

The Importance of Mentorship on Pre-service Educators' Interest in Continuing in ECEC

Jeetatmi Singh

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the quality of mentorship in field placement affect the pre-service educators continued interest to work in the field of ECEC. A quantitative research study was conducted, which included a survey of 48 questions. There were 36 participants who contributed in this study. Most of the participants reported being supported emotionally and having strong relationships with their mentors in all three placements. A majority of them said in all three placements there was frequent communication between themselves and their mentors, including feedback which occurred weekly in most instances. In all three placements, most the participants stated there was frequent communication themselves and their mentors. These meeting took place on a weekly basis. It is unclear how long these meetings lasted. Based on the results gathered it seems a majority, 45% of participants had positive experiences during their field placements. As a result of these positive experiences a majority of them are still interested in pursuing a career in the field of ECEC. Emphasis needs to be placed on pre-service educators experiences during field placement as this is an important factor in their retention in the field, not just their theory knowledge.

Introduction

This research examined mentorship of pre-service educators during field placement. Mentorship can be defined as a process to help novices develop teaching behaviours and strategies, involving a nurturing relationship between a less experienced person and a more experienced (Hobbs and Stovall, 2015). During internships, pre-service educators are influenced by the environments their mentors create (Han & Damjanovic, 2014). In 2017-18, there were 1,114 early childhood educators were approved for the ECE qualification upgrade program in Ontario (Ministry of Education, 2019). This meant there were 1,114 early childhood educators who were entering an Early Childhood Education program in Ontario and therefore would need to complete some kind of internship during their programs.

The overarching questions this research sought to answer is, **does the quality of mentorship in field placement affect the pre-service educators continued interest to work in the field of ECEC?**

Literature Review

The literature reviewed revealed three consistent themes – communication between mentors and mentee, lack of time and lack of training for mentors.

Communication during mentorship occurs in a number ways, however, in this paper the focus will be on emotional supports for the pre-service educators, and feedbacks. Emotional support for pre-service educators can be deemed as an inspiring component of fostering a positive relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher (Loizou, 2011). Supports can be simply be a message to the student teacher as a way to encourage them (La Paro, Van Schagen, King, & Lippard, 2017) or in the form of empathy. Good communication including feedback between mentors and mentees, which helps to assess the relationship and identify any issues that may be evident (Ammentorp, & Madden, 2014). Feedbacks serves as reinforcements or constructive advice that mentors provide to their students teachers and may aid or hinder their experiences. It is believed that the way feedbacks are communicated will impact the learning experiences of the pre-service educators (La Paro, Van Schagen, King, & Lippard, 2017). Student teachers who encountered difficulties in their relationship with their mentors cited a lack of communication as a leading factor (Recchia, Beck, Esposito, & Tarrant, 2009).

Lack of time – mentors often have to give feedbacks while planning lesson since they had very little time between their normal work load and the number of students they mentor (Loizou, 2011; Hoxha, 2016). Pre-service educators who were able to spend more time with their mentors experiences a quality mentorship (Graves, 2010).

Lack of Training for Mentors – According to Martin (2002), the most ignored factor of a mentoring relationship is to equip mentors with the skills they need to be effective mentors. Participation in mentoring training programs allows mentors to be better equipped to dealing with and understanding their mentoring duties (Hoxha, 2016). Also allowing mentors to part take in training gives them insights into the roles they have in the development of pre-service educators (O'Brien, Stoner, Appel, & House, 2007).

There were 3 sub-questions related to the research, which helps to answer the research question..

Sub-question 1 – What is the relationship between pre-service educators and their mentors?

Sub-question 2 – Which asks is there sufficient communications between pre-service educators and mentors?

Sub-question 3 – Are pre-service educators able to spend quality time with their mentors?

Methodology

Research Design

The research design used in this study was a qualitative research in the form of a survey. Creswell (2012) suggests that “surveys can gather extensive data quickly, employ tested forms and sample questions rather than having to design them” (p. 383).

