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# BUILDING BLOCK I: MENTOR'S PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

## UNIT V - COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

The creation of this publication has been co-funded by the Erasmus+ grant programme of the European Union under grant no. 626148-EPP-1-2020-2-PT-EPPKA3-PI-POLICY. This publication reflects the views only of the author. Neither the European Commission nor the project's national funding agency are responsible for the content or liable for any losses or damage resulting of the use of this publication.



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## UNIT V - COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

### INTRODUCTION

A **meaningful mentoring relationship** relies on the establishment and maintenance of a fruitful, successful and effective **professional learning conversation** which, in turn, has as main characteristics the:



Figure 4 – The three main characteristics of a professional learning conversation.

This is the reason why **communication and interpersonal skills**, underpinned by these three characteristics too, are identified as one of the **most relevant skills a teacher mentor should have and strengthen** to ensure a successful and effective mentoring relationship with teachers mentees. Furthermore, by knowing and understanding the value of these skills, teacher mentor will be more able of endowing teachers mentees with these skills as well, allowing them to:

- Relate and interact with the students with assertiveness and empathy
- Establish and maintain professional and positive relations and communication with student's parents and families
- Cooperate, co-work and co-learn with other teachers and professionals in the educational system



The power of **good communication** is in **effective listening**. In a conversation with a teacher mentee, many times the teacher mentor thinks about what they would do in a certain situation and immediately starts giving advice. Many times, while the other person is talking, we are no longer actively listening, because we are preparing what we are going to say in response. But **real listening** requires that we **listen to the end**, with a **desire to understand the other person**.

Furthermore, as a teacher mentor, it can be very easy to want to just jump in and solve the teacher mentees's problems for him/her. However, the teacher mentor's role is to guide the-teacher mentee to think for him/herself, following a **questioning technique** fostering teacher mentee self-discover. Is critical to ask open-ended questions to help the teacher mentee reflects on his/her experiences and learn from the conversation with the teacher mentor. Once again, when asking questions, teacher mentor must first listen well and try **to understand the other person**. Being a questioning peer gives the teacher mentor, an opportunity to: uncover additional facts and information about the teacher mentee; confirm the teacher mentee's goals, aspirations, and needs; explore strong feelings about situations; define problems and possible solutions and discover the teacher mentee's commitment to his/her growth.

**Feedback** as a two-way street is also important in communication, being important to be able of receiving and providing feedback. Again, effective listening plays a role in the transmission and understanding of feedback, for both parties in the conversation.

## OBJECTIVES

- To understand the value of active listening and use techniques to strengthen this ability
- To be able to use the questioning technique to guide, have a conversation and empower teachers mentees
- To understand and be able of receiving and transmitting feedback

## CONTENTS

- Effective listening and questioning techniques applied to the mentoring relationship.
- Tips and strategies to provide and receive feedback.

## DURATION, ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMICS

Estimated working time: 180m

Running time for activity and dynamic:

| Activity                          | Dynamic                                      | Duration | Total Duration |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------|----------------|
| 1. Being an active listener       | 1. Hear, think, ask                          | 30m      | 90m            |
|                                   | 2. Role playing in an effective conversation | 60m      |                |
| 2. Embracing the feedback mastery | 1. Be givers and receivers of feedback       | 30m      | 90m            |
|                                   | 2. Provide constructive feedback             | 60m      |                |
|                                   |  |          | 180m           |

### Activity 1: Being an active listener| 90 Minutes

In this activity, teachers mentors will have the opportunity of hearing and learn more about effective listening and questioning techniques and of applying some of the key ideas related to these topics, through preparation, presentation and analysis of role-playing.

“Role-playing” is a technique in which teachers mentors play a specific role in a fictional setting, to evidence/show the most suitable way of performing that role.

### Dynamic 1- Hear, think, ask | 30 Minutes

- a. The trainer will introduce the Minor theory related to effective listening and questioning using as support the worksheet prepared for it (see [Annex 16](#)).



