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Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen

Models of Mentoring in Language Teacher Education

 Springer

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*In honor of the late
Professor Richard B. Baldauf Jr. (The
University of Queensland, Australia)*

Preface

As professionals, who have developed our academic skills within a Western educational tradition, but who have lived and worked in Asian cultures, we have had the experience of being mentored at various times in our careers. Much of our experience in being mentored has been informal, through degree supervision experiences, or through working with more senior colleagues. Sometimes, it has occurred within groups of peers, or in more organized training programs, laboratory work groups, through formal workplace support or from journal editors. For the authors, working with mentors – some of whom may not have seen themselves in this role – and subsequently being mentors ourselves has had a major positive impact on our careers. But, beyond this anecdotal evidence, what do we really know about mentoring/peer mentoring as a process and its impact on our professional development as educators and that of others?

This research monograph examines this question and its related issues from the perspective of English language teachers. In most educational institutes and schools today, teachers in general and language teachers in particular are expected to maintain and continuously upgrade their professional standards. For this to occur, they need to be provided with conditions and opportunities that allow them to reflect on and develop their teaching. Mentoring provides a possible avenue for this to occur both in teacher education and teacher professional development. This need for effective mentoring for preservice and in-service teachers has been an emerging theme in language teaching circles in recent years. However, the field of mentoring for language teachers is relatively unexplored in both of these language teacher education contexts, and the literature on mentoring language teachers is limited when compared with that of other teacher development issues such as teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) methodology.

This volume provides a research-based, practice-oriented introduction and guide for teachers, teacher educators, and coordinators who wish to understand and implement a mentoring approach to preservice and in-service teacher development programs. The book focuses on the two main themes: (1) mentoring and (2) peer mentoring in English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education with specific research findings related to each theme.

This volume, which is framed by the disciplines of ESL/EFL and teacher training, draws on the broader literature to provide insights into issues related to mentoring/peer mentoring, which has been under-researched in ESL/EFL teacher education in general and in Asia in particular. This book provides teacher educators, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers with informed, empirically-based, yet practical information about the implementation of mentoring models that can be used for developing beneficial language teaching outcomes in Asian-specific contexts.

Although this volume reflects our findings from a series of related research studies conducted in the Vietnamese context, it is designed to allow readers to consider how they might apply a mentoring approach in their own situations. As the following chapter summaries indicate, the volume covers a wide range of topics related to mentoring and peer mentoring for language teachers both at preservice and in-service levels.

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the current situation of English as a foreign language teaching in Vietnam and stresses the need for reforms in in-service and preservice teacher education. It argues that many of the issues found in language education in Vietnam are also common to other Asian contexts.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of teacher learning theories which underpin the concept of mentoring and peer mentoring and frameworks of mentoring and peer mentoring. It highlights the use of the mentoring/peer approach in teacher education. This chapter then describes different forms of mentoring, formal and informal with their main features, and provides an example of teacher reflective feedback.

Chapter 3 critically reviews the use of mentoring for preservice teachers during the preservice practicum. Then, it examines an example which reports findings from a study which investigated the situation of mentoring preservice language teachers during the practicum in Vietnam.

Chapter 4 describes the major components in the design for a formal mentoring program and covers such topics as training mentors, attributes of mentors, and mentor-mentee matching. For each section, there is a more general theoretical discussion, and then a specific research-related example from an Asian context is provided, e.g., research is discussed which explores what personal attributes preservice teachers expect from their mentors.

Chapter 5 introduces the use of an integrated mode of mentoring (group mentoring) for preservice teachers during the practicum as an approach to facilitating teacher reflection. The chapter reports findings from a qualitative study which explored how this model of mentoring fostered preservice teachers' reflection. It describes in detail the implementation of this model and its effectiveness in developing preservice teachers' reflective skills using data from interviews and recordings of mentoring conversations.

Chapter 6 provides a comprehensive research example that investigates how a peer-mentoring model has influenced preservice EFL teachers' professional practice. A mixed method design that included both qualitative and quasi-experimental techniques was used to investigate the impact of a formal peer-mentoring intervention program on participants' professional practice during the practicum. The study

sheds light on the use of peer mentoring as a model for developing beginning teachers' professional practice and its effectiveness in a specific Asian context.

Chapter 7 reports on a comprehensive research study whose aims were to investigate how a peer-mentoring model might influence preservice EFL teachers' perceptions of the amount of support they receive from their peers. The study sheds light on the use of peer mentoring as a model for supporting beginning teachers and its effectiveness in a specific Asian context.

Chapter 8 reports a case study which explores the experience of groups of Vietnamese EFL teachers toward their participation in a formal peer-mentoring model over one semester. Through observations and interviews, this study offers insights into the participants' experiences as well as the application of formal peer mentoring as a model of EFL teacher professional development. This study offers insights into the participants' experiences with this model in Vietnam as well as how this model could be appropriately used as a model of teacher professional development in a particular Asian context.

Chapter 9 examines the issues of implementation of peer mentoring for preservice and in-service teachers.

Chapter 10 summarizes the main argument of the book and makes suggestions about future practice.

Throughout the book, there is an emphasis on:

- A developmental approach to assist and support preservice and in-service language teachers to advance their professional practice
- A focus on findings from research studies in Vietnamese settings and implications for the wider implementation in other contexts
- Implications for practice

I believe this volume provides an important addition to the literature on mentoring for EFL language teachers and to our understanding of the implementation of mentoring in a specific context in Asia. The volume offers a stimulating and thorough examination of mentoring and peer mentoring, integrating theory and practice throughout. The volume should be of interest to language teacher educators, teachers, and policy makers. The findings from these studies, which are discussed in the light of previous research and in the context of teacher learning theories, are a useful source of information for a variety of educational groups interested in finding ways to improve the quality of teacher education programs and for carrying out teacher development activities in their own settings.

Kensington, NSW, Australia
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Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen

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