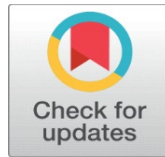


MENTORING AND COACHING IN A WORKPLACE LITERACY PROGRAM

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Received 07 August 2025
Accepted 08 September 2025
Published 16 October 2025

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DOI
[10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i9.2025.6296](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i9.2025.6296)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of mentoring and coaching as strategic tools to enhance workplace English literacy in a post-pandemic context. As organizations increasingly prioritize reskilling and upskilling to maintain employability, this qualitative research examines how personalized support mechanisms—mentoring and coaching—address communication and emotional intelligence gaps among employees. Drawing on data from interviews, surveys, and workplace case studies, the study highlights how these approaches improve employee confidence, communication, engagement, and overall productivity. Mentoring fosters long-term developmental relationships for holistic growth, while coaching targets specific, measurable literacy outcomes. Successful implementation involves needs assessments, trained mentors/coaches, clear objectives, on-the-job integration, and ongoing evaluation. Despite challenges like time constraints and resource limitations, the findings affirm that mentoring and coaching significantly uplift workplace literacy, strengthening both individual career progression and organizational performance.

Aim: To improve the English literacy skills of staff in a workplace through a mentoring and coaching program

The present workplaces need to have best practices in work situations to reskill and retrain their staff more now than ever before since the advent of the pandemic, since early 2020, so that they can stay employable and increase their employability in their organisations and scale vertically upwards or laterally in similar work situations, moving forward.

Workplace literacy programs could aid in providing better communication and emotional intelligence skills via mentoring and coaching programs, tailored to the organisations' needs. The use of andragogical approaches in training the staff at workplaces ensure they are properly and well catered for, to be trained in bettering themselves through carefully supervised and managed literacy training programs, not just via passive learning but in more active learning stances, hence.

Methodology: A qualitative study of workplace literacy issues and solutions via interviews, survey questionnaires, social media surveys, etc.

Result: Improved workplace literacy levels

Implication: Better overall communication and employability for staff in organisations.

Conclusion: English literacy levels lead to enhanced collaborations at the workplaces to improve and sustain greater productivity and employability for the staff.

Keywords: Workplace Literacy, Mentoring, Coaching, Communication, Employability, Adult Learning, Staff Development

1. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving global economy, workplace literacy has become an essential component of employee development and organizational success. Beyond traditional training programs, mentoring and coaching have emerged as powerful strategies to enhance workplace literacy. They provide personalized, ongoing support that helps individuals build critical language, communication, and cognitive

skills necessary for professional growth and efficiency. This essay explores the role of mentoring and coaching in workplace literacy programs, examining their definitions, benefits, methods of implementation, and challenges.

1.1. DEFINING MENTORING AND COACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF WORKPLACE LITERACY

Workplace literacy encompasses more than just reading and writing—it includes communication, digital literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills needed for success in modern workplaces. As adult learners often bring diverse backgrounds and learning needs, mentoring and coaching serve as customized developmental tools that bridge gaps in literacy and boost employee confidence.

Mentoring refers to a long-term developmental relationship between a more experienced individual (the mentor) and a less experienced one (the mentee), focusing on career guidance, personal growth, and professional insight. In a literacy context, a mentor might help a mentee navigate workplace documents, improve email writing, or develop public speaking skills.

Coaching, on the other hand, is typically a short-term, goal-oriented process led by a coach (often a supervisor, trainer, or external consultant) who facilitates learning through questions, feedback, and reflection. Coaching in workplace literacy focuses on specific, measurable improvements, such as enhancing grammar in reports, learning to use workplace digital tools, or conducting effective meetings.

1.2. BENEFITS OF MENTORING AND COACHING IN LITERACY PROGRAMS

1) Personalized Learning Support

Traditional classroom-style training often fails to meet the individual needs of adult learners, especially those with varying levels of literacy. Mentoring and coaching fill this gap by offering one-on-one support, tailored to the learner's current job role, pace of learning, and specific goals.

2) Improved Communication and Confidence

Many employees with low literacy levels struggle with expressing themselves clearly or understanding instructions. Regular interactions with mentors and coaches improve interpersonal communication, encourage constructive dialogue, and foster self-assurance.

3) Increased Employee Engagement and Retention

Employees who receive personalized support feel valued. Mentoring relationships especially promote a sense of belonging and purpose, which contributes to higher levels of job satisfaction and loyalty.

4) Knowledge Transfer and Organizational Culture Building

Mentoring allows for the transfer of institutional knowledge and soft skills, especially when senior employees mentor junior staff. This process supports both literacy and the perpetuation of company values and culture.

5) Enhanced Productivity and Performance

As employees improve their literacy skills through guided coaching, they become more efficient in their tasks, make fewer errors, and manage their time better, leading to tangible productivity gains for the organization.

