

THE HEADMASTER-AS-A-MENTOR: A MENTORING MODEL

FOR RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL OF SARAWAK

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to present an alternative approach to training and improving the quality of teachers serving in rural schools of Sarawak. Based on the understanding that teacher training places are quite limited and that there are limited opportunities for meaningful interaction between school personnel and the central office or the teacher training institutions, it is argued that the overall quality of the teaching learning processes can be achieved through a systematic and properly structured school-based teacher training and guidance programme. A mentoring approach that places the headmaster as the mentor is viewed as a suitable alternative, as administratively and professionally it will have these merits: (a) It will provide the temporary teachers the opportunity to continue to serve in their respective schools, and at the same time receive some form of formal training and guidance; (b) It will allow for a better cooperation, collaboration and teamwork and greater sense of ownership among the school personnel and also between the school and the local education institution and the teacher training colleges; and (c) It will encourage greater staff professional growth as the mentors will also be gaining from the training they received to become effective mentors and from the actual process of guiding and helping the beginning and the temporary teachers under their care.

INTRODUCTION

A World Bank policy paper on primary education (World Bank, 1990) recognizes that weaknesses within the primary education systems of many developing countries have hindered the successful attainment of producing a literate and numerate population and the laying of good groundwork for further education, and hence jeopardizing national efforts to build a human capital base for development. It highlights that they have been ineffective in teaching students the core skills contained in their national curriculum, and have not been able to provide all school-age children with the opportunity to attend school. It suggests that effort on at least three fronts: enhancing the learning environment, improving the preparation and motivation of teachers, and strengthening educational management, should form the main agenda towards improving the standard of primary education in developing countries.

In Malaysia, the provision of quality education is similarly viewed as the main vehicle for bringing the culturally, socially and economically disadvantaged rural majority into the main stream of national development. The formulation of the Integrated Primary and Secondary School Curriculum, placing great emphasis on a holistic and integrated approach is an effort towards this direction. However, the implementation of various educational programmes and the attainment of educational goals in the context of rural Sarawak, are not without problems. The most critical being the shortage of supply of trained and experienced teachers to serve in its rural schools.

The main purpose of this paper is to present a case for a mentoring model that will help both improve the quality of the teaching learning processes in rural schools in Sarawak through an experience-sharing approach and enhance further professional growth among teachers at the school level.

THE TEACHER FACTOR IN RURAL SCHOOLS OF SARAWAK

The Supply and Deployment of Teachers

The supply of trained teachers in Sarawak comes mainly from the four teacher training colleges in the state, i.e. Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang, Kuching; Maktab Perguruan Sarawak, Miri; Maktab Perguruan Rejang, Sarikei; and Maktab Peerguruan Tun Abdul Razak, Kota Samarahan. A smaller number comes from other teacher training colleges in Peninsular Malaysia. Although it is the administrative policy of the SED to give priority to rural schools in the posting of newly trained teachers, however, it cannot be effectively implemented. The numbers of trained teachers produced yearly are still short of the state's needs. And furthermore, limited housing facilities, the difficult geographical terrain, transport and communication problems and the absence of basic amenities in these remote areas do not make them suitable postings for those from outside the locality. Because of their remoteness and poor living facilities and resources, rural schools are not popular postings, resulting in the presence of a high percentage of beginning and inexperienced teachers. High operating cost and financial and resource constraints have also resulted in poor and insufficient educational facilities and teaching learning support material. Similarly, transportation, communication and accessibility problems have adversely affected both the supervisory and support services from the local and central education office and meaningful interaction between the school personnel and the officers from the department. In most cases, the remote rural schools are thus left to manage their daily educational affairs on their own, with minimum support and guidance from the central office.

As a means of filling the teaching vacancies to ensure that rural schools are adequately supplied with teaching personnel, the SED resorts to the recruitment of temporary or attachment teachers. Recruitment, however, is not always easy as very few applicants are keen to serve in these difficult areas. The appointment of these teachers is not necessarily based on their academic qualification, but rather on their availability and their cultural and social suitability for the rural schools. Deployment of temporary teachers has therefore been an accepted feature and a recognized necessity in some schools in Sarawak. Up to the early 80s the number of temporary teachers serving in primary schools in the state were as high as 20-25%. The number however has decreased steadily over the years.

