

Abstract

Historically, teacher preparation has been challenging, providing adequate opportunities for self-efficacy development. There is a causal correlation between teacher self-efficacy, teacher preparation programs, and closing the achievement gap (Hanushek, 2019). Urban students receive higher academic grades, test scores, and improved attendance when their teachers are efficacious and confident (Yeh, 2019). However, support for self-efficacy development for teacher candidates enrolled in a teacher preparation program is often inadequate (Berg & Smith, 2018; Ma & Cavanagh, 2018). Teacher preparation programs focus on the technical domain and shorten student teaching time, which is limited to one semester (Taneri, 2017; Wiens et al., 2021). Zeichner et al. (2015) posted that these traditional programs need to connect coursework to practical field experiences, undermining the development of self-efficacy. Teachers are likely to perform best when they are confident in their ability to deliver instruction to students. Therefore, there is a need to understand how to improve teacher preparation, specifically in urban schools. The benefit of urban teacher preparation programs is that they provide early and prolonged support under expert urban mentor teachers (Hamilton & Margot, 2019). This presentation explores the role of mentor teachers in supporting urban teacher preparation programs. Urban contexts pose unique challenges for aspiring educators, necessitating tailored teacher training and support approaches. Drawing on a comprehensive review of existing literature, this study examines the multiple responsibilities of mentor teachers within urban settings, including their roles as instructional guides, cultural brokers, and community cooperation. The presentation also showcases mentor teachers' various strategies to effectively support and develop pre-service teachers during field experiences in urban classrooms. Additionally, this research highlights the importance of collaboration between universities, school districts, and community stakeholders in enhancing mentor-teacher support structures. The analysis underscores the significance of ongoing professional development and reflective practices for mentor teachers to navigate the diverse needs of urban learners and foster equitable learning environments. Mentor teachers support self-efficacy development to improve teacher instruction, closing the achievement gap (Burns et al., 2019; Whitford et al., 2018). This qualitative single case study explored expert urban mentor teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy development during field experiences of teacher candidates enrolled in an urban teacher preparation program. I used qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with teacher mentor teachers and triangulated with literature and written reflections collected from the teacher candidates. The data analysis used current research on urban teacher preparation programs to provide context for the problem. Interviews were transcribed, and a thematic analysis was completed and reported. The research question explores the role of mentor teachers in supporting urban teacher preparation programs and describes their perception of the development of teacher candidate self-efficacy. Ultimately, this research offers a deeper understanding of the role a mentor teachers play in nurturing the next generation of educators for urban schools.

Introduction

In the realm of education, the preparation of teachers stands as a cornerstone for fostering academic success and bridging the achievement gap. However, in the past, the journey towards effective teacher preparation has been filled with challenges, particularly in cultivating self-efficacy among teacher candidates. The significance of teacher self-efficacy cannot be understated, as it directly correlates with student outcomes and academic achievement, especially in urban settings. Yet, traditional teacher preparation programs often fall short in providing adequate support for self-efficacy development, perpetuating the cycle of inadequacy. Recognizing this critical gap, this presentation embarks on an exploration of the important role mentor teachers play in supporting urban teacher preparation programs. Urban contexts present unique challenges, necessitating tailored approaches to teacher training and support. Drawing upon an extensive review of existing literature, this study looks into the multiple responsibilities of mentor teachers within urban settings, ranging from instructional guidance to cultural mediation and community collaboration. Through a qualitative single case study, I aim to explain expert urban mentor teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy development during field experiences of teacher candidates enrolled in urban teacher preparation programs. This research methodology involves semi-structured interviews, triangulated with literature and reflective writings from teacher candidates. By analyzing data through the lens of current research on urban teacher preparation, I aim to contextualize the problem and shed light on effective strategies for mentor teacher support. Ultimately, the research seeks to uncover the intricate dynamics of mentor teachers' influence on teacher candidate self-efficacy development and their pivotal role in shaping the future of education in urban schools.

Experimental

In the study, I gathered qualitative data by chatting with teacher mentor teachers in semi-structured interviews. I also dug into literature about urban teacher prep programs and looked over written reflections from teacher candidates. By taking this multi-pronged approach, I got multiple points of view. After collecting all that info, I analyzed the data, transcribing interviews and picking out themes.

