

Educational Mentoring in the Dominican Republic: Current Situation, Proposals, and Perspectives for Action

El acompañamiento pedagógico en República Dominicana: situación actual, propuestas y perspectivas de acción

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Abstract

Pedagogical accompaniment is a modality of teacher training in practice. This article seeks to present some reflections and proposals based on scientific evidence on mentoring as a modality of continuous teacher training in the Dominican Republic. To this end, a review of the specialized literature on the process (mentoring) was carried out in international electronic information sources. The results were structured as follows: first, the state of the art of mentoring in the Dominican Republic is presented. Then, proposals are made to develop pedagogical mentoring centered in the school, in a comprehensive manner. Finally, some pedagogical and research perspectives to strengthen accompaniment are identified. It is concluded that, in the Dominican Republic, accompaniment is not yet consolidated; it has not produced the desired changes in pedagogical practices and student achievement. Therefore, it is necessary to continue developing the conceptual and pedagogical training of mentors to promote quality education.

Keywords: educational counselling, educational guidance, novel teacher, teacher training, mentoring, mentor.

Resumen

El acompañamiento pedagógico es una modalidad de formación docente en la práctica. Este artículo busca exponer algunas reflexiones y propuestas basadas en la evidencia científica sobre el acompañamiento como modalidad de formación continua del profesorado en República Dominicana. Con tal fin, se realizó una revisión de la literatura especializada sobre el proceso (*mentoring*) en fuentes internacionales de información electrónica. Los resultados se estructuraron como sigue: primero, se expone el estado de la cuestión del acompañamiento en República Dominicana. A seguidas, se hacen propuestas para desarrollar el acompañamiento pedagógico centrado en la escuela, de forma integral. Por último, se identifican algunas perspectivas pedagógicas e investigativas para fortalecer el acompañamiento. Se concluye que, en República Dominicana, el acompañamiento aún no está consolidado; no ha producido los cambios deseados en las prácticas pedagógicas y el rendimiento estudiantil. Por consiguiente, es necesario continuar desarrollando la formación conceptual y pedagógica de los mentores para que promuevan la educación de calidad.

Palabras clave: asesoramiento pedagógico, formación de docentes, orientación pedagógica, profesorado novel, mentoría, mentor.

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical accompaniment is a modality of teacher training in practice, which consists of observation, analysis and reflection on some authentic pedagogical experiences to support evidence that allows improving teaching and learning processes (López, 2013; Kay & Hinds, 2009; Orland & Wang, 2021). By tradition, in this process, the teacher mentor – an older professional with more academic training and professional experience – academically, socially, professionally and emotionally supports the accompanying teacher – a younger and less experienced person – to do more academically and professionally competent, and improve their pedagogical practices and the academic performance of their students (Du & Wang, 2017; Gunn et al., 2017; Rhodes et al., 2004; Wexler, 2019).

It has been one of the modalities of teacher training that has received the most attention in the international academic field in recent years. Numerous qualitative and quantitative studies have been carried out to evaluate pedagogical interventions that use pedagogical accompaniment as a teacher training modality (López & Marcelo, 2021). In general terms, regardless of the country where the research has been carried out, the results have indicated that it is a positively perceived teacher training practice, since it improves the commitment, permanence and training of teachers, their pedagogical practice and student performance. This practice also produces changes in the perceptions and attitudes of teacher mentors with respect to their own training. However, there are still debates about the effect of pedagogical support in improving the quality of education in the Dominican Republic (Taveras-Sánchez, 2022).

In this context, in an attempt to contribute to the reflection and discussion on pedagogical accompaniment in the Dominican context, this article seeks to discuss some reflections, proposals and perspectives based on scientific evidence on accompaniment as a modality of continuous teacher training in the Dominican Republic.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Characterization of the pedagogical accompaniment

Based on the findings of previous studies, in this work, the term *accompaniment* is used in a similar way to how *mentoring* is used (from the Anglo-Saxon term mentoring, whose definition is associated, internationally, with roles such as *guide, preceptor, advocate, sponsor, or adviser* [Orland, 2016; Rhodes et al., 2004]). For this reason, mentoring, *mentoring* and accompaniment are used in an equivalent way, on the one hand, and mentor and companion, on the other.

Pedagogical accompaniment is a modality of teacher training in practice, aimed at offering individual support to accompanied teachers, in training and in service, in the academic, professional, socio-labor and psychological fields (Orland, 2016; Rhodes et al., 2004). It is a social training process that takes place in authentic educational contexts, that is, pedagogical practice is observed and analyzed in real educational situations. Its planning, execution and evaluation must be consistent with the interests and needs of teachers and schools. This could help teachers gain a better understanding of coaching and produce more stable and significant improvements in educational practice and student achievement (Kay & Hinds, 2009; López, 2013; Orland & Wang, 2021).

