

# Features of Mentoring

## Introduction

In general, the work relationship between the mentor and the teacher being mentored can often be based on a hierarchical structure. Thus, the mentor may have a higher position of organisational responsibility than the teacher. The lower status individuals in work relationships (who are being mentored) can be concerned about exploitation and unfair treatment. Those in higher positions of authority may worry that their subordinates may not work as hard as they should or undermine the work of the organisation. These vulnerabilities are inherent in hierarchical work relationships, but they can be overcome with relations built on trust which create opportunities for jointly beneficial outcomes.

Similarly to many hierarchical relationships, the mentor - teacher relationship is characterised by distinct power asymmetry. The mentor may exercise considerable role authority that directly affects the teacher, including decisions such as the students or classes assigned to the teacher, the kind of teaching materials available to the teacher, the location of the classroom, etc. These decisions can affect work quality and signal status and personal regard within the school. Thus, the teacher who perceives benevolent intentions on the part of their mentor is likely to feel more efficacious in his/her job.

Any actions taken by the mentor to reduce the teacher's sense of vulnerability are highly significant. Establishing inclusive procedures for decision making affords the teacher a real opportunity to raise issues, to be heard and to have a meaningful voice. Such behaviour by the mentor impacts directly on the integrity of the relationship between mentor and teacher and the inherent trust required in the relationship.

Thus, we need to consider the key features of mentoring required to establish an effective mentor - teacher relationship. These features are outlined under a series of sub-headings which describe the overall aspect, which is then elaborated further.

## Features

### *Pastoral Support*

The mentor should:

- know the teacher professionally and personally;
- create an open climate for discussion;
- create a supportive climate for discussion;
- create a challenging climate for discussion;
- develop a professional relationship built on trust and respect;
- provide pastoral support, when appropriate.

### ***Teaching Support***

The mentor should:

- provide advice and guidance on the process of learning and teaching;
- monitor and evaluate progress through observation of teaching, providing feedback;
- encourage the teacher to reflect on his/her teaching and evaluate pupils' learning;
- organise regular meetings focusing on the teacher's self-evaluation of his/her progress;
- identify development needs and action plans in discussion with the teacher;
- review progress of the teacher's action plan.

### ***Professional Development***

The mentor should:

- ensure that opportunities are provided to address the professional development needs of the teacher;
- co-ordinate and manage the teacher's professional development programme;
- oversee the development of the teacher's action plans and professional portfolio;
- review the implementation of the teacher's action plans and professional portfolio.

### ***Systems Support***

The mentor should:

- record critical issues and evidence as required;
- monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the school support programme for the teacher;
- monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the local authority support programme for the teacher;
- provide regular reports, as required, on the teacher.