

# Experiences In Training Of Mentors For Management Of Directors At Basic Education Institutions In Peru

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## Abstract

The objective of the research is to understand how mentors perceive the training process they receive for the accompaniment of managers. For this purpose, a study was conducted with a qualitative approach, using hermeneutic phenomenology as a method, and supported by a documentary review. The research population consisted of 8 mentors who were subjects of study, selected intentionally taking as a base criterion the years of experience according to their participation during the 3 years of the mentoring program for managers. An interview was used as a data collection technique and a semi-structured interview guide was used as instrument. In addition, a documentary review of the professional profile of each person was carried out and contrasted with the interview data. The study categories were the professional characteristics of the mentors, the training process before starting their work and during the accompaniment of managers. The most important findings were the diversity of professional profiles of the mentors; not all of them have assumed the position of manager. The training process of the mentors, during the years that it was face-to-face, shows a marked difference in the virtual modality, causing difficulties in the new mentors who entered during the year of confinement; the same that were strengthened in informal meetings by their more experienced fellow mentors. In conclusion, it is necessary that the training programs for mentors be part of a permanent design that promotes new methodologies in virtuality and more spaces for mentors to share experiences. Likewise, the companion who follows the mentor's training process has been complemented by the participation of professionals from different careers who provide different expertise to the mentors.

**Keywords:** training process, mentors, professional profile, managerial coaching

## Resumen

La investigación tiene como objetivo comprender, desde la experiencia de los mentores, cómo estos perciben el proceso formativo que reciben para el acompañamiento a directivos. Para ello se ha realizado un estudio con un enfoque cualitativo, teniendo como método la fenomenología hermenéutica, además de una revisión documentaria. La población de la

investigación estuvo conformada por 8 mentores sujetos de estudio, seleccionados de forma intencional tomando como criterio base los años de experiencia de acuerdo a su participación durante los 3 años que duró el programa de mentoría a directivos. Como técnica de recolección de datos se utilizó la entrevista y como instrumento una guía de entrevista semiestructurada. Además, se realizó una revisión documentaria del perfil profesional de cada uno contrastado con los

datos de la entrevista. Se consideró como categorías de estudio las características profesionales de los mentores, el proceso formativo antes de iniciar su labor y durante el acompañamiento a directivos. Los hallazgos más importantes que se encontraron fueron la diversidad de perfiles profesionales de los mentores, no todos han asumido el cargo directivo. El proceso formativo de los mentores, durante los años que fue presencial, denota una marcada diferencia en la modalidad virtual, ocasionando dificultades en los mentores noveles que ingresaron durante el año de confinamiento, los mismos que fueron fortalecidos en reuniones informales por sus compañeros mentores con más experiencia. En conclusión, es preciso que los programas de formación para mentores sean parte de un diseño permanente que impulse nuevas metodologías en la virtualidad y mayores espacios para que los mentores puedan compartir experiencias. Asimismo, el acompañante que sigue el proceso formativo del mentor se ha complementado por la participación de profesionales de distintas carreras brindado diferente experticia a los mentores.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** proceso formativo, mentores, perfil profesional, acompañamiento directivo

## Introduction

Training educational leaders has become an interest to improve the quality of learning, which has generated in the last decade several induction programs for new managers, who are expected to start from a critical reflection on their management, recognizing the actions that drive an individualistic work to give way to a collaborative work of communities that learn to work and solve problems (Bolívar et al., 2013). This will lead to recognize the school as a space where emotions interact (Casassus, 2007), allowing the organization to facilitate the participation of teachers in a favorable environment, a necessary condition for the manager to exercise leadership.

Among the innovative experiences in Latin America in principal training programs is the use of diverse methodologies that involve accompaniment in the practices of management work and certified coaching skills or having served as a mentor to the trainers (Weinstein, et al., 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to have professionals capable of promoting, from a critical and reflective approach, actions from the practice of pedagogical leadership, which means recognizing the profile and capabilities of these professionals. For example, they may be teachers or other professionals, who have held managerial positions or classroom experience, or trainers or specialists in pedagogical issues, or be university professors.

