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Group Mentoring for Professional Development in Higher Education: An Analysis of two Case Studies and its Prospects in Bangladesh

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Abstract: *Mentoring is an effective medium to guide, support and facilitate the learning of an individual. Group mentoring, also known as "mentorship circles", is a mentoring process where a group of experienced personnel guides one or a group of apprentices for professional development. Like traditional mentoring, it is also a powerful tool for professional development. There are numerous examples of successful implementation of group mentoring in higher educational institutions all over the world. The higher educational institutions in Bangladesh require professionally skilled teaching staff but official mentoring programmes are absent. In this circumstance, group mentoring can be a possible way to transform higher education as it can train multiple persons at the same time with a limited number of mentors. Moreover, it is less time-consuming and costs less than other professional training or mentorship programmes. Considering all these things, this paper defines group mentoring, discusses its effectiveness and challenges with the examples of two case studies and shows how far higher educational institutions in Bangladesh can be benefitted by implementing it.*

Keywords: Mentoring, Group Mentoring, Mentoring Circles, Professional Development, Higher Education

1. Introduction

Higher educational institutions have numerous objectives and responsibilities. One of the objectives of higher education is to make people professionally skilled for numerous higher responsibilities (Monem & Muhammad, 2010). Likewise, higher educational institutions also require professionally skilled teaching staff. Higher education in Bangladesh is indeed transforming and advancing because of economic solvency and technological progress (Al-Zaman, 2020). Contrarily, the quality of education in Bangladesh has drawbacks in creating a strong human resource and evaluating the opportunities in society based on knowledge (Khan, Uddin, Rana, & Haque, 2014). From the professional perspective, in the higher educational institutions in Bangladesh, the quality of teaching staff is not up to the mark and the lack of infrastructure facilities hampers staff development (Monem & Muhammad, 2010). For all these reasons, it is now imperative to introduce something innovative that can improve the professional development of the teaching staff in the higher educational institutions in Bangladesh. Here, teachers' professional development refers to the activities and interactions which

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can increase their knowledge and skills as well as develop them personally, emotionally and socially (Desimone, 2009).

According to Goodyear (2006), when two or more individuals work together to develop the career and abilities of a single individual is called mentoring. Mentoring for professional development has been used since the mid-1980s. Different forms of mentoring have evolved since then. Through mentoring, one can help, guide, advise and support to facilitate the learning and development of another person (Aladejana, Aladejana, & Ehindero, 2006). There are numerous benefits of mentoring for professional purposes. Like all mentoring programmes, group mentoring also has many advantages in the professional circle. As a methodology, group mentoring utilizes more than one expert and learners in a group setting for individual development (Carvin, 2011). Furthermore, Group mentoring has become very successful in supporting new university faculty (Darwin & Palmer, 2009) as well as staff (McCormack & West, 2006).

Studies show the existence of mentoring-like activities such as advising, supervising and counselling in Bangladesh, but the official mentoring programme is absent, especially in the education sector (Naomee & Bayezid, 2016). For this, some reform measures are needed to develop pedagogical qualities. The group mentoring model can be applied in higher educational institutions in Bangladesh for overall professional development. Research has found that successful mentoring relationships can help individuals in professional development; increase career satisfaction, salaries, and influence in the organization; and decrease turnover rates (Goodyear, 2006). Such a mentoring programme can support and motivate existing faculty and newly appointed teachers and staff as it has emerged as the best practice model in the training and development of a profession (Emelo, 2011). Based on the above-mentioned facts this paper discusses the prospects of group mentoring in higher educational institutions, especially in the context of Bangladesh.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Mentoring and Professional Development