Teachers and the Teaching in the Rural School

Generally, either a high percentage of beginning teachers or temporary teachers characterize the teaching personnel of the small rural school in Sarawak. It is also common for these remote rural schools to have the headmaster as the only experienced trained personnel. Beginning or temporary teachers under the guidance of a headmaster thus generally manage the teaching activities. They get little support from the central office or the teacher training institutions as in the case of the KDC participants. The main responsibility of guiding and the task of teaching to teach and facilitating the process of learning to teach thus rest with the headmaster.

To meet the training needs of temporary teachers in rural schools, the Ministry of Education introduced a teacher-training programme called the *Kursus Dalam Cuti* (KDC - Holiday Course) in 1979. It is aimed at providing a training opportunity for those temporary teachers who have served continuously for a minimum period of three years and have shown good potentials. The course is tailored in such a way that the participants shall continue to teach during the terms and attend courses during the school holidays. The schools however play minimal role in the training, and mentoring is not a feature of the programme.

The overall quality of teaching and learning in rural schools, to a certain extent, is reflected by the poor overall academic performance of rural primary schools in the three basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic over the years. Their performance in the national Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) that is conducted yearly at the end of the sixth year of primary education is unsatisfactory and falls below the state average. It is realized that to help bring about positive changes in the students' learning in these schools, the quality of teaching among beginning and temporary teachers must be further improved.

Based on the understanding that teacher training places are quite limited and that there are limited opportunities for meaningful interaction between school personnel and the central office or the teacher training institutions, in the context of rural Sarawak, it is believed that this can be achieved through a systematic and properly structured school-based teacher training and guidance programme. A mentoring approach is viewed as a suitable alternative, as administratively and professionally it will have the following advantages: (a) It will provide the temporary teachers the opportunity to continue to serve in their respective schools, and at the same time receive some form of formal training and guidance; (b) It will allow for a better cooperation, collaboration and teamwork and greater sense of ownership among the school personnel and also between the school and the local education institution and the teacher training colleges; and (c) It will encourage greater staff professional growth as the mentors will also be gaining from the training they received to become effective mentors and from the actual process of guiding and helping the beginning and the temporary teachers under their care.

Bearing in mind that these schools are not easily accessible from the central office and the teacher training institutions, and that the headmaster is normally the most experienced personnel in the school, a mentoring model considered most appropriate and applicable would be one that places the headmaster as the key actor, playing the major role of the school mentor, using an array of supervisory and mentoring approaches to meet the varying levels of development and needs of the beginning, KDC trainees and the temporary teachers in the schools.

THE HEADMASTER-AS-THE-MENTOR MENTORING MODEL

This section of the paper will present a case for school-based mentoring in rural schools as a means of providing initial training and enhancing professional growth of rural teachers. The different stages of development which these teachers have to go through in the process of learning to teach will be considered in view of identifying suitable mentoring approaches to support such a training and developmental programme. *Clinical supervision, partnership supervision* and *induction programmes* will also be looked into as possible approaches of enhancing further the strength of this school-based training.

Head Teacher as an Instructional Supervisor

In the context of Malaysian schools, the Ministry of Education Circular 3/1987 clearly specify that 'principals and headmasters are reminded that classroom supervision of teaching learning is an important integral part of their task as professional leaders'. Four reasons are given to support this move. Firstly, it helps to update the professionalism of headmasters and teachers in line with the objectives of the nation's philosophy on education. Secondly, it provides opportunity for the sharing of expertise and experience. Thirdly, it helps nourish, develop and strengthen professional relationships and positive interactions among headmasters and between headmasters and teachers. And fourthly, it enables the headmasters to render professional help and to assist teachers to develop more positive attitudes towards the teaching profession.

