



MENTORING

THE BLUEBOOK



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1.1 Executive Summary

The need for continuous learning and development, to contribute effectively to the larger mission of student learning, has been felt by educational functionaries of India at various levels. The 'Bluebook on Mentoring' is an outcome of the efforts to address this ever-increasing need. 'Mentoring', a term used to refer to a structure of interaction between someone who is experienced at what they do (mentor) and someone who wants to learn from that experience (mentee) forms the core of this book. It attempts to serve as a guide to different stakeholders in the education landscape exploring 'mentoring' as a solution to leverage the expertise that's available within the system.

This bluebook is divided into six different sections-

The *first section* sets the context with a brief on the status of education in India. It covers the successes of the Govt. initiatives so far, highlighting some impact indicators and the aims of the ongoing nationwide projects and policies in education.

The *second section* brings readers' attention to the nature of challenges faced by the educational leaders in today's dynamic scenario, viz. lack of bandwidth, gaps in accessing expertise and connecting with peers from similar contexts, absence of a platform to leverage cross-learning, etc.

The *third section* introduces the proposed 'National Mission for Mentoring' and explains the need for the same in alignment with the National Education Policy and to address the challenges covered. It identifies 'Mentors', 'Mentees' and the 'Administration' as the three key actors in a mentoring construct and talks about the interactions between them before suggesting different phases that this mission can be constructed into, to reach its goal.

Section four delves into the concept of mentoring covering various aspects like the nature of a mentoring relationship and principles that govern such a relationship. It compares and contrasts mentoring with a few other similar interactions like coaching, training, teaching, etc. An attempt is made here to bust some commonly held myths on mentoring. This section ends with the details of a few examples where mentoring was tried out as a solution with encouraging results



Section five would be of great interest to those who are already sold on the idea of mentoring. It offers different solutions, with examples wherever necessary, that can be vital for the successful implementation of any mentoring programme. Some of them are:

- Characteristic traits of mentors (both essential and buildable)
- Different modes of mentoring (case studies, discussion circles, peer learning sessions, etc.)
- Suitable methods (synchronous/asynchronous) and media (online/offline) for execution
- Various elements in the design of a mentoring programme coupled with a list of essential questions at each stage of the programme implementation
- Broad evaluation parameters and tips to aid in institutionalising mentoring structures.

This section ends by calling out a few challenges that can be potential barriers in designing and implementing such mentoring programmes.

Leveraging technology and shared digital infrastructure to maximise the access, effectiveness and efficiency should be an essential feature of any mentoring programme, especially when envisioned at scale. In this context, the *sixth section* covers all the important details of the 'National Mentoring Infrastructure' (NMI) that ensures ease in the adoption of mentoring services and solutions across varying contexts of both mentors and mentees. This section lays out the guidelines and details the design principles of the digital infrastructure, while highlighting the importance of platform governance to achieve the desired outcomes.

The approach note ends with a few sample tools that can prove to be useful in the 'structural design' and 'mentor selection' phases of a mentoring programme.





Education In India



2.1 Education in India: The Current State of Affairs

Education initiatives in India have been guided by a much-deliberated system of principles aimed at achieving outcomes that have been crucial for progress. Many innovative education initiatives have been undertaken in the past and have contributed to positive shifts however complex the implementation has been. The focus has essentially been around making education universally available while ensuring a strong foundation at the primary level. Designing child-friendly spaces which allow children to thrive and grow into well-adjusted, confident adults has been in practice. Structures that serve to help learners gauge their progress while looking on teachers as facilitators and creating a collaborative atmosphere prove to be effective.

India has a total of fifteen lakh schools out of which eleven lakh schools are run by the government. Reports indicate a rise in the number of privately funded schools in our education landscape. Parallely, there has been a rise in the number of teachers being recruited in both rural and urban areas. Between 2013-2018, urban areas saw a rise from 21 lakh to 25 lakh teachers and rural areas saw a rise from 61 lakh to 67 lakh. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), the gross enrollment ratio¹ (GER) in higher education has increased from 25.8 per cent in 2017-18 to 26.3 per cent in 2018-19 which when translating into absolute terms, the enrolment increased from 3.66 crores to 3.74 crore students. The same survey also indicated that the Gender Parity Index² (GPI) in higher education has improved to 1.01 which increases access to higher education for females.

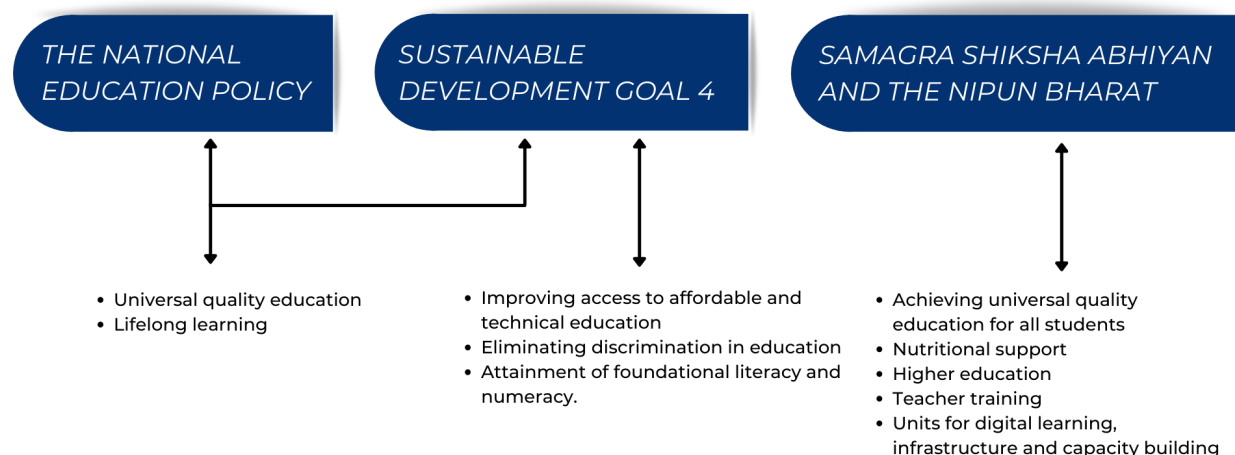
The role of teachers has no doubt emerged as a key factor that can turn the education system around and energise the system to meet the challenge of balancing out quality, quantity and equity. According to provisional data from the Unified District Information System (UDISE), India has approximately ninety-four lakhs teachers in its schools which include permanent, contract, para teachers (*Shiksha Mitra* and *Niyojit Shikshak*). Recognizing that the quality, competence and character of teachers play an important role in determining the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) has put in place systemic reforms to work on continuous professional development and training of teachers. This includes drafting of National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, (NCFTE, 2021) to guide all teacher education, pre-service and in-service working in academic, vocational & special education streams. Steps will also be taken to bring focus to 'Enculturation of Teacher

¹ Gross Enrolment Ratio or the GER is the number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.

² Gender Parity Index or the GPI is the ratio of girls to boys (gender parity index) in primary, secondary and tertiary education is the ratio of the number of female students enrolled at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education to the number of male students in each level



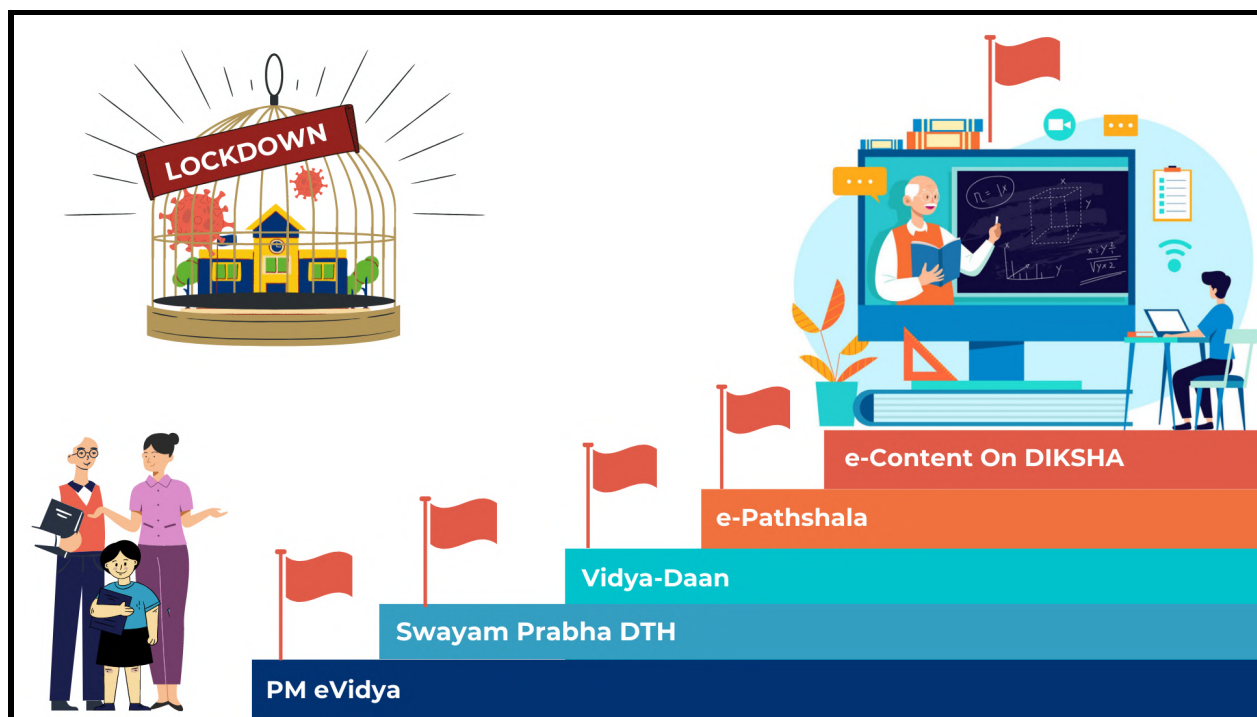
Empowerment’ which essentially means investing teachers with the right to participate in determining school goals and policies and to exercise professional judgement about what and how to teach.



Image_2.1: Education in India

The National Education Policy 2020 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations share the goals of universal quality education and lifelong learning. Further, the SDG Goal focuses on improving access to affordable and technical education, eliminating discrimination in education and attainment of foundational literacy and numeracy. The flagship Indian government scheme, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and the Nipun Bharat aim at achieving universal quality education for all students. Targeted schemes on nutritional support, higher education, and teacher training complement this effort. Resources are being directed into setting up units for digital learning, infrastructure and capacity building to eliminate hurdles at the infrastructure level.

During school closures, digital resources became the lifeline for education and the pandemic pushed the ecosystem to quickly adapt to teach and learn online. The opportunities that digital technologies offer go well beyond a stop-gap solution during the pandemic. This enabled educators, leaders and the community as a whole to evolve their understanding of what people learn, how people learn, where people learn and when they learn. The role of educators from imparting knowledge towards working as co-creators of knowledge, as coaches, as mentors and as evaluators emerged.



Image_2.2: Education Initiatives during lockdown

2.2 Stakeholders and Challenges

2.2.1 Scope of stakeholders

With students at the centre, the responsibility of transforming learning outcomes lies on all key stakeholders. Educational leaders as pedagogical heads are required to manage the teaching-learning process, establish norms for continuous quality improvement and also create a collaborative learning organization. They also play a vital role in defining the cultural essence of their school or the schools in their geography. They have to continually shift their focus from reactive to a more proactive strategic response to future challenges. Leaders in the education ecosystem also take on challenges to strengthen teaching-learning practices and provide sustained support for teacher development. They are expected to learn about enabling professional practices that support curriculum development, team leadership, accountability and supervision. The most commonly articulated expectation is to facilitate change and effectively manage the shifts that emerge with change-facilitation. Teachers are central to the

teaching-learning process given the structures, policies, boards or practices followed in the school.



Image_2.3: Role of Education leaders

Experiences from challenges in the past reaffirm the need for continuous learning and skill-building. Several initiatives in the past have been launched that focus on capacity building and continuous professional development of the key stakeholders. The realization that the teaching-learning process will continue transforming places greater importance on diverting resources that enable collective learning for stakeholders. Despite these multiple structures that enable the scope of continuous learning and development there are still some challenges that our stakeholders continue facing that act as barriers towards providing the required centralized capacity building sessions from the state or centre.

2.2.2 Challenges

So far, learning opportunities for professionals have been designed and prescribed as and when the need for it emerged. However, very few times learners have had the agency to choose and be part of discussions, sessions or learning circles that they wish to be part of. Expertise within communities has existed, however, this expertise has existed in silos which has made it difficult to leverage prowess in the best capacity, transfer of knowledge and collective learning.

