

Abstract

This is a study of *mentoring* and its applicability in the Palestinian educational system. Forty newly appointed teachers by the Palestinian Ministry of Education were interviewed during February-March, 1997 for approximately 45-60 minutes each. These interviews tried to highlight some of the crucial professional and personal attributes of a good mentor as perceived by these teachers. The sample of this study consisted of 10% of the study population which was the newly appointed teachers for the last two scholastic years in Nablus District. The sample was stratified according to gender and qualification. A structured guide, written in Arabic, was used to ensure that all face-to-face interviews were conducted in a similar manner. Each interview consisted of two parts. The first part attempted to familiarize the interviewees with the mentoring concept and to assess their readiness level to be mentored. This was done by identifying their concerns and the areas in which they need help. The second part attempted to provide data about the novice teachers' perception of the mentor's role, gender, age, function and status.

The findings of this study showed that novice teachers seek informal school-based help to overcome their concerns. Patterns similar to the mentor-protégé relationship description exist between these novice teachers and their colleagues. Older colleagues who teach similar

subjects and grade levels, and who exceed them in age by 5-10 years, were among the most frequently nominated colleagues as prospective mentors. The overwhelming majority emphasized the nonevaluative role of the mentor. Male teachers preferred same-gender mentors, while female teachers did not show any gender preference. Confidentiality, patience, good communication skills, tact and sensitivity were among the most frequently mentioned attributes of prospective mentors. The study showed that the mentoring concept remains to be vague in the minds of Palestinian teachers. Questions regarding the suitable length of the mentoring relationship, the frequency of the mentor-protégé interaction, or even the psychosocial roles of the mentor will remain unanswered fully until the mentoring concept is clearly developed in the minds of Palestinian teachers.

The findings of this study showed that while some of the mentors' personal and professional characteristics seem to be culture bound, others seemed to be universal. These findings were discussed in terms of Palestinian culture and society, and their relevance to the teachers' needs and concerns. Their generalizability is limited to the study and its sample. Until future further research on educational mentoring in Palestine is conducted, its applicability will remain a matter of conjecture.