



# Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

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Facultad de Lenguas

Maestría en la Enseñanza del Inglés

*ELT PROFESSORS' BELIEFS ABOUT THEIR MENTORING  
RELATIONSHIPS*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Languages for the

Degree of

**Maestría en la Enseñanza del Inglés**

By

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Facultad de Lenguas

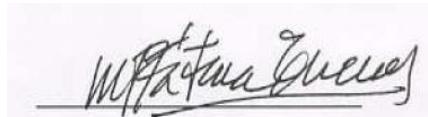
# **ELT PROFESSORS' BELIEFS ABOUT THEIR MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS**

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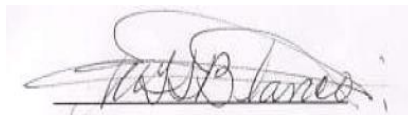
**Dalia María León Vázquez**

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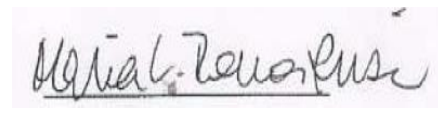
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## **Abstract**

The educational system is going through a series of reforms that imply different demands for professors working at any level of Mexican Education . Calvo (2008) stated that there is a need for an interdisciplinary professionalization of teachers that can contribute to their daily practice and also a need for research regarding teachers' personal and professional development.

This study proposes a multi-theoretical model to address the issue of mentoring as a tool that can contribute to teacher's professional development (PD).

Chandler and Kram (2005) state, that research on mentoring and developmental networks has shown strong support for relationships for personal and professional learning and development. Hence, this study explored English professor researchers' beliefs regarding their mentoring relationships.

This model was developed within a sociocultural perspective. Three different views about mentoring were presented: mentoring in organizational psychology, mentoring in education, and finally mentoring from a psychological perspective.

The participants for this study were two groups. For the qualitative section, 100 participants were selected from three different universities (north, center and south of Mexico). And for the second section, 8 experienced ELT professor - researchers who work in ELT programs from five different public universities in Mexico as well.

A mix-method approach that combined two instruments, a questionnaire and a semistructured interview, was used to carry out this study. The results of this research indicated that there is agreement among and the fact that collaborative work led to PD. Moreover, not all participants were aware about the importance of having professional relationships such as mentoring as a means to enhance their PD. The results also showed that participants are attached

to the mentoring concept that the literature proposes. Participants were also aware of the two mentor functions proposed by Kram (1985).

Four different pathways to become mentors were also found among the participants. Some conflicts in the professor's mentoring experiences were also identified as part of the drawbacks in this kind of professional relationship. There was also evidence of the redefinition of the professional image of participants as proposed by Orland Barak (2005) .

The results contribute to raise our awareness on the evolving role of EFL teacher-researchers in Mexican higher education and the relationships they go constructing throughout their professional journey.

## Acknowledgements & Dedications

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I thank God for this achievement in my career and life. I dedicate this accomplishment to my mother, father, siblings, mentors and close friends for their support and patience in this hard but meaningful journey.

I really appreciate the support of my thesis director Fatima Encinas. She has been a very wise, patient and humble mentor. There are no words words to express how much I thank the invaluable feedback I have received from my readers in every stage of this study. This acknowledgement is also for my EFL professors at the Faculty of Languages at BUAP who have contributed to carry out my study.

Now, I perceive my profession differently. I am not only an English teacher, but a professional who can contribute in the EFL field.

Above all I am thankful to every colleague, coworker and professor that contributed to raising my awareness on the implications of this study while presenting its progress.

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# **ELT PROFESSORS' BELIEFS ABOUT THEIR MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS**

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

- 1.0 Why is this being researched?**
- 1.1 The significance of the study**
- 1.2 Wider context of the study**
- 1.3 Participants and research location**
- 1.4 Background of the researcher**
- 1.5 Research aims**
- 1.6 Research questions**
- 1.7 Chapter summary and overview**

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Why is this being researched?

Reforms such as the *Reforma Educativa*, derived from the “*Pacto por Mexico*” and approved on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012 are transforming the roles of teachers, students, principles as well as classrooms, institutions and the whole Mexican education system. Teachers have become core participants in the implementation of these education reforms. So it is necessary to understand the implications that the educational reforms bring about for the professor researchers’ involved in ELT education programs in Mexico. This mixed method study presents professor researchers’ beliefs regarding their own mentoring relationships in these higher education contexts.

Teachers’ and professor researchers’ practices are now being constantly evaluated and a higher range of professional qualifications are being required in order to increase quality in education. The educational system is struggling. According to Calvo (2008) there are three major difficulties that have been identified as part of this transition period, and those are:

- The relationship between theory and practice.
- A need of an interdisciplinary professionalization of teachers that can contribute to their daily practice and help them adapt to the contexts in which they teach.
- A need for research regarding teachers’ personal and professional development.

Over the past decades, one of the most common practices that the heads of institutions have implemented in order to promote teacher development is the provision of massive training courses or sessions on a wide variety of teaching topics such as evaluation, methodology, trends

in teaching, among other. These courses have as their main goal the improvement of teaching practices. Recently, however, criticism and questions have been raised about the way these courses are given and the relation they have with the real teachers' practice of. Many teachers consider that these courses are a mere 'waste of time' because they are not contextualized and so there is a tendency to avoid attending the courses whenever possible (Rojas, 2014). Thus, there is a need for research regarding teachers' personal and professional development in order to promote teacher professionalization and contribute to their daily teaching practices (Calvo 2008). Chandler and Kram (2005) state, for example, that research on mentoring and developmental networks has shown strong support for relationships for personal and professional learning and developmental. So, there is a need to understand the specific professional relationships teachers construct in order to promote their professional development.

Hence, this study explored English professor researchers' beliefs regarding mentoring relationships. The questions, then would be, what do mentoring relationships look like in this professional community? How do these emerge? And what is the impact of such relationships on teachers who experience them? These and more questions will be addressed and analyzed in detail in the next chapters in an attempt to understand this phenomenon in education.

### **1.1 The significance of the study**

The concept of mentoring in this study is focused on professional development support within professor researchers' educational contexts to help them to fulfill the demands that the educational system proposes. There is no single definition of the term *mentoring*; it is used differently according to each context and is flexible and adaptable across contexts. For instance, Henissen (2007) states that in the past a mentor was viewed as a father-figure, a teacher, a role

model, an advisor and guide. In addition, organizational studies first viewed mentoring as a relationship between more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the objective of helping and developing the protégé's career (Kram, 1985; Levinson, 1978). Allen (2008) contributes to this view and states a mentoring relationship as an inherently dyadic and complex process, where the mentor and the mentee have different roles and responsibilities. Hence the versatility of the mentor role from classical times has been reflected in the wide variety of terms and concepts that are attached in the description of a mentor in the different settings, for instance, in teacher education.

This study aims to explore professional support in Mexican ELT communities using mentoring perspectives from research in other disciplines such as psychology and organizational psychology. These two disciplines can contribute to the mentoring research in educational and professional development perspectives.

This study emerged from a macro-project which involved 3 Mexican public universities. The main focus of the macro project was language professor researchers' beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning and research.

## **1.2 Wider context of the study**

A sociocultural perspective has framed this study. In order to carry out this study, issues related to relationships and practices within communities of practice, collaborative learning, stages in professional development were reviewed. These issues were addressed to understand involved issues such as teaching, learning, mentoring, research and professional development directly related to this study.

### **1.3 Participants and research location**

Participants in the quantitative section of this study were professor researchers from three different public universities in Mexico (one from the north, one from the center of the country and one from the south). This study mainly focused on professors who are involved in a national program called the PROMEP (*Programa de Mejora para el Profesorado*) administered by the *Secretaria de Educación Pública* (SEP). This first stage explored professor researchers' beliefs regarding collaboration.

In the qualitative section of this study, seven professor researchers from different public universities around México (north, central and south part of the country) and one from the United States were interviewed. These professor researchers were selected because they had had mentoring experiences in different Mexican universities. The data collected from both stages presented a more clear picture of professors' beliefs on mentoring relationships.

### **1.4 Background of the researcher**

Prior to undertaking the study I was not aware of the impact that mentoring had in my community and in ELT. Given the demands and high stakes of language teacher professional development today, I hope that my research on this topic can contribute to the understanding of the role of mentoring in our field.

Furthermore, understanding trends in teachers' support and issues surrounding this issue could help my own professional development since we often do not pay attention to all the learning opportunities that we all, not only teachers, but human beings have at any context or community of practice we are involved in.

## **1.5 Research aims**

The aims in this research are:

- To explore the way mentoring is perceived within the ELT academic community.
- To become aware about how mentoring relationships emerge.
- To explore the impact of mentoring relationships on professor-researchers' professional development.

