

## İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN MESLEKİ GELİŞİM FAALİYETİ OLARAK MENTÖRLÜK: BİR ÜNİVERSİTE HAZIRLIK PROGRAMI ÖRNEĞİ

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### Özet

*Mentörlük uygulaması öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimi için yaygın olarak kullanılan daha deneyimli ve bilgili bir kişinin daha az tecrübeli ve bilgili meslektaşına mesleki anlamda gelişimine yardımcı olmak amacıyla destek sağlaması sürecidir. Bu çalışma kapsamında Gaziantep Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunda görevli 50 İngilizce öğretmeni 4-5 kişilik gruplar halinde bir mentör eşliğinde belirli gündemlerle grup toplantıları yapmıştır. Veri toplamak amacıyla oluşturulan anket uygulaması yapılmış ve elde edilen bulgulara göre odak grup belirlenerek 5 öğretmen ile bire-bir görüşme yapılmıştır. Anket uygulaması ve elde edilen sonuçlara göre yapılan görüşme kayıtları ile hem nicel hem de nitel veri toplanmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre, mentörlük uygulaması İngilizce öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişimine olumlu katkı sağladığı belirlenmiştir. Bu bağlamda öğretmenlerin mentörlük ile ilgili paylaşımları sonucunda uygulamanın mesleki gelişim ve kişisel gelişim olarak iki kategoride etkinliği belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, uygulanan bu programın faydalarının sadece mentörlük alan kişi ile sınırlı olmadığı aynı zamanda mentörün ve kurumun da gelişimine katkıda bulunduğu belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak geliştirilen bu mentörlük uygulamasının olumlu sonuçları ortaya çıkartılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dil Öğretimi, Mesleki Gelişim, Mentörlük.

## MENTORING AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY FOR EFL TEACHERS: A CASE OF A TERTIARY LEVEL ENGLISH PREPARATORY PROGRAM

### Abstract

*Mentorship has been described as a process during which a more experienced and knowledgeable person provides support, encourages learning and reflection with another less experienced and knowledgeable person in order to help that person's professional development. In this study, we designed a mentorship programme in which 50 EFL instructors at Gaziantep University School of Foreign Languages participated on voluntary basis. 10 participants were selected as mentors and the rest were mentees. Data collected through a custom questionnaire, and interviews with 5 participants. The results suggested a positive impact of the program on not only the mentees, but also the mentors and the institution. The programme was found to be efficient in terms of providing support and role modelling as*

*well as finding solutions to their immediate problems. Therefore, it is assumed that such programs could be of high benefit for preparation schools at tertiary level where continuous development and supervision is required.*

**Key Words:** *Language Teaching, Professional Development, Mentorship.*

### **Introduction**

The significance of mentoring for teacher education has been a popular topic within education studies, but only recently has attention shifted to examine the reverse—i.e. the impact of teacher education on the mentoring process itself (Ganser, 2002; Lindgren, 2005; Kajs, 2002; Crisp and Cruz, 2009; He, 2010; Leshem, 2012). When mentoring programs first appeared in the U.S. during the early 1980s, their aim was to support novice teachers with various intents. Some of these programs aimed to reduce teachers' attrition, some attempted to assimilate novice teachers into the teaching profession and some required that mentors assist novice teachers in learning to teach (Wong, A., and Premkumar, K., 2007).

