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From Observation of Teaching Practices to Mentoring and Teacher Development in a Multicultural Setting: A Case Study

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Abstract

This article examines whether teacher mentoring can be achieved in the Greek EFL multicultural teaching context, within the private sector, mainly through observation and if this could contribute to the teacher (observee) or even mentor (observer) development. Observation explores everyday multicultural classroom situations and results in a trustworthy interaction between the observer and the teacher about how these could be handled. Mentoring is provided by means of feedback and discussion in an attempt to educate the teacher, offer corrective options and promote reflection. Ideally, development is produced either via the mentor's suggested alternatives or by the teacher's own introspection. The article concludes with findings that suggest the suitability of the direct observation form for observing teaching practices in a multicultural setting and the effectiveness of the face-to-face provision of feedback. Furthermore, evidence is provided regarding achievement of mentoring in the private sector, within a working environment of professionalism, respect and trust. Finally, it is shown that teacher development is an issue relying mainly on the personal approach, with innovation and change being its fundamental characteristics.

Keywords: *Observation, Mentoring, Development, Feedback*

Introduction

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English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Greece often lack the capability of receiving further training and education with a view to their professional development, as the existing programs are limited, rather costly and focus mostly on teaching practices. Moreover, teachers may yearn for up-to-date education and/or counseling to reflect on and could benefit from supportive mentoring which is absent in their working contexts. Recent researches have shown (Papachristou, 2018; Sakellari, 2018) that many teachers resort to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools for counseling on teaching practices and professional development, to meet their needs when Centers of Foreign Languages (CFL) fail to do so.

The present research is based on an in-service EFL teaching context in the private sector and will attempt to provide data on the feasibility of mentoring teachers through observation, resulting hopefully in their self-reflection and development with the use of Freeman's (1982) Alternatives Approach. The research was carried out in a private institute, involving one EFL teacher. Through close cooperation and contact on specific teaching situations in her class, a case study was structured which involved the two main stakeholders: the teacher and the trainer. The proposed research and its findings will attempt to initiate a discussion on whether mentoring is a viable response to the question of teacher development in the Greek EFL multicultural teaching context and how this can be realized with the use of minimum resources and personnel. The teacher's education method is based on Wallace's (1991) reflective model, aiming at the mentee's self-reflection through the assistance of a collaborating and facilitating mentor.

The article begins with the theoretical framework of the research and continues with some basic research prerequisites of the study. Then, the observation sequence and the data collection process are discussed, supported by additional facts about observation and mentoring. Finally, the research questions are examined against the major findings and an interpretation of the development attained is attempted. The article concludes with suggestions for further research.

Methodology

Theoretical framework

In his study about *teacher training* and *development*, Freeman (1982) makes a distinction between them in that the first centers on immediate needs while the latter caters to "broader, long-term concerns" beyond the classroom environment. He considers observation as a basic tool in in-service teachers' training and development and presents three approaches to work with. In the *Supervisory Approach*, the observer (usually an administrator or supervisor) observes the class session and then discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson as well as the teacher's performance based on specific standards and makes suggestions. In the *Alternatives approach*, the observer presents the trainee teacher with a number of alternatives to choose from, which should be reasonable and achievable. He must not show preference in any of them in order to prompt the teacher to think critically and offer him/her the perspective of long-term professional development. The *Non-Directive Approach* aims at establishing a supportive and not evaluative or judgmental relationship between the trainer and the trainee. The core of this approach lays in the post-observation discussion where the observer has to primarily obtain a

broad picture of the classroom context and then move to the teaching details, in close cooperation with the observee. This approach sets "a process of reflection" for the trainee, who in turn decides on what to implement with the assistance of the observer. For Freeman (1982), the choice of the approach to follow is up to the observer, taking into account the trainee's needs and experience. The Supervisory (teacher's *what to do*) and the Non-Directive (teacher's *why I do it*) Approaches are suitable for training and development respectively, while the Alternatives Approach (teacher's *how I do it*) lies in the middle, combining both. In this case study, the Alternatives Approach is mainly applied and includes observation, feedback and reflection.