Professional development is essential for the growth of an individual as well as an organization. In education, professional development programs can make a huge change in the classroom, in teachers' attitudes and beliefs, and in students' learning (Guskey, 2002). Basically, professional development in pedagogy refers to specialized training and advanced professional learning. In this regard, Guskey (2002) points out that most professional development programmes for teachers fail because they do not care about teachers' motivation and the process. So, the organizers of professional development programmes should therefore be conscious of the reasons behind the failures of such programmes. Professional development programmes certainly contribute to better teaching-learning outcomes. It also improves teachers' learning and practice and this leads to the development of students' learning (Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, Mundry, Love, & Hewson, 2010). Moreover, research has shown that professional development contributes to developing active learning in terms of observation, practice, feedback, review, developing lessons etc. (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000). Holdsworth, Wyborn, Bekessy, and Thomas (2008) are also of the view that professional development is necessary for developing pedagogical content, curriculum

and learning outcomes. Apart from that, teachers need professional development to keep themselves updated with teaching methods. However, Hudson (2013) mentions that there is a lack of opportunity for teachers' professional development because of workload and cost. To solve the problem, mentoring can be a cost-effective way for professional development, which can contribute to the growth of both mentors and mentees (Hudson, 2013). Ultimately, it proves that students' proper learning depends on the professional growth of teachers. According to Gilles and Wilson (2004), mentoring can help professional development because through mentoring mentors can gain insights into teaching techniques and can also develop leadership capacity. According to Goodyear (2006), mentoring is a process whereby two or more individuals work together to develop the career and abilities of a single individual. Mentoring can be informal or formal, planned or unplanned as well as gender-based or cross-gendered (Aladejana, Aladejana, & Ehindero, 2006). In defining the term mentoring, Bozeman and Feeney (2007) have identified three major characteristics of mentoring. First, a mentor has relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience and the mentee does not have these characteristics. Second, mentoring refers to the transmission of knowledge and social and psychological support. Third, mentoring provides career development assistance. Overall, mentoring involves building an interpersonal relationship that fosters support between a mentor and mentee or protégé.

2.2 What is Group Mentoring?

Group mentoring is a mentoring process where a group of experienced personnel guide one or a group of novices in professional development. Group mentorship is also known as "mentorship circles" in which multiple learners and experts come together to discuss a variety of career development issues (Huizing, 2012). It can be a reciprocal process in which both mentor and mentee can learn from each other for professional development (Heikkinen, Jokinen, & Tynjälä, 2012). It is different from the traditional dyadic or one-to-one mentoring model though the basic objectives remain the same. As a methodology, group mentoring can develop an individual by using multiple experts and multiple learners in a similar setting (Carvin, 2011). Though a group of people work in a similar setting, learning is always individual. Huizing (2012) has identified four different types of group mentoring such as one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many and peer group mentoring. In one-to-many mentoring, one mentor facilitates the mentorship experience and in many-to-one, a group of mentors train an individual. Many-to-many is a team mentoring approach where a group of mentors guide a group of mentees. In peer group mentoring, each individual serves as both mentor and mentee (Kroll, 2016). In one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-one mentoring programmes there exist some problems like the mismatch between the mentee's needs and the mentor's approach and personal issues (Goodyear, 2006). These problems can be overcome through the group mentoring programme. The benefit is that in group mentoring mentees have a chance to develop relationships based on reciprocity, mutuality and trust (Murphy & Kram, 2014).

The distinction between a 'mentor' and a 'mentee' becomes fluid in group mentoring because both parties can share their experience, stories and also learn from one another (Oliveira, 2018). In other mentoring models, there are problems like a mismatch between mentees' needs and the mentor's approach and personal issues (Goodyear,

2006) and other mentoring programmes are costly and difficult to implement (Moss, Teshima, & Leszcz, 2008). For this, the group mentoring model is much better.

There are many examples of successful implementation of group mentoring. In New Zealand, a women's professional networking organization arranged group mentoring as a tool for building relationships and professional development (Mitchell, 1999). At the end of the session, those women found group mentoring beneficial and meaningful. A group of executive-level professional women in an American mid-west city who arranged group mentoring for professional development described the experience as "extremely interesting and stimulating," "truly warm and enriching," and "life-changing" (Kroll, 2015, p. 184). Levine, Hebert, and Wright's (2003) study on many-to-many mentoring shows that group mentoring provides experience for learning and practising skills and helps to overcome mentoring-related barriers.

