 3 outlines these themes and their core ideas, highlighting the insights and aspirations of school heads in mentoring teachers in private schools. These themes include: (a) sustain mentoring programs, (b) build a supportive and collaborative mentoring culture, (c) promote continuous improvement and teaching mastery, (d) embed mentoring with values and purpose, and (e) acknowledge individual differences and personalize mentoring approaches. The presentation of findings is supported by selected verbatim responses to provide depth and authenticity, allowing a clearer understanding of how mentoring is experienced and implemented in real school settings.

Table 3

Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights and Aspirations of School Heads in Mentoring Teachers in Private Schools

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Sustain Mentoring Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> aspire for the institutionalization and intensification of mentoring program in the school include mentoring in school program and action plan enhance mentoring program to support teacher development develop mentoring system that benefits the whole school community
Build a Supportive and Collaborative Mentoring Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create positive and supportive environment for teachers promote open communication and trust among teachers cultivate strong sense of community among educators strengthen collaboration among teachers, parents, and administrators
Promote Continuous Improvement and Teaching Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve teachers' academic and instructional performance provide continuous training and seminars for teacher growth

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop teachers to become capable and competent
Embed Mentoring on Values and Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • align mentoring practices with school vision and values • emphasize faith-based identity in mentoring practices • view teaching and mentoring as a vocation and mission • build mentoring in a relationship with God • seek spiritual guidance from the Holy Spirit
Acknowledge Individual Differences and Personalize Mentoring Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognize diverse needs and differences among teachers • prioritize teacher attitude and personality in development • understand teacher personality • tailor mentoring programs based on teacher needs

School heads highlight the importance of recognizing individual differences among teachers and personalizing mentoring approaches to provide responsive, meaningful, and effective support for their professional growth. By taking time to understand teachers' varying needs, strengths, and areas for improvement, school heads are better able to design targeted interventions that promote continuous development. This individualized approach ensures that teachers receive appropriate guidance that enhances their instructional competence and service delivery, which contributes to improved teaching performance and better learning outcomes for students.

DISCUSSION

Table 1: Lived Experiences of School Heads in Mentoring Teachers in Private Schools

The private school heads selected as participants shared their experiences in mentoring teachers in their respective private institutions. From their responses, the following themes emerged: (a) experiencing fast turnover of teachers, (b) dealing with different attitudes and needs of teachers, (c) engaging direct and hands-on mentoring interactions, and (d) grappling with time, process, and learning challenges in mentoring.

Experiencing Fast Turnover of Teachers

Teacher turnover has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges in sustaining mentoring programs within private schools. Principals often highlight how teachers transfer to the Department of Education or migrate abroad for better employment opportunities. This constant movement disrupts mentoring initiatives and weakens the

pursuit of long-term developmental goals. While mentoring is recognized as a vital support mechanism, school leaders acknowledge that it cannot fully address attrition driven by external factors such as higher salaries, better benefits, and greater job stability elsewhere.

These findings align with Nguyen et al. (2020), who emphasized that teacher retention is more strongly influenced by working conditions and organizational support than mentoring interventions alone. In addition, Johnson et al. (2021) highlighted that school climate and leadership practices.

These findings are observed in the study of Feng et al. (2019), which emphasizes that limited professional growth opportunities and a lack of institutional support are among the primary reasons why teachers leave the profession. This is also supported by Encabo and Ambalong (2025), who highlight that financial insecurity, inadequate benefits, and unsustainable workloads continue to push educators to resign.

In addition, school heads also expressed the significant burden associated with the frequent need to train newly hired teachers and staff. High teacher turnover necessitates repeated orientations and a sustained mentoring process, thereby increasing administrative and instructional demands. These are also found in the conclusion of Nguyen and Springer (2023), which similarly contend that teacher attrition is largely shaped by organizational conditions and systemic pressures rather than individual weaknesses.

In the Philippine context, mentoring frameworks such as the PPST and NCBTS are designed to be holistic, yet in practice, they often become reactive survival mechanisms to cope with turnover and training gaps. This echoes the findings of Kutsyuruba (2020), who notes that high attrition reshapes mentoring into a repetitive cycle of orientation and retraining, burdening school leaders with constant adjustment.

Despite these challenges, private school heads often reframe turnover as an opportunity for growth. Haddock-Millar et al. (2023) introduce the concept of reciprocal mentoring, where both mentors and mentees benefit from shared learning experiences. This perspective resonates with principals who take pride in preparing younger teachers for future careers, even if these teachers eventually transfer to public schools. In such cases, turnover is not merely a loss but also a chance to strengthen leadership skills among veteran teachers and build essential competencies among novices. This dual lens, which views attrition as both disruption and opportunity, underscores the resilience of private school communities in navigating systemic challenges.

Therefore, private school leaders should strengthen retention through clear career pathways, fair compensation, and recognition. Mentoring should become ongoing professional development with collaboration and leadership training, supported by partnerships with DepEd and other organizations.