In the accompaniment practice there are no fixed roles; instead, a reciprocal relationship is established. First, the accompaniment is planned with the participation of all those involved and in a consensual manner (Kay & Hinds, 2009; López, 2013; Orland & Wang, 2021). The accompanying person(s) observe the pedagogical practice of a teacher. Both the mentor and the accompanied teacher record the most relevant aspects observed. They then analyze and reflect on teaching and learning through a collaborative, dialogical and critical exchange. These practices promote the development of teacher training, changes in their pedagogical beliefs, and improvements in teaching, teacher performance, learning, and student achievement (Gunn et al., 2017; Orland, 2016; Rhodes et al., 2004).

2.2. Types of accompaniment

In the reviewed literature, some classifications of accompaniment have been identified according to different criteria (Kay & Hinds, 2009; Wang, 2018).

According to the level of formality, it can be classified into two types (Du & Wang, 2017; Kay & Hinds, 2009):

- An informal, independent and spontaneous accompaniment practice on the part of some teachers.
- Formal institutional teaching assistance.

Considering the type of relationship and the number of participants, it can be classified into the following types:

- An individualized one-on-one intervention (Rhodes et al., 2004; Wexler, 2019).
- A small group intervention (Rhodes et al., 2004; Wexler, 2019).
- Massive conventional courses and conferences (López & Marcelo, 2021).

According to the position of the companion, they can be classified into (Rhodes et al., 2004):

- Accompaniment carried out by the members of the management team of the institution.
- Mentorships offered by mentors hired for such purposes.
- Accompaniment executed by educational supervisors.
- Accompaniment carried out by the teachers themselves, in training or in practice.

Regarding the modality, the intervention can be carried out in four types:

- In person (López, 2013; Orland & Wang, 2021).
- At a distance, as part of open education programs (Ngoepe, 2014).
- Virtually asynchronous and synchronous in the form of online mentoring (Hunt et al., 2013).
- By means of a mixed approach in the modality of blended learning (Rhodes et al., 2004).

In relation to scope, the results of previous international studies indicate that accompaniment is effective as part of programs for:

- Initial teacher training (ÓGallchóir et al., 2019).
- Induction of new teachers. The novice teacher state refers to a transitory state of the teacher determined by their lack of professional

experience in order to solve certain problems and the need for on-going education to acquire new tools to solve issues because their current knowledge is insufficient, non-functional or they explain the problem but in another context (López & Marcelo, 2021).

- Continuous training of practicing teachers (López & Marcelo, 2021; Orland & Wang, 2021; Rhodes et al., 2004; Wang, 2018).
- Didactic strategy for teaching curricular and pedagogical content (Jenkinson & Benson, 2017; Li et al., 2021).
- Vocational development, qualification and promotion of teachers (López & Marcelo, 2021).
- Professional development and teacher training of mentors (López-Real & Kwan, 2005).

2.3. Potential mentors

Accompaniment is usually defined as a formative practice carried out through a unidirectional relationship between more experienced teachers (mentors) and less experienced teachers (accompanied) (López-Real & Kwan, 2005). However, this relationship is not exclusive. In some programs a variety of mentors have participated with different relationships between mentors and accompanied teachers. Regardless of the country where the study was carried out, the type of accompaniment and the roles and relationships of mentors and teachers, accompaniment has been successful (Hunt et al., 2013).

For the purposes of this work, a mentor is a professional who has experience and knowledge about pedagogical practice, is committed and willing to help, guide and provide academic, personal and professional support in a horizontal, respectful, democratic, formative and constructive manner to other teachers and, on occasions, receive similar support in a reciprocal way (Fowler & O'Gorman, 2005).

Li et al. (2021) found that when accompanying teachers have experience, training, and a positive attitude, they better understand their role in the accompaniment process and assume this formative practice responsibly. Consequently, the practice produces significant changes in the training of accompanied teachers, in their pedagogical practice, and in student achievement (Ambrosetti, 2014; López-Real & Kwan, 2005).