Various definitions of mentoring emerge from existing literature, while the concept itself derives from Greek mythology, particularly in Homer's *Odyssey* as Odysseus' friend guides him in preparing for war. During this process, the mentor assists Odysseus in a responsible and reasonable way (Miller, 2002 in Crisp and Cruz, 2009: p.527). Reed et. al (2002) define mentoring as a process of guiding an individual personally and professionally. Blackwell (1989) similarly emphasizes the one-direction flow of benefit from mentor to mentee, defining mentoring as "a process by which persons of a superior rank, special achievements and prestige instruct, counsel, guide and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons as identified protégés" (p.9). Likewise, Roberts (2000) defines mentoring as "a process during which a more experienced and knowledgeable person provides support, encourages learning and reflection with another less experienced and knowledgeable person in order to help that person's professional development" (p.162). Proffering a definition of mentoring as a more mutually beneficial process, He (2010) and Schwille (2008) assert that mentoring entails collaboration between mentors and mentees in order to manage the difficulties of classroom environments (in Russell and Russell, 2011). Halai (2006) approached the concept from a different perspective and stressed mutual trust between mentors and mentees which enables the development and professional growth of both sides (in Russell and Russell, 2011: p.4). Similarly, Reed et. al (2002) noted the mentor's satisfaction in witnessing the development of the mentee. Regarding the nature of mentoring processes, some claim that it is structured by the curriculum, culture and teaching organization of the institution in which it is applied (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002 in Leshem, 2012). Pertaining the advantages of mentoring, studies reveal that these extend well beyond mentors and mentees themselves, benefitting also institutions and educational systems. Moor et.al (2005) suggest that the collaborative emphasis of the mentoring even may

contribute to the professional development of the institution itself. Therefore, it can be said that mentors are expected to fulfil the professional developmental needs of the mentees as well as of the institutions (Randall & Thornton, 2001; Devos, 2010).

Despite long-standing studies of mentoring, teacher education research lacks a widely accepted definition of the process (Miller, 2002; Zimmerman and Danette, 2007). Pertaining the roles of mentors in mentoring relationships, there have been various categorisations. According to Ganser (2001), mentors guide mentees. And they act as advisers, trainers and partners. Some think mentor support to be psychological and emotional (Bruce, 1995; Haring, 1999). Moreover, it is claimed that the mentor roles in educational settings conform to three main categories: personal support, role modelling and professional development (Jacobi, 1991). In another study by Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992), mentoring similarly has been classified into three categories. The first category is that of “local guides” who are expected to help novice teachers assimilate into school environments by assisting them in solving their immediate problems and informing them about methods of teaching, materials, and teaching practices. The second category describes mentors as “educational companions” who work alongside novice teachers in classroom practices. The third category involves mentors as “agents of change” whose duty is to discourage “traditional isolation” and provoke “shared inquiry” and collaboration (p.492). Philip and Hendry (2000) divided mentoring relationships into five categories, the first being classic mentoring, or the relationship between an experienced adult and a young one. The second category is that of an individual team, in which a group of young people observe an individual or a few for advice. The third one is friend-to friend which aims to provide safety. The fourth category is peer group, which consists of a group of friends who explore an issue together. The fifth category involves long-term relationships with “risk-taking” adults (In Crisp and Cruz, 2009; p.529). Luna and Cullen (1995) have also stated that mentoring relationships can be categorized as formal and informal. Formal mentoring relationships are structured by an institution, with mentors and mentees having been paired by a third party. In contrast, informal mentoring relationships are not structured. They develop naturally and have long-term goals.

In addition to the definitions of mentor roles, there are several commonalities related to the qualities of an effective mentor. For instance, Knox and McGovern (1988) mention six features a mentor should have: “willingness to share knowledge, competency, willingness to facilitate growth, honesty, willingness to give critical, positive and constructive feedback and ability to deal directly with the protégé” (in Russell and Russell, 2011; p.4). Experience is stated to be one of the characteristics of an effective mentor since mentoring teachers are required to explain their own teaching practices by reflecting on theoretical issues related to teaching (Garrigan and Pearce, 1996; Roehrig et. al. 2007). Expertise and

competence are also stated to be among the qualities of a good mentor (Wang and Odell, 2002). Characteristics such as support and reliability are also attributed to an effective mentor. In brief, an effective mentor should work collaboratively, be experienced, be honest, possess a spirit of sharing, and be an expert in his/her field.

