

## Cooperating teachers' mentoring moves during internship of early childhood pre-service teachers

Josephine M. Calamlam<sup>1</sup> & Siti Eshah Mokshein<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Education Sciences, Philippine Normal University, Manila Philippines*

<sup>2</sup>*Sultan Idris Education University, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia*

*Corresponding author: calamlam\_jm@pnu.edu.ph*

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### Abstract

Understanding the mentoring practices used by cooperating teachers to guide and support early childhood (EC) pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach during internship (or practicum) in a disadvantaged environment was the main purpose of this qualitative case study. Three EC pre-service teachers and their cooperating teachers were purposively selected from which data was collected through interviews, documents, classroom observations, and post conferences. Collected data were analyzed and through the analyses were identified cooperating teachers' appropriate mentoring behaviors and practices. These mentoring behaviors and practices formed the themes which was used as a 'mentoring framework' during internship. The findings presented in this study has implications towards the development of mentoring, and the developed framework will serve as a guide towards the development of cooperating teachers' capability for effective mentoring.

**Keywords:** Early childhood pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers, mentoring framework, internship, mentoring practices

### INTRODUCTION

The complex nature of mentoring which includes the multiple needs of teachers that have not been addressed, as well as their mentors' need to develop a repertoire of mentoring skills (Koki, 2014) prompted the conduct of this study. Justifying this view was a recent study conducted on mentoring using surveys and questionnaires (Cachola, Aduca, Ma & Calauaga, 2018) which gave a limited view of the phenomenon. It downplayed the use of naturally occurring data (Silverman, 2016) that could have provided a more realistic view of the mentoring process. In another study, participants voiced out their concern that no matter how efficient and effective a teacher may be, it did not always translate to effective mentoring (Calamlam, Montebon, Palmiery & Delos Santos, 2015). Thus, a clamor for ensuring cooperating teachers become effective mentors has surfaced. Describing mentoring practices of cooperating teachers focused on performing their roles as mentors of early childhood (EC) pre-service teachers using the lens of effective mentoring (Hudson, 2013) and reflective practices (Ghaye, 2011).

Mentoring in the context of teacher education has been acknowledged as a valuable process and a cost-effective strategy in achieving educational reform. Optimizing mentoring with the help of a cooperating teacher enables early childhood pre-service teachers to link academic learning to school-work experiences. However, recent studies show that many cooperating teachers are not well-prepared for mentoring, particularly when difficulties arise with the per-service teacher (Valeni & Vogrinc, 2007). This situation can be gleaned from the absence of preparation for mentoring and teacher education institutions have not given effective mentoring program the attention it deserves (Calamlam et al, 2016). Hence, this qualitative case study had been designed to address these central questions:

- (i) What are the behaviors and mentoring practices of cooperating teachers?
- (ii) How do cooperating teachers guide and support EC pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach during internship?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Although mentoring the pre-service teachers in the Philippines has been a practice in universities and partner schools, there is a dearth of research conducted locally in as far as effective mentoring in the context of pre-service teacher education is concerned. To add substance and relevance and to identify the best means of conducting this research theoretically and methodologically, literature related to effective mentoring was reviewed.