Although supervision among teachers is always associated with negative connotation, as Withall and Wood (1979:55) claims,

'Supervision connotes a situation that is unpleasant, poses psychological threat and typically culminates in unrewarding consequences ... Supervisors have tended to project an image of superiority and omniscience in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a teacher's performance and in offering advice concerning how to improve future performance, (quoted by Smyth, 1985:5)

it will be argued that instructional supervision carried out from a mentoring perspective can help bring about desirable positive effects on the teaching learning process and the professional development of teachers. The fact that instructional supervision has already been accepted as an integral part of the role of the headmasters as a professional leader, the proposal for a *headmaster-as-the-mentor* model will readily fit into the existing organizational structure of the school.

Of the three models of instructional supervision; directive, non-directive and collaborative (Glickman, 1985), it is recommended that the collaborative approach would best suit the rural schools of Sarawak. One of the main reasons for proposing this orientation is that the relationship between headmasters and teachers in rural schools tend to be more personal than in the bigger schools. There is a greater sense of community among the staff. Each teacher is highly visible and out of necessity assumes a variety of roles, professional, social and administrative. Because they tend to be generalists they are more receptive to participating in group work and cooperative ventures. Teachers too participate more actively in administrative decision-making, as there is less red-tape and bureaucracy. In such a situation headmasters and teachers tend to feel the need for and understand the importance of interdependence on one another. Small number of classes and pupils also provides for greater room for more flexibility in scheduling timetables and the organization of classroom teaching, and more opportunity for collaborative planning and teaching.

Collaborative instructional supervision which Glickman (1985:137) defines as working jointly with others in intellectual endeavour where the work is done jointly but one participant can participate more than another, premises itself on the participation by equals in making instructional decisions. Its potential lies in the fact that a headmaster and teachers working with him or her recognize the expertise of one another, and that expertise together with their experience, enthusiasm and commitment can be harnessed and utilized towards attainment of both short-term and long-term school goals.

Clinical supervision as a common form of collaborative supervision can provide the right climate for effective mentoring in such context. Clinical supervision which Goldhammer et al. (1993:4) view as 'that aspect of instructional supervision which draws upon data from first-hand observation of actual teaching, or other professional events, and involves face-to-face and other associated interactions between the observer(s) and the person(s) observed in the course of analysing the observed professional behaviour and activities and seeking to define and/or develop next steps toward improved performance', will provide both the teacher and the headmaster the opportunity to grow professionally together. And that it is 'interactive rather than directive, democratic rather than authoritarian and teacher centred rather than supervisor centred' (Acheson and Gall, 1987:11), will further enhance a healthy learning and working atmosphere among the school personnel. Rural schools that are professionally and administratively isolated can ill afford a situation where the school working culture and ethos is clouded by mistrust and suspicion.

Cogan (1973:12) sees the central objective of the clinical process as the 'development of the professionally responsible teacher who is analytical of his own performance, open to help from others, and withal self-directing'. The headmaster's role as a mentor is vital for

generating a conducive professional culture that can develop positive attitudes and enthusiasm among the beginning and temporary teachers in a setting where professional supervisory and support services from outside are minimal.

Headmasters of rural schools through the five stages of the clinical supervision; pre-observation conference, observation, analysis and strategy, supervision conference, and post conference analysis, can play a meaningful role of a collegial coach to their teachers, varying the intensity, scope and depth of their guidance, help and support to suit the individual needs of the teachers. Their personal experience as teachers who have served in rural schools, and also their exposure and involvement in various administrative responsibilities before becoming headmasters, will make them able and capable of sharing these *craft knowledge* with the teachers they are guiding to teach.

Mentoring Needs of Rural Teachers

Teaching is not an easy task, and learning to teach is equally complex, bewildering and sometimes painful, involving the development of a practical knowledge base, changes in cognition, development of interpersonal skills and also incorporating an affective aspect (Maynard and Furlong, 1993:69). Teaching and serving in rural schools, especially for the beginning teachers, the KDC trainees and the newly recruited temporary teachers are even more demanding and difficult. Geographical and professional isolation provides little assistance towards enhancing both the learning environment and their motivation and preparedness.

