

ULCA Mentoring Support with Learn & Lead Innovation

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Mentoring as Experiential Learning in Action

The Vision

From Assessment to Growth: Mentoring that Transforms

ULCA Mentoring Support represents a coherent methodological framework that redefines teacher development, shifting it from a system based on evaluation to a process grounded in experiential learning. The model moves the focus away from assessing performance and toward supporting continuous professional growth through structured reflection on authentic teaching practice.

This approach integrates two complementary dimensions. On the one hand, the Learn & Lead Innovation (LLI) approach provides the conceptual and value-based foundation, emphasizing learner-centeredness, authenticity, intrinsic motivation, and personal responsibility for learning. On the other hand, ULCA Mentoring Support operationalizes these principles through structured mentoring processes, practical tools, and professional dialogue.

The intersection of these two dimensions is represented by Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, which structures the methodology through four interconnected phases: **Experience, Reflection, Understanding, and Application**. This shared framework ensures that mentoring is not an isolated intervention, but a continuous process embedded in everyday teaching practice.

Within this model, teaching is understood as a source of learning. Classroom experience becomes the primary material for professional development, and mentoring becomes a process of guided reflection and meaning making.

The guiding principle of the methodology is that teachers develop most effectively when they engage in the same type of learning they aim to facilitate for their students. Mentoring, therefore, is not an external intervention but an integral part of professional practice.

“Teachers learn best when they live the learning they aim to create for others.”

The Learning Cycle in Mentoring

The ULCA Mentoring Support methodology is structured around an adapted version of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, ensuring that teacher development remains systematic, iterative, and grounded in practice.

The process begins with the phase of **experience**, in which the teacher engages in authentic classroom activity. This phase captures the complexity of real teaching situations, including interactions with students, decision-making processes, and the emotional dimension of teaching. The mentor observes this process without evaluative judgment, focusing instead on significant moments and emerging patterns.

The **reflection** phase follows, creating space for the teacher to articulate the experience. Through structured dialogue, the teacher describes what occurred, expresses perceptions and feelings, and begins to identify key aspects of practice. The mentor facilitates this process through reflective questioning that supports awareness and critical thinking.

In the **understanding** phase, reflection is deepened through interpretation. The teacher connects experience to pedagogical concepts, learner-centered principles, and broader educational frameworks. The mentor supports the construction of meaning by helping the teacher identify underlying patterns, relationships, and insights.

The **application** phase translates insight into action. The teacher formulates specific changes and experiments with new approaches in subsequent lessons. The mentor provides support through encouragement and follow-up, ensuring continuity in the development process.

Together, these phases form a continuous cycle in which each new experience becomes the starting point for further learning, creating a dynamic and sustainable model of professional growth.

Table 1: The Experiential Mentoring Cycle – Phases, Roles, and Focus

Phase	Teacher	Mentor	Focus
Experience	Teaches, engages, tries new ideas	Observes, listens, notices	Authentic learning in action
Reflection	Describes and feels	Asks reflective questions	Awareness and insight
Understanding	Connects to theory and values	Facilitates meaning making	Linking experience and learning
Application	Experiments again	Encourages, follows up	Growth and transformation

Key Elements of ULCA Mentoring

ULCA Mentoring Support is structured around three core elements: **tools, roles, and outcomes**. Together, these elements create a coherent system for supporting teacher development.

The methodological tools include observation sheets, reflection frameworks, learning journals, action plans, and professional portfolios. These tools are designed to structure the mentoring process and support reflection rather than evaluate performance. Each tool corresponds to a specific phase of the experiential learning cycle, ensuring alignment between theory and practice.

The roles within the mentoring process are clearly defined yet fundamentally transformed. The teacher is positioned as an active learner and reflective practitioner who takes responsibility for personal and professional development. The mentor acts as a facilitator of learning, providing structure, guidance, and support without imposing judgment. This relationship is grounded in trust, openness, and shared responsibility.