2.3 Group Mentoring and Teachers' Professional Development.

Mentoring in a professional scenario generally means the relationship between junior and senior colleagues in an institution for the purpose of professional development. Huizing (2012) has shown that group mentoring is beneficial on personal and professional grounds. From a personal level, it motivates the mentees and makes them acquainted with the environment of the organization they are going to work for. From the professional point of view, the mentees get the opportunity to be professionally competent. In this way, both the organization and the mentees get benefitted. In their study Moss, Teshima, and Leszcz (2008) have found that a peer group model for mentoring junior faculty is easy to implement and an inexpensive model of mentoring. Their study conducted at the University of Toronto shows that group mentoring can encourage, support and provide feedback for junior faculty members for their professional development and personal goals. Apart from that, it is also helpful for teachers as they can gain psychological and interpersonal benefits. Group mentoring develops leadership skills (Chandler, 2005). Leadership skills can help teachers with personal and institutional development. As a leader, a teacher can guide and motivate his students as well as the teachers working under him/her.

Geeraerts, Tynjälä, Heikkinen, Markkanen, Pennanen, and Gijbels' (2015) research shows how group mentoring model has improved teachers' professional development in Finland. The research was carried out based on three basic forms of support: professional, personal and social. From a professional dimension group mentoring has the potential to develop teaching methods, provide new perspectives and create new pedagogical ideas. From a personal ground, it can motivate, give self-confidence and strengthen professional identity and from a social perspective it can improve collaborative skills and generate ideas for developing work community. Through group mentoring teachers can get new knowledge through collaboration and sharing of knowledge. In this way, group mentoring is related to social-constructivist theory. Moreover, another important aspect is the opportunity for reflection or the ability to see things from a broader perspective. In this respect Friedman and Wallace's (2006) case study also shows positive outcome of group mentoring in developing personal and professional needs.

According to Driscoll, Parkes, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill, and Pitts Bannister (2009) group mentoring is one type of journey for professional development where a mentee can collaborate according to his/her needs. That means it can develop a teacher's ability for cooperation. By sharing experience teachers can improve their knowledge and experience. In a group mentoring programme, members meet on a regular basis and discuss the topics relevant to their professional development (Goodyear, 2006). In this way, mentees can suit their needs and they can build trust among them. For this, group mentoring has been able to shift its focus because it is not only limited to senior professionals advising junior professionals to gain assistance rather the guiding principle of group mentoring is mutual understanding and reciprocity.

2.4 Effectiveness and Challenges of Group Mentoring.

Group mentoring has been used for a long time for its significant role in individual growth, organizational development and community progress (Kroll, 2016). For various reasons, it has proved to be better than a dyadic mentoring process because group mentoring has the capacity to disseminate the wisdom and experience of multiple people in the same setting (Huizing, 2012). Studies have found several benefits of group mentoring like it can develop an understanding of self, others and the environment, developing connectivity, access to networks, increasing confidence and commitment, generating new ideas etc. (Kroll, 2016). However, one of the problems of group mentoring is that sometimes the level of commitment and expectation disrupts the harmony of group mentoring and power differences, personality clashes and exploitation may pose a threat to group mentoring (Moss, Teshima, & Leszcz, 2008). To overcome the problems certain aspects must be considered like the group demographics, cost, focus group discussion etc. (Moss, Teshima, & Leszcz, 2008). The positive sides of group mentoring can be a great advantage in education, especially for teachers and learners. Moss, Teshima, and Leszcz (2008) have found that mentorship does not only mean transferring knowledge and skills but also supporting, sponsoring, giving constructive feedback, role model etc. These can be applied by a teacher for his/her professional development as well as organizational development e.g. a teacher can have an idea about how to motivate his/her students, how to give feedback etc.

Mitchell (1999) has identified some problems of group mentoring like the availability of space and time. Finding the right space and managing time may be a problem for many. On the contrary, based on a peer group mentoring model for junior faculty members in educational institutions Moss, Teshima, and Leszcz (2008) have identified a number of benefits such as, it is feasible to implement, acceptable to all, relatively low cost, and participants' knowledge, interpersonal and psychological gains. In group mentoring new knowledge and skills are developed through participants' collaboration and sharing of collective knowledge. On the other hand, Mitchell (1999) has identified problems regarding the lack of confidentiality in group mentoring. People attending the programme especially some mentors and mentees may feel uncomfortable because of confidentiality concerns. However, Limbert (1995) has mentioned several advantages against those allegations such as in group mentoring participants can share knowledge, broaden their vision, develop team spirit, create career networks and help with personal development. Despite these benefits, Oliveira (2018) has found several negative sides of group mentoring. Compared to one-to-one mentoring, in group mentoring mentees have the least opportunity to receive personalized guidance. Sometimes for lack of time

