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BUILDING BLOCK II: MENTORING IN TEACHERS' INDUCTION PROGRAMME

UNIT X - MENTORING RELATIONSHIP STAGES

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INTRODUCTION

There are four sequential mentoring stages: initiation stage, cultivation stage, separation stage and redefinition stage. In each phase, some specific steps and strategies lead to mentoring excellence.

1. INITIATION STAGE: the preparation phase and the establishment of the mentoring relationship between two teachers (negotiation). In informal mentoring, potential teachers mentors and teachers mentees are matched through social or professional interactions. Potential teachers mentees look for teachers mentors, accomplished individuals that they like and consider positive role models. Both common professional specialities and hobbies as well as demographic factors should be taken into consideration during the matching process. Principals and/or topic leaders may pair teachers mentors and teachers mentees, or teachers mentors may choose their teachers mentees. Regardless of the approach, a successful mentoring relationship would include mutual exploration of the relationship and assessment of the suitability of the teacher mentor and teacher mentee match.

2. CULTIVATION STAGE: is the primary stage of learning and development (enabling growth). If the initiation stage is successful, the teacher mentee gains knowledge from the teacher mentor throughout the cultivation stage. At this period, the two main mentorship functions are at their maximum. When the teacher mentor observes and gives the teacher mentee advice on how to perform more successfully and efficiently, the career-related role frequently comes into play first. After the teacher mentor and teacher mentee create an interpersonal bond, the psychosocial function takes shape. Within this role, the teacher mentor affirms and accepts the teacher mentee's professional identity, and the connection develops into a solid, productive working friendship. Both the teacher mentor and the teacher mentee often enjoy the cultivation stage. The teacher mentor provides the teacher mentee with important knowledge and skills acquired through experience and specialization. The teacher mentor may learn priceless lessons from the teacher mentee about cutting-edge tools, fresh approaches, and developing problems in the field.

3. SEPARATION STAGE: describes a mentoring relationship's conclusion in general. There are numerous reasons why a relationship might end. There may be nothing left to learn, the teacher mentee might want to forge a separate identity, or the teacher mentor might decide to send the teacher mentee off on their own. This stage can be stressful if the end of the relationship is not accepted by both parties. Teachers mentees may feel abandoned, cheated, or unprepared if they believe the breakup was fast, and teachers mentors may feel misled or used if the teacher mentee no longer seeks their advice or support.

4. REDEFINITION STAGE: both the teacher mentor and the teacher mentee understand at this point that while their relationship can still exist, it will no longer be the same as their mentoring relationship. The connection may develop into a social friendship or a professional collaboration. The connection is no longer centred on the teacher mentee's professional

progress, in contrast to the cultivation stage. With new teacher mentee, the former teacher mentor may forge mentoring connections. The former teacher mentee may also act as a teacher mentor to other people.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify the different stages of a mentoring relationship and the specific steps that lead to mentoring excellence
- To promote strategies to get to know the teacher mentee(s) and establish a professional relationship
- To challenge the teacher mentor to think in new ways
- To get to know strategies to come to a closure of the mentoring relationship

CONTENTS

- The four phases of a teacher's mentoring relationship
- Strategies, checklists and tips to help guide teacher mentors' progress in each phase of the mentoring relationship.

DURATION, ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMICS

Estimated working time: 120m

Running time for activity and dynamic:

Activity	Dynamic	Duration	Total Duration
1. Preparation Checklist	1. Preparation Checklist	15m	15m
2. Mentoring Goals	1. Interview questions to get to know your goals as a teacher mentor	20m	40m
	2. Smart approach	20m	
3. Getting Acquainted	1. Checklist for the completion of the first meeting	10m	10m
4. Enabling Growth	1. Self-awareness reflection	20m	40m
	2. Encourage & Empower	20m	
5. The End is the Beginning	1. The End is the Beginning	15m	15m
			120m

Activity 1: Preparation Checklist | 15 Minutes

The relationship should be defined from the beginning as mutually beneficial. The teacher mentor and the teacher mentee should share their goals for the relationship and work collaboratively to help achieve them. To prepare for the relationship it is important to take time to get to know each other (see Annex 28).

The preparation checklist is an activity for the teacher mentor to have at the beginning, a list with some items that need to be taken into consideration when preparing the first contact:

a. I have a sincere interest in helping this person or being helped by this person.
b. We have mutual interest and compatibility.
c. I am clear about my role. I can commit adequate time to the mentoring relationship.
d. I am willing to use my network of contacts to help in the progress.
e. I have access to opportunities and resources to support learning.
f. I am committed to developing my mentoring skills.