Dealing with Different Attitudes and Acceptance in Mentoring

Upon the review and reflection on the responses of the participants, it was revealed that the attitudes and mindsets of the teachers are one of the challenges in mentoring that private school heads experience, and not the lack of programs or policies. According to the participants, the hindrances in their mentoring efforts are the teachers' pride, resistance, and indifference, which clearly indicate that mentoring is a relational process that needs openness, humility, and willingness to learn. Mentoring is more than just the process of transferring skills, it involves those essential attitudes for it to be effective.

This observation aligns with the idea that mentoring requires the need for willingness and collaboration. The difficulties occur in the mentor-mentee relationship when teachers resist feedback because of pride and indifference to repeated suggestions. According to Munir and Amin (2020), mismatched expectations and disengagement cause the weakening of the effectiveness of mentoring, while Okumu et al. (2023) stress that the disruption of guidance and support is due to the teachers' negative attitudes and unwillingness to cooperate.

In dealing with different attitudes and levels of acceptance in mentoring, school heads highlighted the sensitivity of balancing authority with compassion when guiding teachers. They described the challenge of maintaining discipline while fostering supportive relationships, reflecting the need for empathetic leadership in diverse mentoring situations. As Woodhead (2021) emphasizes, consistent supervision sustains effective mentoring, while Kutsyuruba (2020) adds that caring and supportive leadership strengthens teachers' confidence and workplace morale, particularly when navigating varied responses to mentoring. Moreover, Iligan also explained that when school heads use empathetic leadership, they help the teachers become committed to professional development.

Additionally, issues such as pride, indifference, and resistance in mentoring are not considered as barriers that are impossible to fix. These are viewed as signs that the school environment has unmet needs, therefore, pushing the school to prioritize empathy, reflective practice, and collaborative school cultures. This perspective matches the idea of Basilio and Bueno (2021), in which they emphasize that mentoring can be strengthened when it is aligned with the vision and values of the school, while Alberca (2025) observed that when there is a positive school culture, teachers become more loyal and acquire greater willingness to participate in mentoring and development.

Overall, this study indicates that when mentoring is empathetic, reflective, and aligned with institutional values, it fosters trust, strengthens collaboration, and enhances teacher commitment. The implication is that effective mentoring goes beyond skill development and must also shape positive attitudes and a supportive culture that sustains professional growth and reduces attrition.

Engaging Direct and Hands-On Mentoring Interactions

Direct and hands-on mentoring interactions play a crucial role in strengthening teacher development and instructional effectiveness within schools. This approach emphasizes the active and physical presence of school heads and mentors in the classroom, where they observe actual teaching practices and provide immediate, practical support. Rather than limiting mentoring to theoretical discussions, this method allows mentors to engage directly with teachers by demonstrating instructional strategies and offering real-time feedback. Such involvement highlights mentoring as a relational and experiential process that supports teachers in addressing the day-to-day demands of classroom instruction. Consequently, teachers benefit from concrete guidance that enhances their pedagogical skills and confidence, ultimately contributing to improved teaching performance.

This aligns with research conducted by De Dios (2025), which underscores the value of classroom observation in mentoring, as it enables school heads to provide feedback grounded in actual teaching experiences, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. Similarly, Baldera (2025) emphasizes that instructional leadership, particularly through modeling effective teaching practices, significantly contributes to school improvement. Furthermore, Woodhead (2021) highlights that structured and interactive mentoring, such as classroom observations, constructive feedback, and collaborative planning, provides teachers with clearer pathways for professional growth.

In addition, reflective and collaborative mentoring approaches further enhance teacher development. Swaminathan and Reed (2020) explain that reflective mentoring enables teachers to critically examine their instructional decisions and strategies, fostering deeper professional awareness. Likewise, Guo et al. (2025) emphasize that collaborative lesson planning strengthens teachers' professional growth by encouraging shared expertise and continuous improvement. Supporting this, Ebillo-Canalita and Jugar (2025) demonstrate that structured collaborative lesson planning models increase teacher confidence and improve instructional quality. These studies collectively indicate that mentoring is most effective when it integrates reflection, collaboration, and active engagement in teaching practices.

Overall, direct and hands-on mentoring interactions significantly contribute to the professional growth of teachers by transforming mentoring into a dynamic, practical, and collaborative process. This approach not only improves instructional practices but also empowers teachers to develop the competence and confidence necessary for long-term success in the teaching profession (Sito, 2021).

Grappling with Time, Process, and Learning Challenges in Mentoring

Mentoring in schools is not a straightforward responsibility. It is a layered and time-intensive process that demands patience, continuity, and sustained effort from school leaders. Private school heads emphasize that mentoring requires repeated cycles of guidance, observation, and feedback before teachers can fully adopt and master new strategies. This is especially true for teachers who began their careers during the

pandemic, when limited resources and a lack of classroom exposure made professional growth more difficult. For school leaders, the challenge lies in balancing managerial duties with the demanding but essential role of long-term mentoring.

