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BUILDING BLOCK II: MENTORING IN TEACHERS' INDUCTION PROGRAMME

UNIT VIII - ROLE OF THE TEACHER MENTOR



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INTRODUCTION

The mentoring relationship must be seen with awareness and responsibility because the focus is on people and their training, keeping in mind the goal that they can perform autonomously, in an informed and thoughtful way the roles they propose. The personal involvement of both the teacher mentor and the teacher mentee gives the mentoring relationship a special complexity because many of the skills required for their professional exercise advocate ethical competencies.

There is no neutral education, schools, teachers, or classes (Azevedo, 2003), teachers mentors are also people with a moral conscience, autonomous, armed with convictions and beliefs that guide their professional action. The life of the educational professional is often full of ethical conflicts that require thoughtful analysis and reflections, considered moral judgement and great courage in the solution (Cunha, 1996).



In this sense, and given that mentoring is a permanent challenge, the teacher mentor must respond fully and effectively to the problems he/she faces by reflecting on his/her practices and, in this way, developing personally and professionally. Lieberman (1994) states that these growth opportunities envisage the teacher mentor as a reflective practitioner, constructing knowledge through research on practice, constantly (re)thinking and (re)evaluating their values, principles and actions.

According to Nóvoa (2009), professional development goes through the recognition of the person, understanding that it is impossible to separate the personal and professional dimensions and that in training, special emphasis should be given to the teachers' personalities.

Thus, the proposed activities are intended to create opportunities for reviewing the personalities of future teacher mentor, in the light of a set of principles, the personal meaning assigned to the different experiences and actions developed, as well as the ethical inclination that drives their decision-making. The school is recognised as a space of ethical intervention, a space where the training of people takes place, through the internalisation and experience of values and standards of individual and collective action (Seiça, 2003).

In this case, it is not only the ethics of the subject that is at stake, but also, essentially, the ethical subject, i. e. the notion that actions are based on a moral conscience, which supports the development of the capacity for autonomy and responsibility. It is important, in this sense, that the teachers mentors define a role (a role model) which guides their action and builds agreements about their conduct, bearing in mind their development profile, in the light of the ethical sense of their principles, even if these agreements are in permanent debate and under a constant critical attitude, as a way of avoiding authoritarianism and dogmatism.

Because of this, the dynamics proposed in this module are based on an autobiography which, for researchers such as Goodson (2001) and Nóvoa (2009), has an important pedagogical value in the construction of professionalism and personality. In an autobiography, there is a reflective



retrospective review of past experiences, which occurred in very specific personal, social and cultural contexts and lead to the development of the person and the professional. It is "a journey to one's inner time", since those who speak always speak from a certain place in time and space, assuming a point of view. In the autobiographical process, subjectivity is always present, appearing as a "look back", as a critical reflection on the personal and professional path taken, to understand the present and build the future.

This unit aims to provide a set of useful tools to strengthen the professional identity of the teacher mentor and support the construction of the culture of a new community, by defining the different roles of each of those involved and their rights and duties. It is therefore essential to define a framework that contributes to developing a code of conduct for the various actors involved in the mentoring relationship, also allowing the standardisation of performance criteria to achieve excellence in the relationship.

OBJECTIVES

The mentoring relationship may be faced with some issues or dilemmas, so it is important in this unit to know the actions that may have an impact on this relationship, such as the definition of roles and the identification of the respective responsibilities, based on explicit guiding principles so that it is possible to achieve and maintain the highest levels of professional ethical conduct. Thus, this unit aims to achieve the objectives set out below (see Figure 8).



Figure 8 - Objectives of the unity

- To define the guidelines for action, give security to the teacher mentor and ensure the conditions for a good mentoring relationship
- To empower the teachers mentors with knowledge and techniques to help them fully accomplish their responsibilities, within the framework of their rights and duties
- To guarantee the existence of a transversal action pattern based on the anticipation of solutions for specific issues, thus ensuring a good working environment and the satisfaction of those involved
- To value and dignify professionals and organisations by creating reference standards that contribute to strengthening their professional and organisational identity

CONTENTS

- Role of the teacher mentor
- Responsibility in the mentoring relationship
- Ethics and mentoring: a close relationship



DURATION, ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMICS

Estimated working time: 70m

Running time for activity and dynamic:

Activity	Dynamic	Duration	Total Duration
1. Role of the teacher mentor	1. How you act when you trust	30m	30m
2. Responsibility in the mentoring relationship	1. What will it be like?	20m	20m
3. Ethics and Mentoring: a close relation	1. No drive by teachers (Schulman, 2003)	20m	20m
			70m

Activity 1: Role of the teacher mentor | 30 Minutes

Mentoring requires interaction, which includes trust, honesty, respect and a willingness to work together. Therefore, it is crucial to have a mutual understanding of what trust means.