Activity 2: Mentoring goals | 40 Minutes

The teacher mentor in the initiation stage should define his/her own goals as teacher mentor to reach excellence in mentoring. This activity requires trust in his/her competencies to outline goals for the relationship and the year ahead.

Before defining your goals, reflect on some ideas following the tips available in Annex 29.

Dynamic 1- Interview Questions to get to know your goals as a teacher mentor | 20 Minutes

a. What are you looking forward to in this mentoring relationship?
b. What do you see are your strengths?
c. What do you perceive are areas for improvement?
d. What areas would you like to see worked on in this mentoring relationship?
e. Are you able to prioritize those things to work on so that areas most important to you are addressed early in the relationship?
f. Are you comfortable with approaching situations that may be out of your current comfort zone to build confidence in areas of improvement? How do you feel about this?
g. Tell me about your current teaching activities and responsibilities.
h. What are the most challenging things about teaching?
i. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
j. What motivates you? What stresses you?
k. What else do you want to tell me?

Dynamic 2 - SMART approach |20 Minutes

To make sure the goals are clear and reachable, each one should be specific, measurable, achievable/attainable and timely.

- *Specific*: state the goal in simple but specific terms.
- *Measurable*: how will we measure progress? The goal should be measurable.
- *Attainable*: the goals need to be appropriate and achievable.

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- **Realistic/Relevant**: the goals need to be realistic, often we reach too far when setting goals. It is better to do things in smaller steps than to be disappointed when expectations are not realistic.
- **Timely**: what is the time frame of the goal's success? What are the checkpoints? Assign a time, even if only a guess, to each goal to check progress.

Following this explanation, please define your goals to work on in mentoring partnership.

Activity 3: Getting acquainted | 10 Minutes

The teacher mentor and the teacher mentee become acquainted and informally clarify their common interests, shared values, and future goals and dreams. It takes time to become acquainted with one another's interests, values, and goals. The purpose of this activity is for the teacher mentor to prepare himself for the first meeting and also receive strategies about how to engage with the teacher mentee.

Dynamic 1 – Getting acquainted |10 Minutes

Maintaining an environment of <u>confidentiality</u> is a critical component in building trust between the teacher mentor and the teacher mentee. Without a mutual understanding and ability to speak freely as the situation warrants, the relationship is unlikely to reach its full potential. In the mentoring relationship, <u>constructive feedback</u> is crucial in all monitoring meetings. The first meeting has a big impact since it is the first time they get to know each other. In <u>Annex 30</u> you will find tips to follow during this meeting. After is important to go through the checklist below to check if you filled all the items.

CHECKLIST FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE FIRST MEETING

Did I…	
Introduce myself and let the teacher mentee know how to address me.	
Learn how to pronounce the teacher mentee's name.	
Tell the teacher mentee how I will notify him or her if I cannot make the meeting.	
Accept the teacher mentee as he or she is and not be judgmental.	
Use positive reinforcement.	
End on a positive note.	

Table 1 – Checklist that can be used in the first meeting.

Activity 4:

Enabling Growth | 40 Minutes

The following dynamics allow the teacher mentor to encourage and empower the teacher mentee through reflection and sharing thoughts of the expectations, achieved goals, tasks and activities performed.

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Dynamic 1 - Self-awareness reflection | 20 Minutes

As a mentor you should be able to reflect on your competencies, actions and performance. Following this idea, this activity allows you to reflect on your role in the relationship. Take some time and write your thoughts (use Annex 31 as support).

   a. How do I perceive myself in the many roles that the teacher mentor plays?
   b. How well do I understand the teacher mentee's overall expectations for our mentoring relationship?
   c. What is my objective in this conversation?
   d. Am I too formal or informal?
   e. What assumptions have I made in this conversation?
   f. What kind of response do I expect from the teacher mentee?
   g. Do I give him/her enough time to respond or ask questions?
   h. If I think I have been misunderstood, can I clarify and paraphrase?
   i. Am I willing to set aside my agenda to listen to his/hers at any time?