1.3. STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING MENTORING AND COACHING IN LITERACY PROGRAMS

1) Identify Literacy Needs through Assessment

Begin by conducting a literacy needs analysis to identify skill gaps across different departments. This informs the matching of mentors/coaches with employees and helps in setting realistic goals.

2) Select and Train Mentors and Coaches

Mentors should be empathetic, patient, and effective communicators. Organizations must train mentors and coaches on adult learning principles, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, and how to provide constructive feedback.

3) Set Clear Objectives and Outcomes

Whether the goal is to write clearer emails, participate in team discussions, or understand technical manuals, setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives ensures focused efforts.

4) Integrate with Daily Work Activities

Effective mentoring and coaching align learning with job tasks. For example, a mentor might guide a mentee through preparing a presentation or completing a safety form. This on-the-job learning approach makes literacy development meaningful and practical.

5) Use Technology to Support Coaching

Digital platforms and apps can be used to share resources, track progress, and provide instant feedback. Remote coaching via video calls is also useful for hybrid or multi-location teams.

6) Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust

Track outcomes using qualitative (feedback, observations) and quantitative (test scores, productivity measures) methods. Adjust the program based on results to maximize impact.

2. CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES

A good example is a manufacturing company in Singapore, which introduced a workplace literacy mentoring program for migrant workers. Senior supervisors were trained as mentors to guide workers in reading safety protocols and using tablets for inventory management. Over six months, not only did error rates drop, but the workers also reported increased confidence and better integration with the broader team. [Yeo \(2024\)](#).

Another example is a retail chain in Canada that implemented coaching sessions focused on customer service communication. Employees participated in weekly sessions where they practiced conversation scripts and received individual feedback. This led to a noticeable improvement in customer satisfaction ratings. [Randstad Canada \(2024\)](#).

2.1. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

While the benefits are clear, several challenges can hinder mentoring and coaching in workplace literacy:

- **Time Constraints:** Both mentors and learners may struggle to find time. **Solution:** integrate mentoring into regular work schedules and assign small, manageable literacy tasks.
- **Matching Issues:** Poorly matched mentor-mentee pairs can reduce effectiveness. **Solution:** involve HR in creating matches based on both professional background and personal compatibility.
- **Resistance to Learning:** Adult learners may feel ashamed or defensive about literacy issues. **Solution:** create a non-judgmental, supportive learning environment that promotes dignity and privacy.
- **Lack of Resources:** Smaller companies may lack trained coaches or tools. **Solution:** partner with external consultants or government-supported workplace literacy programs.

3. CONCLUSION

Mentoring and coaching are vital components in the development of workplace literacy. They go beyond traditional methods by offering empathetic, contextual, and empowering learning experiences. In a time when communication, digital literacy, and adaptability are more important than ever, personalized support through mentoring and coaching equips employees with not only functional skills but also the confidence to grow and thrive.

Organizations that invest in these strategies not only uplift their workforce but also strengthen their culture, performance, and long-term sustainability. As literacy is a foundation for lifelong learning and career progression, mentoring and coaching should be seen not as optional add-ons, but as core pillars of employee development.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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APPENDICES

Figure 1

Leadership and coaching style questionnaire

Rate each of the following leadership or coaching statements using a scale of 1-5 where:

5 = Almost Always True
 4 = Frequently True
 3 = Occasionally True
 2 = Seldom True
 1 = Almost Never True

As a leader I...

- 1 ☐ 0 Set and then inform my team what their goals are
- 2 ☐ 0 Explain my decisions
- 3 ☐ 0 Use my time to concentrate more on the vision
- 4 ☐ 0 Celebrate overall gains and achievements with the team
- 5 ☐ 0 Give input to individuals on how they have done
- 6 ☐ 0 Hand responsibility for decision making and problem ownership to individuals
- 7 ☐ 0 Ask others in my team for ideas before making decisions
- 8 ☐ 0 Structure a tight framework in which I expect others to work
- 9 ☐ 0 Find that individuals need very little direction from me
- 10 ☐ 0 Encourage my team to share experiences and use these as learning opportunities
- 11 ☐ 0 Listen to concerns and I am readily available and accessible
- 12 ☐ 0 Avoid offering my own solutions to problems
- 13 ☐ 0 See myself as being the "wind beneath his/her wings"
- 14 ☐ 0 Encourage individuals to use their initiative
- 15 ☐ 0 Like to provide specific training and instruction
- 16 ☐ 0 Act as a sounding board when individuals come with issues
- 17 ☐ 0 Prefer to let individuals determine their own work priorities
- 18 ☐ 0 Provide supervision when individuals are struggling
- 19 ☐ 0 Provide step by step plans of how I want tasks to be done
- 20 ☐ 0 Demonstrate how existing skills can be applied to a new situation
- 21 ☐ 0 Celebrate the personal growth of individuals
- 22 ☐ 0 Make the decisions especially those regarding problem solving achieving objectives
- 23 ☐ 0 Trust individuals to monitor their own performance
- 24 ☐ 0 Encourage team members to use their solutions rather than mine
- 25 ☐ 0 Praise specific progress and provide perspective for hiccups
- 26 ☐ 0 Act as an enabler to members of my team to accomplish their objectives
- 27 ☐ 0 Use to frequently monitor individuals' progress
- 28 ☐ 0 Share responsibility with individuals for decision-making

