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Improving Educational Quality through Teacher Mentoring and Community Collaboration

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Abstract	This community service project was conducted to address the persistent challenge of improving educational quality through a more participatory and sustainable approach that combines teacher mentoring and community collaboration. The main objective was to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence and strengthen community involvement in the learning process. Using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, the program was implemented over six months at SD Negeri 2 Nanga Jetak, Kabupaten Sintang, involving teachers, school leaders, and local community representatives as active partners. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and questionnaires, then analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation tests, and thematic analysis. The results showed a significant improvement in teachers' instructional quality, reflective practice, and community participation, with a positive correlation ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$) between mentoring intensity and teacher performance. The study concludes that integrating mentoring with community collaboration effectively builds professional capacity and strengthens social partnerships in education. This project contributes a replicable and context-sensitive model for sustainable school improvement and community empowerment.

Keywords	Community Collaboration, Educational Quality, Teacher Mentoring.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of accelerating change and growing demands on education systems worldwide, the quest to enhance educational quality has never been more urgent. Schools are no longer isolated islands of teaching and learning; rather they operate within complex ecosystems shaped by teacher capacity, community engagement, resource equity, and collaborative networks. Teacher effectiveness remains a pivotal lever in this system: the professional knowledge, instructional skills, and ongoing development of teachers significantly influence

student outcomes (Wang, 2025). At the same time, community collaboration the meaningful involvement of parents, local organisations, businesses, and civic stakeholders has been shown to enhance school capacity, relevance of learning, and student engagement (Mu'ammaroh, Pugu, Nelza, & Al-Amin, 2024). Thus, integrating teacher mentoring with community collaboration offers a promising pathway to improving educational quality in a sustainable and contextually responsive way.

Despite this promising potential, many schools still face persistent problems that hamper educational quality. First, new and early-career teachers often struggle with adaptation, instructional planning, classroom management, and professional isolation all of which reduce their effectiveness and increase turnover (Adeoye, Nwakaego, & Yahaya, 2025). Second, in many communities, the linkage between school services and the broader community remains weak or superficial: collaboration tends to be sporadic, symbolic rather than integrative, and lacking continuous evaluation or joint ownership (Mu'ammaroh et al., 2024). Third, schools in underserved or resource-constrained environments often face compounded challenges: limited access to professional development, minimal mentoring structures, and low levels of community participation in schooling processes, all of which undermine efforts to raise quality. The combined effect is that many initiatives aimed at improving educational quality end up being fragmented rather than systemic, leaving gaps between teacher support and community engagement.

What makes the present study unique is its integrative focus on **teacher mentoring** and **community collaboration** as mutually reinforcing components of educational quality improvement. While many studies examine these separately for example, mentoring programmes for novice teachers, or school-community partnerships in isolation few explicitly examine how mentoring teachers can be designed *in tandem* with community collaboration efforts, particularly in a school-based community service context. Further, this project situates itself in a real-world service setting (pengabdian ilmiah) where teachers receive structured mentoring while at the same time the community is engaged as an active partner in schooling processes. In so doing, the project aims to move beyond the traditional dichotomy of "school improvements" versus "community empowerment" and toward a holistic model of shared responsibility: teachers are supported, and communities are co-responsible for learning outcomes. Moreover, this study emphasises continuous feedback loops, monitoring and evaluation of mentoring and community collaboration, and the alignment with local cultural, socio-economic and educational contexts.

There are notable gaps in previous service-oriented and research-based efforts on this front. For mentoring, existing work often emphasises the mentor-mentee relationship but neglects wider systemic factors such as community context, institutional support, and longitudinal sustainability (Wang, 2025). For community collaboration, many efforts remain descriptive or conceptual rather than empirical interventions that link teacher development with community engagement and measurable educational outcomes (Mu'ammaroh et al., 2024). In addition, few service-based projects incorporate rigorous measurement of both

mentoring and community collaboration in relation to educational quality indicators — such as student achievement, teacher instructional quality, and community perceptions. Moreover, especially in developing country or under-resourced school settings, there remains a lack of context-specific models that integrate mentoring and community engagement as a combined strategy for quality improvement (Adeoye et al., 2025). This service project therefore addresses those gaps by designing a mentoring–community collaboration framework, implementing it in a real school context, and analysing its impact on educational quality.

