



# Novice Educator Support and Training (NEST)

## 2.4 NEST MENTORING FRAMEWORK

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## Novice Educator Support and Training (NEST)

<b>Deliverable description</b>
The NEST mentoring framework comprises two major elements: A theory of mentorship and a profile of an effective mentor. Both will be tailored to the context of supporting teachers and student learning in disadvantaged schools.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviation/Acronym	Description
EC	European Commission
NEST	Novice Educator Support and Training

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# 1. Introduction

*Reminder - It is important to understand that the scope of the NEST project is focused on adaptive mentoring for beginning teachers working at disadvantaged schools, which is part of the overall induction process of starting teachers. This means that;*

- *Other induction initiatives such as administrative support or learning communities are not included in the scope of the project. However, it is important that mentors understand the importance of making the link between their role as a mentor and other initiatives within the same schools*
- *The mentoring framework is focused specifically on the adaptiveness of the mentoring activity, which is specifically adapted to the challenges for mentoring novice teachers in disadvantaged schools*

This document is establishing the mentoring framework and should function as the outcome of deliverable 2.4 in the NEST project proposal.

In the context of the NEST intervention, it provides both a description of the mentoring as an activity, called the theory of mentorship, as well as the description of the mentor as a person. In turn, the theory of mentorship is itself composed of two elements, the objectives of the mentoring activity and the description of the mentoring practice.

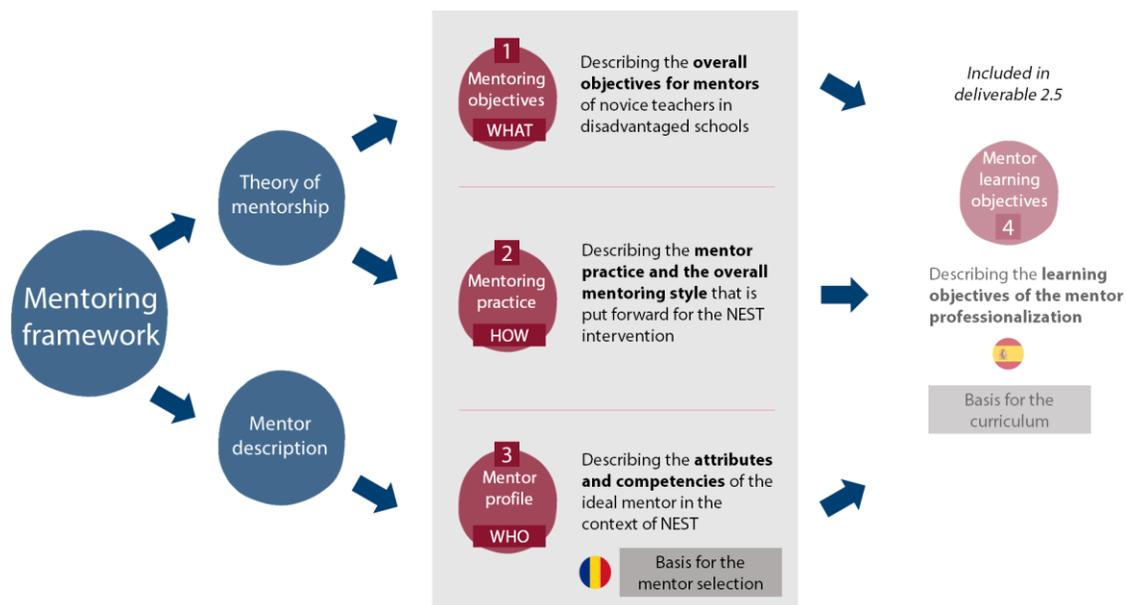


Fig. 1: The mentoring framework and its elements

As a result, the mentoring framework described in this document will include mainly three elements:

- 1) **The mentoring objectives:** This describes the overall objectives of the mentoring process for the adaptive support of novice teachers as part of the induction process. This gives us a vision on **what** we believe to be the objective of mentoring starting teachers in this project.

