Peer Mentoring using Teachers’ own Research Findings

Mitra Ramroopsingh
UWI, St. Augustine
mitraryan@gmail.com
“... the debate on school quality has focused increased attention on teacher’s professional development,” (Richter et al 2011, p. 116).

Teacher Professionalism

Teacher professionalism affects the role of the teacher, his/her pedagogy, and the student’s ability to learn effectively.

It can be defined as the ability to reach students in a meaningful way, developing innovative approaches to content, while motivating, engaging, and inspiring the students.
“uptake of *formal* and *informal* learning opportunities that deepen and extend teachers’ professional competence, including knowledge, beliefs, motivation and self-regulatory skills,”

Structured learning environments with specific curriculum

Graduate courses, mandated staff development, workshops…

B.Ed./Dip.Ed, in-house staff development days….

No structured environment with no specified curriculum

Professional literature, classroom observations & collaborative activities e.g.; mentoring, conversations with other teachers and parents, teacher networks

Note. From Richter et al., 2011, p. 116-7

Locally we have “untrained teachers” in the classroom (Sharma-Maharaj, 2009; Lochan, 2006; Joseph, 2004; Rampersad, 2002).

Est. 1972 “to promote training of teachers and to research into educational problems” (Retout, 1982, p. 108).

• “Develop professional approach to teaching”

• Standards: 3.1.1.i; 20.1.3; 20.1.6. (Quest for Excellence, 2005) for PD of teachers

• Target 2015 identified “Enabling teachers; Improved teacher professionalism,” as one of its eight action areas.

• Schools are encouraged to host “PD days.”
So we also have locally *we have trained teachers* in the classroom but…
An “individual’s (personal and) professional development behaviour changes over time,” (Richter et al, 2011, p. 117) with “career maturity” (Cook & Bastick, 2009, p. 102);
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Stages/ Dominant Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>“INITIATION”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shock of the real, discovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>STABILITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>security, enthusiasm, maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-14</td>
<td>DIVERGENCE (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dedication, enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-22</td>
<td>DIVERGENCE (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disillusionment, routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥23</td>
<td>SERENITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reflection, personal satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥23</td>
<td>RENEWAL OF INTEREST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>renewed enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥23</td>
<td>DISENCHANCMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>withdrawal &amp; saturation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure . Stages in the Teacher’s Career. Adapted from Gonçalves (2000) in Gonçalves (2009, p. 22).
Figure. Stages of Teacher Development. Adapted from Huberman (1992).
“If the reflection-renewal-growth cycle is broken, the teacher begins to withdraw. Without intervention, the teacher slips into deep professional withdrawal until, finally, there is little hope of remaining in the classroom,” (Steffy & Wolfe, 1998, p. 4).
• Hackett (2005) “… continuous and ongoing staff development (based on need) would contribute considerably to greater efficacy and effectiveness among teachers.”

• Herbert & Rampersad offer “site-based interventions” (2007, p.98) as one means to improving thinking in lower secondary science classes.

• Barrow (2007) advocates that Dip Ed graduates “are also prepared for leadership roles among peers and within professional associations…and for mentoring,”
B.Ed. & Dip.Ed. Graduates can be moved to career stagnation if not afforded opportunities/avenues for continued professional development; Involvement in ongoing professional pursuits, in their professional settings, is one such avenue that is not adequately explored.
Mentoring

“… is a coaching and learning process involving a mentor (person who coaches) and a mentee (the person being coached)” who engage in reflective practice “through collecting and sharing data from classroom observations and asking thoughtful questions,” (Villani, 2009, p. 14).
Mentor/Expert Trained Teacher

Pedagogical Expert

Content Expert

Context Expert

Mentor/Expert Trained Teacher
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“… is a coaching and learning process involving a mentor (person who coaches) and a mentee (the person being coached) who engage in reflective practice “through collecting and sharing data from classroom observations and asking thoughtful questions,”” (Villani, 2009, p. 14).</td>
<td>Coaching is a strategy a mentor may use to provide more targeted support to the new and early-career teacher. (Gudwin &amp; Salazar-Wallace, 2010, p. 53).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benefits to the Mentor

1. Improved reflective practice

2. A higher level of professional responsibility/leadership

3. A broadened perspective of the profession

4. A renewed appreciation for the field of education

Hanson, 2010, p. 79; Saffold in Scherer, 2003, p. 83.
One trained science teacher’s experiences as a mentor and her own professional development.
Research questions

Questions:

- What does mentoring a novice teacher entail in the setting?

- What are the barriers (to the mentor) that impact on the mentoring process?

- What are the enablers (for the mentor) that enhance the mentoring process?
Vicksburg Model

3 Participants:
1. Instructional Specialist
2. Mentor
3. Mentee

The Mentor-Mentee Handbook
1. Welcome & Introduction
2. Overview of Programme
3. Responsibilities of Mentor
4. Responsibilities of Mentee
5. Sample Reflective Journal Template

Villani, 2009, p. 38-96
The mentoring process involved:

1. a pre-observation conference (planning conversation);
2. nonjudgmental classroom observation;
3. a post-observation conference (reflecting conversation)

(Villani, 2009, p. 14)

Data Sources:
1. interviews
2. reflective journals
The setting, the participants...

