# Toward developing a qualitative mentoring program for pre-service teachers: Kosovo's experience

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This study aims to understand pre-service teachers' perceptions about mentor teachers' mentoring practices and their relevance to the level of their teaching self-efficacy. A survey was conducted with a sample of 210 pre-service teachers in the 3rd and 4th year of a 4-year bachelor program for elementary teacher education at the University of Prishtina. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 pre-service teachers who reported their highest levels of mentoring experience were with mentor teachers' personal attributes, whilst the lowest level of experience was with feedback provision. Furthermore, they reported their lowest levels of self-efficacy beliefs were in the classroom management domain. Results showed that a lack of close mentoring relationships combined with a lack of institutional (faculty) support and commitment to student professional development had a negative impact on pre-service teachers' perceptions of their experiences. Findings indicate that the quality of mentoring may be enhanced when mentors display attributes such as hospitality, openness to collaboration, non-prejudicial approaches, space for engagement, and encouragement to take initiatives. More information about system requirements, more feedback, more support, and closer rapport with mentors can contribute to higher teaching self-efficacy for pre-service teachers.

## Introduction

Examining the level of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy is important to improve their motivation to teach and consequently advance their teaching performance (Abun et al., 2021; Çolak et al., 2017; Flores, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Abun et al. (2021) stated that teacher education programs should examine pre-service teachers' level of self-efficacy and its sources to understand potential challenges, such as personal or environmental factors, creating teaching experiences. Some of the most powerful influences on the development of teacher efficacy are mastery experiences (performance outcomes) during school placement and the induction year (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Mastery experiences refer to personal experiences of success (Bandura, 1997). In this study, mastery experience relates to pre-service teachers' ability to perform a task successfully in teaching during teaching practicum. Teaching practicum provides a perfect opportunity to create mastery experiences and accordingly influence pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Knoblauch & Chase, 2015; Pfitzner-Eden, 2016; Usher & Pajares, 2008). According to Woolfolk Hoy (2000), the first years of teaching could be critical to the long-term development of teacher efficacy, which speaks to the importance of identifying what elements of self-efficacy should be promoted during mentoring programs. As the body of research exploring pre-service teacher efficacy does not always present consistent results (Duffin et al., 2012), it is vital to conduct studies to determine the level of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in order to improve it.

The quality of education in Kosovo suffered significantly because of political developments before and after the war in 1999. Based on a report of the European Commission (2013, p.13) that investigated teacher education and training in Kosovo, a key recommendation in the area of teacher education is to "put in place an effective and sustainable teacher development system to improve quality of education." Teacher education programs in Kosovo have faced criticisms regarding quality, especially after pupils' low results in the two latest editions of PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2015, 2018). This also raised questions about the quality of pre-service teachers' mentoring in teacher education programs and the quality of induction programs in schools. The pre-service teacher mentoring program in Kosovo is initiated by the universities and there is no formal country mentoring program. Despite the public concern about the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in Kosovo, there is a lack of institutional policies and studies that determine how well teacher education programs are meeting the standards in terms of course syllabi, student teaching policies, and program outcomes. The design of the mentoring program by teacher education institutions embedded within itself certain features of hierarchical relationships between the mentors and pre-service teachers which led to confusion about mentoring and monitoring concepts among the teachers involved (Vula et al., 2015). There is a rising amount of pressure on Kosovar universities that offer teacher education to increase pre-service teachers' academic performance and to offer better conditions for teaching practicum in public schools.

## Literature review

MacCallum (2007) referred to pre-service teacher mentoring as a developmental partnership and a collaborative model in which the more experienced mentor provides support for the pre-service teacher. Furthermore, mentoring serves as an opportunity for sharing ideas and information, and consequently provides advantages for the ongoing supportive learning environment and professional development of both mentors and students (MacCallum, 2007; Maor & McConney, 2015). Mentors are responsible for supporting pre-service teachers to ensure they learn how to teach effectively (Clarke et al., 2014). Mentors are expected to engage pre-service teachers in examining and practising the expected teaching in authentic classrooms seen as transferrable to future teaching contexts (Burn & Mutton, 2015). The experience of pre-service teachers influences their self-efficacy beliefs, thus providing an active learning environment and discussion is considered an appropriate way to increase their teaching self-efficacy beliefs (Futter & Staub, 2017; Nikoçeviq-Kurti, 2021; Sahin-Taskin, 2018).

According to the existing literature on the topic, there is an urgent need to develop pre-service teachers' self-efficacy during their studies, before they start working as teachers (Berg & Smith, 2018; Hudson et al., 2005; Yada et al., 2021; Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). Moreover, students who have a low sense of self-efficacy need to be identified, and those expected to fail during their studies need to be helped (Ismail & Jani, 2016). Given the importance of teachers' self-efficacy in instructional effectiveness and student engagement, educational institutions must understand possible factors that might enhance or hinder these beliefs (Berg & Smith, 2018; Hudson et al., 2005; Van Dinther et al., 2011;

Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). According to Gjelaj et al. (2020), in recent years, the reflection of teacher educators has indicated a lack of quality mentoring practices in Kosovo's schools.

