

Strength-based mentoring in pre-service teacher education: a literature review

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(Received 30 January 2009; final version received 16 May 2009)

In order to better prepare pre-service teachers for potential challenges in their first year of teaching, it is critical for both teacher educators and supervising teachers to provide strategies to strengthen pre-service teachers' beliefs and maintain their motivation. In this article, strengths-based theories are reviewed to provide a discussion on teacher mentoring approaches that offer an alternative to the more common problem-based models. A strength-based mentoring model in teacher education is presented, and measures and strategies developed from different strength-based theories are applied to the six elements of this model.

Keywords: teacher education; pre-service teachers; strength-based mentoring

A major component in teacher education programs, mentoring is a collaborative effort between university teacher educators, school supervising teachers and pre-service teachers. While teacher education has long adopted the apprenticeship model in mentoring, mentoring includes emotional support and professional socialization in addition to pedagogical guidance (Hawkey, 2006; Schwille, 2008). In other words, an effective mentoring program not only grooms pre-service teachers for classroom instruction but also enhances their self-efficacy and prepares them for the potential 'shattered dreams of impeccable professional performance' during their first year of teaching (Friedman, 2000, p. 595). Bobek (2002) points out that building relationships, including mentoring programs and support, is one of the five primary reasons for teachers remaining in the field. Mentors' modeling and interactions with their mentees are vital for instilling the resilience necessary for teachers to meet the challenges they face.

The term *resilience* was first used in psychiatry and developmental psychology studies to describe individuals' ability to successfully recover from adversity (Block & Block, 1980). In the past two decades, resilience studies have shifted from individuals' sufferings and struggles to the positive characteristics, strengths and assets that facilitate successful transition or adaptation (Henderson & Milstein, 2003).

In teacher education, resilience studies are closely related to inquiries into teacher retention. *Retention* is not only defined as teachers' physical continuation in the teaching profession but also their maintenance of motivation and commitment in the teaching field (Gu & Day, 2007). The motivational forces, or teacher resilience, that

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sustains teachers and their passion for teaching – even when facing demanding situations – needs to be promoted through modeling strategies to negotiate the potential conflicts they encounter.

While different mentoring models offer ways to enhance the quality of mentor-mentee communication, it is challenging for mentors to ‘cross the border’ (Giroux, 2005) and focus on their own strengths and assets as well as those of their mentees. For example, Bradbury and Koballa (2008) found that there is a ‘culture of isolation’ caused by mentor teachers’ lack of know-how in communicating their teaching beliefs to others. Without adequate communication between mentor teachers and pre-service teachers regarding teaching expectations and beliefs, pre-service teachers leave teacher education programs ill-prepared to negotiate potential conflict between their beliefs and the reality of teaching, leading to dissonance and resistance to adaptation.

While proposing a mentoring model that facilitates communication between mentor teachers and pre-service teachers and enhances teacher resilience through mentoring, this paper reviews strength-based theories, examines measures and strategies applicable to teacher mentoring, and presents a strength-based mentoring model in teacher education.

Strength-based theories and applications

Increasing numbers of educational researchers have argued for a more affirming perspective for schools and teachers that moves away from IQ and cultural-deficit orientations and promotes achievement for all students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Derived from positive psychology and social cognitive psychology theories, various strength-based approaches have been developed and applied to pre-K-16 educational settings to develop and build upon individuals’ strengths to enable optimal student performance (Lopez, 2006; Seligman, 2000). These strength-based approaches focus on the articulation of one’s strengths and assets as identified by examining past positive experiences; encouragement of hope and optimism for the future; and development of emotional satisfaction with the present (Seligman, 2002). In the following section, the major strength-based theories and research findings are reviewed in relation to teacher education.

Strengths identified from past experiences

It is the focus on individuals’ positive experiences and strengths as opposed to their problems and shortcomings that distinguishes the strength-based approach from the deficit-based model. The strengths-development theories can be traced back to Donald Clifton, cited by the American Psychological Association as the ‘father of strength-based psychology and grandfather of positive psychology’ (McKay & Greengrass, 2003, p. 87). As an educational psychologist, Clifton’s career focused on identifying methods to explore and develop positive attitudes among individuals.