### *Dynamic 2 – Role playing on effective conversation | 60 Minutes*

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- a. Identify two volunteers willing to play the roles of an teacher mentor and a teacher mentee among the teachers mentors
- b. The volunteers will have 15 minutes to prepare a scenario of a mentoring session between them.
- c. During these 15 minutes, the other elements of the group should discuss in small groups of 4 to 5 elements, the presentation made by the trainer and jointly analyse the observation sheet (see [Annex 17](#))
- d. After it, the volunteers will have 30 minutes to present the role play while other teachers mentors will:
  - Take notes related to the presentation following the observation sheet, justifying their positioning related to it
  - Interrupt the presentation of the colleagues, whenever they consider that something could be done more adequately. In this case, the teacher mentor will substitute the teacher mentee to represent it.
- e. At the of the role-playing the trainer will do a debriefing of the activity related to the:
  - Volunteer's feelings while performing their role
  - The overall perception of the group related to the hear, think and ask the position of the teachers mentors.

### *Activity 2: Embracing the feedback mastery| 90 Minutes*

In this activity, teachers mentors will have the opportunity of knowing and understand how teachers mentors can provide useful feedback to generate change in teachers mentees' behaviour and decision-making.

Following a brief presentation on key aspects to be considered while providing feedback, the group of teachers mentors will have the opportunity of simulating situations where a teacher mentor will provide feedback following the guidelines provided.

### *Dynamic 1- Be givers and receivers of feedback | 30 Minutes*

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- a. The trainer will introduce the theory related to providing and giving feedback using as support the worksheet prepared for it (see [Annex 18](#)).



### *Dynamic 2 – Provide constructive feedback | 60 Minutes*

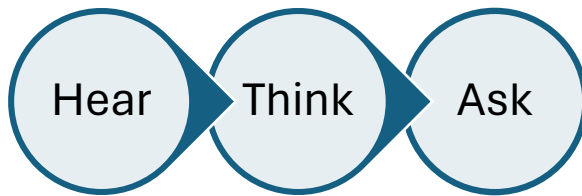
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- a. Divide the group in small groups of 3-4 elements
- b. Each group will have 30 minutes to prepare and do a simulation on “How to provide constructive and effective feedback” and discuss feelings and thoughts between them following the presentation made by the trainer in the previous dynamic
- c. At the of the simulation in small groups, the trainer will do a debriefing of the activity related to the: Constraints and difficulties in providing constructive feedback; New ideas on how to provide constructive feedback; Main conclusions of the activity

# ANNEXES

Annex 16 - Hear, think, ask

Minor (2019) in his book *We Got This* describes listening in **three stages**.



The first phase is just listening: **listening carefully**.

In the next phase, we have some time to think, **process** what we have heard and try to **understand** it.

Then we **ask** questions **based** on what we have **heard**. Listening therefore consists of three steps as it can be shown in the figure.

## Hear

### LISTEN UP

- **PREPARE TO LISTEN** - Effective listening requires preparation. Put aside papers, books, and other materials that may distract. Make sure that the teacher mentee has your full attention.
- **PAY ATTENTION** - Give your teacher mentee your undivided attention.
- **SHOW THAT YOU ARE LISTENING** - Especially if you are meeting over the phone, encourage your teacher mentee to continue with small verbal comments like “Sounds good,” “Go on,” or even “Uh huh.”
- **REFLECT ON WHAT HAS BEEN SAID** - Sometimes personal biases and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said.

## Think

### REDUCE MISUNDERSTANDING

- **REMAIN OPEN TO DIFFERENT VIEWS** - Good teacher mentor often learn from their teacher mentee. Also, teachers mentors can serve as models for the behaviour of others by not being over opinionated.
- **THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK** - If you rehearse your thoughts, and it doesn't sound right, don't say them.
- **SPEAK UP** - Voice something when you do not understand something.
- **BE CLEAR** - Keep your message as simple as possible.
- **DON'T ASSUME** - Unless you say something, you usually cannot be entirely sure the other person knows what you're thinking or feeling.