For beginning teachers, who are new to the real-life classroom situation in difficult rural educational setting and who no longer enjoy the support of their tutors or supervisors, teaching in rural schools is a very challenging experience. Being on their own, shouldered with the heavy responsibilities of meeting the high expectations of the local community, they need professional guidance and support. Their mentors will be able to both provide the craft knowledge and the guidance to effectively operationalize into practical classroom teaching learning experiences the limited theoretical knowledge and skills they have acquired during their formal training. They require an induction programme through mentoring to enable them to come to terms with 'the contractual, legal, and ethical obligations of becoming a professional' and to assist them to shoulder and take 'the sole responsibility of instructional planning, lesson implementation, pupil assessment and the myriad of other teaching duties that previously were assumed by the pre-service sponsor teacher' (Andrews, 1987:147). The socialization process of the beginning teachers can contribute to the reconciliation between the idealism of their professional beliefs and the pragmatic realities of the school as a work place. Their capacity and enthusiasm for professional growth will be greatly influenced by the kind of support and guidance that they receive.

The KDC trainees, by nature of their programme, spend most of their training in schools. Such arrangement exposes them to the possibility of being greatly influenced by the practical skills and theoretical knowledge that they have acquired over the years. They undoubtedly will bring with them a reservoir of practical and professional knowledge into their formal training. Their needs would be that of reconciling and reaffirming the knowledge that they have already possessed with those that their training institutions are providing. This being the case, the school, and the school

mentor in particular has a critical role to play to ensure that these practical and professional knowledge and skills are complementary and supplementary to one another.

The needs of newly recruited temporary teachers are more complex. Their transition would be from that of students fresh out of school to teachers, without any prior professional and practical knowledge. They bring with them limited knowledge of the teaching process and other related teaching responsibilities, that is their own personal experience and observations of the practices of their own teachers, and their perceptions of what constitute effective teaching.

In the rural schools of Sarawak the headmasters are directly responsible for the supervision of these three different groups of teachers, each with their own specific needs and requiring different mentoring approach. Instructional supervision by headmasters, and in particular mentoring, is thus very critical to the successful implementation of the school curriculum. Supervision in this context should be developmental in nature, aimed at providing these teachers with the right opportunity and guidance to develop their potential to the fullest.

Mentoring Approach and Strategy

Maynard and Furlong (1993) suggest that two factors should be taken into account in determining mentoring approach suitable for the school-based teacher training. One is the different stages that trainees typically go through early idealism, survival, recognizing difficulties, hitting the plateau, and moving on; and two, the variety of issues involved in the process of learning to teach. These issues are: the nature of practical knowledge trainees must acquire; the process of forming concepts; the interpersonal skills they must develop; and the affective issues they must confront. Learning to teach requires the learner to acquire adequate practical classroom knowledge of students, situation, subject matter, and strategies that can be best learned through direct experience in schools and classrooms. Quoting Berliner (1987) and Carter and Doyle (1987) Maynard and Furlong (1993) stress that it involves changes in cognition, and the need to form concepts, schemas and scripts in order to make sense of, interpret and come to control aspects of classroom life. Mentors they argue are in a unique position to be able to support trainees as they begin to form concepts about their practical work. 'They are uniquely placed to expose trainees' developing concepts and help them see the implications of various ways of working' (1993:79), that is guiding them to see.

Learning to teach is a complex and slow process. The learner of teaching, as in the case of rural schools of Sarawak, the beginning teachers, the KDC trainees and the temporary teachers, have to come to terms not only with the pressure and the expectations placed and imposed on them by the community; the schools and the department, but also with their own ideals and aspirations, their own hope and fear, and their own expectation and frustration. The headmaster as a mentor has a very important role to play to ensure that

the children's learning is effectively managed and the teachers' teaching are properly and efficiently handled.