Complex and Emergent Nature of Challenges

Usually, the stakeholders, who seek learning, are located in different and diverse contexts. Therefore it has been challenging - even for those facing similar challenges - to come together, brainstorm and build their proficiency to problem solve. Having to solve complex, new and emerging challenges makes one feel isolated and demotivated which eventually adds to the complexity of the situation. The pandemic has reinforced the importance of a vibrant community that consistently shares learnings, experiences, challenges and solutions to navigate common concerns. At times, stakeholders experience delays and lags in arriving at solutions for the challenges they face. These lags primarily occur because stakeholders are unaware of how to access platforms, technology or experts that might be able to provide specific support.

Busy Schedules

Stakeholders take up multiple responsibilities as part of their roles. Managing time for capacity and professional development while balancing tasks that their roles demand becomes extremely challenging as well as tedious tasks especially when it requires the physical presence of the learner.

For example, Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) might have to mentor several teachers and headteachers under them, go for observations, attend meetings and conduct training. Amidst all this, the government might announce an important policy that a CRP wishes to learn and know about. However, finding the time to do so becomes difficult for the CRP after accounting for various tasks and responsibilities that he or she has to undertake.

Relevance and Context

The need for learning of stakeholders across geographies, roles and domains may vary based on their contexts, challenges and interests. Therefore, each stakeholder might seek a different mode of learning, networking or solving. For some, learning directly from peers helps while for some, connecting with a large community facing similar challenges adds value. At times, getting to hear what experts or people with experience have to say about specific topics does the work.

Therefore, a platform where learners can learn while getting the opportunity to choose the learning method that works best for them has been missing.





An Introduction to the National Mentoring Mission



The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) proposes a nationwide mission to incorporate mentoring to improve the acquisition and sharing of knowledge, skills, and mindsets across the Indian education system.

3.1 Why is there a need for a National Mission for Mentoring?

Teachers and School Heads need new solutions to today's unprecedented demands and challenges. The community of stakeholders in itself is rich with experts, who possess the knowledge and skills to contribute towards problem-solving and capacity building of peers. Systems capable of adapting to the rapidly changing environment can empower their citizens with the right mix of skills to allow them to lead satisfying professional and personal lives. At an aggregate level, it leads to inclusive and sustainable economic growth. **A structure of mentoring, therefore, offers a solution to address the existing gaps in a more decentralised manner. These are the gaps in accessing expertise, continuous professional development, connecting with peers from similar contexts and the absence of a platform to leverage cross-learning.** Mentoring offers individuals to engage in the processes of learning under an experienced professional. The different ways of engaging in mentor-mentee interactions can enable skill and capacity building for teachers, school leaders and professionals. This comes with an opportunity to network with experts, engage in forums to exchange learnings, best practices and disseminate findings across various domains such as but not limited to school leadership & management, curriculum, pedagogy, educational policies and assessments.

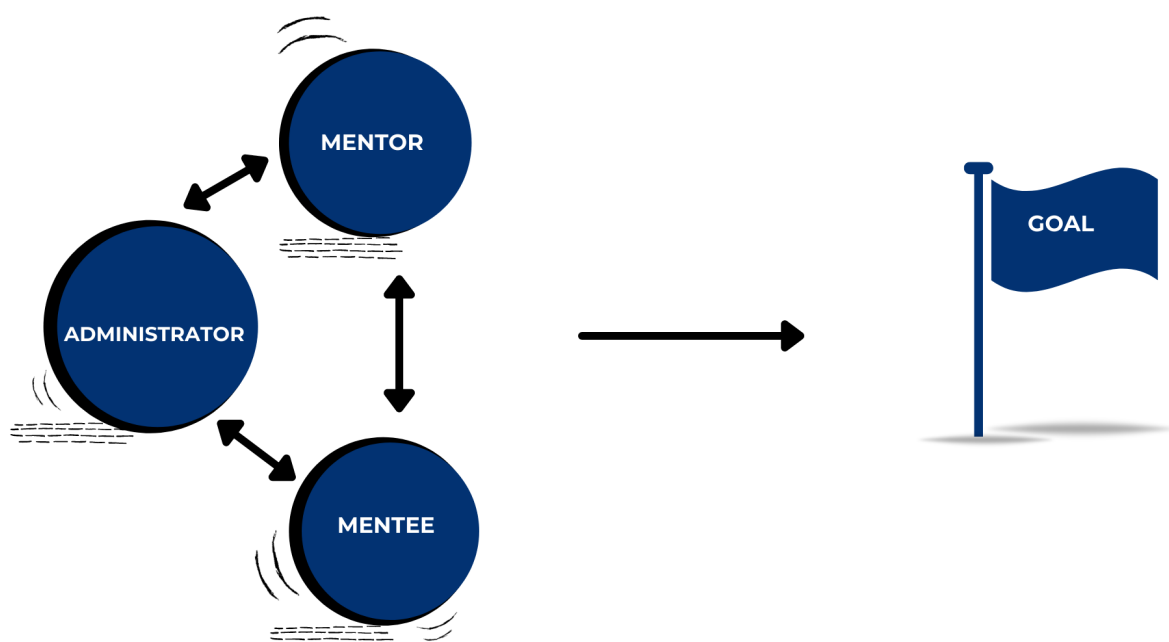
The hierarchical, unidirectional top-down flow of information and learning designed as training events have been prevalent woes in our current education system. Mentoring has an opportunity to soften the boundaries of hierarchies and bring a fundamental paradigm shift. It will make learning more peer and community-led. It will also make learning more personalised and continuous.

Mentoring gives rise to a collaborative agency for stakeholders where the community fosters the spirit of learning, reflection and sharing towards capacity building.

3.2 How will the mission be achieved?

A mission can be described as several actors from a level interacting to achieve a common goal. It can be implemented at any level of the education sector.





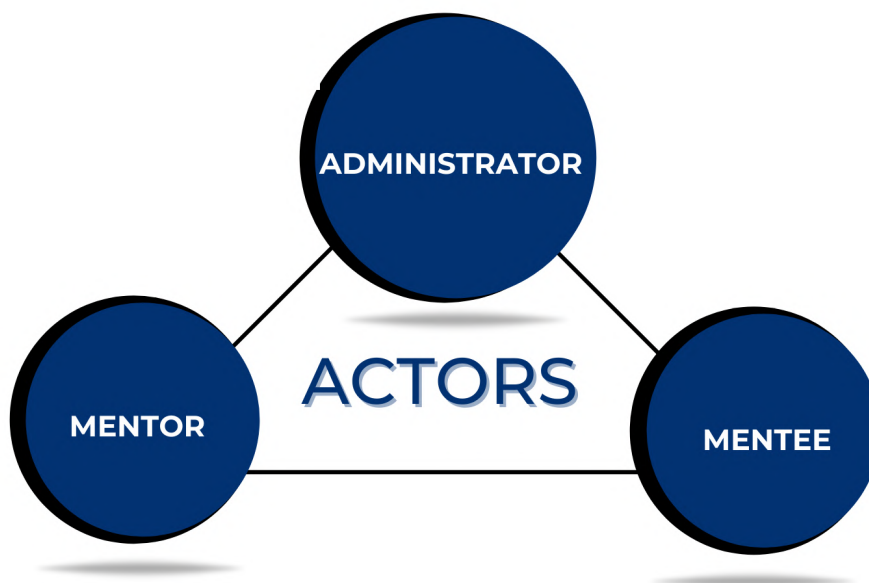
Image_3.1: Actors engaging in interactions and progressing towards goal as a unit

Actors

The main actors at play for this mentoring mission are *mentors* and *mentees*.

Mentees are individuals from a cadre of the education sector that are seeking professional development in a field. *Mentors* are individuals from the same cadre or above, who have been seeking professional development in the same field for a while, and are adept at facilitating discussions and conversations suited to “seeking.”

While the roles of a mentor and mentee might be enough to conduct small-scale mentoring activities, the mission involves a third element to facilitate and sustain mentoring structures at a much larger scale. *Administrators* (individual or unit) are responsible for continuously improving the quality and frequency of all interactions taking place between mentors and mentees. In addition, they ensure the continued development of the mentoring structure and its institutionalisation by the ecosystem. Since the scale of any mentoring program in the education ecosystem is likely to be vast, there is immense opportunity for other system partners to develop technology and online platforms to make mentoring a seamless experience for all actors.



Image_3.2: Actors of Mentoring

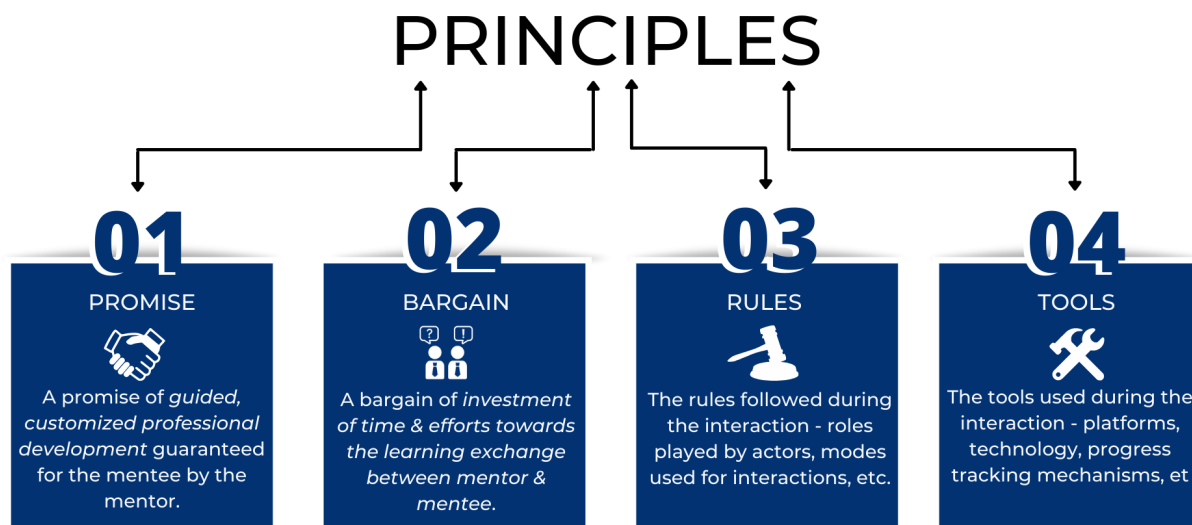
Interactions between actors

The interactions between these actors will primarily be centred around the exchange of knowledge, skills, and mindsets, and improving the quality and value offered by these exchanges.

For instance, a mentor school leader engaging in conversation with a group of mentee school leaders to facilitate a discussion about best practices for orientation of new teachers; an administrator of the structure engaging mentor school leaders in a skill-building session on how to facilitate a case-based discussion.

The value of the interaction is guided by four elements - namely the Promise, Bargain, Rules and Tools - as shown in Image_3.3.

There are several means to increase the value of these interactions, some of which are listed in the following sections.



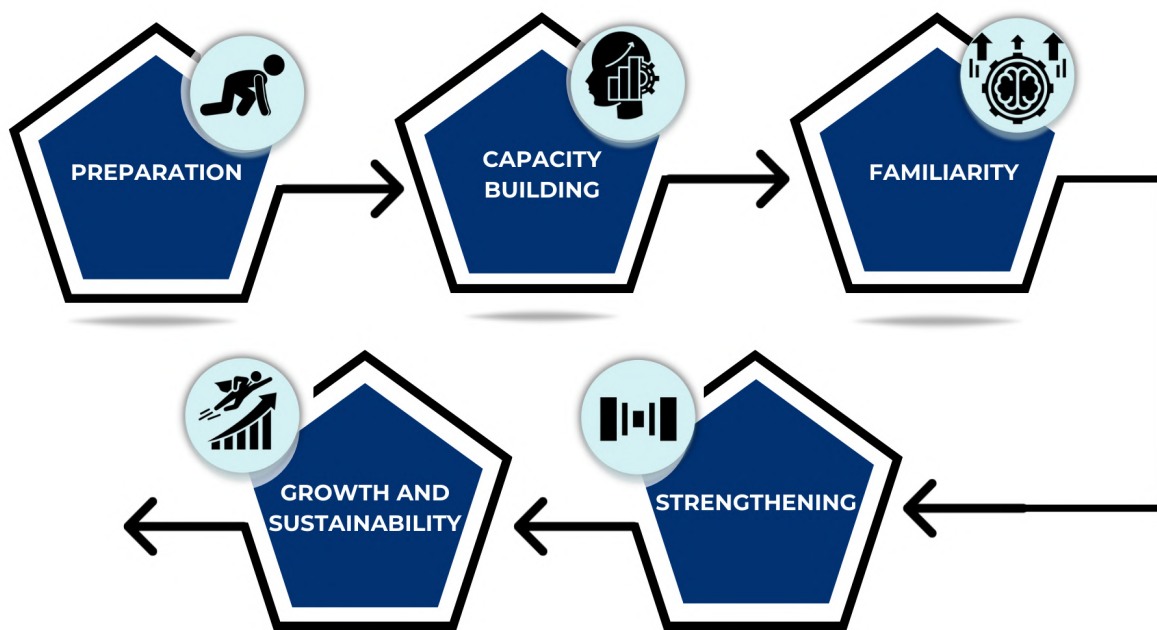
Image_3.3: Principles of interactions among actors

3.3 What are the expected results of the mission?

The actors interact with each other to achieve a common goal of improving the acquisition and transfer of knowledge, skills, and mindsets across the Indian education system. This will be achieved through the incorporation of large-scale, decentralised, technology-assisted mentoring structures across levels in the education ecosystem.