## Ask

### EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS





- What are the most interesting aspects of your activity?
- Why did you pick this to concentrate on?
- What do you want to gain?
- What do you want to be known for?
- What do you understand the issue to be?
- What tells you that your assessment is correct? What are other people's perceptions of this issue?
- What assumptions are you making here?
- What other ideas do you have?
- How long has this been an issue?
- What did you learn from past experiences that you didn't expect to learn?
- What are the reasons behind an issue?
- Have you tried to resolve this issue before? Why or why not? If yes, what was the result?
- What choices do you have?
- What progress have you made?
- What other ideas do you have?
- How are you using the things/ideas we've spoken about?
- What results are you looking for?

## Ask

### EMPOWERING QUESTIONS

- What are the skills you want to develop?
- What strategies come to mind when looking at a situation?
- What do you see as possible solutions here?
- What outcomes are you after here? Are these outcomes reasonable given the circumstances?
- What resources are available to help you move forward?
- What key players do you need help from?
- What forces may help and/or hinder you?
- What other information do you need to arrive at a solution?
- What are the pros and cons of each solution?
- What is the first step you need to take to achieve your preferred outcome?
- What alternative strategies should you develop?
- How will you know you have mastered or successfully enhanced a competency?
- How will you apply your new skill?

### Annex 17 – Role playing on effective conversation | Observation sheet

While observing the role playing presented by the colleagues, take some notes related to the following aspects related to the performance of the teacher mentor during the conversation with the teacher mentee:



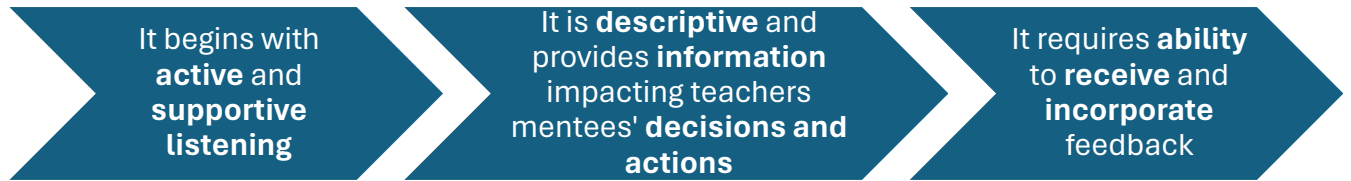
| FOCUS                        | CRITERIA   | NOTES AND JUSTIFICATIONS |
|------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Hear</b>                  | To what extent is the teacher mentor prepared to listen?                                   |                          |
|                              | Did the teacher mentor pay the necessary attention to what the teacher mentee was saying?  |                          |
|                              | It was clear to the teacher mentee that the teacher mentor was listening to him/her?       |                          |
|                              | It was clear that the teacher mentor was reflecting on what the teacher mentee was saying? |                          |
| <b>Think</b>                 | The teacher mentor was able to show that he/she was open to hearing the teacher mentee?    |                          |
|                              | The teacher mentor reveals to be comfortable speaking up whenever he/she has a doubt?      |                          |
|                              | The teacher mentor was clear in his/her interventions?                                     |                          |
|                              | There were situations in which the teacher mentor assumes some interpretations?            |                          |
| <b>Exploratory questions</b> | Did the teacher mentor make proper and adequate exploratory questions?                     |                          |
| <b>Empowering questions</b>  | Did the teacher mentor make proper and adequate empowering questions?                      |                          |

## Annex 18 – Be givers and receivers of feedback

One of the highest-rated strategies on the **teacher mentor** professional learning scale is for **teachers mentors** to **learn how to provide useful feedback** to **teacher mentee**, once the feedback is important for:

- **Teachers mentees** identify and acquire the skills and knowledge needed for a successful career
- **Teacher mentor** acknowledge **teacher mentee's** strengths and motivate them to work on areas of weakness
- **Teachers mentees** move forward in his/her career.

Prompt and frequent feedback will go a long way toward cementing the **teacher mentor** - **teacher mentee** relationship, and it will be helpful to avoid the **teacher mentee** getting bogged down in pursuing the wrong path in his/her research or professional development. As such, effective feedback is **more than just a comment or reaction to an action**:



Giving feedback is then about understanding how to give and receive feedback.

The best way to provide feedback to strengthen the teacher mentor - teacher mentee relationship and potentiate the integration of the feedback in the teacher mentee's decision-making is through:



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