Results and Discussion

The research question reflects a study of how mentor teachers describe their perception of the development of teacher candidate self-efficacy. The research question was aligned with Kolb's (2008) experiential learning theory: active experimentation, concrete experience, reflective observation, and abstract conceptualization. The study results aligned with the research question and supported existing literature on urban teacher preparation programs. Four themes emerged from this qualitative case study related to the development of self-efficacy. Experiences in the field were a central theme in the literature and interview responses. Additionally, participants attributed the development of self-efficacy to the relationships with mentor teachers, and the last theme centered on the benefits of reflective practices. Teacher candidates share that self-efficacy is important for effective teaching. Studies have shown growing concern with beginning teachers' self-efficacy on how to deal with and manage the realities of teaching in urban classrooms. Beginning teachers need guidance and support from their mentor teachers for beginning teachers to transform and build their self-efficacy positively and improve in their classrooms. Mentor teachers play a significant role in self-efficacy development.

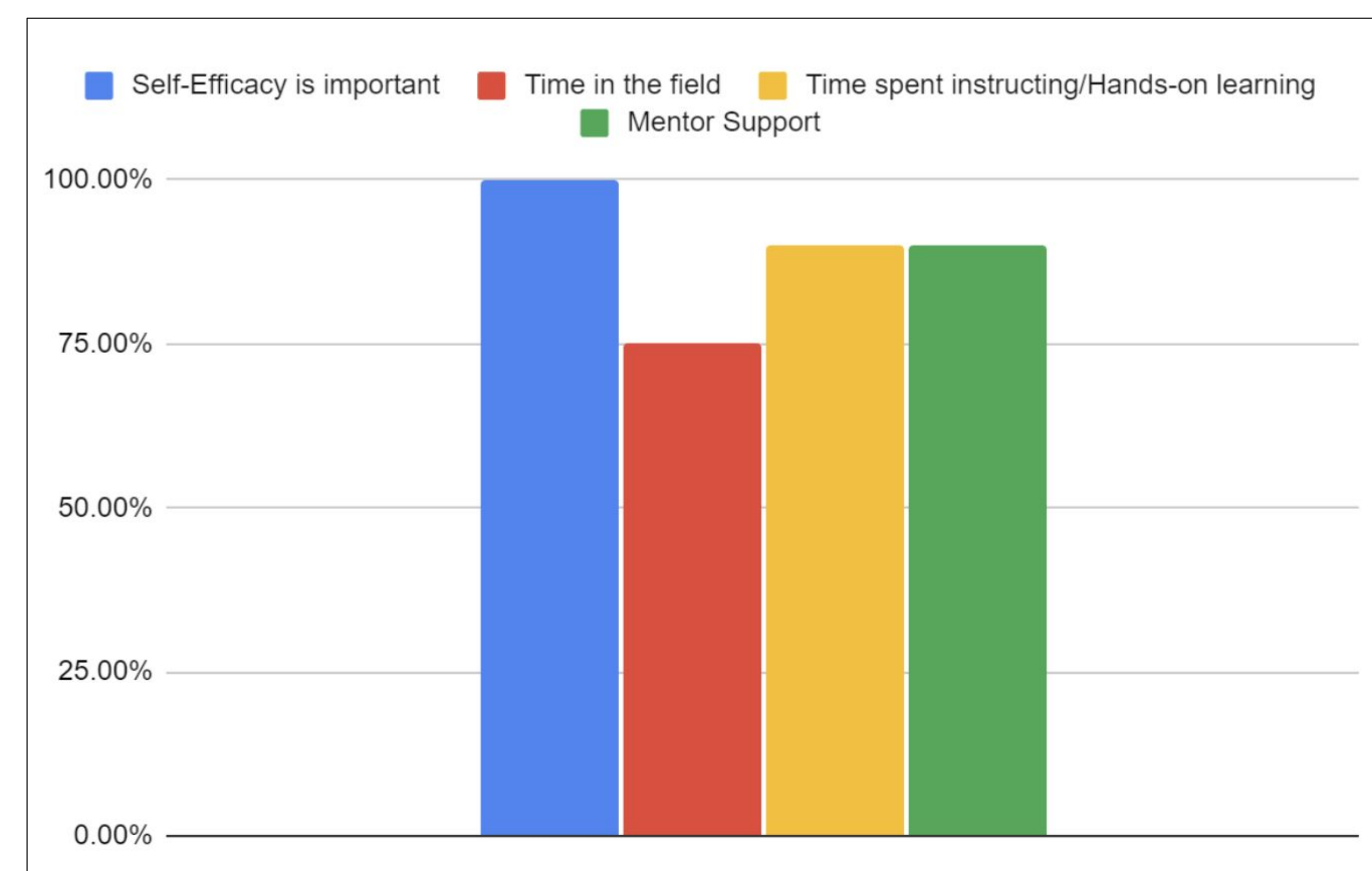


Figure 1. Graph representing the most important key terms mentor teachers used to describe supporting future teachers.