Based on Clifton and Anderson’s (2002) work in applying positive psychology theories, StrengthsQuest was developed for identifying individuals’ specific strengths. It is presented as a personal development program by Gallup Higher Education Division (2000) and is probably one of the most widely used programs in personal-strength identification. The premise is that an individual may experience three sequential stages of strength development: talent identification, talent ownership and behavioral change (Clifton & Harter, 2003). Based on the StrengthsQuest theory, one’s talent is

different from their strength. Talent is ‘a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling and behavior that can be productively applied,’ while strength is ‘the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity’ (Hodges & Harter, 2005, pp. 190–191). The purpose of the StrengthsQuest program is to help individuals discover and build upon their natural talents to maximize their potential for strengths.

One of the major components of the StrengthsQuest program is the StrengthsFinder instrument. The instrument identifies the top five strengths for the respondent from among 34 themes. Descriptions for each individual strength theme and suggestions for actions to promote growth in each area are also provided. StrengthsFinder is one of the few instruments for identifying positive psychological attributes that employs a computer-adaptive algorithm wherein the questions offered to a respondent are reactive to previous responses. Gallup Organization has conducted several large-scale validity and reliability studies to confirm the stability of the instrument, and a recent study indicated its consistency when used across countries, languages, age, and gender (Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2004).

The StrengthsQuest program has been widely used in educational settings. In addition to research exploring its applications with high school and college students and professional academic advisors (Hodges & Clifton, 2004; Rath, 2002), several studies have also reported success with teachers (Henderson, 2005; Onishi, 2005) and principals (Norwood, 2005).

McEntarffer (2003) has conducted a mixed-methods study of 16 pre-service teachers applying the StrengthsQuest program in a mentoring context. In this program, both mentors and mentees completed the StrengthsFinder instrument and identified their individual strengths. The study results indicated that significant positive growth in the relationships between the mentors and mentees was achieved by participants identifying and focusing on their own strengths, as well as the strengths of one another.

These research findings indicate the potential for applying the StrengthsQuest program in teacher education mentoring to facilitate both mentors and mentees in identifying their talents and strengths, especially at the beginning of the mentoring relationship.

Hope and optimism for the future: hope theory

Instead of focusing on strengths identified through past experiences, both the hope theory (Snyder, 1995) and academic optimism theory (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006) highlight goal setting and self-efficacy to promote future development. Both theories are closely related to Bandura’s (1982) self-efficacy theory, Scheier and Carver’s (1985) optimism theory and Covington’s (2000) goal theory.

Hope theory involves a motivational model that emphasizes both the ‘will and the way’ in which individuals reach their goals (Snyder, 1995). Snyder (1995) defines hope as ‘the process of thinking about one’s goals, along with the motivation to move toward those goals (agency), and the ways to achieve those goals (pathways)’ (p. 355). In other words, in order to reach the goals, one needs to have the motivation for both approaching the goals and seeking alternative strategies to achieve them. The identification and confirmation of agency and pathways as two separate constructs furthers the understanding of goal setting, allowing educators not only to measure factors related to hope but also to design and provide interventions to enhance hope.

Several measures of hope for participants ranging from seven years of age to adults have been tested, and the validity and reliability of these measures have been examined in various educational settings (Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003). Compared with the relatively extensive studies of the hope measures, the studies on interventions for increasing hope among students are limited. Based on research on high-hope versus low-hope participants, Snyder (1995) and Snyder et al. (2003) provide implications for teacher education mentoring:

- (1) Set meaningful and reasonable ‘we’ goals (i.e., goals in relationship to their mentors, peers, students and parents). Goal setting is the foundation of imparting hope and is a learning process. The goal-setting process, according to hope theory, is a socially constructivist process. Goals need to be initiated and set by pre-service teachers based on recent pleasurable and meaningful experiences. When setting the goals, pre-service teachers need to be guided to focus on actively pursuing positive outcomes rather than trying to prevent negative experiences from occurring (Snyder et al., 2003). The mentors should then engage pre-service teachers in prioritizing the goals and setting indicators for success. Pre-service teachers should also be encouraged to consider ‘we’ goals in addition to ‘me’ goals to enhance positive interpersonal transactions.
- (2) Develop pathways thinking. Pathways are strategies that help teachers in achieving their goals (i.e., ‘the way’). Mentors are challenged to guide pre-service teachers in breaking large goals into smaller objectives and identifying multiple current and future routes to achieve their goals. The discussion of alternative and future pathways not only enhances pre-service teachers’ probability of achievement but also supports the development of their resilience in teaching.
- (3) Enhance agency thinking. Agency thinking helps pre-service teachers in sustaining motivation to pursue their goals. Mentors should guide pre-service teachers in distinguishing between the ‘other-selected’ goals (i.e., goals that are set by their parents, peers, supervisors, or social expectation in general) and their ‘self-selected’ goals. Through self-talk and personal narrative, pre-service teachers are encouraged to generate positive memories and internal talk to intentionally invigorate their motivation for success.

