Investigating the Impacts of a Mentoring Model on Experienced EFL Teachers at Tertiary Level

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ABSTRACT

In teacher education programs, mentoring is generally regarded as a major component of the practicum of preservice teachers; mentors guide the development of preservice teachers and evaluate their readiness to teach independently. Mentoring can also be a highly valuable tool for the professional development of in-service teachers, who need to update their knowledge and skills as they progress in their career and gain familiarity with the expectations of an institution. However, mentoring programs offered for experienced teachers are very rare in Turkey. In-service teachers fulfill their professional development needs by attending seminars or courses and/or try to cope with challenges through informal talks with their colleagues. This chapter reports on a mentoring program provided to experienced EFL teachers and explores the effects of it on the participants. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers. Findings indicate that experienced teachers feel the mentoring program contributes to their professional as well as personal development.

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INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is generally defined as,

… a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/or personal development (Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

Mentoring is an important part of pre-service education all over the world. As a part of the practicum, preservice teachers are provided with mentoring by their cooperating teachers (Campbell & Brummett, 2007; He, 2009; Hudson, & Skamp, 2002; Isikoglu, Ivrendi, & Sahin, 2007). Recently, mentoring has become one of the prevalent forms of professional development programs and schools have started designing and implementing mentoring programs to develop their teachers’ competencies systematically since it is one of the means of improving teachers’ collaborative problem solving competence, which is crucial due to the increasing difficulty and complexity of teaching but mostly these programs are for the beginning teachers (Britton, Paine, Raizen, & Pimm, 2003; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Strong, 2009). In this study, the perceived impacts of a facilitated mentoring model, not a common model adopted by schools all around the world, were explored. The study aims to give insights into how a facilitated mentoring model can be used to develop the skills, competencies and consequently the confidence of the new members of an institution even if they are experienced in teaching.

BACKGROUND

Different Definitions of Mentoring

Mentoring is often defined as a more experienced individual’s sharing his/her knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust (Clutterbuck, 1991; Delaney, 2012). One type of mentoring is called informal mentoring model. It is based on the idea that true mentoring is spontaneous or informal and it should not be formalized (Cox, 2005; Herrbach, Mignonac, & Richebe, 2011). Informal mentoring relationships frequently occur over time without external intervention or planning (Egan & Song, 2008). Mentors are matched with mentees based on their expertise and the needs and interests of the mentees and the sole motivation for mentors is to commit themselves to the mentoring relationship by the will to share and help others (Chinamasa, 2015).

Others believe that mentoring should foster systematic development of skills putting emphasis on self-agency, which is generally regarded as facilitated or formal mentoring. In his definition, Parsloe (2000) (cited in Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002) states that the purpose of mentoring is,

… to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.

Rather than sharing what they do or know with the mentees, mentors should ensure that this process is self-oriented. Similarly, Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) suggest that mentors should create opportunities for mentees to learn from their past successes and failures, enable them to be involved in self-determined