The principal aim of this article-service project is to examine how structured teacher mentoring programmes, when combined with intentional community collaboration practices, can lead to improvements in educational quality at the school level. More specifically, the objectives include: (1) to develop and implement a mentoring programme for teachers that is responsive to their needs and embedded in school practice; (2) to design community collaboration mechanisms including stakeholder engagement, shared planning, and feedback loops that complement teacher mentoring; (3) to measure the effects of this combined approach on key educational quality indicators (e.g., teacher instructional practices, student engagement, community-school linkages); and (4) to draw lessons and recommendations for sustainable service practices in school–community ecosystems. Through these objectives, the study hopes to contribute both to practice (improved teacher capacity, stronger community-school relationships) and to theory (the bridging of mentoring and community collaboration in quality improvement).

The anticipated hopes from this service intervention extend beyond immediate improvements in classroom instruction and community involvement. On the teacher side, the mentoring component is expected to enhance teacher confidence, instructional innovation, reflective practice, and professional growth thereby reducing attrition, elevating quality, and fostering resilience in the teaching profession (Adeoye et al., 2025). On the community side, the collaboration is intended to build mutual trust, shared responsibility for student learning, continuous dialogue between school and community, and a deeper understanding of local educational aspirations and constraints.

METHOD

The community service project employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, emphasizing collaborative engagement between researchers, teachers, and community stakeholders to improve educational quality through mentoring and partnership. The PAR method was selected because it enables a continuous cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection in which participants actively contribute to problem-solving and capacity building. The activity took place over a six-month period (April to September 2025) at SD Negeri 2 Nanga Jetak, Kabupaten Sintang, Indonesia, involving ten teachers, school administrators, and representatives from the local community and parents' association as the primary partners. The process began with a planning phase, in which researchers conducted preliminary needs assessments through focus group discussions and informal interviews to

identify the main challenges in teaching practice and school–community engagement. This was followed by obtaining official permissions from the local education office and the school principal, as well as coordinating with the community leaders to ensure legitimacy, transparency, and cultural alignment.

During the **preparation phase**, the research team developed a mentoring framework that combined professional development workshops, peer mentoring sessions, and collaborative community meetings. The implementation was conducted in several **cyclical stages** following the PAR model: (1) **Planning**, including co-designing mentoring objectives and collaboration strategies with teachers and community members; (2) **Action**, where mentoring sessions, classroom observations, and community forums were carried out; (3) **Observation**, involving systematic documentation of teacher performance, student engagement, and community participation; and (4) **Reflection**, where all participants evaluated outcomes and identified areas for improvement before entering the next cycle. Data were collected using **mixed methods**, including **questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation studies**. The primary data sources included teachers' reflective journals, students' progress records, and community feedback forms, while secondary data were obtained from school reports and local education statistics. Quantitative data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics and correlation analysis** (Pearson's r) to explore the relationship between teacher mentoring intensity and indicators of educational quality, such as student participation and academic performance. Qualitative data were analyzed through **thematic analysis**, coding participants' narratives to identify recurring themes related to empowerment, collaboration, and pedagogical growth.

Monitoring and evaluation were integral to the process, conducted periodically every month through collaborative review meetings involving teachers, mentors, and community representatives. These meetings assessed progress toward goals, identified obstacles, and refined subsequent action plans. Final evaluation was performed at the end of the sixth month, combining both qualitative reflections and quantitative assessments to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. The evaluation also included a **correlation test** between mentoring participation scores and teacher performance indicators, validated through triangulation of data sources and peer debriefing to ensure credibility. The expected outcome of this PAR-based service activity was not only the enhancement of teachers' pedagogical competence and reflective practice but also the strengthening of community engagement as co-partners in education. Ultimately, this participatory approach fostered a sustainable model of teacher professional learning and community collaboration that could be replicated in other schools within the Sintang region.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this community service project revealed several significant findings derived from the participatory action research process. The integration of teacher mentoring and community collaboration proved to have a tangible and positive impact on educational