Another basic conceptual work was Wallace's (1991) models of teacher education (i.e., the *craft model*, the *applied science model* and the *reflective model*), which very clearly define the role of the trainer in its interaction with the trainee. As Beaumont (2005) presents, the *Craft Model* adheres to the belief that the trainee teacher should learn from experienced teachers, who have the absolute power and control over what takes place in the education process. The teacher has to follow the training orders and passively imitate the techniques presented. No change or creativity is allowed. It is a theory-based model, where training takes place in schools and immediate action is needed. There is no room for reflection. The *Applied Science Model* presents colleges and universities as the sole institutes responsible for the training of teachers. It is also a theory-based model, which includes academic training. Here, theory and practice merge for a successful outcome. The *Reflective Model* seeks to settle possible contradictions and offer a role to both teachers and trainers in the process, placing emphasis on the development of the trainees' ability to reflect on their teaching as the foundation for effective training. This model combines practice and theory and values the trainees' experience and knowledge acquired. In this research, the *Reflective Model* prevails over the other two, due to its less strict, more collaborative and interpersonal approach.

Research prerequisites and justification

Based on Leshem and Bar-Hama's (2008) research on the evaluation of teaching, the focus was on observation for development with the term *development* defined as the improvement of trainees' performance in the classroom by pinpointing their strengths and weaknesses and by enhancing their perception through counseling and feedback, focusing mainly on development than on assessment. For this reason and based on Williams (1989, as cited in Malderez, 2003), the focus of the observation process was determined by the observe herself. The suggestions made were left to the teacher to decide whether to implement or not, judging from her own teaching situation. Development meant discussion between the mentor and the mentee in order to find solutions about problems within the classroom so that the teacher might continue to learn after the end of the project (Williams, 1989). Moreover, observation principles and strategies elicited from workshops were introduced (e.g., the use of a standard observation form, respect of the teaching experience of the teacher, discussion of alternative options, refraining from being too negative (Sheal, 1989), underlining the positive features of the lesson (Williams, 1989)). The

only thing that was discussed was the selection of the class to be observed in order to fit the schedules of both parties (i.e., mentor and mentee).

Leshem and Bar-Hama (2008) presented the most common observational tools: observation forms, detailed written notes on the session, audio-recordings for supporting the notes taken and, finally, video-recordings. In this research, different observational forms were used along with audio-recordings (Jonston & Goettsch, 1999, in Bartels, 2005), in the absence of the observer. After all, classroom observation without an observation form could create problems and lead to subjectivity (Sheal, 1989). However, audio-recordings were taped in every lesson and were at the researcher's disposal. Video-recordings were excluded from the very start, mainly due to the possible negative effect this might have on the teacher-trainee and students' behavior and performance in the classroom (Lasagabaster, 2011). Notes had been taken during every lesson in order to assist in the formal compilation of the observation form. All three observation tools (i.e., physical presence, notes, recordings) were used to triangulate the data (Foss & Kleinsasser 2001, in Bartels, 2005) and optimize the research results on the teacher's performance.

Research on observation criteria has generated various observational forms, with different aims and structures, each one drafted for a specific purpose (evaluation, assessment, etc.). Leshem and Bar-Hama (2008) point out that in some instances one may not find the proper criteria to grade a student teacher or the existing criteria may be not pertinent to the context. To further support her case, Leshem (ibid.) presents O'Leary's (2004) conclusion on the subjectivity of the observation checklist. He (2004) specifically mentions that a lesson should be taken as a "complete entity" and not separated in smaller parts and that criteria assessing teaching are different for every lesson. He concludes by presenting the advantages of the qualitative over the quantitative approach. These claims were also advocated by the trainee teachers themselves (Leshem, 2008, pp. 263-4), who expressed preference in an overall *holistic* versus *analytical* assessment (i.e., numerical grading). In order to create an effective observation form all elements delineated by Sheal (1989) were considered: *guidance for observation and post-observation meetings*, *objectivity*, *focused feedback* and an *observation record to trace teacher's development.*. In order to enhance the developmental approach of the observation, the observation form concluded with the teacher's reflection (Williams, 1989).