Some international studies have analyzed the effect of accompaniment carried out by different educational agents. Here are some of the most relevant:

- Peer cooperating teachers (Gunn et al., 2017; Jenkinson & Benson, 2017; López, 2013; ÓGallchóir et al., 2019).
- Experienced cooperating teachers (Ambrosetti, 2014; López, 2013; ÓGallchóir et al., 2019).
- Formal mentors (Ambrosetti, 2014; López-Real & Kwan, 2005; Walters et al., 2020; Wang, 2018; Wexler, 2019).
- Instructional coaches (Keiler et al., 2020).
- Institutional pedagogical supervisors (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2018; Kendall, 2018).
- Directors and other members of the management team (Kendall, 2018; Pérez et al., 2018).
- Mentors, managers, supervisors and teachers in a joint manner (Pérez et al., 2018).
- Mentors and teachers who participate in educational research projects (Coggshall et al., 2018; Yendol et al., 2018).
- Mentors and teachers who participate in intervention projects that integrate institutional continuous education programs and university programs for initial teacher training (Amos & Kukar, 2016).

In general terms, regardless of the country where the studies were carried out and the type of mentor, the results indicate that accompaniment has a significant and positive effect on the quality of education. It improves commitment, permanence and teacher training, pedagogical practice and student achievement. It also promotes changes in the perception and attitude of teachers regarding this training practice (Ambrosetti, 2014).

In tune with the international trend, the educational system of the Dominican Republic has incorporated the position of teacher coordinator to strengthen teacher training, through the implementation of situated accompaniment of pedagogical practice focused on the school. The following describes the situation of pedagogical accompaniment in the Dominican Republic in the last 15 years

3 | METHOD

A systematic search of the literature was carried out to identify, analyze, evaluate and summarize studies on the practice of accompaniment (*mentoring* in the Anglo-Saxon environment) used as a modality of initial teacher training and in services published in international sources of electronic information in the last 20 years, using the PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses*) protocol for systematic reviews (Moher et al., 2016). In addition, the legal and institutional framework that governs pedagogical accompaniment in the Dominican Republic was reviewed and local research was analyzed in the form of scientific articles, degree projects and doctoral theses that have evaluated the effect of accompaniment on pedagogical practice and student performance in the country since 2009.

3.1. Search strategies

The search for scientific publications was carried out in the following electronic information sources: Science Direct, Sage Pub, Springer Link, Wiley Online Library, SciELO, Web of Science and Scholar Google Beta. It was carried out combining the following descriptors: pedagogical advice, teacher training, pedagogical orientation, Dominican Republic, tutoring, mentoring, mentor, in Spanish; *Dominican Republic, educational counselling, educational guidance, teacher training, mentoring, mentor*, in English. In both cases, the descriptors were combined using the boolean logical operators AND, OR, NOT..

3.2. Eligibility criteria

Identified studies were assessed for eligibility. On the one hand, it was verified as an inclusion criterion, by reading the title, the summary or *abstract* and the key words or *keywords*, that these were studies that evaluated the effect of pedagogical accompaniment on pedagogical practice, teaching performance, student performance, regardless of the modality, the agents involved, the context, the purpose and the design used. The methodology of the study was immediately examined to verify whether they were field studies or systematic reviews. Finally, to be included, it was considered that there was access to the full text of the article.

On the other hand, non-systematic documentary studies, narrative reviews, editorials, letters to the editor were excluded from this systematic review. Field studies on teacher training that did not include coaching practice were also excluded.

3.3. Procedure

This study was carried out following the protocol for systematic reviews of Moher et al. (2016), which provides a systematic, scientific and rigorous procedure; this protocol includes:

- Design of the review protocol.
- Search for the highest quality relevant literature.
- Selection of evidence.
- Analysis of the studies.
- Synthesis and presentation of results.

4 | RESULTS

In the search process, 280 works on pedagogical accompaniment or *mentoring* published in thesis and article format, or as legal documents that regulate this formative practice in the Dominican Republic, were identified. Of these, 66 that met the inclusion criteria were selected. The results of their review were structured in three parts: 1) relation of the state of the question of pedagogical accompaniment in the Dominican Republic, 2) proposals to develop pedagogical accompaniment focused on the school in an integral way, and 3) prospective to strengthen the pedagogical practice, and research on accompaniment. .

4.1. Situation of pedagogical accompaniment in the Dominican Republic

The analysis of the educational quality of the Dominican Republic suggests the need to improve teacher training, since weaknesses have been identified such as the lack of articulation between theory and practice, poor teaching performance and inconsistency between study plans and programs teacher training (González, 2015; MINERD, 2014). Given this scenario, the Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic (MINERD) has proposed restructuring the teaching career and permanent training programs, placing the teacher and the school at the center of educational policy (Van Grieken, 2014).