## **1.6 Research questions**

**RQ1: What are ELT professor-researchers' beliefs regarding mentoring and professional development?**

**RQ2: How do ELT professor-researcher report they have experienced mentoring and other collaborative relationships?**

## **1.7 Chapter summary and overview**

In this chapter, I have described why this study has been carried out and where the idea emerged from. The wider context of the research was described and also the disciplines that informed the literature review for the study were discussed. Furthermore, the background of the researcher was presented as well as the aim and research questions. The next chapters in this thesis are organized as follows: chapter two includes a literature review about issues around mentoring and professional development; then, chapter three describes the methodology followed to carry out this study, the context of the study, the research methodology, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedure. Additionally, chapter four includes the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and finally, chapter five presents the findings of the study and final conclusions of this research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

### **2.1 Psychosocial perspective**

### **2.2 Organizational psychology perspective (business perspective)**

### **2.3 Mentoring in teacher education and development**

### **2.4 Contributions of the three perspectives to the concept of mentoring**

### **2.5 Professional development**

### **2.6 Conclusions**

## 2.0 Introduction

Mentoring has received increasing attention in education in the new global knowledge society because both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs have become central components of educational systems interested in high quality standards. Mentoring relationships in teacher education and development are generally established in teachers' pre-service and in-service teachers' research and teaching contexts (Velázquez de Medrano, 2009)

There are different structures to support teachers within the working context, ranging from macro meetings with all the teaching staff of a school to a one-to-one exchange between a teacher and the school's coordinator, principal, among others. The support that is given to teachers may refer to specific professional practices within a specific community; that is, the provision of supervision, coaching, training, or mentoring depends on how institutions manage and perceive continuing teacher education.

According to how continuing teaching education is perceived, institutions carry out specific practices with the purpose of supporting teachers who are key elements to reach the competences that the global educational context demands. Despite all these attempts to improve teachers performance there is still a need to implement actions that enhance a teacher's professional development *during* their practice and not only during their induction into the educational system (Velázquez de Medrano, 2009). Among the various practices that attempt to help teachers develop professionally, mentoring is the main focus of this research study.

To date there has been little agreement on what the term mentoring really means and its implications as a professional relationship in different professional communities. Further, there is increasing debate on whether mentoring can be formalized as part of school programs and as a target to be achieved by institutions.

In the following sections, a discussion about the concept of mentoring is presented in order to arrive at a working definition and analyze the different perceptions and contributions that the concept has had in different disciplines.

## 2.1 Psychological perspective

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the concept and the role of mentoring, and in this section we discuss it from a sociocultural and educational perspective. The reason why the term mentoring was first revised from psychological perspectives is due to the context in which this study was carried out, the ELT community.

Cochran and Lytle (1999) adopt the concept of mentoring and define it as ‘the knowledge of practice’ in which teachers generate local knowledge of practice by working within the context of inquiry communities to connect theory to practice and adapt to a specific social, cultural and political context. These authors perceive mentoring as a relationship.

Awaya et al. (2003) discuss mentoring in reference to the reading of ‘Mentor Telemachus who was a character from the Greek Mythology in The Odyssey. By making this connection, they explained the concept of mentoring and how the process in the relationship evolves. In order to describe this process, they conceive the *mentor-protégé relationship as a journey* in which they highlight that mentoring can be conceived as the adulthood initiation characterized by the protégé trying to find a role in society. Then, they visualize equality *in the mentoring relationship*. They also recognize the need of friendly care and assistance of mentors and they also mention that mentoring doesn’t have to be necessarily based on ranks but on the mentor’s greater experience and wisdom. These authors also view *mentoring as a guide to practical knowledge* or guide to action. What the authors refer to in this point is that mentors support

protégés in the problems and challenges that they face by helping them to see different pathways they may have as options to overcome different hard situations. *The mentor as a source of moral support* is very connected to the previous point since it implies that mentors play a very important role when building mentee's confidence.

Awaya et al (2003) note that the mentor has to *provide enough space to the mentee to prove his/her worth*. This means that mentors have to guide mentees but not take control over his/her actions. So, as they explain, the dynamic goes around finding the right moment to help and the right moment to sit back and just observe what the mentee is able to do with the pathways that the mentor has provided to its protégé.

Another psychological perspective is the one based on the work of the well-known researcher Kegan. His theory on adult's developmental stages and the implications that such theory has in mentoring is used as a framework to define mentoring. Kegan (1982, 1991, 1994) states that the individual's stage will influence the types of relationships that the individual is likely to create. He focuses on the psychological framework, subject-object relations, a tool that helps to assess individuals' levels of development and how they increasingly know themselves as separate from the world of objects around them. The developmental stage model that he presents has five stages, of which four can be developed in adulthood. These four stages are: 1) the instrumental mind, 2) the socialized mind, 3) the self-authoring mind and the self-transformative mind.

In the *instrumental stage* adults see their own impulses as primary and they are unable to see perspectives from others or to reflect upon themselves or identify patterns in their personality. At this stage, individuals are attached only to their desires. Then, in the *socialized mind* stage individuals are conscious of the influence of other's perspectives in their lives as well

as in their needs. Moreover, they are capable of putting their individual interests upon a reflective lens; however, they are dependent on relying on others to generate answers.

In a **self-authoring mind**, adults possess the skills to differentiate themselves from others, evaluate their own values system and shape their identity. At this stage, individuals are able to manage conflict and reach leadership. Finally, in the *self-transformative order*, a very small minority of individuals, are able to reflect on the limits of their own work. They can identify what is in some way partial or incomplete in their work or view and make space for revision and development.

What seems to be relevant about this theory is that the need for a mentor emerges based on the needs an individual has while developing professionally, and how individuals can go about choosing mentors that can support those needs. That is, individuals look for different types of support according to the stage of development they are in a specific time.

In sum, psychological studies on mentoring stress the need to link the term mentoring with a professional relationship that has as its main purpose the knowledge of practice. Moreover, this perspective suggests that this kind of support will depend on an individual's stage of development. In addition to this, there is a gap regarding mentoring and such a gap has to do with a lack of research focused on the details of mentoring interactions in practical settings (Hawkey, 2003).

Likewise, it is necessary to carry out research about how individual's developmental stage affects the kind of relationships he/she experiences (Kegan 1982,991, 1994).

## 2.2 Organizational psychology perspective (business perspective)

Mentoring research in organizational psychology (organizational psychology, management among others) started more than three decades ago. Starting with the work of Daniel Levison in 1978, eight years later with Kathy Kram (1985) and later there have been a number of current literature accounts for the study of mentoring (Among the most recent Ragins & Kram , 2007; Allen, Eby, Poteet, O'Brien & Lentz, Lima, 2008; Eby & Allen, 2008). All these studies have contributed to the understanding of mentoring relationships, the roles of participants, the context of the professional relationship and methodological research issues.

Organizational studies first viewed mentoring as a relationship between more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the objective of helping and developing the protégé's career (Kram, 1985; Levinson, 1978). This perspective considers the mentor's experience as an important factor that will contribute with the mentees' growth. Kram (2007) also highlights that the mentoring process is a developmental relationship that is embedded within the career context. She argues that while learning, growth, and development may happen in different types of work and close personal relationships, mentoring's main focus is on career development and growth. She also adds that the mentor may or may not be part of the organization or company where the protégée performs.

Kram (1985) contributes to the concept of mentoring with the idea that mentors are perceived as providing two types of functions: *career functions and psychosocial functions*. On one hand, Allen et. al. (2004) state that career-related functions enhance mentees advancement in the organization and include the mentor functions as sponsorship, and providing exposure, visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. Moreover, Allen also mentions the

fact that the mentor will be able to provide such support depending on her or his seniority, experience, and organizational influence.

On the other hand, Allen argues that the psychosocial functions address more interpersonal aspects of the relationship and refers to “those aspects of a relationship that enhance an individual’s sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role” (Allen, 1985, as cited in Kram, 1985, p. 32). Explicit psychosocial functions entail role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship.

In addition, Kram (1985) talks about 4 phases of mentoring which are Initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition of the relationship. With these, he tries to explain the way the relationship may be successful or may be interrupted.

In sum, Kram’s states that the concept of mentoring in business management relates to a kind of support that mentees need within an organization. Mentors are not necessarily part of such organization. Furthermore, experience plays an important role to boost mentees’ careers in terms of performing better or to learning how to perform in a specific work context, and mentors are not necessarily part of this context. Finally there are specific functions that mentors should be aware of when involved in the mentoring practice as well as phases that the mentoring relation can experience. In addition, another important perspective is the one that Allen (2008) presents. Allen alludes to the idea that a mentoring relationship is an inherently dyadic and complex process, where the mentor and the mentee have different roles and responsibilities. Here there is agreement with Velazco (2009) who discusses mentoring from the perspective of mentoring in education.

Allen adds that great part of the success of the mentoring experience depends of the behaviors of both the mentor and the mentee. Allen suggests viewing mentoring as a specific

form of organizational support based on social psychological models of helping behavior. With this view he emphasized the importance of mentors as part of an organization who play a key role in ensuring the transfer and continuation of knowledge and helping prepare junior colleagues for further organizational responsibility (Kram & Hall, 1996). Allen, based on Kram's two dimensions; career support and psychological support, highlights that psychological support generally determines longer mentoring relationship experiences than just career support.

Mentoring relationships are not static and take place within a full range of positive and negative experiences, practices and outcomes (see Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Fletcher and Ragins agreed on the idea that mentoring is a journey in which both mentor and mentee or, in the case of constellations of relationships (Higgins & Kram, 2001) learn by engaging individuals and groups in communal learning, networking, and sponsoring (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) both personally and professionally (Kram 1985).

Although we can see that Allen (2008) supports Kram's theory, he argues that significantly less research has examined mentoring behavior as self-reported by the mentor. Awareness of the need for research from the mentor perspective has influenced the focus of this study.

### **2.3 Mentoring in teacher education and development**

Now we turn our attention to mentoring in teacher higher education. Hennissen et al. (2008) draw attention to mentoring in higher education in terms of what the concept implies according to the tradition. When talking about 'the tradition' the authors focus on how the mentor was perceived in the past, i.e., at the same time a father-figure, a teacher, a role model, an advisor and a sort of guide.

