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MENTORING: OVERVIEW AND CHALLENGES

Abstract. The present scientific article highlights various views and definitions regarding mentoring programs and a mentor-mentee relationship in the context of international and local. A great amount of studies are dedicated to generalize the theories of mentoring, however, some experiments on mentoring exposed its uniqueness to each person, place, time, and situation. This article briefly investigates different views on mentorship and identifies challenges that come with it.

To sum up, this article will be helpful to raise awareness about this topic and challenge for further investigation.

Keywords: mentor, mentoring, mentorship, mentee-mentor relationship.

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Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеу мақаласында тәлімгерлік бағдарламалары мен ментор - тәлім алушы халықаралық және жергілікті жағдайдағы қатынастарына қатысты әртүрлі көзқарастар мен анықтамалар көрсетілген. Көптеген зерттеулер тәлімгерлік теорияларды жалпылауға бағытталды, бірақ тәлімгерліктің кейбір тәжірибелері оның әр адамға, орынға, уақытқа және жағдайға ғана тән екендігін көрсетті. Бұл мақалада тәлімгерліктің әр түрлі перспективалары егжей-тегжейлі баяндалған және онымен бірге болатын қиындықтар анықталған.

Қорытындылай келе, бұл мақала осы тақырып туралы хабардарлықты арттыруға және әрі қарайғы зерттеулерге түрткі болады.

Түйін сөздер: тәлімгер, ментор, менторлық, тәлімгерлік, тәлімгер-тәлім алушы қарым-қатынасы.

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Аннотация. В данной научной статье освещаются различные взгляды и определения в отношении программ наставничества и отношений наставник-подопечный в международном и местном контексте. Большое количество исследований посвящено обобщению теорий наставничества, однако некоторые эксперименты по наставничеству выявили его уникальность для каждого человека, места, времени и ситуации. В этой статье подробно излагаются различные взгляды на наставничество и выявляются проблемы, которые с этим связаны.

Подводя итог, эта статья будет полезна для повышения осведомленности об этой теме и вызовет дальнейшие исследования.

Ключевые слова: наставник, наставничество, отношения подопечный-наставник.

Introduction

Teaching is a challenging and complex profession, therefore developing mentoring programs for teachers are seen as the primary solution to minimize the risks of teachers, leaving the profession [1]. Despite the fact that numerous research works have been conducted over the years in this field, a great emphasis is given to address the challenges that first year, in-service teachers face [2]. In order to lessen the transition demands of new and experienced teachers is to use of formal induction programs [3].

Among the various possible advantages of a mentoring process can be highlighted two main fields [4]. First, they can be a great assist in dealing with social issues, such as with parents and administrative [5]. Second, providing support in implementing a new curriculum [6]. In order to achieve those goals a mentor specialist works individually with a newer teacher [3;6]. Therefore, the main tool to effectively conducting the mentoring program is a mentor himself. Street et al (1998) defines effective mentors as "possess rich and sophisticated content, curricular, and pedagogical knowledge and also have strong listening and communication skills that can support, motivate, and emotionally engage a mentee".

Even though mentoring programs are officially implemented in Kazakhstani educational organizations, there are no studies that could be located in this context [7].

The purpose of this article is to explore different views considering mentoring in international and Kazakhstani contexts. Also, providing challenges and obstacles related to this subject is the main concern.

I. General overview on mentoring

Various studies have been conducted regarding mentoring programs for teachers. However, the main issue lays on the term itself. The word 'mentor' has various definitions, evolving descriptions and functions over time.

The earliest study on mentoring belongs to Gold (1996) who suggested mentoring as the strategy to overcome transitional challenges in teaching career. Later on, other researchers such as Little (1990), Serpell and Bozeman (1999), and finally Smith and Ingersoll (2004) also come to agreement with the previous suggestion.

More recent studies on mentoring gives precise characteristics of how the mentoring process goes: 'voluntary and mandated mentoring builds the productive capacity of people and organizations, but voluntary mentoring, transpired through informal communication can enhance the development of the whole person' [8].