Dynamic 1 - How you act when you trust | 30 minutes

- a. Divide the group into small groups and discuss together the following questions
 - i. What does trust mean to you?
 - ii. What is it like to be in a relationship where trust exists?
- b. After this task focus on the concept of trust in possible scenarios in the mentoring relationship and your role as teacher mentor. Go to [Annex 21](#) and fill in the exercises.

Activity 2: Responsibility in the Mentoring Relation | 20 Minutes

Teachers mentors are professionals committed to the personal and professional development of their teachers mentees. Therefore, some elements that can affect the teacher mentor's actions should be considered, including: the context, the content, the process, adjustments, collaboration and contribution.

Dynamic 1 – What will it be like? | 20 minutes

- a. The trainer should ask the teacher mentor to record the main activities he/she believe is responsible for in the mentoring relationship and also the actions to trigger so that they can effectively develop the activities (see [Annex 22](#)).

Activity 3: Ethics and Mentoring: a close relation | 20 Minutes

The mentoring action should also benefit from the debate on the teachers mentors' roles, rights, values and ethical principles since the desirable increase in their awareness contributes to improving teaching satisfaction and enhancing the prestige and self-esteem of those involved.



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Time demands, more than ever, more creative and innovative professionals with a strong ethical dimension. Therefore, it is urgent that training allows for the construction of the "I", which integrates personal commitment, the willingness to learn how to teach, the values, beliefs and knowledge of what is taught and how it is taught, past experiences and professional and personal vulnerability.

Dynamic 1 – No drive by teachers (Schulman, 2003) | 20 minutes

- a. Read the text of Schulman (see [Annex 23](#)) and reflect on the ethical principles that must guide a teacher mentor in his/her role. The trainer may promote a discussion in small groups to share their thoughts.

ANNEXES



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Annex 21 - How you act when you trust

In small groups discuss the following questions:

- What does trust mean to you?
- What is it like to be in a relationship where trust exists?

The following exercises will help answer these questions.

1. Think of someone you know and trust. Keep that person in mind as you complete the following sentence:

Because I trust (the person you have in mind), I... (list several behaviours, feelings, thoughts, and expectations you experience because you trust that person).

2. Now that the concept of trust associated with behaviours has been defined, the next question is about the importance of creating a trusting relationship between teacher mentor and the teacher mentee; thus, it matters how the teacher mentee can trust the teacher mentor.

2.1. Complete the following sentence:

When I want someone to trust me I... (list several behaviours you exhibit when you want someone to trust you).



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Annex 22 - What will it be like?

Record the main activities you believe you are responsible for in the mentoring relationship and also the actions to trigger so that you can effectively develop the activities.

REFLECTION

Support material

Teachers mentors are professionals committed to the personal and professional development of their teacher mentee. It is in this perspective that Portner (2008) draws attention to the elements that affect the teacher mentor should take into account in his/her action:

- **The context:** effective teacher mentor plan and monitor behaviours concerning physical and psychological environments that reflect the local culture; the activities of the teachers mentors are appropriate, timed and aligned with the mission and goals of the community;
- **The content:** effective teachers mentors incorporate actions into their practice to meet the professional needs of teacher mentee; strategies are based on adult learning principles, teacher development theories, interpersonal communication, coaching and best mentoring practices;
- **The process:** effective teachers mentors collect and analyse formal and informal data that describe the professional performance of teacher mentee and their evolution, to facilitate the teachers mentees' development;
- **Adjustment:** effective teachers mentors seek to continually increase their knowledge and skill base; they regularly collect and reflect on data regarding the professional growth of teachers mentees and modify their practice to ensure mentoring is most appropriate;
- **Collaboration:** effective teachers mentors recognise that team effort exceeds individual effort; they, therefore, assess their strengths and support and promote the involvement of others in mentoring, monitoring the effectiveness of new resources and collaborations;

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- **Contribution:** effective teachers mentors seek out and participate in knowledge-sharing opportunities and contribute to improving practice among fellow teachers mentors and within the mentoring field.