In addition to definitions of mentor roles and effective qualities, it is important to address studies on mentoring with in-service teachers. One of these studies was conducted by Aslan and Öcal (2012), who investigated mentors' views of the mentoring process within a teacher development program. The results indicated that mentoring is beneficial for teacher development and it supports both mentors and mentees. Moreover, it was suggested that mentoring programs should emphasize interaction between mentors and mentees and further claimed that the content of observation during mentoring should include institutional units and their systems (ibid.).

Age similarity and teaching experience as well as knowledgeability, trustworthiness, and support are among the features of an effective mentor. Mentees should be given opportunities to share experiences, ask questions and reflect on their own decision-making processes. Moreover, effective mentorship should not be limited to pre-post observations but rather should be ongoing (Brown, 2001)

Similar to the above study, Russell and Russell (2011) conducted qualitative research involving the perspectives of mentor-teachers on mentoring student-teachers as well as factors affecting the mentoring process. The research focused on three factors in the mentoring process: the role of the mentor, expectations for mentoring relationships, and the mentor teachers' motivation while serving as a mentor. The findings suggest that in order to develop effective mentoring programs, participating schools should work with teacher education programs. The development of mentoring teachers is also emphasized and mentoring workshops are suggested to contribute to their professional growth. It is also pointed out that mentor teachers are aware of the importance of their roles in the development of intern students.

Kissau and King (2015) used a mixed-method design by pairing second-language teachers who were pursuing a Master of Arts degree in second-language teaching. The research explored the perceived benefits of peer mentoring partnership. The findings affirmed that mentees benefited from the process and the mentors' support positively influenced their performance; moreover, a strong and permanent relationship was revealed to exist between mentors and mentees. Results also indicated that establishing a communicative and constructive environment may contribute to the professional development of people.

The benefits of mentoring have also been the focus of many studies (Hobson, 2009; Johnson, Berg and Donaldson, 2005; Lindgren, 2005; McIntyre, Hobson and Mitchell, 2009). Lindgren (2005) advocates that mentoring and

mentoring relationships lead mentees to a heightened self-awareness and claims that since mentoring is an active and ongoing process, it is “a powerful method for learning and improving human dynamics” (p.253). Moreover, because the process contributes to the improvement of mentees, mentor-teachers can improve their classroom management and problem-solving abilities as well as enhance their self-confidence and self-reflection. Mentoring may also have promising benefits for mentors. With the help of mentoring programs that provide opportunities for continuous learning, mentors also get the chance to develop themselves (Ganser, 2002; Kajs, 2002). However, the above-mentioned advantages rely on mutual support, trust, honesty and collaboration.

#### ***Formal & Informal Classification***

Recent literature on mentoring suggests its valuable contribution to classroom practice. Mentees can share their immediate classroom practice issues with mentors in order to derive instant solutions. Another advantage of mentor-mentee relationships is that they provide opportunities for mentors to develop themselves and to raise awareness about classroom instruction. This relationship may be concluded in shared experience and knowledge besides personal and professional development. The role of mutual trust and honesty should be emphasized here. In the light of this, this case study attempts to articulate the role of mentor-mentee relationships for teachers' immediate needs as well as the problems they face during classroom instruction. As mentioned previously, in formal mentoring relationships, mentors might be chosen by authority and they are generally more experienced than mentees. On the other hand, in informal mentoring relationships, mentees often choose whom they believe will be a good mentor. In both forms of mentoring, a more experienced individual guides a less experienced one. This study suggests an alternative mentoring model by blending formal and informal mentoring models. In our model, the mentor acts as a guide, organizing a meeting during which mentees share knowledge and experience. The mentor chairs the meeting to ensure participation from each mentor. Moreover, the meetings in our model are not one-on-one; mentees and mentor meet at the same time. This study investigates the outcomes and functionality of this alternative mentoring model.