topics are covered quickly, and mentees may not understand the topic. Sometimes timing poses a problem for the participants because it is difficult to match a common time for everyone. To overcome the disadvantages, Kaye and Jacobson (1996) propose two ways to connect group mentoring to career development. Firstly, creating learning assignments for new professional skills and secondly, gaining management support. Group mentoring has been successful in incorporating individuals in collaborative work, and creating opportunities to develop an understanding of self, others, and environment (Driscoll et al., 2009). Darwin and Palmer (2009) have also found the effectiveness of group mentoring as it helps individuals to join networks, improve connectivity, reduce feelings of isolation and increase confidence and commitment.

3. Group Mentoring: Case Studies

3.1 Case Study 1: Mentoring Circles in Higher Education (Darwin & Palmer, 2006)

In higher education, mentoring can be helpful for the professional and personal growth of faculty (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2006). For this, many higher education institutions support formal mentoring programs (Gardiner, 2005). Darwin and Palmer (2006) have discussed a group mentoring model in their case study titled 'Mentoring circles in higher education'. The objective of their study was to find the benefits of group mentoring for academics at the University of Adelaide, Australia and to assist new faculty. The authors have used the term 'mentoring circle' in the title as a synonym for group mentoring as Huizing (2012) has said that group mentoring is also known as 'mentorship circle'.

The programme was initiated in 2006 and twenty persons were involved. Three groups were formed, and each member was supposed to meet eight times for two hours for six months. Participants in each group consisted of experienced and new faculty members from the Health Science, Law and Commerce Faculties. Each group had an outside facilitator who maintained the focus of the group and organized the programme. One of the participants acted as the coordinator. In group one, there were six staff from the Law and Commerce Faculties and two experienced professors acted as mentors. In group two there were six women and two men, but one left the programme mid-way. Though there were junior and senior members, no one acted as a mentor in this group and the coordinator was from outside the group. Group three consisted of six staff from Health Science. This group consisted of junior researchers and clinicians and experienced senior members of the staff. Senior members acted as mentors and one participant acted as coordinator.

At the very beginning of the programme, the participants and the mentors set the expectations, guidelines, goals, roles and responsibilities. They chose a topic-based learning approach. Generally, participants started the topics including career, leadership and personal issues. As part of the programme, twenty academics were supposed to meet eight times for six months. They met every three weeks for two hours. After the first few sessions, the participants became more interested in asserting themselves and becoming part of the group. The participants and mentors discussed career, collaboration, life/work balance and mentoring. At the end of the programme participants completed a survey on its influence upon them. To discuss the survey

results a focus group discussion was also arranged to analyse the programmes' effectiveness.

When the mentoring ended, the participants found that interaction with others and sharing of experiences were the two largest benefits. The participants also stressed that their success depends on gaining new skills, establishing new relationships and meeting career or institutional goals. This supports the studies of Kram (2004) and Limbert (1995) that individuals learn better when they develop good relationships with the people around them. After six months when the programme came to an end, two circles were able to achieve their target and one circle could not because of the lack of cooperation among the members. Group one and two decided that they would meet but less frequently. Motivation for joining the programme was an important issue because the success of the programme depends much on it. Time management is a crucial factor here as participants must feel reasonable with the allocated time. Studies show that the shortage of time to meet the mentor is a serious problem (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Results of the survey carried out at the end of the programme showed that participants willingly joined the programme. From the responses given by the participants three major themes came out. Firstly, group mentoring developed participants' interest in developing skills. Secondly, participants desire to get benefit from the experience of others. Thirdly, participants' and mentors' interest to improve the method of mentoring.