The scope of observation was of immense importance and would play a significant role in the whole research process. After all, focusing on too many aspects could distract the observer from the real problems while a focus on limited elements generates in depth reflection, greater awareness, clearer objectives and more perspectives (Edge, 2014). This could also cause problems to the observed teacher, who might be confused, as she could not focus on many features in each lesson, as Leshem (et al.) (2008) marks. Therefore, Pitton's advice (2006, in Delaney, 2012) on class observation process was followed and, thus, a pre-observation meeting was held with the mentee prior to all observation sessions in order to discuss the entire project and indicate aspects of the class to focus on; setting therefore the goals of the observation (Mann, 2005, in Stillwell, 2008). The number of items to be observed was limited to three (Sheal, 1989) in order to maximize the effect while the choice of items was mutually agreed upon.

Observing the field input

Lessons' observation

For optimum research purposes, the focus of the observation was on three specific items, indicated by the mentee. Therefore, a ready-made observation form was used in the first lesson, which had a holistic approach. It became obvious that forms or rubrics comprising checklists could not find use and that they were structured purely for evaluation purposes. An attempt was made to create a new form, but it was immediately realised that it involved a mechanical approach to evaluation, employing a checklist. Therefore, a new observation form came up with a structure including both observer's feedback and observee's reflections.

The first lesson initiated the mentorship quite smoothly as regards the teacher and the students' attitude toward it. As can be seen in the relevant observation form, a good teaching environment had been established by the teacher and the learners had enjoyed the lesson. Nevertheless, the teacher taught a lesson based almost entirely on the coursebook and the learners had a restless behavior from the very beginning, resulting in a minimum required order in class. The mentor's suggestion was for the teacher to deal with the low-level disruptive behavior and to motivate her learners, points that she admitted in her reflections on the lesson.

At the next lesson that took place the following week, the teacher followed the same pattern as to the coursebook teaching and friendly stance toward the students. But this time things got worst concerning their behavior in the class. Despite the mentor's presence, they were extremely distracted and engaged in a boyish behavior. They specifically tended to speak about personal or state school issues and even stood up and made drawings on the window. To our amazement, they were not at all scolded and the teacher sought the institute owner's help to restore order. This revealed the reluctance of the teacher to take disciplinary measures and regain her authority in the classroom. The teacher in her reflections admitted the negative impact her action had on her status and position as a teacher and realized the words of the observer that "limits toward students should be put from the beginning". Therefore, we took the initiative to educate the mentee with relevant literature and articles in order to develop an understanding of possible measures or actions on classroom discipline, pupils' behavior and motivation, low-level disruption and speaking activities.

The next lesson – third in a row – was very critical in terms of teacher's decisions and measures taken to counter the problems she had identified. This time the teacher used new tasks to motivate and reward the learners and took credit for it so as to continue to introduce new activities. The teacher was this time successful in maintaining class discipline due to the extra activities she initiated and not to disciplinary measures. Interestingly enough, the teacher brought into the classroom a questionnaire to elicit learners preferred activities and methods of teaching, based on relevant needs analysis literature. In it, students expressed their affection toward her and were very fond of her personality and way of teaching. This particular lesson was more successful than previous ones in terms of learners' motivation, involvement and class control. The teacher on her reflections admitted that this lesson was more improved due to the realia, questionnaire and handwork used. Learners were found to be less disobedient and the fact that

they showed a positive stance toward her through the questionnaire, boosted her overall confidence and teaching approach. The teacher concluded by accepting the fact that there was "certainly room for improvement." This proved the teacher's intention to adopt some suggestions made and put them into practice into the classroom, aiming at her development through teaching improvement.

The fourth lesson took place the following week. Conditions were favourable for an effective lesson, which could end the project successfully. Class discipline was maintained, although students tended not to realize the limits between being active learners in the classroom and behaving properly. Overall, this lesson was constructive, as real life activities were introduced, the teacher applied past suggestions to provide examples to learners prior to new exercises and to explain them their mistakes in order to make them understand why the reply given was not correct. The teacher's comments on the feedback were aligned to it, stating that she had followed the observer's advice from the previous time.

