

## Unit 11 Mentoring PBL learners



### Introduction

The purposes of this unit is to give an overview of what issues need to be considered when mentoring/facilitating PBL learners

Lesson 1: Mentoring tips

Lesson 2: Conflict management

### Lesson 1: Mentoring tips

Mentoring, coaching and counseling are human resources development processes often used to induct and introduce staff into a place of employment. Mentoring implied not just guidance and suggestions, but also the development of autonomous skills, judgements, personal and professional mastery. Great value was placed on expertise and the development of self-confidence over time.

Mentoring is usually a partnership between two people: an experienced person (the mentor) who facilitates the development of another person (the mentee).

On-the-job (or workplace) mentoring has been identified as an important aspect of work-based learning. It includes the accompanying, career advancement and natural support of an employee (mentee) by an experienced colleague (mentor), in order to achieve some pre-determined goals. The mentors transfer their knowledge and experience to the mentees and support them continuously in their professional development, thought processes and social integration in the organisation.

There are three key phases to mentoring. This is done as part of the preparation of PBL and through PBL itself. However it is necessary to be aware of these:

Phase	Tools
Lead (Start)	Build trust Mentoring agreement Active listening Goal setting
Follow up (Intermediate)	Conversation (proactive goal setting) Power questions Action plans
Get out of the way (Completion)	Feedback

**Table 1: Phases of mentoring** (see <http://www.voca.net/>)

To be a mentor one needs to be aware of the skills they require:

#### ➤ Social skills

Mentors need to be focused strongly, principled, and able to develop **empathy** with the perspectives of others. Social competences are of key importance for mentors, particularly interest, motivation, and awareness, verbal and non-verbal communication, aptitude, empathy and engagement skills. If a mentor has no special interest or motivation, or empathy, aptitude and engagement for his/her mentees or for the job, there may be no appropriate mentoring and

favourable job outcomes.

The mentor should have **conflict management** competences. This will be discussed in Lesson 2

➤ **Methodical competences**

There are skills that enable people to communicate verbally and effectively with one another. Basic to all communication is **active listening** and overcoming barriers to communication (<http://www.problem-solving-techniques.com/Listening-Barriers.html>). Some key elements of active listening are paying attention, showing that you are listening, providing feedback, deferring judgment, responding appropriately, and respecting and understanding the speaker. Barriers to communication can be resolved by minimizing stress factors and avoiding 'noise' i.e. visual and any other sensory distraction.

The mentor and the mentee give **feedback** regarding his/her work and its effectiveness.

A mentor should encourage **reflective practice** to enable the mentee to learn from his/her own experience. This is done through the PBL cycle

➤ **Professional competence**

Any mentor must have professional competences under five main headings, with special reference to the area in which s/he becomes active. These include:

- Basic knowledge about own enterprise, workplace, sheltered workplaces, and legislation affecting disabled people
- Success recognition
- Motivation & empowerment regarding family, services, and community
- Mastery of routine work
- The personal skills that make it possible to deal with the everyday routine, but also makes it possible to deal with events that are not everyday routine.

➤ **Empowerment – Promote people's equality, diversity and rights**

Mentors should understand the principles of equal opportunity and demonstrate best practice. They should be aware of their own values, beliefs and attitudes and seek to use these in a constructive manner principally, but not exclusively, in the interests of the mentee. They should maintain confidentiality unless otherwise required by duty or statute.

*Self-development*

Mentors must be able to develop their own and their mentees' knowledge and practice across professional and organizational boundaries. They should understand the health and social care context relevant to the mentee, and make realistic allowances for problems and issues (including the mentees attitudes, beliefs, learning style, motivation etc.), that might obstruct the application of best practice. They should talk, and respond knowledgeably, about the competing demands within the mentor's everyday work, whilst understanding national and local health and social care priorities and how these are relevant to the mentee's circumstances.

The factors for mentoring learning are:

- Building up confidence. This is important for a mutual learning process, for sharing different points of view, and different feelings. This could be supported by, for example, giving space to everybody's expressions and contributions and by discussing expectations openly
- Trying to understand one's own identity
- Discerning reality in the process of learning guided by respect for personal decisions, acceptance of other views, seeking reconciliation of different points of view, and being conscious of one's own personal responsibility in this process
- Being in dialog with the 'other'. It opens up the possibility of identifying with the perspectives of the 'other'
- Being prepared to break away from old beliefs, traditions and ideas
- Taking into consideration that conflict is sometimes at the heart of learning.

## Lesson 2: Conflict Management

In team work and collaboration there is going to be times when conflicts arise. As a mentor/facilitator it will be you who the learners seek to resolve such conflicts. This section deals with approaches to aiding the resolution of conflicts that may arise. Note this material is taken from the below source<sup>1</sup>

When working in a Learning Team, the objective is to resolve conflicts in a win-win manner, rather than a win-lose. If one or more team members take a win-lose approach to resolving conflict, the team as a whole will suffer, and the real result will be lose-lose.

Managing conflict and resolving conflicts are two distinct processes. Before conflict can be managed, it must be understood. One approach to conflict analysis and resolution is known as the 4Rs Method, according to Engleberg et al (2003). This method has four steps, each of which is summarized with a word beginning with the letter "R":

- **Reasons.** In this step, the causes or reasons for the conflict are explored and openly, yet respectfully, discussed.
- **Reactions.** In this step, team members look at their own reactions to the conflict. If those reactions are destructive, rather than constructive, individuals can self-correct and take the necessary steps to recommit to team success.
- **Results.** If the conflict is not resolved, what might happen? How might the team work together to resolve the conflict in a constructive manner?
- **Resolution.** Which approach to conflict resolution could be used to effectively resolve the conflict?