The ultimate goal is improvement in school education through enhanced, decentralised leadership in education. For instance, mentoring should be used to accelerate skill building among teachers to expand their knowledge base, develop their skills, and prepare them better to tackle the challenges in a classroom, thereby improving the daily dissemination of education for a set of students; school leaders should get mentored by other school leaders who are more proficient in creating safe spaces of learning for students and providing assistance for mental well-being - this may prove to be a fast and effective way for both schools to grow into great learning institutions. The mission is also an opportunity to allow for a more decentralised approach to leadership and capacity building by allowing SCERTS, DIETs, District Education Officers, etc, to play a role in promoting mentorship roles.

While achieving these goals is a continuous journey, there are some concrete stages of the mission that will indicate its progress.



Image_3.4: Key phases of the mission

Phase 1: Preparation

The stakeholders in a system may conduct a **needs assessment** for professional development and map the landscape for sufficient resources to implement a mentoring program to fulfil the needs. At this time, system actors may use resources, such as this book, to orient themselves towards the implementation of a large-scale mentoring system.

Phase 2: Capacity Building

Once the mentors have been recruited, this stage allows for building their capacity in skills relevant to the field, along with essential mentoring skills and techniques.

Phase 3: Familiarity

During this phase, mentors may practise the skills they learnt during phase 2 in a controlled environment. The familiarity phase may also be used to refine the methodology used for capacity building in phase 2 based on feedback from mentors and mentees on the quality and value offered during mentoring interactions.

Phase 4: Strengthening

Once the actors are confidently implementing mentoring structures in controlled environments, mentors start gaining experience in mentoring in their fields of expertise. This phase allows for the continuous development of the mentors through ongoing capacity building sessions. At this time, tracking metrics towards an end outcome of

the mentoring relationship will help understand the effectiveness of the mentoring structure and re-align it to achieve the stipulated outcomes.

Outcomes should be aligned with the objectives intended for the mentoring program. For instance, in a program to enhance student learning outcomes in foundational literacy and numeracy through teachers' peer mentoring circles, an outcome to evaluate is the percent (%) increase in student performance in foundational literacy and numeracy assessments.

Phase 5: Growth and Sustainability

This phase shifts attention from testing the mentoring structure to building a community of practice in mentoring. The mentoring structure can now be scaled to ensure participation by all relevant stakeholders in the system, and their continued interest in it. This can be achieved by introducing mechanisms to A) trigger the need for participation by demonstrated value offering; B) institutionalise to enable participation by everyone; C) motivate actors for continued participation in the structures through relevant incentives.

The following sections illustrate some constructs to effectively increase the value of interactions between all actors in a mentoring system to carry out the aforementioned phased dissemination of the mission.





Mentoring



4.1 Introduction to Mentoring

4.1.1 Concept

"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled."

-Plutarch

Mentoring - the word has long been used to describe an interaction between someone who is experienced at what they do, and someone who wants to learn from that experience. It is believed to be a great way to achieve personal and professional growth for both the mentor and the mentee³. These conversations may range from mentors being allocated to mentees to respond to queries and give moral support, to structures that involve more in-depth "counselling" of mentees to solve complex, challenging problems⁴.

While mentoring may have its loose adaptations that have been used to suit individual personal and professional needs, it has been defined to be a structure "to support and encourage people to manage their learning so that they may maximise their potential, develop skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be."⁵

4.1.2 Principles

While mentoring may be of different types, suiting the needs of the participants of the interaction, some guiding principles may help to maintain the essence of the structure. Going back to Eric Parsloe's definition of mentoring, here are some key phrases that are essential to mentoring:

1. *supportive/encouraging*: mentoring is non-directive and promotes the use of positive reinforcement towards best practices
2. *manage their learning*: the mentee takes responsibility for their learning journey.
3. *maximise potential, develop skills, improve performance*: the focus is on the growth and development of the mentee, personal and/or professional. The process is developmental.

³ Together Platform. "Mentor Handbook." Together Platform, <https://www.togetherplatform.com/handbook/mentor>. Accessed 16 Aug. 2021.

⁴ University of Reading. (n.d.). Mentoring: definitions and principles - University of Reading. University of Reading. Retrieved August 16, 2021, from <https://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinmentoring/what-is-mentoring/eim-definitions.aspx>

⁵ by Eric Parsloe, an experienced international executive coach-mentor and one of the co-founders of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council.



4. *the person they want to be*: the mentee establishes their own goals with help from the mentor. The process is facilitated by the mentor.



Image_4.1: Key phrases of mentoring

Any mentoring structure will be most successful when both the mentor and mentee are invested in the process. The following list of principles has been curated to be consistent with the adult-learning principles promoted by Knowles⁶, keeping in mind that they will promote the investment needed by the participants of a mentoring structure.

1. **Mentee-directed**: Mentees should be involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating their learning. The mentee should drive the relationship and be encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their development. Mentor agenda or coercion should not be the driving force of mentoring interactions. A mentor should guide the mentee to set their own goals, identify challenges, and prioritise per the mentees' needs.
2. **Derivative**: The discussions and learnings in the mentoring process should evolve from the mentees' life experiences. Mentees should be able to reflect on their experiences.
3. **Application-oriented**: The mentoring should help implement insights from the process into real-life problems and/or processes.

⁶ Knowles, M. S. (1980). The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education.

4. **Facilitated:** The mentors' focus should be to facilitate spaces that promote and support the conditions necessary for a self-directing, derivative, and application-oriented mentoring experience.
5. **Safe:** While the mentoring experience should be voluntary for all participants, continuous effort should be put in to make the spaces safe. The structure should allow for establishing trust, confidentiality, mutual respect and sensitivity. Mentors should start by agreeing on boundaries and ground rules with the mentee to offset any power differentials between them.
6. **Symbiotic:** Mentors should focus on continuous growth and development for themselves, apart from that of their mentees'. They may seek advice and/or assistance to further their mentoring interactions, whenever needed. Mentors will benefit from the interaction best by acknowledging that they will gain from the process.

These principles are universal and could be used in mentoring structures across the board in different fields of work. For instance, The Standing Committee of Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education in the UK (SCOPME) defines mentoring as "a voluntary relationship, typically between two individuals, in which: the mentor is usually an experienced, highly regarded, empathic individual, often working in the same organisation, or field, as the mentee; the mentor, by listening and talking with the mentee in private and in confidence, guides the mentee in the development of his or her own ideas, learning, and personal and professional development".⁷ According to SCOPME, the process of mentoring should not be "part of assessment or performance monitoring procedures."

4.1.3 How is mentoring different from other forms of professional development?

Since mentoring has a broad definition and can be customised according to the participants' needs, it's important to differentiate between mentoring and other types of interactions between people that may be considered similar.

⁷ Bligh, J. (1999). Mentoring: an invisible support network. *Medical Education*, 1, 2–3.
<https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2923.1999.00360.x>



MENTORING V/S



Image_4.2: Mentoring vs other professional development opportunities

Mentoring vs Teaching

While teaching might be a part of a mentoring relationship, it often has a more narrow and finite focus than a mentoring relationship. Teaching implies the dissemination of knowledge by one participant to the other. The teacher often has very little to learn from the student and uses means like instruction and explanation to share knowledge. Mentors are more informal and relational and use means like advising, sharing experiences, and asking guiding questions. The mentor-mentee relationship is more equal than the teacher-student relationship and lasts for as long as is needed.

Mentoring vs Training

In contrast to teaching, training is more short-lived and less developmental. It is bound by scope and time, focusing on improving participants' capability and/or capacity in specific areas of skill and knowledge, whereas mentoring is more holistic and benefits both the participants. Mentors strive to inculcate autonomous learning among their mentees.

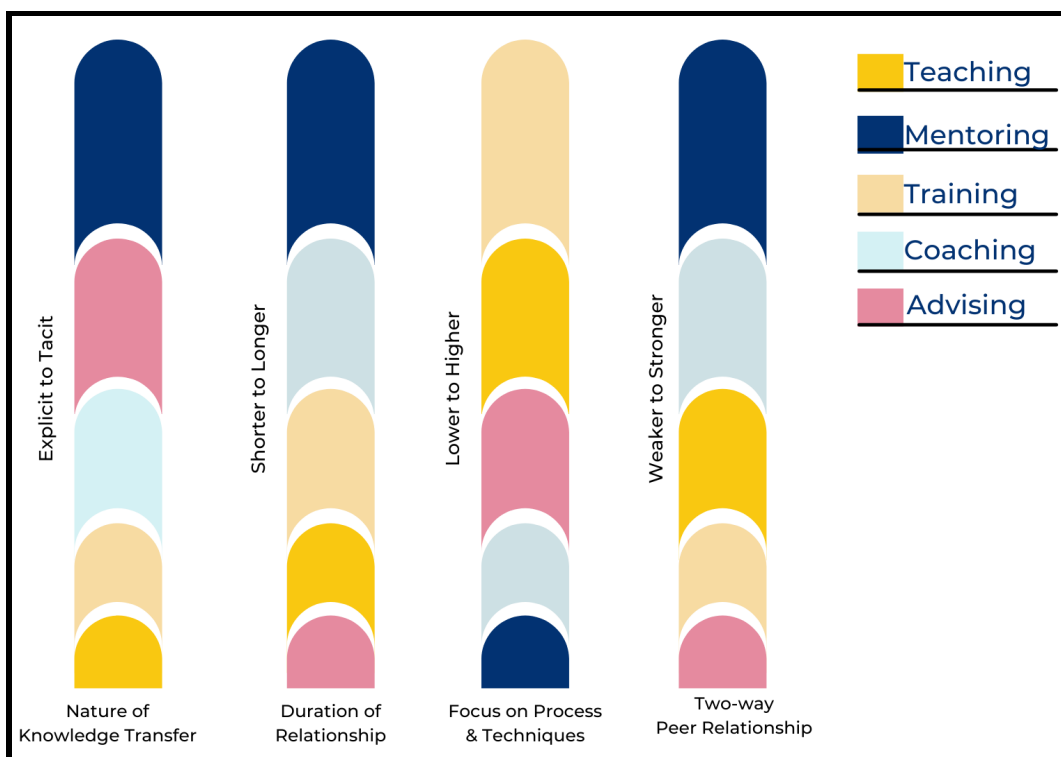
Mentoring vs Coaching

Unlike teaching and training, coaching is more prolonged and provides avenues for developing a more mutual relationship. While coaches offer some life experiences and knowledge, the coaching relationship is not as mentee-directive as mentoring. Coaches need to take on more control of the process to fuel the result-oriented nature of a coaching relationship.

Mentoring vs Advising

An advisory conversation is only arranged when there is a specific need. In contrast, mentoring conversations have a pre-arranged set frequency and allow for progress tracking mechanisms for the mentoring relationship. Unlike advising, mentoring is akin to a journey.

A mentoring relationship is a prolonged, structured symbiotic relationship, grounded in customised interactions between professionals from similar fields that primarily leads to professional development towards the mentees' goals.