### **Mentoring practices during internship**

One of the essential components of an early childhood internship program are the mentoring practices that are seen to challenge EC pre-service teachers to build relationships with young children; extend understanding of the early childhood curriculum; provide supportive learning-teaching environment; collaborate with other adults in a child's life; and nurture professional growth through research and inquiry. Leung (2013) highlights the intention of mentoring in teacher education as having to establish a personal relationship for the purpose of professional instruction and guidance. In the Philippine context, pre-service teachers were assigned to partner schools where they were supervised by cooperating teachers. For the duration of ten weeks or one quarter of the school year, learning opportunities were negotiated and cooperating teachers carry on the task of mentoring pre-service teachers in the practical aspects of learning-to-teach. Once cooperating teachers accept the responsibility to mentor pre-service teachers, Ambrosetti (2014) emphasizes that they need to nurture, advice, guide, encourage and facilitate authentic learning experiences for developmental growth of their mentees. In the mentoring process, the cooperating teacher, the mentor and the pre-service teacher, the mentee establish a relationship where objectivity, credibility, honesty, trustworthiness and confidentiality are crucial. If the role of the cooperating teachers is crucial, who then, should be selected to mentor the pre-service teachers? Ideally, a cooperating teacher chosen to be a mentor does the roles described as someone who can be a guide, a supporter, a friend, an advocate and a role model. Cachola et al. (2018) assert that cooperating teachers must be skilled and experienced in mentoring and who can nurture positive development of student teachers toward becoming effective teachers. More importantly, cooperating teachers should have a deep understanding of the nature of mentoring within the teacher education context and must not equate mentoring to supervision or coaching alone. Building of relationship through interaction between the mentor and mentee is central to mentoring. Through this mentor-mentee relationship, Wall (2016) emphasized that mentoring should provide mentees with the opportunity to develop their personal and professional selves through reflection. Looking at this stance, cooperating teachers should refrain themselves from creating replicas of themselves allowing the identities of their mentees to emerge. Since cooperating teachers are the ones who have continual dialogue with the pre-service teachers in terms of appraising and assessing the latter's performance and development, they are also mandated by teacher education institutions to evaluate and give the appropriate rating. Deducing from this practice, cooperating teachers need to draw on both mentoring and supervisory skills to perform their role (Camburn, & Hans, 2015).

With the adoption of the word mentor rather than supervisor, Keogh, Dole, and Hudson (2007) posit that a more collaborative, supportive and equitable relationship is assumed and anticipated. Student teachers' perceptions of important elements of student teaching experience during the twelve-week field experience points to the perception that cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship is the most important element in the pre-service teacher professional development.

The positive dimension of mentoring lies within the relationship formed between a mentor and mentee. Other factors that impact influence on reflective practice are: relational trust, quality, relationship, connected and associated emotional. Having identified the personal and professional qualifications of a cooperating teacher taking the role of the mentor and the importance of the role they play in nurturing future teacher professionals, studies reveal that much is still to be done in support of these mentors. Tang and Choi (2007) in their research gathered that few teachers receive training or preparation for mentoring. Ambrosetti (2014) justify this view that in many instances, it is assumed that if a teacher is considered to be an effective practitioner, they can pass their knowledge and skills to another as a mentor. Thinking along this line cooperating teachers may just adopt the notion that mentoring is just requiring the pre-service teachers to replicate what the former are doing. For practice teaching to be meaningful and fulfilling, Fletcher (2000) suggests a proactive approach to mentoring where the mentoring relationship has to go through the five stages.

Furlong and Maynard (1995) cited in Fletcher (2000) created a model identifying the stages in the development of the pre-service teacher during practice teaching. Furlong and Maynard's (1995) describe a pre-service teacher's characteristics in each stage: Stage 1 Early Idealism – in which teaching and learning were commonly seen in a simplistic way where the relationship with students is seen as crucial factor in terms of their effectiveness as teachers; Stage 2 Personal Survival- where pre-service teachers tend to be reactive rather proactive- leaving students to define the situation; Stage 3 Dealing with Difficulties- Pre-service teacher tries to 'mimic' what they believed to be teacher behavior attempting to gain at least a "procedural" understanding of what it meant to be a teacher; Stage 4 Hitting a Plateau- in which a pre-service teacher's teaching still showed little appreciation of the relationship between teaching and how students learn but starting to gain confidence in their abilities to manage the class; and Stage 5 Moving On – where a pre-service teachers' evaluation of their beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning is fundamental if they are to develop into fully professional teachers The model provided a frame for the present study to contextualize the actual experiences of EC pre-service teachers and to describe their behavior in the span of time they stayed in the partner school.