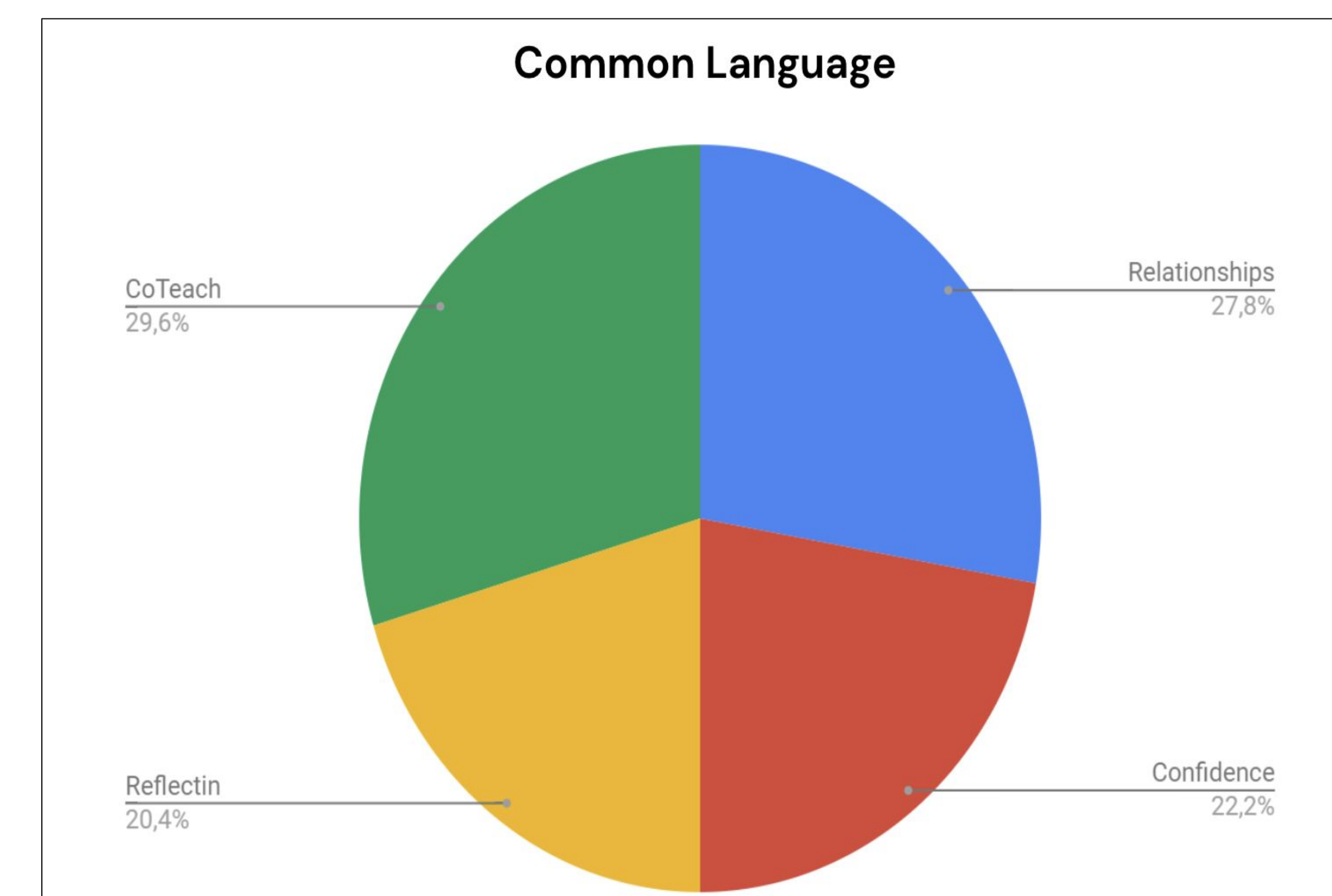


Figure 2. Pie chart showing the common advice/language mentor teachers used to help preservice teachers feel comfortable and have a positive impact in their own classrooms.

Acknowledgements & References

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