Since 2020, the Peruvian Ministry of Education (Minedu) calls them trainers and mentors, indicating that the trainer is a professional with experience in training processes, without specifying whether he/she must be a teacher, unlike a Mentor who must have experience in the management position to provide support in school management (RM 013-2020 - Minedu).

In this way, accompanying the manager in his practice requires mentors, but this is not a new profession, it is a teacher with experience in management with knowledge and skills determined for this work. Analyzing and reflecting on how the mentors perceive the training process they receive will contribute to strengthening the practice of the manager in his or her work as a pedagogical leader.

For this study, it is of great importance to understand and describe the experiences that mentors have had in their training for the management of directors of basic education institutions in Peru. In this sense, the study intends to answer the following questions: What is mentoring? What are the professional characteristics of the mentors? What is the training process before starting the work of accompaniment? What are the experiences of the mentors in the training process during the accompaniment of managers?

### Mentoring in educational leadership training programs

The term mentoring is associated with coaching, Kennedy (2005) calls it a peer-to-peer training model that facilitates more open encounters, where there are no hierarchies and it opens the discussion of beliefs. Whitworth (2011) expresses that coaching seeks that the mentee reaches the potential of their learning. For Clutterbuck (2015), the coach motivates using various techniques, while the mentor promotes learning processes based on reflection.

Pířová and Duschinská (2011) classify the definitions of mentoring into two groups, those that focus on professional growth and those that combine professional growth with personal development. However, in all of them, the cooperation of an expert with a novice, based on reflective practice, takes precedence. In this way, the process of reflective dialogue is a thorough examination of recognized beliefs and that sustains acting, implies participation and self-reflection (Dewey, 1919; Perrenoud, 2007). But as Domingo (2020) would say, it is not a spontaneous practice, it is learned through voluntary and methodical training as individual and collaborative reflection strategies, applying diverse strategies.


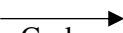
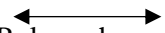
In Singapore, mentoring programs began in the mid-eighties, as a stable system to train

the best principals in the world, strengthening collaborative work based on experience, even after the mentoring programs, networks emerged among principals (Lim, 2009). In New Zealand, in 2006, mentoring was incorporated into the induction programs for managers, in which mentors made two visits to schools, selected for their good performance as managers, some are retired, receive training three days prior to each mentoring. In addition to other courses, to strengthen their counseling skills, they have a structured work plan for their mentoring work; however, it can be modified by recognizing the training needs of the manager (Robinson et al., 2006).

The traits of a good mentor are in the clarity of the objectives proposed, assuming commitment to the learning of the other, and establishing relationships with a sense of humor (Clutterbuck 2015). Likewise, the expertise is in integrating experiences with theoretical foundations, coupled with social skills such as empathy and assertive communication; the mentor recognizes the successes and failures of the manager as part of the training process, constituting opportunities for intervention (Merino and Melero, 2018).

The mentoring approach can be framed within the paradigms shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Mentoring Paradigms

	<b>Traditional Paradigm</b>	<b>Transitional Paradigm</b>	<b>Transformative Paradigm</b>
<b>Centered</b>	Provide emotional and technical support for the position, helping to identify areas for improvement.	Analysis based on one's own reflective practice. Joint planning.	Permanent questioning of practice and joint action.
<b>Mentor relationship</b>	 Hierarchy	 Co-learning	 Role exchange

Purpose	Solving problems in the educational context	Incorporate improvement actions	Educational innovation
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**Source:** Adapted from Cuellar et al. (2018).

Morales (2020) analyzed the influence of informal mentoring in the construction of the professional image of novice law students from three higher institutions in Mexico, conducting in-depth interviews with 40 graduates, 21 of whom had an informal, temporary or permanent mentor. The conclusion was reached that the novices who had a mentor improved in specialized legal procedures, as well as projected the professional image of their mentor, such as the characteristics of his or her clothing.

Morton and Gil (2019) described the origins of a peer mentoring model designed by and for early career teachers in educational leadership development from diverse ethnic minorities in the United States. The study is based on a literature review, to implement cooperative mentoring (peer mentoring), teachers have working meetings with various mentors, being a supportive tool to enhance their professional growth and personal well-being, increasing teacher satisfaction and retention.