### Role of mentoring in influencing pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in teaching

The mentoring programs play a significant role in creating and developing pre-service teachers' self-efficacy and teaching skills (Hudson, 2004a, 2014; Tillema et al., 2011; Van Dinther et al., 2011). Involvement in a well-designed mentoring program may aid mentor development on how to guide pre-service teachers (Hudson, 2013). Maor and McConney (2015) suggest that mentoring program design should include the provision of professional learning for both mentors and pre-service teachers. Particular emphasis should be on a collegial constructivist approach to mentoring and also on careful selection of mentors based on content expertise, their motivational goals for participating, and their interpersonal attributes (Maor & McConney, 2015). Mentorship becomes more effective when mentors include in their mentoring attributes such as supportiveness, attentiveness, and comfort in talking about teaching practices (Hudson, 2004b). A study by Erbilgin (2014) revealed that poor communication between pre-service teachers and mentor teachers can cause barriers to planning lessons, feedback, and teaching experiences. If mentors demonstrate productive personal attributes, they can instil confidence, develop reflective skills, and encourage pre-service teachers' reflection on classroom management practices (Desouza & Czerniak, 2003, *as cited* in Hudson et al., 2005).

In studies by Hudson et al. (2005) and Hudson (2010), the Mentoring for Effective Primary Science Teaching instrument (MEPST), demonstrated that, due to the lack of mentoring on system requirements by mentors, many final-year preservice teachers ready to enter the profession may not be aware of aims, curriculum, or policies for teaching in primary education. In another study using the MEPST instrument (see Hudson et al., 2009), mentors' personal attributes were perceived by students as less provided, while feedback was most provided. According to Ulferts (2019), successful teaching requires pedagogical professionalism, therefore setting pedagogical knowledge as a common standard for teaching is necessary. Mastery experiences and feedback are closely related (Morris & Usher, 2011), given that pre-service teachers draw on feedback from their mentor teacher to inform the judgment of their mastery experiences (Klassen & Durksen, 2014). According to Çolak et al. (2017), pre-service teachers' beliefs about their instructional competencies influenced how they formed activities in their classroom. In a study by Bird and Hudson (2015), modelling effective teaching and rapport with students were perceived to be the most representative practices of the mentors while mentors' modelling of classroom management and well-designed lesson plans were lower on the pre-service teachers' responses. A study by Nikoçeviq-Kurti & Saqipi (2020) examines how mentor teacher feedback helped pre-service teachers to develop lesson planning skills and an understanding of instructional strategies. The study highlighted the effect of mentoring culture in which mentor teachers do not seem to consider giving feedback as part of the duty while students tend to agree with such perceptions, as they think that "asking for feedback is a form of pressure and demanding something extra" (Nikoçeviq-Kurti & Saqipi, 2020, p.186). The findings underscore the need for pre-service teachers to experience opportunities so that self-efficacy beliefs can be developed. According to

Bjørndal (2020), the mentor's ability to recognise, understand, and act competently in relation to pre-service teachers' expression of their competence must be regarded as an important part of their expertise.

### Benefits of teacher's self-efficacy beliefs

Teacher self-efficacy is related to beneficial outcomes for both teachers and their students (Poulou et al., 2019; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Thus, teachers who possess a high sense of self-efficacy may be more likely to make effective use of different methods and strategies which may have a higher potential to contribute to a better learning outcome for students (Abdulhussain et al., 2017; Gan, 2019). According to Poulou et al. (2019), teacher self-efficacy is a factor that is strongly correlated with instructional choice and refers to a teacher's belief that he or she can produce a change in student academic achievements. Teachers' self-efficacy is associated with teachers' ability to maintain a conducive learning environment and uphold a commitment to their professional responsibilities (Dellinger et al., 2008).

Effective classroom management is critical for the establishment of learning environments and teachers' confidence in their ability to manage disruptive behaviour can develop and increase teachers' levels of self-efficacy (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Rosas & West, 2009). The role of a mentor teacher in offering motivational practices for student engagement is crucial to ensure pre-service teachers understand how teacher motivational support increases affordances for student engagement (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2016; Taylor & Parsons, 2011). Based on a study by Woolfolk Hoy (2000), beginner teachers completing their first year of teaching who previously had a high sense of teacher efficacy found greater satisfaction in teaching, had a more positive reaction to teaching, and experienced less stress.

## Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) and the five-factor mentoring model proposed by Hudson (2004). The social cognitive theory describes how the belief in one's competence to succeed at a task, known as self-efficacy, strongly affects learning outcomes (Bandura, 2008). Several studies have found that there is a positive, significant relationship between pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their academic performance (Bandura, 1986, 2008; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Nasir & Iqbal, 2019). Therefore, building strong self-efficacy as early as possible is essential for developing high educational achievement among pre-service teachers.

Many factors are relevant to enhancing pre-service teacher self-efficacy. This study focuses on examining the components and best practices of mentoring that may impact the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. According to Hudson (2004), the five key factors for effective mentorship are personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback. Hudson (2004) pointed out that the five-factor model for specific mentoring may assist the development of pre-service teachers' primary teaching,

but the ultimate goal should be the development of student pedagogical self-efficacy, and consequently, autonomy in teaching practice. The application of these five factors during mentor work with pre-service teachers has a positive impact on the initial success of students (Cartwright, 2016). According to Hudson et al. (2005), this model provides educators with information for designing specific mentoring strategies for mentors to use toward improving their pre-service teachers' teaching but also can provide the basis for mentors' professional development.

## Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explain how the school placement mentoring experiences influence the level of self-efficacy of pre-service teachers. This study aims to understand pre-service teachers perceptions of mentor teachers' mentoring practices and their relevance to the level of their teaching self-efficacy. Through an examination of students perceptions on the level of the offering of the five-factors mentoring model by mentor teachers and the level of their self-efficacy in teaching, specifically in classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies, the study sought to garner a deeper comprehension of the quality of the mentoring program and a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of mentoring in elementary teaching. According to Gjelaj et al. (2020), the Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina developed a training program for 300 mentor teachers who will serve as mentors for new students in the reformed programs. Still, pre-service teachers were also appointed to other mentor teachers even though they were beginner teachers. There is a need for research on measuring the relationship between pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in teaching and their school placement mentoring experiences based on the five-factor mentoring model.