During the focus group discussion, it was found that group discussion can be a valid method for professional development at the University. Time is an important factor here because it is difficult to schedule a mentoring programme. That is why participants said that arranging meetings once a month is convenient for all. Focus group discussion also found that a minimum of eight and a maximum of thirteen members are perfect for group mentoring activities. Moreover, mentoring groups should be cross-disciplinary in nature. In general, the group mentoring went well at the University of Adelaide. Group mentoring has also been used in many Australian universities with considerable success (West, 2004). Participants found several benefits like having different viewpoints, learning and hearing opinions from the seniors and meeting new people (Darwin & Palmer, 2006). Another benefit of group mentoring is that participants do not feel isolated. In this way, group mentoring can change workplace cultures. The authors found that different factors can influence the success of a mentoring programme like- people's devotion, privacy, understanding and voluntary attendance (Darwin & Palmer, 2006). Studies (Burke & McKeen, 1997) show that career development is one of the main functions of mentoring while it also motivates the participants to join the programme. Above all, interaction with others and sharing of experiences are two important benefits of mentoring circles.

3.2 Case Study 2: Facilitated Group Mentoring Develops Key Career Competencies for University Women: A Case Study (McCormack & West, 2006)

It has been recognized that there exists a link between mentoring practices and career development (Gibson, 2004). Higgins and Kram (2001) also summarised the key career-related benefits of mentoring like career development, promotion, career satisfaction, increase of competence etc. McCormack and West (2006) in a study have shown that mentoring-related advantages are not always helpful for women and in most

cases they are gender biased. Especially, Mavin (2001) has identified that the one-to-one mentoring method has a male pattern and women's careers are not related to it. Researchers have also discussed the use of group mentoring models instead of one-to-one mentoring (Mitchell, 1999; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Carvin, 2011; Emelo, 2011; Huizing, 2012). The study of McCormack and West (2006) draws on the experience of a mentoring program at the University of Canberra, Australia. The objective of this programme was to find out how group mentoring can develop competencies for careers for university women. Though the programme was arranged only for female participants, the framework for professional development in this study can be applicable to men's group mentoring programmes too.

McCormack and West (2006) in their study titled "Facilitated Group Mentoring Develops Key Career Competencies for University Women: A Case Study" have discussed a group mentoring programme at the University of Canberra in Australia. This group mentoring programme was meant only for females because of the unavailability of career and professional development opportunities for women in higher education institutions (McCormack and West, 2006). The programme started in 1999. The programme aimed to develop knowledge, skills, professional autonomy, confidence and professional network among the academic staff in the university. There were a total of 8-10 women from academic and general and each group was co-facilitated by two women, one from academic staff and the other from general staff.

Before the main programme, a training programme was arranged by the facilitators for three months. Previous years' experienced facilitators also shared their experience during the training programme. The facilitators helped the group members to identify their needs and required activities for fulfilling those needs. The programme began with workshops. The focus of the workshops was to improve group dynamics, give motivation, and identify learning objectives. Apart from the workshop, there was a retreat for two days to provide assistance. Each group met fortnightly for three hours. An additional workshop was also held after six months and there was also a year-end celebration. This group mentoring programme for women was operational for five years (1999 to 2003). During this period 122 women (103 participants, 19 facilitators) joined the program. Participants completed questionnaires three times each year- after the workshop, after the mid-program workshop, and after the programme ended. Apart from this, two independent evaluators conducted programme evaluations. The first evaluator conducted a focus group discussion with the participants after the end of the programme and the second collected participants' experience through in-depth interviews.

After the successful group mentoring programme, it was seen that among 103 participants 83 successfully completed the programme. 20 participants could not complete it for various reasons. The outcome of the women's group mentoring programme came from four parts of professional development such as knowledge and skills, self-sufficiency and confidence, networks, and career development. These four aspects of group mentoring comply with the view of Limbert (1995). Personal satisfaction is also another benefit of the programme (Emelo, 2011). Thematic analysis of the outcomes of the programme showed that participants' professional knowledge and understanding increased, they acquired knowledge and skills and had a sense of belongingness, confidence and self-efficacy. So, it was proved that the group mentoring