González et al. (2019) conducted a research to analyze the obstacles and training needs of 10 novice mentors in a Program of Initiation to Professional Practice in the Dominican Republic, where instruments such as self-presentation guides, biograms and critical incidents were applied, concluding that the training needs of mentors are permanent within the counseling work, being indispensable the exclusive dedication in this task and the pedagogical technology training.

Cuellar et al. (2018) sought to conceptualize 'good mentoring' and a 'good mentor' from 21 interviews with principals, mentors and coordinators of the induction program for novice principals in Chile, concluding that good mentoring implies adequate planning, a protected environment and cognitive flexibility of both parties involved and the

good mentor must possess interpersonal skills and attitudinal dispositions that favor social exchange.

Aravena (2018) explores the experience of 8 novice mentors in a management training program in Chile to recognize the problems faced by mentors in mentoring and what they learn. The author analyzed 280 reflection sheets, identifying that mentors learn while accompanying managers, improve their listening skills and strengthen their capacity for criticality, taking care of trust environments.

## Methodology

The research is based on the qualitative approach, with the application of the **hermeneutic phenomenological method**. In this approach, the sample was made up of 8 mentors who were selected intentionally (Martínez, 2014), taking the years of experience as a base criterion according to the participation during the three years of the mentoring training program with the managers. Each interviewee was given a code name to protect his or her identity and for ethical considerations. Three a priori categories were used as a guide. As for the data collection technique, the interview was used with informed consent from each mentor, and virtual meetings were arranged through zoom meetings.

From the interview a semi-structured interview script was developed **with** open-ended questions that were discussed with the interviewees. For the analysis of the information, the interviews were recorded one by one. Subsequently, the processes of categorization, structuring, triangulation and contrasting of the information collected were used. In addition, content analysis was used

as a technique to analyze what was said by the participants-

Regarding content analysis, the software Atlas.Ti software was used, starting from the a priori categories, which were related and new codes emerged, with which the networks were formed, establishing new relationships that were confronted with the theory. In addition, documentary analysis was used in the research, through a documentary analysis guide with which the years of experience in school management programs were weighted, as well as if the exercise of the

principal's work. For the review of the documentary analysis guide, the amount of experience in teacher training, in training programs related to school management and years in the position were weighted.

## Results

As for the results or findings obtained in the research after the data collection process, Table 2 shows the a priori categories and subcategories and the emerging categories.

**Table 2.** Aprioristic and emergent categories

Categories	subcategories	Emerging categories
Professional characteristics of mentors	Managerial experience	- Mentors without managerial experience
	Executive work performed	
Previous training processes	Consulting work performed in other types of training or training programs	- Differences in the induction process for new mentors - Significance of mentor training - Empathetic social skills
	Mentor Induction	
Training processes during mentoring	Mentor accompaniment	- Pedagogical advice - Instrumental consulting
	Group counseling	- Informal meetings of new mentors

**Source:** Own elaboration

### Professional characteristics of mentors

Regarding their professional experience prior to the mentoring position, all of the mentors have experience as classroom teachers with different years of experience, from 5 to 20 years; about having held a managerial position, 5 of the 8 mentors held a managerial position, of which they held 2 a managerial position for less than 5 years and 3 mentors for 5 years or more. In addition, before assuming the position of mentor, 3 of them have

provided technical assistance in school management to managers.

Among the executive tasks performed, most of the mentors have participated in teacher training programs as teaching assistants or trainers; only one mentor has not participated in any training program, but he has held a managerial position.

The following table details the experience of the mentors covered by the study.

**Table 3.** Experience and professional work performed.

<b>Mentors</b>	<b>Studies highest grade</b>	<b>Teaching experience years</b>	<b>Management exp. years</b>	<b>Training or Accompanying Person Pedagogical Practice (non-management)</b>	<b>School management technical assistants to directors</b>	<b>Number of executive mentoring programs 2019 a 2021</b>
<b>1A</b>	Licensed	5	0	x	x	1
<b>2B</b>	Master's Degree	10	3	..	....	2
<b>3C</b>	Licensed	7	0	x	....	2
<b>4D</b>	Licensed	20	0	x	x	3
<b>5E</b>	Licensed	18	15	x	....	2
<b>6F</b>	Master's Degree	15	5	x	....	2
<b>7G</b>	Licensed	20	2 1/2	x	x	2
<b>8H</b>	Master's Degree	20	5 1/2	x	....	3

### **Formative processes prior to the mentor:**

#### **Mentor Induction**

Since 2019, mentoring programs for directors have been initiated, before starting the training program for directors, the Ministry of Education provides training for mentors. The last year 2021 was virtual through the zoom platform, evidencing notable differences.