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Annex 23 - No drive-by teachers (Schulman, 2003)

Read the text of Shulman and reflect on the ethical principles that must guide a teacher mentor in his role.

No Drive-by Teachers

October 2003 - Lee S. Shulman

What different picture emerges, and what consequences follow, if we think about the teacher as the primary agent of his or her accountability?

It's hard to open the paper or turn on the radio these days without finding yet another call for educational accountability. It's a reasonable thing to seek. The public needs to know that schools and colleges are delivering on their promises to students and society. The problem is that the typical mechanisms for ensuring quality (such as external tests or other measures of some sort) often miss much of what goes on in classrooms. A different way of looking at accountability is through the lens of the classroom, where, after all, the proverbial rubber of teaching and learning meets the educational road. Do we need tests and state "report cards" to take measures of education's effectiveness as an enterprise? Maybe. Do we need teachers who see student learning and its improvement as their professional, ethical responsibility? Absolutely.

What is entailed in this responsibility? An analogy is helpful here. Consider the story we read in the news at least once a year. In one version, a passenger on an aeroplane experiences severe chest pain, and the cabin attendant asks if there is a physician on board. A physician comes forward and attempts to assist the patient, but after several interventions, the patient dies. Subsequently, the family of the deceased sues both the airline and the physician, the latter for malpractice. Had the physician remained in her seat and withheld her professional service, she would have been held harmless, no questions asked.

In another version of the story, an auto accident leaves several people by the roadside badly injured. A physician drives by and decides not to stop and render medical assistance for fear that he will be held responsible for any care he delivers. Perhaps he had just read a news story about the first physician. He is later criticized for inaction, for an unwillingness to act professionally. Once a person or a community takes on the mantle of a profession, every act is potentially permeated with ethical questions. My point is that excellent teaching, like excellent medical care, is not simply a matter of knowing the latest techniques and technologies. Excellence also entails an ethical and moral commitment-what I might call the "pedagogical imperative." Teachers with this kind of integrity feel an obligation to not just drive by. They stop and help. They inquire into the



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consequences of their work with students. This is an obligation that devolves on individual faculty members, programs, institutions, and even on disciplinary communities. A professional actively take responsibility; she does not wait to be held accountable.

Consider the case of one of last year's U.S. Professors of the Year (a programme co-sponsored by Carnegie and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education). Dennis Jacobs is a Professor of Chemistry at the University of Notre Dame. Several years ago, teaching the introductory course in his department, he found himself face to face (often during office hours) with students who were failing his course or dropping out. This was disturbing for a couple of reasons. For one, these students were clearly bright and hardworking enough to succeed--but they weren't succeeding. Second, it was disturbing because failure for many of them meant abandoning long-held dreams and career aspirations.

Now, in some chemistry departments, the student failure rate in an introductory course is a badge of honour. But Jacobs was having none of this. Feeling an ethical responsibility for the success of his students, he designed an alternative approach to the course, employing small-group study circles and an emphasis on conceptual thinking. And then this is an essential part of the story--he set about to document the effectiveness of this new approach. My colleagues and I at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching refer to this commitment as "the scholarship of teaching and learning."

Leaving aside many of the details, Jacobs's approach not only allowed more students to succeed in meeting the chemistry department's high standards (far more students passed the course), but it also modelled a kind of professionalism that should be at the heart of our ideas about educational accountability. Jacobs didn't just "drive-by" when he saw what was happening to his students. He stopped what he was doing and assisted. He took responsibility for the quality of his students' learning through his innovations and highly demanding assignments and tests. Teachers like Dennis represent a kind of teaching excellence that is, admittedly, beyond what we find in lots of classrooms where teachers are content to teach well and leave it at that. It's tempting to say it goes "beyond the call of duty," but in fact, my point is just the opposite. Teachers must accept the ethical as well as the intellectual and pedagogical challenges of their work. They must refuse to be drive-by educators. They must insist on stopping at the scene to see what more they can do. And just as is the case on airliners and freeways, many of the needed resources may be lacking. Nevertheless, they must seize responsibility.

There is no more powerful form of accountability.

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