### The research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of pre-service teachers' mentoring experiences they perceived during their last teaching practicum?
2. What is the level of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in classroom management, student engagement and instructional strategies?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the five-factors for effective mentoring and pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy?
4. According to pre-service teachers, which mentoring practices and approaches affected the development of their teaching self-efficacy beliefs?

## Method

### Research context

The teaching practicum in school settings is an integral part of each of the four years of the teacher education programs in Kosovo. The Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina designed the *Handbook for Teaching Practicum* (Faculty of Education, University of Prishtina, 2004) to support pre-service teachers, mentor teachers, and university supervisors involved with the practicum component. The practicum format for the first

and second-year pre-service teachers focused on observing and planning to teach (3 weeks), while the format for the third and fourth-year pre-service teachers (6-8 weeks) focused on student teachers taking responsibility over teaching classes. Third-year students should plan, teach, and evaluate one lesson in a course, and teach by themselves a series of interconnected units in at least two other courses, while fourth-year students should share teaching and other responsibilities in the classroom with the mentor teacher on an equal basis. Pre-service teachers are required to keep a well-organised record of their teaching, such as portfolios of evidence (lesson plans), and write reflective articles in their diary. Furthermore, supervising professors and mentor teachers are expected to provide diary feedback as well as evaluation according to the following criteria: student effort to reflect on experiences, how students make conclusions from their observations about teaching and learning in the classroom, and whether students raise issues carefully.

## Study design

This study employed a mixed-method combining both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions. Researchers advocating mixed research argue that it is important to use both the exploratory and the confirmatory methods in one's research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004 as cited in Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Mixing research methods in a study can offer a more holistic picture and a stronger explanation of a phenomenon by approaching it in different ways (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

## Instrumentation

The purpose of the quantitative analysis of data was to evaluate the impact of school placement mentoring experiences on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in teaching. Creswell (2012) stated that survey research is used to identify and relate variables and to measure attitudes and beliefs. The instrument constructed for this study consisted of two standardised questionnaires, "Mentoring for Effective Teaching Science" (Hudson et al., 2005) and "Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) which were translated into the Albanian language. The "Mentoring for Effective Teaching Science" instrument consisted of 34 Likert-type questions ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and covers the 5 factors for effective mentoring which are: personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback (Appendix A). The instrument "Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale" covered three subscales: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. It has 24 items with a nine-point Likert-type scale (1-Nothing; 3-Very little; 5-Some influence; 7-Quite a bit; and 9-A great deal) (Appendix B).

Ten semi-structured interviews with pre-service teachers were conducted with strict attention to rich data collection (Appendix C). Pre-service teachers were selected based on mixed random-convenience sampling. At the beginning of the interview, participants signed the interview consent form. Participants were informed that the interview was confidential and will only be used for research questions with the guarantee that their identity will not be revealed in any circumstance. Interview durations were between 17 and 23 minutes.

### Sample and sampling

The context for this study is a primary teacher education program. The survey was conducted with a sample of 210 third and fourth-year student teachers enrolled in a Kosovar 4-year bachelor program at the University of Prishtina for elementary teacher education after their last teaching practicum in Prishtina elementary schools. The main criterion for inclusion of pre-service teachers in this survey was finishing the teaching practicum successfully before being part of the survey. The third-year students finished the teaching practicum during the fifth semester (winter period), whilst the fourth-year students completed the teaching practicum during the eighth semester (summer period) in the academic year 2020/2021.

Out of 220 respondents, 210 questionnaires are validated and considered for analysis. Adopting systematic random sampling techniques, 110 third-year students (52.4%) and 100 fourth-year students (47.6%), from which 197 students (93.8%) are female while 13 students (6.2%) are male, participated in the survey. Third-year students completed the questionnaires in the presence of this study researcher, while the fourth-year students completed it online because of the pandemic situation and lockdown. The first author managed and collected the data, and there wasn't any relationship between the researcher and participants. A demographic summary is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample (N=210)

| Characteristic | Description | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Year of study | 3rd year | 110 | 52.4% |
| | 4th year | 100 | 47.6% |
| Gender | Female | 197 | 93.8% |
| | Male | 13 | 6.2% |
| Place of residence | Urban | 101 | 48.1% |
| | Rural | 109 | 51.9% |
| Age | 18-22 | 148 | 70.5% |
| | 23-26 | 47 | 22.4% |
| | 27-32 | 10 | 4.8% |
| | 32+ | 5 | 2.4% |

In order to understand more aspects of the research, the semi-structured interviews consisting of several questions (Appendix C) were conducted with 10 pre-service teachers (3rd and 4th year of studies at bachelor level who participated in the survey) of the Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina. The age of the students ranged from 20 to 26 years old. Eight (8) students were female while two (2) were male (Table 2). Interviews were conducted using the virtual platforms *Zoom* and *Google Meet*. These two virtual platforms were used depending on the request of the interviewee. Both virtual mediating experiences were the same. No connectivity problems or technical delays occurred.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of interview participants

| Code | Age | Gender | Year of study | Mentor teacher age | Mentor teacher gender | Duration of interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S01 | 21 | F | 3rd | 31-40 | F | 18 min |
| S02 | 21 | F | 3rd | 31-40 | F | 20 min |
| S03 | 21 | F | 3rd | 21-30 | F | 20 min |
| S04 | 20 | F | 3rd | 41-50 | F | 17 min |
| S05 | 22 | F | 3rd | 21-30 | F | 23 min |
| S06 | 26 | F | 4th | 21-30 | F | 17 min |
| S07 | 22 | F | 4th | 31-40 | F | 20 min |
| S08 | 25 | M | 4th | 31-40 | F | 20 min |
| S09 | 23 | M | 4th | 31-40 | F | 23 min |
| S10 | 22 | F | 4th | 31-40 | F | 20 min |

The study was conducted with institutional approval on the basis that the research meets ethical standards and does not present harm to human life and the environment.