#### **Method**

This study investigated EFL instructors' attitudes towards and gains from an in-house professional development (PD) programme developed by the host institution. A PD programme was developed and EFL instructors participated in the program. The mentoring relationship included in this study differs from classical one-on-one mentoring. In our model, mentoring is regarded as a process of conversation and discussion among colleagues. Mentees shared their experiences and knowledges in informal meetings of mentoring groups, and they did not feel uncomfortable while sharing their ideas. The focus of the meetings was not theoretical knowledge but classroom practice. Mentors and mentees shared their

experiences and ideas in dialogue format and tried to produce beneficial ideas for classroom applications. They were provided the chance to learn about different points-of-view and reach relevant solutions. While forming mentor and mentee groups, we developed and utilized the following criterion: not being office mates, not being class partners and having different years of experience. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected for this study.

#### ***Aim of the study and research questions***

With this mentoring program, we aimed to enhance the professional development of the participating mentees and mentors. Therefore, we designed a PD programme and collected data to investigate the effectiveness of the programme for the professional development of EFL instructors. For these purposes, the following research questions were constructed:

1. What are the attitudes of EFL teachers to PD program?
2. What are the gains of EFL teachers from the PD program?

#### ***The Procedure***

The PD cycle consisted of three stages. In *organisation*, an initial meeting was organised with a group of experienced teachers on a voluntary basis. They were informed about mentoring in general, the conception mentoring being employed by our specific study, and the roles of mentors. In fact, in our model, the mentor is an organizer, not an authority. Later, ten focus groups were formed, each including one mentor and four mentees. The second stage was the selection of a *topic of focus* (TF). In this stage, participants in each group were asked to identify the topics which they would like to discuss in the informal meetings. Then, mentees and mentors recorded and submitted the issues they had experienced in their classrooms. Among the issues stated by participants, the five most common topics were determined by the participants themselves. Then, the list of five topics was shared with participants and they ranked them in order of personal interest. Based on the results we gathered from the participants, we designated the most interesting one as the topic of focus (TF). All participants were informed of the TF. The third stage was the *execution of meetings*. In this stage, mentors and mentees were asked to hold short meetings in their available time to discuss the TF and share their experiences. The meetings were expected to be held in fifteen days and mentors were asked to keep a report including all shared experiences and recommendations. These reports were used to provide feedback to the PDU.

#### ***The Participants***

The participants were fifty in-service teachers employed by an intensive English program at a state university in southeast Turkey. Ten participants were mentors who possessed fifteen or more years of teaching experience. The teaching experience of the mentee teachers ranged between two and ten years. While forming mentee groups, the following criterion were employed in order to bring together colleagues who did not meet regularly. The mentees in the same group

were not office mates or class partners, and they did not hold the same years of teaching experience. Thus, they would have more to share.

#### **Data Collection**

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through the use of questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. After an initial investigation of mentor reports from the meetings, a questionnaire including four open-ended questions was prepared. While preparing this questionnaire, a deductive method was used in order to derive more specific knowledge related to the mentioned emergent constructs in the reports. This questionnaire was given to fifteen participants (including five mentors and ten mentees). A content analysis of the questionnaire was conducted and five participants, including two mentors and three mentees, were included in a semi-structure interview so as to gain more detailed information related to emergent constructs in the questionnaire. Content analysis was used in order to analyze the data collected from the interview, as well.

#### **Data Analysis**

After the conduction of the mentoring program for six months, we asked fifteen volunteer mentors and mentees to complete the questionnaire prepared by the PDU. When we analyzed the questionnaire, we found that four constructs emerged through the content analysis of the questionnaire. The first construct was related to the participants' personal gains during the process. The results are presented in the following table.

