The Significance of Mentoring Programs in English Language Teaching

Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao (csrv8@yahoo.co.in)
Professor of English, Sagar Group of Institutions, Hyderabad, India

Abstract

A number of studies reveal that nearly fifty percent of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into teaching as they are rarely sufficient to provide all the knowledge and skill necessary to successful teaching. Professionalism in teaching needs application of appropriate standards connected to different competencies of teaching. An important aspect of preparing students of class-teaching to become successful teachers of English is teaching practice or mentoring programs organized. Studies have found that mentoring relationships can have a positive impact on mentees' early teaching experiences. Mentoring is a complex, interactive process, occurring between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise. Mentoring is the process of serving as a mentor, someone who facilitates and assists another's development. Mentoring programs can help the mentees deal with the cultural differences, logistical issues, unfamiliar structural and organizational arrangements, different understanding of assessment, communication gaps and problems with teacher and student relations.

Keywords: Mentor, Mentee, Mentoring Programs, Teacher Education Programs

Introduction

In the present globalised context teachers seem to be key factors in implementation of reforms intended to provide high-quality education, for which teachers have to play a major role to develop throughout their careers improving already acquired competencies and to get trained and practiced new methods and techniques. In addition, professionalism in teaching needs application of appropriate standards connected to different competencies of teaching. As English was widely used for international communication, the teaching and learning of English language is the significant need. An important aspect of preparing students of class-teaching to become successful teachers of English is teaching practice or mentoring programs organized.

According to Garrido and Alvarez (2006:170), "it is very clear that the role of the language teacher has expanded very much beyond its traditional boundaries and therefore the nature of teachers' responsibilities has also changed. Teacher education programs need to take into account teachers' extended roles and responsibilities not only as educators but also as learners."

In education policy and reform novice teachers are a major topic in recent times. A number of studies reveal that nearly fifty percent of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into teaching as they are rarely sufficient to provide all the knowledge and skill necessary to

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The Significance of Mentoring Programs in English Language Teaching
Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao

successful teaching. However, it is the responsibility of the managements of educational institutions or policy makers to make them retain by providing a harmonious environment where the beginners of teaching profession can learn how to teach, survive, and succeed as teachers.

According to Delaney, Y. A. (2012), Studies have found that mentoring relationships can have a positive impact on mentees' early teaching experiences. For example, in their study of student teachers in England, Malderez, Hobson, Tracey, and Kerr (2007) collected data via questionnaires and face-to-face interviews showing that most student teachers praised their mentors for boosting their confidence, providing support for classroom management, and offering guidance on time and workload management.

Global economic integration, the linguistic and cultural diversity characteristic of today's societies, new communication technologies and new media have changed our perceptions of the nature of knowledge and the kinds of literacies needed for the workplace and for the satisfaction of everyday communication needs (Johnson and Kress 2003).

Mentoring in the workplace is a popular way for any institute to integrate new employees into the organization as seamlessly as possible. Mentoring has been the focus of much attention in the recent literature on initial teacher education and induction and as such has become a 'foundation stone' of collaborative endeavors between universities in the facilitation of teacher development. During the last two decades formal mentoring programs in higher education have been introduced to support new staff and now the focus has extended to developing research (Hylan & Postlethwaite, 1998).

Teaching English Language or EFL is no exception among subject areas. Language mentoring programs have published for the last 10 years describing the mentoring programs and practices for pre-service and in-service teachers. The present paper focuses on mentoring programs to be designed to develop students' subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge, their critical faculties, their reflexitivity skills, reflecting on mainstream teaching practices and understanding social needs for language learning in the present scenario. They also provide students with the discourse and vocabulary to analyze and discuss their personal teaching theories, and provide a rationale for their teaching.

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The Significance of Mentoring Programs in English Language Teaching
Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao

Literature Review

What Is Mentoring?

> *Mentoring is not a new concept. Mentor was a character in Homer's Odyssey. Before Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, went off to war, he hired Mentor and charged him with the responsibility of educating and guiding his son, Telemachus, during his absence from Ithaca. Mentor is a trusted servant and a member of the court; his authority is derived from his wisdom, and not his rank. Mentor serves as Telemachus's teacher, role model, counsellor, facilitator, supportive protector and guide, (from Homer's Odyssey).*

According to Carmin (1998 cited in O'Brien and Christie 2005:191), "Mentoring is a complex, interactive process, occurring between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise which incorporates interpersonal or psychological development, career and/or educational development, and socialization."