### Data collection and analysis

The survey was conducted two months after the pre-service teachers had completed their teaching practicum. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents in-person and online. The questionnaire was anonymous and respondents were entirely free from any pressure in time or other constraints so that they could be truthful with their opinions. Additionally, participants did not have to provide any personally identifiable information in either questionnaire. Complete confidentiality was ensured by the researcher. The researchers determined that the data distributions were non-normal using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. These tests were used to test the normality of data in order to determine if a variable is normally distributed in a population. As the data did not meet the normality assumptions, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used to test if two sets of pairs differed in a statistically significant manner, and Spearman rank correlations were conducted to measure the degree of association between each independent variable (five-factors) and dependent variable (teaching self-efficacy).

The interviews were administered individually by a researcher. A thematic analysis method was used to identify, analyse and report the themes within the qualitative data. The goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes, specifically patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The qualitative data were analysed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide, by initially becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining themes, and writing up.

## Findings

### Quantitative research findings

Results are presented by descriptive statistics to provide pre-service teachers' perceptions on their mentoring experience after last teaching practicum in school settings (see Appendix A). The overall mean of 3.90 (SD=.97) indicates that pre-service teachers had positive mentoring experiences during their teaching practicum. Personal attributes had the highest mean score, 4.13 (SD=.865), while modelling was placed second with a mean score of 4.02 (SD=.755). According to the order of the dimensions based on group means, pedagogical knowledge was placed third. The two factors with low mean scores were system requirements (M=3.84, SD=.910) and feedback (M=3.61, SD=.841). The highest mean score was obtained on mentors' personal attributes and the most commonly reported experience was "the mentor has a good rapport with the primary students" (M=4.46, SD=0.852) which is an item of the "modelling" factor. The least reported experience was "the mentor provided me with written feedback on my teaching" (M=2.95, SD=1.283) which is an item of the "feedback" factor.

The findings regarding the level of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in teaching reported the mean scores ranging from 7.35 to 7.56 on a nine-point scale (see Appendix B). The mean of 7.45 (SD=.97) indicates a high level of teaching self-efficacy of the students participating in the research (N = 210). Based on the results, the highest mean score was obtained on teaching self-efficacy in instructional strategies (M=7.56, SD=1.02), while the lowest mean score was obtained on teaching self-efficacy in classroom management (M=7.35, SD=1.05). Specifically, the highest mean score was obtained on self-efficacy to get students to believe they can do well in school work (M=7.82, SD=1.286), while the lowest was for self-efficacy to control disruptive behaviour in the classroom (M=7.03, SD=1.486).

As displayed in Table 3, Wilcoxon signed-rank test results show that there were no significant differences between pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in student engagement and self-efficacy in classroom management (Z=-1.812, p=.070).

Table 3: Pairwise comparisons for teaching self-efficacy
(Wilcoxon signed ranks test)

| | Instructional strategies - Student engagement | Classroom management - Student engagement | Instructional strategies - Classroom management |
|---|---|---|---|
| Z | -3.464 (a) | -1.812 (b)b | -4.734 |
| Asymp. sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .070 | .000 |
| (a) Based on negative ranks; (b) Based on positive ranks. | | | |

However, there was a statistically significant difference between students' self-efficacy in instructional strategies and self-efficacy in student engagement (Z=-3.464, p=.001), and between students' self-efficacy in instructional strategies and self-efficacy in classroom

management (Z=-4.734, p=.000). Results showed that pre-service teachers have self-efficacy to use instructional strategies effectively at a higher level than to engage all pupils in learning and manage the classroom.

Table 4 presents the findings for the third research question regarding the relationship between each of the five factors for effective mentoring and pre-service teachers' level of self-efficacy in student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies.

Table 4*:* Relationship between pre-service teachers' mentoring experience (five-factor model) and their level of self-efficacy in three subscales

| | | Self-efficacy in student engagement | Self-efficacy in instructional strategies | Self-efficacy in classroom management | Self-efficacy in teaching |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personal attributes | Spearman's rho | 0.183** | 0.193** | 0.200** | 0.207** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.008 | 0.005 | 0.004 | 0.003 |
| | N | 210 | 210 | 210 | 210 |
| System requirements | Spearman's rho | 0.128 | 0.140* | 0.185** | 0.170* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.064 | 0.043 | 0.007 | 0.014 |
| | N | 210 | 210 | 210 | 210 |
| Modelling | Spearman's rho | 0.106 | 0.146* | 0.191** | 0.166* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.126 | 0.034 | 0.006 | 0.016 |
| | N | 210 | 210 | 210 | 210 |
| Pedagogical knowledge | Spearman's rho | 0.111 | 0.138* | 0.201** | 0.171* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.108 | 0.046 | 0.003 | 0.013 |
| | N | 210 | 210 | 210 | 210 |
| Feedback | Spearman's rho | 0.151* | 0.152* | 0.156* | 0.169* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.029 | 0.028 | 0.024 | 0.014 |
| | N | 210 | 210 | 210 | 210 |

