I am the Staff Development Unit (SDU) Coordinator at YADYO, Cukurova University. The mission of SDU is to serve and support our academic staff at YADYO to help them maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills. In this respect, our favorite activity is Action Research which is an in-service teacher development program that holds the principles of "reflexive practice" and "action research". The participants act as "teacher researchers" and go through a process of self-observation and self-evaluation to identify and explore their practices and underlying beliefs to improve their teaching. At the end of these processes they are asked to write the reports of their studies and share with the other staff members or colleagues from different universities at conferences (like the one at Bahçeşehir University), supported by organizations like IATEFL.

Our Action Research Program started last year as a project and viewed as a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activity to empower the teachers by helping them positively affect their own situations and that of the students. The participants enjoyed their journey of inquiry as well as being a member of the research team. At the end of the academic year we had the chance to present our studies.

WHAT ARE TEACHER MENTORS EXPECTED TO PROVIDE?

Psychological support: Being there, caving, listening, empathizing, encouraging, being a supporter of the mentor during often emotionally-charged process.

Model: Inspiring, demonstrating, visibly being a researcher as well as a research-mentor

Subject-specialist: Sharing practical knowledge (or pedagogical content knowledge) of language learning and teaching, and of how to conduct research, of how to manage a research project

Expert-coach: Building rapport, observing and providing supportive feedback: eliciting, scaffolding; knowing how and when to give advice

Acculturator: Creating a community of critical friends focused on research for CPD and sharing valuable resources (like a chapter by Anne Burns); creating a research culture within the school and linking it to wider purposes

Sponsor: Opening doors, providing introductions, bringing teacher-researchers to a conference where they can meet a wider community

A good teacher mentor should empathise with the teacher-mentees (TM's) views and motives. It was my second mentorship experience as a team leader of an action research group this year. Conducting my own research in my own classroom as one of the participants of the research team had helped me a lot to empathise with the possible struggles teachers face, like trying to improve oneself professionally despite the workload and managing the time accordingly, planning for more fruitful and more enjoyable lessons both for the teacher and the students, despite the pressure coming from syllabus (in terms of items taught), negative attitude of some students towards ELF learning after the university exam (demotivated students who want to have a rest instead of studying and learning English and some other personal problems, etc., forming research questions, conducting research in the class, making students, understanding students' perspectives, struggling my colleagues might experience during the process). As being one of them as a teacher researcher I had had the chance to understand and helped them better. Therefore, I was able to see if the deadlines of the researches were manageable and/or was it going well with our usual workload as an instructor. This year, we had a collaborative action research project with one of the experienced mentors from the last year's project. Her area of interest in doing classroom research was similar to mine. So this year's research helped me gain insight regarding collaborative approach as well as building upon my empathy skill as a TM.

Feeling like a community has a great contribution to the dynamics of a TM group. Having a common goal helps members a lot about this matter. Nevertheless, I believe that the TM must be equipped for providing trusting, supportive, respectful and safe environments to help the mentors feel as part of a community which aims personal and professional development.

Having regular group meetings and having other ways to have continuous communication among group members (forming a What's Ap Group, chats in the corridor, break times, coffee breaks, office hour increase the pace and the quality of the projects conducted in classes. In this way, TMs have the chance to communicate their ideas, share their problems, understand one another and find solutions while trying to see happenings from different perspectives while articulating on their own ideas.

A good TM should never leave a problem unsolved. The mentors should feel confident that the TM will play their role to resolve conflicts and should feel respectful to the group norms. A good TM shouldn't evaluate and discourage the TMs. Instead, s/he will guide and support them at certain dose, NOT MUCH, to encourage the TMs for self-evaluation through reflection.

I once again realized that a good mentor should be equipped with all kinds of mental and spiritual tools to keep a group going and be successful in terms of helping the TMs focus their attention and interest on engaging the moment for CPD, enjoying the experience and being able to see some kinds of products of the classroom projects like their students' achievement, contentment, joy, completing a study, writing a paper, having a paper published, etc.). A TM can have a strong influence on TMs professional development. My team had positive reflections about the experience they had via this action research projects they conducted as part of CPD, classroom, students' learning.

Providing scaffolding to the TMs by clarifying the expectations and purposes is very important for their learning and improvement. A TM is a model for this reason. s/he should act as a model in terms of resilience and positivity against the challenges that can be faced during the research.

A good TM should never be lazy or lean or leave any place for laziness. s/he should be organized, true blue, honest but always kind. s/he should be cautious about any kind of difference among the team members.

A good TM should try his/her best to understand the needs, preferences, working style and working pace of his/her TMs.

Subject of expertise can be something, however, to me a TM should be able to teach how to use a spoon to the MT, instead of spoon-feeding him/her by his/her expertise knowledge. In this way, the TMs have the chance to grow themselves in different subjects.

Last but not the least, a good TM should know how to praise a good move, achievement and improvement on the part of the TMs.