

## PEER COACHING AND MENTORING AS PILLARS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

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The quality of basic education is delivered highly dependent on the continuous professional growth of the teachers. Research and practice have shown that sustained, school-based professional learning initiatives have a more lasting impact on instructional improvement. Meanwhile, formal trainings and seminars play an important role in professional development. Among these mentioned initiatives, peer coaching and mentoring stand-out as one of the effective strategies for strengthening teaching competence and fostering a culture of collaboration in schools.

Peer coaching is an example of a structured professional practice in which teachers observe one another's classroom instruction, engage in reflective dialogue, and collaboratively identify strategies for improvement. Joyce and Showers (2002) emphasized that coaching significantly increases the likelihood that teachers will successfully apply new teaching strategies learned during training. Traditional professional development approaches are often short-term and theoretical. On the other hand, peer coaching continuous, job-embedded support that directly influences classroom practice.

Mentoring, on the other hand, focuses on providing guidance and professional support to beginning and developing teachers. Mentors assist in lesson planning, classroom management, assessment practices, and alignment with curriculum standards and performance indicators. In the school setting, mentoring is especially valuable as teachers handle multiple learning areas, manage diverse classrooms, and address

learners' developmental needs. Teachers gain confidence, develop reflective habits, and enhance their instructional skills. This can be done through mentoring relationships.

The integration of peer coaching and mentoring contributes to the establishment of a professional learning community within the school. Teachers become more open to feedback, share instructional strategies, and collaboratively solve instructional challenges. This mutual environment encourages reflective practice and reduces professional isolation. This is often experienced by teachers working independently in their classrooms.

In schools, where foundational learning skills are developed, instructional consistency and quality are essential. Peer coaching enables teachers to align instructional practices across grade levels, ensuring the learners receive coherent, and progressive learning experiences. Collaborative lesson planning and post-observation discussions allow teachers to refine teaching strategies and improve learner outcomes.

Teachers play a crucial role in leading and sustaining peer coaching and mentoring initiatives. As instructional leaders, teachers model effective teaching practices, guide professional discussions, and provide constructive feedback based on evidence and professional standards. Leadership helps to ensure coaching and mentoring activities are developmental rather than evaluative, fostering trust and professional growth.

Moreover, peer coaching also promotes accountability and shared responsibility for learner success. When teachers reflect on teaching process and learner performance, and instructional decisions collaboratively, it becomes more informed and responsive. This collective effort leads to improve classroom instruction and enhanced learner engagement.

Lastly, peer coaching and mentoring are essential components of effective instructional leadership in schools. Teachers provide meaningful professional learning opportunities that enhance teaching competence, foster collaboration, and support

continuous improvement. Peer coaching and mentoring initiatives shows professional maturity, instructional leadership, and commitment to educational excellence. Such practices contribute significantly to the development of a strong teaching workforce and the delivery of quality basic education.

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