Three models of mentoring identified in current literature: the apprenticeship model; the competency model; and the reflective model (Maynard and Furlong, 1993) are considered as suitable and applicable for use in the Sarawak context as they can be used to address the needs of the teachers at various stages of their development.

The **apprenticeship model**, an approach to learning to teach that is strongly advocated by the Hillgate Group (1989) places importance on the emulation of experienced practitioners and by supervised practice under guidance in the learning of some teaching skills that are difficult, complex and of high moral and cultural values. KDC trainees and temporary teachers who are already a part of the real teaching situation will require the assistance and guidance of mentors to be able to see, interpret and understand the concepts, schemas or scripts of the process of teaching that they have acquired and experienced. Through collaborative teaching the headmaster-as-a-mentor can provide the temporary teachers with the opportunity to develop a variety of skills to enable them conduct their own teaching. Burn (1992:134) recognizes three important kinds of learning which are possible through collaborative teaching. They are:

1. Learning to plan lessons carefully through being involved in joint planning with experienced teacher, finding out what the teacher takes account of, and identifying with the planning and its consequences;
2. Learning certain skills of classroom teaching through having responsibility for a specified component of the lesson, while identifying with the whole lesson and recognizing the relationship of the part to the whole;
3. Gaining access to the teacher's craft knowledge through observation of the teacher's actions, informed by a thorough knowledge of the planning, and probably through discussion of the lesson afterwards, with a heightened awareness because of having joint responsibility for the lesson.

This approach is most suitable for the early stage of the temporary teachers' exposure to the actual classroom situation. Another approach that the headmaster as a mentor can take is that of a systematic trainer, coaching temporary teachers on a list of behaviours and skills crucial for helping them manage their own lesson.

The **competency model** approach will give them control of the teaching process, and with the help of the mentor, acting as a mirror or working as a coach, will form and implement some of their own teaching routine and develop and modify their own personal concepts and schemas (Maynard and Furlong, 1993).

Through a **reflective mentoring** approach the mentor can encourage the teachers to switch their focus of concern from that of their own teaching to that of students' learning, and reflect on possible ways and alternatives as to how their teaching and students' learning can be made more effective. The mentor will provide the teachers the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the learning process, thinking through different ways of teaching and developing their own justifications and practical principles from their work (Maynard and Furlong, 1993). The

headmaster will facilitate this process and shift his role from being a model, coach and instructor to that of a co-enquirer, promoting critical reflection via a more equal and open relationship.

Reviewing the possible contributions of experienced teachers towards the training of entrants into the teaching profession, McIntyre and Hagger (1993) suggests that support for learning to teach through practice via minimal mentoring can be effective if mentors: (a) possess a high level of supervisory skills; (b) are able to capitalize on the distinctive strengths of their situation - availability of information, continuity and validity, and (c) can guard against the dangers of arbitrariness and idiosyncrasy associated with one-to-one relationship and other dysfunctional consequences arising from the closeness of such relationship. Through what is termed as developed and extended mentoring, McIntyre and Hagger (1993) further suggest that making effective use of the teachers' or mentors' expertise in the training of teachers at the school level can provide invaluable experiences. Collaborative teaching, access to experienced teachers' craft knowledge, discussion of learner-teachers' ideas, and effective management of beginning teachers' learning opportunities are among the strategies that are considered beneficial and necessary for a holistic teaching experience. In rural schools of Sarawak these responsibilities rest with the headmaster.

The task of mentoring is complex and ambitious. To be effective and meaningful, various models, approaches and strategies must be considered and employed, suited to the various levels of the development and needs of the new teachers and trainees. This is relevant for headmaster as mentors in rural schools of Sarawak. It will initially be very demanding and difficult. But given the circumstances, the choices are limited. A mentoring model that provides the headmaster with the opportunity to actively play the role of a mentor is thus argued to be a very suitable and appropriate means of providing school-based training for KDC trainees, an initial training for temporary teachers, and as induction programme for beginning teachers.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RELATED ISSUES

Mentoring in rural schools in Sarawak cannot be viewed from a narrow perspective of just providing initial training to temporary teachers and KDC trainees. To be fully beneficial in improving the overall quality of teaching and learning, and hence school improvement, mentoring should also be concerned with professional growth of teachers, and becomes an integral part of staff development programme. To be effective and successful in this endeavour various implementation related issues must be recognized and accordingly addressed.