Image_4.3: A representation of mentoring with respect to other types of professional development⁸

⁸ This diagram has been adapted from Lynda Bourne's interpretation of mentoring in her blog post called "Developing your Team." Bourne, L. (2013, November 29). *Developing your team / Stakeholder Management's Blog*. Stakeholder Management's Blog; Wordpress.com. <https://stakeholdermanagement.wordpress.com/2013/11/30/developing-your-team/>

4.1.4 Common myths associated with mentoring

1. **Only mentees benefit from a mentoring relationship.** Mentoring is a symbiotic arrangement in which both the mentor and the mentee learn from each other, despite the seemingly more obvious benefits to a mentee.
2. **A mentoring relationship needs to be in person.** While in-person mentoring relationships have their benefits, a mentoring relationship can be established using online modes and asynchronous methods as well.
3. **A mentee may only have one mentor at a time.** Different mentors bring their unique skills and knowledge to a mentoring relationship, and that can greatly enhance the professional development experience of an individual.
4. **A mentoring relationship should be organic and accessed as and when needed.** A mentoring relationship works best when it is structured and has a predetermined frequency, along with a set of goals to accomplish at the end of it.
5. **Mentors must be older than mentees.** Mentors are best selected when assessed based on their knowledge, skills, qualifications, and mindsets to learn and grow together.
6. **One can either be a mentor or be a mentee.** Mentors need mentors of their own to learn essential skills that are conducive to creating valuable mentoring relationships of their own. It is not uncommon for mentors to have their own mentors who have supported and guided their own professional journeys.

4.2 Mentoring as a solution - examples of how mentoring elsewhere has helped improve systems

The widespread study of mentoring and its prevalence in community, academic and organisational contexts has deemed it a “strategy for positive youth development and as a deterrent of risky youth behaviour; as a way to improve the academic adjustment, retention, and success of college students; and as a means to facilitate career development among employees”.⁹ In a multi-disciplinary meta-analysis conducted by Eby et al to advance mentoring theory, a question was asked - “looking across different areas of mentoring scholarship, does mentoring matter, and if so, how much?” It was found that mentoring had significant correlations with favourable behavioural, attitudinal, health-related, interpersonal, motivational, and career outcomes. It also had negative correlations with deviance, psychological stress and strain.

⁹ Eby, L. T., Allen, T. D., Evans, S. C., Ng, T., & DuBois, D. L. (2008). Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 2, 254–267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.04.005>



Mentoring constructs have been implemented at large scales in many different contexts so far, both in and out of the education system. Here are some examples of how mentoring has benefitted different outcomes across different sectors.

4.2.1 Education, India

The Government of Delhi launched a Mentor Teacher Program in 2015 to support teachers to provide on-site learning support and organise workshops suited to the pedagogical needs of their fellow teachers¹⁰. The department recruited 200 teachers who were serving as Academic Resource Persons at the Directorate of Education and assigned five to six schools to them to visit regularly and observe and provide on-site learning support to the teachers. Mentor teachers were also provided with national and international level exposure to develop their skills of observation, facilitation, content understanding and pedagogical skills further.

Based on their learnings from this initiative, the department moved to create an integrated 3-tier support structure to further the teaching-learning process in classrooms just three years later¹¹. Among other things, they aimed at creating a culture of academic discourse within schools and sharing best practices and documentation within the system.

As a result of this program, Teacher Development Coordinators shared that 31 per cent of students started attending schools more regularly and 61 per cent asked questions when in doubt. 35 percent of teachers were found to be more observant of student needs, and in general, the environment of schools became more conducive to academic discourse.

4.2.2 Education, Finland

Given the high professional status of Finland's teachers and the country's excellent PISA¹² results, teacher support was not given precedence until around 2005. For the last 15 years, about 2000 educational professionals in the country have been involved in a

¹⁰ Directorate of Education, Government of Delhi. (2015). 2015 and Beyond: Delhi Education Revolution. Edudel.Nic.In; Directorate of Education, Government of Delhi.

http://www.edudel.nic.in/welcome_folder/delhi_education_revolution.pdf

¹¹ Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi - Directorate of Education: School Branch. (2018, May 23). Roles, reporting and review system for Mentor Teachers for the Academic session 2018-20.

Dixitschoolweb.in; Directorate of Education: School Branch.

https://dixitschoolweb.in/Circular/DTE/Duties%20and%20Responsibilities/2018_05_23_Roles,%20Reporting%20and%20Review%20System%20for%20Mentor%20Teachers%20for%20the%20Academic%20Session%202018-20.pdf

¹² PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.



peer-group mentoring (PGM) structure¹³. The PGM structure now serves its purpose in the larger Finland Education System as 1) the tunnel between initial teacher education and induction phase where qualified teachers emerge; 2) the zone between training in universities and training in municipalities; 3) an intermediate state between formal, non-formal, and informal learning for continuous professional development.

Throughout the country, this structure has led to the empowerment of teachers as change agents, a strengthened teacher identity, enhanced motivation, and well-being. This model ensures a research-based development of mentoring and continuous professional development for all teachers in the country. A study of 116 participants conducted by the Institute for Education and Information Sciences (Belgium) and the Finnish Institute for Educational Research saw teachers agreeing unanimously that PGM was an important tool for professional development throughout their entire teaching careers¹⁴.

4.2.3 Medicine, US/UK

In 2002, the Standing Committee of Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education in the UK (SCOPME) suggested mentoring to be the solution to doctors' career-long need for personal, educational and professional support¹⁵. There were widespread concerns in the recruitment and retention of health professionals due to feelings of isolation and failed informal peer support in the workspace. Mentoring was deemed as both a voluntary and prescribed framework of support provided for doctors in the country.

In a study published by the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, physicians' perceived benefits of mentoring as crossing the professional-personal interface and overriding organisational differences¹⁶. The key areas of improvement for physicians were found to be problem-solving and change management. Further analysis of their study also suggested that by benefitting one area, mentoring may lead to consequential benefits in others. As a result of consistent findings across several such studies, it was concluded that doctors felt more satisfied and confident in their professional roles as a result of participation in mentoring.

¹³ Heikkinen, H. L. T., Pennanen, M., Markkanen, I., & Tynjälä, P. (2020). A Brief History of the Peer-Group Mentoring Model in Finland: Struggling for Space in a Contested Niche. In *New Teachers in Nordic Countries - Ecologies of Mentoring and Induction* (pp. 107–128). Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP. <http://dx.doi.org/10.23865/noasp.105.ch5>

¹⁴ Geeraerts, K., Tynjälä, P., Heikkinen, H. L. T., Markkanen, I., Pennanen, M., & Gijbels, D. (2014). Peer-group mentoring as a tool for teacher development. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 3, 358–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2014.983068>

¹⁵ Bligh, J. (1999). Mentoring: an invisible support network. *Medical Education*, 1, 2–3. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2923.1999.00360.x>

¹⁶ Steven, A., Oxley, J., & Fleming, W. (2008). Mentoring for NHS doctors: perceived benefits across the personal–professional interface. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 11, 552–557. <https://doi.org/10.1258/jrsm.2008.080153>



Around the same time, the US recognised the need for mentoring relationships between Physician-teachers and students to have had a profound effect on the professional lives of their students¹⁷. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) requires medical teaching institutions to have programs to promote student well being since medical students need to balance between dealing with the multifaceted demands of medical education and assimilating in the medical community¹⁸. They identified that a mentor possesses characteristics like self-confidence, generosity with time and energy, competency, etc, and skills like tolerance, willingness to learn, building relationships, provoking thought through questions, etc. Medical students in the US consider mentoring important to their education, and so, innovation is promoted in mentoring programs across the nation.

4.3 The National Education Policy's (2020) vision for Mentoring

The National Education Policy (NEP) released in 2020 proposed to revamp all aspects of the education structure in alignment with the fourth sustainable development goal (SDG4) of quality education¹⁹. It proposed mentoring as a solution at various levels to improve the quality of outcomes.

4.3.1 For Students

- In an effort to curtail school dropout rates and ensure access to education for all, school students will be mentored by alumni and community members, which will lead to enhanced learning outcomes and sustained interest.
- Faculty from higher education institutions will develop the capacity to approach their students as mentors in addition to as their teachers, to support an optimal learning environment.
- Mentoring programmes will be established to provide socio-emotional and academic support to socially and economically disadvantaged groups to ensure equity and inclusion in higher education.

¹⁷ Bhagia, J., & Tinsley, J. A. (2000). The Mentoring Partnership. Mayo Clinic Proceedings, 5, 535–537. <https://doi.org/10.4065/75.5.535>

¹⁸ Farkas, A. H., Allenbaugh, J., Bonifacino, E., Turner, R., & Corbelli, J. A. (2019). Mentorship of US Medical Students: a Systematic Review. Journal of General Internal Medicine, 11, 2602–2609. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-019-05256-4>

¹⁹ Ministry of Human Resource Development. (2020, July 29). National Education Policy 2020. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf#page=29&zoom=100,97,630

4.3.2 For Teachers

The NEP 2020 has recognized the process of teacher preparation as requiring “multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of dispositions and values, and development of practice under the best mentors”²⁰. Therefore, it proposed mentoring as an accessory to teacher development across the board.

- It suggested establishing a mentoring structure for early childhood care and education (ECCE) teachers in Anganwadis by the Cluster Resource Centres of the School Education Department along with monthly meetings for continuous assessment. In a longer-term proposal for preparing professionally qualified ECCE educators, a combination of professional training, mentoring mechanisms, and career mapping would be used.
- A suitable, robust mentoring arrangement would be put in place for in-training teachers, in addition to practicum training, and for in-service teachers aiming to enhance their qualifications.
- A National Mission for Mentoring would be established to provide long-term professional support to teachers, facilitated by a pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty.

4.3.3 For Educational Leaders and Institutions

The NEP emphasized the need for mentoring across educational institutions by involving educational leadership. The primary focus of the NEP 2020 for higher educational institutions was their restructuring and consolidation through mentoring towards effective governance and better leadership.

- To promote a culture of empowerment and autonomous innovation within higher education institutions, a graded accreditation granting mechanism will be established, for which colleges will be mentored to level up on benchmarks. Each university will mentor its affiliated colleges to help them develop capabilities in “academic and curricular matters, teaching and assessment; governance reforms; financial robustness; and administrative efficiency,” to eventually transition to autonomous degree-granting colleges.
- Additionally, one of the primary roles of the National Research Foundation (NRF) will be to mentor academic institutions to catalyse quality academic research in all fields.

²⁰ Ministry of Human Resource Development. (2020, July 29). National Education Policy 2020.

Www.Education.Gov.In; Government of India.

https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf#page=29&zoom=100,97,630

In addition to the recommendations offered by the NEP 2020, there is immense scope for establishing mentoring structures for various purposes across the education ecosystem in India. The wealth of knowledge and expertise possessed by various stakeholders can be utilised to disseminate information and guidance effectively and efficiently across the different cadres of education leadership.

A National Mentoring Mission to promote structured sharing of ideas for mutual professional development would facilitate rapid development of the Indian education system leveraging existing resources.





Solutions for Mentoring



5.1 The roles in a mentoring construct

A mentoring construct requires designated mentors and mentees, apart from an administrator (individual or unit) to facilitate structures and sustain the process over long periods of time. This section covers ideas on what characteristics in mentors and mentees will enable a mentoring construct to succeed.

5.1.1 The characteristics of mentors and mentees

“True teachers are those who help us think for ourselves.”

-Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

There are certain characteristics that a mentor and a mentee would need to possess, prepare for, and learn, before and during a mentoring relationship, to reap the most out of it. The mentor should have aspirational qualities that have led to the desired learning outcomes of the program.

In a study published in the Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, the participant mentors and mentees in the Finnish model of teachers' peer-group mentoring were asked about their conception of the roles of an ideal mentor and mentee²¹. The study identified a set of core characteristics that describe the virtues of a mentor and mentee based on participant views. However, out of the sixteen identified virtues, only four were specific to mentors or mentees; the rest were common among both participants.

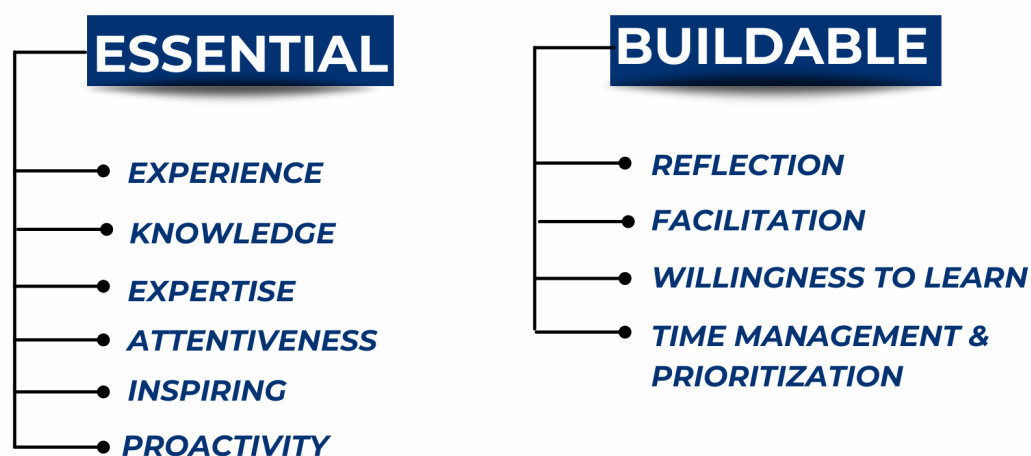
This overlap between the characteristics of mentors and mentees reinforces that a mentoring relationship is mutually beneficial and is not for a mentor to singularly drive. The findings of the study also suggested that more than the recognition as an expert or a skilled professional, a required attribute of the mentor is about facilitating the meeting (preparation, practical arrangements) and the discussion (guiding, asking questions). Similarly, the role of a mentee is being recognised as a member of the group to share knowledge and experiences, without formal titles.