Also Danielson (2002) highlights that structured support should include not only fixed system, but also emotional assistance [9]. And he concludes that with the support of the instructional skill of a mentor, teachers can receive enough support to stay in the profession. Mentoring in the description of Smith (2007) is seen as a certain type of learning in which a mentor not only supports the mentee, moreover he or she provides a zone to advance [10]. The idea similarly to this has been proposed by Kwan and Lopez (2005) [11]. They depict mentoring as a 'relationship and process'. Mentoring is the 'nurturing process' according to Anderson and Shannon (1988), wherein the experienced and skillful mentor helps the less-experienced one to facilitate the latter's personal and professional development [12]. Some studies describe effective mentors as effective coaches who always practice reflection and analysis on their own teaching, and encourage beginning teachers to do the same [13], while others see them as the emotional supporter, who shows positive attitude towards protege and have strong interpersonal skills [14]. All of these studies represent the mentoring relationship should be in order to facilitate a desirable outcome.

II. Mentoring in Kazakhstani context

Although there are few studies related to the mentoring in Kazakhstan, the general descriptions of the term are suitable for this context. As mentoring enables teachers develop professionally, the urge of establishing mentoring relations among teachers seems to be rational. Moreover, professional development is considered to be the essential skill that directly influences the learning outcome of students [15]. Not every school can afford PD courses for their teachers, therefore, as international studies claim, mentoring is regarded as the one of the less expensive cost for improving teacher knowledge [16]. Thus, mentorship elevates a teacher's professional development without any expenses in the workplace. Another benefit of mentorship can be, as Long (1997) claims, the minimizing number of novice teachers leaving profession, and turning the situation to job satisfaction [17]. Currently, the number of people going to the teaching job is decreasing in Kazakhstan, due to the factors, such as low salary, lack of support from society, and not prestigious [18]. As in Kazakhstan, the research in this field is limited, the data from American and European countries demonstrates that teachers tend to leave their workplace in the first three years [19]. For this reason, mentorship is necessary tool to avoid such consequences. It seems obvious to conduct mentoring service to novice teachers though, the findings show that only 20% of them receive it during their first teaching year [20].

Nevertheless, there is no sufficient studies that show evidence on what extent and how mentorship is implemented, the role of a mentor, and how they are selected in different schools of Kazakhstan [18].

It is declared in Kazakhstan Education Strategy 2011-2020 that the country is in need to develop training and professional development for teachers.

And many experts come to conclusion that in this situation mentoring is the best option [16].

According to Villegas-Reimers (2003), mentoring mostly proceeds between one and three years, as it is specified for beginning or newly hired teachers [21]. In Kazakhstan this trend is maintained, and the induction period lasts up to one year [18]. The decision whether to stay or leave is accepted during the three years [22], one year of mentoring or induction program is not enough.

Another aspect to consider in mentoring is the process of mentor selection. As Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko (2014) suggest, the success of a mentor in assisting a mentee's professional development is directly depends on the fact how and why they are assigned to the mentorship [23] Therefore, it is crucial to identify teachers' reasons and motives of becoming a mentor [24]. Even though the studies [23;25] claim that being involved in mentorship programs requires more time of participants, other studies showed a great interest of teachers to participate in mentoring programs, due to their altruistic intentions to assist younger colleagues, and to develop school community [24;26]. Otherwise, mentoring becomes ineffective, as mentors and mentees are forced to participate by the school administration [16].

The process of mentoring in schools of Kazakhstan can be found in OECD (2014), however other research based evidences about participants' motivation and outcome of this relationship are still in question. Mentors in Kazakhstani schools are selected by the principal from the best of first or highest category. A mentor with a mentee discusses his or her weak or strong sides in order to create a development plan. A mentor is required to provide support, do classroom observations, give feedback, and evaluate his/her mentee's progress. As all of these duties are accomplished in a free basis, the level of willingness to participate in mentoring can be disputable.

The next question that arises regarding mentorship is referred to whether all experienced teachers can be mentors. The reply from Rajuan et al., (2011) states that it is impossible for all experienced teachers to have leadership and supervision skills to guide newcomers through their difficult year [27]. At the same time, in most cases, the role of a mentor is assigned or taken by a more experienced teacher rather than who has qualifications from participating special courses. Trubowitz (2004) and Ambrosetti (2014) are among the proponents of the view that mentors are more likely succeed in their work with their mentees, as they have undergone some special courses, and therefore they see their role not just mechanical and simple [16;28].

