

Tool: Expectations in mentoring conversations

Goals

Tool to understand that mentors and trainees come to mentoring meetings with different expectations.

Tool to discuss how to set the agenda and give feedback to a mentee if expectations are very different between the mentor and the mentee.

Conditions

Every participant needs to receive the relevant printed role description immediately before the exercise begins. Mentors must know that they are the responsible persons for a good procedure in this conversation though the circumstances may be difficult. So the person who is playing the role of the mentor is the one who practices in this exercise and is the vulnerable one who sticks out his or her neck.

The third role is the role of the observer.

This role consists of observing the process of the mentoring conversation.

The role description is simple and consists of some questions like : What happens in the meeting? Is the mentor capable of listening to the mentee? What interventions does the mentor make? Is the mentor capable of asking attention for his or her issues/lesson observations? What works and what not?

Process

- Preparation [20 minutes]

The goals of the exercise are explained in the plenary. The role of the observer is made clear. The group can ask questions about the procedures. [10 minutes]

Then the groups of 3 are formed. The trainer distributes the roles of the observer, the mentor and the mentee or at random to the participants, or asks the group of 3 who is wanting to play the mentor and will take the opportunity to practice his or her skills.

The observer gets both roles to have an early insight in the different positions of mentor and mentee.

Each group prepares in silence for the conversation. The mentor and the mentee do not talk with each other and the observer prepares by reading both roles. [5 minutes]

- The role playing exercise. [15 minutes]

The mentoring conversation takes place. The observer takes notes as much as possible. The trainer walks around the group and listens to what happens but does not interfere.

After 7 or more minutes the trainer stops the exercise in all groups and tells the observers to lead the observation conversation about what happens in the role play. The trainer emphasize that the mentor in any case also needs positive feedback about what worked, his or her strong points and effective interventions.

- Plenary discussion.[15 or 30 minutes, dependant on how many groups have done the exercise]

The groups of 3 are asked about their experiences in this exercise. Each group get the opportunity to raise their voice. Central questions are:

1. What happened in each meeting?
2. What can a mentor do when you discover the different agenda of the mentee?
3. What have you learned from the exercise?

The trainer leads the discussion and takes notes on a flip chart to keep a hold on the important issues of this learning situation.

In a last round the observers of the different groups name, one by one, a strong point of the mentor they observed.

Material:

Role descriptions and a description of the role of the observer.

Flip chart and felt pen.

Role play: Different Expectations

Role description of the mentor

Description of the situation:

When your mentee arrived in school you thought s/he had all the right qualities to be a good teacher. In the first week s/he taught some good lessons. In the second week you were absent from school for one day and, when you returned, your colleagues told you an unhappy story. Your mentee had had a lot of trouble teaching, with one class in particular making a huge noise. You didn't say anything to the mentee but you are going to observe a lesson now. Hopefully you can observe where and how the problem takes place.

Lesson observation notes

Entry of pupils is good, the teacher settles them down very quickly.

The teacher starts with an enthusiastic presentation and explains clearly what the lesson is about. This monologue goes on for a while and then 6 of the boys [John, Musa, George etc.] at the back seem not to be listening at all any more, just talking to each other about a video they want to see at the weekend. This starts to take place 12 minutes after the lessons starts with the teacher still explaining what the activities are going to be. There is a lot of noise then and the reaction of the teacher is to talk louder and louder. The activity is still not starting and you are counting that after 2 more minutes also 3 girls [Linda, Pam and Laila] are having contact with each other and are not listening any more.

When the activities start you see a lot of confusion. Some pupils are asking their neighbors what to do, some are calling the teacher to ask what they must do. The teacher gives attention to the individual questions and is for a while very busy with this. The teacher did not use the blackboard to write anything down, nor used another visual aid to make the instructions clear to the pupils.

The pupils have also workbooks for this subject, but they remain closed during this lesson.

You notice that the individual attention of the teacher is drawn for a long period [7 minutes] to the small group of girls in the front row. A girl called Miriam asks a question in the beginning of the working period [after 16 minutes] and the teacher kneels beside her to answer her question not noticing that two boys [John and Ben] are throwing pencils to each other behind the teachers back.

Towards the end of the lesson the teacher manages to draw the attention of almost the whole group. The effectiveness of this moment consists of taking a good body position [right in front of the group] and the sudden hand clapping sound s/he makes. The group falls quiet and the teacher uses this moment to summarize the lesson. He also makes a positive remark about the working climate of the group that you think is friendly but not deserved by the group all.

Role play: Different expectations

Role description of the mentee

When you arrived in school you immediately formed a good relationship with your mentor. In the first week you taught some lessons and your mentor said these were good. In the second week your mentor was absent from school for one day but you coped very well and taught all your lessons. One lesson was a little bit noisy but the others were okay.

Your mentor came to visit you in the classroom and again this was a noisy lesson. It seemed to you as if you were not having the grip on the group as you used to have. But you worked very hard and in the end you even gave the group a compliment for their work which was perhaps a little bit positive. But you like to be positive and you do not like to become a grumpy teacher.

Now you have seen an advertisement for a job and you want to talk about this in the meeting with your mentor. It is in a good school, near your home, and it seems perfect for you. There is only one problem in the advertisement. The paragraph printed below requires you to have an ability to choose appropriate IT equipment. Although you have some knowledge of IT, you are not sure that your knowledge is enough. In your meeting with your mentor you want to know what you should say in your job application and how you can get more experience of educational IT.

The person appointed to this post will be required to work with the Deputy Principal to develop the use of Information Technology (IT) within the school. At present, the school has only a small number of computers and these are very old. However there is new funding of 50 000 Euros every year, for three years, and we want the money to be spent well, on hardware and software that will benefit our pupils. The person appointed must have a working knowledge of educational IT, the ability to choose appropriate IT, and to evaluate the use of IT within the school.