Another important view regarding the issue of mentoring and teacher education is the one presented by Mann (2012). He starts by mentioning some gaps that still exist in the issue of mentoring research and teacher education. Mann (2012) points out that most studies emphasize that mentoring only takes place during the first year of teaching. He argues that in the context where he carried out his study (a university in Israel) there is no attention to mentoring in later years of the teaching practice. In addition, Mann talks about the role of mentors and how it evolves from being a short-term technical assistance to being a more long-term reflective companion.

Mann, supported by Hobson's (2009), states that mentoring is a process which turns into a socialization process of constructed learning which is limited by the time mentors and mentees spend together. Thus, the longer time they spend together the more possibilities the mentoring situation has to shift into a socially constructed knowledge experience. This point of view highlights the importance of researching mentoring experiences not only at the beginning of the process as pre-service and novice teachers but along the in-service teachers' practice. Professional developmental changes may happen at any stage of the career and the mentoring experiences and the effects that such a relationship may have on the mentors and mentees may evolve as well.

Another author who discusses mentoring in teacher continuing education is Orland Barak (2005). She carried out her research in the Israeli in-service education. Her objective was to explore her own understanding about the process of learning to mentor by comparing mentoring with acquiring a second language/ acquiring communicative competences. By carrying out her study, she was able to raise her awareness about mentoring by making connections and distinctions between mentoring and teaching.

Barack (2005) focuses on the transition period that teachers go through when becoming mentors. She points out that when teachers start mentoring, they may find very familiar behaviors as in teaching and so there may be a confusion when trying to deal with mentees since mentors may follow patterns that have to do more with the teaching task, rather than with the mentoring. That is teachers are 'lost in translation' when transferring teaching to their second language of practice (mentoring) due to the variety of faceted demands of mentoring.

Then, the same author describes some of the activities in which the mentor gives support to mentees. She indicates that districts mentors in the Israeli context observe and evaluate novice and veteran teachers at schools, organize and conduct workshop sessions, lead staff-development programs, and develop and disseminate new school curricula. In addition, she states that mentors almost always maintain part-time teaching jobs at schools.

In addition, Barack (2005) highlights that to induct mentors into the range of functions and roles, mentioned above, institutions invest a considerable amount of money at a national level to train mentors at the postgraduate and in-service levels. She mentions that these training programs, initially coordinated at universities, had focused, until recently, on the development of mentors' professional roles as facilitators, collaborators, and reflective professionals, adopting more bottom-up, personal-growth agendas of mentoring and mentored learning.

Barak (2005) also discusses the redefinition of professional identity. She points out that like when learning to teach, learning to mentor seems to constitute "part of a process of constructing an identity in the middle of more than one system of relations that can overlap or cause conflict in the activity setting which in a sense makes the identity construction quite challenging (Smagorinsky et al., 2004 as cited in Barak).

In a later section, Barak (2005) refers to what McIntyre et al. (1993) and Maynard (1996) described as ‘learning to mentor’. Barack points out that mentoring is a process of “reskilling” since mentors learn to untie one kind of practical knowledge from another in their work with student teachers. Barack explains the struggle teachers go through while becoming mentors.

Henissen (2008), highlights the fact that only a few studies are focused on the effectiveness of mentoring from the point of view of mentor/mentee. On the other hand, Barack (2005) talks about the importance of preparing mentors to develop what Goleman (1995) calls “emotional intelligence” in order to be able to fulfill mentees’ needs effectively. Also, the same author sheds light of the need for exploration on learning the practice of mentoring in education systems.

#### **2.4 Contributions of the three perspectives to the concept of mentoring**

After all the discussion of the literature in the previous sections, it seemed pertinent to define **mentoring** for this study based on different authors in three different disciplines.

*Through this study, **mentoring** is used to refer to a formal or informal type of professional relationship or socialization process of constructed learning between a mentor and a mentee where participants (mentors and mentees) play specific roles and have specific responsibilities. This relationship consists of two main functions (career and psychosocial) that has as main focus to boost individual’s practical knowledge in accordance with the individual’s stage of development and needs.*

#### **2.5 Professional development**

Professional Development is central to the focus of this study. Furthermore, it is said that current professional development seeks to generate learning communities where participants are involved in meaningful activities collaborating with peers to co-construct knowledge about teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Shulman & Shulman, 2004).

Professional development is also perceived as key for a country's development in this knowledge society (Vélaz de Medrano, 2009).

Regarding the term professional development, Lange (1989) describes PD a process of continual, intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal growth (p. 4). Danielewicz (2001) who supports Lange's view on professional developments argues that teacher development is seen as part of the process of "transformative re-imagining of the self". Johnson (2001) agrees with the two authors and highlights that the change or transformation of professors' identities is conceived as to be socially constructed.

Finally, it is important to remember Kegan's view (1994) about professional development in his developmental stages theory which states that professional development is a gradual process. Furthermore, he states that moving from one comprehensive way of knowing to another may take years and for each person will be different, that's why we may find people of the same age that go through different levels of professional development which is limited by the experiences the individual is involved in.

As we can see, there seems to be agreement on what the concept of professional development stands for and its implications. However, there is still need for more research that explores the complexities of teacher learning in redefined professional developmental contexts (Borko, 2004).

In this section, PD and the focus of current professional development was discussed. Lange's view (1989) about professional development was presented as well as Johnson (2001) agreement on the conceptualization of the term. Finally, attention was paid to Kegan's view (1994) about professional development.

## **2.6 Conclusions**

Along this literature review, special attention has been given to the concept of mentoring. First, as mentioned before, mentoring has received increasing attention in the new global knowledge society because of the reforms of the educational systems. Mentoring has also become a major area of interest since it is a common practice within academic communities. In addition, the concept of mentoring has a lot of different implications and definitions and therefore different disciplines tend to apply it differently according to their specific working and professional contexts.

This literature review has helped to understand that there is a need for mentoring not only in pre-service teacher education but also in-service teacher higher education because professor researchers are core participants in the education of future teachers who will later implement educational reforms.

## **CHAPTER 3: STUDY METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

### **3.1 Setting the study context**

### **3.2 The study subjects/participants**

#### **3.2.1 Context and background of the participants and selection criteria**

### **3.3 The research methodology**

#### **3.3.1 Data collection instruments**

#### **3.3.2 Questionnaire**

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## 3.0 STUDY METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological design followed to collect analyze and draw conclusions regarding the issue of mentoring and professional development in higher education.

### 3.1 Setting the study context

This study used a mixed method which collected data with two instruments (see 3.4.1) a questionnaire and an interview. These explored both qualitative and quantitative issues of professor-researcher's mentoring beliefs and experiences. It seemed necessary to explore the qualitative and quantitative aspects to portray a larger picture of what the theory says about the professor-researcher's mentoring beliefs and their implications in the context of higher education.

### 3.2 The study subjects/participants

The participants for this study were two two different groups for each section of the study. For the quantitative section, 100 participants were selected from three different universities (north, center and south of Mexico), all of them were part of the "*Programa para el Mejoramiento del Profesorado*" (PROMEP) program which belongs to *Secretaria de Educación Pública* (SEP). This program promotes the improvement and development of teachers in public universities around the Mexican republic. For the second section, 8 experienced ELT professors - researchers who work in ELT programs in five different public universities in Mexico were selected.

### 3.2.1 Context and background of the participants and selection criteria

The participants in this study are involved in the ELT context as professor – researchers (Table 3.1). The selection of the participants was determined by the following criteria. For the first section of the research (quantitative), participants needed to be EFL professor – researchers who worked in the three universities mentioned above. The participants in this group were involved in teaching, research, thesis supervision and diverse academic activities in their academic communities. For the second section, (qualitative) 8 experienced professor – researchers from five different universities in Mexico and one from the United States were selected. The previous selection was based on the fact that there has been little attention given to mentoring outcomes as self-reported by mentors, and also the fact that there is a lack of understanding on the outcomes and the way mentoring interactions take place (Hawkeye, 1998; Kegan’s 1982, 1991, 1994, Hennessey et al. 2008).

*Table 3.1 Professor Researcher’s information*

<b><i>SUBJECTS</i></b>	<b><i>Education degree</i></b>	<b><i>Years in the ELT field</i></b>	<b><i>Years in Teacher education</i></b>	<b><i>Years as a mentor</i></b>
<b><i>Nayeli</i></b>	MA in TESOL, PhD in Applied Linguistics	17	5	9
<b><i>Manuel</i></b>	PhD in English and Education from the University of Michigan	19	14	4
<b><i>Raquel</i></b>	Social psychology, UAM/MD TESOL University of London. PhD SLA and instructional university of South Florida	about 35	7 , (since 2007)	7
<b><i>Lucia</i></b>	Masters of Arts from Morwic University	28	about 12	15 , since1999

<i>Rose</i>	PhD (Lingüística Aplicada y Teórica)	None	2009	4 years, since 2010
<i>Mirna</i>	MA TESOL PhD in Language studies	30 as a teacher	20 as teacher educator	15 as a mentor
<i>Mariana</i>	BA Anthropology (1973); MA Linguistics(1981); PhD Linguistics (1998)	41 (since 1973 to present)	1987 to present	Since 1999
<i>Sara</i>	MA in Linguistics	25	20 as teacher educator	15 as a mentor

### 3.3 The research methodology

The data collection instruments, research procedure and data analysis are described in the following section.