III. Challenges in mentoring

There is no doubt that mentoring is seen as the most effective and low cost way of dealing with the teacher retention, and it is also advantageous in developing professional skills of teachers. Even though a great amount of research works have been done in this field, every mentoring case is unique, as it is dependent on the situation, people involved, and other factors [14].

Therefore, it might be difficult for researchers to propose generalizations and theories regarding mentoring relationship.

Mentor's role is essential in order to sustain effective mentoring. Thus, this idealization of mentor prototype leads to the frustrations from mentor's side. A mentor has to improve not only professional side of a mentee, but also care about emotional wellbeing of the latter. Bullough & Draper (2004) supported this view reporting that mentors faced with high expectations on them accomplishing different roles in order to achieve the 'proper' mentor image. And the problem is the mentors mostly unable to achieve those standards , and they hide all their vulnerabilities under the mask of strict professionalism [29].

Another challenge for the mentor can be related to the balancing of support and challenge functions [30]. Some gives high support and a low challenge, while others low support and a high challenge to their mentees. Both situations are unlikely to be successful in developing mentees' progress. Therefore, the best option seems to be high support and high challenge. The next controversy in functions of a mentor occurs when giving assessment to the mentee. Gay & Stephenson (1998) described mentors as 'judge, jury, and sometimes executioner rolled into one' [31]. Thus they give a vivid picture of tensions between supporting the role of a mentor and assessing one. Other studies also acknowledged such controversy regarding the assessment aspect of mentors [32].

As mentoring is an interpersonal relationship, there is a great amount of feelings put into the deal. Therefore, it is hard not to mention the role of feeling when considering mentoring challenges. Some studies reveal that mentees suffer from abusive relations of their mentors [33]. Also, Maynard (2001) suggests that authoritative trait of a mentor leads to the diligent obedience of a mentee, seeking approval of him [34]. As the consequence, the mentee acquire and use new methods and approaches without fully understanding them.

Methodology

Research questions

This study is designed to identify the role of mentoring programme in assisting secondary science teachers in applying English language in their subjects. There are two research questions:

1. What is the role of a mentoring programme in implementing CLIL elements in teaching science subjects in secondary schools?
2. What are the effective mentoring tools to support science teachers in secondary schools?

Data collection is preceded through implementing the tools of qualitative research design.

The research can be proceeded in two stages; theoretical and practical. In the first stage, different data and materials are collected to give definitions to the term 'mentoring' and identify methods that can be used in implementing

mentoring. The next step is a field work, where the relationship of a mentor-mentee is observed, different semi-structured interviews are taken, and questionnaires are collected to define whether the mentoring program succeeded or not. The study area is five secondary schools of Kyzylorda city, Kazakhstan. From those schools are selected thirty science teachers who are accomplishing the mentoring program, and their mentors together are asked to cooperate in this study.

Ethical considerations

Before conducting the research, participants were informed about the aim and process of the study. Also, letters of permission were provided. The participants filled informed consent forms. The main concern is to provide valid, objective conclusions from this study, therefore, voluntary participation and anonymity of respondents are considered.

Interview Protocol Matrix for Study on Implementing mentorship services to support the Science teachers in trilingual secondary schools (First Interview of Three)

Script prior to interview:
Before starting our online interview, I'd like to thank you again for agreeing to participate in my research study. As you know from the consent form, the study explores the role of a mentor and mentoring programme in teaching English by science teachers. Also, with this study I want to establish certain tools and methods that are essential and effective in conducting mentoring programmes. Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify better ways of conducting mentoring programmes, and provide a basis for it. Our interview today will last about half an hour during which I will be asking you about your teaching job, difficulties you have, and your thoughts about a mentor and mentorship.
[review aspects of consent form]
I've sent you a consent form asking your permission to record audio and video records of our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___Yes ___No
If yes: *Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.*
If no: *Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.*
Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]
If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