A review of research literature by Elliot and Calderhead (1993:172-173) on the nature of professional growth among teachers highlights a number of factors that are important in understanding mentoring needs of teachers. First, growth in teaching is a process that occurs over a considerable period of time and must be fostered in ways that are unique to the profession. Such fostering should attend to both the affective and cognitive aspects of teaching. Second, because growth is complex and multidimensional in nature, learning to teach will probably occur at different rates for different students, it is thus in a sense idiosyncratic and personal. Third, growth can be fostered and hindered by the knowledge, values and ideas that the beginning teacher brings to teaching as well as the contexts in which such growth is developed. Fourth, those who foster growth in novices require a comprehensive language to assist them in the process. Such language would not only enable a diversity of classroom experiences to be incorporated into the novice's images of teaching but it would enable developers to adequately reflect on their complex task.

And finally, there is a need for considerable individual support, in both emotional and cognitive spheres, for beginning teachers if they are to develop and grow as teachers.

Kirkham (1992) suggests two conditions for good mentoring of trainees in school. Central to this is the schools, and specifically the mentors, active participation and direct involvement in the planning of the training programme. Two reasons are given to support this; one, in order for the mentors to act with authority, confidence and credibility they must be well-informed; and two, in order that the students receive a coherent and systematic training, in which professional skills and understanding are to develop in a justifiable and rational manner, joint planning is crucial. The second condition that is vital for successful mentoring in schools is that mentors should have the support and cooperation of colleagues. The mentors need time with his trainees, time for discussion and appraisal, and time to relate theory and practice. To help the trainee do all these, there should be opportunities and events made available which will encourage the raising of questions, and the challenging of assumptions (Kirkham, 1992:72). The mentor is dependent on colleagues for these, and if it is not properly placed in a staff-development perspective it can be problematic. In other words, It requires a positive and conducive professional culture in the school and among staff members to be effective.

Taking into account these observations and experiences, it is recommended that the following approaches be taken to ensure an effective implementation of the proposed mentoring model in Sarawak. First; headmasters of rural schools should be given adequate training to mentally, professionally and psychologically prepare them to assume the role and perform the task of mentors. Providing them with the necessary supervisor and mentoring skills and in-depth understanding of their expected roles through a systematic and coherent in service training programme is of primary importance. It would be most beneficial for such training to be jointly organised and conducted by the state education office, the teacher training institution and the schools. It must be recognized that the acquisition of these skills and competencies are important to ensure beginning teachers, KDC trainees and temporary teachers get appropriate and adequate support and guidance necessary for meaningful professional growth and self development at their work place.

Second, mentoring in rural schools should be supported by professional supervisory services from the local education department and the teacher training institution. Although regular visitations might not be possible, however it must be recognized that partnership supervision, between the mentor and an outsider, will provide the headmaster the vigour and enthusiasm to remain curious and adventurous about the classroom and the teaching-learning process. Rudduck (1997:130) points out that 'experienced teachers often have difficulty in seeing through familiarity of everyday events because their capacity for surprise has given way to a comfortable if dull predictability. The regularities of teaching lead them constantly to reconstruct the world of their classroom in its own image; and their eyes transcribe only the surface realities of events and interactions'. She further adds that 'immersion in the world of routine practice can tend over time to reduce the capacity of the practitioner both to contemplate alternative courses of action and to continue to gain insight from everyday events' (1987:130). Tutors from teacher training institution and school supervisors from the central and local education office through partnership and collaborative supervision can provide the schools and the teachers with new perspectives, fresh vision, and intellectual excitement. At the same time they can play a mediating role in the event that the closeness of the mentor-mentee relationship brings negative influences and undesirable consequences.