#### 3.3.1 Data collection instruments

As mentioned in CH.1, this study was part of a larger project related to a series of specific key elements that contribute to research and professional development. The macro project collected data with 100 questionnaires which at the same time opened a wide opportunity for more research regarding other issues on PD. In this case, for this study, the same questionnaire was used to frame the quantitative section of the research design. After having a defined quantitative section, the need of a qualitative section that complemented beliefs about mentoring and real practice experiences seemed pertinent. So, in a later stage of this study, an interview was designed and carried out with the second group of participants that collaborated with this study.

#### 3.3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire designed for the quantitative section was created, piloted and delivered physically to all the participants. The reason why this instrument was selected is because it shed

light on the issue of mentoring relationships within higher education communities. Although this questionnaire did not give enough information about professors' mentoring beliefs and experiences, the data collected with this instrument was used as a starting point for the qualitative section.

### **3.3.3 Semi structured interview**

The interview for the qualitative section of the study was designed based on specific aspects of the literature review (see Chapter 2) as well as on the second research question of this study. The reason why this instrument was selected was because the questionnaire itself did not provide enough evidence about mentoring and its relation with professional development in higher education.

### **3.4 The research procedure**

This investigation followed a series of steps to collect the data needed to answer the research questions. The instruments were chosen, designed, piloted and then improved. In the quantitative section, the questionnaires were delivered and then answered by the participants. For the qualitative section, interviews were scheduled according to participant's availability. The majority of the interviews were carried out via Skype since most of the participants are from universities from different states in Mexico. In some other cases, the interviews were carried out face to face. During the Skyped interviews spontaneous transcription of answers took place and in some cases when some of the participants wanted to add more information to whatever they said, they typed out their answers or additional information via instant message. During the face to face interviews, there was opportunity to record participants and then transcribe their answers.

### **3.4.1 Data analysis procedures**

In order to analyze the data collected throughout the questionnaire, it was necessary to select the items related to the topic mentoring and categorize them. Those items were found in the sections related to collaborative work, and career support within the questionnaire the questionnaire. Some graphs were designed in order to have a graphic support to draw conclusions about the issue. After having the graphs done, conclusions about beliefs about mentoring were drawn. Regarding the **interview**, after having designed, piloted, improved and carried out the interview the information was analyzed and compared with what the theory says.

### **3.5 Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, the methodology of this study was described. A mixed method with two different instruments was used in order to complement each other and be able to answer the two research questions stated in CH 1.

Secondly, the study subjects/participants were described by including two descriptions, the former related to the group of professors that were given the questionnaire and the latter group that included experienced professor-researchers that have been involved in the mentoring practice.

In the next section the data collection instruments were mentioned as well as described. The instruments selection criteria and the data analysis were described. The next chapter presents the data analysis carried out for this study.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS ANALYSIS**

### **4.0 Introduction**

### **4.1 Beliefs regarding mentoring and professional development**

#### **4.1.1 Participants' beliefs about Collaborative work (CW)**

#### **4.1.2 Participants' Beliefs on Career Support**

#### **4.1.3 Mentoring as a concept**

#### **4.1.4 Mentors' role**

### **4.2 Experiences related to Mentoring and Professional Development**

#### **4.2.1 Participants' experiences regarding Becoming a mentor**

#### **4.2.2 Effects of Mentoring in Participant's Professional Development**

#### **4.2.3 Institutional culture and Mentoring**

### **4.4 Chapter conclusions**

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS ANALYSIS**

### **4.0 Introduction**

The results of this mixed method study on professor-researchers beliefs and reported experiences on mentoring along their professional journey in the ELT community are presented in this chapter. Evidence taken from the questionnaire and interview described in chapter three were taken into consideration to support the emerging categories in each section (qualitative and quantitative). Because of ethical considerations, the participants' real names were not revealed in their extracts.

### **4.1 Beliefs regarding mentoring and professional development**

The following section presents the findings from the data collected from a questionnaire on research beliefs answered by 100 PR from 3 different Mexican universities and a semi structures interview to 7 PR (Professor Researchers) who are well known for their tutoring, supervising and or mentoring practices. In this section both quantitative and qualitative data were integrated in order to complement each other and present a more in-depth landscape of PRs' beliefs about mentoring relationships. This chapter is divided as follows: first, the participants' beliefs on collaborative work (CW), next, career support as a means to enhance professional development (PD), and finally, participants' perceptions of mentoring as a concept as well as the roles that mentors have in an academic context.

#### **4.1.1 Participants' beliefs about Collaborative work (CW)**

This section describes the participants' beliefs related to collaborative work. This section of the questionnaire was selected because mentoring takes place in a context of collaboration.

The concept of mentoring, in this study, refers to a formal or informal type of professional relationship or socialization process of constructed learning between a mentor and a mentee or in a networking group relationship where participants play roles as mentors and mentee's and have specific responsibilities along a collaborative journey.

The data in the questionnaire showed that 90% of the participants believed that collaborative work enhanced their academic productivity. When asked whether collaborative work was benefic or not; about 88% of the participants agreed it was beneficial. Moreover, 82% of the participants answered that collaborative work helped them to improve their research competences.

Regarding satisfaction in collaborative work (CW), 88% of the participants found satisfaction. Finally, a last item in the questionnaire focused on whether working with colleagues favored the participant's professional development and 91% of them agreed. Figure (4.2) shows the results described above.

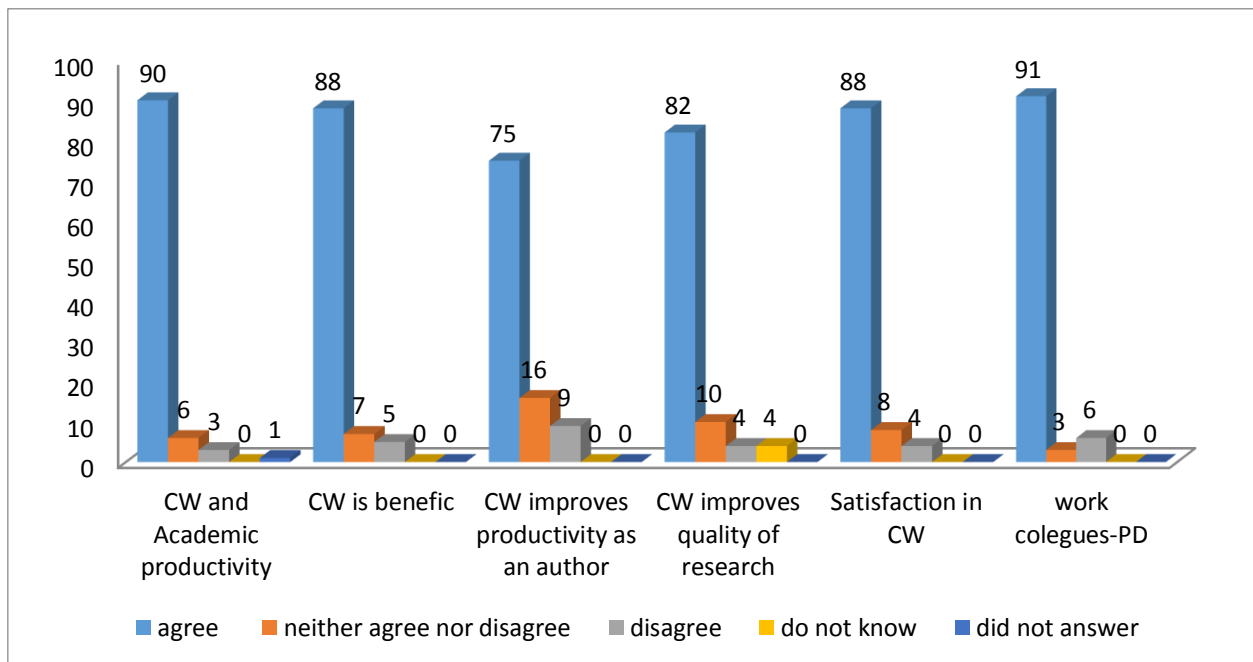


Figure 4.2 *Participants (n=100) beliefs about collaborative work.*

#### 4.1.2 Participants' Beliefs on Career Support

A later section in the questionnaire included items related to participants' beliefs on career support. The section started by asking whether participant's development had been improved by a mentor and at least 66% of the participants agreed.

Although, the answers of most of the items related to were quite positive 80%; the percentage lowered significantly when the participants answered items related to their teaching and research practice. Around 52% of them considered that a mentor support in their teaching practice had frequently had a positive impact in their professional development; whereas, 19% of the participants thought that such a situation rarely happened and 7% considered that a mentor had not had any impact in their career. When asked about mentoring experiences in research 52% participants thought their research activity had been improved by the help of a mentor.