An all girl, board-assisted secondary school in the Victoria District, Trinidad.

**mentor**
- Dip Ed Science Graduate (2009, with distinction) – Curriculum Study = Hands-on Approach
- 1<sup>st</sup> appointment, 7 years at school,
  Acts as Form Dean
- Serves on many committees & organizes School’s Science Fair
- Utilises MOE PD opportunities

**mentee**
- 2 years into 1<sup>st</sup> appointment
- Serves on many committees
Figure 2. Gibbs’ reflective cycle. Adapted from “Beginning reflective practice: Foundations in nursing and health care” by M. Jasper, 2003.
A: Reflective Practice

Serving as a mentor:

“forced me to take stock of my craft”

“made me sit up and take stock about my role as a mentor and the effect on the mentee, her career and her students”

“gave insight into the powerful role that a mentor has on her mentee and how it endures”

“was rewarding for me in a way because I actually got to practice what I’ve learnt so far in diped and to help someone else”

“actually showed me where I need to improve”

Myrtle
“a mentor needs to gauge the mentee’s interests”
“too many changes can’t be introduced too fast”
“always made her feel comfortable”

Myrtle
### Table 5

**Comparison of functions of the complete mentor to mentor roles identified by Myrtle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Mentor role identified by Myrtle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Relationship emphasis</td>
<td>To establish trust</td>
<td>✓ Effective communicator ✓ Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Information emphasis</td>
<td>To offer specific advice</td>
<td>✓ Inductor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Sharer of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Facilitative focus</td>
<td>To introduce alternatives</td>
<td>✓ Action researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Confrontive focus</td>
<td>To challenge</td>
<td>✓ Facilitate improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mentor model</td>
<td>To motivate</td>
<td>✓ Intuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Praiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mentee vision</td>
<td>To encourage initiative</td>
<td>✓ Relinquisher of power ✓ Aware of successes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: Confidence

“the series of experiences during the mentoring process boosted my confidence as a teacher”

“the exercise was useful for developing my confidence as well as the confidence of Dora”

“since the students felt that I was more motivated and that I was more confident in myself they actually grew in their confidence as well”

Myrtle
### Table 6
**Comparison of confidence developing experiences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors which influenced the development of exemplary teachers</th>
<th>Experiences identified by Myrtle which boosted her confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Specific kinds of professional development</td>
<td>• Engaging in professional development workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collegial support</td>
<td>• Being mentored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A sense of engaged autonomy</td>
<td>• The Curriculum Study for DipEd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D: Mentee’s traits

“the willingness to teach on her side and the willingness to learn on my side”

“came to me asking what improvements she could have”

Myrtle
E: Informal v. Formal

“I now see that professional development just doesn’t have to be in a classroom itself or in a very formal atmosphere it could actually be very informal and be just as effective”

“did not feel pressured at all because all the meetings were so informal”

Myrtle
“actually encourage it (use of her action research) because you’re actually helping your school and your students become better.”

“having the information there within me being put to use by another teacher in the school was so … I just felt relieved and happy I was not the only one using the hands-on approach after I put so much work in trying to get a technique our students would respond to”

Myrtle
G: Tricks of the Trade

“more than 90% of teachers attended schools with a different school culture and the techniques they were exposed to when they were in secondary school are not necessarily applicable to their students”

“share with her some of the challenges I faced and how I was able to overcome them”

Myrtle
H: Time

“time was one of my main hindrances”

“if mentors are within the school itself and readily available it would be easier”

“I wish I had more time to share with her some of the challenges I faced and how I was able to overcome them”

“requires a lot of planning as the mentor must come prepared with written information and examples on topics to be discussed and possible readings”

Myrtle
I: Passion

“I have always admired my former principal who knew all the students by name and knew all their problems at home she was just amazing”

“make a difference in the students’ lives”

“to do whatever I can to help the students in my school … even the ones I don’t teach”

“the way to help the students I don’t teach is to help their teachers understand what I understand about this teaching thing”

Myrtle
Figure 5. Weighting of themes which influence the mentoring process. The study’s findings postulate that once the passion fulcrum is in place, the enablers will outweigh the barrier.
Players
- Practicing teacher
- Learning teacher
- Consulting teacher

Considerations
- Andragogical needs
- Generational needs
- Career maturity

Learning
- Reflection
- Enactment
- Growth

Feedback
- Community
- Role reversal

Content
- Context
- Pedagogy

Pre-conference
- Observation
- Post-conference

Figure 6. PLC model showing the conditions necessary for an effective mentoring programme.
The Wow & Wonders Protocol

After every session report on:

1. What left me wondering

2. What wowed me/ what I liked.

Easton, 2009, p. 19
1. Implement the PLC Model for mentoring of untrained teachers at the District Level in an “academically underperforming” education district.

2. Establish PLC populated by trained teachers in school environments.
“the greatest teachers – now and in the future – are those who both help students learn and spread their expertise to others”

(Byrd & Rasberry, 2011, p. 3)
Call for Support

“If schools are not well organized and supportive, it is possible that even good teachers will not be successful”


Thank You