The Spearman rank correlation is a non-parametric test that is used to measure the degree of association between two variables. A p-value less than 0.05 (≤ 0.05) is statistically significant. The results show that there is a weak positive correlation but statistically significant (r = 0.207 **, p<0.01) between the students' satisfaction with mentoring on personal attributes and their level of teaching self-efficacy (in all three subscales). Also, a weak positive but the statistically significant relationship has resulted between the provision of feedback by the mentor and pre-service teachers' level of teaching self-efficacy in all subscales (r = .169 *, p <0.05). The results show that there was no statistically significant relationship between the three other factors of the mentoring model (providing information on system requirements (r = .128, p> 0.05), modelling teaching practices (r = .106, p>0.05), and pedagogical knowledge, (r =. 111, p>0.05) and the level of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in student engagement. On the other hand, all five factors of the mentoring model have a weak positive but statistically significant correlation with students' level of self-efficacy in two other subscales (instructional strategies and classroom management). Results indicate that pre-service teachers felt more effective at engaging all students in learning if they received effective mentoring on personal attributes and feedback on their teaching practices from their assigned mentors.

## Qualitative research outcomes

This section presents the outcomes from interviews with 10 pre-service teachers. The themes with the main findings derived from the interview are presented in Figure 2. The findings are related to the research question posed in the study: "According to pre-service teachers, which mentoring practices and approaches affected the development of their teaching self-efficacy beliefs?" Six major themes emerged as the data were reviewed and coded according to the inductive analysis approach, by two separate coders. Figure 2 shows that the themes derived from the interview data are related to mentor teachers' pedagogical methods, personal attributes, modelling of teaching practices and communication, provision of constructive feedback, lack of rapport between mentor-student, and lack of support and commitment by school and faculty.

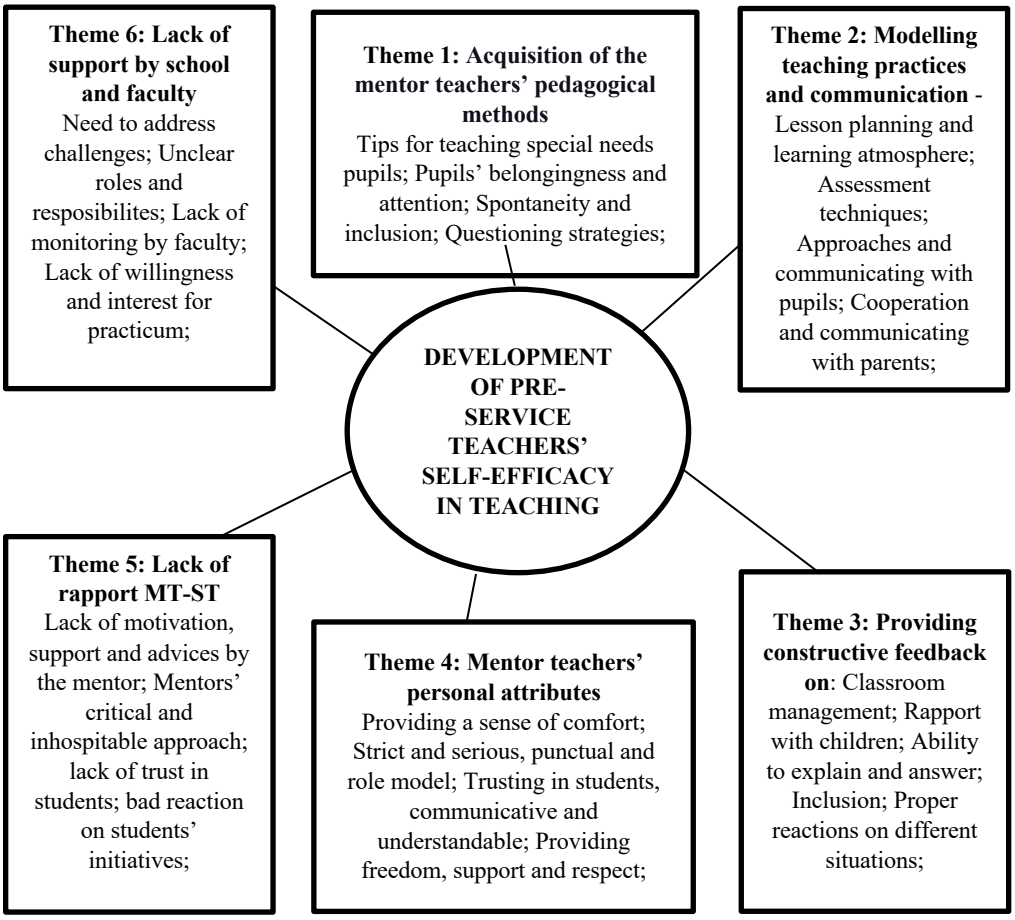


Figure 1: Mentoring practices and approaches that affect pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy beliefs

### Acquisition of the mentor teachers' pedagogical methods

Based on the results of the interview analysis, it can be noted that students emphasised the key role of the teacher in creating a sense of belonging, security, and freedom of children in the classroom.

> Teacher taught me how to give children that sense of security, that they should not only depend on the teacher but also create trust in their classmates … so, they can have that sense of security to ask freely and express their opinion (S07).

Also, students said that mentors explained how to approach pupils with special needs and the different activities pre-service teachers can provide for them. "*Approaching pupils with special needs was challenging. I learned how to provide activities they like*" (S04). Students said that they learned from the mentor teachers how to accept spontaneity in the classroom and that any event that happens by chance can be included in the lesson. "*By seeing how the teachers include games in the lesson, I have realised that children are more focused and remember the lesson more easily if the lesson is fun*" (S03). Students showed that teachers have used different forms of student relaxation to have their attention back to learning.

