

Mentoring Guidelines

Part 1: Pedagogical Background

“But how, Mentor,” replied Telemachus, “dare I go up to Nestor, and how am I to address him? I have never yet been used to holding long conversations with people, and am ashamed to begin questioning one who is so much older than myself.”

Odyssey, Book C: The Events in Pylos

The Odyssey of Homer, by Samuel Butler, [1900]

1 Introducing the term “mentoring”

Looking back at the origin and use of the term “mentoring” through time helps us to fully grasp its instrumental role in the effective implementation of the “ACTIVE Citizenship” Project (ACTproject). More specifically, the term “mentor”, firstly introduced through the Homeric verses, has found its way in several European contexts, as in the pedagogical novel, “Les Aventures de Télémaque” (1669), by the French author François Fénelon, where goddess Athena, disguised as Mentor is shown to assist and guide Telemachus in a particularly amiable manner. In the present day, the term “mentor” denotes the attitude and actions of a friend and counsel, also perceived as a spiritual guide and inspirer, qualities which contribute greatly to the efficient teacher training in the ACTproject. There are several derivatives of the word “mentor” in the English language, amongst which *mentoring, mentorship, mentoree/mentee*.

‘Over the last 40 years, the term mentoring has been hailed as an important workplace learning activity, and applied in a variety of contexts, such as schools and community settings’ (Ehrich, 2013). Nowadays, organizations adopt mentoring actions as an instrument towards professional development, the idea being to generate improvement, acquire knowledge, induce changes in attitude as well as for trainees to develop skills and competences. Mentoring, as a process, may be part of a formal and clearly defined procedure, supported by a final evaluation, just as it may be an informal process, as in a natural and spontaneous interaction likely to develop amongst individuals/teachers (Stromei, 2001). Moreover, mentoring may involve mentees being engaged in an individual or a collective level within a school unit, or outside the school hours and premises with the contribution of other supporting mechanisms and/or relying on the use of digital tools and remote communication techniques.

2 Mentoring aspects

2.1 Choosing a mentor

For mentoring to be a positive experience for both mentor and mentees (i.e. trainers and teachers in our case) certain conditions must be met. That is:

- Mentors possessing scientific and teaching competence in the subject.
- Mentors professionally or volunteering engaged in the field of enhancement of pupils' social and civic skills.
- Mentors that are more experienced than the mentees, although not necessarily older in age than the latter (Ehrich, 2013).
- Mentors that are more close (age, discipline) to mentees (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).
- Preferability for cooperation between mentors and mentees of same gender, teaching at the same class and being of the same discipline (Ehrich, 2013).
- Effective guidance skills (DuBois et al., 2002).

2.2 Knowledge exchange, advice and guidance techniques

- Mentors are important to share additional knowledge, advice and guidance both as a group and with the project manager (s).
- Answers to teachers' questions require careful planning and it is likely that monitoring of responses is important. The messages through digital tools can be stored and examined in a systematic way, contributing and strengthening the research itself.
- Asynchronous digital communication provides mentors with considerable time to process their responses appropriately and with the contribution of project team members.

2.3 Using different role models

- Creation of online learning and practice communities by providing access to all mentors.
- Mentee can see his mentor or her mentor as one of the many mentors who supported him / her.

3 The Roles undertaken by the Mentor and the Mentee

Within the framework of the “ACTive Citizenship” project, the role of the mentor is primarily to contribute to the development of the mentee. For this reason, it is important to attempt multiple approaches that on the one hand will support mentee

and on the other hand will offer him/her challenges that mentee faces in the form of dilemmas so as to develop analytical and critical thinking (Daloz, 1986; Cohen, 1999). The role that the mentor is called upon to undertake is best described, below, in the form of six basic interpersonal functions. More specifically, mentors:

1. Emphasize relationships with the mentee including encouraging, active and empathic listening, understanding and acceptance as well as creating a climate of trust with the trainee.
2. Facilitate mentee to focus on behaviors such as identifying and investigating his or her views, interests, and beliefs.
3. Include in the communication with mentee the highlighting of events related to his / her own work and his / her own life experiences (self-disclosure), such as his / her difficult decisions he / she has to take for example in his / her professional career.
4. Concentrate and focus on mentee's explanations and ideas, giving mentee incentives to meet challenges related to his / her needs to reassess his / her beliefs, his / her affairs and practices / and finally adopt a different approach.
5. Receive from the mentee and provide the mentee with detailed information on features and issues that concern him / her.
6. Encourage mentee to move forward to achieve and realize his / her own vision.

3.1 Asking Questions: a fundamental mentoring technique

Sometimes the mentor's role is to pose and use questions to help mentee. According to Stanfield (2000), there are four levels of questions that the mentor can use:

1. Object-level questions such as the following:
 - What are you ready to do?
 - What have you been doing since the last time I saw you?
 - Who do you work with / collaborate with?
 - What have you achieved since the last time we talked?
 - What are your observations?
 - Which words or phrases stand out for you?
2. Reflective level questions such as:
 - What was the reaction of the rest to the work you did?