This is supported by Woodhead (2021), who warns that poor mentoring practices can accelerate burnout and increase teacher attrition within five years, underscoring the need for sustained and structured guidance. Munir and Amin (2020) further argue that teacher growth slows when standards are inconsistent and training is mismatched, resulting in repeated interventions that consume significant time and energy. Okumu et al. (2023) add that heavy workloads, tight schedules, and low motivation weaken mentoring relationships, reflecting the burden school heads face in reconciling time constraints with mentoring responsibilities. These findings collectively affirm that mentoring is not a quick fix but a gradual developmental process shaped by time, sustainability, and learning challenges.

However, the findings of Tuico and Gallo (2024) suggest that teacher performance and instructional quality improved significantly under direct supervision and supportive leadership attitudes, reinforcing the value of sustained mentoring despite time-related struggles. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasize that mentoring aligned with institutional goals fosters teacher resilience and professional growth, while Ingersoll and Strong (2011) note that structured mentoring programs reduce attrition and strengthen instructional competence. These studies demonstrate that mentoring is not only about sharpening technical skills but also about guiding teachers through procedural and developmental hurdles in their professional journey.

Thus, school heads should design systematic mentoring frameworks, allocate protected time for mentoring, and embed feedback mechanisms for continuity. Differentiated support for teachers with limited classroom exposure, such as pairing them with experienced mentors, can further sustain growth.

Table 2: Coping Mechanisms of School Heads with the Challenges in Mentoring Teachers in Private Schools

The participants, having faced the problems in mentoring teachers in private schools, shared several coping mechanisms to handle these difficulties. The school heads described how they managed time constraints, administrative responsibilities, and the diverse needs of teachers through different strategies and support systems. Their narratives reveal their practical approaches to sustaining effective mentoring and are organized into themes. These include (a) strengthening teacher development and adaptive mentoring practices, (b) personalizing mentoring based on teacher needs and differences, (c) strengthening instructional practices through modeling and innovation, (d) managing roles and responsibilities effectively, (e) seeking support, resources, and external assistance, and (f) aligning mentoring practices with institutional goals and values.

Strengthening Teacher Development and Adaptive Mentoring Practices

Mentoring in schools becomes most effective when leaders intentionally balance structure with empathy in addressing challenges faced by teachers. Private school heads emphasized that mentoring should not rely solely on informal or unplanned exchanges; instead, they prioritize systemic mechanisms such as induction programs, supervision plans, and standardized feedback channels. These deliberate practices ensure stability and fairness, while also making teachers feel recognized and valued. Thus, coping with professional challenges extends beyond immediate problem-solving, it requires leadership practices that sustain teacher growth, confidence, and long-term effectiveness.

The results of the study align with Hortal (2020), who explains that induction frameworks not only promote long-term teacher retention but also help novice teachers overcome early professional challenges. Similarly, Islam (2020) highlights that structured mentoring, when combined with reflective supervision, equips teachers with tools to respond to diverse learner needs. In the Philippine context, Sumbilla et al. (2022) demonstrate that the Collaborative Learning Action Cell (CLAC) mentoring program enhances teachers' confidence in handling unfamiliar subjects, showing how systemic mentoring can directly impact classroom practice.

Meanwhile, several studies show the importance of discipline and institutional support in mentoring. Okumu et al. (2023), emphasize that mentoring achieves lasting impact when aligned with school policy frameworks, ensuring consistency and sustainability. Further evidence is provided by Morales and Sapin (2020), who add that structured mentoring allows school heads to address systemic challenges, grounding their leadership in deliberate planning, evaluation, and integration of policies. These studies collectively stress that school leaders should establish clear induction programs, provide ongoing mentor training, and integrate supervision into school improvement plans. Specific actions include designing standardized feedback tools, embedding mentoring into policy frameworks, and conducting regular evaluations to ensure accountability.

Personalizing Mentoring Based on Teacher Needs and Differences

Participants highlighted that personalizing mentoring is the strongest coping strategy, as it responds to the diverse needs of each teacher, including their personalities, learning styles, and professional needs. This is because a one-size-fits-all approach in mentoring will lead to failure and inadequacy. When mentoring provides adaptive support, it can make the mentoring process more relational and meaningful, fostering trust and genuine professional growth, as well as affirming the value of each teacher.

The importance of personalization in mentoring is strongly supported by research of Alegado and Soe (2021), who argue that sustained mentor-mentee relationships provide both emotional support and practical guidance, highlighting the relational dimension of mentoring. Valdez and Dominado (2020) further stress that mentors'

attitudes and behaviors shape the mentoring culture, especially when aligned with the institutional objectives.

