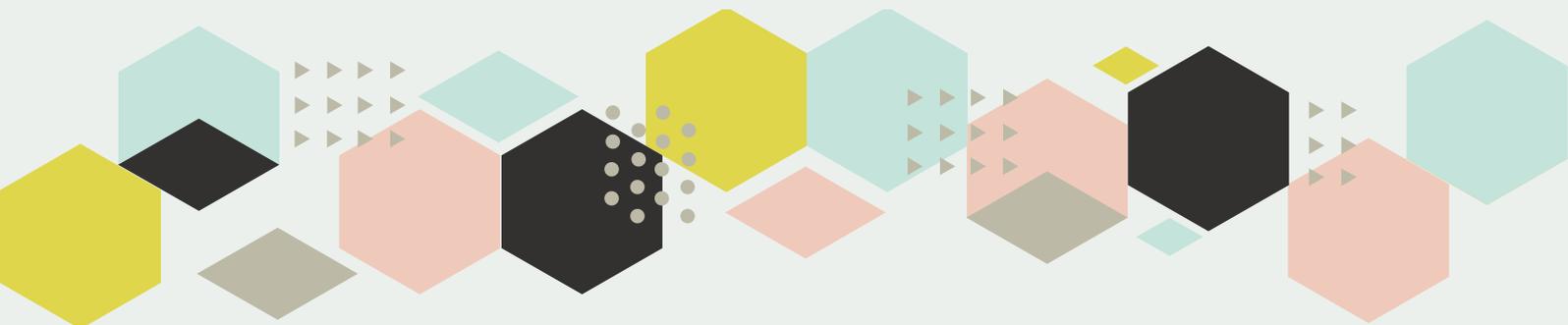


Super Mentor

Program pilot

*A building block of
leadership*



"When in doubt, ask."

Whom do we usually ask questions in case of doubt or whom do we go to guidance when we seem lost? In different situations we have different mentors who guide us, provide us answers, sometimes push us and at times challenge us to do better.

In the words of Rita F. Pierson, a professional educator and counsellor, *"every child deserves a champion - an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be."* Same applies to adults as well, we all **need** mentors at different stages of life.

The origin of "Mentor" comes straight out of Greek Mythology and the story suggests the meaning to be "wise and trusted teacher", someone who is more knowledgeable and experienced than the person receiving the guidance.

The Beginning

In education sector too, stakeholders play the role of mentor or mentee depending on the need. Similar such relation exists between two primary stakeholders in the school i.e teachers and school leaders (principals/HMs). Mantra4change engages with state education departments to develop the capacity of system leaders, where states have already identified cadre of mentors such as block mentors, district mentors, cluster resource center coordinators and master resource persons.

And through our experiences in working with the states, one of the questions that kept coming back to us was - what does effective mentoring look like? And how might that be enabled at scale?

Keeping this in mind, team at Mantra4change conceptualized the pilot for Super Mentor Program.

This is done as a solution to the bigger problem "if mentorship is an existing practice that is used widely, how might we enable mentoring at scale?"

A comprehensive 10 day capacity building program for mentors was designed and through a series of design conversations, we reached at two prominent questions -

- what exists in the system that can be leveraged?
- What new processes for mentoring need to be created?

You can watch the [testimonial video](#) that summarizes the 10 days journey led by the already existing mentors.

Below you can find the poster circulated to invite mentors from across the country.



SUPER-MENTORS PROGRAM

Listen to expert speaker from Azim Premji Foundation

SIGN UP before **5th June, 2021**

- Zoom Sessions
- 2Hrs x 10 days
- 21st June - 2nd July 2021
- Access to fun resources

Who can apply? HMs, BMs, CRCCs or other mentors across India with proficiency in Hindi

Sign up at - <https://bit.ly/10DaysOfLearningFu>
More details to follow soon!