- 2) **The mentoring practice:** This describes the mentoring practice and the overall mentoring style that will be used in this project. It provides us with a description of **how** the mentor will mentor their mentees in this project (transformational vs. informational)
- 3) **The mentor profile:** This describes the attributes and competencies of the ideal NEST mentor. It shows **who** we want to have as mentors and will serve as a basis for drawing up the selection criteria.

It is also important to understand that these three elements will form the basis for the mentor learning objectives, and the mentor trainings in general. However, this will not be discussed in detail in this document as this is part of deliverable 2.5. of the NEST project:

**The mentor learning objectives:** Describing the learning objectives of the mentor professionalization. This in turn form the basis for the core curriculum of the mentor trainings.

In developing the three elements listed above, we are building further on the final version of the theory of change (deliverable 2.2), which states the desired outputs and outcomes of the NEST intervention.

## 2. The mentoring objectives

In this section we describe the overall objectives of the mentoring process for the adaptive support of novice teachers as part of the induction process. This gives us a vision on **what** we believe to be the objective of mentoring starting teachers in this project. In doing so, the mentoring objectives will address the challenges of novice teachers in disadvantaged schools.

Given the intended outcomes of NEST, and based on insights from local entities and the Teach For All network<sup>1</sup>, we have thus identified six core objectives for mentorship in this program:

The mentoring objectives		
The mentors....	This means that ....	More details, with a focus on the context of disadvantaged schools
<b>Empower</b>	Mentoring programs are oriented to help the starting teacher to develop their skills of leadership, that is taking responsibility for developing the potential of the students to lead students to an improved learning progression and outcomes	“Mentors support the development of teacher leadership by holding as their fundamental purpose to develop the <i>teacher’s</i> capacity for self-reflection and innovation, rather than the mentor over-relying on their own experience and skillset. As such, they engage teachers to inquire deeply into the challenges they face in the classroom and to define their own potential solutions, especially in this disadvantaged context in which the students need to be empowered and inspired to succeed. When offering suggestions or modeling new skills, mentors create an inclusive learning environment for the starting teachers in which they engage teachers in making choices and adapting techniques for their own style and content”

<sup>1</sup> based on the “Global Coaching Kit” of Teach for All, augmented with best practices from countries participating in this project (AITSL, 2018; DG Education and Culture, 2010; Esteve, O. 2020; FWB, 2020; KPHVIE, 2018; Onderwijs Vlaanderen, 2019; Romanian Ministry of Education, 2018;\_Mozdzanowski 2016; Stingu et al., 2016; Sullivan, 2019)

<b>Envision</b>	The mentor’s vision for their role in developing leadership is clear, meaningful, and explicit	We see that mentoring is effective when the mentors clearly, compellingly, and explicitly communicate about their role. This is needed to prevent misunderstanding and build stronger relationships and trust with starting teachers from the beginning. This role should be adapted to the specific context of starting teachers in disadvantaged schools.
<b>Connect</b>	Mentoring programs place genuine trusting relationships at the heart of the work and aim at connecting starting teachers to the educational ecosystem, including students.	Effective mentoring builds and maintains trusting and authentic relationships between starting teachers and the educational ecosystem, which includes the mentor, the other teachers, the students & parents/caregivers, and relevant associations. Especially in the context of disadvantaged schools, it is key to connect with disengaged parents and students. But it also includes the need for regular communication and a focus on the confidentiality between the novice teacher and the mentor. This enables starting teachers to be open about their challenges, fears, goals, and successes in ways that encourage their growth and learning.
<b>Facilitate</b>	Mentoring facilitates powerful conversations that will help grow the starting teacher’s leadership.	Facilitative mentoring conversations support starting teachers to develop their own capacity through reflective practice. In this approach, the starting teacher has the answers while the mentor shows up as a non-judgmental questioner and listener to facilitate the starting teacher to increase their awareness and to identify their own solutions. It is especially relevant in a disadvantaged context, that the teachers grow leadership both on the personal and professional level.
<b>Build &amp; share expertise</b>	In mentoring, the mentors exercise judgment and skill in choosing from a toolkit of mentoring strategies	One critical way that mentors support starting teacher leadership is mentoring them to set, pursue and realize a meaningful vision and ambitious outcomes for every student – More generally, the mentor helps the teacher in seeing the potential of every student in the classroom. Also, the mentor puts relevant materials and information at the disposal of the starting teacher, to ensure an effective onboarding of the starting teacher.
<b>Grow</b>	In mentoring, the mentors attend faithfully to their own learning, leadership, and development	Through dedicated self-reflection and self-awareness, mentors become more conscious of their beliefs, words, and actions and the impact they have on those they are helping to grow.... To support regular and honest self-inventory, mentors gather a variety of evidence to help them reflect on and develop their mentoring practices, adapted to the specific context of disadvantaged schools. As part of this evidence, mentors also reflect on their practices with peers.