During the years 2019 and 2020, the training program for mentors was conducted 20 days prior to the start of their work, being carried out in person, since the last year of the beginning of the pandemic the situation of isolation has not yet been declared. The training was meaningful for the mentors through experiential workshops, where they performed role-plays, playing the role of director and mentor, asking questions. "...when we started in 2019, we were a small group of twenty-something teachers, they gave us the chip that we are mentors, \_believe it\_ they told us, the training was experiential, first it was theoretical, then we did role-play" (4D)."

The training in collecting information using the field notebook and the systematization of the information in instruments that allow directing the mentor's intervention is also highlighted. "...the use of certain instruments and criteria to observe, that is important, because it defines to you a little bit that you have to strengthen the manager (3C)."

In addition, soft skills such as empathy and emotion control were strengthened through the coaching methodology. For some, it meant a change in their attitudes and social skills. "...I have a very strong character, but mentoring has shaped me, it has helped me with patience, with smiling, transmitting tranquility to the directors" (2B).

In 2021, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the induction changed the number of days and the work methodology, developing the training of mentors through the zoom platform, the training process for mentors was perceived as expository. "I consider that this year (2021) the induction has been dense and heavy, not in the contents, but because of the time we were behind the camera, it is very different to work in person than from a distance, the

methodology should have been different” (7G).

As every year, new candidates entered the mentoring program to managers, proving insufficient for the new mentors to empower themselves with the tools to use and the right time to use them, having to ask for support from more experienced colleagues after the induction program. “I had to turn to more senior mentors who helped me, I met with 4 female mentors at different times for them to explain” (1A).

The zoom platform allowed the formation of working groups to share some tools, resulting in a short time for the participation of 8 to 10 people in each group. In the main room, participation was centered on the old mentors, so the new mentors were limited to listening. “In my team of mentors, 4 entered this year, those who entered this year, felt lost as one colleague told me: those two weeks I did not learn anything” (8H).

### **Training processes during the mentor's work:**

#### **Mentor accompaniment**

During the first two years, the mentors have been accompanied by a professional in the humanities, such as sociologists or anthropologists, from whom the mentors have acquired expertise in recording and systematizing evidence through their field notebooks “...he advised me on what I should write down in the diagnosis, that was his strengthening” (4D).

These capabilities are valued by the mentors because based on what is recorded they provide feedback to the manager through a reflective dialogue in order to recognize his or her strengths and aspects to improve. However, two mentors with experience in management positions expressed that the mentor should be an educator with experience in management, in order to understand and make more flexible the actions performed by the mentors in their work. “We had a meeting with the manager about a regulation, my mentor asked me: How do you accept it? - You

have to stick to it. When we went to a meeting with another teacher who was a pedagogue, he emphasized the axes for diversification, under that regulation, so I said to my companion, how does that regulation relate to the work of teachers?” (5E).

In the case of another mentor who had a teaching assistant, he allowed her to develop strategies to ask questions in the reflective dialogue, in addition to enriching some tools internally to advance step by step in the manager's reflection processes, with examples from the management itself. “This year, the look of the accompanying person was different, because he focused on the pedagogical, I loved it, he gave me strategies to formulate reflective questions” (8H).

#### **Group counseling**

Group mentoring sessions have been spaces for socializing among the mentors before or during their work of visiting the managers. In the first two years, the mentors had a week to meet, they traveled to Lima from different regions and shared their difficulties as a group, highlighting a greater camaraderie among the older mentors who shared their experiences in the mentoring work. Some groups of mentors agreed to meet one day a week, and stopped scheduling visits on that day. However, in the last year, the visits were very frequent and the meetings were brief. In the last year of virtuality, the meetings consisted of socializing the protocols for the next round of visits to the managers, which took place on a single day. Some mentors express that so many meetings were not necessary because the protocol was similar to last year, just like the instruments, unlike the new mentors, for whom in a single day it has been very short meetings to socialize. “In this year, the protocol is similar and as each one has had that experience we no longer meet as before” (7G).