Some of these characteristics may be viewed as essentials to being able to take on a role in a mentoring relationship, whereas other characteristics can be built along the way.

²¹ Pennanen, M., Heikkinen, H. L. T., & Tynjälä, P. (2018). Virtues of Mentors and Mentees in the Finnish Model of Teachers' Peer-group Mentoring. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 3, 355–371. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2018.1554601>



Depending on the context of the mentoring setup, here is a list of criteria that may act as a starting point for mentor selection.



Image_5.1: Essential & buildable characteristics of mentoring

Essential

Experience

Mentors' sufficient experience in the same cadre as the mentee is necessary to elicit and share examples and best practices. This helps establish trust between the actors given the mentor's relevant understanding of the role

Knowledge

In-depth knowledge about the field of work helps elevate the level of discussion in a mentoring relationship as a mentor is able to root conversations in theory and offer a tested basis for professional development.

Expertise

A mentor's expertise and skill level in the field of work helps establish trust between the actors given the mentor's understanding of the challenges faced during the implementation of theoretical concepts.

Attentiveness/thoughtfulness

Empathetic listening skills displayed by a mentor are crucial in identifying problem areas instead of assuming them and making the mentees feel heard.



Inspiring/catalysing oration

Powerful and inspiring oratory skills are needed to get other people to listen, act on, and make changes in already set patterns.

Proactivity

A willingness to engage and initiate is crucial to the sustainability of the program and will help bridge the gap where mentees struggle to ask for help when needed.

Buildable**Reflection**

The mentor's ability to reflect on their experiences and learn from them can elicit the same in mentees and amplify the effect of the mentoring relationship

Facilitation

Mentors' skills to carry a conversation, either one-on-one or in a group setting, is crucial to make the mentoring process worthwhile and enjoyable for all actors.

Willingness to learn

Mentors' willingness to learn from their mentees' experiences and the mentoring journey indicates open-mindedness in thought and practice, that crucial to facilitate a respectful learning environment

Time management and prioritisation

Establishing and continuing a mentoring relationship takes time and resources in addition to the other roles played by the actors. Skills in time management and prioritisation ensure the consistency and quality of mentoring interactions.

These criteria should be tested during the recruitment and selection process of mentors. The level of essential skills can be tested through short questionnaires, case studies, textual or audio-visual reflection, and interviews.

For instance, multiple-choice questions to understand prospective mentors' ability to identify challenges, provide support, deal with failure or inaction, etc. could be helpful in selecting mentors with the right attitude for mentoring.



Example Question:

Q. What would you do if your mentee disagrees with your solution to a problem?

- a. I would wait for them to realise the value of my feedback in due course of time
- b. I would persuade them to try and test my advice though they aren't completely convinced about it at the moment
- c. I would listen to their reason for disagreement before trying to win over the argument
- d. I would probe more on the grounds for rejection of my solution

The Mentor Selection Process

The screening process should be designed keeping in mind the scale at which the program needs to be executed. The question to ask is: "what works at scale?" For instance, if one invites many long, subjective responses as part of the selection process, it will be important to plan (1) who will evaluate the quality and appropriateness of those responses, and (2) how much time and effort will be required. Hence, a simulation for scale is indispensable during the design of the process.

Characteristics of Mentee

For a mentoring relationship to be successful, a mentee should be goal-oriented, seek challenges, take Initiative, show eagerness to learn, and accept personal responsibility. They should participate actively, retain critical faculties, seek new capacities, in addition to knowledge, remain open to multiple influences, and own responsibility for success.²²

²² National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research . (2020, September). Making Mentoring Relevant: NEP 2020 PERSPECTIVE. [Http://www.Nitttrchd.Ac.In/](http://www.Nitttrchd.Ac.In/); National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research . <http://www.nitttrchd.ac.in/sitenew1/impdoc/2020/ReportonMakingMentoring.pdf>

Mentor Persona 1

Ms Asmita Pant is the Principal at Sunshine Public School, Dehradun. She has been a school leader for the last 20 years across two schools in Dehradun and had joined Sunshine Public school as a Principal ten years ago. As a teacher, she developed expertise in pedagogy over time and wanted to use her knowledge and experience to explore whole-school improvement. She started by completing some leadership modules and improving her understanding of managing teams and institutions. She listened to the teachers and staff at her school and identified areas that needed improvement. While talking to teachers and staff about challenging areas, she would listen with an open mind, understanding that everyone has different strengths and areas of development. While offering feedback, she would make sure to identify and give evidence for both strengths and areas of development, focusing on constructive criticism. She would reflect upon her actions and their consequences frequently and use that reflection to alter her actions and break patterns that lead to inefficiency and negative growth in her work. Always willing to learn more, she would also inspire others at her school to keep learning by holding workshops for her school staff to upskill and demonstrate examples of how improvement can happen if learning continues. She would go out of her way to make sure teachers were safe and comfortable, and always had access to support when needed. Her public speaking skills would get everyone attending very interested in what she had to say and motivated to take action. Now as a school leader with various years of experience in leading school improvement projects, she is interested in offering mentorship to school leaders across the country to learn more from their different contexts and be a partner in the school leaders' journeys towards better schools.

Mentor Persona 2

Mr Amarpal Singh is a teacher of Geography at Holy Child School in Aizawl. He has been teaching for 20 years and has been a constant source of inspiration for other teachers at his school. In addition to his skills as a teacher, he often offers a listening ear to other teachers and supports new teachers with easing into the culture of the school. He has a knack for building and maintaining a supportive, safe space for all staff members at his institution, and is widely regarded as an inspirational leader. He understands the importance and benefits of safety, professionalism, and high standards for work ethics in a workplace, and he makes it clear through his actions. He now wants to use his expertise to help other teachers feel supported, guided, and eased into schools, and be a partner in their journey towards fulfilling professional lives.



Mentee Persona 1

Mr Sarfaraz Shaikh is the Principal of Brighton Public School in Coimbatore. He was a teacher at the school for 12 years before moving to the role of a Coordinator for 3 years and then the Principal for 3 years. His inclination for learning more and growing in his role has led him to take a few courses on school leadership. He sees a lot of potential in the school to rise from mediocrity towards excellence and create a great experience for all students. Now in a leadership role, he seeks guidance from mentors towards his school improvement journey and is excited to learn along the way.

Mentee Persona 2

Sushma is a student of grade 9 in a government school in Pune. She likes going to school and her favourite subject to study is history. She has decided to study at school until grade 10, and then pursue her interest in pottery as a professional artist and craftsperson. She nurtures her talent and interest in the field as and when she can, however, she is unsure of how to get started on this path as a vocation. Sushma is keen to learn from other students on a similar path, and adults who are experts at vocational training.



Image_5.3: Mentor and Mentee Persona

5.2 Solutions for Mentoring- The different modes

A mentorship experience becomes constructive for all parties when mentor-mentee interactions catalyse four key verbs for mentees and restore their agency to *Learn*, *Share*, *Solve* and *Connect* to solve problems in their respective contexts. This can be enabled through different modes of mentoring, as illustrated below.



Image_5.4: Mentoring modes

5.2.1 Discussion circles on understanding Policies and Best Practices (Knowledge Transfer Mentoring)

Key Verb: Learn

Through discussion circles (or mentoring circles in this context), policies, schemes, concepts and best practices related to the needs of the community can be facilitated. These spaces can be open for experts who take up the role of mentors to facilitate and share their knowledge, experiences and learnings. Mentoring circles combine the beauty of mentoring with elements of coaching and action learning. These circles can be leveraged to inspire mentees to learn and progress collectively. It makes it easier for people facing similar challenges or those who seek to build collective knowledge to come together to explore and discuss while being mentored and guided by someone



who has knowledge and experience in personally overcoming that problem: the mentor. The opportunity to choose mentoring circles that they wish to be part of adds to mentees' agency to choose whom and what they wish to learn from

Example: The Ministry of Education has launched a National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat). Several school leaders come together through mentoring circles organised by DIET to interact with an expert from NCERT. The expert, in the role of a mentor, shares key concepts and nuances of the policy. School leaders as mentees listen and ask questions to seek clarity.

5.2.2 Peer learning session (All Teach, All Learn)

Key Verb: Share

In this mode, a group of professionals who have successfully navigated through specific challenges or have developed expertise in certain domains lead discussions and mentoring spaces for their peers.

Peer learning sessions have the scope of enhancing supportive relationships between peers by sharing knowledge and experience and by providing an opportunity to learn from different perspectives. It offers mentees' trusted networks of people with similar contexts to share their best practices with, and while adding to their knowledge as well. Peer mentoring suggests a two-way, reciprocal learning activity. It is mutually beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee as it involves the sharing of knowledge and experience between both parties. As the peer mentors teach and guide the mentee along, they find themselves working harder to understand the information, recall it more effectively and apply the knowledge in different ways that help the mentee to learn. This also acts as a forum for 'Best Practice Sharing'.

Example: During the early days of school closures due to Covid-19, a group of school heads in the state of Punjab came together in a virtual space to discuss how to reach out to parents to enable continuity of learning for children at home. Everyone shared their ideas and a few spoke about interesting initiatives that they had started for their community. One such initiative that got discussed was the idea of Virtual Parent Teachers Meeting (V-PTM), where the school head had collaborated with the teachers and made sure that they reached out to parents using either Zoom or WhatsApp call, or phone call. Today, V-PTM has become a statewide initiative in Punjab.



5.2.3 Case-based discussions (Situational Mentoring)

Key Verb: Solve

In this mode, mentees reach out to a network/mentor with a specific common struggle they would have been facing, in anticipation of finding solutions. This mode serves as a great opportunity for collective problem-solving.

Example: A set of teachers in Tamil Nadu identified learning loss in students due to school closures as a common challenge that all of them were facing. They came together in the Block Resource Centre to brainstorm and to identify solutions that would be relevant in their context. The mentor shared examples from other states and countries.

5.2.4 One-on-one mentoring

Key Verb: Connect

One on one mentoring is a personalised, knowledge-sharing conversation that participants can have on a topic of their choice. It is a focussed discussion between a mentor and a mentee. The mentee gets the opportunity to choose to connect with a trusted individual (mentor or peer) to share, learn and discuss. The mentor helps mentees to reinforce the skills and knowledge they have acquired and make them understand how to apply the knowledge and skillsets to the challenges they face. Engaging through the mode of one-on-one mentoring becomes an insightful journey for mentees as it supports them to grow personally as well as professionally while building a strong belief in their capabilities. It helps in advancing growth for the mentees. For a mentor, it serves as an opportunity to contribute to the community they belong to.

Example: The Block Mentors (BM)s in Punjab who usually have expertise in particular domains of school improvement help the teachers and school leaders to undertake the journey of school improvement. These one-on-one mentoring conversations happen during the school visits of BMs.

5.2.5 Flash Mentoring

Key Verb: Learn

Flash mentoring is one-time or short-term mentoring. It is centred around tactical one-time meetings that provide knowledge or skills when participants need them. With the one-time format, mentees can learn from a variety of individuals with expertise in varying subjects. It makes experienced and busy mentors more accessible to mentees and enables them to interact with more mentees over time. Flash mentoring also



empowers mentees to drive just-in-time learning, allowing them to connect with a mentor to get what they need to succeed.

Example: During the pandemic, several teachers wanted to learn more about ways to drive student engagement and attendance in the blended learning environment. To understand more about this, they invite experts to conduct short-term sessions and familiarise them with best practices and strategies.

While the modes identified above are meant to encourage synchronous interaction between mentors and mentees, additional ways to execute a mentoring interaction are possible. It could be through a combination of online and offline mediums, using synchronous or asynchronous methods, as shown in the table on the next page.