Since 2009, the position of teaching coordinator has been incorporated into the management team of Dominican public institutions. This official has pedagogical and administrative functions. He is in charge of coordinating and developing continuous education processes and providing support for teachers from the beginning of their professional career

(López & Marcelo, 2021). This official is also responsible for monitoring the teaching and learning processes to improve teacher training and performance. With the incorporation of the teaching coordinator as a mentor, it is expected that the accompaniment will positively influence school learning and the academic performance of the students (Martínez & González, 2010; Rodríguez, 2013).

One of the main tasks of the teacher coordinator is to carry out the pedagogical accompaniment in a formal way to be in tune with the international trend of initial teacher training and service. It has been found that this modality is more effective than traditional programs: it produces better results in student academic performance and has a greater scope in the socio-affective and professional development of accompanied teachers and mentors (Du & Wang, 2017; Kay & Hinds, 2009; Orland, 2016).

As a result, a conceptual, legal and procedural framework was created to regulate the practice of pedagogical accompaniment and contribute to the achievement of the educational objectives of the Dominican Republic (Martínez & González, 2010; Oviedo, 2004). The “Manual of procedures for monitoring and follow-up in educational centers” (MPASCE) and the Regulations for the selection of teaching coordinators (MINERD, 2009; Oviedo, 2004) stand out.

Ambrosetti (2014) refers that these regulations establish that teaching coordinators must have a solid academic background and professional experience, especially in accompaniment. This practice is conceived as a horizontal, contextualized and democratic process, focused on school and teacher needs, without hierarchies or recipes, to help solve their professional problems and promote good pedagogical practices. As such, it could be guaranteed that teachers improve their teaching-learning process (Orland, 2016; Rhodes et al., 2004).

MINERD (2014) evaluated the effect of teacher accompaniment carried out by coordinators on pedagogical practice, student performance, and teacher training. The quantitative results indicate that there is a positive perception regarding the coordinators, but the effect of the accompaniment on the improvements in teaching has not been significant (González, 2015; MINERD, 2014). The coordinators support the teachers in some school activities, such as the design of didactic resources, the improvement of the school climate, the increase in motivation, the planning and control of student discipline; however, it has not had a significant effect on the improvement of the teaching-learning processes or on the academic performance of the students, as reported by the national evaluations

(Directorate of Evaluation of the Quality of Education, 2017) and international, such as the PISA test (Schleicher, 2019).

Other quantitative national studies carried out as degree papers since 2015 (Taveras-Sánchez, 2022, lists these works) coincide, in some way, with the findings of MINERD (2014) and González (2015). They found that teachers have a positive perception of the accompaniment and of the coordinators and observed that a high percentage of teachers consider that the teaching coordinators are responsible, know the curriculum, listen to the teachers and work as a team; however, the accompaniment does not significantly improve their teaching performance, although they acknowledge that they use their recommendations in pedagogical practice.

The referred studies indicate that the effect on the teaching-learning processes is concentrated especially in controlling student discipline and assisting teachers in class planning. In addition, the accompaniment allows to reflect on the pedagogical practice to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as to seek solutions to the identified problems.

On the other hand, it was also observed in these investigations that the practice of accompaniment does not differ from the traditional conception of supervision and that little time is dedicated to accompaniment because the coordinators have multiple tasks in the institutions. This generates negative attitudes from teachers, which can affect the effectiveness of the accompaniment.

In the referred degree papers, it was found that the accompaniment practice has some weaknesses that hinder its success, prevent it from producing the desired educational changes in student performance, pedagogical practice, and teacher training. Consistent with these findings, Urate (2017) and Cedeño and Estivel (2020) highlighted the following: the negative attitudes of teachers, the lack of dedication and poor academic training of the support team, the absence of follow-up pedagogical and programmatic applications, the practices focused on administrative aspects, the conditioning of the physical space and furniture, the low participation of the teaching staff, the non-compliance with the planning of the accompaniment, and the lack of diversity, systematicity and cohesion in the development of the activities.

On the other hand, the national investigations cited observed that some schools did not have teaching coordinators; consequently, the director of the management team is the one in charge of carrying out the pedagogical accompaniment. In these cases, teachers also have a positive attitude towards this accompaniment and consider that it has a positive effect on

some aspects of their pedagogical practice. However, deficiencies similar to those indicated for coordinators have been observed.

Considering the quantitative evidence presented in the aforementioned studies and the results of the national and international academic performance tests (Directorate for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education, 2017; Schleicher, 2019), it is observed that, despite the efforts made, to date, the teaching coordinator and the pedagogical accompaniment have not managed to generate the expected educational changes in the Dominican Republic.