The mentors were invited from across India, invitation poster created by Mantra4Change

10 DAY PROGRESSION

WEEK 1	
MONDAY 21ST JUNE	Importance of mentoring- Zoom 3.30 PM to 5.30 PM
TUESDAY 22ND JUNE	Modes of mentoring Self-learning*
WEDNESDAY 23RD JUNE	Modes of mentoring Zoom 3.30 PM to 5.30 PM
THURSDAY 24TH JUNE	Discussion circles Self-learning*
FRIDAY 25TH JUNE	Discussion circles Zoom 3.30 PM to 5.30 PM

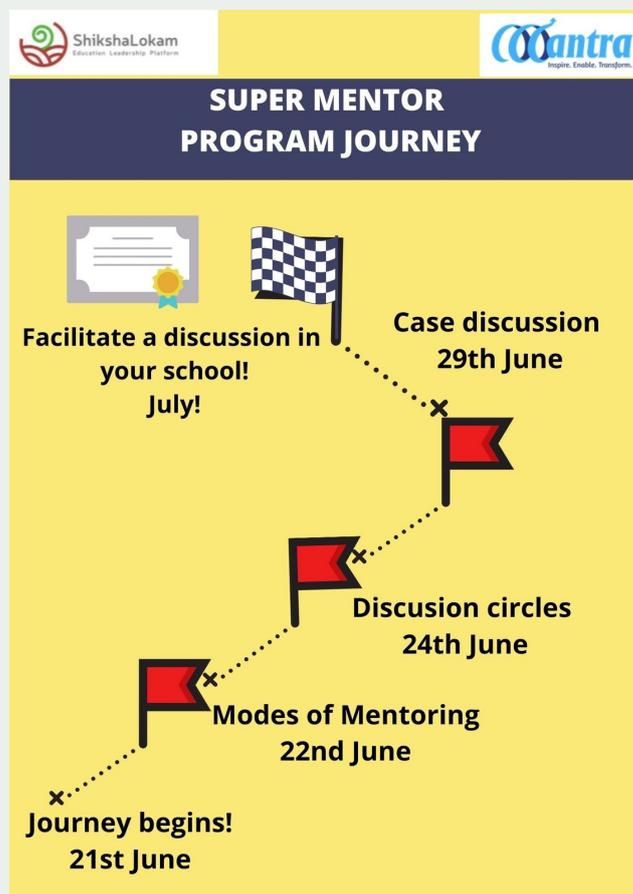
WEEK 2	
MONDAY 28TH JUNE	Let us practice facilitation! Zoom 3.30 PM to 5.30 PM
TUESDAY 29TH JUNE	Case based discussion Self-learning*
WEDNESDAY 30TH JUNE	Case based discussion Zoom 3.30 PM to 5.30 PM
THURSDAY 1ST JULY	Designing session plans Self-learning*
FRIDAY 2ND JULY	Let us practice facilitation Zoom 3.30 PM to 5.30 PM

*For Self-learning, we will share videos and activities that you can do at your own time. There will not be a Zoom call on these days.

Sneak peek into progression for 10 days program

Building Leadership

13 school leaders from 6 private schools in Bangalore became part of the journey and experienced the program. The sessions under this pilot program majorly covered different aspects of mentoring like facilitation of discussion, case based discussion, feedback cycles, session planning etc. which is beneficial for school leaders as mentors given their role revolves around these.



Journey map created for 10 days

Apart from sessions, the program also aimed at defining what mentorship looks like and introduction / reinforcement of usage of significant tools like Google meet, Quora, Zoom break out rooms, Google jam board etc. which is a *must know* in the current scenario.

The program was designed to provide the experience of 'learning by doing' to the mentors. The group collectively took up **7 action projects** and **3 of the mentors facilitated** different sessions for the group.



Mentors led sessions

In the words of one of the participants, *"although I have more than 6 years of experience of being a mentor for the teachers of my school, I found these strategies very helpful. I am also planning to use them in my staff meeting. Strategies like small group discussion and ice-breaking sessions can make the meetings vibrant."*

Another participant, who had never been a mentor before, shares, *"I have only worked as a teacher, but small activities that I learnt through this program can easily be translated to my classroom like appreciating children for answering and encouraging them to try."*

So, who is an effective mentor? Why do we need effective mentors? What strategies should they use to be an effective mentor?