There are a number of ways to define mentoring. According to Roberts' (2000) review and a phenomenological perspective, a sample of mentoring research and debate covering a time period 1978-1999 across several disciplines. He identified some essential attributes that characterized mentoring: "a supportive relationship; a helping process; a teaching-learning process; a reflective process; a career development process; a formalized process; and a role constructed by or for a mentor" (p. 145). Roberts claims, "Mentoring is a complex, social and psychological activity" (p. 162).

Educative mentoring has been highlighted as a "new mentoring stance" by Langdon and Ward (2015, p. 241), implying a deeply ingrained set of principles and practices for mentoring that are embedded in wider educational purposes. A "new mentoring stance" suggests that mentors and new teachers engage in collaborative talk and action with the potential to deepen understanding about how pupils learn and in turn develop "alternative practices" (Langdon and Ward, 2015).

A *mentor,* who is an expert to help a mentee develop the career, establishes the career-related function as a coach and provides advice to enhance the mentee's professional performance and development. The word mentor refers to any caring person who develops an on-going, one-on-one relationship with someone in need. A mentor encourages, listens, gives advice, advocates, and acts as a role model, shares information and experience (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, (2004).

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The Significance of Mentoring Programs in English Language Teaching
Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao

A broad survey of the literature (Malderez& Bodóczky: 1999; Randall & Thornton: 2001; Wajnryb: 1995) suggests that a mentor is somebody who:

- helps young people achieve their potential;
- encourages positive choices and promotes high self-esteem;
- is caring and devotes time to a younger person;
- develops in mentees self-awareness and interpersonal skills;
- inspires and shows the mentee the ropes;
- acts as a sounding board;
- is there for you when the mentee is going through a bad patch.

It is problematic to define mentoring as the concept and practices of mentoring connected with a number of activities. While there is no agreed definition, mentoring can be described as an interpersonal relationship. This can take the form of a more senior or experienced person helping a junior or less experienced person (Clutterbuck, 1992) or in a more extended concept where the mentor, of equal or similar standing, goes beyond guidance and sponsorship and works with the mentee to provide support to build self confidence and competencies to improve working relationships. It is this latter concept that seems to sum up the core insights of the most recent analysis of mentoring and which has been the impetus for much of the current interest (Gibb, 1994).

Mentoring is widely recognised as an important adjunct to teaching, because it influences and fosters the intellectual development of learners. For pre-service teachers' and newly qualified teachers' (NQTs) development within the school is crucial. The teacher mentor has an impact on the mentee's practices (Hobson et al., 2009), particularly through discussing practices, modeling teaching and providing feedback (Clarke et al., 2013).

However, there required a strong relationship between the mentor and the mentee, based on personal and professional engagement (Bjerkholt, 2013; Richter et al., 2011). Mentoring assists teachers in their professional growth since it provides mentees with practical support that helps them gain self-confidence, solve problems, and apply critical thinking skills to situations affecting student learning (Wang and Odell, 2007).

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The Significance of Mentoring Programs in English Language Teaching
Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao

Mentoring is the process of serving as a mentor, someone who facilitates and assists another's development. The process includes modeling because the mentor must be able to model the messages and suggestions being taught to the beginning teacher (Gay, 1995). Also, as indicated, the mentor must be able to serve as a model of the teacher's role in education. The mentoring process includes coaching as an instructional technique used in endeavors such as sports or apprenticeship at the work place.

The Aims and Objectives of Mentoring Programs

In the language mentoring programs mentors have to teach their mentees the roles they play throughout their teaching profession, keeping them in mind that language teachers are called to carry out a variety of diverse educational, psychosocial, technical and ethical roles (Garrido and Alvarez 2006). The following are the roles the language teachers have to play:

- *Educational Roles-* provider of language models, developer of materials, assessor and evaluator of student learning and communicator
- *Psychosocial Roles-* motivator, coach, guide, counselor, advisor and supporter of student work
- *Technical /Managerial Roles-* resource manager, monitor, consultant and coordinator
- *Ethical Roles-* facilitator, foster, counselor and cultural mediators

Therefore, The Aims and Objectives of Mentoring Programs should be prepared and designed considering the needs of novice or pre-service teachers. Changes in the nature of pre-service teacher education programmes have been accompanied by a reformulation of their aims. So, Mentoring Programs or teacher education programs should focus on future teachers' awareness of the range of instructional theories and options available, and to develop their ability to critically appraise the effectiveness and appropriacy of various methods, models and theories to their teaching context and their learners' profile, and within this process become aware of their own preconceptions and beliefs and how these influence their instructional practices. In other words, the aim of teacher education is not to indoctrinate teachers to operate in a particular manner (Kincheloe 2004), but

- to develop teachers' capacities and tools for a critical understanding of language, culture and appropriate methodologies.