### Modelling teaching practices and communicating with children and parents

According to interviewed students, the ways in which mentor teachers provided a supportive environment and how they achieved student inclusion in learning were quite motivating. "*Teacher explained to me how to link learning outcomes to teaching and learning activities and to assessment"* (S01). Students emphasised that they were familiar with assessment structure and how to assess and grade pupils' projects. Furthermore, students said that mentors were collaborating in lesson planning and measuring the achieved outcomes. The interviewed students admitted that approaching children and communicating with them was their biggest challenge and concern. They said that during the teaching practice they tried to adapt to the children and learn as much as possible about how to approach them.

> The approach was the first point I tried to master. All the time I was concerned about if I'm achieving the goal. Then, can I give answers to everyone so that it does not make a difference in the answer? (S09).

Students also said that in addition to understanding the ways of communicating and reporting to parents, they also understand the degree of closeness they need to maintain with parents.

### Providing constructive feedback to pre-service teachers during mentoring

Despite the small number of teaching lessons provided in front of students and the lack of time for the teachers' feedback, pre-service teachers said that through teacher feedback, they understood more about their shortcomings, raised self-confidence, and understood the attributes that a future teacher should have. Furthermore, students said that they learned from the mentors' feedback how to create close rapport with pupils and how to use this in classroom management.

> I am rather quiet as a person and did not have it easy to talk in front of students. At the end of the practicum, the mentor teacher told me that I developed in this regard and that I was very kind to the pupils" (S01).

Among others, students emphasised that they learn how to understand different situations and how to react to them properly.

> I had a lot of support from my school mentor, I have constantly received good comments and support, which has made me feel good so that I can have more self-confidence (S09).

Even if they made minor mistakes, pre-service teachers said that the way that the teachers treated them in such cases and their positive approach has influenced the pre-service teachers' encouragement for improvement.

> After I taught the lesson, the teacher told me where I should read more slowly or how to ask the children, so small details that matter and were for my own good (S03).

The students emphasised that the feedback from the mentor teacher has increased their self esteem and that it has encouraged them to incorporate a variety of activities into their lesson plans and to initiate the learning process in this way.

### Mentors' attributes as motivators for developing values of future teachers

According to students' statements, mentor teachers had provided good models of positive approach and close communication while creating confidence and freedom in students.

> For me, the mentor's approach was very important. It made me feel much safer. If it hadn't been for her to make me feel very free, I probably wouldn't have been able to be trained much (S09);
> She told me that she is ready to answer every question whenever in doubt… she helped me in everything (S07).

Above all, students emphasised that the sense of comfort in the classroom and support in every aspect has raised their self-confidence and they do not hesitate to get involved in teaching.

> The fact that she has made me feel comfortable has given me some confidence that I was ready and I insisted on taking part in every step of my practice. I even tried to do it myself because I knew she would not prejudge me (S06).

Among other things, students emphasised hospitality, trust in pre-service teachers, space for engagement, unprejudiced atmosphere, and encouragement for continuous development with positive comments as some of the factors that influenced the increase of their sense of self-efficacy in teaching.

### Lack of close student-teacher mentoring relationships

According to the statements of the interviewed students, in some cases there was a lack of support from mentor teachers for their involvement in teaching; therefore the creation of a close relationship was not possible.

> The teacher was neither motivating nor close (S06);
> I think it is very important initially to create respect, to feel loved, and be close to the teacher. But I did not have the opportunity to learn much from the teacher because her reaction was bad. She made me feel guilty (S01).

In some cases, students said that teachers minimised opportunities for students to get involved or did not disrupt their routine to give students space to contribute. Among others, they expresed the need to address the situation if they do not match with their mentor teacher.

> You do not even have the right to choose a mentor teacher. This is the teacher, like it or not. You spent eight weeks in her class. It is also very important how you fit in with someone (S10).

Adapting to the mentoring teacher is very important. If this does not happen, students asked to replace their mentor, but is not offered by the faculty.

### Lack of support and commitment from school and faculty for professional development of the students

The interviewed students emphasised that they feel neglected and even not welcomed in the school due to the lack of good coordination with the faculty.

> The rapport between mentor teachers and university supervisors is missing. Monitoring by university supervisors should be mandatory, at least once a week (S04);
> The mentor teachers' mood was down when they saw us in their classroom. I thought, why they should not like us, we help the teachers in the classroom (S02).

The interviewed students said that due to the lack of cooperation between the faculty and the school, they were not interested in the internship and their involvement in it was not taken seriously.

> This is also the reason why students' interest in internships has decreased. I do not know if you have noticed but most students lack enthusiasm for internships. They are not happy that there is no interest from either the mentor teachers or the university supervisors (S06).

Students said they need support during the challenges in practice, which is not being offered by the faculty so far. They emphasised that the interest of mentors encourages their initiative to work harder and therefore requires more frequent meetings and visits with university supervisors.

## Discussion

The results show that mentor teachers have shown a high level of personal attributes and modelling of teaching practices, while they have lagged regarding providing feedback and information on the system requirements. The results of the present study relate to the findings of other studies (Galamay-Cachola et al., 2018; Duah, 2010; Turpeinen, 2018; Vásquez Carrosa et al., 2019), who reported that pre-service teachers were mentored greatly by the mentor teachers in terms of personal attributes. These studies have shown (see also Hudson 2004, 2010; Sempowicz & Hudson, 2011) that personal attributes are fundamental in the mentoring process, and their provision can ultimately strengthen the professional development of pre-service teachers. According to Kaplan and Garner (2017), pre-service teachers may become less confident and display a higher level of insecurity and anxiety, if their mentor teacher fails to provide emotional support and a nurturing relationship with them.