**Table 1: Personal Gains**

<b>Personal gains</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>I have learnt a lot from this process in terms of:</i>	
1- having discussions in small groups instead of crowded ones	7
2- having group members from different background	9
3- sharing ideas with other colleagues we rarely come together	10
4- getting a chance to re-evaluate ourselves	4
5- confidence which the process provided to express our feelings	8
6-expressing our observations, fears and doubts	8
7- finding the opportunity of collaboration	12
<i>I found the process beneficial because it provided:</i>	
1- us a chance to exchange our ideas	15
2- us to have small group discussions related to our current teaching	14
3- us to come together with colleagues who have different years of experience and teaching in different levels	11
4- young and old colleagues have the chance of sharing and exchanging ideas in a friendly atmosphere	7

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5- an opportunity to re-evaluate ourselves in terms of teaching	5
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Table 1 indicates that one of the most influential contributions of this program was the opportunity for participants to exchange ideas (N=16). The second most focused idea was a similar one, having small group discussions related to their current teaching (N=14). Similarly, we see that twelve participants emphasized the importance of collaboration. They may have believed that, through collaboration, both sides were able to share their own ideas and learn from other colleagues. Moreover, eleven participants claimed that the program enabled them to come together with colleagues who had different years of teaching experience and who had been teaching at different levels. Furthermore, it is seen that ten participants stated that they enjoyed gathering with colleagues with whom they rarely socialized. Eight participants noticed the relaxed atmosphere of meetings and felt they were able to express their fears, observations and doubts in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Lastly, five participants made it clear that, as teachers, they had an opportunity to re-evaluate themselves through this process. The following extract clearly illustrates this advantage of the PD program:

*“I think I have learnt a lot from the mentoring experience. Since all group members were from different backgrounds, I found the opportunity to observe different attitudes, methods and ways of coping with difficulties in teaching. I believe that my other colleagues also found the study useful and re-evaluated themselves on this basis”. (Mentee 2)*

As seen in Table 1, most participants focused on the personal and social contributions of this program. For instance, one advantage of such kind of collaboration may be that teachers may make use of each other’s experience while young teachers may contribute to the practice of teachers who have longer years of teaching experience. When the whole data of Table 1 is considered, it can be said that participants generally made use of the PD process. They raised their awareness about the importance of collaboration with colleagues of different personalities, backgrounds and years of teaching experience. Professional gains were another construct that emerged through the content analysis of the questionnaire. The findings are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Professional Gains**

<b>Professional gains</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>Through this process we got the opportunity</i>	
1-to learn about other colleagues ways of teaching while teaching	8
2- to learn about what to do in certain occasions	7
3-to improve some of our attitudes related to teaching	6
4- to observe different methods and techniques used by other colleagues	13
5- to learn about different ways of coping with some difficulties while	8



teaching	
6- to apply shared experiences in our classes	9
7- to get feedback about our teaching which we found really beneficial	12
8- to bring diversity to all our monotonous teaching style	5

When Table 2 is considered, it is seen that learning about different methods and techniques used by other colleagues was the most emphasized point (N=13). In addition, twelve participants indicated that receiving feedback about their teaching was another benefit of this program. Nine participants emphasized that, through this process, they were able to apply shared experiences in their classes. Likewise, eight participants expounded that they learnt about other colleagues' ways of teaching while teaching similar subjects as well as different methods for coping with some difficulties they encountered in classrooms. Seven participants said that they learnt what to do in certain occasions and six mentioned that during that program they improved some of their attitudes related to teaching. Five participants thought that this program brought diversity to their monotonous teaching styles as seen in the following quotation by one participant:

*"Diversity brought some kind of spice to all our monotonous teaching style, I suppose. I think we all had the opportunity to revise the qualities our institution expects from us, and; thus, we were able to improve some of our attitudes. We also learnt how to teach specific subjects in ways which are different from the methods we generally make use of when we teach them". (Mentee 5)*

Data related to professional gains in Table 2 reveals that the participants found this PD process beneficial for their professional development. They focused on teaching practice, specifically the contributions made by other colleagues who were able to share and exchange their practices. In fact, they emphasized the significance of collaboration for professional development. Moreover, they may have favoured the close relationship between personal and professional development. The improvement of one may affect the improvement of others.