programme was a success in developing knowledge and skills, creating networks and giving confidence. Participants' career enhancement means promotion to a higher salary level, moving to a better job area, ensuring permanent employment and gaining formal qualifications. Most of the women (70%) got career-related benefits. This is significant from the two perspectives. Firstly, these women can be role models for others and can act as mentors in future. Secondly, it is also beneficial for the university as it has more knowledgeable and experienced staff. Participants' programme experience can be described by three ways of knowing- why, how, and whom (Arthur, Defillippi, & Lindsay, 2001). 'Knowing why' refers to participants' values, beliefs, motivation and passion. These three ways refer to the theoretical, practical and strategic knowledge which are necessary to facilitate career development. These are the ways an individual can find the reason for doing something. 'Knowing how' means skills and expertise participants can have during the programme and 'knowing whom' denotes building relationships through networking activities (de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004). In this programme participants main career-related capabilities increased in an interdependent manner as participants' interconnectedness helped to achieve their goal. Overall, the group mentoring programme shows that more than one mentor is significant for career success (McCormack & West, 2006).

4. Discussion

4.1 Implementing Group Mentoring in the Context of Bangladesh

Group mentoring for professional development has several advantages e.g. personal and professional growth, cooperation and emancipation, and networking (Langelotz, 2013). Group mentoring is significant for any organization to make its employees professionally and personally confident. Mentoring programmes are very rare in the sphere of the higher education sector in Bangladesh (Naomee & Bayezid, 2016). Group mentoring can be more suited in the context of Bangladesh because it can train multiple mentees at a time and it costs less than one-to-one mentoring. Higher educational institutions do not provide mentoring benefits to their faculty and staff. Every year a number of new employees join these institutions. For proper acceleration of the academic and administrative jobs, newly appointed teachers and staff need to be trained. For this purpose, a group mentoring programme is best suited and if it is properly implemented education sector will benefit in numerous ways.

Group mentoring can benefit both the mentor and mentee, as well as the organization. It can contribute to creating professionally developed individuals. To maintain the quality of education and administration an institution needs expertise. Group mentoring is suitable because it develops both personal and leadership skills (Limbert, 1995; Chandler, 2005). Group mentoring can reduce the cost of training newly appointed employees and it is a huge benefit (Teshima & Leszcz, 2008). One-to-one mentoring is costly because a lot of people are involved separately. This benefit of group mentoring can reduce expenditure. This practice will accelerate the motivation of both mentor and mentee and improve morale and performance. Mentors get the opportunity to make productive use of their knowledge, skills and experience and help newly appointed teachers (Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1994). Through the group mentoring process, mentees will feel more attached to the organization and it will make them loyal to the job and accountable for what they will do. A culture of personal and professional growth will be increased as group mentoring can develop networking among the

mentees (de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004). Also, research has shown that mentoring can increase career satisfaction and decrease turnover rates (Goodyear, 2006). The mentoring programme will give the mentees a positive impression of the institutions and the employees will not switch jobs. Group mentoring develops an individual's self-esteem (Driscoll et al., 2009) and because of this reason both mentors and mentees will be motivated, and they will contribute to the overall development of the institution. Apart from these, personal relations among the mentees will result in the creation of a group network. Networking can create informal opportunities for professional development.

4.2 Ways to Implement Group Mentoring

Lumpkin (2011) has discussed four stages of implementing effective mentoring: planning, designing, implementation and evaluation. The implementation of group mentoring will require academic and administrative support as Kaye and Jacobson (1996) propose that the connection of group mentoring to job requirements needs management support. The authority must study the feasibility of implementing group mentoring. To make the group mentoring programme a success the authority can do a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. SWOT analysis is used to frame a strategy by using organizational knowledge (Sammut-Bonnici & Galea, 2015). For group mentoring the college has to find its internal and external strengths and weaknesses like financial resources, infrastructure, human resources, space and time, sociocultural factors, technology, gender, environmental issues and most importantly ethical issues. Both mentors and mentees must be motivated to join the programme because the success of the programme mostly depends on it (Darwin & Palmer, 2006). The programme must be arranged by keeping Arthur, Defillippi, and Lindsay's (2001) idea of knowing- why, how and whom in mind. They will act as guidelines for participants' motivation, skill and collaborative abilities.