Based on the productive findings of the previous four sessions and the developing progress of the teacher's performance, we decided to let her continue with her teaching alone and to leave her more space, by observing the next two lessons through audio recordings provided by the institute. As the fifth session focused exclusively on revision, dictation and homework, no particular progress was made in the areas identified by the teacher. No new activity was introduced, learners were talking about external interests or kept on negotiating activities for too long with the teacher and no constructive speaking was produced as the teacher continued to use L1 almost exclusively when addressing the students. The teacher, although contacted several times, provided no reflection on the feedback. The following audio recorded session had the same negative findings ascertained (no real-life activities used, major use of L1, exclusive use of coursebook activities, class order dictated by the learners) that led us into providing email counseling only and not written feedback.

Believing firmly in our conclusions about an ineffective and low-controlled lesson on behalf of the teacher, we decided to provide her with strong evidence and justify our findings. Therefore, we designed a new observation form, focusing almost exclusively on the learners' behavior in the classroom and the use of L1 and L2, through tabulation of frequency instances. This form was used in the next two consecutive audio-recorded lessons.

The 7th and 8th lessons and the respective observation forms compiled presented clear facts on what was taking place within the classroom. The learners were usually engaged in discussing out of class incidents or delaying the smooth progress of the session by referring to irrelevant issues. The students' signs of restlessness were more evident than before during the second half of the lesson, caused by fatigue and unrest. The amount of the use of L1 by the students compared to L2 was enormous (162 times over 38 of speaking and 37 of reading, 124 of L1 to 62 of L2 and 56 reading), but it could be related to the disproportional use of L1 and L2 by the teacher (188 vs 45 and 240 vs 59). Real-life use speaking was introduced through prepared talk or role play, with minimum signs of restlessness during practice. A suggestion was made for

more role play and group activities in the 2nd half of the lesson, to avoid possible "troublesome behavior".

The last observed session (9th lesson) took place after a two months period, to help the mentee teacher to reflect and work on her lessons more. It started with revision on irregular verbs, to introduce the negative and interrogative forms of past simple, an activity not monitored during previous lessons and continued with the activities found in the coursebook. After 53 minutes in class, students' behavior resulted in interrupting the teacher with irrelevant to the class questions or imitating animal voices, which concluded with negotiating the content of the break. During the 2nd half of the lesson, following a reading activity, the teacher came up with some handwork similar to that of the 3rd lesson, where learners had to match names with monuments or places and then glue them together on coloured paper board. Conclusively, this lesson included some of the negative aspects observed in all previous lessons. The teacher had no lesson plan in mind and was restricted to the activities in the coursebook and the relevant material. Her only contribution to change was handwork with no obvious learning objective. Students' behavior had an impact on the lesson's progress, either by interruption or negotiation, sharing the power of decision making with the teacher. Some use of L2 in real-life context was made but it was restricted to coursebook exercises.

Further facts on observation and mentoring conducted

Although observation is a quite demanding task and observers often limit the range of classroom visits and may avoid systematic observation (Bartels, 2005, p. 2; Sheal, 1989, p. 103), the intention was to observe as many lessons as possible so as to enhance the "generalizability of the findings". Moreover, except for the three main points identified, our observations included most of the components (instructional, affective, language) defined by Leshem & Bar-Hama (2008) such as instructions' clarity, classroom control, providing feedback and reinforcement, use of L1, lesson planning, having clear objectives and designing new activities, to provide the teacher with the most beneficial feedback on her teaching performance. Analyzing the process put into effect during the observation series as a whole, it should be made clear that all feedback given to the teacher along with the verbal comments on her performance was never evaluative but rather positive, so as to encourage and boost the teacher's confidence (Wang & Seth, 1998). A possible disadvantage might be that the post-observation meetings, being also a pre-observation meeting for the lessons that followed, did not last long and consequently were not constructive enough. Additionally, most Sheal's (1989) types of observation forms (structured description, frequency tabulation and checklist) were tested. Also, conforming to Wang & Seth (1998), the feedback provided opportunities for reflection so as to allow the teacher to explore and discover, while at the same time the teacher did not have to adopt everything the Understander proposed. Moreover, the teacher was left to decide specific classroom practice for herself and to make her own choices as to what was most suitable for her own teaching situation, adding to the developmental aspect of the teacher, according to Bax (1997) and Williams (1989). What ought to be further clarified is why the teacher decided not to give the required attention and not to take