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The Significance of Mentoring Programs in English Language Teaching
Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao

- to develop teachers' ability to reflect upon their beliefs and practices and construct and reconstruct their personal theories of language and teaching.

- to develop positive attitudes of lifelong learning and professional self-development.

- to help deconstruct the myth of the native speaker and offer opportunities for teachers to recognize and value themselves as intercultural speakers.

- to raise teachers' awareness of diversity and focus on helping teachers construct attitudes, knowledge and skills which will be effective when working with diverse student populations

    (Crandall 2000, Dooly and Villanueva 2006, Garrido and Alvarez 2006, Newby 2003,

    Snow et   al 2006.)

Significance of Mentoring Programs

In Mentoring programs mentees are professionally benefited. Mentoring programs enhance professional learning, and the adjustment of new faculty into their professions (Kalbfleisch and Bach, 1998), and mentoring programs can aid in enhancing a friendly environment that encourages collegiality (Boyle and Boice, 1998).

Mentoring is the concept of continuing support to the new comers or beginners of a profession after qualification for a period. It is a well established concept being conducted in many professions, like teaching by many organizations. Mentoring programs can help and support:

- specifically identified groups
- development and workbased learning programs
- individuals or organisations through change or transition
- improved effectiveness of organisations and individuals

According to Jones & Jowett, (1997), for a variety of reasons, facilitated mentoring schemes may be introduced and the following are some of them:

- to identify potential more effectively
- to induct new staff more quickly
- to improve the retention of staff
- to encourage and support high flyers
- to encourage and support ethnic minority and disadvantaged groups
- to encourage and support women to break through the glass ceiling

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- to support self development and work based learning programs, continuous professional development, graduate or company training programs

- to encourage and support mentoring in community initiatives such as mentoring capable but disadvantaged school students

- to support organizational change

- to encourage personal development

- to help individuals cope with transitions such as moving into a new job or role.

According to Fairbanks, Freedman, and Kahn (2000), the benefits of a mentoring program for English teachers among several Texas school districts entitled "Effective Mentoring in English Education." In this program, student teachers attended monthly workshops, observed each other and kept dialogue journals, maintaining mentoring relationship in pairs with cooperation.

A cyclical model was proposed by Pitton (2006) based on data gathering and peer dialogue to promote decision-making skills, reflection on choices adopted, and the monitoring and adjustment of practices. The stages of the cyclical model are:

- posing a question or concern

- setting goals for both the mentor and mentee

- gathering data via class observation and feedback

- analyzing the data

- researching and implementing modifications

- assessing the effectiveness of changes introduced in the classroom

- observing again and receiving feedback

- generating new questions and concerns

According to White and Mason (2003), mentoring helps mentees improve their skills of observation, communication and gives them time to form new techniques into their own teaching practice, which consequently elevates their professional development. In mentoring programs a variety of strategies, resources, and practices used to promote and develop the mentees' ability to reflect. It is claimed that effective language teachers are reflective practitioners who assess and appropriately modify their performance to avoid falling into unanalyzed routines (as cited in Delaney, 2012, Farrell, 2007; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Schön, 1983, 1987; Sowden, 2007; Wallace, 1991).

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The Significance of Mentoring Programs in English Language Teaching
Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao

Mentoring programs can help the mentees or novice teachers in finding solutions to the challenges which they face particularly in the EFL classes, and they are also helpful to deal with the cultural differences, logistical issues, unfamiliar structural and organizational arrangements, different understanding of assessment, communication gaps and problems with teacher and student relations. In addition, mentoring helps the mentees improve their teaching, which resulted in an increased feeling of security.

Conclusion

As English was widely used for international communication, the teaching and learning of English language is the significant need. The managements of educational institutions or policy makers have to make new teachers retain by providing mentoring programs with a harmonious environment to learn how to teach, survive, and succeed as teachers. Mentoring is a complex, interactive process, occurring between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise which incorporates interpersonal or psychological development.

Mentoring programs can help the mentees or novice teachers in finding solutions to the challenges which they face particularly in the language classes. Therefore, mentoring is always helpful for the mentees to deal with the cultural differences, logistical issues, communication gaps and problems with teacher and student relations.

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