The outcomes of the mentoring process extend beyond observable teaching performance. They include the development of reflective capacity, increased self-awareness, enhanced professional autonomy, and the ability to engage in continuous learning. Improvement is understood as a process emerging from reflection and experience rather than a result of external evaluation.

While this framework intentionally shifts the focus away from summative evaluation to prioritize psychological safety and reflection, it is imperative to recognize its role within a broader institutional context. This developmental approach is designed to complement, rather than contradict, mandatory institutional evaluation processes. By engaging in this formative, evidence-based reflection, teachers build the internal capacity and professional autonomy necessary to successfully navigate and meet formal institutional standards, thereby effectively bridging the gap between continuous personal growth and systemic quality assurance.

The model is inherently dynamic and may be visualized as a tree or spiral representing continuous development, renewal, and growth.

The Learn & Lead difference

The Learn & Lead Innovation approach introduces a systematic transformation of teacher development, shifting it from a model based on instruction and control to one grounded in learning, reflection, and co-creation.

While traditional educational frameworks have provided a necessary foundation through structured instruction and formalized assessment, the Learn & Lead approach seeks to expand this repertoire. It builds upon existing practices by explicitly emphasizing the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning. Rather than replacing formal requirements, continuous reflective processes complement them, supported by evidence emerging directly from practice.

Knowledge within this framework is not treated as abstract or purely theoretical content, but as something constructed through meaningful engagement with real situations. This ensures that professional development remains relevant, applicable, and sustainable over time.

Mentoring, therefore, is not perceived as an external intervention, but as a process of living the principles of learning. Teachers experience the same learner-centered approach that they are expected to create for their students, which strengthens authenticity and coherence in professional practice.

Broadening the Perspective

Table 2: Key Differences Between Traditional and Learn & Lead Approaches

Aspect	Traditional	Learn & Lead Mentoring
Teacher role	Knowledge provider	Facilitator and co-learner
Learning process	Linear (explain → test)	Cyclical (experience → reflect → apply)
Motivation	Extrinsic	Intrinsic, purpose-driven
Assessment	Formal, external	Reflective, authentic
Knowledge	Theoretical	Practical and meaningful

It is important to view this comparative perspective not as a rigid dichotomy, but rather as a developmental continuum. Traditional instructional models have historically provided essential foundational structures for educational systems. The Learn & Lead approach does not seek to invalidate these prior experiences; rather, it aims to systematically expand the teacher's professional repertoire. This shift represents a natural evolution towards a more reflective practice, building upon the established strengths of existing pedagogical frameworks to foster continuous growth while proactively mitigating unnecessary resistance among experienced educators.

Extending the Model: The 9 + 0–0 Principles

The Learn & Lead Innovation approach is further operationalized through a structured framework known as the **9 + 0–0 Principles**, which represent a holistic model of personal and professional development.

These principles extend the methodology beyond procedural mentoring and introduce a deeper developmental dimension in which professional growth is inseparable from personal awareness, purpose, and internal alignment. Mentoring thus evolves from a technical activity into a meaningful developmental journey.

While traditional models of experiential learning (such as Kolb's) focus primarily on the cognitive processing of external events, the **9 + 0–0 Principles** extend the model by introducing a **meta-reflective layer**. This extension moves the practitioner from a horizontal plane (improving technical skills) to a **vertical plane** (deepening professional identity). By integrating "Inner Voice," "Purpose," and "Self-compassion" into the learning loop, the model ensures that the transition from *Reflective Observation* to *Abstract Conceptualization* is grounded in the teacher's core values rather than just institutional requirements.

Within the ULCA Mentoring Support framework, the principles function as:

- a reflective structure guiding mentoring dialogue,
- a framework for teacher self-development,
- a bridge between internal experience and external teaching practice.

The 9 + 0–0 Principles as a Development Framework

The principles form a coherent developmental sequence, moving from awareness of challenge toward growth, learning, and self-leadership.