Pre-service teachers need to develop strategies to maintain their passion and motivation for teaching. The modeling of goal-setting processes, including the development of pathway and agency thinking, not only assists pre-service teachers in working with their mentors during the teacher education program but also prepares them for challenges.

Hope and optimism for the future: academic optimism

Academic optimism is built upon the same principles as hope theory and was introduced as a construct for school change to promote student achievement (Hoy et al., 2006). Since impacting student achievement is the ultimate purpose of quality teacher education, this theory has implications for pre-service teacher mentoring as well.

Academic optimism is composed of three elements: collective efficacy (a cognitive dimension), trust in parents and students (an affective dimension) and academic emphasis (a behavioral dimension) (Hoy et al., 2006). Collective efficacy, first

introduced by Bandura (1993), argues that in addition to teachers' individual self-efficacy, their beliefs about the capability of the entire faculty also affect their performance and the school's academic performance (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Trust entails collective teacher trust in both the students and the parents (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Academic emphasis refers to 'the extent to which a school is driven by a quest for academic excellence – a press for academic achievement' (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 427).

Because academic optimism is composed of three distinct aspects, assessment typically involves a measure for each aspect. Instruments such as the Collective Efficacy Scale (Goddard et al., 2000), the Omnibus Trust Scale (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) and the Organizational Health Inventory (Hoy & Miskel, 2005) have been used to measure the constructs. Reliability and validity of the measures were established through studies of students at various education levels (Goddard et al., 2000; Hoy et al., 2006).

More recently, Hoy, Hoy, and Kurz (2008) extended the concept of academic optimism from the school level to the individual level. They identified the teacher beliefs and practices that were predictors for academic optimism and defined academic optimism for teachers as:

a teacher's positive belief that he or she can make a difference in the academic performance of students by emphasizing academics and learning, by trusting parents and students to cooperate in the process, and by believing in his or her own capacity to overcome difficulties and react to failure with resilience and perseverance. (p. 822)

In identifying the teacher-level construct, the measures modified from the school-level instruments described above were used, and additional constructs including beliefs about instruction and management and individual citizenship were added. The study established the reliability of the measures and demonstrated that the dispositional optimism, humanistic classroom management, student-centered teaching and teacher citizenship behaviors were significant predictors for teacher academic optimism (Hoy et al., 2008). While the study shows potential in measuring and monitoring academic optimism at the individual level, the instrument needs further improvement to enhance validity and reliability. Empirical data also need to be collected to demonstrate the instrument's potential use and impact.

Satisfaction with the present

Seligman and his colleagues are the first to focus their research on individuals' 'authentic happiness' with the present (see Seligman, 2002). Such exploration has introduced new perspectives on positive psychology and provides applications for teacher mentoring. According to Seligman (2002), happiness involves three aspects: positive emotion, engagement and meaning in life (or 'eudemonia'). Multiple instruments (available free from www.authentic happiness.org) have been developed to measure each of the three distinct aspects of happiness. Most of the studies conducted in establishing the reliability and validity of the instruments were based on data collected from convenience samples of website visitors. Among all the instruments, the Values in Action (VIA) Signature Strengths Questionnaire has been used most frequently not only as a measure for individuals' strengths but also as a self-monitoring

tool through which participants are made aware of the change or development of their strengths. Based on their studies, Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified six virtues – wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence – as well as 24 related character strengths that facilitate success. According to their classification, the signature strengths are psychological constructs that represent virtues, indicating one’s moral character. This emphasis on moral values differentiates signature strengths from the ability-focused strengths identified by StrengthsFinder.