Methods→ Media↓	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Online	All modes as described above, using online conferencing tools <i>This might be the most useful combination for large-scale mentoring programs where in-person sessions might not be feasible because mentors and mentees may be in different physical locations.</i>	Online tools to assign work and exchange feedback, such as reflective assignments, case studies with associated questions, etc. <i>This may be used in addition to an online-synchronous program to encourage self-reflection and self-learning time.</i>
Offline	All modes as described above in an in-person setting <i>This combination might be the most useful for smaller-scale programs and will enhance mentoring interactions by not limiting communication to online-only modes.</i>	Offline tools such as books, activity kits, experiential programs, etc, may be assigned. <i>This combination may be used in addition to a more customised online/offline - synchronous mentoring program to encourage self-learning.</i>



5.3 The elements of a mentoring program

A mentoring program is likely to be an intricate structure with many aspects to consider while designing. The process of developing a mentoring program can be divided into four stages. At each stage, answering the following questions should help design and implement an effective program.

5.3.1 Program Design and Planning

1. What is the population to be served through mentoring? Who are the program's stakeholders?
2. What will be the type of mentoring the program will offer, and the nature of the mentoring sessions (Refer to Section 5.2 for modes of mentoring)?
3. What are the types of individuals who can be onboarded as mentors (Refer Section 5.1.1 for mentor characteristics)?
4. What are program goals and expected outcomes for mentors, mentees and sponsoring organisations? What are the expected outcomes for the system, and how do program objectives lead to those systemic outcomes?
5. When and how often will the mentors and mentees meet?
6. What is the expected or desirable duration of the mentoring relationship?
7. What is the setting of the mentoring program (online, in-person, hybrid)?
8. How will the communication related to the program be made?
9. What is the best way to evaluate the progress and success of the program?
10. What is the protocol to ensure that program staff regularly contacts mentors and mentees to discuss how their mentoring relationships are going?

Refer to Section 5.4 to get examples of what a program progression may look like.

5.3.2 Program Management

A successful program management unit (or team of administrators) includes the following elements:

1. An advisory group
2. A comprehensive system for managing program information
3. A resource design and development plan
4. A system to monitor the program
5. A redressal mechanism for stakeholders, institutions, and the program
6. Strategies for staff development
7. Strong pro-mentoring advocacy efforts
8. Effective public relations and communications efforts
9. Budget allocation for implementation of the program



5.3.3 Program Operations

Operational functions to keep in mind are:

1. Recruiting mentors, mentees, program staff, and volunteers, if any.
2. Screening potential mentors and mentees.
3. Providing orientation and training for mentors, mentees, and program staff.
4. Matching mentors and mentees
5. Bringing mentors and mentees together for activities and sessions that fall within established program parameters
6. Supporting, supervising and monitoring mentoring relationships
7. Recognising the contributions of all program participants
8. Helping mentors and mentees reach closure

5.3.4 Program Evaluation

The following are needed for ongoing quality improvement:

1. A plan to measure program process accurately
2. A process for measuring whether expected outcomes have been achieved
3. A process that reflects on evaluation findings and disseminates them to appropriate parties.

Exemplar program design:

Problem Statement: Students are home because of the COVID - 19 pandemic and many teachers in Rajasthan are not equipped to tackle the challenges of online learning.

Objective: To enable the teachers with expertise in online learning to mentor other teachers across the state.

Action Plan:

1. The SCERT in the state of Rajasthan will appoint a Program Management Unit (PMU) to lead efforts for a state-wide mentoring program for teachers with a focus on online learning.
2. The PMU will implement a selection process for teachers and school leaders across the state to become mentors.
3. The selected mentors will undergo a month-long training program to learn about the concepts, skills, and technology they need to mentor effectively.



4. The mentors will be mapped to other teachers in the state (mentees) to start their mentoring journeys. Mentors will help the mentees upskill in online learning.
5. The mentors will be given opportunities to level up as mentors through continuous development. Mentors will also have the opportunity to become lead mentors and join the PMU.
6. Mentees will be given opportunities to grow and become mentors after attending a certain number of mentoring sessions and going through a selection process.
7. Monitoring and evaluation processes will be in place to track the execution, satisfaction, and impact of the program.
8. The best performing mentors, mentees, and their associated institutions will be incentivised for their efforts towards upskilling through the mentoring program and to keep the mentoring program running sustainably.

Success Criteria:

The program will be successful if:

1. Mentees are satisfied with their mentors' sessions and find them relevant.
2. Mentees can implement good quality lessons through an online medium.
3. Students across the state are satisfied with online learning, and there has been positive growth in the quality of online classes.
4. Students show positive growth in learning outcomes.
5. Mentors find it useful to engage in mentoring interactions, and consider it a form of professional development.

5.4 How to design the progression of a mentoring program

A mentorship program consists of not only the relationship between mentors and mentees but also making sure mentors are being made available to the system continually, accounting for attrition.

The mentoring system should be designed in a way to support sustainability, and should not always rely on external sources to keep the system going. For instance, mentors could play the role of training incoming mentors after receiving a certain level of training themselves. An example of a four-step process is listed below.



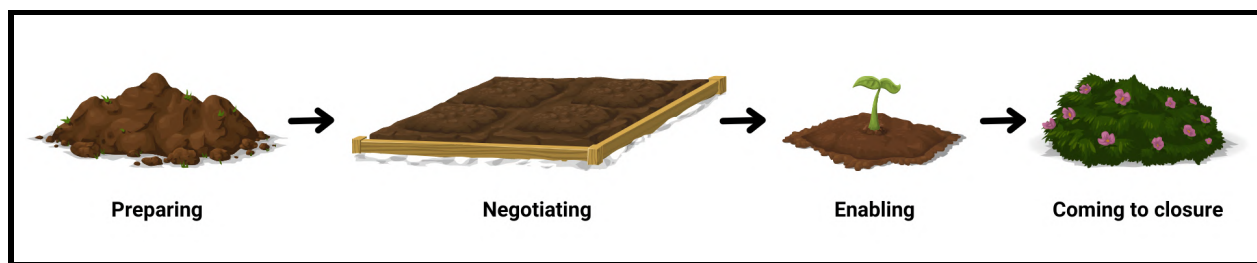
The progression of a mentoring program should be designed keeping in mind the progression of a mentoring relationship, as detailed in the next section.



Image_5.5: Mentor Progression

5.4.1 The evolution of the mentoring relationship

The mentoring relationship is long-term and non-transactional. It is bound to evolve with time and has been compared to the different phases of nurturing a plant²³.



Image_5.6: Evolution of mentoring relationship-analogy

²³ Premkumar, K., & Wong, A. (2010). An Introduction to Mentoring Principles, Processes and Strategies for Facilitating Mentoring Relationships at a Distance. MedEdPORTAL, 1. https://doi.org/10.15766/mep_2374-8265.3148

1. **Preparing: *tilling the soil before planting***

Mentor motivation impacts the sustainability of the mentoring relationship. The mentor's role, unlike popular assumptions, should not be that of an expert with answers to every question, but be a consistent, reliable guide for their mentees. Mentors should reflect on their motivation for engaging in a mentoring relationship and their readiness for this.

A mentor-training program executed at the beginning of a mentoring cycle is crucial to orient mentors to the key principles of a mentoring relationship. This should be in addition to opportunities for continuous upskilling of mentors.

2. **Negotiating: *Planting seeds in well-cultivated soil***

This phase includes arriving at a set of learning goals, content, and process of the relationship. This shared understanding of outcomes should include:

1. Desired learning outcomes
2. Criteria for measuring success
3. Mutual responsibilities
4. Accountability assurances
5. Protocols for addressing problems
6. An action plan for achieving the learning goal.

This is also the phase for boundary setting by both the mentor and the mentee. This could include consensus on access, time, frequency, mode, agenda, etc. Additionally, dialogue between the mentor and mentee at this stage will help the mentor in understanding when to step forward and when to hold back with their mentees, respecting their different learning styles. A comprehensive mentor training program can include modules on how to set objectives and structures, and promote adherence to them throughout the mentoring journey.

3. **Enabling: *Nurturing growth as the seeds take root.***

There are certain processes that a mentor could apply to facilitate the "enabling" part of the mentoring process. Here are some strategies that could be helpful:

1. Enabling reflection by asking questions to help the mentee articulate their thinking.
2. Rephrasing and confirming the mentors' understanding of the mentees' reflection and articulation.
3. Summarising by both the mentoring partners to make sure there is a shared understanding of assumptions and outcomes.
4. Iterating from cues by staying alert and watching for signs of boredom, confusion, discomfort, or embarrassment.
5. Providing authentic, constructive feedback with actionable steps.



During the enabling phase of the relationship, mentees are "gradually initiated into the traditions of a community of practitioners; they learn their conventions, languages, constraints, a repertoire of exemplars, and patterns of knowing in action."

The effective practices that enable this phase can be inculcated in mentors through practice. Providing spaces for mentors during the training program and throughout the journey to give and get feedback from their peers will help establish a community of practice for mentors that yields effective mentoring sessions.

4. **Coming to closure: *Reaping the harvest.***

All mentoring relationships should follow a timeline - either formally set, or informally agreed upon. At the end of the timeline, there should be a conversation about the learnings that have taken place during the mentoring relationship, and as a result of it. Both the mentor and the mentee should carry out this process, as both mentoring partners learn through the process. Key things to keep in mind while evaluating the relationship based on outcomes are:

1. Acknowledge the difficulty without casting blame
2. Consider things that went well and those that didn't
3. Express appreciation

It is important to celebrate the conclusion of a successful mentoring relationship. Structures to enable reflection on a mentoring journey, along with transitioning from one mentor to the next can be very useful in the successful conclusion of a mentoring relationship.

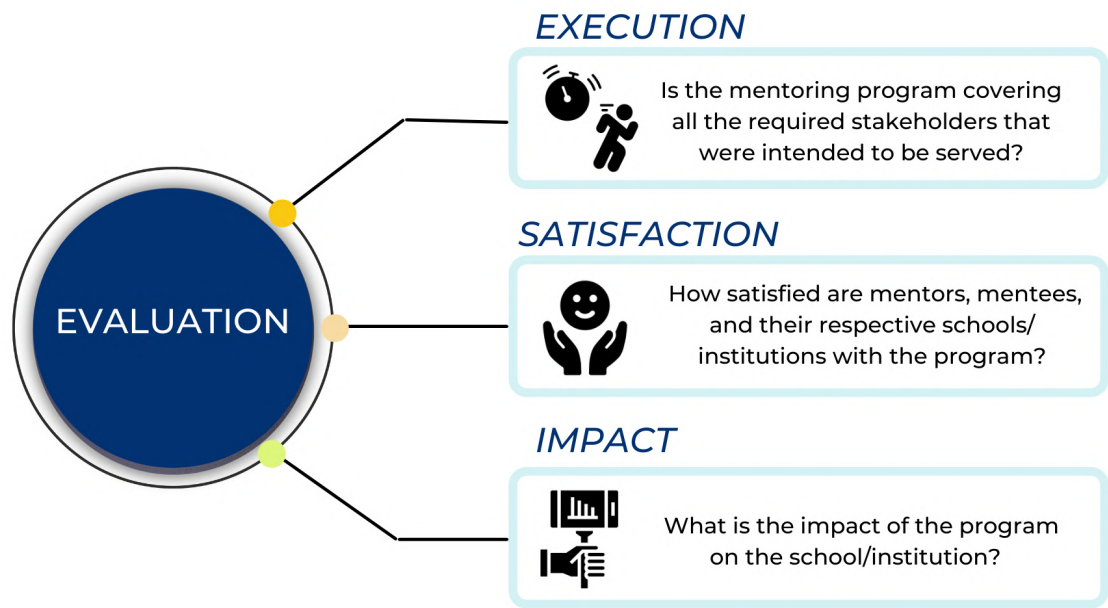
The phases listed above could form the basis of a mentoring framework, with key milestones that benefit all actors in understanding their progress within the mentoring structure.



5.5 Evaluation and Institutionalisation

5.5.1 Evaluation

The success of the program can be measured by evaluating three metrics:



Image_5.7: Evaluation metrics for mentoring

1. **Access**- Is the mentoring program covering all the required stakeholders that were intended to be served?

Access to the program is the most important factor to consider while evaluating the program. Mentoring is an opportunity for stakeholders to engage in customised, well-rounded professional development and all members of a cadre should have the opportunity to engage with it. This metric should be measured by checking existing databases of the stakeholders for coverage. It should also take into account key factors that lead to successful implementation in a country with a broad range of contexts - inclusivity, diversity, scale, language, and access.