Figure 4.4 show these results:

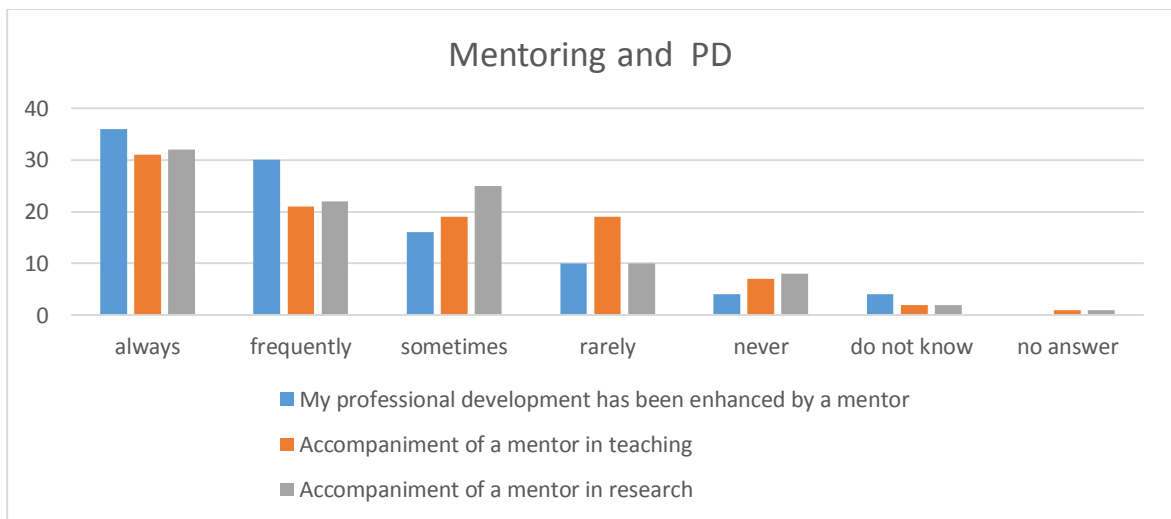


Figure 4.4 *Participants (n=100) participant's career support and professional development*

Finally, in a specific section of the questionnaire, participants were asked about the importance of working with expert researchers. Most participants (85%) completely agreed on the importance of working with expert researchers.

The results of the items related to the importance, satisfaction and the impact of collaboration in professional development showed that the majority of participants showed a positive attitude towards these issues. However, the data from the items in the questionnaire about career support showed that although the participants had a positive opinion about the impact that career support in their careers, the percentage of participants who thought had had beneficial collaboration experiences were considerably less. Such situation raised some questions, such as what was the situation of those professor researchers regarding the kind or support they got during their careers, teaching or research practice? Or whether they had mentors during their professional trajectory experience.

These affirmative responses regarding the relationship between collaborative and professional development may be linked to a feature of personal response data which is known as socially desirable response in survey research (de Mortel, 2008). This may be seen as a response bias which leads participants to answer questionnaire items to portray positive self-images. Such a situation may lead to confusion and affect the data.

Moreover, in the previous section the term mentor/mentoring was already mentioned and it seemed that all participants understood what a mentor was and the benefits of having a mentor. The next section indicates some evidence about more in-depth participants' beliefs regarding the term of mentoring and its implications.

### 4.1.3 Mentoring as a concept

In the interview, the participants' were asked about the concept of mentoring and what this concept meant in their own educational contexts. When defining the term, six out of the seven interviewees answered that mentoring with *accompanying, supporting, helping, and guiding*.

Although participants agreed on some factors that are involved in the concept of mentoring, they also had additional ideas that enriched the concept. Lucia thought that the term was also related to educating, negotiating and constructing social networks.

In addition, when discussing mentoring in a pre-service English teaching program, Lucia, who was more into mentoring in teaching, emphasized that mentors had to raise mentees awareness about socializing since teaching was not only about going to a classroom and teaching a class, but also about constructing relationships in those contexts in which they are involved in, the following extract reveals the way Lucia stated this point.

...when you teach you have to do with many people, not only students, but the janitor who opens the door... (Lucia)

In addition, Manuel asserted that mentoring is related to guidance, but also has to do with do with supervision. Manuel then clearly identified the fact that there is a difference between mentoring and supervision. Manuel said:

...for me it means guidance, working with someone who is less experienced in my area of expertise. It is close guidance and supervision...

As stated in the literature, the concept of supervision seems to be more related to institutionalize asymmetrical relationships (Olivia 1993).

At least 5 of the interviewees perceived mentoring as a relationship between more experienced participants (mentor) and a less experienced (mentee). In addition, at least three of

the participants stated that mentoring was a practice which had as its main purpose developing in the professional journey. Raquel's stated:

... It is a relationship in which a person with more experience accompanies or guides another person, the result of this relationship is introducing a person in the profession, or to have better performance. For example, right now I am mentoring a teacher, giving her opportunities to grow, because I give her suggestions...

Mentoring according to the participants can work with both individuals who are in their initiation phase of the profession or in other developmental teaching stages.

In relation to this point, the participants were involved in mentoring practices that took place within teaching and/or research and so the time the relationship lasts may be limited by the time the mentee was developing a study or in the case of teaching the limitation could be the time a subject related to professional practices lasts. Nevertheless, there may be relationships which start as a more formal kind of relationship such as supervisor and thesis/ dissertation student or a practicum supervisor and a pre-service teacher student and evolve into a mentoring relationship and have a considerable significance in both the participants' professional development (mentee and mentor). Man (2012) and Hobson (2009) discussed the role of time in the mentoring relationship and the importance of researching mentoring situations longitudinally in order to explore how the relationship evolved.

Furthermore, Nayeli mentioned that mentoring could take place in different contexts.

...Mentoring can be given in different situations, in teaching, writing, researching. In many contexts...  
(Nayeli)

This indicates the flexibility of mentoring, it can adapt to different professional contexts. As Encinas and Sanchez (2014) state, mentoring models and experiences in education contexts vary significantly depending on their purpose. Some contexts may require mentoring practices to initiate pre-service student teachers into teaching, to retain novice teachers to advance

professionals development, and promote research (Cooper et al., 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

Finally, Rose, who is into mentoring in research, reported that mentoring had to do with a responsibility that all teachers have. She also added:

...For me it is a responsibility that a teacher has to guide the student, not to solve the student's problems, but to show pathways and give enough space to generate questions and answers...

In the next section, Rose had a similar perception than Mariana who also thought that they are not problem solvers for mentees.

In sum, PR's responses in this section indicated that mentoring has to do with educating, negotiating, guiding, accompanying and supporting. Also, one of the participants stated that mentoring had to do with supervision. Participants somehow agreed that mentoring is a relationship given between a more and a less experienced participant. At least three of the participants mentioned that the main purpose of mentoring was developing in the professional journey, and also that it is a relationship which is established at the initial or other developmental stages of the profession.

Moreover, participants responded that mentoring could take place in different contexts and could be either formal or informal. Participants who were more into mentoring in teaching considered mentoring more as a formal relationship and the ones that are into research seemed to consider the relationship as something that could become informal and personal.

Finally, participants also discussed about the flexibility of the term mentoring and the applications that it could have in within different professional contexts. Psychological studies on mentoring proposed the need to link the term mentoring with a professional relationship that has as its main purpose the knowledge of practice (Cochran & Lytle1999). Such a point fits with participants' views about the concept of mentoring. Moreover, this perspective suggested that

this kind of support will depend on the individual's stage of development which can be easily seen in the elements more experienced participants described when talking about the concept of mentoring.

#### **4.1.4 Mentors' role**

When asked about their roles as mentors, most of the participants' answers were related to the activities that they normally carry out with their mentees. They answered that they supported their mentees in research or in teaching. Some focused more on teaching and others in research and a few on both probably depending on their working contexts and the classes they teach. A second group of participants related mentoring more to the personal side of the relationship and so these participants described the kind of personal or psychological support they give to their mentees.

First, Mirna stated that her role had to do with different kinds of activities. The excerpt below describes what she meant better.

... my role has to do with sharing experiences, guidance, knowledge exchange, motivation, providing opportunities to the mentees, trying to make sense of experiences, and being a critical friend...?

Mariana agreed with Mirna regarding her mentoring roles. Mariana argued that she was also a critic, a couch, a guide, a fellow scholar and an advocate. She added that she rarely told a mentee what to do, or what she thought the mentee should do. So, she emphasized the idea of not solving mentee's problem. Then, she said,

...I try to present perspectives that help them see their own options clearly...

As Awaya et al (2003) pointed out that the mentor has to provide enough space to the mentee to prove his/her worth. This means that mentors have to guide mentees but not take control over his/her actions, and Mariana agreed with this assumption. Regarding this aspect of mentoring, data showed that most experienced mentors, Mirna, Nayeli, Raquel and Mariana,

tended to discuss the need to give mentees their own space to perform and to let them reflect about how to react in harsh situations in order to improve their teaching or research practice.

Although Rose was not as experienced as Mariana and Mirna, she agreed with the need to give mentees their own space. Moreover, when reflecting about the mentor's role, Rose emphasized that mentoring goes beyond the professional. She reported:

... A mentor has to do with the personal side. Sometimes we have to be psychologists. Sometimes our mentees have personal issues and we can be a means to guide them...

In this excerpt Rose distinguishes between the two functions of mentoring, which according to Kram (1985) are the career function and the psychological function. As stated in Chapter 2. Kram emphasized that the career function focuses on enhancing mentees advancement in the organization and the role of mentor has to do with sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection and challenging assignments. The psychological function involves a more interpersonal aspect of the relationship in order to enhance individual's sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role. As mentioned in chapter 2, the psychological function includes the mentor's functions as sponsorship, exposure, and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments.

To sum up, there were two types of PR's responses related to mentors' role. The first type of answers had to do more with mentors who helped mentees understand research design by recommending readings, clarifying ideas, revising their writings, among other tasks. The other type of support had to do more with either sharing or making sense of experiences, being a critical friend, exchanging knowledge and in sum, as Rose said, going beyond the professional in order to support students and show them pathways they could follow so that they could solve difficulties along their professional journey.