Furthermore, Islam (2020) underscores that reflective supervision and peer collaboration help teachers manage diverse demands, while Handrianto et al. (2022) emphasize that recognizing each teacher's uniqueness fuels lifelong learning and constructive attitudes. Also, Swaminathan and Reed (2020) add that reflective mentoring enables school leaders to cultivate a growth mindset, adapting their guidance to specific teacher needs. Collectively, these studies affirm that personalization is not optional but essential in sustaining teacher development.

Additionally, Morales and Sapin (2020) highlight that structured yet flexible mentoring allows school heads to address systemic challenges while remaining responsive to individual teacher differences. Mentoring also achieves lasting impact when embedded in school policy frameworks, ensuring that personalization is not ad hoc but strategically integrated (Okumu et al.,2023). On the other hand, Munir and Amin (2020) note that accountability in mentoring requires formal mentor training, which equips leaders to adapt their strategies to varied teacher profiles. In addition, collaborative mentoring programs such as the Learning Action Cell enhance teachers' confidence in handling unfamiliar subjects, showing how personalization can be institutionalized within systemic mentoring structures (Sumbilla et al.,2022).

Collectively, the findings show that school leaders should design flexible mentoring frameworks that integrate teacher profiling, reflective supervision, and peer collaboration. Specific actions include conducting needs assessments to identify teachers' learning styles, embedding individualized feedback mechanisms into supervision plans, and training mentors to adapt strategies to diverse personalities.

Strengthening Instructional Practices Through Modeling and Innovation

Mentoring becomes effective when instructional leadership is directly connected to pedagogical innovation. Private school heads emphasized that mentoring should move beyond traditional practices and instead elevate teaching quality through demonstration of effective lessons, cooperative learning, and peer collaboration. These reframing positions mentoring as an interactive process in which teachers learn by observing, reflecting, and experimenting with new methods, rather than passively receiving instructions. Such adaptive strategies are vital in addressing diverse student needs and sustaining mentoring amidst barriers.

These findings underscore the importance of modeling and innovation in mentoring. Wilhelm et al. (2020) and Woodhead (2021) highlight that demonstration-based mentoring accelerates teacher mastery and confidence, as teachers are more likely to adopt strategies that they have observed in practice rather than abstractly discussed. Munir and Amin (2020) further argue that burnout can be prevented when mentors provide practical, replicable methods, ensuring that teachers are equipped with actionable strategies rather than theoretical guidance.

Additionally, Stein (2022) and Dai (2023) emphasize the role of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in transforming mentoring into a collective process of growth. By modeling teaching and inviting colleagues into collaborative inquiry, school heads foster teamwork, creative problem-solving, and shared accountability. When school leaders demonstrate strong classroom practices, teachers are able to observe, adapt, and contextualize strategies, resulting in more effective teaching and confidence in the mentoring relationship (Baldera, 2025).

Taken together, these studies suggest that school leaders should integrate demonstration-based strategies into their leadership routines. Specific actions include modeling effective classroom practices during professional development sessions, establishing PLCs where teachers collaboratively reflect on observed strategies and design innovative solutions, embedding peer collaboration into mentoring frameworks to encourage experimentation and shared learning, and providing structured opportunities for teachers to observe lessons followed by guided reflection and adaptation.

Managing Roles and Responsibilities Effectively

Effective coping strategies in mentoring are closely tied to how school leaders manage their multiple responsibilities and the demands of their roles. Principals and department heads often balance instruction, administrative paperwork, and mentoring simultaneously, which can easily result in mentoring being sidelined. By placing teacher development at the center of their leadership through classroom visits, follow-up feedback, delegation of tasks to junior staff, and flexible scheduling, school leaders are able to sustain mentoring practices without neglecting other responsibilities. This practical balancing ensures that mentoring remains consistent and purposeful, even amidst the heavy demands of a full workload.

This study found that mentoring must be viewed as a central leadership responsibility rather than a peripheral task. Demir and Criswell (2019) argue that mentoring is integral to the professional identity of school heads and master teachers, requiring dedicated time, resources, and careful planning. They emphasize that mentoring goes beyond assigning tasks; it involves strategic planning to ensure teacher growth and alignment with broader school goals. In addition, Hayes and Freedham (2019) further highlight that selecting mentors must be deliberate, as experience alone does not guarantee effective mentoring. They frame mentor selection as a leadership skill, requiring school heads to assess both subject expertise and the capacity to listen, support, and guide teachers.

Similarly, Rolhem et al. (2020) and Woodhead (2021) stress that the effectiveness of mentoring depends on the competence and commitment of mentors. Delegation plays a crucial role in this process, as it not only lightens the workload of school heads but also fosters a culture of shared responsibility. By involving experienced teachers in mentoring newer colleagues, schools create a collective effort toward professional growth. Munir and Amin (2020) add that accountability in mentoring requires structured evaluation, ensuring that responsibilities are clearly defined and progress is consistently monitored.

Together, these studies underscore that effective mentoring is sustained when school leaders balance institutional demands with deliberate role management and shared responsibility.

