

Traversing the Out-of-Field Mentoring: A Classic Grounded Theory

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ABSTRACT: Mentoring has a vital role in CNU-ILS for this is the main instrument of the mentor to prepare the student interns in the real teaching field however there are mentors who are assign to a specific discipline that is out of their discipline thus, there is a mismatch of expertise and effective mentoring is affected. Moreover, the purpose of this classic grounded theory study was to discover and explore how mentors experienced out-of-field mentoring. The grounded theory on Traversing the Out-of-Field Mentoring comprises of three stages and two cutting points. The first stage is Presuming Incompetence which ends with the first cutting point during the first day at a new job. The second stage is Forced Acceptance which ends with the second cutting point, success of mentees. The final stage is Finding Meaning. This new theory has an implication to the administration of a certain institution. This study was conducted in Cebu Normal University-Integrated Laboratory School, Cebu.

KEYWORDS : *mentoring, out-of-field, classic grounded theory, lived experienced*

I. INTRODUCTION

In economics, it's normally accepted that specialization maximizes productivity or efficiency. As Adam Smith preached, specialized workers are better able to hone their skills, become more efficient, and require less transition time between tasks (McDougald, 2016).

In teaching most especially in secondary education, teachers are specialized in the different discipline like Science, English and mathematics wherein they are considered expert on their chosen field.

In the Philippine Educational system, a student who wants to be a teacher with specialization should take the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED). It is a four year degree program intended to prepare students for becoming high school teachers. The program combines both theory and practice in order to impart students the needed knowledge and skills a high school teacher needs. The BSEd program trains students to teach one of the different learning areas such as English, Mathematics, General Science, Filipino, Social Studies, Biological Sciences, Physics, Chemistry, Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) and Home Economics and Livelihood Education (FINDUNIVERSITY,2019).

In Cebu City, one of the schools that produce future teachers is the Cebu Normal University. Before their teacher will graduate, they need to undergo the internship program. This program is meant to provide students with an opportunity to complement their formal learning with their practical knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes and to gain hands on experience Host Training Establishment (HTE) (CHED, 2017). For the student teachers to acquire with necessary knowledge and skills, they will be sent to the Integrated Laboratory School during their 4th year of their studies of the said university for the mentorship program.

In connection with the aforementioned statement above, student teachers under the mentorship program in the Integrated Laboratory School will be assigned to the different mentors who are experts of their chosen discipline. These mentors will guide the student interns in the development of their professional competencies, attitudes and their behaviors. Moreover, mentoring is often discussed as a means to increase desirable behavior like the academic performance and job performance and decrease undesirable behavior (Eby, et al., 2008). In teacher mentorship program, a more experienced teacher is assigned to a younger or new faculty member. (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009). The program aimed to help student teachers or interns to develop their communication and teachings skills and it also helped teachers mend the gap between preparing outside the classroom to actually putting skills to practice inside the classroom (Hellsten et al.,2009).

In the current situation in CNU-ILS, there are mentors who are assigned to a specific discipline that is out-of-their field of specialization. This happened due to the lack of teachers/mentors or due to the influx of mentors in every specialization. This is where the problem arises because the student teaching mentors can no longer fully guide their mentees because of the mismatch of expertise. The mismatch of expertise may lead to a

negative mentorship. This is when the mentor shows dysfunctional behavior of the task due to the lack of knowledge and interest to the field where he or she is dealing with. In fact, negative mentoring experiences reduce job satisfaction and increase turnover intentions and stress (Eby and Allen 2002).

Many studies have been conducted focusing on the effects of mentoring and also studies which deal with the experiences of the protégés/mentees but to date, no studies have been done focusing on the out-of-field mentors.

This study seeks to describe and explore the experiences of the mentors who are mentoring discipline or subject that is out of their specialization in order to create a theory on this phenomenon. It will examine their struggles and coping-up mechanism to get through and survive this job assignment.

II. METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The lack of literature specific to this population supported the use of qualitative methods. School Administrators cannot develop appropriate interventions when so little is known about the experience of these mentors. Classic grounded theory was chosen because it is a powerful method to understand unfolding processes. The mentors' experience in an out-of-field mentoring was an unfolding process.

The researcher of this study has asked permission from the participants and ensures the protection of the participants. Data collection, sampling and data analysis/interpretation occurred iteratively. Almost all sampling was purposive. To qualify for the study, each participant was (a) mentor in Integrated Laboratory School of Cebu Normal University of any gender assign to an out-of-field discipline/subject, (b) mentor with 1 year or more experience in out of field mentoring and (c) understood/spoke English. Sampling took place until saturation occurred.

The participants were contacted by the researcher himself about their willingness to participate in the study. The participant chose where, when, and how the non-structured interview happened. Interviews were not recorded, as suggested by Glaser (1998). The writing of field notes on a password-protected computer occurred within minutes of completion of the interviews. Data analysis started after the first interview. Constant comparison was used throughout the process to code and classify data. Memos were generated and sorted. The outcome of the study was the grounded theory traversing the out-of-field mentoring.

III. TRAVERSING THE OUT-OF-FIELD MENTORING

The theory of Traversing the Out-of-Field Mentoring has three stages with two cutting points. In the first stage, the out-of-field mentor is presuming incompetence. Presuming incompetence abruptly ends with the cutting point during the first day at a new job. This is when mentors start receiving lesson plans to check of the assigned subject/discipline that is out of their specialization. This cutting point may happen during the week before and after receiving the mentoring load. The second stage of forced acceptance starts after receiving all the lesson plans to check during the first day at work. During the stage of forced acceptance, the following experiences occur: dilemma, callow, and vexation. A second cutting point occurs at the success of the mentee. The third stage that follows the success of the mentee is finding meaning. Finding meaning includes two experiences: avenue for learning and opportunity for professional development.

Stage 1: Presuming Incompetence

Presuming Incompetence is the first stage of the theory. During this stage, mentors have apprehension in accepting the assigned discipline because they feel that they are incompetent and lack of the content knowledge of the subject most especially if it is not related to their field of specialization. However, this stage ends abruptly during the First day at a new job.

Cutting Point # 1: First day at a new Job.

The stage of presuming incompetence ends abruptly during the First day at a new job. This is when mentors start receiving lesson plans to check of the assigned subject/discipline that is out of their specialization. Anticipation becomes anxiety, fear, guilt, and dread. Joy is replaced by sadness and misery. Visions and plans are forever altered. All participants talked about getting the bad news.

Stage 2: Forced Acceptance

The stage of forced acceptance starts after the first day at a new job. In this stage, mentors don't have any choice but to accept and go through the process of the out-of-field mentoring even if they are not confident in dealing with it. Because of the fear of having the task, they experienced struggle and difficulty in dealing with their mentees and also of the job itself. Mentors were no longer productive for they are no longer motivated to work. The stage may last for months but always ends with the second cutting point: success of mentee. Three major experiences occur within the stage of forced acceptance: dilemma, callow, and vexation.

Dilemma. The mentors in this stage experienced mentoring as a very difficult task. They find it stressful because they have to deal with the different approaches, strategies, styles and techniques on how to teach the content or the concept of the subject they are assigned with. Moreover, out-of-field mentoring is also a

tiring work and it really entails preparation, content and pedagogy. In this experienced, mentors felt like they are helpless because they don't know what they could do in order to rescue/help the student teachers in times of failure in teaching. If the mentor is not familiar with the subject mentored, he will find it difficult to handle the subject and mentor the student interns. The mentors are in the state of hardship wherein they need to make decisions that would still benefit and help their mentees.

