



Uncovering the Role and Challenges of School -Based English Mentoring (SBEM) to Enhance Novice Teachers' Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to uncover the role and challenges of school based English mentoring (SBEM) to enhance novice teachers' self-efficacy in North Wollo Zone Woldia City Administration Secondary Schools. To achieve the objectives of the study, descriptive phenomenological research design was employed. The participants were experienced and novice English as a foreign Language (EFL) teachers, school directors, English language department heads, school supervisors and Woreda education experts. For this study, purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used. Data was gathered through interview and focus group discussion (FGD). Both primary and secondary data sources were used. The data was analyzed using qualitative data analysis approach. The findings showed that school-based English mentoring is significant to boost novice teachers' self-efficacy. EFL teachers' overall teaching practice can be improved via SBEM. It is also positively perceived by many of EFL teachers. Moreover, institutional challenges, teacher quality and lack of motivation are the most shared challenges among the participants. Therefore, it is recommended that every stakeholder should give especial emphasis for the better implementation of school-based English mentoring program. It is also vital to provide continuous training for practitioners to enhance awareness regarding school based English mentoring.

Key words: School -Based English Mentoring, Novice teachers, EFL, Self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

The class-room teacher's role has its own impacts on the learning process of students. It is evident that teachers are vital for success or failure of an educational system; they implement the policies of an education system on the ground. Prior studies indicates that a number of novice teachers leave their jobs in the early stages of their careers (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Glazer, 2018; Newberry & Allsop, 2017); more specifically, a third of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years due to lack of support in their working environments (Stanzbury & Zimmerman, 2000). The first year of teaching is critical in that teachers start to shape their profession as educators and decide to stay or leave the profession (F eiman-Nemser, 1983). Thus, the more competent the teachers are, the more effective is the educational system. However, many novice teachers are not ready for "the emotional, physical, social, and psychological demands of teaching" (Babinski & Rogers, 1998, p. 285); they tend to feel helpless, isolated, strange, foreign, uncertain, and unconfident to the highest degree during the induction year (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2014).

As some studies reported that high-pressure working environments with high attrition rates (Ingersoll, 2001), encounters with low self-efficacy, and indications of ineffective teaching practices in classrooms (Benner, 2000) are some of challenges of novice teachers'. Johnson, (2002) suggested that novice teachers in Massachusetts struggled to prepare class content and materials even though the state had established standards and statewide assessments. These new teachers did not receive the support that they needed; they were provided with little or no guidance regarding what to teach and how to teach it. This scenario is also common in the study area. In order to meet these demands, it is worth giving due attention to enhancing the quality of English language teachers at all levels of the education system in Ethiopia in general and high school English teachers in particular. Nowadays, in the Ethiopian context everyone has no courage to say that teachers have had the expected proficiency and pedagogical knowledge, which help them deliver their content knowledge in the classroom properly. It is also a common problem for EFL teachers.' Especially, the problem is serious with less-experienced English language teachers. As School-Based English

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Mentoring Hand Book which was compiled by the MOE (2012, p. 2) assures this fact that “In Ethiopia many teachers of English and their students need support in developing their own language proficiency and in improving their teaching methods.” Furthermore, the impact study conducted by Lund University in 2005 and Haramaya University in 2007 on English Language Improvement (ELIP) as cited in MOE (2012) indicates that teachers need intervention to improve their proficiency and pedagogical skills in English. As far as the researcher knowledge is concerned, the problem could be emanated from gaps in English mentoring practices by EFL teachers within the school context.

In order to minimize practitioners’ lack of English language teaching skills and promote the use of English in Ethiopian schools, practical contributions have been prepared and done by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education and others like the British Council, which works on language and culture (MOE, 2007a; The First Ethiopian Mentor Trainer Team, 2012, p. 2). School-Based English Mentoring is among the measures taken. Mentoring refers to the support given by experienced teachers to the less-experienced teachers usually to enhance their professional development. Malderez (2009) identifies mentoring as a practical skill that is essential for teacher’s professional development to succeed in a specific workplace context.