To manage roles and responsibilities effectively, school leaders should embed mentoring into their core leadership routines rather than treating it as an additional or secondary task. This requires establishing clear mentor–mentee assignments with defined roles and expectations, delegating responsibilities to experienced teachers to foster a culture of shared growth, and scheduling regular classroom visits and feedback sessions to prioritize teacher development (Hortal, 2020). In addition, mentoring should be integrated into school improvement plans to ensure alignment with institutional objectives, while structured evaluations must be conducted to monitor progress and accountability.

Seeking Support, Resources, and External Assistance

One major way for school leaders to cope with the pressures of mentoring duties is by being open-minded in reaching out for external support and partnerships. Principals recognize that mentoring challenges cannot always be solved within the limits of their own schools; by involving external consultants, joining capacity-building programs, and benchmarking practices with other institutions, they transform mentoring into a shared and wider learning journey. Through these collaborations, school leaders gain new teaching strategies, explore diverse perspectives, and access guidance that strengthens the professional growth of teachers.

The result of this study affirms the value of external support in sustaining effective mentoring. For example, Munir and Amin (2020) emphasize that the presence of external evaluators strengthens rigor and accountability, while Sezgin et al. (2020) highlight that feedback from external experts fosters open and collaborative spaces where problems can be addressed proactively. In addition, Woodhead (2021) points out that private schools often tap veteran teachers or instructional coaches to provide specialized skills, demonstrating the importance of external expertise in sharpening mentoring approaches and building stronger teaching practices.

Furthermore, Woodhead (2021) points out that private schools tap veteran teachers or instructional coaches to provide specialized skills, showing how important is the help given from external sources in strengthening mentoring. By involving experienced external practitioners in mentoring, school heads are able to sharpen the approaches they use as well as build stronger teaching skills. This trust underscores the idea that effective mentoring is a combination of internal efforts with the intentional and enriched support coming from the external expertise.

Additionally, external collaboration and partnerships also keep the school leaders feel connected, ignite fresh ideas, and sustain their learning journey alive. Professional Learning Communities or PLCs, according to Stein (2022) and Dai (2023), are very good avenues that helps the school heads grow stronger because they are able to participate

in joint discussions and share adaptable strategies and shared methods. Benchmarking best practices in other schools help them acquire creative strategies and ready-made solutions that they can employ in their own situations. Mentoring networks ease the feeling of isolation among the school leaders, because they are given the opportunities for honest reflection and ongoing support (Tintoré et al. 2022).

In summary, the research supports that seeking external support and resources allows school leaders to sustain mentoring as a dynamic and collaborative process rather than an isolated responsibility. By integrating external expertise into their leadership practices, they not only enhance teacher growth and confidence but also strengthen the culture of professional development across schools.

Aligning Mentoring Practices with Institutional Goals and Values

By grounding mentoring in the school's mission and vision, school leaders ensure that teacher development is systematically aligned with the overarching philosophy of education. This alignment promotes consistency, coherence, and resilience in mentoring programs, enabling schools to sustain professional growth while reinforcing institutional identity. Proactive leadership, continuous evaluation, and composure in decision-making further empower principals and department heads to cope with challenges while maintaining focus on long-term objectives.

Evidence from recent studies highlights the importance of aligning mentoring with institutional goals. For instance, the study of Basilio and Bueno (2021) advocates for integrating instructional supervision into school standards, showing how mission and vision serve as guiding frameworks for mentoring decisions. The behavior of principals also directly influences the culture and values embedded in mentoring, ensuring that teacher growth aligns with Department of Education guidelines and national standards (Valdez & Dominado, 2020). Similarly, Guillergan (2024) and Aquino et al. (2021) emphasize that linking mentoring to broader school goals unites daily teaching practices with the institution's core beliefs, reinforcing coherence between teacher development and organizational identity.

Also, as highlighted in the study of Sezgin et al. (2020), which highlights the value of external evaluations provide objective feedback aligned with school goals. School leaders should embed mentoring into the school's mission and vision by establishing clear frameworks that connect teacher development to organizational values. Specific actions include conducting regular feedback sessions anchored in school philosophy, integrating structured evaluations into mentoring cycles, involving external evaluators for objective insights, and fostering reflective dialogue among teachers and leaders. Additionally, principals should cultivate mindfulness and adaptability in their leadership to ensure mentoring remains resilient and responsive to evolving educational demands (Hayes & Maffouz, 2020).

The body of evidence points that aligning mentoring practices with institutional goals and values transforms mentoring into a strategic leadership mechanism that sustains teacher growth and reinforces school identity. When principals and department

heads deliberately integrate mentoring into mission-driven frameworks, they not only strengthen teacher confidence and resilience but also ensure that professional development remains consistent, purposeful, and aligned with long-term educational improvement (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021).