Soslau and Rath (2017) identified some problematic aspects in student teacher supervision such as giving feedback, specifically in planning and assessment and fostering good relationship with pupils. Hudson and Hudson (2011) identified personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, feedback and modelling as the essential elements of the mentoring model. Another mentoring model conceived by Hillman (2006) highlighted the importance of having supervisors and mentors of teachers-in-training to be the best educators in which the model comprises quiet observation, focused listening, trust building, clear and honest communication and a commitment to positive, supportive relationship. Aspors and Franssen (2015) emphasized the need to practice reflective approach in teaching so that cooperating teachers could better mentor their student teachers on what teaching strategies work for a more effective student learning situation. In a related study, Cacho et al. (2018) used quantitative design to determine the extent of mentoring cooperating teachers provided to their student teachers and the extent of mentoring received by student teachers from their cooperating teachers. Cognizant of the importance of mentoring, review of relevant literature yield recommendations as to how different strategies could be used to optimize the benefit of mentoring the EC pre-service teachers. One study suggests setting up a mentor teacher's scheme which should be implemented throughout the four-year teacher preparation and not only on the third or fourth year of study (Leung et al., 2013). In another study, pre-service teachers expressed the idea of having a pre-student teaching experience where they could have a session to prepare them for student teaching (Calamlam et al., 2015). This is a modality of having early field experiences is practiced as part of Field Study Courses (Experiential Learning Courses Handbook, 2009) in teacher education institutions in the Philippines.

Taken all these previous studies into account, the mentoring practices in terms of analyzing patterns of behaviors of cooperating teachers and EC pre-service teachers' experiences on the way they were mentored during their internship remain scarcely understood and therefore problems on some aspects of student teacher supervision persist (Soslau & Rath, 2017; Cachola et al., 2018) Analysis of literature that have been reviewed situate the current study in the conversation about mentoring and provided a niche for the researcher to add to the ongoing literature on mentoring.

With the use of an appropriate approach and method to capture naturally occurring data (Silverman 2014) illuminate issues surrounding mentoring during internship.

### ***Understanding Reflective Learning and Reflective Practice***

The concept of reflective practice (Schön, 1987) in this study is viewed within the context of constructivism, is defined as an active and careful consideration of the basic assumptions and conclusions one holds in a direct experience that inform future actions. In another study, Deville (2010), stated that reflection is a learning method which fosters meaningful learning through questioning and investigation. It is in this view that this study explored the nature of reflective thinking. For better understanding and appreciation of reflective thinking process, Grimmer (1990) proposed the four modes of thinking: a) technological or formulaic thinking is based on knowledge from an external, existing and prescribed source where a teacher relies on practices that have proven to be effective and efficient; b) situational thinking focuses only on information embedded in a specific context at a specific time without looking beyond the surface to consider the root cause of the problematic situation; c) deliberate thinking is done when an educator intentionally seeks more information than what the immediate context provides; and d) dialectical thinking is exhibited by teachers when a change in teaching behavior takes place resulting from their use of deliberate thinking to gain understanding of a situation. Each mode requires an increasing degree of conscious analysis and data seeking. Knowing the four modes of thinking will help cooperating teachers adapt their reflective thinking practices to the situation, using the level of thought that is sufficient to address a concern.

As one is engaged in reflection, he/she derives insights which can be used to take action to construct new learning. Van Woerkom (2010) enumerates the practical benefits derived from reflective learning that ranges from development of deeper learning to acquiring new comprehensions, changed beliefs and an altered attitude or emotional trait that leads to constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge based on new experiences provided by learning environments that emphasize taking responsibility for one's professionalism and lifelong learning.

A paradigm shift in the perspective of mentoring is seen as a factor supportive of reflective practice. The present traditional views of practicum using the apprentice-model, where the naive pre-service teacher is immersed into the work station, observing, absorbing and ultimately imitating a master, and that the apprentice has little to contribute to the situation are raised to the level of discourse. Keogh, et al. (2007) question the assumption that cooperating teachers are considered 'experts' and pre-service as 'novice'. This kind of relationship is deemed to be counter intuitive in developing pre-service teachers as reflective practitioners. Reflective teaching practice entails an ongoing examination of beliefs and practices, their origins and their impacts on the teacher, the students and their learning process. Exploring mentoring practices specifically on the development reflective teaching provided the much needed input in the choice of research design and data collection methods.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research questions led the researcher to use qualitative case study that allowed trend or explanation to surface, exploration of the mentoring in terms of teacher education and deep understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2005). Furthermore, qualitative approach elicited discovery and description of the participant's actual experience that was instrumental in better understanding EC pre-service teachers' internship experiences and intrinsically interpret mentoring as an event to understand the interaction of EC pre-service teachers and their cooperating teachers (Bloomberg (2012).