Although the concept of mentoring is originated from Greek Mythology and its notion is rooted in the constructivist philosophy which claims that humans generate knowledge and meaning from interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Nowadays, the concept has been spreading in Ethiopia largely with regard to school-based career training (The First Ethiopian Mentor Trainer Team Hand Book, 2012 p. 8). According to the Hand Book, SBEM is an in-service mentoring which differs in some important ways because it supports in-service development. It is also bases for English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) and Teacher Development Program (TDP). The aim of TDP is to improve the performance of teachers in the classroom and to raise students’ achievement and learning thereby improving quality of education (slightly adapted from MOE, 2009b).

Mentoring is an essential skill and a valuable development option that can be used as part of developing performance of teachers and induction

processes to help others maximize their capabilities and work effectively. Hence, various emphases on improving and refining educational standards and practices have occurred over the last three decades though quality of education decreased dramatically. Therefore, the suggestion that EFL teachers should practice mentoring within the school context has got an attention currently (Hennisen, et al.2011).

School Based English Mentoring helps EFL teachers planning, implementing and evaluating appropriate learning experiences for their student’s. It can also help them in using and where necessary adapting textbooks; ability in evaluating and reflecting on their own teaching ability in modifying their teaching strategies in the light of self-evaluation and peer evaluation ability (Meierdirk, C.,2016). Most importantly, this program supports them in dealing with the most common role relationships, conflicts, negotiations, counseling, and needs... etc (ibid).

There are some previous researches on the issue of school-based mentoring. Among these, Solomon (2001) conducted a survey entitled ‘Some Insights into the Mentoring Role of High School Teachers at Addis Ababa’ and identifies that the cooperating teachers (mentors) do not seem to be successfully discharging their mentoring duties. Hailu (2006) made a survey on ‘Factors Affecting School-Based Mentoring Implementation at Kotebe College of Teacher Education and St. Mary’s University Colleges’ Practicum’. By using questionnaire and interview as primary data collection instruments, the study revealed that lack of assistance from school administrators, considering mentoring as an extra responsibility on the part of school-based mentors and mentors’ inability to get training on mentoring skills as some of the factors that hinder the SBM. Therefore, the current study is different in that it focuses on school-based mentoring in relation to EFL teachers’ practice. Hence, the study intends to answer the following research questions:

- What is the role of School Based English Mentoring (SBEM) to enhance novice teachers’ self-efficacy?
- How EFL teachers perceive school based English mentoring?
- What are the challenges of EFL teachers in participating school based English mentoring?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Self-efficacy refers that being capable to achieve and be successful on a profession. Self-efficacy focuses on a specific task or situation. It is people’s beliefs in

their competency to produce desired effects by their own actions (Bandura, 1997). It is the most important factor people choose to involve in and how much they persist in cope up from obstacles and challenges. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) define teaching efficacy as the belief a teacher has “in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teacher task in a particular context” (p. 223). This view can be practical to clarify the insights teachers have about themselves with regard to their capacity to impart on their profession. Research suggests that teachers who have high teaching efficacy are more likely to plan and implement engaging lessons, support struggling learners (Schunk, 2008), and vary their instructional strategies (Rimpola, 2014; Goddard et al., 2004). In the reverse, teachers with low teaching efficacy may limit their engagement with specific instructional tasks. Hence, promoting high self-efficacy of teachers through implementing School-Based English mentoring (SBEM), therefore, is as vital as teaching instructional strategies and subject matter knowledge. Teachers’ motivation to succeed may be in part due to their perceptions of their competency (Dweck, 2006). Teachers who trust that their achievement may be attributed to their efforts are more likely to achieve mastery and are more likely to stick with challenging tasks, while being less likely to compare themselves with others. Dweck’s philosophies have been applied to various educational contexts (Cato, 2011; Chase, 2010). Her work is also being employed to explain self-efficacy of experienced or novice teachers (Dweck, 2015; Gutshall, 2013; Laine et al.,