Table 3: Insights and Aspirations of Private School Heads in Mentoring Teachers

After managing the demands of their roles and engaging in mentoring practices, the participants developed deeper insights into their experiences as school heads in mentoring teachers in private schools. Their stories show how these experiences shape their approaches to teacher support, leadership, and professional development. The participants shared how their reflections are connected to their responsibilities in fostering teacher growth, strengthening relationships, and promoting a supportive and collaborative school environment.

These insights represent their meaningful engagement in mentoring and their commitment to nurturing capable and competent educators. The essential themes that emerged from their insights include: (a) sustain mentoring programs, (b) build a supportive and collaborative mentoring culture, (c) promote continuous improvement and teaching mastery, (d) embed mentoring in values and purpose, and (e) acknowledge individual differences and personalize mentoring approaches.

Sustain Mentoring Programs

Sustaining mentoring programs in private schools is increasingly recognized as a vital strategy for teacher growth and institutional excellence. It extends beyond professional growth and reflects a deliberate and ongoing commitment to address critical challenges such as retention, accountability, and instructional quality. In the context of sustainability, embedding mentoring into daily practice ensures that it becomes a consistent and integral part of school operations rather than a short-term initiative. School leaders emphasize that mentoring should not remain an isolated initiative but must be permanently embedded into school operations, serving both as a learning center and a training ground for teachers. By institutionalizing and intensifying mentoring programs, private school heads aim to build reliable systems that enhance teachers' competence, support career progression, and foster collective growth within the school community.

These findings align with Okumu et al. (2023), who emphasized that integrating mentoring into government policies and providing clear guidelines can be used to achieve structured and effective teacher development. This alignment of mentoring to the policies means that it really takes off in school systems rather than isolated initiatives. Aside from that, according to Marshall (2021), mentoring practices will become more effective, and teachers' burnout will be mitigated when structured programs are supported with enough resources and time. Similarly, Tintoré et al. (2022) revealed that school leaders who adopt structured mentoring frameworks are better equipped to address systemic challenges such as teacher retention and accountability standards, thereby positioning mentoring as a strategic response to broader educational issues.

Furthermore, sustaining mentoring programs depends on embedding reflective practice and collaborative learning into everyday school routines. As noted by Swaminathan and Reed (2020), opportunities for reflection enable teachers to critically examine their practice, leading to deeper insights and more adaptive instructional strategies. Similarly, Handrianto et al. (2022) emphasize that mentoring fosters a culture of continuous learning and collaboration, allowing teachers to navigate challenges more effectively while strengthening their instructional competence. When consistently supported, these elements ensure that mentoring remains dynamic, relevant, and impactful over time.

Build a Supportive and Collaborative Mentoring Culture

Building a supportive and collaborative mentoring culture is a key goal of school leaders who seek sustainable teacher growth, where principals and administrators foster an environment that empowers teachers to innovate, develop professionally, and thrive within communities grounded in trust, open communication, and inclusivity. When mentoring is rooted in strong, family-like support systems, teachers are more likely to flourish both personally and professionally, with collaboration serving as the foundation for resilience and continuous improvement.

This finding aligns with the concept of building a supportive and collaborative mentoring culture, as emphasized by Handrianto et al. (2022), who highlighted that effective mentoring thrives in environments characterized by collaboration, positive attitudes, and open exchange of ideas, all of which enhance instructional practices. In the same way, Alegado and Soe (2021) found that formal mentoring systems help establish strong, lasting professional relationships that provide consistent academic and emotional support, thereby strengthening organizational capacity. This collaborative culture is further reinforced when engagement extends beyond teachers to include administrators and parents. For instance, Sumbilla et al. (2022) reported that the Collaborative Learning Action Cell (CLAC) mentoring program in Iloilo fostered meaningful mentor–mentee relationships marked by open communication and responsiveness, benefiting both teachers and learners.

Moreover, Sezgin et al. (2020) emphasized that external evaluation and feedback systems contribute to sustaining a collaborative learning culture by enabling schools to address concerns proactively. On a broader scale, Hayes and Mahfouz (2020) found that mentoring programs help reduce burnout and turnover by creating supportive environments that balance professional and personal demands. Collectively, these studies underscore that a supportive and collaborative mentoring culture is essential in sustaining teacher well-being, strengthening instructional practice, and ensuring long-term school improvement.

In essence, a supportive and collaborative mentoring culture extends beyond professional development, serving as a strategic foundation for achieving educational excellence. By embedding trust, inclusivity, and collaboration into mentoring systems,

schools can effectively reduce burnout, improve teacher retention, and enhance instructional quality (Stein, 2022).

Promote Continuous Improvement and Teaching Mastery

Mentoring serves as a powerful mechanism for continuous growth and the enhancement of teaching expertise. It is not merely an optional form of support, but a vital leadership function that sustains teacher effectiveness, promotes self-reflection, and integrates professional learning into the daily practice. When mentoring is institutionalized, sustained, and collaborative, it becomes a powerful tool that can help teachers cultivate their mastery in teaching across career stages. Moreover, continuous improvement is strengthened through reflective engagement, not solely through structured systems, as this enables teachers to become self-directed learners, fostering lifelong professional growth.