quality at SD Negeri 2 Nanga Jetak. Through continuous mentoring cycles, teachers demonstrated remarkable improvement in pedagogical practices, classroom management, and reflective teaching behavior. Analysis of the post-mentoring observation sheets indicated a notable increase in instructional quality, with teachers shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches. Lesson plans became more creative and contextualized, reflecting better alignment with students' local realities. This shift was reinforced by the mentoring process, where teachers received consistent feedback and constructive evaluation from both mentors and peers, promoting a culture of professional learning and shared accountability.

Quantitative analysis using Pearson's correlation test revealed a significant relationship between the intensity of mentoring participation and teacher performance improvement ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$). Teachers who attended mentoring sessions regularly, engaged in reflective discussions, and implemented suggestions in the classroom demonstrated higher improvement scores on performance rubrics compared to those with irregular participation. Moreover, student learning engagement—measured through observation and attendance data—showed a parallel increase of approximately 18% over the six-month period. This suggests that when teachers' competence and motivation rise, the classroom environment becomes more dynamic and supportive, leading to better student involvement. These statistical findings align with the qualitative reflections gathered during focus group discussions, in which teachers expressed greater confidence, creativity, and satisfaction in their teaching roles.

From the community collaboration perspective, the project strengthened relationships between the school and the surrounding community. Before the intervention, community participation in educational activities was sporadic and mostly limited to ceremonial events. However, after the implementation of the PAR model, the number of community members involved in school programs increased by more than 40%, particularly in mentoring support sessions, resource sharing, and co-organized extracurricular activities. Parents and local leaders began to actively participate in school forums, contributing ideas on curriculum relevance and helping provide local learning resources such as cultural artifacts and traditional stories for contextual learning. The qualitative data highlighted a sense of shared ownership and collective responsibility emerging among community members, who began to view education not as the sole responsibility of the school but as a collaborative enterprise.

The reflection sessions also uncovered valuable insights into the dynamics of partnership and learning. Teachers reported that community collaboration enhanced their understanding of students' socio-cultural backgrounds, allowing them to design more inclusive and relevant learning experiences. In turn, community representatives acknowledged that their involvement in mentoring discussions increased their appreciation for the challenges teachers face, fostering empathy and cooperation. These findings suggest that mutual learning occurred not only between mentors and mentees but also between the school and the community. The participatory nature of the project facilitated a two-way

exchange of knowledge, aligning well with the principles of empowerment and sustainability inherent in the PAR approach.

Analysis of qualitative interviews further revealed that teachers experienced significant professional transformation in three main dimensions: pedagogical skill, reflective capacity, and collaborative mindset. Initially, several teachers expressed hesitation and a lack of confidence in applying innovative teaching methods. By the end of the program, 90% of the participants reported a higher level of self-efficacy, supported by evidence from classroom observations showing improved use of formative assessment and differentiated instruction. Moreover, teachers became more adept at using community knowledge and resources to support classroom learning—for instance, integrating local crafts, folklore, and environmental issues into lesson content. These findings affirm that mentoring, when coupled with community involvement, can foster culturally responsive teaching that strengthens students' identity and learning engagement.

The monitoring and evaluation data revealed that the iterative nature of the PAR cycles played a crucial role in sustaining improvement. Each phase of reflection informed the next cycle of action, creating a sense of continuity and adaptability. The school leadership also showed increased commitment to institutionalizing mentoring and community collaboration as part of their annual development plan. The evaluation results demonstrated an overall 23% improvement in educational quality indicators, encompassing teacher performance, student engagement, and parental involvement. Furthermore, the correlation between mentoring participation and the frequency of community interaction ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$) highlighted that teacher growth was positively associated with collaborative engagement beyond the classroom walls.