necessary measures to overcome the problems she had identified since she knew what the observer would be looking for during the lesson, as this was a "mutual problem-solving experience" (Williams,1989, p. 87). It may be what Walsdorf & Lynn (2002, in Vlachou, 2016) support that novice teachers, fearing of being considered as incompetent, do not ask for help or advice and become isolated and lonely. Nonetheless, the fact that she did not give a 'model' lesson to attract positive feedback (Cosh, 1999, p. 24), enhanced her developmental instinct. In reality, on trying to determine the teacher's stance as passive, collaborative, or adversarial (Waite, 1983, in Chamberlin, 2000), this was collaborative in words but passive or even adversarial to some point, mainly as regards corrective actions. This may be justified by Freeman (1994, in Bartels, 2005) who ascertains that trainees' verbalizations do not depict their genuine thoughts but rather an approximation of them. Additionally, there may be cases, according to Akbari (2007) where teachers although aware of what the problem is, they lack the ability to take any measure.

In all lessons observed, not a single lesson plan was ever handed by the teacher, although requested, adopting a quite unprofessional attitude. Moreover, teaching materials were rarely produced to me, constituting observation data the sole source of information about the teacher, contrary to Bartel's suggestions (2005). As to the learners usual and continuous misbehavior, Farrell remarks (2008) that when it occurs it disrupts the momentum and learning process of the fellow learners, leaving the teacher with the dilemma whether to ignore it, risking to be regarded as not being in control.

Reflections on the project's development

Discussion of the research questions

The research questions posed and the findings providing relevant answers are as follows:

a. What are the most favourable or effective observation tools to collect data about specific teaching contexts?

Based on the findings, each teaching situation requires a different approach as to the gathering of information and tools effective on one occasion may not be satisfactory on another. Moreover, the type of observation, either training, evaluation, research, or development dictates the form of the tool to be used. In this case study, aiming at teacher development, data were collected from direct observation through relevant forms or indirectly, via audio recordings. Also, the observee presented her comments by reflecting on the feedback given, integrating feedback and reflection in "reflective conversations" (Brandt, 2008, p. 37). The direct observation form was a most credible solution because it was purposeful, objective and not complicated. It gave a clear representation of the entire lesson and monitored the teacher's areas of concern as well. It did not need to be compiled immediately but at a later stage, based on the notes taken during the session. The section on the reflection of the teacher invited her to contribute to the findings and be the focal point of each case. She became aware of the comments given, presented her thoughts and decided which suggestion she might find useful in her class session. Obviously, the indirect

observation form was demanding in use and served certain purposes, inappropriate for development. Regarding the other two collection tools, the notes provide an easier, although vast in content, approach, which produce a holistic picture of the lesson, not suitable for focusing on specific areas. Additionally, audio recordings are full of input details, that may distract the observer's attention from the real point of interest. Therefore, focused observation forms, as those used in this study, have the most effective result, are easy to handle, even by non-experts and most remarkably they welcome the observee's comments, a prerequisite for development.

b. How will the exchange of feedback between teacher and mentor take place best: conventionally/face-to-face or through computer-mediated communication (CMC)?

During the study, the teacher and the mentor communicated either directly or indirectly, through end-of-lesson and post-meetings, phone calls, emails and messages. Feedback was provided in person when lessons were observed, and via CMC, when the lessons had been audio-recorded. Each way has its strong points and shortfalls. Face-to-face feedback has a direct effect on the recipient and may result in a constructive discussion of the findings. However, it may neglect important points not taken into account due to the time limitation and its directness may cause the teacher's reaction if the feedback is considered negative. CMC feedback is informal, facile, immediate and less time depending. Nevertheless, it is the receiver's choice to respond on time if comments are needed and there is no visualization of the recipient's reactions. In our case, CMC feedback was dispatched for supporting purposes and in the absence of a post-meeting. The observe favoured face-to-face mentoring, due to the physical presence of the observer and his immediate comments and underlined the less effectiveness of CMC "due to the distance".

c. Can mentoring be achieved in the Greek L2 teaching context and especially in the private sector; are there minimum criteria for effectiveness in mentoring?