On the other hand, other studies have found that pedagogical support has a positive effect on the quality of education in the Dominican Republic. López and Marcelo (2021) present qualitative and quantitative evidence indicating that the actors involved positively perceive the accompaniment as part of the implementation of the National Induction Program (INDUCTIO). They consider that it produces high levels of satisfaction among the participants and greatly improves the pedagogical practice.

The results of studies on accompaniment carried out in the Dominican Republic reveal that there are debates about its effect on the quality of education (Taveras-Sánchez, 2022). These could be related, on the one hand, to the methodological characteristics of the research carried out. Most of these studies use a descriptive design and have analyzed the effect of mentoring using the quantitative method, with small samples, obtained from intentional non-probabilistic sampling of one or a few institutions from the perspective of the mentored teachers. There are few national studies that qualitatively analyze the mentoring process from the mentors' perspective. On the other hand, the type of publication could influence the reported findings. Most of the studies whose results indicate that the accompaniment has not produced the desired changes are graduate papers, in comparison with the scientific articles that have found that it has had a more positive effect.

On the other hand, in the international studies carried out in different countries, a tendency has been observed that indicates that the pedagogical or mentoring accompaniment is highly effective, since it improves pedagogical practice, student performance and the training of accompanied teachers and accompanying mentors.

These differences with respect to what was observed in the Dominican Republic may be due to the previous training received by accompanying mentors, the institutional conditions of mentoring, and the pedagogical conception of the interventions. However, there is no empirical evidence to support these preliminary observations. Since this comparison

transcends the purposes of this study, it would be advisable to carry out more research that analyzes the factors associated with the success of the accompaniment.

Therefore, it would be necessary to design, execute and evaluate training programs aimed at strengthening pedagogical support and promoting significant improvements in the educational quality of the Dominican Republic. The following section presents some proposals for this purpose.

4.2. Pedagogical accompaniment to improve educational quality: proposals

In general, accompaniment implies an individualized and unilateral relationship in which the teacher mentor -by tradition an older person, with more professional experience and academic training, who is presented as a role model- helps the accompanied teacher -usually being a younger person or less experienced and with less academic training – becomes a more competent professional (Du & Wang, 2017; Orland, 2016; Rhodes et al., 2004; Wexler, 2019). However, in this work it is proposed that the practice of horizontal and reciprocal accompaniment between equals be contemplated, a more collaborative interaction.

International scientific evidence suggests that accompaniment is a highly effective teacher training practice. Since it has implications for the entire educational process, it should include those involved in educational practice, seen as a holistic manner. This requires institutionalizing, systematizing, individualizing, and regularizing the accompaniment centered in the school. In addition, the accompaniment practice should transcend remedial practices aimed at compensating for training deficiencies in beginning teachers, resolving the difficulties, deficiencies, and pedagogical, didactic, and socio-emotional problems of teachers.

Hence the need to improve its implementation: hold more planning, discussion, reflection and evaluation meetings; more observation sessions; change inappropriate, routine and traditional practices and with little innovation aimed at monitoring, supervising, monitoring and control.

Some strategies are proposed below to carry out a constructive, horizontal and democratic accompaniment practice (Rodríguez, 2013).

4.2.1. Constructivist Planning

As part of the planning of the accompaniment, pedagogical discussion groups should be organized to diagnose the interests and needs of the educational centers and their teachers, reach agreements on the contents,

the characteristics and the operation of the accompaniment, the roles of those involved, the training priorities, the most appropriate didactic strategies and the most suitable work schedule (Bórquez & Murillo, 2022). By taking into account what the teachers involved have to say, their commitment, attitude, motivation with the development of accompaniment, their pedagogical practice and their own training can be improved (Rodríguez, 2013).

4.2.2. Strategies to Mediate Accompaniment as Ongoing Training

According to the results of numerous international qualitative and quantitative studies on the effectiveness of pedagogical accompaniment as a modality of teacher training, the use of constructivist teaching strategies has a positive effect on teacher training, their pedagogical practice, and student achievement (Rodríguez, 2013). Some pedagogical accompaniment strategies that serve to guide observation, analysis and discussion are described below.

4.2.2.1. Reflective Pedagogical Dialogue

The reflective pedagogical dialogue is an equal and respectful exchange between the teacher and the mentor, regardless of their socioeconomic level, gender, age, culture, academic background, and professional experience. This critical and reflective dialogue allows exploring topics of great interest. The participants present their reflections, identify problems, discuss possible solutions, propose potential concrete applications and share good practices (Orland, 2016).

This reflection allows us to review the pedagogical beliefs of teachers and their pedagogical practice, analyze them and reorient them based on the aspects that can be improved that have been identified. Reciprocally, the mentor can improve their practice and training by identifying and solving problems with teachers (Gunn et al., 2017).