Third, mentors must be accordingly accorded professional and administrative recognition by the department and the teacher training institution. Kelly and colleagues (1992:179) write that 'mentor status can enhance the self-esteem, self-confidence and self-image of those acting in that capacity...having some responsibility for the development of others can be satisfying and rewarding experience, providing it is handled sensitively and professionally'. In a very difficult educational setting like those experienced in remote rural schools of Sarawak, professionally and socially isolated, recognition and acknowledgment of their professional and administrative importance will have a positive motivating effect on the headmasters, and consequently the whole school community. Literatures on effective schools have shown that one of the important factors that contribute to school effectiveness is the headmaster's leadership quality. Headmasters should be given less teaching workload so that they can have more times for mentoring activities and to conduct collaborative teaching and clinical supervision. An improved teacher quota for rural schools can help provide such an opportunity. Rural schools should also be encouraged to experiment and try alternative approaches of teaching, and allowed to be flexible and innovative in their interpretation and implementation of the national curriculum, which in the current practice are not widely practiced.

Fourth, rural schools should be given greater resource allocation to help provide adequate support services for teachers in order to create a more conducive physical, social and professional environment. Better accommodation and recreational facilities will go a long way to help these teachers enjoy and benefit from their rural postings. Better funding formula is necessary to help upgrade and update teaching learning resources and support materials. Of equal importance is adequate financial allocation for transportation of personnel so that better interaction can be developed among fellow headmasters and with officers from the department and lecturers from teacher training colleges.

In summary, changes in conceptions and structure of training, and adjustments to the existing administrative procedures and regulations are essential. For the proposed mentoring model to be effectively implemented and attain the objectives of improving the quality of teaching among the beginning and temporary teachers in rural schools, a holistic and integrated approach is necessary. Holistic in the sense that it incorporates all suitable mentoring and supervisory approaches and strategies. And, integrated in that, all relevant parties involved in the recruitment, deployment and training of teachers in the state, the education department, teacher training institution and the schools, should plan and work collaboratively.

CONCLUSION

When one is working in an isolated and difficult living area, as experienced by teachers in a big majority of the rural primary schools of Sarawak, the only thing that will push one to move on and grow professionally is the within-self factor, that is the realization of the importance of self-development and the hunger for knowledge. Self-development is rarely successful without the support of other people. A system of mentoring, as Kelly and colleagues (1992:174) rightly suggest can offer that support by providing individuals with someone who can give feedback, question, share, discuss, challenge, confront and guide one through the learning cycle.

This paper argues that the headmaster-as-a-mentor model can provide such an opportunity in rural schools. The inherent characteristic and innate value of mentoring, especially when it is rightly placed within a staff development perspective, will provide everyone involved in the mentoring process, the mentor and his protégés, the right opportunity to professionally grow and develop. In the case of rural schools in Sarawak, the temporary and beginning teachers will be provided with: (a) opportunities for meaningful feedback of performance; (b) opportunities for greater effectiveness in classroom; (c) opportunities to observe others as role models in the classroom or general management activities; and (d) personal support.

The headmaster as a mentor will directly benefit from this mentoring exercise. Kelly and colleagues (1992:179) argues that; 'helping others to reflect on their practice must be beneficial to oneself...it is difficult not to question your own practice when you are discussing the knowledge, skills or attitudes, possessed by others'. Developing mentoring skills like, listening, giving feedback, observing practice, coaching, counselling, motivating, and diagnosing performance can only help enhance performance in other areas of the mentors' work, in the case of this model, the headmaster's administrative and management responsibilities.

It must be recognized that this model cannot operate in isolation of other supervisory services now available in the state. The support of existing supervisory mechanism of the school inspectorate and the direct participation of teacher training institutions, divisional and state education offices are critical. However, in the final analysis, it is the enthusiasm and commitment of the headmasters and the temporary and beginning teachers of the rural schools themselves that will determine the effectiveness of the mentoring model in bringing about the desired change in the quality of teaching in rural schools.

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