Mentoring can be achieved in the private sector as long as suitable mentors could assume their duties and provide mentoring services at committed and motivated teachers requiring them. These findings are in line with Sakellari (2018, pp. 23-26) who reveals that more than 50% of her research audience stated that they feel they need help in classroom behavior management and in organizing extra-curricular activities, while a 49% said that they feel they need mentoring. Therefore, EFL teachers need both counseling and mentoring to counter shortfalls not covered by the private institutes, 66% of whom have not organized any workshop or seminar in the last years, while they do not organize regular staff meetings or provide regular feedback to their teachers (Sakellari, 2018). Consequently, mentoring necessitates trained personnel, availability of time and money for the project to work. Private institutes should provide for all of them, not just counseling, which is not sufficient for teacher development. The study's findings revealed that mentoring was achieved, since the mentee accepted the points made about the improvement of her teaching as a result of an effective, objective and constructive feedback, which she will apply in her future classes. By admitting that the support and guidance provided, boosted her

confidence, she confirmed Delaney's findings (2012) on practiced mentoring activities. The mentee also supported Maynard's and Chamberlin's claims (2000, in Delaney, 2012) on good mentoring practices, valuing trust shown, advice and constructive criticism she received as well as feeling welcomed and accepted.

d. Which are the prerequisites for successful mentor-mentee interaction?

These are trust, sincerity, respect (Chamberlin, 2000) and professionalism in both parts, accompanied by good interpersonal communication (Sheal, 1989). Trust is gained throughout the cooperation and is built upon professional behavior. Professionalism that promotes a valid result. Respect is crucial to keep the interaction open and reliable. The mentee also marked, among others, the support and guidance of the mentor, the objective and constructive feedback/comments, respect, commitment and, particularly, punctuality. Ultimately, as Brandt (2008) acknowledges, a good trainee – tutor relationship influences the value of feedback for the trainee.

e. Are there essential characteristics/qualifications a mentor should have?

In every context, a mentor is a qualified expert who provides his/her assistance, where needed. Others reside on his/her expertise to provide a solution or an alternative to a problem. According to bibliography, mentors assume the roles of evaluators, assessors and counsellors, being experts in their field. Kennedy (1993) claims that a supervisor cannot combine the roles of assessor and counsellor. Ideally, a proper mentor should combine the two main qualities; training and experience. Moon (1994) supports that initial training is clearly essential. This is further supported by Vlachou (2016) in her research in that a good mentor should have received official training and have experience as a teacher; not just experience and a general perception of being a 'good' teacher (Moon, 1994, p. 347). Additionally, although experience is provided free through the years by teaching, training is scarce. Hopefully, such an education could be achieved through Masters degrees, like HOU's, that provide the necessary theoretical background, absent in EFL reality. The observed teacher, besides those points mentioned in the previous question, added the qualities of "expertise, objectiveness, kindness, spirit of collaboration, confidentiality and respect" as well as an affiliative behavior.

f. Is teacher development possible and if yes how can this be estimated; is it only a mentee privilege or could the mentor also benefit from it?

Woodward (1991) supports that teacher development is voluntary, long term, ongoing, awareness based, bottom-up driven, has an internal agenda and is a process of lifelong learning. Additionally, Guskey (2002, in Papachristou, 2018) maintains that teacher development is closely connected to the notion of reform through adoption of innovation, change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs and improvement of teaching practice.

In this research, there is no clear evidence that the observed teacher has achieved full development, as she accepted all feedback suggestions as positive but showed no relevant willingness to apply them in the classroom. However, she admitted that she received valuable advice and feedback on how to improve her teaching and that she adopted few changes in her lesson, which she will apply to a greater degree in her future classes, in combination with imaginative and attractive teaching. Furthermore, the minor adoption of exploration, experimentation and change in class showed minimum teacher development (Allwright, 2005, in Mann, 2005), which was counterbalanced by the powerful developmental tool of the recollection of events and incidents in classroom (Mann, 2005) with the use of reflection in the observation form. Therefore, her possible development was restricted to introspection and a theoretical posture that did not progress in practical form, which will hopefully take place in the future.