	Research Question 1: What is the role of a mentor in the professional development of secondary school science teachers?	*Research Question 2:* What are the tools of mentoring to successfully guide teachers in trilingual classes?
1. What are the challenges/difficulties you face when you teach in English your subject?	x	
2. What do you do to overcome such challenges/difficulties?	x	
3. What did you learn from your mentor that helped your teaching practice?	x	x
4. Did the mentoring experience help you overcome some of the challenges/difficulties you previously mentioned? Provide support to your answer.	x	x
5. What do you wish you learned from your mentor that you hadn't?	x	x

6. How would it have been different if you hadn't had the mentoring experience?	x	
7. How many times did you meet with your mentor?	x	x
8. What tools or methods did your mentor use to help you in your lessons?	x	x
9. As a summary, reflect on the mentoring experience.	x	x

The interview questions were sent by email to the participants. Only three participants replied due the time. According to their replies, the answers can be classified into three categories: difficulties and challenges met by a bilingual teacher; characteristics of an effective mentor; lessons from a mentoring experience.

Challenges and difficulties of a trilingual teacher

The first interviewee described her challenges in this way: '*as I didn't study English at school, so I couldn't quickly learn it in a year. And I had a great fear of speaking in front of students*'. The next interviewee also had the same struggles, as they have the same background. So, the first difficulty was the level of English they had. And the consequences of having poor English were the fear and nervousness in front of the class. The next challenge was to implement CLIL elements in the science lessons in order to make students understand the subject in English and learn it too. The interviewee 2 said that 'I *had difficulties with understanding CLIL concepts, because I couldn't imagine how I am going to explain my subject and also teach English to students. That was some kind of unbelievable thing for me*'. So, the second difficulty that teachers often face is applying new methodology into their lessons.

Characteristics of an effective mentor

All three respondents described their mentors in a positive way. They all believed that it was a mentor's contribution on tackling issues which they mentioned before. An effective mentor can be defined in two aspects: personal traits and professional competence. A mentor's nonjudgmental comments and feedback, understanding a teacher's condition, and being friendly are mostly mentioned traits by interviewees. Interviewee 3 noted: '*I felt comfortable with*

my mentor, because she always listened to me and gave feedback in a friendly way.'

About mentor's professional qualities the interviewee 2 stated: '*my mentor helped me a lot when I needed to construct lesson plans. Also, she always checked my pronunciation in pre-lesson discussion sessions.* ' In addition, the interviewee 1 mentioned that sessions with her mentor gave her a great assistance in dealing with her low self-esteem and boost her language level.

Lessons from a mentoring experience

When the question was asked about life without experiencing mentoring all three teachers concluded that they couldn't overcome those struggles by themselves.

Mentoring programme wasn't about academic success of teachers and students, but also bringing a positive attitude to education. Our mentor organized different activities, like reading competition, cinema time and so on. In this way I learned that teaching is not only explaining the content, but also interacting with students out of content. I started to love my profession. (Interviewee 1).

Through this programme, I learned the importance of using technology at class. And I also started to use them actively. I always thought that at my age it is difficult to learn new technologies. However, with the insistence of my mentor, I gradually learned to use them. I think this is a big achievement for me. (Interviewee 2).

I used to have a lot of teacher talking time, as I believed that I needed to explain everything during the given time. However, my mentor explained the importance of having less TTT and practicing more STT. After accepting this theory, I began to see differences in my lessons. The lessons became more lively and most importantly, students were engaged! (Interviewee 3).

Conclusion

The importance of mentoring in the education world is apparent. Mentoring can be seen as the one of the best solutions for the teacher retention and decreasing the number of teachers leaving their job in their initial years. Moreover, mentoring can be a great assistance to develop teachers professionally, and maintain a positive attitude to the workplace, despite its complex and challenging demands.

Through the conducted study can also be seen the great role of mentoring in supporting science teachers in secondary schools. The responses of the teachers were positive in most cases. As mentoring program can be implemented in myriad cases, it can be an optimal solution for the challenges that teachers are facing. Despite its effectiveness on the teacher development, there are still questions on implementing mentoring in schools. Therefore, organizing a proper mentoring program requires to investigate further on this subject.

This paper is an attempt to exposure some issues related to the mentoring, regarding both international and Kazakhstani views, as the current education state, especially our country, is in need to implement mentoring more effectively and properly.

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