Table 1: The six key pillars of the mentoring role

### 3. The mentoring practice

In this section we describe the mentoring practice and the overall mentoring style that will be used in this project. It provides us with a description of **how** the mentor will mentor their mentees in this project (transformational vs. informational)

The practice is best represented by a continuum that allows both mentors and mentees to travel back and forth from the directive strategies to the facilitative strategies. Both will be used to ensure the teacher outputs of the Theory of Change are achieved. These are the changes in competencies and capabilities at teacher level that should result from the mentoring practices.

Teachers strengthen...

1. ... their capacity for self-reflection and professional self-understanding
2. ... their content mastery and pedagogical knowledge
3. ... their ability of monitoring progress towards a vision and goals
4. ... their ability of creating a productive learning environment
5. ... their relationship-building skills
6. ... their ability to manage personal & professional demands



Fig. 2: Mentoring practice using directive and facilitative strategies

**Directive strategies** focus on confronting and adjusting the starting teachers' behaviours so that it has the most impact on the students' learning. It starts from the idea that the mentor is the expert responsible for sharing his/her experience with the mentee by training the mentee to acquire a set of skills or a body of knowledge. Directive strategies are therefore focused on informational learning.

**Facilitative strategies** focus on learning new ways of thinking and being through reflection, analysis and experimentation. For support to have a long-lasting impact, it is imperative for the tutor to choose facilitative strategies that support the mentees to explore and develop the ability to choose the behaviours, beliefs and ways of being that best support the students development and learnings. Therefore, transformational learning is put at the heart of the facilitative strategies.

Informational learning (and directive mentoring strategies) have an important role to play in addressing pressing learning needs in novice teachers. However, partners within the Teach For All network have found that an emphasis on growing teacher leadership, which entails more transformational learning (and thus facilitative mentoring strategies) produces between long-term outcomes for students, especially in disadvantaged contexts, and is thus the basis for defining the mentoring practice in the NEST project.

In fact, directive and facilitative strategies are forming a continuum, one in which the preferred strategy depends on the intentions of the mentor towards the starting teacher. Both strategies are thus co-existing and need to be used to maximise the intended impact on the starting teacher.

*Example of the different strategies in practice:*

*The starting teacher does not act when students are busy on their smartphone during a lesson.*

- *If the teacher does not act because he/she has not seen that the students were using their smartphones, a directive approach could be used. The mentor can model what to do and the teacher then practices these classroom observation skills.*
- *If the teacher does not react because he/she believes it is OK for students to be busy on their smartphones, a facilitative approach would be appropriate. The mentor and the teacher work on developing an understanding why the teacher did not act and consider possible consequences, thus challenging the belief of the teacher about this.*

## 4. The mentor profile

In this section we describe the attributes and competencies of the ideal NEST mentor. It shows **who** we want to have as mentors and will serve as a basis for drawing up the selection criteria<sup>2</sup>.

To define the criteria for the mentor selection, we have split the 'mentor profile' into two dimensions: a context-related and a mindset-related dimension. Each of these 2 dimensions contain a list of criteria split into "must-have" criteria, and "nice-to-have criteria" to ensure feasibility for the NEST mentor selection in the different participating countries. We have not included any skills that would be required before the start of the mentor training because mentors will develop such mentoring skills during their training.