Callow. If you don't have the skill, you cannot teach. You cannot teach what you do not have. In this experienced, the mentors feel that they are incapable and inexperienced in dealing the out-of-field discipline. The out-of-field-mentor cannot share much with the content or cannot give everything to the student teachers on the subject he/she is assigned to because this is not his/her area of specialization. They can just deal with the process and techniques of the lesson but not the technicalities of the subject matter. There are really times that mentors could not really relate well with the topic and in this time, they felt that they are incompetent. They don't have mastery of the subject matter because they are not exposed to it and this is just given to them due to the lack of mentors in every specialization. Sometimes, the out-of-field mentor just presumed that the student interns are already good in delivering the content of the lesson without knowing the real quality of their plans. Because mentors had difficulty on the content of the subject matter, they just focused on the pedagogical side in the teaching performance of the student teachers/interns. In this stage also, the out-of-field mentor could not demand more from the student interns because he/she is not expert on it.

Vexation. In this stage, mentors are dissatisfied with their experiences in the out-of-field mentoring. The mentor finds their out-of-field mentoring experience meaningless because this doesn't help them grow personally and professionally. Some mentors, feel negative and hatred about their status and assigned job. They are frustrated because it causes misery and stress to them. Out-of-field mentoring doesn't help the student and the student interns because quality of job will be sacrificed.

Cutting Point # 2: Success of Mentee

The success of mentee is the second cutting point. This happens when the mentors see or witness that his/her mentees are able to learn and follow his/her suggestions resulting to the success of their performances in teaching. Mentors were able to see the positive side of their experiences despite of all the struggles and difficulties faced. This is the starting point of the acceptance of the task. They will now try to incorporate it to their daily routine and creating a positive attitude towards the task and trying to eliminate the fear, stress and unhappiness towards the fulfillment of doing it.

Stage 3: Finding Meaning

The Stage of Finding Meaning begins with the first success of the student teachers. The out-of-field mentors in this stage will try to start new things and incorporate mentoring in their daily routine. Finding meaning means seeking for the positive impact of the out-of-field mentoring in the lives of the mentors. Moreover, it focuses or gives attention on the benefits that can be gained from experiencing the out-of-field mentoring. Thus, the out-of-field mentors in this stage are motivated to do the task which is opposite from what they have experienced in the second stage. This is because they have gained something good from what they are doing. In this stage, the mentors have shown their coping mechanism in doing the out-of-field mentoring in order for them to survive the task. Two major experiences occur within the stage of Finding Meaning: Opportunity for Avenue for Learning and Opportunity for Professional Development.

Avenue for Learning. In this process, the out-of-field mentors have discovered something good or advantages in doing the process of out-of-field mentoring. This is when the mentors tried to cope up with the task by doing things that will make their job easy and beneficial for their mentees. Mentors in this stage will try to study and ask from more knowledgeable others about the assigned discipline. Moreover, it makes the mentor more knowledgeable and gives the mentor additional information. Mentors in this stage also learn new things in mentoring the subject out of their specialization. Aside from it, they also find out-of-field mentoring as a learning opportunity. This stage is a place where mentors grow mentally and where mentors enrich their knowledge which is out of their comfort zone or specialization.

Opportunity for Professional Development. It is the practice of maintaining and developing the skills and knowledge required in the job role. In this experience, mentors experienced out-of-field mentoring as a learning opportunity because it broadens their knowledge and perspective in terms of teaching strategies or teaching style and also because they are not just going to focus on one subject, so, they have to innovate more, have to think and have other resources on what to do, on what to teach and on what to give to their student teachers. Out-of-field mentoring is significant in broadening the experience of the mentor and in sharing to the future teachers. It also taught the mentors to be positive. These things might be perceived negatively by others but for me for the mentors it is a golden opportunity to develop new skills and attitude as mentor. Moreover, mentor should be flexible and willing to do any task. Aside from it, mentors find out-of-field mentoring as an experience that can hone their competence. Being an out-of-field mentor is actually a very challenging yet a fulfilling task because one can get to widen his/her horizon especially in mentoring, in learning different techniques and strategies in teaching, in providing corrective feedback and in a further developing competence as a teacher.