## **Methods of Data Collection**

Multiple individuals were selected to comprise a heterogeneous sample, which means from a total of eight participants involved in the study, the three EC pre-service teachers were the main informants. The type of information collected were from interviews of participants and from the reflective journals compiled in their portfolio. To deduce details from participants, the researcher used interview protocols and memoing, within which, the researcher anticipated to address issues that she encountered during data collection. The collected data was transcribed, translated and were considered documents stored in computer files.

The use of multiple methods in collecting data and triangulation was vital in the attempt to determine cooperating teachers' mentoring practices. The use of multiple methods of generating data ensures that the study will characterize rigor, breadth and depth that will provide corroborative evidence (Cresswell, 2007). Therefore the study sees to employ a number of different data collection which also includes classroom observations, focus group and document analysis.

## **Ethical Considerations**

A provision in the memorandum of agreement between the university and the partner schools stipulates that a research activity of this kind can be conducted bearing in mind the best interest of the participants. Although such agreement exists, the researcher observed protocols by securing the needed permits from the Department of Education Division of City Schools Manila to allow the researchers to conduct the interviews. The researchers explained to the participants the nature and purpose of the research and the plans for using the findings. The pre-service teachers and the cooperating teachers signed a consent forms ensuring that they fully understand the protocols.

## **FINDINGS**

The research questions identified in the problem statement guided the exploration, discovery and understanding of cooperating teachers' mentoring behaviors and practices. Employing thematic approach in analyzing ng data sets were scrutinized leading to patterns that emerged as categories which were then understood and labelled as themes. Aside from the interviews conducted, the researcher used data from observation field notes and documents. Table 1 shows the mentoring moves demonstrated by cooperating teachers as perceived by their interns relative to guidance and support provided by their cooperating teachers and university supervisor during internship.

By and large, cooperating teachers' guidance and supervision are essential elements of internship and these are classified according to the behavior they manifested as they interacted with their interns. Although the EC pre-service teachers found mentoring to be insufficient, the researcher took note of the actions taken by the cooperating teachers to guide them by way of modelling the desirable traits of a teacher most of the time. These behaviors are not necessarily linear which follows the stages in the internship program. A typical internship program practiced in the university had three stages: observation period, participation period and independent period which is considered linear. But according to the findings of the study, interns learning behaviors did not follow "staircase" model of development. Instead certain behaviors recur depending on the context of the intern's experience. A cooperating teacher manifests a kind of 'move' depending on how she perceives the needs of an intern in a given time. Here we see that a cooperating teacher must sense the intern's behavior so that she could provide the necessary support. The researcher took note of opportunities where the cooperating teacher matches the behavior of her intern.

The field notes were also useful for the researcher to adopt an interpretive stance and at the same time, had to maintain her reflexivity (Bloomberg, 2012). This reflective activity is captured in the field note displayed in the proceeding parts.

**Table 1.** Mentoring moves as demonstrated by cooperating teachers and perceived by EC pre-service teachers

Statements culled from interviews	Data Categories	Themes
<p>I am not only teaching her, but I also learned from her. (CT1)                      She's learning at the same I'm also learning from her so the style can somehow be called as give and take. (CT3)                      I allow her to make decisions for as long as it is for the benefit of the class (CT2)                      She leaves the class to me especially when she has to attend meetings (Aneth)</p>	<p>CT as delegator</p>	<p>independence-inducing moves</p>
<p>It's like she told me who should I focus on, I should prepare for. That's the first thing that she did. (Kai)                      I tell her that if ever she has problems she has to talk to the kids in a nice way or talk to her in a corner so that she won't be humiliated in front of her classmates. (CT3)                      Let's do this together (CT1)</p>	<p>CT as facilitator</p>	<p>skill-steering moves</p>
<p>That is where I am happy about because I receive compliments from her (Aneth)                      She encourages me (Kai)                      I see that my CT use the strategy I implemented (Ces)</p>	<p>CT as motivator</p>	<p>confidence-building moves</p>
<p>They would help me in terms of managing the classroom and in writing the lesson plan following Department of Education's template (Kai)                      But at times we have our conference after the class when the two of us are left in the room. There we had longer uninterrupted time. (Ces)                      Now, since my CT is busy, she corrects me on-the-spot.(Ces)                      I am very strict. (CT)</p>	<p>CT as authority</p>	<p>authority-establishing moves</p>