In addition to measuring happiness, Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) also examined the impact of interventions in enhancing participants’ happiness. Based on their study, two interventions were identified that increased happiness and reduced depressive symptoms among participants. The first, identifying three good things in life, involved participants writing down three things that went well each day and the causes of those events. The second, using signature strengths in a new way, required participants to identify their signature strengths and then use them in a new and different way each day. Both of these strategies could be used in teacher mentoring to help mentors and pre-service teachers reflect on and apply their moral strengths in their daily practices.

Beyond the general applications of the happiness theory exemplified in these interventions, the identification and application of these signature strengths has been taught in public schools (Gilpin, 2008; Reznitskaya & Sternberg, 2004) and college courses (Baylis, 2004; Fineburg, 2004). It has also been incorporated into teacher education programs (Khramtsova, 2008). In order to enhance teacher candidates’ motivation, Khramtsova (2008) integrated the theories of positive psychology into educational psychology courses and assigned students an action research project to develop one signature strength. The study results revealed teacher candidates’ reliance on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation in completing the assignment and provided an exemplary approach for preparing pre-service teachers for character education.

Appreciative advising model

Different from the theories and concepts reviewed above, appreciative advising (AA) is a process-oriented model that has been applied both to general advising and to teacher education. It was developed as a higher education academic-advising model based on appreciative inquiry (AI).

AI is an organizational change theory that ‘provides a positive rather than a problem-oriented lens on the organization, focusing members’ attention on what is possible rather than what is wrong’ (van Buskirk, 2002, p. 67). Positive questioning techniques are employed in AI to uncover existing strengths, hopes and dreams to identify and amplify the positive core of the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Doing so transforms people and organizations by bringing greater focus on positive potential – the best of what has been, what is and what might be (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

The 4-D cycle of AI (discover, dream, design and destiny) has been applied in numerous educational settings. It has been used to enhance teacher and student interpersonal relationships in the middle school classroom (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006); to foster culturally responsive relationships among administrators, teachers and at-risk students in middle and high schools (Calabrese, Hummel, & Martin, 2007); and to enhance the social capital in school and university partnerships (Calabrese, 2006).

In teacher education, the principles of AI have been adapted to engage pre-service teachers in an AI reflection process during their internship (Harkess, 2005), leading to enhanced self-awareness of strengths (discover) and visions (dream) among pre-service teachers. In addition, the power of inspiring language was noted to encourage pre-service teachers' reflection-in-action for developing alternative teaching approaches in the classroom (Harkess, 2005).

AA is a mentoring model that shares the same principles as AI in its focus on the positive potential, with two additional stages: disarm and don't settle. The destiny stage is also re-named as delivery to capture better the features of that stage in AA. The six stages of AA lead both the mentors and mentees through establishing relationship (disarm); identifying and valuing their personal assets through examining their past positive experiences (discover); encouraging dreams and hopes for the future (dream); enhancing the awareness of present while finding alternative routes to build upon one's strengths (design); and maintaining the momentum in the pursuit of the future (deliver and don't settle) (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). Whereas AI focuses on organizational change, AA focuses on individuals' positive development, and the institutional-level change is a result of the social interactions guided by AA principles.

Two instruments were designed to facilitate the discovery of mentees' strengths: the Appreciative Advising Inventory (AAI) and the Appreciative Advising Questions. The AAI was developed for college students on the basis of the 40 Developmental Assets model for children and adolescents (Search Institute, 2008). The inventory helps identify both external assets (support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations and constructive use of time) and internal assets (commitment to learning, values, social competencies and positive identities). Paralleling the AAI in regard to the internal and external assets, the Appreciative Advising Questions help mentors start conversations to discover the assets and strengths of their mentees (Bloom et al., 2008). Both instruments are available free at www.appreciativeadvising.net.

The AA model has been adopted by several higher education institutions in their first-year experience, at-risk student, and transfer student advising and mentoring programs and has obtained significantly positive results (Bloom et al., 2009; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007). Although there are few research studies focusing on the direct application of the AA model in teacher education mentoring programs (Bloom et al., 2009), the AA principles and strategies provided a framework and concrete steps for a strength-based mentoring model.

Strength-based mentoring in teacher education

The foundation of strength-based mentoring is closely aligned with educative mentoring, in which both mentors and mentees are engaged in continued professional growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In educative mentoring, which is grounded in Dewey's (1938) model of educative experience and influenced by theories of socially constructed cognition (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978), the learning of the mentors and mentees occurs through meaningful social communication, interactions and practice in reaching co-constructed goals. The strength-based approaches reviewed above could be integrated in a mentoring model to engage teacher educators, supervising teachers and pre-service teachers in the educative mentoring experience.