The low level of students' satisfaction with feedback provision is an indicator that the students are seldom in charge of organising lessons and that mentors do not provide adequate feedback regarding students' performance during the teaching practicum. These results can be compared to other studies in the context of Kosovo (see Nikoçeviq-Kurti & Saqipi, 2020; Gjelaj et al., 2020) which shed light on the influence of the mentoring culture in which mentor teachers do not perceive providing feedback as part of their duty and therefore, they pay little attention to their role as feedback providers. Furthermore, a study by Gjelaj et al. (2020) found that the content of six syllabi of the course "Pedagogical Practice" at the Faculty of Education of the University of Prishtina reflected a more limited scope of elements in the dimension of system requirements and pedagogical knowledge. The low level of feedback provision by mentor teachers is concerning. According to Hudson and Millwater (2008), students feel more successful when they obtain constructive feedback, which helps them increase their confidence and improve their performance. Opposite results from those of the present study are shown in other studies (see Hudson et al., 2009; Virtič et al., 2021), which show that final-year student teachers reported that their mentors provided feedback regularly, but their mentoring lacked significantly in personal attributes and system requirements.

The majority of students have reported a high level of self-efficacy in teaching, with an average score of 7.45 (on a 9-point scale). These findings are consistent with findings in other studies (Ngidi & Ngidi, 2019; Senler & Sungur, 2013; Swan et al., 2011) which have also reported a high level of students' self-efficacy in teaching. In the present study, students reported a lower level of self-efficacy in classroom management. Therefore primary education programs should include classroom management courses in their curriculum. Çakmak (2008) found that pre-service teachers' biggest concern is classroom management. This research suggests that the content of courses about classroom management provided in teacher training programs should be reviewed. According to Kass and Miller (2015), it is possible that educators and teachers are not aware of the importance of developing a sense of self-efficacy in the classroom. Just transmitting knowledge and information is not enough when it comes to self-efficacy. One of the most likely in-school factors affecting decisions to leave the profession includes poor

interactions with principals and staff and a lack of a sense of efficacy in the classroom (Feuer et al., 2013).

Consistent with findings of previous studies, the present study has shown a significant, positive correlation between students' school placement mentoring experience, and their self-efficacy in teaching (see Berg & Smith, 2018; Martins et al., 2015; Rupp & Becker, 2021; Simsar & Jones, 2021). Pre-service teachers who reported more positive experiences with mentors' attributes and feedback felt more effective in student engagement. Results showed that students need a positive mentoring experience in all five factors to feel more effective to use instructional strategies and classroom management. This study suggests that it would be preferable for the training of mentors to be done in concordance with the five factors of effective mentoring because the mentors that have undergone this sort of training have shown to be more effective and have offered more mentoring practices (Hudson & McRobbie, 2003). The central argument is that pre-service teachers' school placement mentoring experiences relate to their level of teaching self-efficacy. Therefore, it matters that pre-service teachers' perceptions of their experiences influence how they invest in the practicum.

The interview findings demonstrated the importance of establishing close rapport between mentors and students to open the way for additional support and effective mentoring opportunities. When mentors and students have not established a positive rapport from the beginning of the mentoring process, students have experienced a lack of motivation, anxiety, concerns, or loss of interest in the teaching practicum. This may prevent students from achieving a mastery experience. These findings accord with the results in previous studies reporting on the obstacles that can occur due to poor communication and cooperation between mentors and students (Bird & Hudson, 2015; Erbilgin, 2014; Kilburg, 2007). Studies suggest that it would be more effective if the match between pre-service teachers and their mentors was more selective and if the number of trained mentor teachers was increased (Hudson & McRobbie, 2004; St. John et al., 2018).

## Conclusions

This study offers a deeper comprehension of the quality of the mentoring program in Kosovo and also contributes to the current literature on how future teachers should be prepared and supported during initial teacher education programs. Findings indicate that pre-service teachers' school placement mentoring experiences are related positively to their level of teaching self-efficacy. The lack of close mentoring relationships combined with the lack of institutional (faculty) support and commitment to student professional development has a negative impact on pre-service teachers' perceptions of their experiences. Thus, these perceptions influence motivation and their interest in teaching practicum. Participants in this study indicated the importance of teacher personal attributes, such as enthusiasm for teaching and a supportive student-mentor relationship, for the development of their teaching self-efficacy beliefs. The low level of student satisfaction with the mentor teachers' feedback indicates that students are more observers than practitioners in the classroom. They lack feedback on their positive aspects and areas that require further improvement. Results indicate that pre-service teachers have the self-

efficacy to use instructional strategies effectively at a higher level than to engage all students in learning and manage the classroom. Pre-service teachers find classroom management a difficult process, including establishing routines during learning activities, controlling disruptive behaviour in the classroom, and dealing with challenging students who tend to ruin a lesson.

Findings indicate that the quality of mentoring may be enhanced when mentors include in their mentoring attributes such as hospitality, openness to collaboration, non-judgmental approach, space for engagement, and encouragement of pre-service teachers to take initiatives. This study also points to the importance of matching students and mentors, which is often one of the most challenging aspects of mentoring programs. Lack of close mentoring relationships, lack of institutional support, and commitment to student professional development have affected pre-service teachers' motivation and interest in teaching practicum.

### Limitations and further research

This study has three main limitations. First, the level of self-efficacy perceived by the pre-service teachers depended on their honest self-reporting in the questionnaires. Secondly, the majority of respondents and interviewees are female, influenced by the fact that this gender constitutes the majority of primary pre-service teachers. Another limitation of this study may be the fact that it is unclear whether students' initial experiences during previous school placement affected their level of self-efficacy.