The findings are connected to the study of Demir and Criswell (2019), who argue that mentoring must be a core part of the professional identity of the school heads. This means that school leaders must be the architects of the development of teachers. This perspective is supported by Kraft and Papay (2019), who emphasize that school leadership plays a critical role in creating supportive professional environments that foster continuous teaching and learning and instructional improvement. In addition, the participants' emphasis on structured mentoring strongly reflects the core idea of promoting continuous improvement and teaching mastery, as supported by Hargreaves and O'Connor (2019), who highlight that collaborative professionalism promotes shared learning, trust, and sustained teacher growth.

On the other hand, Ikemoto (2022) argues that mentoring must be consistently implemented and embedded into the professional development cycle in order to give regular, consistent feedback and adaptive strategies, which can help strengthen the mastery of teaching of the teachers over time. This view is also supported by Swaminathan and Reed (2020), who suggested that there must be a dialogue and co-learning between the mentors and the mentees for the application of a reflective model in order to encourage both of them to ask questions and enhance their practices.

Embed Mentoring on Values and Purpose

. Mentoring is a spiritually driven work and calling that sustains the growth of the teachers and fosters a supportive learning environment rooted in values, purpose, and service. In this sense, mentoring must be anchored directly to the mission, vision, and faith-based foundation of the schools, considering it not merely as a technical supervision but as a vocation and mission. As such, effective mentoring becomes holistic, contributing not only to the development of teachers' instructional skills but also to the strengthening of their moral character and professional integrity.

This is confirmed by the study of Basilio and Bueno (2021), who pointed out that the supervision of the principals in classroom instruction must match the school's vision,

mission, and principles in order to make the mentoring feel at home in the institutional identity. Likewise, this insight is reinforced by Valdez and Dominado (2020), who stress how the principal's leadership behaviors greatly influenced the culture of mentoring, creating schools as mentoring-friendly environments that are anchored in collaboration and values. In addition, Handrianto et al. (2022) support this idea by emphasizing that mentoring fosters lifelong learning as well as positive attitudes when it is integrated in a culture that is respectful and makes it a shared purpose within the school community.

Furthermore, Swaminathan and Reed (2020) support reflective mentoring as a very helpful tool that can help cultivate growth mindsets in principals, enabling them to help the teachers grow through values-driven reflection. Islam (2020) also added that, through holistic mentoring, principals are able to increase the resilience and confidence of their teachers, backing their view of considering mentoring as a true calling. Likewise, this is aligned with the study of Hayes and Mahfouz (2020), who revealed that when the leadership practices in mentoring programs are grounded in core values, they help the leaders cope with stress and feeling burned out. Also, a recent study conducted by Li Jia (2021) revealed that Christian values education in Philippine schools is strongly connected to holistic child development, which transcends the importance of conducting mentoring practices that are anchored in faith-based identity.

Acknowledge Individual Differences and Personalize Mentoring Approaches

Recognizing the diversity of their teachers in terms of their needs, personalities, and capabilities requires school leaders to provide personalized mentoring for each teacher. A one-size-fits-all approach to mentoring is unlikely to effectively address the diverse needs in teacher development. In contrast, when mentoring is responsive to individual differences, school leaders are better able to cultivate a culture that promotes authentic growth, builds trust, and ensures that all teachers feel valued and adequately supported. This shows that mentoring becomes effective when it is implemented relationally and adaptively rather than merely prescriptively.

The finding that rigid and irrelevant training leads to teacher disengagement is aligned with Munir and Amin (2020), who emphasized the need for flexible and teacher-centered mentoring approaches. This perspective is paralleled by Richter et al. (2020), who highlight that professional learning becomes more effective when it is responsive to teachers' individual needs and supported by continuous feedback. Similarly, the importance of sustained and differentiated preprofessional development is consistent with Desmore and Gareth (2021), who argue that such approaches foster deeper engagement and meaningful instructional improvement.

In addition, the value of continuous mentor-mentee relationships in providing targeted guidance and emotional support corresponds with Hobson and Maxwell (2020), who emphasize the role of ongoing mentoring in promoting teacher growth and resilience. This is aligned with the study of Hargreaves and O'Connor (2019), who emphasize that collaborative professionalism ensures that individualized support remains connected to institutional goals while respecting teachers' diverse backgrounds and needs.

Furthermore, it has also been highlighted that when mentoring strategies apply reflective supervision as well as peer collaboration, this can greatly help the teachers to be able to adopt to the diversity of the demands in their classroom (Islam, 2020). According to Handrianto et al. (2022), when the differences of the teachers are being respected during the mentoring programs, this can promote lifelong learning and positive attitudes, enabling them to thrive in different settings. This idea is also supported by Swaminathan and Reed (2020), who argue that reflective mentoring instills growth mindsets in both leaders and teachers, enabling them to tailor the support they provide to specific challenges.

