
Title	An exploratory study of beginning teacher mentoring practices in Singapore
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An Exploratory Study of Beginning Teacher Mentoring Practices in Singapore

By **Low Ee Ling**

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Since 2009, the Principal Investigator (PI) and her team have been building an evidence base in order to help inform policy on and practice of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in four related research projects.

From these projects, it was found that during the first 2 years of teaching, many beginning teachers (BTs) encountered various challenges in classroom management, time management and working with parents, to name a few. During the critical transition period from pre-service learning to beginning teaching, school support and mentoring are crucial to BTs' socialisation into the school culture, and to their professional growth.

It was found that a supportive and sharing school culture, strong and structured mentoring, and individualised support and mentoring strategies were some strong supporting factors that were helpful for BTs' professional growth in the first 2 years of teaching. During visits to schools participating in the Instructional Mentoring Programme (IMP), officers of Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST) also sensed that there existed school variations in terms of the implementation of BT mentoring. We therefore felt a need to explore school support for and mentoring of BTs in Singapore.

IMP is a 2-year long mentoring programme introduced by AST in 2015 to develop effective Instructional Mentors (IMs). The aim is to provide instruction-focused support for BTs and to enhance BTs' professional expertise and effectiveness for student learning

through mentoring and skilful teaching. We therefore collaborated with officers from the Ministry of Education (MOE) and AST to investigate how the mentoring of BTs in Singapore schools has been implemented, and its success factors, primarily based on the IMP. Our objectives are:

- To describe and measure patterns of mentoring practices in Singapore schools;
- To explain the factors affecting the success of those practices;
- To measure the impact of mentoring practices on mentee instruction; and
- To identify opportunities for the enhancement of mentoring practices.

To find out what are the factors that contribute to the successful implementation of BT mentoring, we are specifically interested in:

- What is the intention of the implementation of mentoring at the level of AST, IMP, and schools?
- How is the implementation being enacted in IMP, and in schools?
- What is the impact of the implementation?

- What are the factors that lead to successful implementation and positive impact?
- What are the suggestions for improvement in IMP, in school-level leadership and support, and in mentor-mentee work?

To answer these questions, we used a mixed-methods design. The table below shows a summary of the research methods.

It was found that BTs from schools participating in the IMP and the Skilful Teaching and Enhanced Mentoring (STEM) programme rated the following factors significantly higher than those from schools with no official mentoring programmes: structured support, pedagogical support and socio-emotional support.

Interviews with school leaders, CIMs, IMs, and BTs from schools that participated in the IMP also showed that the IMP was highly valued by the participating schools. Factors that contribute to successful implementation of BT mentoring include: strong support and trust of school leaders, structured mentoring (e.g., professionally trained expert mentors, localised mentoring tools and materials, timetabled time for regular mentor-mentee meetings and discussions, offloading, etc.), and mentees' growth mindset. These findings suggest the importance of school-based structured mentoring programmes for BTs.

How to Cite

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Level	Participants	Research Methods
AST	One officer in charge of professional development	Interview, policy documents
IMP	Mentor Coaches	Interview, video recording of IMP lessons conducted by Mentor Coaches, IMP documents
School	IMP case study schools (Principals/Vice Principals, coordinating IMs, IMs, & BTs)	Interviews, video recordings of BTs' lessons, audio recordings of mentor-mentee conversations, mentoring tools and protocols
	Other IMP schools (Principals/Vice Principals, Coordinating IMs, & IMs)	Surveys
	Beginning Teachers (2017 & 2018 BT Symposiums)	Surveys