Instrument

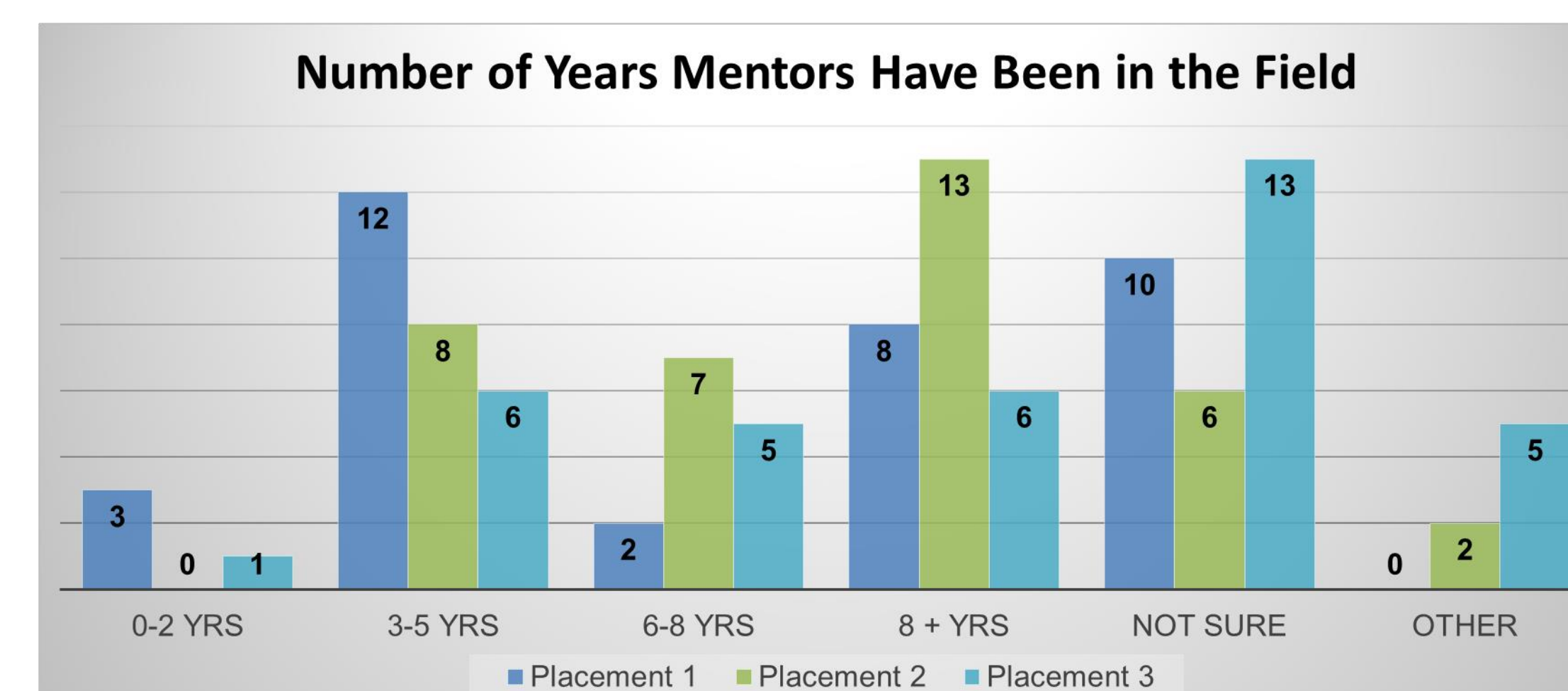
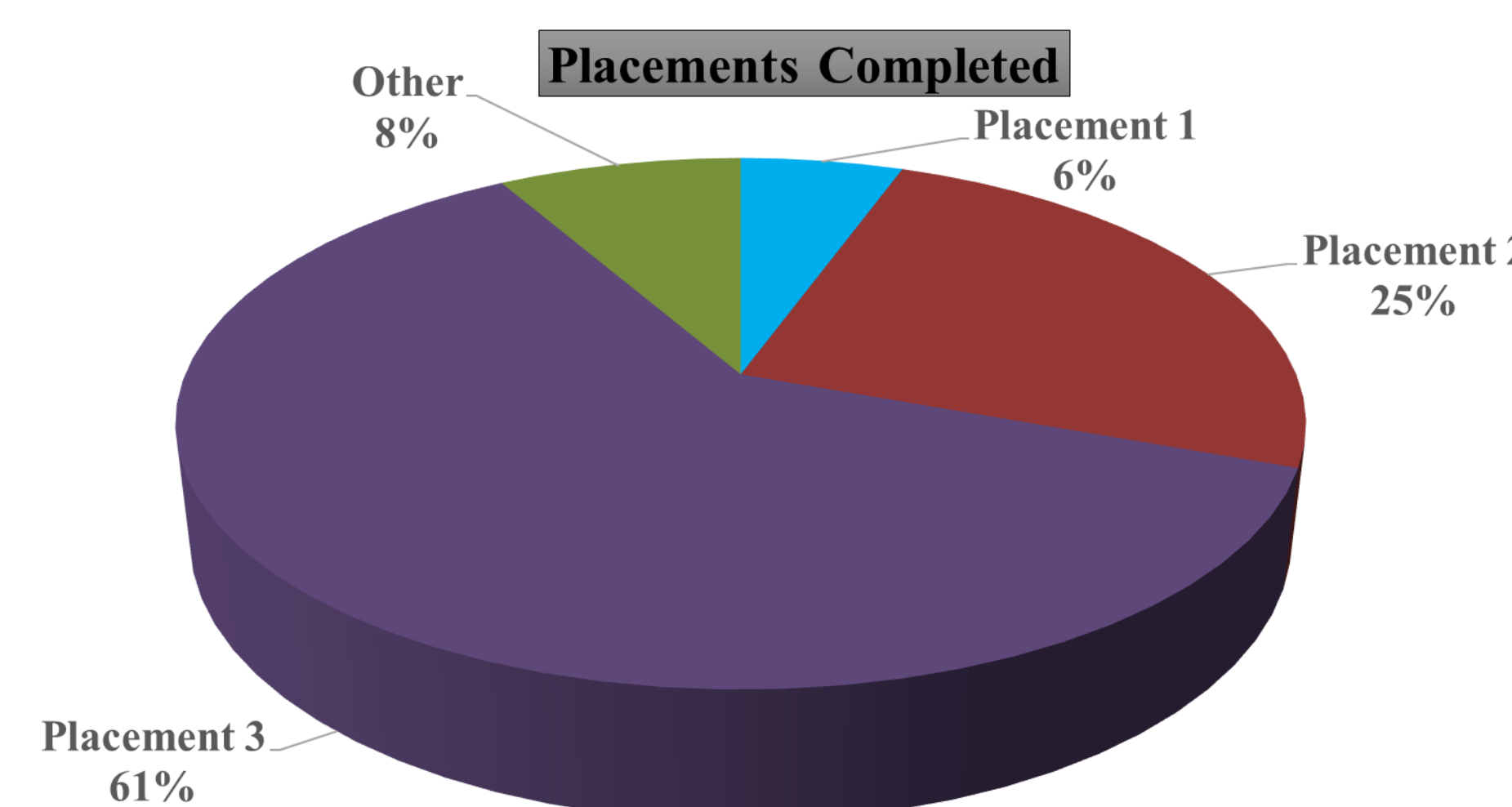
The instrument that was used to gather data for this study is a survey, which was created by the researcher. It consisted of 48 questions – 8 demographic questions and 40 core questions. This study was conducted online through an program know as Survey Monkey.