- What did you like most about?
 - What did you like less?
 - How do you feel about these issues now?
 - What surprised you / what made you feel?
 - What do you miss;
 - What brought you to this memory?
3. Interpretative level questions such as:
- What have you learned about yourself, about others, so far?
 - What are some issues you are still worried about? Why;
 - What are the alternatives you are thinking about to address some of the current challenges?
 - What makes this matter important?
 - What consequences will this have for you?
 - What can be the impact?
4. Decision-making questions such as:
- What are you going to do next?
 - What is your plan and how will you succeed?
 - Can I help and if so how?
 - Are things moving in the right direction for you?
 - What kind of recommendations do you have?
 - What can you do differently in the future?
 - What did you learn from this?

4 Elaborating a Mentoring Program

There are nine (9) steps to follow in the process of elaboration of a mentoring program, both at the level of planning and that of the implementation thereof.

4.1 Appointment of a Coordinator

The appointment of a coordinator is important, as the overall oversight of the design and implementation of the mentoring program is required.

4.2 Target setting

The success of a mentoring program / module may be further enhanced, provided the objectives and target thereof have been clearly delimited. If the mentoring process has been associated with an organized system, since it contributes to its improvement and development, and finally if upper management level supports and strengthens the mentoring program.

4.3 Establishing Time Schedules

The design of a mentoring structure is important to include decisions on the timing and duration of the program and the justification of the timetable.

4.4 Clearly set roles and responsibilities of the two parties

The existence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities assumed by mentor and mentee is important to have been identified in the planning of mentoring. Both roles and obligations have to be communicated and understood in both parts.

4.5 Mentor Training

Mentor training as well as the development of a practice and learning community amongst them (also involving the coordinator) is a useful step in the process of planning of the mentoring action.

4.6 The Participants

In most programs, mentee participation is obligatory as it aims at their development. However, mentors are better off voluntarily participating in a mentoring action.

4.7 Pairing (Mentor – Mentee)

Pairing is an important element for the success of mentoring actions. According to Rolfe-Flett (2002), there are two basic methods of pairing:

1. Establish a partnership with the choice of coordinator, who creates couples based on the curriculum vitae of both parties,
2. Providing opportunities to the stakeholders to choose who he / she will work with, with the ultimate goal of choosing mentors and mentees their partner.

4.8 Withdrawing from the Mentoring Program

In a mentoring program changes and modifications are possible due to difficulties or other needs. In case of difficulties, the coordinator is usually the person who provides support to the mentor and mentee trying to find alternatives. Depending on the implementation and the needs of the mentor, it is likely that there will be a

framework for possible withdrawal, which will allow the termination of the mentor relationship without responsibility for either party.

4.9 Follow-up and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation procedures are a key element of mentoring programs. Monitoring helps troubleshoot problems that occur during the project implementation. The evaluation is useful to be carried out officially, so that all program features (planning, training, co-operation, results) can be evaluated. The assessment can be accessed through interviews and focus groups, by completing a questionnaire from the mentors and the mentees, the coordinator, the trainers as well as all the participants in the program.

5 E-mentoring

According to researcher Bray, “through the Internet all forms of education ... can now be realized without borders” (Bray, 2009, p. 102). Mentoring with the use of digital tools and distance communication techniques between mentors and mentees is defined as e-mentoring. E-mentoring programs are therefore programs of implementation of any kind of mentoring (informal or formal (clearly defined)) or any structure (individual or group level mentees).

E-mentoring actions can be categorized based on the degree and mode of utilization of digital tools and distance communication techniques between mentors and mentees (Ensher & Murphy, 2007).

1. Exclusive use of digital tools and distance communication techniques. Moreover, content management systems may highly contribute to ensuring that all electronic communications (e.g. email, forum, wiki, synchronous distance communication) are concentrated under an electronic platform.
2. Digital tools and distance communication techniques are used, where again the project can be based on a content management system, but meetings are also taking place in a common place or telephone communications.
3. Digital tools and distance communication techniques are used in a complementary way, since the main way of communication is meetings in a common place.

The choice as to whether e-mentoring actions shall be preferred over mentoring actions without recourse to digital tools or whether the third form of mentoring is adopted, as discussed above, is conditioned by a multitude of factors, to be visited in the light of the pros and cons of e-mentoring action.

Advantages of e-mentoring:

- Minimizing geographical distances,
- High programming flexibility,
- Reduction of administrative costs, since they are more cost-effective than meetings in a common place,
- E-mentoring may attract people facing difficulties in participating in meetings in physical common locations (premises) or in meeting a particular mentor in physical common locations (premises).
- E-mentoring may be used to support persons regardless of gender, nationality, mobility constraints or place of residence.
- The participants (mentors and mentees) may have access to data available in content management system of the e-mentoring program, anytime.
- E-mentoring may enhance interaction and cooperation between mentors and mentees which in turn might result in the parties involved benefiting from ongoing vocational training opportunities.