**Table 3: Strengths of the Process**

Strengths of the process	Frequency
<i>It was a good opportunity</i>	
1- for both the mentors and the mentees	10
2- to have an understanding of how the teaching process goes on in other colleagues' classes	10
3- to see that the problems we encounter are similar in each classroom	8
4- to share ideas and experiences in a friendly environment	7
5- to build a bridge between the teachers and administration to make new policies about the schedule	4

As seen in Table 3, participants generally felt positive towards the process. Ten participants found the program beneficial both for mentors and mentees. Ten also mentioned that they had the opportunity to understand how the teaching process operates in other colleagues' classes. Seeing that the problems they encountered were similar to those of their colleagues was another opportunity mentioned by eight participants, as in the following quotation:

*"It was a priceless experience for all of us as we had the opportunity to have a general understanding of how the teaching process goes in other teachers' classes and it gave us a kind of relief to see that the problems we encounter are similar in each classroom. Moreover, we were surprised at times to see some different techniques that our colleagues used, which made us –at least me, for sure- think like 'Why didn't I think of this before?'"* (Mentee 10)

Furthermore, nine participants focused on the importance of sharing different activities used by other colleagues. The relaxed atmosphere in which they exchanged their ideas and experiences was expressed by seven participants. Additionally, four participants expressed that the program enabled them to construct bridges between teachers and administration to make new policies about the schedule. As seen in Table 3, participants generally had positive attitudes towards the process and they enjoyed the opportunity to express themselves in a relaxed and flexible atmosphere.

**Table 4: Weaknesses of the Process**

<b>Weaknesses of the process</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1- we could not find enough time for discussions because of our workload	16
2- topics were too general	4

As indicated in Table 4, fourteen participants complained that they could not find enough time to discuss the topics because of their workload. On the other hand, four participants found the topic too general. One of the participants voices the following:

*"It was a bit difficult to make time for the meetings or to come together as we had a busy schedule. We couldn't find enough time to discuss everything".* (Mentee 8)

Considering these issues, it can be said that while the participants of some groups engaged in deeper and more detailed levels of understanding regarding classroom dynamic and teaching, those of other groups discussed them in a non-contextual (general) way.

### Analysis of Interview

In order to gather more detailed information related to the emergent constructs in the questionnaire, we conducted a semi-structured interview with six voluntary participants. The findings are presented in the following tables.

Firstly, the participants were asked how this process contributed to their professional development. The results are given in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Contributions of the Process**

<b>Contributions of the Process</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1- motivating students	5
2- classroom management	4
3- raising awareness about methods & techniques	4
3- sharing experiences	3
4- finding solutions to the problems faced in the classroom	2

As seen in Table 5, five of the participants expressed that they shared knowledge about the motivation of students. Four participants mentioned this process helped them to enhance their classroom management skills and it raised their awareness about the methods and techniques used by other colleagues. Three participants made generalizations and stated that they shared their experiences during that process. Finding solutions to the problems faced in the classroom was another issue stated by two participants. For instance, one of the participants expressed the following:

*“It was an opportunity for us to see that what kind of methods and techniques used by other colleagues and we raised our awareness about the ones we did not use. Although we know those techniques I realized that I did not use them in my own class”. (Mentee 6)*

As seen in this quotation, the mentoring relationship assisted the participant to raise his/her awareness about classroom practice skills. He/She also mentions the benefit of sharing experiences. We also found that participants generally reported the beneficiality of meeting with colleagues possessing different years of teaching experience. The findings are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6: Contributions of Meeting Colleagues Having Different Years of Experience**

<b>Raised awareness about</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1- the use of different techniques and methods	5
2- various practices by using the same technique	3
3- practising theory	3
3- the problems teachers with less experience may face in the future	3
4- reminded the more experienced teachers of using the techniques they did	2

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not use for a while

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Table 6 indicates that the experience of the mentoring relationship generally leads to awareness for both mentees and mentors who participated in that program. Raising awareness about the use of different techniques and methods was emphasized by five of the participants, which can be supported by one of the participants' statements:

*"I think more experienced teachers realized that there were methods and techniques they ignored or forgot to use in their classrooms. Less experienced teachers formed opinions about the possible problems they might meet in their classrooms and took views about possible solutions for these problems". (Mentee 3)*

Additionally, three participants reported that they appropriated various practices by using the same techniques and learned of possible issues less experienced teachers may encounter in the future. As seen in the quotation of Mentee 3, two participants believed that it helped more experienced teachers to remember the techniques they had not used for a while. It can be said that mentoring relationships have been useful for both mentors and mentees. Later, we asked participants whether they did self-reflection on their teaching and, if so, what they discovered about their teaching. The findings are indicated in Table 7.