4.2.2.2. The Pedagogical Debate

Alternatively, discussions can be organized with the teachers who have made the observations or seen their recordings. The debate consists of discussing a topic that can generate controversy among the members of the institution. The mentor can be in charge of organizing the development, proposing points to discuss and giving the right to speak to the participants. This strategy makes it possible to support, reject or verify one's own ideas and those of others. It is advisable to start from the positive

aspects observed; then practices that could be improved can be incorporated. In addition, within this pedagogical debate, one could also reflect, in a constructive way, on negative experiences, with a view to changing them and providing solutions (Rodríguez, 2013).

4.2.2.3. Research-Action to Understand and Improve Practice

Action research makes it possible to study an educational or social problem that affects a certain group of people and, therefore, requires solutions; seeks to understand and interpret educational and social practices to change the existing reality and improve it; to investigate about pedagogical practice and the role of the teacher as a learner and as a facilitator is very productive, effective and positive. Research in the classroom allows teachers to objectively observe their own pedagogical practice, which makes it easier to analyze it with their peers and mentors in a more critical and reflective way (Coggshall et al., 2018; Yendol et al., 2018).

4.2.2.4. Learning community

Learning community is a training strategy aimed at a group of people learning together by sharing the same tools in the same learning environment (Villegas & Hernández, 2017). The creation of communities allows the development of learning and the construction of knowledge in a collaborative way. In addition, it promotes the socio-cognitive exchange between teachers and mentors, a positive attitude and motivation in order to achieve common goals: train teachers, develop their capacity for analysis and evaluation of their practice, and improve pedagogical performance (Walters et al., 2020).

It is necessary for mentors and teachers to form their own communities of practice - face-to-face, virtual or mixed - to diagnose their needs, interests, teaching and learning styles, and teachers' skills, so that interventions do not impose external conceptions, themes, or practices. Instead, this allows the development of significant and interesting practices, resulting from the learning community (Villegas & Hernández, 2017).

4.2.2.5. Pedagogical Groups as Communities of Practice

The pedagogical group is a specialized training modality focused on social and psychological aspects related to educational practice. It implies a pedagogical practice in which a small group of teachers and other professionals related to the educational process participate at the same time and place, whether physical or virtual (Bórquez & Murillo, 2022).

The participants, as members of a professional community, have common pedagogical purposes, share norms and values, and are in permanent communication (MINERD, 2009, 2014). The pedagogical groups constitute a very valuable strategy to analyze and reflect on the teaching practice with the participation of the specialists that make up the management team of the educational centers (psychologists, counselors, social workers and educational psychologists, among others) (Taveras-Sánchez, 2022).

4.2.2.6. Mutual Observation of Classroom Practice

As we have mentioned before, mutual observation of classroom activities is a good strategy to develop teacher training and improve educational practice. This practice is one of the most effective, formative and constructive; it is a way of reciprocal observation; the roles of accompanying and accompanied are not fixed, since the mentor is also accompanied in his professional practice. Numerous studies agree that peer, experienced, and inexperienced teachers can observe each other to promote critical and reflective analysis of pedagogical practice (Ambrosetti, 2014; Gunn et al., 2017; Jenkinson & Benson, 2017; López, 2013).

4.2.2.7. Constructive Feedback

La retroalimentación se refiere a las indicaciones, comentarios, preguntas. Feedback refers to the indications, comments, questions and recommendations that the mentors offer to the observed teacher after each observation session. This strategy makes it possible to offer socio-emotional and pedagogical support to improve the attitude, motivation and pedagogical practice of teachers. The interventions of the companion must be formative, constructive, respectful, purposeful and proactive; In addition, the companion must be projected as a reliable interlocutor so that the support offered is well received (Keiler et al., 2020).

It is an essential part of the accompaniment, seen as a recursive process in which mentors and companions are in constant interaction, reflecting and analyzing the pedagogical practice in a reciprocal way to change the aspects that can be improved and socialize the good practices (Rodríguez, 2013).

The feedback strategy could include, first, the observation of class activities and, then, the descriptive record of all the situations that are considered relevant, especially critical actions, the application of effective strategies and improvable practices. To carry out an effective feedback practice, Keiler et al. (2020) and Rodríguez (2013) recommend the following:

- Describe each situation in detail, verbally photograph the pedagogical practice or, if possible, make a video recording.
- Avoid making value judgments or subjectively interpreting what is observed. This avoids introducing biases when analyzing pedagogical practice.
- Record the doubts and questions that arise during the observation to discuss and analyze them in subsequent meetings.
- Record the positive aspects observed.
- Register aspects that can be improved.
- Write the proposals and recommendations that you would like to offer to the observed teacher.
- Supplement the observation with the written documents available in class.
- Avoid interfering in class and distracting students.