Ideal Mentor

Moor et al. (2005, in Hobson et al. 2009) suggested (a) mentoring leads to increased collaboration among staff members, (b) there is a continuous culture of professional development and support within school. An ideal mentor-mentee relationship is a two way process, as much as the former guides the latter, mentee can also provide feedback to mentors on their guidance, and shape the journey together. Further, a mentor is expected not only to address their mentees' expectations, but also organization's expectations. Mentors are expected to fulfill not only professional or developmental needs of mentees but also the institutional expectations (Randall & Thornton 2001).

These research definitely indicate one thing, the role of mentors is much more than it is perceived to be.

Hence, the preparation and training of mentors is as important as mentoring the mentee. It is often believed- *the trainer is effective only if they have had the right training too*

Imagine a state with above 4 lakh teachers. Since mentoring is a crucial aspect of school leadership, to navigate through challenges like remote or blended learning, high drop-out rates, and learning loss; school heads need the capability, resources and support to mentor the teachers.

The school heads, on one hand, get the training from state or center on how to mentor the teachers, which is important for them but given the complexity of problems that they deal with, those trainings also require contextualized solutions for the school heads. That's what an ideal mentorship in such broad spectrum of problems is.

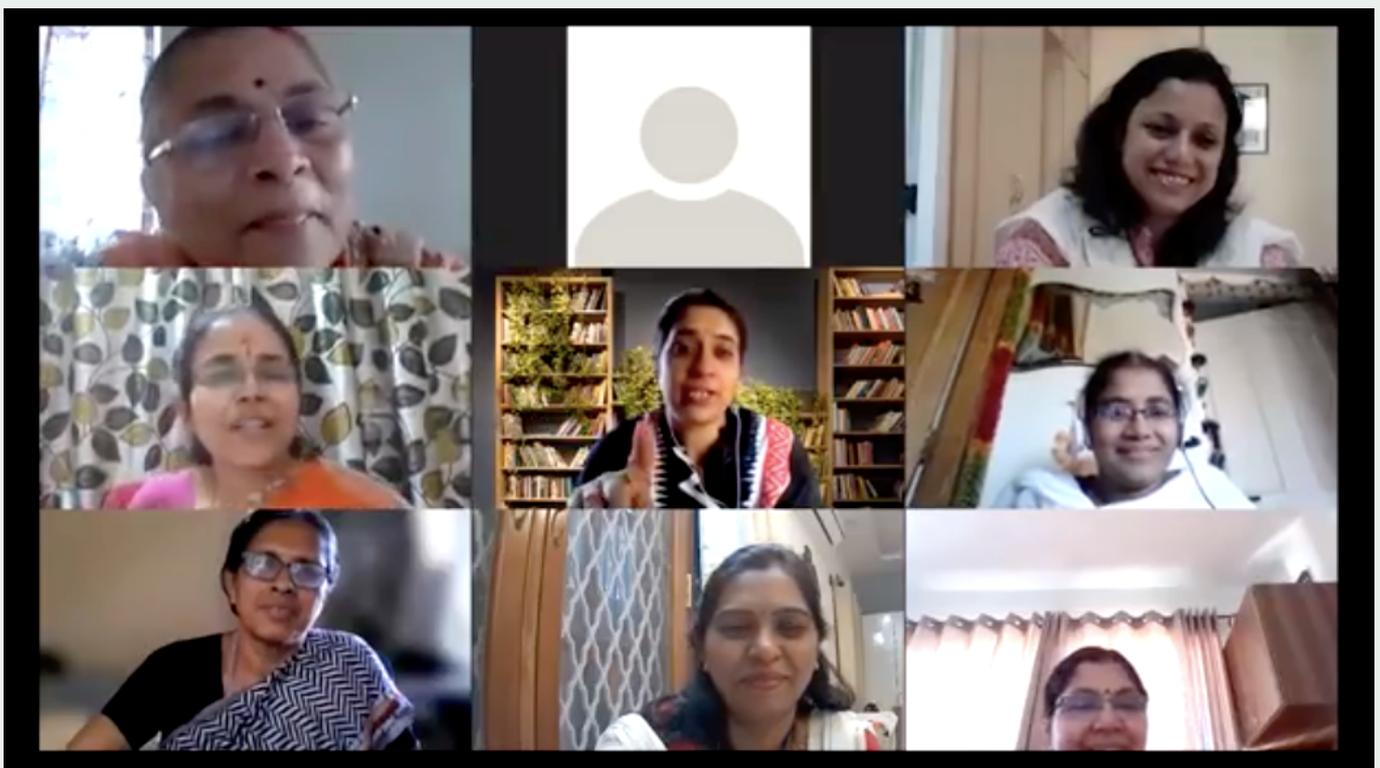
Keeping these challenges in mind, the **4 Mentoring Modes** based on different needs of mentees and situations faced by them, is developed. These modes are scalable.