2016; Meierdirk, 2016). The above-mentioned studies disclose that teachers who have high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to persevere with challenging tasks. These teachers also believe that, with gaining a support from other peers and then their students’ achievement can be higher and vice-versa. Teachers’ self-efficacy, as a result, possibly influences on of teachers’ careers as well as their students success. Therefore, the role of school based English mentoring (SBEM) can have a positive effect on education through cultivating professional development of teachers. According to Gordon et al (2013), “In an effort to increase students’ success, it is vital to develop school-based English mentoring programs (SBM) to foster positive outcomes for learners and adolescents” (Gordon et al, 2013, p.227). It is important to employ more and more mentoring programs in order to serve higher-risk students because with the right kinds of support, these students could put themselves on a path towards bright, productive futures, and make vital contributions to their families, neighborhoods and nation (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013, p.2). Recent research into school-based English mentoring outcomes indicates this program can achieve the following: improve academic performance; improve the quality of classwork; increase the number of homework and in-class assignments turned in; reduce serious school infractions such as disciplinary referrals, fighting, and suspensions; increase students’ perceptions of scholastic competence; and reduce skipping classes (Gorden et al, 2013, p.228).

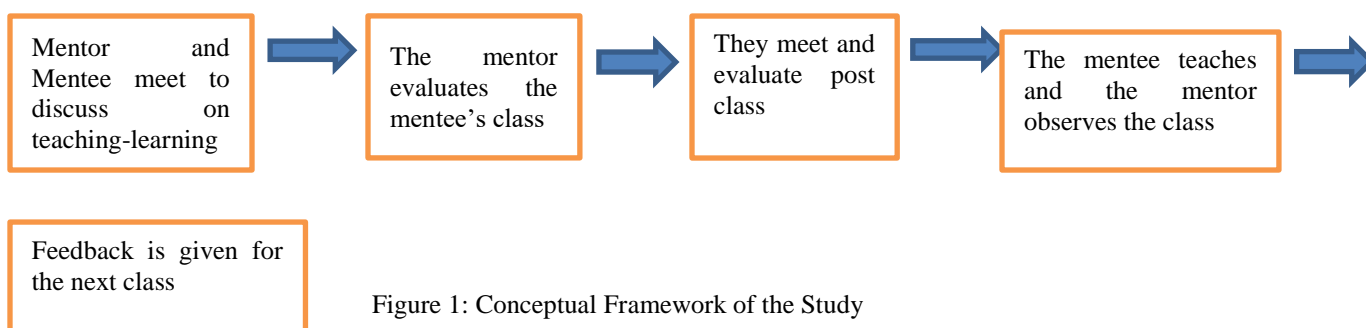


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The general objective of the study was to uncover the role and challenges of school-based English mentoring (SBEM) to enhance EFL novice teachers' self-efficacy in North Wollo Zone Woldia City Administration Secondary Schools. The study focuses on uncovering the role and challenges of

school-based English mentoring (SBEM) to enhance EFL novice teachers' self-efficacy. In order to examine the overall practice of school based English mentoring program (SBEM) in depth, descriptive phenomenological research design was employed. Hence, a total of 16 participants participated in the study. To mention, 10 EFL teachers on which 5 of

them were experienced and the other 5 were novice teachers through purposive sampling technique. Then, 2 school vice directors, 2 English department heads, 1 Supervisor of the Schools and 1 woreda education expert were part of the study using convenience sampling technique. The data were gathered through interview and focus group discussion (FGD). Therefore, interview was used to gather in-depth information from the EFL teachers, school principals and Woreda education expert about over all practices of SBEM, its roles and challenges. Then, their interview was recorded for further analysis. Moreover, focus group discussions was also used with experienced and novice EFL teachers, head of the departments, supervisors and school principal. Both primary and secondary data sources were used in this study. The primary data were gathered from EFL teachers, school director, and Woreda education expert. The secondary data were gathered from books and published articles. The data were analyzed using qualitative method of data analysis based on categorizing into themes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The role of school-based English mentoring (SBEM) to enhance novice teachers' self-efficacy