Once you've completed this questionnaire, hand it out to a small group and discuss it to a member of the group who works for you (and your boss, if you want) and then to the questionnaire about your leaders. I assure, they will need to do it, and, of course, if you are going to get back, then respond to it.

I, _____, fill in this page to interpret, the results.

Figure 2

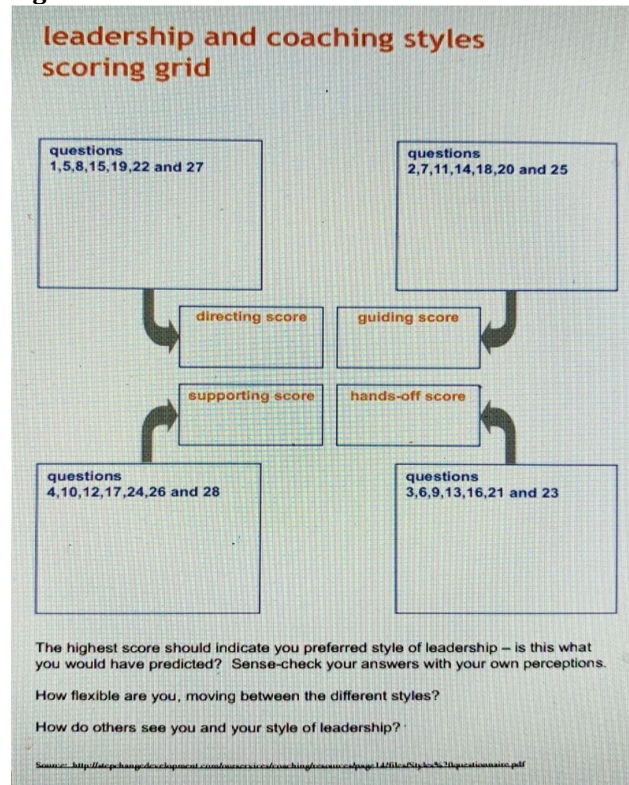


Figure 3

For Mentors

Would you have a positive opinion of the mentor program so that you can encourage others to participate in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No

1. How would you rate the mentor program?

Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor
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2. How would you describe the quality of your experience as a participant in the program?

Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor
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3. Would you volunteer to serve as a mentor again next year or in the future?

Yes	Probably	Not sure	No
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4. Did the mentor training session help you prepare for your role as a mentor?

Yes	Somewhat	Not sure	No
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5. Would you have liked additional training for mentors?

Yes	Maybe	Probably not	No
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6. How clearly defined were our mentor responsibilities?

Very clear	Moderately clear	A little unclear	Not clear
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7. The mentor program coordinators were accessible and easy to talk to, and I am free from them when necessary.

Always	Sometimes	No, much	Never
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8. How would you describe your relationship with your mentee?

Very good, good	Fair	Poor	
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9. Do you think that the time you spent with your mentee was sufficient?

Yes	Almost, really	No	
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10. Do you think that the time you spent together was helpful for your mentee?

Yes	Somewhat	Not really	No
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11. Did you gain personally from this relationship?

Yes	Somewhat	Not much	
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12. Would you have preferred to meet less often with your mentee?

Yes	Sometimes	Rarely	No
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13. Would you have preferred to meet more often with your mentee?

Yes	Sometimes	Rarely	No
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14. What was the most satisfying about the mentor program?

15. What was the most challenging about the mentor program?

16. What would you suggest to improve the mentor program?

Courtesy of Oregon Mentors and Mentees Mentoring Partnership. Mentoring A-Z Training Manual.

Figure 4

PROGRAM COORDINATOR, MENTOR, AND MENTEE PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

For Program Coordinators

1. Did the mentor program run as you planned? Why or why not?

2. What are the strengths of your program?

3. What areas of your program need improvement?

4. What aspects of your mentor program would you like to improve?

5. How could your school/business/community partner further assist you in coordinating the mentor program?

6. Did you feel overwhelmed or burdened by coordinating the mentor program? If yes, explain why.

Courtesy of Oregon Mentors and Mentees Mentoring Partnership. Mentoring A-Z Training Manual.