Overall, the findings of this community service initiative underscore the effectiveness of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a framework for school improvement. By intertwining teacher mentoring with community collaboration, the program succeeded in creating an ecosystem of continuous learning, reflection, and shared responsibility. Teachers evolved as reflective practitioners; the community transformed into active co-educators; and the school became a center of collaborative learning. These results demonstrate that improving educational quality is not a one-dimensional effort but a multidimensional process that thrives when professional growth and community empowerment converge. The success of this initiative offers a replicable model for other schools in rural or resource-limited areas aiming to enhance educational quality through participatory and sustainable practices.

Figure 1. Teacher engaging warmly a group student

The Figure 1 portrays a male teacher engaging warmly with a group of ten elementary school students in a modest classroom setting. The teacher's attentive posture and the students' focused expressions illustrate an atmosphere of collaborative learning and mentorship. This scene reflects the essence of community-based education initiatives that aim to strengthen teacher-student relationships and improve educational quality in rural areas.

The analysis of the findings from this community service project demonstrates that the integration of **teacher mentoring and community collaboration** through the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model significantly contributes to improving educational quality in primary schools. When compared with prior community engagement and professional development initiatives, the present results provide stronger empirical support for the idea that sustainable educational change requires participatory and context-sensitive interventions. The increase in teacher instructional quality and community involvement at SD Negeri 2 Nanga Jetak aligns with the theoretical foundations of **transformative learning** (Mezirow, 1997) and **social constructivism** (Vygotsky, 1978), both of which emphasize that professional growth and knowledge are constructed through social interaction, dialogue, and reflective practice. These theories affirm that learning is not an isolated cognitive process but a socially mediated act, which resonates with the mentoring and community-based collaboration implemented in this study.

When compared with previous community service projects focusing solely on teacher training or workshops, the outcomes of this PAR-based approach reveal deeper and more sustained impacts. Earlier initiatives often relied on top-down models of teacher development that lacked follow-up and local adaptation (Adeoye, Nwakaego, & Yahaya, 2025). Such models frequently failed to address teachers' real classroom challenges or build ownership among participants, leading to limited behavioral change after training. In contrast, the PAR framework adopted in this project positioned teachers as co-researchers and co-designers of their own professional growth. This participatory approach not only enhanced teacher motivation but also established a collaborative culture of inquiry, as documented in other successful cases of action research–based professional development (Tripon, 2025).

Consequently, the improvement in teaching practices and student engagement observed in this project can be understood as the product of **situated professional learning** learning that occurs in authentic, context-rich environments where reflection and action continuously interact.

The community collaboration component also provides valuable analytical insights when juxtaposed with prior service activities in rural education contexts. Previous studies have highlighted that community participation often remains symbolic, characterized by passive involvement in school events rather than active engagement in decision-making or curriculum development (Mu'ammaroh, Pugu, Nelza, & Al-Amin, 2024). However, the findings from this project demonstrate a qualitative shift from symbolic to substantive participation. Community members became co-facilitators in educational planning and resource sharing, indicating that when communities are treated as knowledge holders and not mere beneficiaries, they develop a sense of collective ownership. This observation supports the framework of **community-based education** proposed by Epstein and Sanders (2006), which stresses that family–school–community partnerships improve student outcomes when collaboration is reciprocal and sustained. The current project validated this principle, showing that the creation of shared spaces for dialogue between teachers and community members effectively bridged the gap between formal education and local cultural knowledge.

The statistical correlation between mentoring intensity and teacher performance improvement (r = 0.76, p < 0.01) also aligns with prior research findings on the efficacy of mentoring systems. Studies such as that of Wang (2025) found that mentoring positively correlates with teachers' self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and instructional quality. However, the present project extends those findings by demonstrating that **contextual mentoring**, enriched by community perspectives, leads to a more holistic transformation of teaching practice. Teachers who interacted regularly with community members during mentoring sessions exhibited greater cultural sensitivity and curriculum relevance outcomes that traditional mentoring models rarely achieve. This suggests that community collaboration enhances the mentoring process by grounding professional reflection in local realities, echoing the **ecological systems theory** (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which posits that educational behavior is influenced by multiple environmental layers, including family and community contexts.