## **4.2 Experiences related to Mentoring and Professional Development**

After discussing participants' beliefs regarding mentoring and professional development, in this section, real mentoring experiences, as reported by participants, are described and analyzed. First, experiences regarding the way participants became mentors are described. Then, the effects that mentoring has had on participant's professional lives and the role that participant's institutions played in promoting or hindering mentoring practices are analyzed.

### **4.2.1 Participants' experiences regarding becoming a mentor**

After asking participants to reflect on the concept of mentoring and its meaning, participants were asked to provide some insights about the way or the circumstances in which they became mentors. In general terms, there were four paths in which participants became mentors. Nayeli, Lucia and Mariana initiated mentoring because they had a role model who influenced them to become mentors. Secondly, Nayeli and Manuel were involved in different projects with a colleague who supported them or set opportunities that led them into mentoring.

A third path was of those who felt they were experienced in the profession and felt the urge to support other colleagues, as in the case of Mirna and Sara. Finally, Sara and Rose became mentors because they taught Teaching Practicum in an undergraduate ELT program which involved supervision and mentoring. So, in some way they were "thrown into" supervision and later mentoring.

Nayeli and Mariana reported their PhD dissertation supervisors were their role model.

Mariana emphasized :

...Perhaps my most important model and influence has been my own dissertation advisor. Over time (especially over the past 10-12 years), I have been more consciously aware of assuming a more mentoring role, which for me is strongly linked to advocacy and compassion, and mentally and perhaps spiritually "channeling" my mentor (e.g., "What would Barbara say to this? –Do in this case?")(Mariana)

Hennissen's view (2008) about mentoring is directly related to Mariana's experience. Hennissen stated that a mentor was at the same time a father-figure, a teacher, a role model, an advisor and guide. The fact that Nayeli and Mariana's mentoring practice has been strongly influenced by their own role models provides evidence of the author's assertion.

Lucia also said that studying the MA was a starting point to start mentoring because all her teachers were her mentors. She also said that she has been mentored all her life since she started to work and that is why she finds mentoring a necessary tool for learning.

Furthermore, Nayeli reported that turning into a mentor came originally from working with a colleague who helped her to find ways to understand how to move within the profession. She said that she was interested in her own professionalization and that led her to research and then to become a mentor or a role model for other researchers (her mentees). This is an example of the force of mentoring as described by Encinas and Sanchez (2014) who argued that the relationship is not static and that it is a complex situation that takes place within a full range of positive and negative experiences, practices and outcomes (see Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Nayeli's idea of about moving within the profession is the evidence of mentoring as something that is not static and is often related to networks.

Similar to the previous experiences, Manuel stated that he was influenced by a colleague. First he started by contrasting formal and informal mentoring situations. He said that there were a series of informal mentoring experiences that helped him to start formalizing and shaping his role as a mentor. He said that everything started when a colleague in a public university in the center of Mexico invited him to teach a seminar. This experience led to another invitation and he began later to mentor researchers from another university, and helped students and professors

design research while he was a doctoral student. These experiences, he seemed to think were informal.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the concepts of mentoring and supervision often overlap. He finally stated,

...I began formal processes of mentoring when I got my current job at my university , I began supervising masters research and being a reader in thesis committees 2010...

He emphasized the fact that a colleague had helped him in his mentoring experience by generating opportunities to play such a role. Here we can see that some mentors are given opportunities to develop as mentors and decide to adopt mentoring roles.

In contrast to the previous participants, Raquel reported that nobody introduced her into mentoring. She reported that in the 90s she was part of a distant master's program, process in which she experienced loneliness and that raised her awareness about lacking support in processes such as studying an MA program. These were her words,

...nobody introduced me into mentoring. I think I was one of the ones pushing teachers to professionalize. In the 90s I participated in a distant master's program and I felt so alone in the process. Now, I understand how difficult it is to be alone without support...

She argued that she implemented a mentoring program in a language center she was working at in 2005. She also worked in the Applied Linguistics BA program at her university, and there, she had the chance to mentor teachers but as a voluntary activity.

In addition to the previous accounts, Mirna explained that a factor that influenced her to become a mentor was becoming more experienced and having more education. Then she mentioned that another factor or motivator to become a mentor was finding people who she felt had the potential to grow in within the field. Hennisen's view (2008) on role modeling can be perceived again.

Finally, Sara and Rose expressed that they turned into a mentor because they taught a class that involves mentoring.

On the other hand, Rose reported that although she does not consider herself a mentor yet, she thinks that it was an opportunity that she had because of being a teacher. She said:

...I don't really consider myself a mentor; I think I am on the way. It was an accident, or sometimes is just life opportunities. I think that teaching involves mentoring itself. I never wanted to stop being a student and that is why I decided to be a teacher and I follow my teachers who are my role models all the time in teaching and in mentoring...

To conclude, the circumstances in which each participant had become a mentor was different. As mentioned above, there were four pathways in which participants became mentors. First, Nayeli, Lucia and Mariana had a role model who influenced them to become mentors. Secondly, Nayeli and Manuel took professional opportunities or challenges offered to them colleagues in or outside their working contexts. Thirdly were those who felt they were experienced enough to mentor as the case of Mirna and Sara. Finally, the case of mentors, such as Sara and Rose who teach a subject which involves supervision and mentoring in their teaching practicum courses. The mentoring experiences the participants have had influence their beliefs about mentoring and their mentoring practices.

#### **4.2.2 Effects of Mentoring in Participant's Professional Development**

In another stage in the interview, participants discussed about the effects of mentoring in their professional development both as professor and as researchers. Most participants talked about the two-way winning game that takes place in a mentoring relationship.

Lucia reported that mentoring has helped her to become more knowledgeable since often students tended to have doubts and she had to be ready to try to solve those. In addition, she affirmed that she has raised her awareness of the responsibility that being a mentor implies.

Rose stated that she had enriched both her teaching and research practice. Regarding research, she said:

...I have learned new research topics, questions and from the researches themselves. Now I am more patient since mentees sometimes don't do what we expect. I have also got surprised because some mentees sometimes do surprising things, things that I never expected they could do...My mentees and I have taken advantage from each other. It is mutual feedback...

Similarly, Nayeli informed that by helping others (mentoring) she has become more theoretically knowledgeable, and ideas because she has to read more. She asserted that mentoring is not just a one-way process, but a two way system that has a 100% effect on mentor's PD.

...By helping people, I come across new theories, ideas, I read more and it is a two way system, when I help that help comes back...

Manuel pointed out that mentoring has influenced his research practice. He explained that the positive impact that mentoring has had in his research has been due to the fact that he has been urged to become more knowledgeable in secondary areas such as SLA, sociolinguistics and literacy which in the past were areas of interest but not of his expertise.

Alike to the previous experiences, Mirna reported her teaching has been influenced by her mentoring practice. She said that whenever she taught she had to look back and see whether her teaching was related to her mentoring. She said that as a mentor she has become a role model and so she has to try to do her best. Moreover, she added that in the past she used to be stricter, but now she is more flexible since she has become conscious about the fact that all her mentees are different. Similar to Nayeli, Mirna agreed on the fact that mentoring is a two way process by saying,

...Becoming the role model, you try to do the best as possible. It is a two way gain. I have modified my beliefs. I used to be stricter, but now I'm more flexible. Each student is different...

Raquel, interestingly, highlights both sides of the coin regarding the impact of mentoring in her professional development. On one hand, she reported that mentoring can be advantageous for your professional development since you can have the support of your mentees, you can count on their perspectives when you are writing a paper, and that of course helps you develop. The next were her words,

...Negatively, it takes time. Like MEXTESOL people, they come to me. Although it is worthwhile, it takes lots of time. I put a lot of time and sometimes I don't get anything...

Probably Raquel's point should be stated as a drawback or critical moment in her experience as a mentor. Additionally, Mirna reported that she had had certain negative experiences regarding mentoring. She described one of the experiences:

...Yet I have had two experiences when I felt somewhat used. In one case, someone said I was a mentor for the person and after time, I felt the person had somewhat taken advantage of me and who I am professionally to get ahead or for advancement...

Finally, Mariana pointed out that by mentoring, she has learned to accept herself better as well as to become compassionate with others. She stressed that she can also accept better what is within her limits or interests. She felt that mentoring has been part of her professional development. The excerpt below describes what she thinks:

...I think I'm much more accepting of myself as well as compassionate with others than I used to be, in part because of mentoring. I can also accept better what it is within my limits/interests to do. I think I can "let go" of things outside my realm of influence (e.g., misguided school policies, etc.)...

In conclusion, all the previous accounts indicate that participants agreed on the fact that mentoring had effected either their teaching or research practice. On the other hand, Lucia, Rose, Manuel and Nayeli reflected about becoming more knowledgeable due to the demands of their mentees. On the other hand, the participants viewed mentoring as a two-way practice in which

both, mentors and mentees win. Finally, there is a more identity related aspect that Mirna and Mariana, two of the most experienced mentors, emphasized the fact that in the past they used to be stricter and now they are more flexible.

#### **4.2.3 Institutional culture and Mentoring**

The participants in this study were asked whether their institutions either promoted or hindered their mentoring practices. The data showed that participants thought that at least 4 of the institutions promoted mentoring the other four did not.