As research findings indicating that many newly employed teachers leave their teaching profession at early stages of their careers (Darling- Hammond, 2003; Glazer, 2018; Newberry & Allsop, 2017); particularly, they leave the job within the first three years due to lack of support from the experienced teachers (Stanzbury & Zimmerman, 2000). The first year of teaching is significant in that teachers start to shape their self-efficacy as educators and decide to stay or leave the profession during this time (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

Novice teachers who are supported and encouraged have a chance to stay in their profession and vice versa. Besides, from all the determinant factors to stay or leave on the teaching profession, teachers' self-efficacy has a lion's share. So that self-efficacy is not perceived skill; it is what I believe I can do with my skills under certain circumstances.

"I feel confident when I discuss with my mentor about issues related to my teaching practice. My mentor is always telling me about how I can manage my students. He also advise me how a measure taken for disturbance students. More importantly, he has directed me the possible questions I could be asked by the students." (Interview, 2022)

So, one can infer that the role of school-based English mentoring plays an important role in increasing novice teachers' self-efficacy. Through discussing with experienced teachers' (mentors), novice teachers can enhance their teaching practice.

"I feel nervous when I enter to the class; however, I know my subject matter well. Since I am afraid of the students, I become confused to handle things in the classroom. Then, I thought that I am unable to perform this profession. Hence, I remember the time that I decided to leave the job. Nevertheless, due to tireless and frequent advice from my mentor, I have stayed in my profession. And now, I am happy with my profession." (Interview, 2022)

Another experienced EFL teacher in FGD discussion also explained the following:

"Many novice EFL teachers have come to the school with lack of motivation, fear and low self-efficacy beliefs about teaching profession. I can assure you that there are teachers who have good subject matter knowledge with various skills. However, they lack methodologies of teaching to practice in their actual classroom. This is due to the feeling fear and anxiety. Hence, I know many teachers who become efficient within short period of time because of the mentoring program with experienced teachers in our school. As a result, the role of school based mentoring to enhance novice teachers self-efficacy is unquestionable." (FGD, Discussants, 2022)

It is possible to conclude that the role of mentoring practice is significant in order to make novice teachers professional through enhancing their self-efficacy. In line with this, many studies confirmed that novice teachers are exposed for high-pressure working environments with high attrition rates (Ingersoll, 2001), encounters with low self-efficacy, and indications of ineffective teaching practices in classrooms (Benner, 2000; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Therefore, as participants of this study explained, school-based English mentoring plays a great role in fixing such problems of novice teachers.

Perception of EFL teachers towards school-based English mentoring (SBEM) Teachers' predilection towards SBEM

The process of English language teaching is somewhat complex especially for novice EFL teachers. There are various methods being practiced by EFL teachers at different periods to catch the needs and demands of all individuals but none of them could accomplish their goals and satisfy the learners. So, dissatisfactions and criticisms on EFL teachers led the researcher to study this issue. Almost all the respondents were aware about the essence of school-based English mentoring.

Sharing the experience, participant 1 conceded:

"I am really interested to engage myself in mentoring program. In this program, we teachers are highly advantageous as lots of experiences of teachers in all over teaching activities are shared. Therefore, SBEM is an important program particularly for novice teachers like me." (Interview, 2022)

In the same vein, the other participant added:

"I perceive that SBEM can enhance our classroom practice. We can increase students' academic achievement through gaining and exchanging different methods of teaching. Then, this in turn can enhance quality of education. By engaging ourselves in this program, we can escalate our acceptance by the students. Generally, SBEM is a significant program for EFL teachers to do better in our classroom." (Interview, 2022)

Both the ideas disclose what Chen (2014:58) writes, "Quality problems and unsatisfactory learning outcome push the teachers and pedagogical researcher to research new method/way of teaching." The teachers seemed more hopeful and positive to school-based English mentoring which focuses on the needs of both teachers and learners. They believed that the program is best but it is impossible to prove optimal quality unless they engage themselves regularly. They seemed very happy participate in SBEM in order to maintain quality education. Their happiness and hope of quality education reveals Akbari (2008) that SBEM indicates a condition to become a good English teacher.