The process begins with identifying the **challenge**, where the teacher defines a meaningful professional situation that requires attention. This is followed by clarifying the **vision** or desired outcome, which introduces direction and purpose into the process.

The teacher then reflects on **obstacles and barriers**, both internal and external, as well as potential **risks and setbacks**, thereby strengthening awareness and resilience. The identification of a **support system** situates development within a relational context and emphasizes the importance of collaboration.

A deeper level of reflection is introduced through the principle of **inner voice and intuition**, which encourages alignment between external action and internal understanding. Teachers also acknowledge **future challenges**, reinforcing the idea that development is continuous.

The clarification of **purpose (why)** strengthens intrinsic motivation, while the identification of **learning** transforms experience into conscious development.

The final principle, **0–0 (gratitude and self-compassion)**, integrates the process by supporting emotional balance, appreciation, and sustainable growth. It ensures that development remains human-centered and grounded in self-awareness. To ensure rigorous alignment with established academic frameworks, these principles are deeply grounded in recognized literature from educational psychology and andragogy. Concepts such as gratitude and self-compassion (0–0) are not merely abstract ideals, but vital components of professional resilience, emotional regulation, and cognitive reappraisal. By anchoring these reflective practices in standard psychological constructs, the methodology not only supports emotional balance and sustainable growth but also maintains scientific validity and robust theoretical coherence within formal institutional structures.

Integration into Mentoring Practice

The 9 + 0–0 Principles are not applied as a rigid sequence, but as a flexible reflective framework integrated into the mentoring process.

They can be effectively used:

- during reflection phases of the experiential learning cycle,
- as guiding prompts in mentoring dialogue,
- as a structure for teacher learning journals,
- as a framework for portfolio development.

This integration ensures that mentoring addresses not only observable teaching behavior but also deeper dimensions of professional practice, including:

- beliefs,
- emotions,
- motivations,
- professional identity.

Impact on Teacher Development

The integration of the 9 + 0–0 Principles significantly deepens the mentoring process and enhances its developmental impact.

It supports:

- the development of self-awareness beyond technical teaching skills,
- alignment between personal values and professional practice,
- the strengthening of intrinsic motivation,
- increased resilience and adaptability in complex situations.

Most importantly, it enables the transformation of the teacher into a self-directed learner capable of navigating uncertainty, reflecting on experience, and continuously developing practice.

Conclusion of the Learn & Lead Difference

The Learn & Lead Innovation approach, enriched by the 9 + 0–0 Principles, creates a comprehensive and coherent model of mentoring that integrates:

- experiential learning,
- reflective practice,
- personal development,
- relational support.

Within this model, mentoring is not limited to improving teaching techniques. It becomes a process of developing the whole professional identity of the teacher.

This ensures that change is not temporary or superficial, but meaningful, sustainable, and internally driven.

“Mentoring the Learn & Lead way means living the learning — not just teaching it.”

1. Introduction and Context

ULCA Mentoring Support provides a structured and theoretically grounded framework for teacher professional development based on mentoring as experiential learning. The methodology responds to the growing need for educational systems to move beyond traditional evaluation-based models toward approaches that support continuous and meaningful professional growth.

While current institutional practices in teacher observation inherently involve summative evaluation for quality assurance, there is a parallel need to foster continuous development. This methodology bridges that gap by providing a formative, development-oriented mentoring framework. It builds the teacher's internal capacity and professional autonomy, empowering them to confidently navigate institutional assessment standards. By proactively addressing the historical discrepancy between the expectations placed on teachers as facilitators of learner-centered education and the rigid systems previously used to evaluate them, this methodology aligns personal professional growth with institutional quality assurance.

The ULCA Mentoring Support methodology addresses this discrepancy by redefining mentoring as a process of guided learning. It builds directly on the Learn & Lead Innovation approach, integrating key principles such as authenticity, reflection, and personal responsibility for development within the Learner-Centered Approach framework.