4.2.2.8. Analysis of Critical Incidents

In the educational field, the analysis of critical incidents is a strategy to improve school coexistence; part of any event that disturbs the organizational climate and the harmony of the participants in the educational process, which may hinder teaching, learning and welfare. The purpose is to generate reflection from a double perspective: on the one hand, it proposes responses which are immediately applicable for constructive solutions to the critical incidents that have taken place; on the other hand, it allows analyzing the practices that have caused the critical incidents for modification or elimination as deemed necessary (Monereo, 2010).

4.2.2.9. Dialogic Inquiry

Dialogical inquiry is a key horizontal communication tool in the development of a positive attitude in teachers and in increasing interest in collaboratively investigating and analyzing educational situations with the help of other teachers and mentors. The objective is to promote the construction of situated and contextualized knowledge, of practical application to transform the teaching and learning process (Villegas and Hernández, 2017).

4.2.2.10. Synthesis of Studies on the Use of Constructivist Teaching Strategies

Recent studies on the use of constructivist didactic strategies within pedagogical accompaniment as a modality of teacher training have provided solid scientific evidence that includes studies with quantitative and qualitative designs that prove their effectiveness. For this reason, their

findings have served as the basis for implementing these strategies in pedagogical interventions aimed at teachers in training and in service. However, it is still necessary to develop lines of action and research to strengthen teacher training and pedagogical accompaniment and, consequently, improve pedagogical practice in the Dominican Republic. Below are some practical and investigative perspectives.

4.3. Perspectives for the development of pedagogical accompaniment

4.3.1. Perspectives to improve practice

Based on the results of the previous studies, it is possible to identify some areas of the pedagogical support carried out in the Dominican Republic that require incorporating the recommended best practices. Here are some of the most relevant:

First, it is necessary to include teachers in service to implement reciprocal and horizontal accompaniment, so that they accompany and be accompanied by their peers. Their theoretical and practical pedagogical knowledge, problems, needs, limitations and teaching styles can improve their understanding of accompaniment, so that they promote the desired educational changes. It is also necessary to train the supervisors who are in charge of the accompaniment to change their traditional pedagogical conceptions, which in some cases interfere with the constructivist training of the accompanied teachers.

Second, it is advisable to take advantage of social networks to develop teacher training in practice, since most teachers frequently use social networks for their daily interactions, recreation, communication and information. In this sense, institutional discussion groups could be created by educational center units and regions to analyze and discuss problematic educational situations among equals and socialize alternative solutions based on authentic experiences.

Third, it would be convenient to institutionalize accompanying projects focused on the school that involve all educational actors. This entails including the formative activities, the implementation of the accompaniment and the permanent evaluation in the formal programming of the institution. The activities and roles of all community members should be formally established in the weekly, monthly and yearly plans. Thus, it is possible to transcend the vertical practice between the management team and the accompanied teachers, to more inclusive, horizontal, democratic and constructive training processes.

Fourthly, it is recommended to create local, regional and national meetings for teachers and trainers to share their experiences in the accompaniment process. Based on these meetings, a database of good follow-up practices could be created, which could be published on blogs, web pages and institutional newsletters. It would be useful for teachers and trainers to have access to the accompaniment practices that have been successful, as it would allow them to learn from others, identify the key aspects associated with the success of the process, and encourage their interest in researching, documenting, and publishing their experiences.

Fifth, although it is desirable that all members of the institution's teaching staff be trained in accompaniment and actively participate in its implementation, each educational center must have a teaching coordinator with academic training and teaching experience to undertake actions of teacher training and, especially, pedagogical accompaniment. This position can be the pivot to articulate and coordinate the training for teachers and trainers.

Sixthly, the findings of the studies on the effect of accompaniment in improving the quality of education in the Dominican Republic suggest the need to reformulate the training programs for accompaniments and in-service teacher accompaniment. It is essential to identify the strategies and activities that have the desired positive effects on training, pedagogical practice, and student performance in order to implement them, and to identify those that hinder the process of accompaniment in order to change them.

Seventh, pedagogical accompaniment has a fundamental role in the development of in-service teacher training, the improvement of the quality of education and educational performance; therefore, officials dedicated to such an important process should dedicate themselves exclusively to teacher training.