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<sup>2</sup> These have been based on discussions within the consortium and research findings

	Context-related criteria	Mindset-related criteria
Must-have criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The mentor is <b>currently a teacher</b></li><li>• The mentor is teaching in the <b>same ISCED level</b> as the starting teacher</li><li>• The mentor is teaching in a <b>disadvantaged school</b></li><li>• The mentor is participating on a <b>voluntary basis</b></li><li>• The mentor has a (formal or informal) <b>mandate</b> from the school direction or other relevant authority</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The mentor is <b>courageous</b></li><li>• The mentor is <b>open for freedom and flexibility</b></li><li>• The mentor is <b>evidence-based</b></li></ul>
Nice-to-have criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The mentor has at least <b>5 years</b> of teaching experience</li><li>• The mentor is active in the <b>same school</b> as the starting teacher</li><li>• The mentor is teaching the <b>same subject</b> as the starting teacher</li><li>• The mentor has <b>prior training in and/or experience</b> with mentoring</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The mentor is <b>open for personal and professional development</b></li><li>• The mentor is <b>respectful</b></li><li>• The mentor is <b>trustful</b></li><li>• The mentor is <b>empathic</b></li><li>• The mentor is <b>curious</b></li></ul>

Fig. 3: Mentoring profile – overview of criteria for selection

Firstly, we have the **context-related dimension**<sup>3</sup>, which includes all criteria which are related to the environment in which the mentor is functioning, and thus not directly to their competencies as a mentor. This includes elements such as the job and position of the mentors within the school, their experience with teaching and other school-related criteria. The NEST intervention will have no effect on these elements, and we do not expect to see a change in these criteria over the period of the intervention.

Based on the discussions and other factors which might be interesting to select mentors on, we have further complemented and refined this (see table below).

We intend to further refine during feedback loops and discussion in the table below:

<b>Context-related dimension of the mentor profile</b>	
<b>Key criteria for mentors put forward by UDE and coming out of discussions within the consortium</b>	<b>Remarks (to be completed during feedback loops and discussions)</b>
The mentor is <b>currently a teacher</b>	
The mentor is active in the <b>same school</b> as the starting teacher	Not in all countries (for example not in Bulgaria) the mentors will be teaching at the same school as their mentees. So, that would be nice to have but is not a must have. The ISCED level becomes than a must have, because we have to prevent mentors teaching at primary schools being the mentor for novice teachers at secondary schools (or the other way around)
The mentor is teaching in a <b>disadvantaged school</b>	
The mentor is participating on a <b>voluntary basis</b>	
The mentor <b>has a (formal or informal) mandate</b> from the school direction or other relevant authority	
The mentor has at least <b>5 years</b> of teaching experience	In Austria, as the mentors will be selected amongst the alumni of the Teach for Austria program, it might be that they have less than 5 years of teaching experience. Therefore, this is not considered as a must-have criterion. However, looking at the reality of existing structures, in some regions (FWB, Romania), mentors are already required to have a minimum amount of experience in teaching to be recognized officially as mentors.
The mentor is teaching in the <b>same ISCED level</b> as the starting teacher	Not in all countries (for example not in Bulgaria) the mentors will be teaching at the same school as their mentees. So, that would be nice to have but is not a must have. The ISCED

<sup>3</sup> These have been based on the criteria developed by the University of Duisburg-Essen and are thus taking into account the optimal selection of the intervention and control groups, as stated in the NEST official project proposal.

	level becomes than a must have, because we have to prevent mentors teaching at primary schools being the mentor for novice teachers at secondary schools (or the other way around)
The mentor is teaching the <b>same subject</b> as the starting teacher	
The mentor has <b>prior training in and/or experience</b> with mentoring	

Table 2: Refined context-related dimension for mentor profile

Secondly, the **mindset-related dimension**. This includes all elements related to the attitude of the potential mentor. These are mainly the mindsets which are needed to optimally achieve the 6 key pillars described in the mentoring role. The NEST intervention will further develop these mindsets by focusing on transformational mentoring strategies.