Date: September 13, 2017 Venue: Kindergarten Room

I was ready to observe Kai's final demonstration teaching. To the interns, the final demonstration teaching is something they looked forward to. But today, I saw Kai talking with her cooperating teacher while they were cutting some pieces of paper and placed them in a brown envelop. I sensed that what they were talking about was really serious. I saw her CT held her hand as if trying to show that everything will be all right. I did not interrupt them to ask questions and decided to observe them from where I was seated. In a while, Kai stood up and took a deep breath. She appeared ready and she started the lesson. I was expecting Kai to deliver an extraordinary lesson because that was her final demonstration teaching. Kai seemed flustered and trying to compose herself for that whole lesson. It was noticeable that her CT was assuring her by nodding and smiling at her. After the demonstration teaching, Kai's CT gave her a big hug, as if there a war was won. It turned out that there was a story about Kai's behavior. Her backpack where she put all her materials for the demonstration teaching and her laptop was stolen yesterday. That explains why her CT was helping her with the cut outs. This incident showed that the unexpected turns of events need adjustment and

understanding. I saw how the CT helped Kai in that pressing moment. (Field note, Sept.13, 2017)

Journal entries were considered as documents to understand how they were mentored by their cooperating teachers giving the researcher an opportunity to understand how EC pre-service teachers made sense of instances they had with their cooperating teachers

This particular incident showed the cooperating teacher's authority-establishing moves which Kai needed to gain her composure and confidence. Her decision to go on with her demonstration teaching was respected by her cooperating teacher. Kai was seen as demonstrating in a dependent mode and received support from her cooperating teacher.

In another situation, Ces' cooperating teacher used skill-steering moves in this journal entry.

August 30, 2017

Today is my second day of teaching Math. The lesson is on the sum of 5. I used my own lesson plan that I patterned to my CT's lesson plan. I did not change it that much as we have not talked about how I should deliver the lesson. I am still adjusting to ELLN design. The main point of the lesson plan lies on the group activities. There wasn't much preparation needed in the first portion of the lesson plan. My CT advised me to try some discovery learning. With the sample lesson plans she lent me, (which I believe was her way of developing my skills in lesson planning) I am still figuring it out. (Ces)

Mentoring an intern is an added responsibility of the cooperating teacher. There are adjustments to the time, resources, and workload of the teacher who accepts the role of a mentor. Not any other teacher is being assigned to mentor an intern. As stated in the Practice Teaching Handbook, there are certain qualifications to meet the expectations of being a mentor. The behaviors manifested by the cooperating teacher are described and categorized as: authority-establishing moves, confidence building moves, skill-steering moves and independence-inducing moves.

The cooperating teacher who demonstrates authority-establishing moves sees an intern who is still dependent on her expertise. The expertise can be on the subject matter, a strategy in which the intern is not familiar with, filling up forms or attending to children. Authority-establishing moves need to be precise as the interns closely watch their mentor more especially at the first part of internship where the interns get to be familiarized with the new environment.

Confidence-building moves were demonstrated by the cooperating teacher when the intern needed to be affirmed of the new role she is playing. This 'moves' must be felt, seen and heard by the intern as a feedback to her performance. Since the interns expect for a more formal way of assessing their performance, they missed this 'move' as part of mentoring.

As interns came to the thick of their internship experiences and had acquired some measure of knowledge and skills, what they need now is a mentor who can steer their skills to the right direction. Thus, skill-steering moves are actions that make cooperating teachers as facilitators of the EC pre-service learning-to-teach experiences. The CT creates more opportunities for the interns to practice more on their skills knowing that their interns are in the level of being 'involved' and are more confident to take on more challenges. Although interns demonstrate some measure of confidence, they still need their cooperating teachers' guidance and support because they were just in the process of polishing their new-found skills. This is probably what Ces felt when she said, "I felt alone and exhausted." And when Kai said, "I was like being eaten alive by these kids." To induce intern's sense of independence, cooperating teachers and university supervisors calibrate their moves so that interns would not feel frustrated in trying out for example, strategies that were unfamiliar to the interns. They build on certain skills which they have observed interns already acquired. Skill-steering moves would mean cooperating teachers need to give constructive feedback, demonstrate the skill themselves through a demonstration lesson in which interns would capture teaching skills such as questioning skills, attending skills, and classroom management skills.

