

other teachers and students expressed admiration and recognised the work of the generalist teachers who were introducing English into their classrooms.

### Conclusion

This project has had a profoundly positive impact on teachers, students and the school community. It has empowered teachers, whose self-esteem and confidence has increased. Students were also empowered, as they were not only learning something new but also something useful. The project has also involved parents who cooperated with the creation of teaching resources.

### Continuation of the teaching of English during the pandemic

ELT Consultants have been the British Council, Venezuela's, consultants, supporting the production of teacher training and classroom materials since 2013 (Arnold & Gregson, 2019). During the pandemic, both online and offline platforms were commissioned for the teacher training and classroom materials, and the development of stories for radio programmes (Lopez de D'Amico & Hutchinson, 2021).

Link to presentation recording: <https://youtu.be/1ZFjeCb6jTg>

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## 1.6 Mentoring teacher research

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### Why this topic?

Teacher research (research done by teachers into issues of importance in their work) can have a long-lasting positive impact on teachers and learners. Quite a few resources on classroom-based research are nowadays available (e.g. Rebolledo et al., 2016; Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). However, there is a lack of guidance on how to *support* teacher research, particularly for prospective mentors. Such guidance is needed because teacher research mentoring can help teachers get started and can maintain

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their motivation, thus spreading the benefits of teacher research. Yet, it does not generally occur, without training and support.

### What is mentoring?

Mentoring involves 'sharing knowledge, skills and experience in order to encourage and empower another person ... enhancing teachers' autonomy to develop for themselves, increasing their ability and willingness to take control of their own learning rather than judging or directly advising them or telling them all the answers' (Smith, 2020, p. 14).

### When is mentoring useful for teacher researchers?

Experience gained on the British Council Action Research Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) in India and Nepal (2017–20) showed that the following were particularly necessary but challenging for prospective mentors of teacher research:

- helping teachers to select a topic;
- guiding teachers to develop research questions;
- preparing teachers to collect data;
- guiding teachers to analyse and interpret data;
- supporting teachers to plan and evaluate change; and
- helping teachers to share and reflect on their research.

Based on ARMS experience, a freely downloadable handbook was developed for teacher research mentors worldwide (Smith, 2020), ideas from which were shared during the workshop.

### Helping teachers to select a topic and develop research questions

Through dialogue, a teacher can be helped to identify recent successes or problems, and to select one issue which is the most interesting, important, and beneficial and practicable to explore. The mentor can then probe further with questions like these:

- *What were the signs of your success or problem?*
- *What were the reasons for it?*

At some points, a mentor may need to challenge assumptions, by asking, for example, 'Are you sure?' or 'Why do you think [X]?' When a teacher expresses uncertainty, for example by saying 'I think [Y]' but with no actual evidence, the mentor can suggest converting the uncertainty into an exploratory research question (see Smith, 2020, chapters 7 and 8). The final choice of research focus will be the teacher's, however, in response to a mentoring question like the following:

- *What do you want to explore further, to understand your success/problem more deeply?*

### Preparing teachers to collect, analyse and interpret data

Once a teacher has clear research questions in mind, a mentor can usefully help them identify the kinds of data they need, guiding them, also, to integrate data collection into everyday teaching (see Figure 1.6.1).

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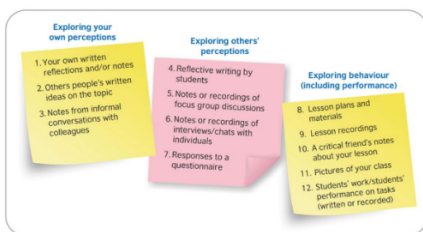


Figure 1.6.1: Feasible data for teacher research (source: Smith & Rebolledo, 2018, p. 50)

For exploring students' perceptions, elicited reflective writing can, for example, be very informative. Teachers can be shown how to group different answers thematically by using keywords, as in the following example of student reflections relating to 'What leads to loss of concentration, according to students?':

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1 Other students talking too much       | [other students' behaviour]. |
| 2 The teacher talking for too long      | [teacher lecturing].         |
| 3 When other students misbehave         | [other students' behaviour]. |
| 4 There's no space for asking questions | [teacher lecturing].         |

Through further dialogue, a mentor can help the teacher interpret findings and decide whether further exploration or a change in teaching behaviour is needed. In this case, for example, the teacher could be guided to make a simple questionnaire using students' statements as items, to see if these are idiosyncratic or commonly held opinions. Discussion could then focus on how to reduce teacher talking time or reduce disruptive behaviour, if these are generally perceived to be problems.

### Helping teachers to share and reflect on their research

Teachers can be shown how to share their research via means other than a formal written report, for example via oral presentation to students or teachers, at a specially organised event, a conference, or online (e.g. via webinar or uploaded recording). Whether written or oral, an exploratory action research report may need to include the following (see Smith, 2020, chapter 12):

- context description;
- topic/issue and how it arose;
- research questions;
- types of data;
- findings;
- description of new actions;
- evaluation of effects; and
- overall reflections.

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### Follow-up

I ended by inviting participants to join a developing international teacher research mentoring community (via [www.facebook.com/groups/mentoringTR](http://www.facebook.com/groups/mentoringTR) and [mentoring-tr.weebly.com/](http://mentoring-tr.weebly.com/)). I also suggested ways (see Smith, 2020, chapter 5) for mentors to get involved in researching their practice, for their own further development and that of the profession as a whole.

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Link to presentation recording: <https://youtu.be/UHT19eSPEJY>

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## 1.7 Shifting the mentor-mentee relationship: enhancing capabilities and increasing efficacy

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### Introduction

This talk reported on a different approach to mentoring, why it took a different form during the global pandemic, how the shift from face-to-face to online mentoring involved synchronous and asynchronous communication, what the challenges facing both the mentor and mentees were, and what recommendations were made. Although the shift to online mentoring had its challenges, the rewards far outweighed its limitations. Participants were one teacher with much experience in teaching academic English to freshman students, and two mentees completing their master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Mentoring took place during spring 2020 and 2021 semesters. Like most institutions, we moved to online teaching in spring 2020, thus shifting the mentoring set-up from face-to-face to virtual teaching. The purpose of this study was to understand the challenges of engaging in a virtual mentoring relationship, to select the needed instructional tools, to reflect on best ways of mentoring, and to make recommendations that will help future mentors.

### What is efficacy?

The term efficacy is a self-reflective concept referring to what a person can do with their skills to attain a desired goal. Those with high self-efficacy believe in themselves,

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