Dynamic 2: Encourage & Empower | 20 Minutes

The teacher mentor and the teacher mentee begin to accomplish the actual purposes of mentoring. Gradually, needs become fulfilled, objectives are met, and intrinsic growth takes place. New challenges are presented and achieved. The cultivation stage is the stage of acceptance, but it is also a stage of change, where a teacher mentee is more likely to exercise self-discipline. This activity presents empowering questions for the teacher mentor to work with the teacher mentee in a monitoring meeting:

   a. What outcome are you looking for?
   b. What will you do first?
   c. What must you do to make that happen?
   d. How will you begin?
   e. How will you know when you have it?
   f. Who else needs to know this?
   g. What resources do you have/need?
   h. What is the risk of doing this? Not doing it?
   i. How might you get in your way?

Activity 5: The End is the Beginning | 15 Minutes

Often you have gained a lifelong professional colleague with whom you can continue to share experiences and seek advice. Even though you have met goals and had personal growth through the mentoring experience, the formality may end, but a new type of relationship begins. In this activity, there are some questions to trigger reflection and sharing of ideas about the all-mentoring process, to give them a closure sensation.

To have a satisfactory redefinition of the relationship at the end of the agreed term, the beginning teacher must experience a sense of closure. The teacher mentee should feel a sense of

accomplishment, knowing that he/she is headed in the right direction toward achieving his/her goals. For this reason, they must know that the relationship is changing not because it was unsuccessful, but because they have succeeded, and it is time for them to pursue goals differently. In the final meeting launch, two or three questions for both of you reflect together on the mentoring process.

Dynamic 1 – The end is the beginning |15 Minutes

Individually think about the following questions (use Annex 32 as support):
  a. Were our goals reached?
  b. What have we learned during this process?
  c. What could we do differently in another mentoring relationship?

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Annex 28 - Strategies for Preparing the Relationship

Initiate contact with your teacher mentee.

Exchange background information before you talk for the first time.

Take time to get to know each other.

Share past mentoring experiences and those who influenced us.

Talk about the learning and development goals.

Determine the personal expectations of the relationship.

As a potential mentor reflect on the following aspects:

1. How much time can be committed to the relationship? Be realistic.

2. Write down goals and analyse them to meet the SMART criteria.

3. Agree on a discussion format. (e. g. Formal agendas, topic-driven agendas, check-in conversations, etc.)

4. Use a journal to help stay focused, monitor progress and capture follow-up items.

5. Establish any ground rules. (e. g. Confidentiality, boundaries and "hot topics")

6. Be flexible! Expectations and plans will change as your relationship progresses.

7. Evaluate progress, milestones, and goals, regularly.

8. Learning styles are important, identify and discuss successful learning.

9. Articulate criteria for success. What does success "look" like?
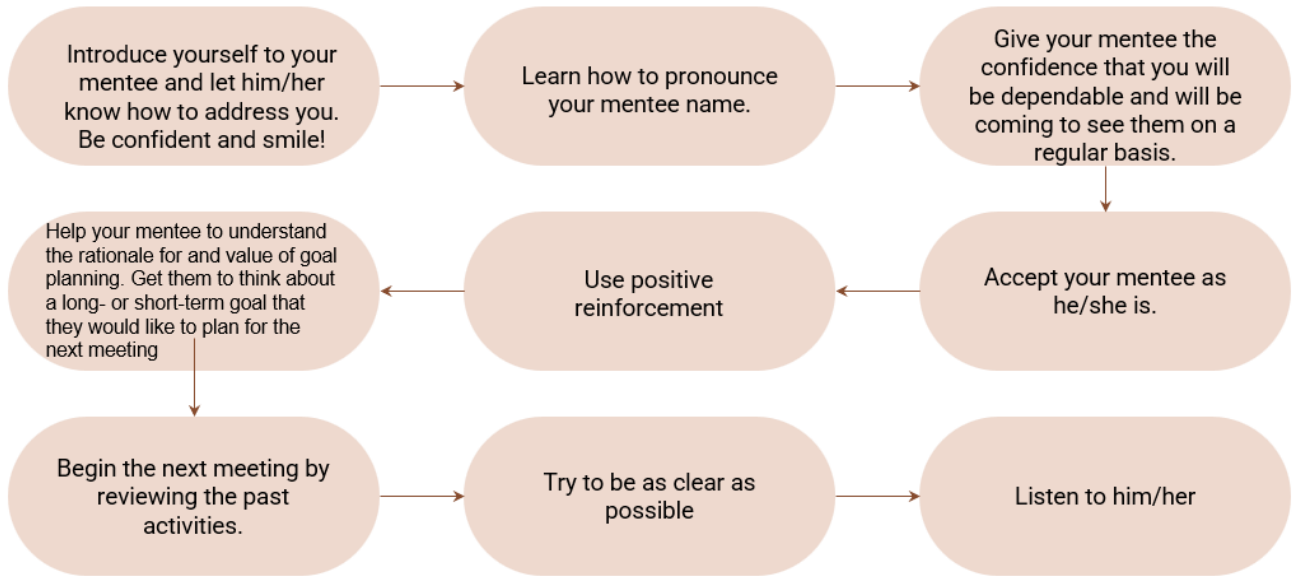
REFLECTION

Annex 30 - Getting Acquainted

There is no specific formula to integrate the proper personal and professional qualities to create a successful mentoring relationship. Some individuals are attracted to opposites; others are attracted

to those with similar interests, styles, and backgrounds. Regardless, implementing the following suggestions will facilitate relationship development.

While establishing the relationship, I must consider:

- The degree of eagerness my mentee brings to our relationship
- The similarities in our personal styles
- The similarities in our expected goals

Annex 31 - Enabling growth

The teacher mentor is asked to provide continued feedback on the progress of the teacher mentee and share ideas for improving his/her skills and growth. Here are some strategies to adopt.
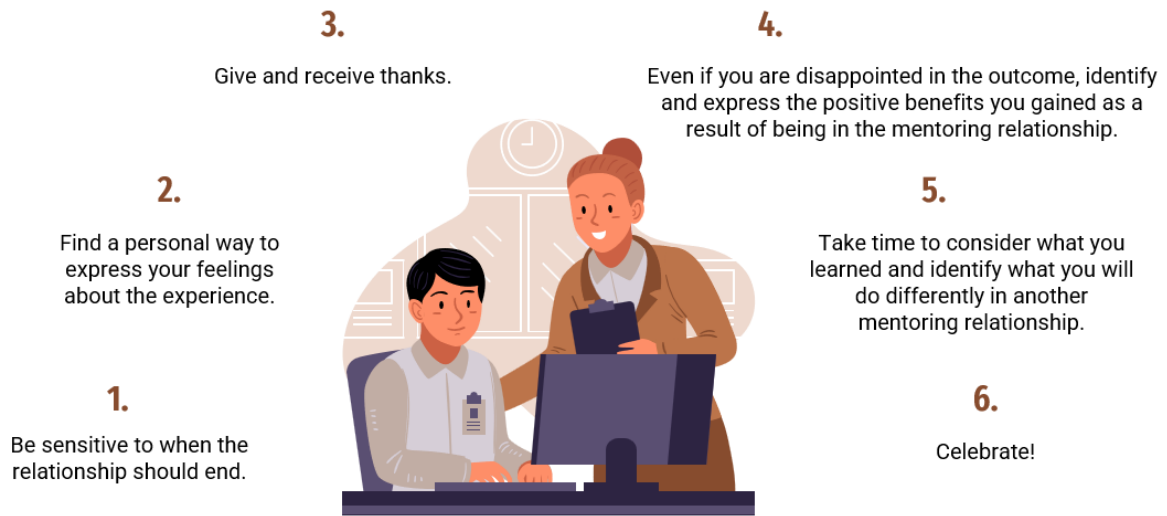
★Regularly check in

★Actively listen/advise

★Ask for and give feedback so that the learning experience is satisfactory and the pace is comfortable.

★Provide timely support, create appropriate challenges to facilitate learning.

★Solicit feedback from other sources.

★Use the time together productively.

★Evaluate goals and deadlines throughout the process.

★Give constructive criticism and accept and reflect on it.

★Advise on what you know, don't be afraid to admit what you don't. Find other resources if you can't provide guidance.

★Don't shy away from difficult conversations. It is a safe place to talk.

★Celebrate each small success!

Annex 32 - The End is the Beginning...

Consider what you want your mentoring relationship to look like after the formal relationship concludes.

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3.

Give and receive thanks.

4.

Even if you are disappointed in the outcome, identify and express the positive benefits you gained as a result of being in the mentoring relationship.

2.

Find a personal way to express your feelings about the experience.

5.

Take time to consider what you learned and identify what you will do differently in another mentoring relationship.

1.

Be sensitive to when the relationship should end.

6.

Celebrate!

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