While the program might make mentoring an essential or opt-in opportunity for stakeholders, it will be important to ask the question - “are stakeholders who will benefit from mentoring the most accessing the program?” This calls for the mentoring program to be a combination of prescription and choice-based. It is



challenging to incorporate new practices in any system, and measures to ensure availability and access should be enforced as needed.

2. **Satisfaction** - How satisfied are mentors, mentees, and their respective schools/institutions with the program?

This metric focuses on the quality of mentoring interactions. Satisfaction of all partaking stakeholders is essential in making sure the program continues and is sought after. The satisfaction of mentors and mentees may be measured using periodic surveys asking about the value this program adds to their professional lives, and the returns they are getting on their invested time.

The satisfaction of stakeholders can be measured using two separate metrics -

1. The quality of the facilitated interactions - This is to ensure that mentors and mentees are enjoying the structure of mentoring conversations and that there is enough engagement from both sides to maximise the time spent on these activities.
 2. The quality of the content delivered through the interactions - This is a test of whether the content delivered during these interactions adds value to the stakeholders' professional lives. The content covered should offer a comfortable challenge for both the mentor and the mentee; it should be familiar enough for stakeholders to make connections with their existing knowledge-base and understand well, yet challenging enough to push their thinking in new directions.
3. **Impact** - What is the impact of the program on the school/institution?

This metric tests the mentoring system for impact and may be the hardest to measure. Depending on the objective of the mentoring program, one may have to test for impact on students, shifts in school culture, etc. While this is a longer-term metric to measure and might not be feasible in the beginning stages of the program, feedback on the impact on everyday practices could help to tweak the program to stay on track with achieving objectives.

In the long term, the success of the program and decisions to continue with it should be based on the impact created by the program. Although this can be measured only after a certain period of time spent in the mentoring program, this is the most important indicator of the success of the program. Measuring impact like school improvement, ease of transition into a working culture, improved learning outcomes, etc. needs to be done using the right success indicators, and frequently enough to tweak the program. Here are some examples:



Objective of the mentoring program	Impact indicators that may be used
To ease the transition of pre-service teachers into the workforce, pre-service teachers will be mentored by in-service teachers.	1. Percent increase in teacher satisfaction as they join the workforce 2. Percent increase in new teachers' students' learning outcomes 3. Percent increase in new teachers' students' satisfaction levels 4. Percent increase in performance indicators for in-service teacher-mentors
To enhance student learning outcomes in foundational literacy and numeracy, teachers in a cluster create peer-mentoring circles	1. Percent increase in student performance in foundational literacy and numeracy assessments 2. Percent increase in the use of appropriate teaching-learning materials and performance recorded during classroom observations 3. Percent increase in teacher satisfaction and feeling a sense of community
Experienced and expert school leaders mentor other school leaders towards continuous school improvement	1. Percent increase in school improvement projects executed and recorded 2. Percent increase in school performance based on affiliation-specific rubrics and frameworks 3. Percent increase in school leaders' capacity and professional development experiences 4. Percent increase in school leader satisfaction and feeling a sense of community

In an effort to use positive reinforcement to drive change, all stakeholders' work leading to positive impact should be rewarded and encouraged publicly. This will ensure a continued focus on the change and positive impact that is brought about by the mentoring program, in addition to the other benefits of it. Ultimately, a mentoring program should be evaluated by its ability to bring positive changes to education in India.

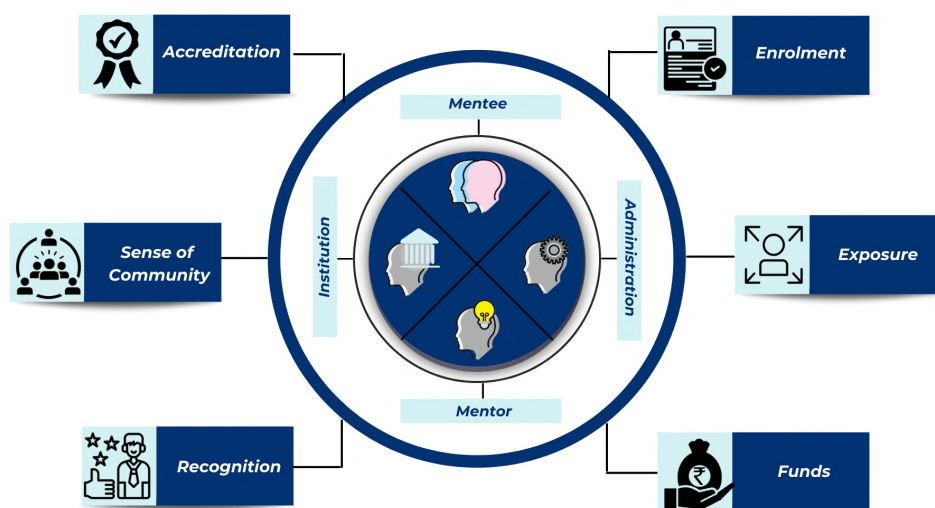


5.5.2 Institutionalisation

Mentoring is a great way to achieve institutional, organisational and individual professional goals. It leverages existing resources in an ecosystem to improve the collective value offering of the system and should be perceived as an essential activity across levels in the education system. This essential activity should be an ongoing process for everyone that is sustainably incorporated into everyday practices for all actors. A mentoring program may yield a lot of satisfaction among stakeholders in the beginning because of a sense of camaraderie among its beneficiaries. However, executing a mentoring program, for the mentor, mentee, and the administration takes a lot of time and effort. Program designers will have to assume that intentions and goodwill will not be enough for this program to continue; the mentoring program would need to be institutionalised.

Institutionalisation is the act of establishing something as a convention or norm in an organisation or culture. All structures in the mentoring program should be linked to institutional practices and benefits to make it work, sustainably, at scale. The program should employ incentives for participation that help mentors, mentees, and their associated institutions thrive in existing structures in the education system.

There are some common drivers for actors in the mentoring program, some of them are listed below:



Image_5.8: Key drivers for actors in the mentoring program

The mentoring program should account for institutionalising incentives towards these drivers for time and effort put into mentoring for all actors. For instance, an opportunity to take a leadership development course from a premier institution for the best performing mentors; spotlighting the institution with the best performing mentees, etc.

5.6 Challenges to mentoring

A mentoring program is not free from barriers. Designing and implementing a mentoring program may pose its own set of challenges. However, if we are aware of these challenges, they can be addressed in simple ways.

1. Mismatched expectations

An essential element in any mentorship construct is setting goals and clear expectations for all parties involved. Setting goals and aligning expectations can become a challenge especially when a party (mentor or mentee) is unclear about what they wish to accomplish within the mentorship.

To avoid this barrier entirely, it becomes essential to continuously **communicate expectations** throughout the mentoring program and introduce spot checks to ensure that everyone is still on the same page.

2. Disinvested mentees

Whilst it is important for mentees to engage and use mentorship programs effectively, it is also counterproductive to force them through the relationship. There might be several underlying reasons that might lead to the disinvestment of mentees. This affects the quality of mentor-mentee engagement and disregards efforts put in by different actors.

3. Lack of motivation in mentors

One of the most common challenges is getting the right number of mentors to participate in the program. While that challenge is important, the motivations and expertise of the mentors are just as important. Mentors who lack motivation will be less effective and engaged. This results in a poor experience for mentees and an unsuccessful mentoring relationship.

Choosing the right mentors at the beginning of the program, therefore, becomes important. Along with this, it becomes crucial to provide mentors with apt training and communicate with them throughout the relationship.



4. Too much or too little structure

It is important to remember that different people require different environments to feel comfortable and learn. Some mentees and mentors will appreciate access to many tools and resources whilst they are beginning their mentoring relationship. Others may feel overly pressured if pushed to use these resources.

The key is to find a way of creating balance through program design so that those who need resources and tools can find it easily. While those who don't can access it if they get stuck, without feeling pressured to stick to a rigid regime.

5. Ignored checkpoints

Clear checkpoints in a mentoring program help mentors and mentees feel like there is a well-defined beginning, middle and end. It adds satisfaction for all parties involved.

For example, not having an effective closure to a mentoring relationship can leave mentors and mentees dissatisfied afterwards, feeling confused and unsure of how to carry forward with the learnings.

6. Misconceptions around mentoring

Some common misconceptions around mentoring can create barriers and dissuade potential participants from making the most out of a mentorship experience. Certain common misconceptions are:

- *"Mentoring is a time-consuming process"*
- *"Mentoring has no value to careers or personal lives"*
- *"Mentoring benefits only mentees and not mentors"*

Setting clear expectations at the beginning of the program with well-defined roles, responsibilities and outcomes help to address these misconceptions

A well-planned and supported mentoring program can last for many years and have a long-lasting impact. Once the program has gained momentum, a culture of mentoring is instilled and informal mentoring often flourishes alongside formal programs.





Introduction to National Mentoring Infrastructure



6.1 Introduction

The National Mentoring Infrastructure (NMI) has been conceptualized as a set of open-source NDEAR Compliant modular building blocks designed for scale and reliability. Currently, there are no Open Protocols defined for the delivery of Mentoring Solutions/ Systems, resulting in several fragmented and disconnected mentoring solutions. Mentees have been using different solutions or systems to discover Mentors. The National Mentoring Infrastructure aims to overcome this shortcoming by defining and enabling the Unified Learning Interface. The Unified Learning Interface aims at enabling interoperability of diverse Mentoring Services and solutions thereby opening up the discovery of mentors, mentoring programs across diverse services.

The National Mentoring Infrastructure aims at ensuring ease in the adoption of Mentoring Services and Solutions across varying contexts of both mentors and mentees. These features are reinforced at every step of its design including its design principles and technology components.

6.2 Design Principles

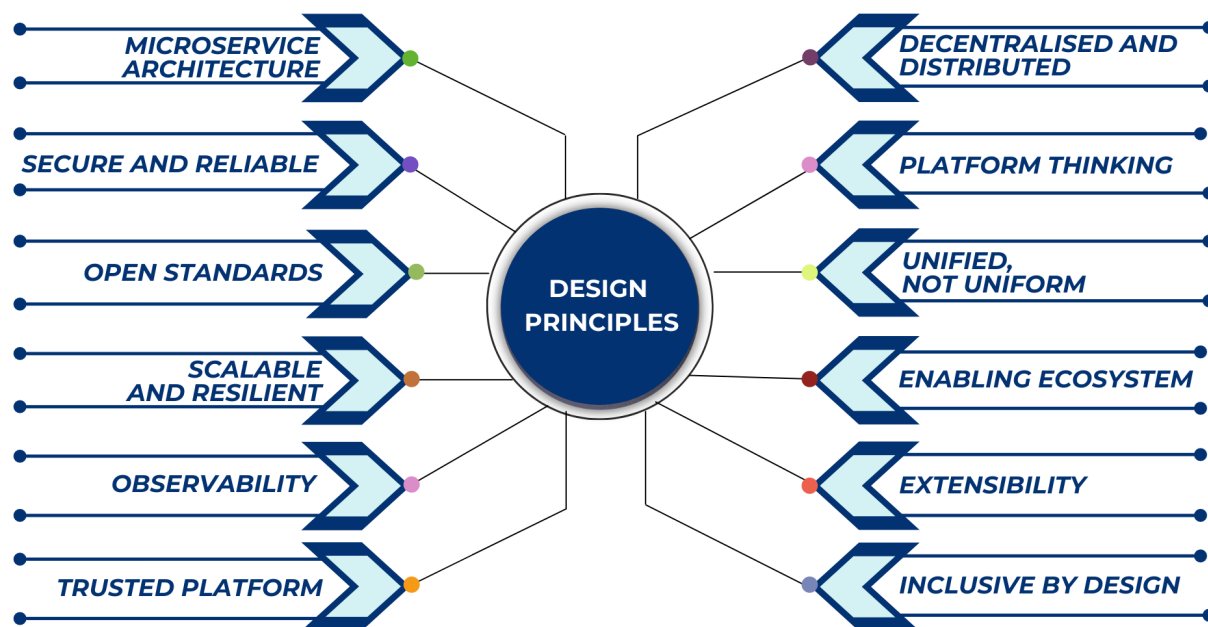
In this section, we focus on the digital infrastructure aspects of the NMI by specifying the underlying design principles. As platforms “distribute the ability to solve” to ecosystem actors, they need guidance in the form of basic principles and best practices for each such actor to create useful and relevant solutions.