The methodological foundation is Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which structures mentoring as a natural and iterative process consisting of **experience, reflection, understanding, and application**. This structure ensures that professional learning emerges directly from teaching practice.

The primary goal of the methodology is to support teachers in becoming reflective practitioners who can analyze their own practice, generate insights, and implement meaningful changes. In this context, mentoring becomes a central mechanism for transforming teaching into a continuous learning process.

2. Objectives of ULCA Mentoring Support

The ULCA Mentoring Support methodology is designed to achieve a set of interconnected objectives that collectively support teacher development as a continuous and self-directed process.

The primary objective is to enable professional growth through lived experience, moving away from formal evaluation toward development grounded in practice. This is achieved by embedding reflection and experimentation into everyday teaching, ensuring that learning is directly connected to real classroom situations.

Another key objective is to strengthen the connection between theory and practice. Teachers are supported in interpreting their experiences through pedagogical frameworks, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of teaching and learning.

The methodology also aims to foster teacher autonomy by positioning teachers as active creators of their own learning journey. Mentoring provides the structure and supports necessary for this process while maintaining the teacher's ownership of development.

In addition, the methodology equips mentors with tools and strategies that facilitate reflection, dialogue, and transformation, ensuring that mentoring remains a supportive and non-judgmental process.

3. Learn & Lead Innovation Methodology in Mentoring

Within the ULCA Mentoring Support framework, the Learn & Lead Innovation (LLI) methodology provides the conceptual and developmental foundation for redefining mentoring as a process of co-creation, reflective learning, and continuous professional growth.

The approach shifts the focus from instruction-based models toward experience-based learning, emphasizing that meaningful professional development emerges through active engagement with real teaching practice. In this context, teachers are not positioned as passive recipients of knowledge, but as active participants in an ongoing process of inquiry, reflection, and transformation.

Learning is therefore understood as a dynamic process that evolves through experience, is deepened through reflection, and becomes meaningful through personal interpretation and application.

Transformation of the Learning Paradigm

The LLI methodology challenges traditional assumptions about teacher development. Instead of viewing learning as the acquisition of predefined knowledge and skills, it frames learning as a process of meaning-making grounded in authentic experience.

In traditional models:

- learning is linear and structured around instruction and evaluation,
- knowledge is transferred from expert to practitioner,
- development is externally directed and measured.

In contrast, the LLI approach:

- positions learning as cyclical and iterative,
- understands knowledge as constructed through experience,
- emphasizes internal engagement and responsibility for learning.

This paradigm shift ensures that professional development is not only effective but also sustainable, as it is rooted in the teacher's own context and experience.

Redefinition of Roles in Mentoring

A key component of the methodology is the transformation of roles within the mentoring process.

The teacher becomes a reflective practitioner who:

- continuously observes and evaluates their own practice,
- engages in critical thinking and self-reflection,
- actively shapes their professional development.

The mentor engages as a collaborative professional partner who:

- co-creates a safe and structured space for reflection,
- engages in a reciprocal dialogue to analyze the complexities of teaching,
- and explores the construction of meaning alongside the teacher.

This relationship is based on trust, openness, and shared responsibility. It replaces hierarchical models with collaborative partnerships in which both participants contribute to the learning process.

Core Principles of the LLI Methodology

The Learn & Lead Innovation approach is guided by a set of interconnected principles that define the nature of learning within the mentoring process.

Learning through Experience

Every mentoring interaction is grounded in real teaching practice. Experience is the primary source of learning, providing authentic situations that require reflection and interpretation.

Reflective Dialogue

Reflection is facilitated through structured dialogue between mentor and teacher. Meaning is not delivered but emerges through questioning, exploration, and shared understanding.

Personal Transformation

Professional development is closely linked to personal growth. Changes in teaching practice are supported by increased self-awareness, alignment of values, and internal motivation.

Community of Practice

Learning extends beyond individual mentoring sessions into a broader professional context. Teachers engage with peers, share experiences, and contribute to a culture of collaborative learning.

