

MENTORING AS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL TECHNOLOGIES IN TEACHING EFL

Mehriniso M. Abduraimova

Junior Lecturer Uzbek State University Of World Languages, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT: This article sheds light to the usage of mentoring technology in language teaching and learning. Positive influence of student-mentors and teacher-mentors on learners facing difficulties in their study, peculiar features of each type of mentoring are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: Mentoring, teacher-mentor, student-mentor, social acceptance.

INTRODUCTION

Most school systems have some type of mentoring program in place for first year teachers, but what about the students? Mentoring refers to both short- and long-term academic and professional development planning for the mentee (Haack, 2006).

According to Haack, this development planning is the very heart of every successful mentoring relationship.

Research conducted by Rowley (1999) found that a good mentor exhibits certain characteristics. These characteristics consist of a committing to the role of mentoring, being a model of continuous learning, accepting of the inexperienced educator (or student), and being a positive influence by communicating hope and optimism toward the mentee (Rowley). Rowley contended that these elements are necessary for a successful mentoring program.

A mentor provides support, gives encouragement, increases communication, is open to professional development, and ensures that mentees receive the attention needed for success in the classroom. Veteran teachers would have many opportunities through mentoring to share their vast armory of classroom experiences with fellow faculty members. Education is a continuous route and in order for students and teachers to continue to expand their horizons and learn together, it is necessary for them to keep abreast of new trends, strategies, models, and methods. Inexperienced and experienced educators, English speaking students and ELL

students, should continue on a path to improve and sharpen their skills with the expertise, knowledge, and support of a mentor.

THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

ELL students are expected to perform many of the same tasks as English speaking students. Teachers and students in both regular education classrooms and ESOL classrooms face challenges daily. Some of these challenges are personal, while others deal strictly with academics and school activities. According to Mason and White (2001), professional needs fall under four categories: emotional, instructional, resources, and managerial. While the personal challenges appear to connect with belonging (social acceptance) in the work environment or in the community, or in the school, a mentor could intervene. The school year is often stressful due to the challenges students face in school, both academic and social.

Mason and White confirmed that a mentoring program could alleviate some of those situations before they become problems or develop into major issues not easily resolved. Examples for students might be failing academically, discipline referrals, or emotional issues.

Knowledge and understanding of the mentoring program are essential components for a mentoring program to be successful. Research by Feiman-Nemser (1997), validated that mentoring will only prove successful for mentors and mentees if both parties are 100% committed to the program. Failure rates of mentoring programs are attributed to the lack of commitment by those participating in the program. The usual mentoring model pairs students to students, teachers to teachers, or teachers to students.

According to Erickson (1995), mentoring relationships are essential for novice teachers and would be an advantage for ELL students. Without the input from a nurturing, supportive mentor, the inexperienced teacher and the ELL students flounder. Erickson (1995) expounded on the fact that mentoring relationships build the foundation for teaching professionals, first language English students, and ELL students. This foundation provides the opportunity to structure a framework of direction and support vital for continued professional, academic, and social growth. Mentoring programs are beneficial for all students and professionals within the school system.

According to Lock (2006), mentoring could be defined as a "...nurturing process in which a skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of prompting the latter's

professional and/or personal development” (p. 233). A committed, knowledgeable and cooperative teacher or student is an essential component, providing support, direction and offering meaningful suggestions. This is the essence of mentoring as it pertains to ELL students in B1 level. A mentoring program can be the key component in keeping academics subjects alive and exciting for ELL students, while providing the needed support system.

In schools, there is a drive to raise test scores or to achieve designations such as “School of Excellence.” Traditional methods of teaching are no longer acceptable or successful in classrooms due to the culturally diverse populations within American schools. Traditional methods do not meet the needs of the diverse learners. Past practice has left a legacy behind that says that a quiet classroom and all students working promote success. This is no longer true. This simply does not meet the needs of today’s diverse school population. There is a need for change and mentoring programs for students would be a positive change.

According to Graves (2000), the key is to keep students focused on people. In addition to keeping students focused on people, Graves reported that in order to keep the lesson fresh and exciting, teachers must go from outside the subject to inside. A mentoring program could help the progression of this process. In addition, educators must follow the guidelines and curriculum provided by administration and state departments of education for students to achieve success. Educators have not always been provided with advanced pedagogical technologies curricular material, but they are continually trying to accomplish things that have never been done. Mentors are needed more than ever for these things to happen for the students and fellow educators. Gatewood (1998) contended that while curriculum integration is important, classroom instruction is more critical. The goal is “to engage the mind of the learner” (p. 25). When educators do it well, students enjoy learning and the process is satisfying and meaningful to both the students and teachers. A mentoring program for students would certainly engage the learner and give them opportunities to be a leader. This would allow for the additional practice of social skills that ELL students need for success.

CONCLUSION

ESOL teachers are expected to guide, counsel, mentor, and oversee their students’ emotional and social needs in addition to teaching (Reed & Railsback, 2003). ESOL teachers must find teaching strategies that promote social acceptance while promoting academic success for ELL students as English emerges as their second language. When ELL students feel unproductive in

the classroom, they begin to feel inadequate in school, and they lose confidence that they can make any academic progress. By using more effective teaching strategies and promoting social acceptance ELL students can find success during the difficult academic lyceum and vocational college level years.

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