Before we move ahead with them, let's think of several situations where we may need to use one of these modes. Imagine a school with one school head and 25 teachers. The school head acts as the mentor of the teachers and need to solve issue of documentation which is faced by 90% of the teachers of the school. ***How would the school head mentor these teachers?***

Let's look at other scenario. A new policy has come out and all the school heads need some clarity from cluster resource coordinator (CRC), on it. ***What would you suggest the CRC to do in order to mentor these school heads in the most effective way?***

Different Modes Of Mentoring

- **Discussion Circle** - A discussion circle focuses on facilitating a space on a topic for the participants to build on their experiences and to develop a deep understanding of the topic. Group comes together and discusses policy or changes in the scheme of the government or concepts, good practices related to education and leadership. This space can also be facilitated by any expert. This can be done quarterly or based on the need of the mentee.



- **Case based discussions** - Such discussion spaces are meant to brainstorm on a problem that is being faced by multiple mentees and identify solutions using the discussion space itself.



- **One on one mentoring** - This is the most focused discussion between mentor and mentee and it's also a knowledge sharing conversation that participants can have one-on-one, on a topic of their choice.

- **Peer-learning session** - Like the name suggests, this space could be termed as "all teach, all learn". PLCs (peer learning circles) or sessions are used for best practices sharing or learning something from the peers if they have developed expertise in a particular topic.

If you delve deep into these modes and go back to the scenarios shared above, you'd find that there are different ways of mentoring other than one-on-one mentoring.

"There's a difference between scaling what works, and building what works at scale."

The mentor program pilot is an attempt to build the program at scale. From mentoring one mentee to enabling mentoring for 4 lakh teachers, the core of the design, or the scalable 'fractal' remains same - allowing for contextualization and implementation at scale.

The 'Want' or The 'Need'?

NEP 2020 has put emphasis on mentorship. ***The ECCE training of Anganwadi workers/teachers will be mentored by the Cluster Resource Centers of the School Education Department which shall hold at least one monthly contact class for continuous assessment.***

Further it talks about mentoring teachers, ***teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, the formation of dispositions and values, and the development of practice under the best mentors.***

One of the recommendations of National Education Policy (NEP 2020) is to develop a system of mentorship by experienced, distinguished and retired faculty. (Mentorship Guidelines by University Grant Commission . 2021).

Learning and Insights

While we realize that mentoring (at every level) is the need of the hour, let's look at the learning and insights -

- **A collaborative process** - Mentoring is a collaborative process. The mentor does not need to solely guide all the mentees but can connect them to right expert, their own peers or any other guide who can coach them. The Peer learning session mode could be an useful approach to guide the mentees.
- **Mentor as the role model** - It is a must that mentors are able to demonstrate the competencies that they want to build in their mentees like providing constructive feedback, holding difficult conversations, creating safe spaces for the mentees, probing, using wait time and including data (need-based) in the discussion.

- **Mentoring program as equal responsibility**
The mentor is neither a supervisor nor an evaluator, but a guide who supports and guides mentees in overcoming challenges and achieving different goals. Hence, it is imperative that they both be on equal footing. While working on scale, it is crucial that they hold each other accountable.
- **A smooth experience** - While the Mentor program pilot ended in 10 days, the participants (most of them are already mentors), expressed a time crunch due to school work and said they could spare time for one session a week. It is important to make any type of mentoring program a comfortable challenge for them and doable, both in terms of ability and in terms of time, rather than a forced learning or training.

While it sounds simple to talk about mentoring program, it is definitely not easy and has multi layered aspects attached to it. More than everything, it is based on mutual trust and compatibility between both the parties - mentor and mentee.

So what's your experience been? Has it been a need or a want? If you have ever experienced being mentored or have mentored someone, do share your experience and learning with us.