These principles ensure that mentoring is embedded within a learning-oriented environment rather than functioning as an isolated intervention.

Integration of the 9 + 0–0 Principles

The LLI methodology is further deepened through the integration of the 9 + 0–0 Principles, which provide a structured framework for reflective thinking and personal development.

Within mentoring, these principles function as a reflective scaffold that supports teachers in moving from surface-level observation toward deeper awareness and transformation. They guide the teacher through a developmental process that includes:

- identifying meaningful challenges,
- clarifying vision and purpose,
- recognizing obstacles and risks,
- engaging with internal reflection and intuition,
- understanding learning outcomes,
- integrating growth through gratitude and self-compassion.

This framework ensures that mentoring addresses not only professional competencies but also the internal dimensions of teaching, including beliefs, emotions, and identity.

The integration of these principles strengthens the coherence between personal and professional development, making learning more meaningful and sustainable.

Mentoring as a Process of Co-Creation

Within the LLI framework, mentoring is understood as a co-creative process. Knowledge and understanding are developed collaboratively through interaction between mentor and teacher.

This process is characterized by:

- shared exploration of experience,
- joint construction of meaning,
- mutual learning and reflection.

Co-creation ensures that solutions are context-specific and relevant, as they emerge directly from the teacher's own practice.

From External Control to Internal Ownership

A defining feature of the LLI methodology is the shift from externally driven development toward internal ownership of learning.

In traditional systems:

- motivation is often based on external requirements,
- feedback is provided by an external authority,
- development is shaped by compliance with standards.

In contrast, the LLI approach:

- fosters intrinsic motivation based on personal meaning,
- supports self-assessment through reflection,
- encourages responsibility for one's own growth.

Assessment is no longer understood as a formal procedure but as an ongoing reflective process supported by evidence gathered through practice, such as observations, journals, and portfolios.

Impact on Professional Learning

The application of the LLI methodology within mentoring leads to a qualitative shift in teacher development. It enables teachers to:

- engage more deeply with their practice,
- develop higher levels of self-awareness,
- align teaching with personal and professional values,
- respond more effectively to complex classroom situations.

This approach also contributes to the development of learning cultures within schools, where reflection, dialogue, and collaboration become integral parts of professional life.

Conclusion

The Learn & Lead Innovation methodology provides a coherent and comprehensive framework for mentoring that integrates experiential learning, reflective practice, and personal development.

By redefining roles, shifting the focus from instruction to experience, and integrating the 9 + 0–0 Principles, the methodology ensures that mentoring becomes a meaningful and transformative process.

It moves beyond improving isolated teaching techniques and supports the development of the teacher as a reflective, self-directed professional capable of continuous growth.

4. The Experiential Mentoring Cycle

The experiential mentoring cycle provides the operational structure of the ULCA Mentoring Support methodology, translating the conceptual foundations of the Learn & Lead Innovation approach into a coherent and repeatable process of professional learning.

While the Learn & Lead Innovation methodology defines how learning is understood — as experiential, reflective, and co-creative — the experiential mentoring cycle defines how this learning is enacted in practice. Together, they form an integrated framework in which mentoring becomes both structured and deeply developmental.

The cycle is grounded in Kolb's experiential learning model and is further enriched by reflective and developmental elements, including the 9 + 0–0 Principles, which deepen each phase of the process.

4.1 Experience: Engaging with Practice

The cycle begins with experience, where the teacher engages in authentic classroom practice. This phase captures the complexity of teaching, including interactions with students, instructional decisions, and the emotional dynamics of the learning environment.

The mentor observes without evaluative judgment, focusing on:

- student engagement and participation,
- teacher–student interaction,
- decision-making processes,
- moments of challenge and success.

Within the broader LLI framework, this phase corresponds to the identification of a real challenge and the emergence of a meaningful learning situation. It aligns with the initial principles of awareness and context, where experience becomes the starting point for reflection.