**Table 7: Self-reflection and contributions**

	Frequency
<i>We noticed that</i>	
1- there are more techniques and methods that could be applied	4
2- various ways of motivating students existed	4
3- various ways of classroom management	3
4- sharing experiences contributed to our teaching a lot	2

As shown in Table 7, four participants stated that they realized that there were more techniques which might be used. They also mentioned that they noticed that there existed various ways of motivating students (N=4). Two participants reflected that sharing experiences was significant for their teaching. For instance one of the participants comments the following:

*"I noticed that the ways of our teaching cover each other's. However, I discovered that some of the teaching styles and motivation ways worth trying". (Mentee 2)*

Participants were able to share their experiences and to reflect on their own teaching. Thus, they might have gained a new awareness regarding their teaching, and therefore being likely to improve it when necessary.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of an in-house PD programme and participants attitudes about it. It was revealed that the PD programme was fruitful for participants in their personal and professional domain.

Therefore, in this part, we will discuss these along with the PD programme. To begin with, personal gains indicate that both mentors and protégés experienced psychological and emotional support. This finding can be supported by Bruce, (1995) and Haring, (1999) who advocate that psychological and emotional support are among the functions of mentoring relationships. The participants focused on the personal support they provided for each other. Moreover, all participants felt confident and relaxed during this process. Thus, mutual trust and honesty are important for mentoring relationships (Russell and Russell, 2011).

When professional gains are considered, it can be said that shared experience and collaboration have been the focus of all teachers. Moor et. al. (2005) suggest that collaboration is one of the most significant contributions of mentoring to the professional development of both parties and institutions. When teachers enhance their professional development, it will lead to the development of the institution, as well. Classroom practice and classroom management have also been the focus of meetings, which indicates that mentoring relationships might help teachers with immediate needs and problems in their classrooms. Through collaboration and ongoing learning provided by mentoring, teachers may feel more confident professionally because they know that there is someone to consult and from whom to receive help (Feiman-Nemser and Parker 1992; Lindgren, 2005).

When the strengths of the program are considered, we can say that mentoring relationships have been beneficial for both mentors and mentees. The focus was on shared experience and collaboration, which made the process significant for all participants. Related to the strengths of the program, it is observed that because of workload, teachers may not have enough time for these kinds of programs. However, if they are prepared in a flexible way and in a relaxed atmosphere, teachers may find them more useful and efficient. Thus, they might try to create time for such kinds of relationships.

The results of the interview were more or less congruent with the results of reflection form. Most teachers emphasized the importance of mentorship in terms of classroom practices and classroom management. They stressed that this program provided them a chance to see what happened in other colleagues' classrooms and to share their experiences so as to improve their professional development. They found the program efficient in terms of providing support and role modelling as well as finding solutions to their immediate problems. One other focus of the interview was shared experience between more- and less-experienced teachers. Both parties noticed that they might contribute to each other's professional development in various ways.

When the results are considered, it is seen that this model of mentoring relationship has been useful for both parties. Both mentors and protégés generally focused on the importance of collaboration and sharing experiences during this process. As Jacobi (1991) claimed, we discovered that mentoring relationships

might contribute to the professional development of mentors and mentees. Lindgren (2005) stated that mentorship is significant for mentees in understanding their own teaching. Similarly, most of the participants in the present study found mentoring relationships helpful in terms of increasing their self-awareness about their teaching.

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