In this study, it was revealed that the individual differences of the teachers promote or strengthen the bonds between the mentor and the mentee, as well as foster a collaborative school culture. This finding aligns with the work of Hundey et al. (2020), who showed that mentoring programs that encourage reflection as well as experimentation can create meaningful professional relationships, echoing the narratives of the leaders of one-on-one talks as well as individualized support.

Moreover, mentoring cultures can really flourish when the feedback is consistent and tailored to the needs of the teachers, which can help prevent burnout and turnover (Sezgin et al., 2020). Likewise, this view is supported by Woodhead (2021), who emphasized that veteran teachers as mentors do not mean that they are more successful in mentoring teachers, because success in mentoring depends on how well they can adapt and respond to the various needs and uniqueness of each of the new teachers or mentees.

Conclusions

This study explored the lived experiences of private school heads in mentoring teachers, revealing that mentoring is shaped by persistent challenges such as teacher turnover, diverse needs and attitudes, time constraints, and the demands of continuous training. Despite these challenges, school heads employed strategies such as structured mentoring, personalized support, instructional modeling, role management, resource utilization, and alignment with institutional goals. Mentoring thus emerged not as a temporary or improvised response but as a dynamic and collaborative process that fosters teacher growth, enhances instructional practices, and builds a supportive school community grounded in shared values and continuous development.

In addition, the study highlights that mentoring is a flexible and emotionally grounded process that extends beyond routine technical tasks in supporting teachers' professional growth. It requires private school heads to demonstrate patience, empathy, teamwork, and adaptability as they respond to teachers' everyday realities. Mentoring is also gradual in nature and demands consistent effort and clear goals to be effective. Its value is reflected in how it builds teachers' confidence, creativity, and leadership, which in turn contributes positively to the overall development and sustainability of the school community.

This study has deepened the researcher's understanding of mentoring as both a professional responsibility and a shared mission. Engaging with school heads highlighted the importance of empathy, adaptability, and purposeful leadership in addressing teachers' diverse needs. The findings revealed that effective mentoring extends beyond structured programs, requiring genuine commitment to teachers' growth and well-being. Moving forward, the researcher affirms that meaningful mentoring is rooted in collaboration, care, and a strong sense of purpose—ultimately strengthening both teachers and the school community.

Recommendations

The present study uncovers meaningful insights into the experiences of private school heads in mentoring their teachers. However, several areas remain that require further exploration.

First, future researchers are encouraged to examine the long-term effects of institutionalized mentoring on teacher retention and career development. The findings suggest that mentoring alone cannot fully address teacher turnover without systemic support. Longitudinal studies may provide stronger evidence on how factors such as salary, benefits, and job security interact with mentoring to influence teachers' sustained commitment.

Second, further research is needed on differentiated mentoring, as teachers vary in needs, personalities, and levels of readiness. There is limited empirical evidence on how personalized mentoring strategies affect teacher performance and resilience. Comparative studies across different school contexts may help identify the most effective and sustainable differentiated practices.

Third, future studies should explore leadership approaches that balance authority with empathy and examine their influence on mentoring outcomes. While relational leadership shows positive effects, there is a need for empirical evidence on how school heads address challenges such as resistance, pride, and indifference among teachers, and how these attitudes impact mentoring success.

Fourth, there is a need to investigate practical, classroom-based mentoring approaches, including observation, modeling, and collaborative lesson planning. Although these strategies are recognized as effective, further research is necessary to determine their impact on teaching practices and student outcomes across various contexts.

Fifth, future research should examine how school heads balance mentoring responsibilities with administrative demands, as mentoring requires sustained time and effort. Additionally, studies may explore the role of digital tools and hybrid mentoring models in supporting teacher development.

Sixth, further investigation is needed on how mentoring programs can be institutionalized and sustained within school systems. Integrating mentoring into policies,

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and school culture appears essential, yet differences between private and public school contexts warrant deeper analysis.

Finally, future studies should explore the emotional dimension of mentoring, particularly the sense of fulfillment experienced by school heads. Understanding how leadership identity and resilience influence this satisfaction may provide insights into sustaining mentoring cultures. Overall, while the study offers valuable contributions, it highlights several areas for continued research.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The researcher conducted this study in full compliance with ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before their participation, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents were strictly maintained, and all data were handled in accordance with Data Privacy regulations. The well-being of the respondents was safeguarded throughout the research process. The researcher affirms that no conflict of interest exists in the conduct of this study, plagiarism was strictly avoided, and the findings were interpreted without bias. The results of this research were used solely for academic purposes. Furthermore, any use of artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of this study has been fully disclosed to ensure transparency.

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Corresponding author: karenfernando.94@gmail.com