Principles of strength-based mentoring

Different from the traditional apprenticeship model – in which the mentor is the guide, supporter or advice giver and the mentee is the advice taker – three principles ensure that the educative mentoring experience takes place when using the strength-based mentoring model. First, the strength-based model starts from the development of the strength-based, appreciative mindset. This is different from the traditional deficit-based approach to mentoring when problems or weaknesses are identified by mentors and a change of behavior is expected from mentees – the strength-based approach calls for both the mentors and mentees to be involved actively in learning and change while emphasizing both parties' strengths, interests and passions.

Second, the focus of the strength-based approach is on the social construction process. While student academic achievements are often linked with the development of their strengths (i.e., ability or moral character), hope and optimism, it is not the ultimate purpose of the approach. Rather, it centers on an alternative way of thinking that enhances the mentors' and mentees' confidence, resilience and creativity in everyday life. Mentors and mentees are motivated to not only be aware of their own strengths but to also maximize each other's strengths and enhance their appreciation of past experiences, hopes for the future and satisfaction with the present.

Third, if implemented appropriately, the impact of the strength-based approach goes beyond the individuals using it – it is transactional through social interactions. In other words, teacher educators, supervising teachers and pre-service teachers who are actively engaged in seeking and developing their strengths, hopes and alternative actions benefit from the process and the strength-based mentoring model could also affect the school culture and the learning of the K-12 students in the long run.

Strength-based mentoring model

Sharing as they do similar underlying principles stemming from positive psychology, the theories and approaches reviewed in this article have various foci in their applications. These instruments and strategies have been used sporadically in education and mentoring practices. A systematic model for adapting and applying them to pre-service teacher mentoring practice would greatly assist teacher educators and supervising teachers in enhancing pre-service teachers' resilience in teaching by introducing ways to identify one's strengths and assets; co-constructing goals and establishing motivation and strategies to achieve goals; and self-monitoring one's growth, optimism and resilience as a teacher. In understanding both their own and others' strengths, mentors and mentees would benefit from enhanced self-knowledge, goal setting and strategies development and interactions for learning.

Using the six-stage AA model as a framework, a proposed strength-based mentoring model is provided based on a summary of the strength-based theories and approaches reviewed in this paper (see Table 1).

- **Disarm** – cultivating an open relationship. It is critical that mentors and mentees not only are willing to share the classroom space and their past learning and teaching experiences, but also that they know how to express that willingness to each other. Through mentor and pre-service teacher orientation, opportunities need to be provided for mentors and mentees to know each other as both professionals and willing individuals in the collaborative learning experiences.

Table 1. Strengths-based mentoring model.

Theory/model	Major focus	Instruments	Application in strengths-based mentoring model
StrengthsQuest	Identifying abilities and skills that led to positive past experiences helps us develop ownership of our talents and strengths, which consequently leads to positive behavioral change and personal growth (Clifton & Harter, 2003).	StrengthsFinder (Clifton & Anderson, 2002)	Discover: Identify strengths of the mentors and mentees.
Hope theory	It is critical to establish meaningful co-constructed goals. In order to achieve our goals, we need to have both the motivation for approaching them (agency thinking) and the strategies for achieving them (pathway thinking) (Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 2003).	Hope scale (Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 2003)	Dream: Establish 'we' goals. Design: Develop pathway and agency thinking.
Academic Optimism	Teachers' academic optimism impacts their performance and students' academic achievement. Academic optimism is composed of teachers' collective efficacy, trust, and the belief that they can make a positive impact on student academic success (Hoy et al., 2008).	Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Hoy et al., 2008)	Don't settle: Monitor collective efficacy and trust in achieving academic success for all students.
Happiness	We can monitor our satisfaction with the present via the identification of positive emotions, engagement, and meaning in life. We should highlight our signature strengths and engage in activities that enhance our satisfaction and happiness (Seligman et al., 2005).	VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire (Seligman, 2002)	Discover: Identify strengths of the mentors and mentees. Deliver: Enhance one's happiness (e.g., identify three good things and use signature strengths in a new way) (Seligman et al., 2005).
Appreciative inquiry/ appreciative advising	Both AI and AA provide strategies to uncover existing strengths and hopes to maximize one's potential, leading to positive change at individual, interpersonal, and organizational levels.	AI Reflection (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) Appreciative Advising Inventory Appreciative Advising Questions (Bloom et al., 2008)	Mentoring process: Employ AA stages. Discover: Identify assets using AA and AA questions. Dream & design: Use AA questions and AI reflections. Deliver: Use AI reflections.

