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THE TUTOR'S ROLE IN THE ONLINE TRAINING OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS: TUTOR AND TUTEE PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This study examined the perception of the role of tutors in online training of preservice teachers during the COVID period, from the perspective of preservice teachers and their tutors.
Background	Because of the COVID pandemic, learning in schools was conducted online, therefore preservice teachers' practicum also took place online, as did the tutoring process.
Methodology	The research question was: How did preservice teachers and their tutors perceive the experience of teaching during the COVID period perceived by them; specifically, what was their sense of self-efficacy and satisfaction, and what difficulties did they encounter? This was a quantitative study. The sample included 221 participants comprising 111 tutors and 110 preservice teachers. Data were collected in Israel in 2021.
Contribution	This study sheds light on the process of online tutoring of preservice teachers by their tutors.
Findings	The study found that preservice teachers and their tutors perceived the practicum during the COVID period to be helpful, answering preservice teachers' needs and providing professional assistance in their training. This was more so in the professional aspects of teaching, in the emotional aspects of the tutoring process, and in the process of shaping the preservice teachers' professional identity, and less so in the organizational aspects of the school. In both groups (tutors and preservice teachers), it emerged that during a complex period of social isolation, maintaining contact reinforces the sense of self-efficacy. Tutors who encountered fewer technical difficulties and thought the tutoring process was enjoyable expressed more satisfaction with the tutoring process. Tutors felt

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that they were able to get better acquainted personally with the preservice teachers they taught, and vice versa, and preservice teachers were able to get to know their tutors personally. Tutors thought that their interpersonal communication benefitted the preservice teachers, that they listened to their mentees, and understood them. Preservice teachers felt that tutors allowed them to voice their expectations and concerns about their teaching experiences.

Recommendations for Practitioners

One of the main goals of practicum in studies toward a teaching certificate is to prepare the students for their role as teachers. In the online tutoring process, emphasis should be placed on professional aspects (such as instruction and classroom management, identifying points for improvement and setting them as goals and challenges for the future) and on emotional aspects (such as promoting growth and personal development of preservice teachers in the process of shaping their professional identity).

Recommendations for Researchers

One of the findings of the study is that the tutor-mentee relationship should be preserved in remote tutoring. The findings showed a positive correlation between maintaining such contact and high self-efficacy for both tutors and preservice teachers. It was found that tutors who reported high self-efficacy felt that interpersonal communication benefitted the teachers they were guiding.

Impact on Society

Information collected in this study indicates that the tutors made a great effort to provide preservice teachers with meaningful coaching during the COVID period. In certain aspects, the tutoring was more successful and in other aspects less so, given the characteristics of the period, such as social distancing, no attendance of regular classes at school, and so forth.

Future Research

It is recommended to continue investigating the online tutoring process, both from the perspective of preservice teachers and of tutors, to explore in-depth the correlation between self-efficacy and interpersonal communication, with emphasis on feedback between the tutors and preservice teachers.

Keywords

clinical training, field experiences, preservice teacher, online teaching practices, COVID-19, practical experience, e-readiness, digital learning literacies, 21st century

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