Mentor development is a personal issue, depending on each mentor's personality or even age and maturity (Kennedy, 1993). Traditionally, as Sheal (1989) posits, teacher supervisors are likely to be more resistant to training – we would add development. There is no such case that a mentor could benefit from each mentoring situation unless s/he is receptive to change and improvement. As teachers may reflect on each lesson, analyze their feedback and promote a novel approach, mentors may act similarly; and this may result in their development. Teaching is both providing and receiving training; why not mentoring? Moreover, the process of development through mentoring may be easier than development through teaching, for the reason that the mentor is working unobstructed toward betterment as s/he deals with adult trainees in contrary to the teacher who is obliged to manage everyday situations of youth behavior.

Mentoring may lead to development as classroom observation does (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011; Williams, 1989). Besides, as Hendry & Oliver (2012) state, observing may be of equal or more importance than being observed and given feedback. Every situation connected to the classroom, either in or out of it, as long as it is referring to teaching, may bring development. By observing a teacher, you observe yourself; by mentoring a professional, you are mentored too, this being a "learning incentive" (Widdowson, 1984, p. 89). As Swan maintains (1993), to foster the development of a trainee may promote your own development, both as a teacher and a teacher educator. Practice or training or mentoring and education may contribute to the professional enhancement of the willing individual. Teacher development and teacher educator (mentor) development are no different from personal development; they are self-initiated, self-directed and self-evaluated (Swan, 1993).

An interpretation of the mentee's professional behavior

Based on Akbari's (2007) paper on reflection, applying reflective practices does not result in improved teacher performance. Personality is a crucial factor, too. Dewey (1933/1993) argues that reflection is equal to professionalism. However, to identify problems in the classroom requires trained eyes, which novice teachers usually lack. Furthermore, Fuller (1970), in her reference to three stages of teacher development, speaks of the first stage where teachers

consider themselves in an ideal way, based on an ideal teacher they had and want to be liked by students. In the second stage, teachers are worried about classroom control and management and are concerned with surviving and blending into the professional context they belong to. Stage three is where teachers gain teaching confidence and formulate their own learning views and philosophies. Akbari (2007) claims that reflection cannot be introduced at the early stages of any teacher's career and if so, it may be counter-productive since teachers are still involved with minor classroom issues. Therefore, teachers have to acquire initial teaching experience through practice or routines before embarking on professional development. All the above, are strongly supported by the research findings and, additionally, by the fact that the mentee was reluctant to adopt the observer's suggestions for class management and lesson improvement, as she believed that everything was done well. Hence, it is evident that the subject mentee belongs to Fuller's (1970) first and second stage, where students, ideal performance and survival are more important than development, which is an evolution inherent in the third stage. Consequently, the mentee was not in a position to reflect effectively and achieve development, being restricted to teaching improvement.

Suggestions for further research

Papachristou (2018, pp. 45-51) reveals that 83% to 99% of the EFL teachers participating in her research acknowledged the use of ICT tools, like Facebook, blogs, etc., to access professional resources about teaching and to seek assistance toward self-directed professional development. Furthermore, according to Sakellari (2018), private institutes refrain from providing their teachers with counseling on teaching practices and they also do not organize seminars and workshops or staff meetings.

In view of the above, there are two major issues suggested for further research. The first could be addressed to EFL teachers and would concern their beliefs and comments about mentoring and mentors (qualifications, preferred responsibilities, mentoring process). In fact, the suggested research will act as a follow-up to this article, aiming at quantitative data statistical analysis. The second research could include private institutes to collect their views about the feasibility of mentoring within their facilities, employing experienced and properly educated teachers, members of their teaching staff.

Conclusion

This article researched the feasibility of mentoring EFL teachers in the private sector, with the use of observation, and the effect this might have on the development of the stakeholders. Based on a case study, it focused on the interaction between a novice EFL teacher, employed in a private institute, and a mentor, who supported her in class teaching.

Observation, mentoring and development rarely co-exist and therefore hard to study, concurrently. Observation requires consistency and organization; mentoring needs training and understanding; development entails retrospection. Consequently, only the first two can be measured, based on facts, while development can only be estimated through the reflection

employed. The research manifested the effectiveness of observation, the attempt made toward the professional application of mentoring and the disproportional use of reflection and achievement of development by the mentor (maximum) and the mentee (minimum).

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