Nancy and Sara agreed on the fact that their institutions promoted mentoring. Manuel also informed that mentoring and tutoring were requirements in his working position. Additionally, Mirna mentioned that her institution had a tutoring program but the institution does not encourage mentoring. Rose indicated that her institution was really interested in promoting mentoring. Nevertheless, she explained that they carry out something related to tutoring in the BA and mentoring is more related to the MA program because the BA students do not carry out research. She said:

...My institution is really interested in mentoring. They call it tutoring which has to do more with the administrative things or the Academia... (Rose)

Another participant, Lucia mentioned that her institution promotes mentoring, but it also hinders its practice because she considered that it is necessary to start this practice in the first levels of their teaching education programs. The next excerpt describes what she said

...I guess that mentoring should start as soon as possible, because .... I think that if students had in the program a subject where they can help teachers before starting to practice, that would be really useful for them... (Lucia)

Sara also considered that there are some limitations about the mentoring practice at her institution because she stated only teachers who teach professional practice deal with mentoring situations. She seemed not relate mentoring to research or to other apprenticeship experiences.

Regarding the previous point Baugh and Fagenson-Eland (2007) argued that there were factors that influenced the way the mentoring relationships were initiated such as the characteristics of formal programs (expectations, time among others), and those factors of course may have an impact on how long the relationship lasts and its degree of formality or informality. For example, Sofia only considered mentoring as a formal practice, and this may have to do with fact that she teaches the Practicum course.

There were two participants that reported that their institutions did not promote mentoring practices per se. Mariana reported:

...For our merit ratings we are asked to list our PhD and MA student advisees and/or thesis committees we are on, as well as any Independent Study students. These get consideration along with other factors in teaching (faculty course questionnaires that are completed by students; curriculum innovations, other)...

Secondly, Raquel informed that her institution does not really promote mentoring and that on the contrary the school sets obstacles or does not take mentoring seriously. The excerpt below better describes her words

...They don't take this practice really seriously. Maybe because it is not tangible, it doesn't give certifications, money or anything. This experience is not valued...

To sum up, three of the participants, Nayeli, Sara and Manuel, who reported that their institutions promoted mentoring practices. Moreover Rose stated that her institution is interested in mentoring, but they put it into practice more in the MA level since the BA students have their own tutoring program which is something totally different and more related to academic matters. Similar to Rose, Sara mentioned that her institution promotes it but with some limitations.

Finally, Raquel pointed out that her institution does not promote mentoring and Mariana stated that mentoring happens only because of the mentor's own merits.

#### **4.4 Chapter conclusions**

This chapter contained two main sections. The former focused on PR's beliefs regarding collaboration and PD and the later with real experiences related to mentoring and professional development.

The former section started with participants' beliefs about the importance of collaborative work. The data analysis indicated they had a positive attitude towards this kind of work because they thought it enhanced their academic productivity and was beneficial for them. Participants also showed satisfaction in participating in collaborative work and they considered that it influences their professional development.

As mentioned before, the affirmative responses regarding the relationship between collaborative and professional development may have been linked to a feature of personal response data which is known as socially desirable response in survey research (de Mortel, 2008). This may be seen as a response bias which leads participants to answer questionnaire items to portray positive self-images, situation that may lead to confusion and affect the data.

Later in this same section, participants were asked to talk about the concept of mentoring and professor-researchers' responses indicated that mentoring had to do with educating, negotiating, guiding, accompanying and supporting. Also, one of the participants stated that mentoring had to do with supervision. Participants somehow agreed that mentoring is a relationship between a more and a less experienced participant.

Moreover, participants responded that mentoring relationships could be established in different contexts and could be formal or informal, or start as formal relationships and later

become informal. Participants also thought mentoring was a relationship that could be formal or informal, under specific circumstances determined by the context of the mentoring relationship. For instance, it is not the same to support a mentee in becoming a teacher or in developing a thesis to get their degree.

Regarding the mentor's role, there were two types of PR's responses. The first type of answers had to do more with mentors who helped mentees understand research by recommending readings, clarifying ideas, revising their writing, among other kinds of support. The other type of support had to do more with either sharing or making sense of experiences, being a critical friend, exchanging knowledge and in sum, as Rose said, going beyond the professional in order to support students and show them pathways they could follow so that they could solve difficulties along their professional journey.

In the second section of this data analysis, real experiences as reported by the participants were integrated and the first point had to do with the how they became mentors. The circumstances in which each participant had turned into a mentor had been different. As mentioned above, there were four pathways in the way participants became mentors. First of all, Nayeli, Lucia and Mariana initiated into mentoring because they had a role model who influenced them to become mentors.

The second pathway was described by Nayeli and Manuel. They worked in different projects with a colleague who "pushed them" or set opportunities to get them involved mentoring. A third one was that of those who felt they were experienced enough to mentor as the case of Mirna and Sara. Finally, the case of Sara and Rose who taught a subject which involved more supervision and sometimes mentoring in their daily practice.

When talking about the effects that Mentoring had on their professional development the participants agreed on that mentoring has affected either their teaching or research practice. On one hand, Lucia, Rose, Manuel and Nayeli talked about becoming more knowledgeable and Raquel, Nayely, Marta and Rose defined mentoring as a two-way practice in which both, mentors and mentees won. And finally, there was a more identity related aspect that Mirna and Mariana, the most experienced mentors, emphasized by saying that in the past they used to be stricter and now they were more flexible in their practice.

Finally, institutional culture regarding mentoring was also analyzed and three of the participants, Nayeli, Sara and Manuel reported that their institutions promoted the mentoring practices. Moreover Rose and Sara stated that her institution was interested in mentoring, but with certain limitations, and finally, Raquel pointed out that her institution did not really promote it and Mariana stated that mentoring happened because she promoted it as part of her support for her mentees.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

### **5.1 Answers to research questions**

### **5.2 Findings and their significance**

### **5.3 The reflective account**

### **5.4 Pedagogical implications**

### **5.5 Limitations of the research**

### **5.6 Suggestions for further research**

### **5.7 Final comments**

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The conclusions of the study are presented in this chapter. First, the significance of the findings and the answers to the research questions will be briefly discussed which will then be followed by the research aims and the findings. Then, some pedagogical implications arising from the results of this project will be discussed as well as the limitations of the study. As a final section, suggestions for further research will be provided in order to complement the understanding of mentoring.

#### **5.1 Answers to research questions**

The two research questions that guided this project were answered through the data from the participants' answers in the questionnaire and interviews. In each research question different categories emerged as a result of the analysis of the data, making relevant and crucial contributions to this project.

**RQ1: What are ELT professor-researchers' beliefs regarding mentoring and professional development?**

**RQ2: How do ELT professor-researcher report they have experienced mentoring and other collaborative relationships?**

The first research question was mainly answered through data from the questionnaire and from the participants' interviews. The quantitative data suggested that most of the participants agreed on the fact that collaborative work led to professional development. Nevertheless, when answering questions related to specific career support in research or teaching, data showed that not all participants were aware about the importance of having professional relationships such as

mentoring as a means to enhance their performance along their professional journey (Allen 2004).

As mentioned in CH4, some questions regarding the kind of support they experienced during their teaching or research practice were raised.

The analysis of the section in the questionnaire focused on collaboration led to explore how professor researchers understood the concept of mentoring and the implications they thought it had for their and their mentees' professional development. This was achieved through the interviews.

The concept of mentoring that was proposed at the beginning of this study was:

*...mentoring is used to refer to a formal or informal type of professional relationship or socialization process of constructed learning between a mentor and a mentee or in a networking group where participants (mentors and mentees) play specific roles and have specific responsibilities. This relationship consists of two main functions (career and psychosocial) that has as main focus to boost individual's practical knowledge in accordance with the individual's stage of development and needs.*

Participant's answers related to the concept of mentoring attached to what the literature proposes. However, their focus varied depending on their mentoring experiences. Professor-researchers provided evidence of considering mentoring either as a formal or informal relationship according to the situations and contexts where the relationship took place; for instance, mentoring in research and in teaching. In addition, participants seemed to recognize the two functions of mentoring implicitly. More experienced mentors tended to be more aware about the personal function than less experienced. Instead, less experienced teachers tended to focus more on the formal aspect of the relationship; for instance, on checking whether mentees

had written proper research questions or objectives. Such evidence was somehow related to what Mann (2012) proposed about the way the relationship evolves.

As mentioned in chapter 2, Mann discusses the role of mentors and its evolution from being a short-term technical assistance to being a more long-term reflective companion. Such perspective was strongly related to the participant's responses. Moreover in chapter two, Allen (2004), based on Kram's two dimensions; career support and psychological support, highlighted that psychological support generally determined longer mentoring relationship experiences than just career support. This may explain why more experienced mentors emphasized the psychological function more tended to have longer relationships than less experienced ones.

Participants mainly discussed these two types of functions that take place within the mentoring practice. The first type of mentor's function, the career function, as described by participants had to do with those activities related to explain matters in relation to research or to teaching; for instance suggesting readings to mentees in order to develop their Literature Reviews for their research. On the other hand, the second type of function mentees referred to had to do with going beyond the professional that is, making sense of experiences, being a critical friend and exchanging knowledge which is related to the psychological function. Once again, as stated in chapter two, this issue of the mentor's role related to the two functions of mentoring ( Kram, 1985).

Although most of the participants are aware of the functions they have as mentors, less experienced mentors such as Manuel and Rose tend to emphasize more the career function and more experienced mentors such as Mirna, Mariana and Raquel tended to focus more on the psychological function.