Group mentoring will be arranged on the basis of two dimensions- professional and personal. Professionally the teachers get new pedagogical ideas and their teaching method will be developed personally, they will be motivated and increase collaborative and networking skills. An advisory committee should be made for the programme so that they can study the relevant literature, compile programme resources and provide materials. While designing the programme, the purpose of the programme and clarity of focus are to be considered (Lumpkin, 2011). The number of mentors and mentees, duration of the programme and probable results must also be considered early (Darwin & Palmer, 2006; McCormack & West, 2006). A space must be selected for mentor-mentee face-to-face meetings and a schedule should also be made as Mitchell (1999) has identified space and time as a major problem in group mentoring. When a new group of teachers will be appointed, groups will be created based on the number of teachers. Two or three mentors will be selected from the senior teaching staff. Here many-to-many mentoring methods will be applied so that mentees can get diverse perspectives in learning. Mentors should be selected carefully because an important feature of mentoring is the match between mentor and mentee (Lumpkin, 2011). Mentors will be trained beforehand, and they will be provided instructions and the schedule. Six-month programme can be arranged for a better outcome. Topic-based learning approaches like career, leadership and personal issues should be addressed at the very beginning (Darwin & Palmer, 2006). Before the commencement of the main

programme, an orientation programme will be arranged so that both parties can have an overall idea about themselves and the objective of the programme (McCormack and West, 2006). Mentors and mentees will meet two times per month. They will meet on a regular basis according to the schedule to discuss topics relevant to professional development (Goodyear, 2006). group members' gender and subject should be considered in the selection process as studies have found that cross-gendered and cross-disciplinary groups are better (Darwin & Palmer, 2006). Both mentors and mentees have to play an active role for the benefit of both parties. Mentors will do multiple tasks as advocated by Lumpkin (2011) such as socialising in an academic environment, helping them reduce feelings of isolation, providing emotional support, facilitating networking, and providing professional and role-specific assistance. Mentees' professional development will contribute to developing active learning (Birman, Desimone, Porter & Garet, 2000) as group mentoring has the potential to develop teaching methods, provide new perspectives and create new pedagogical ideas. Apart from that, mentees can act as role models for the new faculty next time.

At the end of the mentoring programme, the mentees have to fill out a questionnaire about their experience. Based on the results of the questionnaire a focus group discussion can be arranged to discuss the issues like the positive side of the programme as well as the challenges and how to overcome them. Questionnaires and focus group discussions will help the authority to arrange such programmes in a better way next time.

4.3 Potential Challenges

Though the group mentoring programme in higher educational institutions in Bangladesh may have all the academic and administrative support, still there may be some problems. One of the major issues may be scheduling problems (Mitchell, 1999). Because of the mentor and mentees' busy schedules, it may be difficult to match a time when they can meet simultaneously. But this problem can be avoided if the advisory committee responsible for the programme take measures ahead. Matching mentor and mentee's time is an important issue and must be considered early. Like time matching, matching of personality can also pose a threat. It can lead to a personality conflict. Matching the personality of both parties is an important feature of a mentoring programme. Contrarily, Boyle and Boice (1998) have argued that what mentors and mentees do is more important than personality matching. Again, to overcome this problem the authority must understand the mentality of the mentees and appoint mentors carefully. Covering the topics quickly or very slowly can also be a problem. In this regard, mentors must be careful about the time and topics they have to cover.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Mentoring is a process to guide, support and facilitate the learning of an individual. A successful mentoring programme influences the professional development of the mentees in many ways. Though group mentoring is a more effective medium for its multiple benefits, proper implementation of mentoring programmes in higher educational institutes requires administrator, faculty and stakeholders' support. Moreover, the implementation of a mentoring programme has a procedure to follow and it also involves a lot of activities. Its success depends on the spontaneous

participation of both mentors and mentees. An important advantage of group mentoring in this respect is its ability to provide opportunities for reflection.

In Bangladesh, group mentoring can be a possible way to transform higher education as it can train multiple persons at the same time with a limited number of mentors. However, implementing group mentoring in the context of Bangladesh requires groundwork. Authorities concerned and academics should take the initiative. Teachers who will act as mentors must be trained. Most importantly awareness should be raised about the positive outcomes of group mentoring. For this, educational institutes should make their own policy and also a national policy for mentoring should be structured. In fact, the success of the mentoring programme results from the combined effort of all the parties involved.

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