Disadvantages of e-mentoring actions:

- the use of text-based communication (e.g. emails or forum) poses the risk of misinterpretation because of its asynchronous character,
- In e-mentoring settings, it takes more time for a trust relationship to be built
- There may be dysfunctions in the use of digital tools and remote communication techniques
- There may be discrepancies as to the level of writing skills amongst participants in E-mentoring actions (Ensher & Murphy, 2007).

However, in any case where an organization plans to develop an e-mentoring program, it is useful for program planners to take into account the nine (9) steps presented in the previous chapter, both at the design stage and at the stage of the project implementation. In addition, designers need to make decisions about other issues such as:

- To which extent will digital tools and distance communication techniques be included in the e-mentoring program?
- Which and what kind of technology tools should be utilized within the context of the e-mentoring program?
- Who will monitor, control and coordinate the content management system, as well as of the technological tools involved?
- Who will take the role of e-coordinator under the e-mentoring program?
- Will there be a team e-mentoring aspect as part of the overall design of the e-mentoring program, through modern communication and digital tools?

6 Concluding Remarks on the mentoring framework

This guide reflects an attempt to identify the mentoring framework (types of mentor, how to develop mentoring programs, and how to optimize the relevant actions that are related to the “ACTive citizenship” project and beyond) and the development of e-mentoring actions, in an attempt to show that mentoring is an essential component of the development of competences and skills of those involved in a project or organization, with the ultimate aim of providing high-quality training services. Last but not least, mentoring supports and guides the collaborators in a systematic, but also informal manner, providing opportunities for skills sharing, capacity building, and team building.

Part 2: Implementing a mentoring program for the formation of a learning and practice community

1 Building rapport through mentoring

The theoretical/academic justification of mentoring, as already described, comprises the starting point for defining the rapport between researchers/mentors and teachers.

Following the completion of the two-day face-to-face training and consultation regarding the training, emphasis is now being placed on building a mentoring rapport between researchers and teachers, who participate in the implementation of the ACTproject.

For this purpose, certain stages are implemented, which are presented in the following section.

1.1 E-mentoring stages

i) Planning timeline and collaborative formation of the e-mentoring sessions context

Teachers are informed by the researchers about:

- the platform which shall support their collaboration and the technical details of its use,
- the coordinators/researchers that shall provide mentoring guidance.

A reflective discussion, then, follows, through which:

- the purpose and goals of mentoring are defined
- the timeline of mentoring is optimised

- the role and obligations of mentors and teachers are stipulated on the basis of their mutual collaboration.

ii) Forming a learning and practice community through a blended model of mentoring

Teachers' mentoring is implemented through a blended model, which consists of on-line and face-to-face sessions (thus forming a learning and practice community). In addition, synchronous communication (e.g phone and video calls), which aims to encourage and facilitate teachers, is recommended. Furthermore, five (5) on-line and three (3) face-to-face meetings are proposed, including the two-day face-to-face training.

In each of these (face-to-face and on-line) sessions, teachers are asked to discuss in a reflective, interpretative and objective manner, aiming to reach decisions on how to proceed with the implementation of the programme. The questions posed by mentors and stimulated by the documents comprising the deliverables aim to positively engage teachers. By responding to these questions, teachers present their approaches, while associating them with their obligations during the implementation of the ACTproject. Overall, through this process, teachers themselves specify which actions need to be taken, how to achieve their goals, whether they are heading in the right direction and what needs to be modified.

During the sessions, the function of a learning and practice community developed among teachers is prominent, while mentors, most of the times, keep a distance, allowing teachers to take initiatives. Teachers exchange opinions and ideas, submit proposals, discuss and suggest solutions to problems; all implemented within an environment of collaboration, support and good manner.

For e-mentoring to be provided, a learning management system/ web-based collaborative platform (i.e. Moodle environment), also functioning as an on-line repository of documents, as well as other available web tools are utilised. Teachers upload their own material, using, as much as possible, the existing uploaded materials, while taking part in on-line sessions.

One of the face-to-face sessions is stipulated to have a reporting/reviewing and festive character and is to take place in each of the participating schools,

where teachers have provided their services. This session is to be conducted towards the end of the implementation phase of the programme, as a planned event, where teachers along with pupils, present their projects. Teachers assigned to other schools are also encouraged to attend these sessions (one session separately organised by each participating school), thus promoting the achievements of the learning and practice community, which has been developed through e-mentoring.

3. Concluding Remarks – to ensure the sustainability of ACTproject

Taking all the aforementioned into account, it is imperative that mentoring projects be implemented mainly through web tools and on-line communication, thus employing a learning management system, while ensuring that face-to-face sessions and/or synchronous communication (e.g. phone and video calls) shall also take place.

In this way, face-to-face sessions help to overcome difficulties in presenting the actual concept of the programme or any other potential malfunctions and misinterpretations. Last but not least, direct and unprohibited access to a web-based learning management system, limitation of geographical constraints and minimisation of implementation cost are also achieved. In this context, mentoring sessions ensure the overall effective implementation of the ACTproject, therefore reflecting positive results to the school communities involved.

ANNEX:

Bibliography (Part 1: Pedagogical background)

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