Further research should explore pre-service teachers' level of self-efficacy in teaching in relation to other factors linked with mentoring variables, such as the matching process, goal settings, and trained mentor teachers. Longitudinal studies can also be conducted to track the evolution of students' self-efficacy beliefs based on their mentoring experience after each teaching practicum during four years of initial teacher education.

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## Appendix A: Pre-service teachers' perceptions on mentoring experience based on a five-factor mentoring model

After Hudson, Skamp and Brooks (2005). Scale points: Strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5

| | | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal attributes | was supportive of me for teaching | 4.34 | .976 |
| | seemed comfortable in talking with me about teaching | 4.25 | .938 |
| | instilled positive attitudes in me towards teaching | 4.04 | 1.052 |
| | assisted me to reflect on improving my teaching practices | 3.86 | 1.159 |
| | made me feel more confident as a teacher | 4.07 | 1.077 |
| | listened to me attentively on teaching matters | 4.16 | .989 |
| | *This subscale* | 4.13 | .865 |
| System requirements | discussed with me the school policies used for teaching | 3.88 | 1.105 |
| | outlined state curriculum documents to me | 3.64 | 1.205 |
| | discussed with me the aims of teaching. | 3.97 | 1.095 |
| | *This subscale* | 3.84 | .910 |
| Pedagogical knowledge | guided me with lesson preparation | 3.93 | 1.065 |
| | assisted me with classroom management strategies for teaching | 3.99 | 1.067 |
| | assisted me towards implementing teaching strategies | 4.03 | .955 |
| | assisted me with timetabling my lessons | 3.73 | 1.150 |
| | developed my strategies for teaching | 3.73 | 1.110 |
| | provided strategies for me to solve my teaching problems | 4.03 | .992 |
| | discussed with me questioning skills for effective teaching | 3.91 | 1.088 |
| | discussed with me the knowledge I needed for teaching | 3.75 | 1.204 |
| | gave me clear guidance for planning to teach | 3.79 | 1.137 |
| | gave me new viewpoints on teaching | 3.95 | 1.034 |
| | showed me how to assess the students' learning | 4.16 | 1.072 |
| | *This subscale* | 3.92 | .830 |
| Modelling | used language from the current primary syllabus | 4.19 | .934 |
| | modelled teaching | 3.93 | .968 |
| | had a good rapport with the students | 4.46 | .852 |
| | displayed enthusiasm when teaching | 4.05 | 1.031 |
| | modelled effective classroom management when teaching | 3.91 | .979 |
| | was effective in teaching | 4.03 | 1.020 |
| | used hands-on materials for teaching | 3.74 | 1.116 |
| | had well-designed activities for the student | 3.84 | 1.042 |
| | *This subscale* | 4.02 | .755 |
| Feedback | discussed evaluation of my teaching | 3.81 | 1.056 |
| | provided oral feedback on my teaching | 3.50 | 1.263 |
| | provided me with written feedback on my teaching | 2.95 | 1.283 |
| | reviewed my lesson plans before teaching | 3.45 | 1.282 |
| | clearly articulated what I needed to do to improve my teaching | 3.90 | 1.032 |
| | observed me teach before providing feedback | 4.02 | 1.104 |
| | *This subscale* | 3.90 | .840 |

## Appendix B: Pre-service teachers' perceptions on level of self-efficacy in teaching

After Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001).
Scale points: Nothing=1; Very little=3; Some influence=5; Quite a bit=7; A great deal=9

| | | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Self-efficacy in student engagement | How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students? | 7.14 | 1.515 |
| | How much can you do to help your students think critically? | 7.24 | 1.364 |
| | How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work? | 7.67 | 1.241 |
| | How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work? | 7.82 | 1.286 |
| | How much can you do to help your students value learning? | 7.24 | 1.485 |
| | How much can you do to foster student creativity? | 7.71 | 1.226 |
| | How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing? | 7.24 | 1.395 |
| | How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school? | 7.38 | 1.545 |
| | *This subscale* | 7.43 | .995 |
| Self-efficacy in instructional strategies | How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students? | 7.62 | 1.254 |
| | How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught? | 7.54 | 1.316 |
| | To what extent can you craft good questions for your students? | 7.63 | 1.349 |
| | How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students? | 7.71 | 1.182 |
| | How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies? | 7.44 | 1.323 |
| | To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused? | 7.45 | 1.397 |
| | How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students? | 7.37 | 1.291 |
| | *This subscale* | 7.56 | 1.022 |
| Self-efficacy in classroom management | How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom? | 7.03 | 1.486 |
| | To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behaviour? | 7.24 | 1.494 |
| | How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly? | 7.27 | 1.315 |
| | How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules? | 7.73 | 1.284 |
| | How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy? | 7.41 | 1.432 |
| | How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students? | 7.35 | 1.399 |
| | How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson? | 7.20 | 1.455 |
| | How well can you respond to defiant students? | 7.59 | 1.306 |
| | *This subscale* | 7.35 | 1.057 |

## Appendix C: Interview questions

1. How do you perceive mentoring experience you got with the mentor teacher during your last school placement? Briefly describe the experience.
2. What qualities do you think are most important for a mentor to have?
3. Please explain which mentor teachers' activities, behaviors, and/or tips have assisted you to better master the teaching?
4. While you were being observed by a mentor teacher, what were your general goals in teaching a lesson?
5. What do you think you learned from your mentor teacher and what from your university supervisor regarding effective teaching?
6. What suggestions do you have to improve the teaching practicum for pre-service teachers?

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