Teachers' Self-efficacy leads quality changes in teaching

Teachers who are the agents of transforming knowledge have been assigned different roles at different periods of teaching in their classroom and out of their classroom. All the participants responded that the school-based English mentoring (SBEM) enable EFL teachers as agents of implementing their

subject matter knowledge as well as employing numerous methodologies in their classes without any fear and anxiety of their own ideas and cognition. They enjoy it and share their experiences, so they could bring quality change in language teaching.

Sharing an experience as the following:

"When I started teaching my students, I was totally enslaved of fear and anxiety. I did not have any idea to seek alternatives if I thought the particular method for my subject matter could not work. All my skills, knowledge and context were hided. So, I could not impart quality in my teaching. But now, with engaging myself of the program SBEM has given me a bit efficient to me in my classroom dynamics." (Interview, 2022)

This explanation reveals that EFL teachers were not happy with all of their activities in classroom teaching English before they engage themselves in to school-based English mentoring program. They wanted to be self-efficient in their classes. The advent of school based English mentoring program has kept the teacher's role in the center. Teachers are considered not only the participants and facilitators but also self-reflective who construct their theory themselves and methods from the experiences and knowledge, reading the contexts and needs. Teachers seemed very happy in their participation in SBEM. They gained experience from others in order to produce materials and introduce appropriate alternatives of teaching suitable for their students' needs, interests and contexts. They found the program important in noticing and judging their own teaching, detecting problems, getting possible alternatives for solving the problem and making appropriate decision. Their expression revealed Krashen's (1985) notion of the Input Hypothesis. Therefore, input and interaction through feedback play important roles in the teaching process. Input will be gained from the teachers, their peers, and the model text itself. In another way, social interaction is a key idea for Vygotsky (1978) who emphasizes that development is first occurred at a social level and later on an individual level.

In the same way, FGD discussants also explained:

"We have performed better in the classroom teaching where we discuss with our mentors before class. We use our knowledge, experience and the context of teaching gained from them when we have made detailed discussion with them. We do what has practical utility; we are not

confused. I thank SBEM is a significant program for teacher's."(FGD, Discussants, 2022)

This is in line with the idea of Vygotsky that ideas have social origins; they are constructed through communication with others. An individual's cognitive system is a result of communication in social groups and cannot be separated from social life (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Besides, he states that language helps individuals to build new strategies when they speak with others or even with themselves. This stresses the view that learning happens best when learners engage in tasks that are within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP), the area between what they can do independently and what they can do with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). He further assumes that the process of assisting novice EFL teachers and peers to advance from a level to another beyond their ZPD is called scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976).

In the same tone, next participant added:

"We teachers should be confident, efficient and risk taker for our actions in the actual classroom. We have to be conscious for all the classroom situations before we enter to class. The most interesting thing that happens to us is that to deal with same/similar problems, we do have different alternatives and choices solve." (Interview, 2022)

In relation to this, respondents conceived that their overall performance of being a teacher is more enhanced when they are engaging in mentoring program. Hence, it can be deduced from what has been discussed above, all of the respondents perceived positively since better teaching methods and understanding of classroom environment can be learnt through SBEM.

Challenges of EFL teachers' engagement in school-based English mentoring (SBEM)

Institutional related Challenges

It is believed that schools as an academic institution should be comfortable and have a comprehensible input to create competent citizen. Concerning this, participants were asked and they reveal that schools as an educational institution are a challenge for school-based English mentoring.

"As I understand, the school is like our home even more than it that highly determines our success and failure. If the school is not suitable in every aspect, I do not want to stay there and discuss matters with my colleagues. For instance, there is

no water to drink, there are no cafeterias to refresh ourselves and there is no good infrastructure" (Interview, 2022).