Analyzing responses of participants in interviews led the researcher to interpret 'independence-inducing moves' of the cooperating teachers as not clearly articulated to the interns. This 'independence-inducing moves' was seen when the cooperating teacher did not mind the interns' experimentation on a classroom management strategy (field notes 14) which was totally new to the children. Another manifestation of this cooperating teacher's behavior was when she asked

her intern to design and make the props for the children's performance (field notes 17). On one occasion the interns became official members of the Learning Action Cell (LAC), which means they were required to attend professional sessions for the teaching staff of the school (field note 20). In one of the earlier visits of the researcher to the partner school, the interns excitedly told her that they log in their attendance through the biometrics, which was only for the teaching staff (field notes 7). It may be gleaned from these observations that the EC pre-service teachers came to a point in which they were treated like professional teachers in the different phases of their internship which the interns or even the cooperating teachers regarded as 'independence-inducing moves'.

Synthesizing the data sets that were analyzed through abduction reveals that the three EC preservice teacher cited classroom observation and unstructured conferences were ways by which they were mentored by their cooperating teachers. However, they felt that the kind of mentoring they received from their cooperating teachers lacks structure and intentionality. The study also reveals that elements of mentoring such as building good relationship, high support from the school leadership and open communication have been experienced and identified by the EC pre-service teachers as effective components of mentoring. Cooperating teachers on their part keep adjusting to the demands and problems that arise during the course of the internship. Thus, unconsciously, cooperating teachers demonstrated mentoring moves to guide the EC pre-service teachers.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the study, reflective practice emerged as a result of their exposure to authentic learners and learning environment. Based from the researcher's observations, the three early childhood learners were involved in group dialogic reflection (Foong, Nor, & Nolan, 2018) as evidenced by their conversations whenever they found time to have reflective conversations. EC pre-service teachers' engagement in reflective conversations is a finding in a similar case study of early childhood teachers in which they emphasized that triadic conversation brought in a much deeper processing of their teaching and learning experiences (Foong, et al., 2018). This created opportunity for them to talk about their pupils and ways to make lessons appropriate for the children helped them to increase their skill in reflection. Current literature points to post conference as group dialogic reflection (Foong, et al., 2018) which is parallel to the findings in this research where the cooperating teacher, university supervisor and the intern had a conference after the final demonstration teaching. In the post conference, the three conducted group dialogic reflection (Foong, et al., 2018) where they raised the positive points demonstrated by the intern and at the same time, they discussed the areas for improvement. The feedback given during the post conference was then noted by the intern that formed part of her learning.

At the same time, the interns were able to do individual reflection as evidenced in their journals, lesson plans and case study reports. These two modes of reflective practice were interwoven in the different activities requiring the interns to adopt different learning modes. The different learning modes interns demonstrated are: dependent mode, interested mode, involved mode and self-directed mode. Interestingly, these modes do not refer to learning stages which is different from the model of Furlong and Maynard (1995) which suggest that there are five stages of learning during internship because what came out in the study are not stages but learning modes they used across internship. In many instances in the conduct of this study, the interns demonstrated behaviors which Rădulescu (2013) describes as reflection on their actions and decisions as teachers. Navigating the internship, EC pre-service teachers increased and expanded their understanding of teaching practices and gained appreciation of teacher sensitivity and effectiveness (Recchia, Beck, Esposito, & Tarrant, 2009) as they intend to learn from their experiences. In the study, data showed that learning-to-teach experiences deepen the interns' perspectives on the way they understand the topics they taught; on understanding the nature of the children and how they learn; on implementing strategies to manage children's behaviors and organizing environments for learning. Reflection on action (Schön, 1987) made them sensitive to needs of the children as evidenced by the lessons, activities and instructional materials they planned for children as a result of finding means to effect learning. They also learn by reflecting in their actions (Schön, 1987) as shown in their behavior



