

ABSTRACT

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This research investigated the nature of mentor teachers' learning process and professional development, in particular the specifications of informal and nonformal learning events. In the autumn of 2020, I conducted a small sample research with interviewing 11 mentor teachers. Grounded theory was applied as a methodology through the research. During the interviews, I asked the participants to draw a timeline based on their professional development, which contains 2-3 important learning events that immensely influenced their knowledge and attitude about mentorship. After that, we discussed those events closely.

I intended to gain a deeper understanding of mentor teachers' learning processes, contexts, components, and methods to have a more profound and clear picture of how mentor teachers' knowledge is developed. Moreover, I aimed to use the investigation to identify what kinds of informal and nonformal learning events support the genesis of mentor knowledge. On the other hand, I intended to examine how the participants can identify with the mentor role and how could they become competent in adult education besides keeping their previous identities. The third aspect

of the research was to collect authentic, trustworthy information and data about the career paths of mentor teachers. I highlighted the informal and nonformal learning events and their impact to increase the available database about mentor teachers.

Based on the examination of the informal and nonformal learning experiences, the most vital motivation behind the learning was self-improvement so they can successfully perform their tasks as a mentor, especially in the field of personal and emotional support. As a result, they accomplished new competencies that improved their communication skills and enabled them to cooperate and operate their daily tasks more efficiently. The second strongest motivation was their personal interest in improving their knowledge and skills not explicitly related to their job activities. It became clear from the interviews that informal and nonformal learning events significantly impact their careers, professional development, and their mentoring duties. Based on the interviews, situated learning had a significant part in initiating the learning process; such as a problem or joining a community. This learning process always led to a positive change in their role as a mentor.

Keywords: *mentor teacher, informal learning, nonformal learning, professional development, grounded-theory*