Once the team understands the conflict, it can then choose an appropriate approach to resolve it. Ralph H. Kilmann and Kenneth W. Thomas, authors of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, have identified five general approaches to dealing with conflict:

- 1) Avoidance.
- 2) Accommodation.
- 3) Competition.
- 4) Compromise.
- 5) Collaboration.

Conflict resolution is situational and no one approach provides the best or one right approach for all circumstances (Thomas, 2002). There are, however, general guidelines which can be used to decide which of these approaches will be most effective in certain situations.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.apollolibrary.com/library/ltt/download/managingconflict.pdf](http://www.apollolibrary.com/library/ltt/download/managingconflict.pdf)

## **Avoidance**

Although avoiding or denying the existence of a conflict usually does not cause the dispute to go away, there are times when avoidance is appropriate in the team situation. If the conflict itself is not central to the work of the team, it may be best to set it aside so that the important work of the team can proceed. When the situation gets out of control and emotions are running high, avoidance is sometimes the best approach as well. In these situations, it is best to reschedule the team meeting so that people can collect their thoughts, approach the situation more calmly, and have time to put the conflict in perspective.

## **Accommodation**

When the accommodation approach is used, one person gives in to another for the sake of getting along. This may be an appropriate approach when the person accommodating does not view the matter as important, or when it is more important that the group experience cohesiveness or harmony than for an individual perspective on the topic to prevail. Before becoming an accommodator, however, the individual team member must be certain he or she can live with the decision and will not later regret having made it.

## **Competition**

In a nutshell, competition may best be described as a win-lose style of conflict resolution. That is, one team member may feel so importantly about the topic that he or she needs to aggressively pursue his or her perspective in hopes of persuading other team members to view the situation in the same manner. This approach is appropriate when a team member believes alternatives being explored are not practical, ethical, or legal.

## **Compromise**

Generally, when people compromise it is to accept a middle ground position, i.e., one in which each person gives up something for the sake of agreement. By definition, a compromise only partially satisfies each person. This approach is often effective when teams have reached an impasse and are running out of time to attempt to resolve the conflict. Sometimes, a compromise is the best solution that can be reached under the circumstances.

## **Collaboration**

In an ideal world rather than compromising, people in dispute would be able to collaborate to find a resolution that satisfies the needs of everyone involved. Collaboration requires creative and cooperative efforts. The primary roadblock to collaboration usually is the amount of time and energy it requires. Collaboration is generally effective when the team has sufficient time to fully explore the needs, perspectives, and preferences of all team members, and when 100% commitment from each person is needed to accomplish team goals.

## ***Conflict Resolution Processes***

Before attempting to resolve conflicts, it helps if each person takes some time to think rationally about the conflict and prepare for the discussions. In the book, *Resolving Conflicts on the Job*, authored by Wisinski (1993) the author developed the A-E-I-O-U Model for individual use before engaging in discussions to resolve conflict. Each letter of the model stands for a step, as follows:

**A:** Assume the other people involved in the conflict mean well

**E:** Express your own feelings

**I:** Identify what you would like to see happen

**O:** Outcome—express the outcome you would like to see while remaining open to another outcome that may satisfy your needs and concerns

**U:** Understanding—the agreement should be understood, and committed to, by each member of the team (p. 27).

Once each team member understands the conflict and has an idea about what possible solutions will meet the needs of team as a whole, it is time to decide on a process to use to resolve the conflict.

There are three general processes to consider:

- 1) Negotiation.
- 2) Mediation.
- 3) Arbitration.

**Negotiation** does not require the assistance of anyone outside of the team. Rather, the team members meet together to talk about their individual views on the topic that is at the center of the conflict; identify what is important to them; propose a solution that meets their needs; listen to what others in the team have to say; and then attempt to reach an agreement. Effective negotiations are conducted in a win-win style and frame of mind. Most Learning Team conflicts are resolved through this informal process.

**Mediation** is a facilitated process of negotiation. If Learning Team members are not able to negotiate their own resolution, they could ask the mentor/facilitator to assist them with the discussions. Sometimes, the facilitator member can be used as a behind-the-scenes resource. That is, the facilitator member might be able to help individual team members see the strengths or benefits of the proposals other members are making. The facilitator can share insights about an effective approach to the discussions or about other possible solutions the team has not yet considered. If, however, these behind-the-scenes efforts are not effective, the Learning Team could ask the facilitator member to meet with them in order to discuss the conflict and help them reach a solution. In mediation the facilitator member does not have decision-making power. Rather, he or she is a neutral person who focuses on the process of the discussions and helps the team focus on the issues, rather than personalities and on the future rather than the past. Only when Learning Teams are unable to resolve their own disputes should the facilitator member be asked to assist.

**Arbitration** is a process for resolving conflict, but is one which is virtually never used as a way to resolve Learning Team conflicts. It is a last resort and way to achieve a decision when the team is at an impasse and is not able or willing to come to agreement on its own. The arbitrator is asked to make a decision for the team. Arbitration is a win-lose approach to conflict resolution. There will be winners and there will be losers, since the arbitrator is asked to decide whose approach or idea is right or best for the team as a whole. Clearly, all members of the Learning Team will need to agree to abide by the arbitrator's decision. Although this is a possible approach to conflict resolution, arbitration is not a practical approach to Learning Team conflicts. It can lead to derision and erode the team morale and cohesiveness.

### **Supplementary Reading resources**

[University of Phoenix: Conflict management in learning teams](#)

[CIPD: Conflict Management at work](#)