- Discover – finding assets and strengths. Instruments such as StrengthsFinder, VIA Signature Strengths or the AAI instrument could be adopted to start the conversations between the mentors and mentees to share their expectations of mentoring, preferred communication styles and beliefs about teaching and learning. The selection of these instruments would be determined by the focus of the mentoring on teachers' abilities (StrengthsFinder), moral character (VIA Signature Strengths) or external and internal assets (AAI).
- Dream – setting 'we' goals. Mentors and mentees must set 'we' goals for their professional experiences and visualize their roles throughout the process (Snyder, 2002). The co-constructed goals may have various focuses at different stages of mentoring and may differ according to the strengths and assets identified by the mentors and mentees through the 'discover' stage.
- Design – selecting mentoring methods to form ideal mentoring relationships. Multiple forms of mentoring exist in teacher education. Schwille (2008) summarizes the major forms, classifying them as 'inside the action' or 'outside the action'. The inside-the-action forms include coaching, stepping in, co-teaching and demonstration. The outside-the-action forms include informal conversations, mentoring sessions, debriefing, co-planning, videotape analysis and writing. While all these methods are recognized by mentors and mentees, different people in various contexts may find certain combinations better than others. Ideally, mentors and mentees would purposefully negotiate the best combinations for the selected goals, and reflect upon and modify the methods over time to promote professional growth.
- Deliver – enhancing learning to teach through reflection. Reflections for action, in action and on action for both mentors and mentees need to be encouraged (Schön, 1987). The Appreciative Advising Questions, the AI reflective process and Seligman et al.'s (2005) interventions could be adapted to engage mentors and pre-service teachers in the process of reflection. In addition to reflections on teaching experiences, both mentors and mentees need to be equipped with pathway thinking (Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 2003) that promotes the exploration of alternative ways of teaching. Such guided reflection would facilitate the pre-service teachers' integration of reflective practice into their daily teaching and lead to more thoughtful teaching.
- Don't settle – challenging each other in collaborative partnership. With an established open relationship and understanding of each other's strengths, it becomes possible for mentors and mentees to challenge each others' thinking for their professional growth. In addition to teaching skills and the habit of reflection, pre-service teachers need to embrace the practice of self-monitoring in developing academic optimism (Hoy et al., 2008), affecting student academic success, trusting parents, students and other teachers, and leveraging their strengths to stay resilient when facing challenges.

Conclusion

Researchers have found that first-year teachers often possess 'unrealistic optimism' (Weinstein, 1988), which sometimes leads to the loss of motivation and passion for teaching or the decision to leave the teaching field altogether. Mentoring in teacher education, therefore, is much more than the apprenticeship of instructional pedagogy. Pre-service teachers need to be guided in their application of proper content

knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and content pedagogical knowledge, the negotiation of their own teaching beliefs and resilience in maintaining their motivation for teaching. Much of the success that a first-year teacher experiences is tied to quality mentoring experiences that promote positive professional identity, resilience and the belief that their efforts as teachers make a difference.

The strength-based theories and approaches delineated in this paper offer possibilities and concrete methods for teacher educators, supervising teachers and pre-service teachers to work together to create positive educative mentoring experiences. Combining an emphasis on mentees' teaching skills development with positive emotional growth for both mentors and mentees, the strength-based mentoring model has the potential to facilitate mentors and mentees 'crossing the borders' in their relationship and leads to the view that teaching and learning is asset building rather than problem solving. Strength-based mentoring not only allows mentors and mentees to have an open conversation regarding teaching but also equips pre-service teachers with the strategies they need to remain in the teaching field.

While the research studies reviewed in this article provide the groundwork for identifying measures and processes that may support a strength-based mentoring model for teacher education, empirical data need to be collected in a systematic manner to further understand the long-term impact of the approach. Additionally, research should be undertaken to uncover socio-cultural and contextual factors that need to be taken into consideration in applying this strength-based mentoring model.

Notes on the contributor

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