Moreover, when talking about career support, although most of the participants agreed on its positive effects, not all of them seemed to be convinced they may have had a different experience when talking about real experiences about having mentors along their careers. The differences in beliefs regarding mentoring seemed to be due to the kind of experiences mentors had in their practice.

The second research question had to do with real experiences that participants had gone through along their mentoring practices. In order to answer this research question other categories emerged.

First, participants followed 4 different pathways to become mentors. Those paths were: 1) Two started mentoring because they had a role model who influenced them to become mentors. 2) Two participants Nayeli and Manuel were involved in mentoring because they worked in different projects with a colleague who set opportunities which led them into mentoring. 3) Two participants felt they were experienced enough to mentor. 4) Two taught a subject which involves supervision and mentoring in their teaching practicum courses.

As seen above, according to the participants, the processes of becoming a mentor were diverse. Moreover, it is important to highlight the fact that institutions in those specific contexts in Mexico and the one in Denver are not investing in training mentors. Orland Barack (2005) studies the teachers' transition from teachers to mentors (see Chapter 2). This author stated that professor-researchers who become mentors got into a period which she called 'lost in translation'. In other words, the author compared becoming a mentor with learning a second language and she explained that teachers who become mentors had another struggle which had to do with transferring from teaching to mentoring practices. Hence, the lack of institutions'

mentoring provision could have an impact on their trying to become a mentor or during their actual practice.

In addition to the previous point, the evidence showed that most of the participants carry out mentoring because of their jobs but there is no formal training or informal support for these mentors in higher education. Chapter two described some experiences around the world which invested in training teachers to become mentors and those programs focused on the development of mentors' professional roles as facilitators, collaborators, and reflective professionals, adopting more bottom-up, personal-growth agendas of mentoring and mentored learning. This is not the case in the Mexican contexts, so mentors in this study carried out mentoring more empirically and based on their practices on role models or experiences they had as mentees.

Another aspect related to real mentoring experiences were those that participants described as part of mentoring and its impact on professional development. All participants agreed on the positive impact that the mentoring practice had on their professional development. Participants reported a positive impact either in their teaching or research practice. Additionally, professor researchers who were more into mentoring in teaching felt an impact more in their own professional career, and professor researchers who were more into mentoring in research talked about how being a mentor impacted in their research practice.

The majority of the participants indicated that mentoring was a two-way practice in which both, mentors and mentees developed by collaborating with each other. As mentioned in chapter two, Allen (2012) suggested viewing mentoring as a specific form of organizational based on social psychological models of helping behavior. This helping behavior then can be reflected in that two-way process that participants perceived in their mentoring relationship.

However, along the process of mentoring there may be conflicts such as the one mentioned by Raquel who stated that mentoring may be very time consuming.

Finally, two of the most experienced mentors, emphasized that in the past they used to be stricter and have become more flexible and conscious about their limitations. Such evidence relates to what Orland Barak (2005) called the redefinition of the professional image which at the same time has to do with those changes mentors experience through their mentoring practice.

In addition, institutional culture and mentoring were issues that were explored through participants' responses. In sum, some institutions promoted mentoring practices, but not as a formal practice in the schools' program or as a requirement for professor researchers. Some other institutions have practicum subjects in their curriculum which require mentoring practices, and some others do not pay attention to what the mentoring practices imply and the benefits that it could bring about, both, for mentors and mentees as well as for the institution.

## **5.2 Findings and their significance**

Significant findings emerged from the data in this study. Mentors in general comply with two main functions (career and psychological) when delivering mentoring support. However, while the most experienced ones (e.g. Mariana and Mirna ) emphasized on the psychological one, the least experienced mentors (Manuel and Rocio) tended to base their practice more on the career function of the relationship, that is, acting more like supervisors than as mentors. Moreover, one of the participants, Nayely considered that mentoring takes place in different contexts and that the relationship is not static and many evolve from being a formal relationship (teacher supervisor, thesis supervisor) to a more informal developmental relationship.

Another significant finding was that the eight participants in this research believe that mentoring relationships benefit both the mentee and the mentor. Nonetheless, Moises, Rose and

Raquel also informed about some drawbacks in mentoring relationships. These findings suggest that mentoring is not a static, but a complex ongoing relationship which has many implications for those involved.

This project's main aim was to explore how mentoring was perceived within the ELT academic community. This aim was attained through both, the questionnaire and the interviews.

First, the questionnaire helped to inform the general beliefs participants had regarding the issue of professional career support practices, as the case of mentoring.

The second aim of this project was to become aware about the beliefs professor-researchers have regarding mentoring relationships in their professional development. This aim was achieved mainly through the interview since I was able to explore their experiences and reflections regarding their mentoring practices. Professor-researchers were able to talk about experiences that have enriched or strengthen their professional development in different areas.

Participants mainly talked about two areas of improvement, one that had to do with their knowledge and a second area that had to do with their identity either as professors or as researchers.

The third aim of this study was to explore some key moments that described how teachers experienced support in their teaching careers. This aim was partially achieved through the interviews since some participants described experiences that have been key factors for their mentoring practice, as was the case of these professor-researchers describing how they became mentors or even when by describing positive or negative experiences when mentoring.

### **5.3 The reflective account**

This section of the thesis gave me the opportunity to express the experience I went through in the realization of my project. This reflective account is presented in four different perspectives: a) the beginning of the research project, b) the project development period, c) the ending / write-up project period, and d) personal changes I have experienced as result of this process.

At the beginning of the project, I did not have too many problems to select my topic since I was assigned a topic from a macro project I took part in. First it was kind of subjective when my research team explained the dynamics of the project since I wasn't so familiar with mentoring issues. After having several meetings, reading about the topic and looking at what my other colleagues were working on, I could get the general idea of what my project required.

During the development of my project I had some issues when trying to narrow my topic. In fact, it is important to mention that I wrote two literature reviews. The first one focused more on collaborative work and the second one more on mentoring. Anyway, both literatures helped me to complement my theoretical knowledge about the issue I wanted to research on. Something interesting that happened to me during the development of the project was that as I was developing,

As my thesis director and I reflected the theories and studies said I had a clearer view of a mentoring relationship. Somehow I think I experienced a mentoring relationship while I was studying the issue.

At the end of the project, I took a long time to get the data analysis done, making sense of words as well as connecting those words to the literature was time consuming since it demands a lot of reflection and analysis.

Regarding the write-up process, I consider that I have learned more about real research design and although I there is still a big deal to learn about academic writing, I think next time I will do better since I already had the experience.

The personal change I have experienced by carrying out this research has been huge. It has been a real challenge to keep up my commitment with this project. I have felt stressed, sad, sick, relieved, tired, happy, successful, nervous (when presenting in events or meetings) , all types of emotions. I think that now my social responsibility as a teacher and researcher has been strengthened because now I am more aware of the need for research not only in my field but also in other fields and the benefits that it can bring about. I also think that now I am more aware of my limitations and how those can be fulfilled by carrying out research. Moreover, I have been strongly benefited by the topic I have researched on since mentoring is a practice that is implied in my professional context. I feel somehow I could be very supportive if a colleague asked me for help because now I know the practice of mentoring and all the benefits around it.

#### **5.4 Pedagogical implications**

Some pedagogical implications arise from this project regarding the implementation of mentoring as an integrated practice for promoting professional development opportunities in higher education.

Through research, teachers may be able to understand the complexity, implications and benefits of the mentoring practice as a means to support their own professional careers and of others. This may raise their awareness of their own professional development and some of the alternatives they can have in order to improve it.

In addition, I consider that by exploring this kind of practices in institutions, higher institution in Mexico could think of implementing mentoring training programs for teachers and professor researchers as a means to motivate their professional development.

### **5.5 Limitations of the research**

Some limitations were encountered when carrying out this project. First of all, I planned to have at least two participants per each university (north, south and center of the country) for the interviews. There was a series of availability issues that affected the way subjects were selected. At the end, there were 2 participants from the north (different universities), 1 from the south, and 4 from the center (two different universities).

Moreover, regarding the participant's location and time, it was impossible to have face to face interviews, so Skype software was used. There were some moments in which communication was broken due to internet connectivity as well as problems with facilities/infrastructure to carry out the interview. There were some cases in which the participant ended up writing his/her last answers as in a normal chat conversation.

### **5.6 Suggestions for further research**

A larger number of participants from each higher education context would be necessary to analyze and have a more overall view from each institution and its mentoring practices as well as to be able to compare their institutional cultures regarding the issue of mentoring.

Also, the importance of researching mentoring situations longitudinally (Hobson, 2009) in order to explore how the relationship evolved would be pertinent in order to analyze the relation of time and features of the mentoring relationship between mentee and mentors.

Moreover, as identity was not the main topic of this project, another possible direction of investigation would be the participants' identities after being having experiences as mentors, this would lead to understand mentoring more in depth.

Finally, another useful direction for further research could be investigating about the influence of mentor's developmental stage and the influence it has on the kind of mentoring practice that they deliver to their mentees.

## **5.7 Final comments**

I hope that this study contributes in the following aspects: first, in helping teachers and professor researchers understand the complexity of mentoring within ELT; second, to learn about the impact that this kind of support can have in their professional development, and finally, to try to raise higher education institutions awareness of the importance of promoting mentoring workshops or other informal collective collaboration experiences that can support mentors in order to have a more solid mentoring practice in within and outside their professional settings.

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