The qualitative data further substantiate this analysis. Teachers' reflective journals revealed that community involvement provided authentic feedback loops that helped refine teaching strategies. This mirrors the findings of Karunaratne et al. (2024), who reported that participatory community partnerships in teacher development projects fostered a sense of shared responsibility and improved teachers' contextual understanding of students' learning challenges. Similarly, the current project showed that community input enriched the mentoring dialogue, turning it into a multidimensional exchange rather than a one-directional transfer of knowledge. The mutual learning observed between teachers and community members supports the **theory of dialogical pedagogy** advanced by Freire (1970), which underscores dialogue as a transformative process that humanizes both educators and learners.

Thus, the positive outcomes recorded in this community service program reflect the theoretical coherence between participatory practice and emancipatory education.

From a comparative standpoint, this project addressed several gaps identified in previous community service studies. Earlier projects often suffered from limited evaluation mechanisms and lack of integration between teacher professional development and community empowerment. For instance, Mu'ammaroh et al. (2024) noted that most collaborations were short-term and did not involve systematic reflection cycles. In contrast, the PAR cycles in this study—consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection—ensured continuous adaptation and responsiveness to participant feedback. This cyclical approach enhanced not only program sustainability but also participants' agency in shaping outcomes. The iterative feedback mechanism aligns with the **experiential learning theory** (Kolb, 1984), which posits that effective learning occurs through a continuous process of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. The iterative cycles allowed both teachers and community members to internalize the value of reflective action, making improvements more enduring and contextually relevant.

Another critical dimension of the analysis concerns the impact of this participatory intervention on educational quality indicators. The 23% overall improvement recorded in teacher performance, student engagement, and community participation parallels findings from Tripon (2025), who observed that integrating mentoring and community partnership leads to more sustained quality improvement than isolated interventions. However, this project adds empirical nuance by demonstrating that quality enhancement emerges not merely from external resources but from the social capital generated within the school–community network. Social capital theory (Coleman, 1988) explains that trust, shared norms, and networks facilitate coordinated actions and collective problem-solving, which were clearly evident in this project's outcomes. The enhanced collaboration among teachers, parents, and local leaders created an enabling environment that fostered collective commitment to learning improvement, further validating this theoretical perspective.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that the Participatory Action Research (PAR)–based mentoring and collaboration model successfully operationalized theoretical principles of social constructivism, dialogical pedagogy, and social capital into practical strategies for educational transformation. The findings resonate with and expand upon previous research, offering an integrated model of school improvement rooted in participation, reflection, and contextual responsiveness. Whereas past community service initiatives tended to isolate teacher training from community engagement, this project demonstrates that genuine and sustained improvement in educational quality emerges when both are interwoven.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this community service project confirm that improving educational quality through teacher mentoring and community collaboration within a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework is both practical and transformative. The researcher's initial

concern that isolated training programs often fail to create sustainable change was effectively addressed through the participatory and cyclical nature of this approach. Teachers not only improved their pedagogical competence but also developed reflective habits and stronger professional identities, while communities evolved into active partners rather than passive supporters. This synergy between professional growth and local participation demonstrated that educational improvement is most sustainable when rooted in shared ownership and mutual learning. Thus, the project succeeded in transforming the researcher's unease about fragmented school development efforts into an evidence-based affirmation that collaborative, context-sensitive mentoring can meaningfully enhance educational outcomes and community empowerment.

However, the project also revealed several limitations that warrant attention in future service programs. Time constraints limited the number of PAR cycles, which may have affected the long-term sustainability and generalization of the outcomes. Additionally, the involvement of only one school restricted the scope of comparison and replication potential. Some teachers required more intensive mentoring support due to varying levels of digital literacy and pedagogical readiness. Therefore, future community service initiatives should extend the implementation period, include multiple schools to allow comparative analysis, and integrate digital mentoring tools to expand access and consistency. Strengthening collaboration with local education authorities and universities is also recommended to institutionalize the mentoring model and ensure continuous professional development beyond the project timeline.

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