Procedure

An R.E.B application was submitted for approval. Upon approval gate keepers were contacted through emails. Information letters and the survey link with consent form were sent out to gate keepers. Survey containing consent form and information letter were posted on social media sites as well. The survey was left open for 2 weeks for participants to part take. The surveys were then sorted and the incomplete surveys were deleted. The researcher analyzed the completed surveys.

Participants

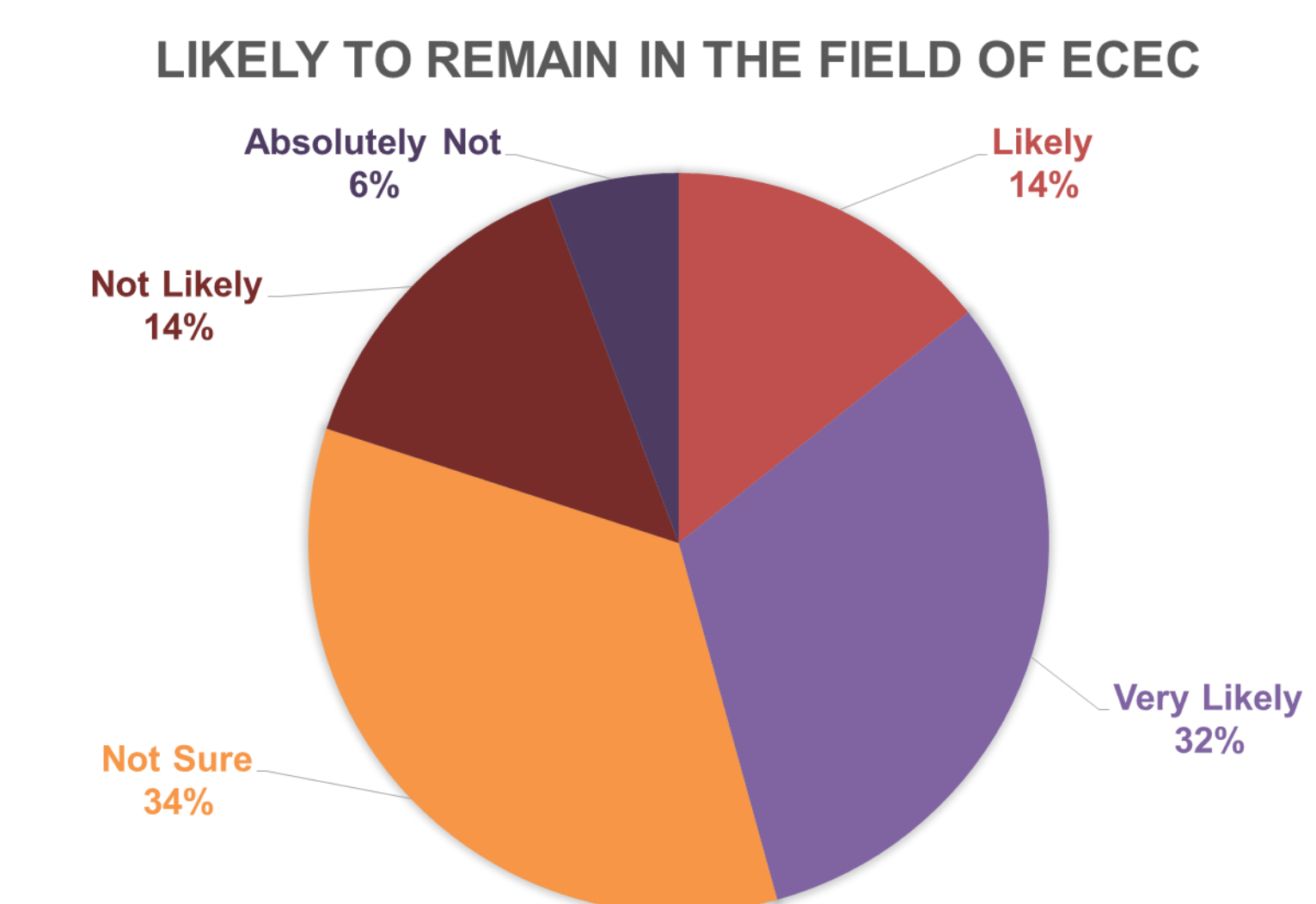
The participants in this study were 36 pre-service educators who completed at least 1 field placement in the ECE program.



Results and Discussion

Findings

- ❖ There were 31 or 86% of the participants who completed at least 2 placements.
- ❖ Participants indicated their mentors had 3 or more years experience in the ECEC field – 91% in placement 1, 100% in placement 2 and 97 % in placement 3.
- ❖ In placement 1, 45% of the participants said they had a positive relationship with their mentors, while 55% indicated the same in placement 2. However, in placement 3, 31 % said it was neutral.
- ❖ 63% of the participants in placement 1 said they were emotionally supported by their mentors, while 60 % and 34 % indicated the same in placements 2 and 3 respectively.
- ❖ 71 % of the participants who completed placement 1, 80% in placement 2 and 40% in placement 3 indicated there was frequent communication between themselves and their mentors.
- ❖ Most the participants indicated meeting occurred weekly with 60% in placement 1, 42 % in placement 2 and 29 % in placement 3.
- ❖ A majority of participants said they received feedback – 89% in placement 1, 97% in placement 2 and 62% in placement 3.
- ❖ Most participants indicated they did not have to ask feedback – 55 % in placement 1, 60% in placement 2 and 43% in placement 3.
- ❖ A large number of the participants said there was time set aside for them to meet with their mentors – First Placement 71%, Second Placement 74% and Third Placement 57%.
- ❖ 65% of the participants indicated they were likely to remain in the field of ECEC.



Discussion

Communication is said to be the foundation to relationships and interactions between mentors and mentees (La Paro, Van Schagen, King, & Lippard, 2017). Most of the participants in this study indicated they were able to have frequent communication with their mentors. Communication may include emotional support and feedback as well. Pre-service educators view support as a key ingredient in their internship (La Paro, Van Schagen, King, & Lippard, 2017). This study indicates most of the participants were being emotionally support by their mentors. The literature also suggests that “student teachers wanted more feedbacks from their cooperating teacher (Hoxha, 2014). Contrary to this a vast majority of the participants received feedback from their mentors on a regular basis, 1-2 times a week.

The data gathered in study suggests positive experiences during field placement for most of the participants, which seems to be an encouraging factor for pre-service educator to remain in the field of ECEC.

Limitations

As a result of the time constraints of this research, there were a limited number of participants in this study. This research was also limited to the Region of Peel.

Implications for Future Research

In the future, this study can be conducted over a longer time period and across a wider geographic area. This will allow the researcher to gather more responses and subsequently more data on this topic. This would provide a better understanding on this topic and whether the findings in this study is consistent across other regions.

- ❖ References available upon request.