Lastly, the new reality that the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed suggests the need to consider the modality of virtual, synchronous and asynchronous accompaniment, which coincides with studies that have demonstrated its efficacy and multiple benefits, as many as the face-to-face modality.

4.3.2. Prospects for Future Research

It is necessary to carry out census-type quantitative studies to identify and describe the training practices of those who perform support functions: mentors, management team, supervisors, managers, etc. This would make it possible to characterize the demographic, academic and

professional profile of the trainers and to identify interests and training needs.

It would also be necessary to carry out ethnographic studies to evaluate the effect of accompaniment on real educational practices in the long term, involving both accompanied teachers and their students.

Likewise, it is necessary to promote the development of accompaniment through studies with a research-action design in which teachers develop the modality of accompaniment in pairs, and evaluate its effects in the short, medium and long term, for which its use should be considered. attitude, motivation, training, pedagogical practice and student performance.

In the same way, it is necessary to carry out qualitative and quantitative studies on the training process of the trainers who work as mentors. It is necessary to analyze to what extent the didactic, pedagogical and psychosocial foundations prescribed in their accompanying practices are part of the practices they teach.

Before the initiation of reciprocal collaborative accompaniment carried out by peers, it would be convenient to evaluate the perspectives of teachers in service, of their role as accompaniment and accompanied. In this way, more horizontal and constructivist accompaniment practices could be diversified and optimized.

In addition, to improve the effectiveness of future training interventions through pedagogical accompaniment, it would be convenient to qualitatively and quantitatively study the factors associated with the success or failure of pedagogical accompaniment from the perspectives of accompanied and accompanying teachers. The findings of studies of this nature could inform the design and execution of follow-up programs.

Along the same lines, experimental pilot studies could be carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the accompanying pedagogical interventions, in which the conditions of the accompaniment, materials, activities and strategies used are controlled, and the results are compared with those observed in control interventions.

To the extent that accompaniment is implemented in the virtual modality, it is suggested to evaluate its effectiveness and compare its benefits with face-to-face accompaniment from the perspective of mentors and accompanied teachers.

5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the studies on accompaniment in the Dominican Republic indicate that there are debates about the effect on the quality of education, which are associated with the nature of the studies themselves. However, regardless of the research designs used, the objective evidence from national and international teacher performance and student performance tests on the quality of education in the Dominican Republic shows that teacher training programs have not achieved significant changes in the pedagogical practices or student learning.

However, most of the teachers and members of the management team have a positive perception of the companions and the accompaniment.

Although improvements have been found in teaching, achievement, teacher training and student achievement, these have not been significant, as expected. The effect has been observed especially in the use of teaching resources, the improvement of the school climate, the increase in motivation and collaboration between teachers and, above all, in teacher planning and control of student discipline.

Another noteworthy positive aspect that has been found in the reviewed literature is the acceptance of the figure of the pedagogical mentor, which can mean an important starting point to promote improvements in pedagogical practices. However, it is necessary that the mentors dedicate themselves exclusively to the pedagogical processes from the training and accompaniment of teachers, as was initially established for teaching coordinators in the Dominican Republic.

Accompaniment is one of the most effective teacher training practices if done properly. This implies involving all educational agents in a reciprocal and horizontal way, since all can be mentors, observe and accompany, and be accompanied. It is also necessary to formalize, institutionalize, systematize, individualize and regularize the accompaniment centered in the school.

In addition, the accompaniment should not be limited to training practices for remedial purposes aimed at beginning teachers with teaching difficulties, deficiencies in their training, and socio-emotional problems. In addition, good practices could be used to be socialized and used as references in initial and in-service training programs.

Although the objective proposed in this review was achieved, the present study had some limitations. First, few studies have been conducted on accompaniment in the Dominican Republic. Most of them are degree

papers with small samples selected at convenience. This limits the scope of the studies, prevents the possibility of generalizing and achieving conclusive results. Secondly, although the practice of accompaniment is regulated and should be formal and institutional, in the educational reality it is carried out by any official on a temporary basis and it is not rigorously planned. In addition, in some studies there could be bias in the selection of the sample, the implementation of the accompanying interventions and in the evaluation of the reported results. This makes it difficult to effectively assess the performance of accompanying mentors and the effect of the accompaniment offered.

It is necessary to design and implement national training policies for teachers in training and in practice that include support pedagogy as a transversal axis. As such, the institutions could have more institutional support to promote their particular initiatives and contribute to the improvement of education in the Dominican Republic.

Author statement

Taveras-Sánchez, B.Y.: conceptualization, software, validation, formal analysis, research, resources, data curation, writing (original draft), writing, revision and editing, visualization, supervision, project management.

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