IV. DISCUSSION

The new theory, traversing the out-of-field mentoring, describes the experience of mentors who are assigned in the field of discipline out of their specializations. The theory emerged from the participants' stories. The theory contains three stages with process and properties and two cutting points. Traversing denotes that the mentors are finding way through the challenging journey of doing and executing the job in the process of out-of-field mentoring. This entails the complex process that the mentors need to experience in order for them to accept or diminish their fear in doing their assigned task.

Limitations

The participants were a homogenous group. There were only 10 participants. However, saturation occurred by the sixth interview. Six of the participants were female and four were male. The participants were volunteers willing to talk about their experience. The theory may just reflect the experience of mentors willing to talk about their experience and not those who still cannot talk about their struggles. It is unclear how to include those unwilling or unable to share, but that input could potentially modify the theory.

This study only included participants who have experienced to be a mentor for one year and more in the Integrated Laboratory School of Cebu Normal University. Only 3 of the participants have 1 year experience as a mentor of the student teaching interns but not new in out-of-field teaching. Thus, it would be important to explore the experience of the first time mentors and doesn't have more experience in teaching.

V. COMPARISON TO EXISTING LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Research

The mentoring relationship is a unique and important one in academia, combining elements of other relationships, such as parenting, coaching, and guild mastering. One mentor has written that his "research group is like an extended family or small tribe, dependent on one another, but led by the mentor, who acts as their consultant, critic, judge, advisor, and scientific father (Cram, 1989).

Ingersoll and Curran (2004) assert that out-of-field teachers are those that are assigned to teach subjects that do not match their field of preparation. Since, mentors were not assigned to the subject they are expert to, they feel that they are incompetent and they lack the knowledge on the subject matter. This may have negative effect to the mentors, student interns and students. According to du Plessis (2018), out-of-field mentors tend to be constantly conscious of their own unfavorable situation and often feel remorseful about any observed problems in the improvement of their students. They have this natural survival instinct wherein they will just find ways in order for them to deliver what is expected from them. They are also aware about the problems in terms of the mastery of the content where they experienced hardship in establishing and gathering resources needed for effective teaching.

According to Yates (2007), teacher learning does not only occur in formal settings, it also takes place informally during the course of the day at school. Kola and Sunday (2015) add that pedagogical content knowledge develops over time, and is gained from experience. Goge (2005) added that a teacher's knowledge of content matures as the teacher acquires experience.

Ingersoll (2001a, 2001b) said that some exceptional excellent teachers might be able to teach all or anything, but the average teachers are significantly reliant on intensive planning about specific pedagogies to teach specific matters. This exceptional mentors or teachers still finds satisfaction in taking part of the out-of-field mentoring. Effective teachers are not egocentric but the achievement and progress of students is their emphasis, understanding the importance of responsible relationships in order to motivate encouraging behavior while they work hard on positive relationships with their students (Frenzel et al., 2009). Positive attitude is important to stimulate students and its effect is satisfying. Teacher career contentment is a multidimensional paradigm that is critical to teacher preservation, teacher obligation, and school efficiency (Shann, 2010).

Sheshea, 2017, claims that out-of-field teachers/mentors make use of senior and/ or specialist teachers to help them understand concepts in the subject. Senior teachers also help these out-of-field teachers in identifying essential concepts that need special attention (Du Plessis, 2013). Moreover, mentors are self-regulated in dealing with the out-of-field mentoring. Self-regulated learning is defined as the extent to which learners (the out-of-field mentors) are active participants in their own learning behaviourally, motivationally and metacognitively (Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2008; Kramarski&Michalsky, 2009).

According to Grossman (1990), a teacher must use his general knowledge of the context in which he teaches to adapt it to the needs of their specific students. Morris et al. (2016) affirmed that when they claim that teachers who had engaged themselves in various professional learning activities were more efficacious than those who had not. Participants in this study reported that they engage themselves in learning activities that they initiated themselves incidentally. Reading was the learning activity all participants engaged themselves in (Sheshea,2017).