while in the act of teaching. As noted in the classroom observations, the interns demonstrated the ability to change the question if they found it to be difficult or unclear. They immediately make decisions if previously planned activity could not be done for some reasons. These self-directed modes or behaviors show their ability to think as they acted which is parallel to reflection in posited by Schön (1987). These two types of reflection posited by Schön (1987) do not account for other behaviors which could be considered as reflection such as planning lessons and activities for longer time blocks and organizing themselves to talk about their experiences for the purpose of sharing and comparing situations that they envisage as learning. These situations are also a demonstration of reflection which Ghaye (2011) identifies as reflection for action and reflection with action. However, the foregoing studies are different from the studies of Lortie (1975) and Darling-Hammond (2005) which focused on the claim that teacher education is often influenced by apprenticeship of observation which points to teacher's reference to how they were taught when they were students. Lortie (1975) posits that students imbibe models of teaching are activated and surfaced when they become teachers. In a related study, Feiman-Nemser (1983) expresses alarm to find that so little research relates to pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach. The findings of the current study present otherwise: that EC pre-service teachers are capable of learning using their personal characteristics supportive of their goal to learn from their internship which is similar to the study of Schmidt (2010) in which it states that teachers claimed that they have learned from teaching experience than from course work attributing their learning to peer teaching, early field experiences, and self-arranged teaching experience engaged in during their university education.

The three participants cited observation and unstructured conference are ways by which they were mentored by their cooperating teachers. They felt that the kind of mentoring they received from their cooperating teachers lacks structure and intentionality. This finding can be explained by Calamlam, et al. (2015) as they cited the lack of training of cooperating teachers can be the reason why they could not mentor pre-service teachers effectively. However, data that did not surface in interviews but emerged in observations must be considered (Silverman, 2014) and interpreted because not all information could be obtained from interviews.

Although there was lack of articulation and coordination with regard to effective mentoring, the cooperating teachers demonstrated behaviors that are in support of the EC pre-service teachers. These are behaviors which are not normally declared but an intern who is willing to learn and observes keenly her cooperating teacher can notice these behaviors and interpret them as mentoring moves. When cooperating teachers demonstrate a lesson to them, when they instructed them on how to fill up forms, when they were told to be consistent with routines- all these are examples of authority building moves. This finding runs parallel to Hudson (2014) who identified cooperating teachers' behaviors in ensuring that their interns know the system requirements as being one of the elements of mentoring. An intern will not feel welcome if he or she was not oriented about the curriculum, policies and other practices specific to the school. In the same respect, making an intern confident through positive feedback and giving words of encouragement is considered mentoring as these moves build interaction and positive relationship (Hudson 2014). When the cooperating teacher creates opportunities for the intern to learn a skill and practice on it, this move is identified as skill-steering moves. On occasions that the intern is left alone to take care of the class or the intern is allowed to try out new strategies, the cooperating is actually doing the independence –inducing move. Given the paucity of time for internship, every move of the cooperating teachers and the university supervisor counts as display of behavior that should be interpreted as an opportunity for the interns to learn. The study shows evidences of mentor's behaviors in which the interns appreciated. The description of their mentors' behavior parallel to the description of Hillman (2016) which describes mentors exhibiting these behavior: quiet observation, focused listening, trust building, clear and honest communication and a commitment to positive and supportive relationship. Similar to what Strümer & Sidel (2015) imply that the concept of professional vision can be assessed by looking at the interns' knowledge referring to the contextualized and situated nature of the real-world demands of the teaching profession. The EC pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach depends on how they make sense of their internship experiences which parallels the study of Strümer & Sidel (2015) citing that pre-service teachers must use their pedagogical, declarative-conceptual knowledge about effective teaching and learning and learning to notice and interpret relevant features of

classroom situations. Additionally, the lack of time for mentoring felt by the research participants is not an exclusive problem. In a similar predicament, Leung (2013) suggests that mentor teacher scheme need to be implemented throughout the four-year program to address the little time left for internship which is only offered in the last year of the early childhood program.

Undeniably, the early childhood pre-service teachers as participants in the study were seen to have exhibited growth during internship of internship even in a given limited time. They have characterized their internship experiences as to having 'highs and lows', 'smooth and rough rides', never static but a dynamic one, at times transparent and at sometimes opaque. In the internship timeline, milestones have been defined as belonging, being and becoming not as stages but points in the continuum. The development of the EC pre-service teachers could not be ascertained at any fixed point which is different from the model of Furlong and Maynard (1995) in which they identified the five stages of pre-service teacher's development during internship. Their model showing a ladder-like growth of an intern during internship which have been followed by the university where the participants came from. This is also the model that underpins the way interns were prepared by their mentors.

