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### Book Review

**Models of Mentoring in Language Teacher Education**, by Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen, Springer International Publishing, 2017, 215 pp., €103,99 (Hardcover), ISBN: 978-3-319-44149-8

*Models of Mentoring in Language Teacher Education* is the 7th volume of the Springer series on English language education. It can be considered the most comprehensive book to date about mentoring in education. Although this book lies within the field of language teacher education, it is beneficial to all readers working in education since teacher education procedures and the processes of teacher professional development are, to a large extent, similar across disciplines.

To serve its wide range of readership, *Models of Mentoring in Language Teacher Education* is written in accessible academic language and organized into 10 content chapters which follow a preface stating the aims of the book, its target audience, and brief chapter summaries. With each chapter building upon the others, the book presents a compelling argument for the use of group and peer mentoring in promoting pre-service and in-service teacher professional learning. While complementary in nature, each chapter is also able to stand alone, with a short abstract at the beginning and a conclusion, together with a list of references at the end. This versatility of structure allows for maximum use of the volume as a whole or of separate chapters as research articles on the theme of professional learning.

Chapter 1 (*The EFL context in Vietnam and East Asia*) sets the scene for all studies discussed in the book as well as confirms its value at the regional level by arguing that English language education in Vietnam has much in common with that in East Asia, not to say Asia in general. The economic and political stimulation behind foreign language education, the lack of qualified teachers, the traditional practice of English teaching (that is, teacher-fronted, grammar- and vocabulary-focused, etc.) and ineffective education reforms, all call for new solutions to English language education. Lying at the heart of these solutions are changes in language teacher training, since teachers play a critical role in effecting positive outcomes in the teaching and learning process. Given the limited resources of most Asian countries, there is an urgent need to create a collaborative environment where both pre- and in-service teachers support each other to develop professionally. Therefore, peer and group mentoring models, rather than the traditional one between experienced and inexperienced teachers, are believed to be a feasible solution to teacher training and, by extension, to the language education quality issue in Asia.

Chapter 2 (*Theories of mentoring*) highlights two important theories underlying mentoring and peer mentoring, that is, social constructivism and collaborative reflection, together with two associated theoretical frameworks. Social constructivism maintains that one's knowledge is constructed via interacting with others in the social environment while reflective practice indicates that continuous reflection on one's practices is also another way to learn. Bringing social interaction and reflection together in the collaborative reflective environment of mentoring and peer mentoring activities is therefore believed to enhance one's learning. This chapter enables readers to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and benefits of mentoring and peer mentoring by thoroughly and critically reviewing the extensive body of related literature. It also lays a foundation for the design and discussion of research projects mentioned in later chapters.

Whereas Chapter 2 brings the theoretical perspective to mentoring, Chapter 3 (*TESOL practicum mentoring for pre-service teachers: the vision versus the reality*) looks at the unsatisfactory reality of most current mentoring practice, mostly in the form of practicum mentoring for pre-service teachers. This analysis establishes the case for the innovative mentoring models investigated in the author's different research projects in the following chapters. For teachers in many Asian countries and polities, the intensive, formal process of learning to teach usually starts, and unfortunately also ends, with the practicum. Outside the practicum, teachers mostly have to struggle on their own. Therefore, the practicum plays a vital role in shaping pre-service teachers' professional practices and lays the foundation for their supposedly life-long professional learning. This chapter successfully presents a picture of the practicum where the reality does not meet its aims and expectations, thus, calling for a change in mentoring models that can foster more professional learning.

Before discussing different mentoring models, Chapter 4 (*The design of mentoring programs*) briefly describes two designs of mentoring programs (i.e., informal and formal), which paves the way for the design of the formal group and peer mentoring programs discussed in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. Three features emphasized are mentors' attributes, mentor-mentee matching and mentor training. As discussed in detail in the following chapters, these features play a crucial role in the success of mentoring programs, no matter which models are being applied. Therefore, these features are revisited in the last two chapters where the author concludes with key issues in the effective application of mentoring/ peer mentoring and her final thoughts.

Arising out of contextual, theoretical and practical needs, studies in Chapter 5 (*Group mentoring: facilitating teacher reflection*), Chapter 6 (*Peer mentoring for pre-service teachers: developing professional practice*), Chapter 7 (*Peer mentoring: a source of support for pre-service EFL teachers*) and Chapter 8 (*Peer mentoring with beginning EFL teachers*) provide empirical evidence of the benefits of group and peer mentoring models to the enhancement of both pre- and in-service teachers' professional knowledge and skills by facilitating teachers' reflection (Chapters 5 and 8), developing their professional practice (Chapter 6), and providing them with a source of psychosocial and career-related support (Chapters 7 and 8). While group and peer mentoring offer an ideal social environment for collaborative learning, the author stresses that the environment itself is not sufficient for learning to take place. Teacher's professional learning needs careful structuring along the line and scaffolding with training sessions, guidelines, worksheets and so on.

Chapter 9 (*Issues of implementation of peer mentoring for pre-service/ in-service teachers*) summarizes major issues arising from the author's research and the literature, which need to be considered if mentoring is to be a successful professional development strategy for teachers. Although the author has described the procedures she took in her intervention studies in great detail, more practical materials such as observation guidelines, reflection questions used in the studies could have been included in the appendixes because they would be invaluable references for those who are enthusiastic about applying the suggested models of mentoring.

Chapter 10 (*Whether mentoring in teacher education: final thoughts*) acts as a final summary and also a confirmation that group and peer mentoring have been theoretically and empirically proven to be a successful substitute for the traditional mentoring model. The conclusion is that these new models should be taken seriously by all stakeholders if educational quality is to be enhanced. Indeed, underlying different peer mentoring models are frequent and close interactions between peers, which, to a great extent, are influenced by the gender factor. Gender plays a significant role in understanding humans' ways of thinking and communicating (Aries, 1996; Coates, 2013). However, probably due to the gender homogeneity (that is, most participants were female), which is typical of several language education contexts worldwide, the author did not balance participants' gender in her studies. Therefore, to promote the recommended mentoring models in teacher training programs of different disciplines, where the male-female ratio may vary, the gender factor should be considered in the design of mentoring materials and activities.

Throughout the book, I was impressed by the author's firm knowledge of mentoring and its associated aspects, her well-designed studies and in-depth analysis of findings, all supported by her ability to pinpoint relevant literature to explain issues emerging from her studies. Her argument is both theoretically and empirically grounded. Therefore, this book could well be considered as a handbook on mentoring for educational researchers, practitioners, administrators and all concerned.

### **References**

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- Coates, J. (2014). *Women, men and language: A sociolinguistic account of gender differences in language* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

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