From the interview above, one can understand that how school can be a basic factor to engage in SBEM in various ways. In connection to this, MOE (2004) stated that the learning environment is determining factor for employing various educational practices and programs.

"The school as an institution does not consider the mentoring practice as a work load. We experienced (mentors) teachers are given equal credit sometimes more than others without considering the mentoring service that we are providing. Hence, the mentoring service is free; however, it demands high effort as well as time, and it should be given due emphasis by the concerned bodies." (FGD discussants, 2022)

It is revealed that the school is also a big challenge for educators to engage themselves in school-based mentoring program. According to UNICEF(2005) stated that physical environment in which the formal teaching-learning occur ranges relatively from modern and well equipped to open air gathering place. Thus, the school environment including classrooms, offices, toilet rooms, water supply, computer, science laboratory, and library must be attractive for the school societies. The facilities are required to be proportional to the number of teachers and students in the school for the provision of quality education in schools.

Teacher Quality and Attitude

According to UNSECO (2000) teacher-related factors like experience, attitude and qualification are main constraints to run different educational programs like SBEM. Moreover, Lockheed et al., (1999) as cited in Yonas (2007) explained that teachers were central to delivery as well as the quality of education. The academic and professional training of teachers has a direct and positive effect on the quality of their performance and consequently on the academic achievement of students. Having the literature presented above, the researcher also provided the results of the interview on how teacher quality and attitude can be a challenge to engage in SBEM.

"In my point of view, there are different teachers in our school. Some of the teachers really interested to help others and to learn from others. In the contrary,

there are also few teachers who are not positive on which they do not want to learn from others.” (Interview, 2022)

Another interviewee also added that:

“For me, a teacher means everything. There is a strong saying in the community about a teacher ,i.e. a teacher is a real parent who can bring a person from dark to light; however, this definition of teachers’ can work for those who are very committed and those who are worried about their job. There are teacher who do not have quality of a good teacher. They want only be praised and others are blamed. So, I believe that teacher quality and attitude are basic challenges to implement SBEM in our school.” (Interview, 2022)

Therefore, as participants explained, most teachers have a problem in exchanging experience as well as engaging themselves in diverse programs for their professional development. This research finding is consistent with the study conducted in Colombia by National Center for Educational Statistics NCES (1991) as cited in Yonas (2007) that participating in professional development program has a positive relation to student academic achievement.

Lack of Motivation

Motivation is an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire to do something. Motivation has a power to push people to perform a certain task (Brown, 1994). Additionally, Oxford and Shearin (1994) mostly agreed with Brown as they believe in self-desire to achieve a goal. Therefore, participants of this study agreed that lack of motivation among the experienced as well as the novice EFL teachers is a basic challenge to participate in SBEM.

I have been teaching for about 28 years. Now, I am very demotivated to teach in general and engage myself in various educational programs like SBEM due to many reasons. First of all, we are less paid and the teaching profession in our country is not given serious attention this time. Moreover, we are not getting regular training to enhance our profession (Interview 2022).

Regarding motivation of EFL teachers, it is vital to motivate teachers to engage in SBEM through arranging suitable time; refreshing them and giving reward for role model teachers. In addition, Ur, (1981) recommends making discussion, interesting, motivating and enjoyable for interaction to overcome

problems of low motivation. It is also necessary to understand the level, interest, age and social background of the teachers to increase their motivation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of the study was to uncover the role and challenges of school-based English mentoring (SBEM) to enhance EFL novice teachers' self-efficacy. As the findings discloses that the role of school-based English mentoring (SBEM) is very significant to boost up EFL novice teachers' self-efficacy. In this regard, it is also evident the quality of education can be achieved through real practice of SBEM. It is also disclosed that most EFL teachers perceived SBEM as an important tool to increase their professional engagement. Then, the unsuitability of the school environment; teacher quality and attitude; and lack of motivation are the most shared challenges by the research participants. As a result, it is recommended that every stakeholder should give especial emphasis for the better implementation of this school-based English mentoring program. It is also important to create awareness about SBEM through training helps them to enhance their professional development.

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