Principles, in turn, enable the creation of necessary Standards, Specifications, and Certifications, which can be developed across three contexts:

- People (Roles, Actions, Capabilities, etc),
- Process (Policy standards, working methodologies, Process standards, compliance certificates, etc), and
- Platforms, i.e. the underlying digital infrastructure (Open standards, Open APIs, Open reference applications, etc).

These principles serve as guardrails, ensuring that the variety of efforts that leverage and contribute to the mentoring infrastructure are widely aligned to each other.





Image_6.1:Design Principles of National Mentoring Infrastructure

1. **Microservice Architecture:** To resolve for scale and diversity, modular Services can be bundled and unbundled as per need. This enables the evolution of functionality as per changing needs and context through loosely coupled microservices.
2. **Secure and Reliable:** Managing security and privacy is important and thus, is a critical part of the design. The infrastructure is designed to provide data enablement while ensuring data security and privacy for its users.
3. **Open Standards:** Open standards and interoperability are essential for the design of the infrastructure to ensure that it supports varying use-cases. The NMI is built using open protocols and APIs that ensure interoperability with no affinity to specific platforms, network technologies or languages. This is based on standards to provide interoperability. Open APIs will, therefore, support a wide range of diverse mentoring solutions built on heterogeneous technologies to work together.
4. **Scalable and Resilient:** To be able to scale for a large number of users in the ecosystem, scalability of operations will be ensured by Standardization and Horizontal scaling.
5. **Observability:** Observability of valuable information exchanged around mentoring interaction in the infrastructure will be realised through Telemetry. This is

designed to capture all the events around Mentee / Mentors and make them available for consumption and Analytics.

6. **Trusted Platform:** The infrastructure aims at being a trusted platform to facilitate insightful as well as purposeful mentoring experiences for both parties-mentors and mentees. This is done by ensuring authenticated and verified Mentors on the platform by leveraging credible registries and due diligence with the onboarding of mentors.
7. **Decentralised and Distributed:** The infrastructure is designed to enable applications and solutions to access and exchange data from re-centrally organised entities/repositories.
8. **Platform thinking:** The infrastructure allows the ecosystem of stakeholders (solution providers) to create and extend their solutions/services to work at a National Level.
9. **Unified and not Uniform:** The infrastructure is based on open standards which facilitate uniform working and enables diverse solutions to work together.
10. **Enabling ecosystem:** The ULI enables an Ecosystem of Mentoring Solutions/applications to work together leveraging data across repositories, providing the user with a single-window of accessibility.
11. **Extensibility:** The infrastructure is built in such a way that it can be leveraged for other initiatives such as education internship opportunities and scholarship programs
12. **Inclusive by Design:**

a. User Base

The infrastructure enables solutions to be designed to cater to the contextual and diverse needs of the users. For Eg. Across different platforms - phones, Web, different languages etc.

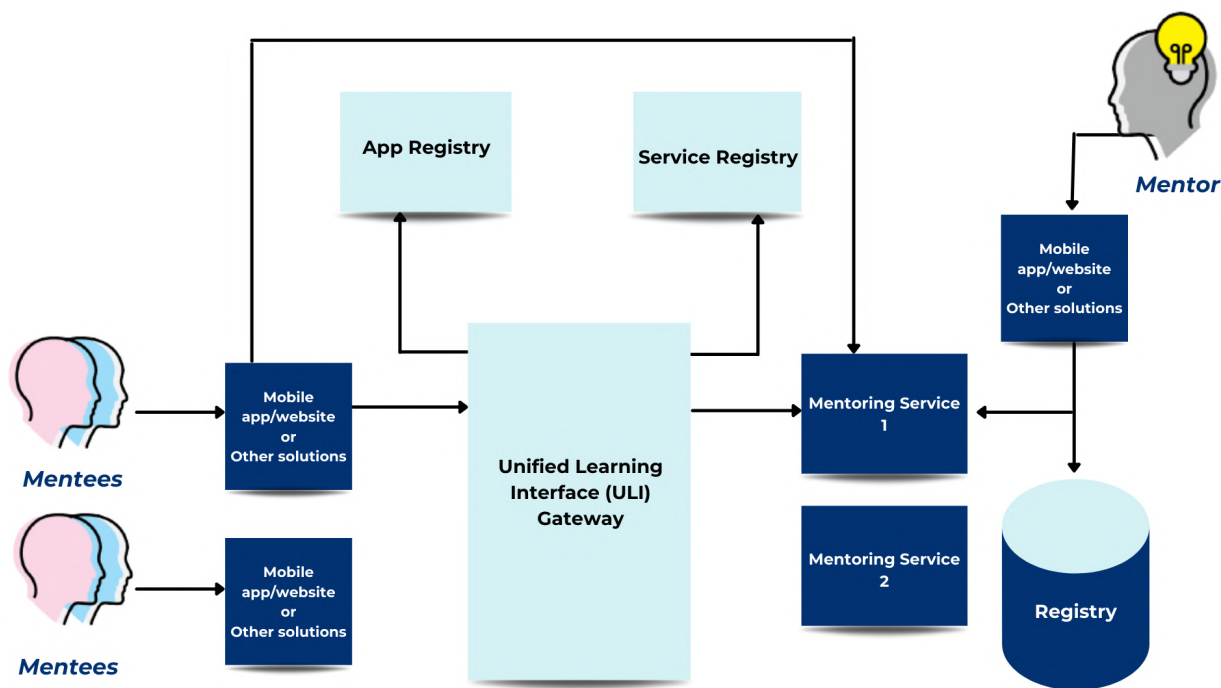
b. Systems & Processes

The infrastructure is designed to connect and leverage varied systems and processes including the applications, solutions and content that exist today.



6.3 Technology Components

In keeping with the design principles, NMI offers different technology components that enable multiple mentoring solutions for its users.



Image_6.2: Technology Components

1. **Mentee Interface (App/Website/Other Solutions):** Mentees can use this interface to discover mentors and sessions based on their interests and needs. They can enrol in mentoring programs that interest them.
2. **Mentor Interface (App/Website/Other Solutions):** Mentors use this interface to plan their interactions/sessions with mentees. They can also get insights and analyses of the various interactions done over time.
3. **Unified Learning Interface (ULI) Gateway:** The Unified Learning Interface would enable interoperability of diverse Mentoring Services/solutions thereby opening up the discovery of Mentors/programs across diverse services. ULI aims to streamline Learning/Mentoring services by creating an open network built on open protocols.

4. **App Registry:** This includes a registry of all mobile apps, web portals and other solutions which use the Interface
5. **Service Registry:** This includes a registry of mentoring systems (applications) which are subscribed to the gateway.
6. **External Registry:** This includes a trusted registry of verified mentors in the ecosystem
7. **Mentoring Service:** The microservice on the infrastructure would enable mentors to plan their sessions and enable key interactions between mentor and mentee.

6.4 Platform Governance

A mentoring program leveraging NMI would need impactful governance to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved. For good governance, the following criteria and questions would need to be addressed.

Appropriateness	• How do you ensure that the technology is compatible with the local and socio-economic conditions of the users? • How do you ensure that the platform interactions build on positive on-ground interactions and prevent harmful interactions?
Sustainability	• Who owns the platform, data, etc.? • Who makes decisions? • Who is accountable for the success or failure of the platform? • Who is supposed to deal (liable) with mishaps? • How do you develop a governance structure with different councils (e.g., design council, engineering council) focusing on different platform-level decisions?
Evolvability	• How do you enable multiple actors to contribute assets (e.g., data, software, content, etc.)? • How do you enable the discovery and consumption of services? • How do you enable the extension of the platform? • How do you decide the licensing of software, content and other assets to ensure continuous development?



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Annexure

1. [Structural Design for a Mentoring Program](#): a sample tool to consult while designing a mentoring program from scratch.
2. [Mentor Selection for a Mentoring Program](#): a sample tool to consult while designing a mentor-selection process for a mentoring program.



Structural Design

for a Mentoring Program



Objective: To create a structural design for a mentoring program

designed for:



**Program
Designer**



**Program
Manager**

There are four stages, each with different elements to consider, while designing a mentoring program.

1. Program Design and Planning

- Type of population to serve
- Modes of mentoring
- Mentor characteristics
- Program goals and expected outcomes for all stakeholders
- Frequency and timeline of mentoring interactions
- Length of a mentoring relationship
- Setting of the mentoring program (online, in-person, hybrid)?
- Program promotion
- Evaluation of program progress and success
- Communication between stakeholders

2. Program Management

- An advisory group
- A comprehensive system for managing program information
- A resource development plan that allows for diversified fundraising
- A system to monitor the program
- Strategies for staff development
- Strong pro-mentoring advocacy efforts
- Effective public relations and communications efforts

3. Program Operations

- Recruiting mentors, mentees, program staff
- Screening potential mentors and mentees.
- Providing orientation and training for mentors, mentees, and program staff.
- Matching mentors and mentees
- Bringing mentors and mentees together for activities and sessions that fall within established program parameters
- Supporting, supervising and monitoring mentoring relationships
- Recognising the contributions of all program participants
- Helping mentors and mentees reach closure

4. Program Evaluation

- A plan to measure program process accurately
- A process for measuring whether expected outcomes have occurred
- A process that reflects on evaluation findings and disseminates them to appropriate parties.

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Mentor Selection

for a Mentoring Program



Objective: To design and execute a screening process to select mentors for a mentoring program.

designed for:



**Program
Designer**



**Program
Manager**

There are certain characteristics that an ideal mentor possesses so that they and their mentees can reap the most benefit out of the relationship.

Essential skills



Experience



**Knowledge and
expertise**



**Attentiveness and
thoughtfulness**



**Inspirational and
catalysing**



Proactivity

Buildable skills



Reflection



Facilitation



**Willingness to
learn**



**Time management and
prioritisation**

Prospective mentors should be tested for the essential skills and characteristics using a screening process, which could include short questionnaires, case studies, textual or audio-visual reflection, etc.

The screening process should be designed keeping in mind the scale at the which the program needs to be executed. Depending on the resources available and the size of the applicant pool, a selection process may need to be a combination of technology assisted data-collection methods and in-person activities and interviews.

Mentor Selection

for a Mentoring Program



Assessment/application form



An initial application form should be used to collect information on demographics, previous experiences, evidences of expertise, etc. This form may be the only tool used to assess applicants (large-scale programs; low resources availability), or could be used in combination with an interview or a group discussion following initial assessment (small-scale programs; high resource availability).

Interview



An interview may help to understand the applicant more subjectively, and analyse certain skills that are hard to test for on an application form. It could consist of questions that test for the applicants' interactive attributes, such as attentiveness, proactivity, approach to problem solving, analytical reasoning, etc.

Group Discussion



In addition to learning about an applicant's conversational skills, a group discussion is helpful to understand their approach when working with an agenda. It may be helpful in identifying the applicant's approach to working with diverse perspectives and navigating complex problems in a team. A group discussion cannot be a screening process by itself, but may be used in combination with an interview or an application form.

Tools like online forms, associated database management systems, video conferencing tools, etc. can be used to host, assess, and analyse the applications. Here is an example of a [sample application](#) containing questions that could be used in any of the aforementioned formats.

The skills and characteristics that are not essential can be built through a mentor training program.

Mentor Selection

for a Mentoring Program

Sample Application Form



Demographics •Name •Contact Information (Phone/Address/Email) •Language Proficiency •Affiliated Institution (Name, City, State, Country)	Experience •Current Role/Designation •Experience working in the field •Experience working in the current role)
Knowledge and Expertise •Questionnaire based on the stipulated content of the mentoring program to test for proficiency •Evidence of past-experience in engaging with the content of the mentoring program - through teaching or learning •Relevant awards, honours, accomplishments in the field	Proactivity Essay/interview questions asking for articulation about why they want to be a mentor: ○What is their purpose of applying to the program? ○What will they bring to the program? ○How will they benefit from the program? ○How do they think the education system will benefit from the program?
Attentiveness and Thoughtfulness Case studies highlighting relevant problems intended to be solved through the mentoring program. The follow-up questions could be multiple-choice or subjective, in an application form or asked in-person, testing for their ability to: ○identify challenges, ○design appropriate support, ○frame suggestions and feedback, ○solve problems, ○understand different leadership styles, ○handle disagreement and inaction, and ○handle not knowing answers.	Inspirational and catalysing Video prompt/interview questions asking for articulation about how they inspire their team towards continuous learning and improvement. The response should be tested for the applicant's abilities in: ○Clear speech ○Appropriate use of body language ○Sufficient description answering the question ○Demonstrated reflective thinking ○Energised oration ○Inspiring storytelling