Aina (2016) maintains that teachers with low levels of efficacy tend to avoid the challenging parts of the content knowledge learners need to be taught. Significant teaching and learning are at jeopardy when students are stirred by anxiety rather than positive motivations and reactions (McInerney&McInerney, 2006).

Augusto (2019) stated that the lived experience of the mentors who were assigned in the out-of-field mentoring is a combination of struggle, opportunity, positivity and adaptability.

Theories

The grounded theory on Mentoring process by Pitney and Ehlers (2004) consists of 3 categories: (1) mentoring prerequisites, (2) interpersonal foundations, and (3) educational dimensions. Mentoring prerequisites included accessibility, approachability, and protégé initiative. Pitney and Ehlers (2004) suggested that potential mentors must not only be accessible but also approachable by a prospective protégé. Mentoring takes initiative on behalf of a student and the mentor. A mentoring relationship is complex and involves the coalescence of both interpersonal and educational aspects of an affiliation. As a professional-socialization tactic, mentoring offers students a way to anticipate the future professional role in a very personal and meaningful way.

According to Martin (2013), in order for the relationship to provide professional growth benefits to both parties a number of factors must be present. The participants must commit to the mentoring process, invest sufficient time for meetings and activities, and become comfortable with each other through honest, respectful and open interactions. It is imperative that school administration thoughtfully pair participants and provide time to facilitate the relationship.

A substantive theory on Mentoring Novice School Counselors by Johnson et., al. (2016) explaining a five-stage induction process. The stages of (a) starting over, (b) relying on previous knowledge and experiences, (c) gaining/learning new knowledge and experiences, (d) integrating new knowledge and experiences, and (e) looking forward were evidenced. They suggested that mentoring programs can be implemented in all school districts that do not currently have programs in place. Experienced school counselors can be provided training to address the needs of new school counselors entering the profession.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

Policy Implementation

The out-of-field mentoring has an implication to the policy implementation of the school. The out-of-field phenomenon is a worldwide concern, frequently disregarded by school-administrators or leaders in their school development plans and guidelines. The occurrence presents problems in determinations to attain excellent education and impartiality for all students in, as well as unsatisfying quality governance within schools. (du Plessis,2017)

Eacott (2013) as cited by du Plessis (2017) emphasizes the necessity for a common vision to be agreed upon in planning management prototypes and styles in schools. Thomson (2010) presented the significance of leadership that generates a space for individuals, with specific capability, knowledge and skill to develop their capital and independence in the field.

Glanz (2003) discussed that effective administration of transformation classifies problem areas, and cultivates policies to address apprehensions in order to create comprehensive schools.

Research

There is a great need for more research related to the out-of-field mentoring most especially focusing on the impact of it to the students who will be affecting with this mismatch problem. This problem may not only affect the students but also the community. If students are not properly mentored, gap in the profession will arise.

Researchers need to explore what is happening in every stages and cutting points of the outcome of the study so that proper intervention might be formulated for the mentors who will continue to experience this kind of phenomenon.

VII. CONCLUSION

Traversing the Out-of-field Mentoring is a new grounded theory that illuminates the experience of the mentors who are struggling in dealing the discipline out of their specialization. These mentors are unheard from this phenomenon. Thus, this theory fills a gap in knowledge. The theory provides a conceptual framework to support some interventions already done such as the creation of mementos. However, there is much to do ensure the welfare of the mentors and the students under the mentorship program.

This theory discussed the different experiences of the mentors as presented by its stages and it summarizes that the out-of-field mentors' experiences is full of struggles yet it makes the mentors to grow and develop professionally.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

The following are the recommendation which can be seen in the findings of this study: school needs must be considered before hiring teachers, training must be given to the out-of-field teachers or mentors to boost their confidence and to avoid job dissatisfaction and school must revisit the guidelines in assigning teachers in a certain field.

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