The mindset-related criteria are based on the work of Aguilar<sup>45</sup> complemented and aligned with other research<sup>6</sup>, which is also aligned to the vision on mentoring from the Teach for All network.

Mindset-related dimension of the mentor profile		
The mentor is ....	This means that ....	More details
The mentor is <b>RESPECTFUL</b>	The mentor is respectful of the teacher person and the learning process	<i>“The mentor respects the person of the beginning teacher. He/She does not expect perfection from himself or from others. He/She respects the learning process. He/She respects the new teacher unconditionally.”</i>
The mentor is <b>EMPATHIC</b>	The mentor can empathize with the beginning teacher	<i>“The mentor tries to understand the thoughts, perceptions and feelings of the beginning teacher. He/She places himself/herself ‘at the same level’ than the starting teacher. He/She has an unconditional view of the person and uses non-judgmental language. He/She knows that compassion for others begins with compassion for yourself.”</i>
The mentor is <b>CURIOS</b>	The mentor is sincerely curious about the mentee	<i>“This curiosity questions their own beliefs, thoughts, prejudices and ways of doing and being. Curiosity questions the world. The mentor is aware of the fears that hold back his/her openness and curiosity. He/She can transfer a judgment to himself/herself and to the mentee.”</i>
The mentor is <b>TRUSTFUL</b>	The mentor has confidence in the process and does	<i>“To have confidence in the coaching process, the mentor knows that it is a long-term process. He/She accepts that the change does not happen immediately and accepts this</i>

<sup>4</sup> Aguilar (2018) Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators

<sup>5</sup> Aguilar (2013) Transformational Coaching Rubric, from *The Art of Coaching*

<sup>6</sup> Cambria (2006), Aspors & Fransson (2015), Constantinescu (2015), De Stercke et al. (2010), Gröschner & Hascher (2019), Lejonberg & Christophersen (2015), Orland-Barak & Hasin (2010).

	not expect immediate results	<i>frustration. He/She meets the person as he/she is and thus accepts him/her."</i>
The mentor is <b>OPEN FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	The mentor is authentic in the relationship and is open to personal and professional development	<i>"The mentor reflects on his/her own process of learning and growth and actively seeks to further develop his/her coaching skills, his/her knowledge of teaching, education and learning strategies, the development of his/her emotional intelligence and beliefs. He/she actively seeks feedback from the new teacher or mentoring colleagues."</i>
The mentor is <b>COURAGEOUS</b>	The mentor is courageous and engages in difficult conversations	<i>"The mentor is the guide in the learning process and the conversations are always transparent. In other words, there is a consensus between what the mentor does or says and what he/she thinks or feels. The mentor is aware that this congruence helps to build confidence. The mentor is present more widely as a support and critical friend"</i>
The mentor is open for <b>FREEDOM AND FLEXIBILITY</b>	The mentor is open to discuss different approaches and can adapt its support accordingly	<i>"Both in the relationship with the teacher, as for supporting the teacher in his/her teaching practice, the mentor is ready to experiment and adapt the content and format of his/her support to the specific needs of the novice teacher. The mentor has an open vision on the mentoring practice, uses the novice teacher as a guidance in doing so and is able to adapt accordingly"</i>
The mentor is <b>EVIDENCE-BASED</b>	The mentor collects, presents, and suggests evidence-based approaches and actions in mentoring conversations.	<i>"The mentor always starts from the evidence, as a way to help teachers analyse their learning environments, becoming efficient teachers and being strategic in their leadership competencies"</i>

Table 3: Details of the mindset-related dimension of the mentor profile

*Attention point - It will be crucial to assess whether and how these mindset-related criteria can be implemented in practice. As national guidelines concerning mentoring do not consider any characteristics related to the mentor attitudes when describing mentoring programs, it is key to have this discussion (Work Package 3).*

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