An important aspect to highlight is the personal attitudes of the mentors, improving the control of their emotions, as well as their empathy and active listening skills. Despite being the last virtual year and in some cases the managers had connectivity problems,

either by telephone, messaging or any platform; the mentors were always willing to listen to the managers first and transmit them tranquility of all the activities required of them according to their position and the complexity of the virtual service.

Similarly, some mentors who have had experience in management indicate that a mentor must have had experience in the management position or at least assumed the position of academic coordinator. In addition, regarding the preparation of new mentors, they indicate that it should be differentiated and with more time to experience their activities, pointing out that before assuming the position of mentor, they should accompany another mentor to acquire expertise. "Mentors should be managers, at least for a year because when you have an experience it strengthens the mentor more ...before going out to the field, mentors should review casuistry and see the work we do" (7G).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research findings focus on three aspects, the first one referring to the mentor's profile, the training processes of the mentors before and during the management training programs.

Regarding the professional profile of the mentors, not all of them have had the experience of being principals, but they have accompanied teachers in classroom management. Mentors who have two years of experience in this work have acquired expertise in advising principals. Aravena (2018) highlights in her research that intervention in diverse educational contexts allows improving knowledge and skills for accompanying principals.

For those who become mentors for the first time, whether they have management experience or not, time should be allowed for them to experience different situations inherent to management work, as well as to become familiar with the type of documentation they must use (files, instruments, matrices), as experienced by the most experienced mentors. In this sense, Domingo (2020) states that the formation of

mentoring is a complex activity based on the formation of the person and his/her professional performance, empowering him/her in the dialogic reflection, requires training. For Merino and Melero (2018), it is not enough to be a mentor and to have been a manager, in addition to consider the empathic attitudes that favor the relationship of trust with managers (Cuellar et al., 2018).

The development of a virtual training program for mentors should take into account the needs of those who begin their mentoring work. These can be reinforced with more direct actions of an experienced mentor on a novel with the observation in the field to their more experienced peers, although there is the openness and attitude of some mentors on the peers who request it, an internal mentoring structured by the program itself predisposes of time and commitment of the more experienced mentors on the novices (Morales, 2020). In this way, the training process ensures the training objectives before entering into the action proper to its function.

Therefore, there is a need to rethink methodologies for the context of virtuality in the mentoring strengthening programs. Likewise, mentors require technological skills, necessary in these times where the educational service is remote and semi-presential, which were not mentioned by the mentors and which González (2019) highlights as necessary in their training to mentors.

The work of accompanying the mentor during his or her work in the field was preferably carried out by a specialist in other careers (sociologists, anthropologists) who strengthened the capacity to record information, a relevant action for mentors who are new to this mentoring process. However, for more experienced mentors who have been managers, they require the mentor to have pedagogical experience in management work.

In this sense, the competencies of instrumental skills such as the quality and relevance of recording and pedagogical accompaniment in situations specific to managerial action should be complemented.



Likewise, during the mentor's work there were spaces for group counseling, which have differed between the year 2021 and previous years. In the last year, the spaces and times for mentoring managers have been closer between one visit and others (virtual meetings through a platform), unlike the last two years where the meeting spaces with the manager were more extended, having up to a week to establish meetings for the exchange of experiences.

According to the analysis carried out, training programs for mentors should be part of a permanent design, necessary to promote induction programs for managers, which should propose a virtual training model and more spaces for mentors to share experiences, thus giving rise to the need for research on training models for mentors.

The mentor's training process has been complemented by the participation of professionals from different professional careers who provide different expertise to the mentors.

There are mentors who have a great experience in the training of managers, the study can be extended to collect good experiences in the training of managers, many of them have already 3 years of experience in the mentoring of managers.

Likewise, the experience of accompanying mentors has been shared by teachers and professionals from other careers, and the objectives and achievements that a multidisciplinary work can reach should be deepened.

It is important to recognize as a limitation of the research that the perspective of the mentors, who will also have a perception of the achievements and difficulties in the training of mentors, was not collected.

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