The unpredictability and iterative process of learning-to-teach is evidenced by the many intervening factors caused by the difficult circumstances they faced. Despite the occurrences of challenging situations, the participants brought with them the insights of teaching vulnerable children. As shown in the study, the professional vision of early childhood pre-service teachers flourished, that is, that student teachers perceived their internship in disadvantaged communities did prepare them to teach in such context.

The data culled from interviews, observations, documents and artifacts that were analyzed in relation to each other gave fresh insights on EC pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach during internship. The promising visage of seeing the understandings and perceptions of EC pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach and the processes in which they drew their learning in relation to the processes they were mentored cast an inspiration for the researcher to look at the problems that beset internship. Mentoring requires understanding of the intern's beliefs and learning modes, finding out what may constraint their learning and how mentors will be able to adjust and influence their interns' development. A mentoring model that interlocks pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach modes and mentors' moves emerged as a result of this study, which the researcher considers her contribution with regard to educating the future early childhood teacher professionals.

## **CONCLUSION**

Exploring a sample of early childhood pre-service teachers' understanding of their learning-to-teach during internship in a disadvantaged community through in depth case study reaffirms the importance of mentoring. However, the study points to the findings that challenge the accepted understanding of early childhood pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach and the customary practice of mentoring being done in the university and partner schools. The conclusions presented in this section come out with a different perspective echoing the voices of the participants in this study. Although the conclusion of this qualitative in depth case study may not generalize the whole population of pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers, its significance lies on generating lessons learned to contribute to accretive public knowledge of learning-to-teach and mentoring processes.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of the study is that the roles of the cooperating teachers were not visible to the EC pre-service teachers. The other demands that needed cooperating teachers' attention make their roles as mentors unclear in the perspective of the interns. A related conclusion is that the behaviors demonstrated by the cooperating teachers such as: authority establishing moves, confidence-building moves, skill-steering moves and independence-inducing moves are considered mentoring behaviors but due to the lack of training in mentoring, the cooperating teachers were not able to maximize their roles as mentors. Further, it can be concluded that assuming a good classroom teacher to be an effective mentor may not be guaranteed as mentoring an early childhood pre-service teacher requires a different set of skills, knowledge and attitudes to help cooperating teachers optimize their potentials as mentors.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings, discussion and conclusions have crystallized and thus, form recommendations that have implication to the management of internship program and policies and in-service training of cooperating teachers. Additionally, the findings of this study have led to a landscape that promises high potential for further inquiry. Conduct ongoing evaluation of the Internship Program to find out on a timely basis any problems or issues that may stand in the way of pre-service teachers' learning-to-teach and mitigate these problems through the collaboration of the cooperating teachers and university supervisor. It is also recommended that an Internship pre and post assessment of the interns be conducted to better prepare the interns and manage their expectations.

Since the lack of time has been identified as a major problem to optimize learning-to-teach experiences, it is recommended that internship be extended to two terms (8 months) in partner schools to ensure the development of the pre-service teacher in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, attitudes and other relevant skills. During the course of Internship, the university should have activities that EC pre-service could relate to and be able to use in the field especially in addressing problems in disadvantaged communities.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Internship program is a rich repository of latent knowledge that is waiting to be examined. The authenticity of the environment in partner schools lends actionable problems to be considered in future research. If given more time and extend participation to a larger group of research participants, future research may be done to examine group dialogic reflections (Foong, et al., 2018) using conversation analysis as a method of extracting lessons from this phenomenon.

Based on the limitation of the current study further research is needed to identify other factors that contribute to cooperating teachers' development of mentoring skills using a larger sample group. Aside from the use of in-depth case study method which was limited to a small sample purposively selected for this study, it is recommended by the researcher to use other method of qualitative inquiry that will involve a larger sample group that will be used to develop a theory on mentoring. The implication of future studies compared to the current study will assess the extent to which similar findings would be exposed and eventually will redound to the improvement of mentoring practices.

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