4.2 Reflection: Developing Awareness

The reflection phase enables the teacher to revisit and analyze the experience through structured dialogue. This process involves:

- describing what occurred,
- expressing thoughts and emotions,
- identifying significant moments.

The mentor facilitates reflection through open-ended questioning, supporting the teacher in moving from description toward awareness.

At this stage, elements of the 9 + 0–0 Principles become particularly relevant, especially:

- identification of obstacles and barriers,
- recognition of emotional responses,
- awareness of influencing factors.

Reflection transforms experience into conscious insight, creating the conditions for deeper understanding.

4.3 Understanding: Constructing Meaning

In the understanding phase, reflection is deepened through interpretation and connection to theory, pedagogical principles, and the Learn & Lead Innovation framework.

The teacher begins to:

- identify patterns in practice,
- connect experience with learner-centered principles,
- interpret the impact of actions on student learning.

The mentor supports this process by facilitating meaning-making rather than providing direct solutions.

This phase is closely linked to the deeper layers of the 9 + 0–0 Principles, including:

- clarification of purpose,
- engagement with inner perspective and intuition,
- recognition of learning emerging from experience.

Understanding represents the point at which experience becomes structured knowledge and professional insight.

4.4 Application: Transforming Practice

The application phase translates insight into action. The teacher formulates concrete steps for change, experiments with new strategies, and implements them in subsequent lessons.

This phase includes:

- defining specific goals,

- planning changes in practice,
- testing new approaches in real classroom settings.

The mentor supports this process through encouragement, follow-up, and continued dialogue.

Within the LLI framework, this phase reflects:

- ownership of learning,
- active engagement in development,
- movement toward self-directed professional growth.

It also connects with the concluding elements of the 9 + 0–0 Principles, including:

- consolidation of learning,
- recognition of progress,
- integration through self-awareness and reflection.

4.5 Continuity and Development

The experiential mentoring cycle is not a linear sequence but a continuous and iterative process. Each application generates a new experience, which becomes the starting point for further reflection and development.

This cyclical structure ensures that:

- learning is cumulative and progressively deepened,
- professional development is sustained over time,
- teachers continuously refine practice through reflection and action.

The integration of the Learn & Lead Innovation principles and the 9 + 0–0 framework ensures that this cycle operates not only at the level of observable behavior but also at the level of internal development, including beliefs, motivation, and professional identity.

4.6 Integration of Cycle and LLI Framework

The experiential mentoring cycle and the Learn & Lead Innovation methodology function as mutually reinforcing components of a single developmental model.

- The cycle provides structure and process.
- The LLI principles provide depth and meaning.
- The 9 + 0–0 Principles provide reflective guidance and personal integration.

Together, they ensure that mentoring:

- is structured yet flexible,
- is reflective yet action-oriented,
- supports both professional competence and personal growth.

Conclusion

The experiential mentoring cycle operationalizes the Learn & Lead Innovation methodology by embedding experiential learning, reflection, and co-creation into everyday teaching practice.

Through its cyclical and integrative nature, it ensures that mentoring becomes a continuous process of learning, enabling teachers to develop not only instructional skills but also the capacity for reflection, adaptation, and self-directed growth.

5. Mentoring Tools and Resources

The ULCA Mentoring Support methodology is supported by a set of structured tools that facilitate each phase of the experiential learning cycle.

Observation and reflection sheets provide a framework for capturing and analyzing classroom practice. These tools focus on key aspects of teaching and learning, ensuring that reflection is grounded in evidence.

The teacher learning journal supports ongoing reflection, allowing teachers to document experiences and track development over time.

Mentor–teacher dialogue forms structure the mentoring conversation, ensuring that reflection progresses through the stages of the learning cycle.

Action plan templates support the translation of insight into concrete steps, enabling teachers to implement changes in practice.

The professional portfolio integrates these elements into a comprehensive record of development, supporting both reflection and dialogue.

Key tools include:

- [**ULCA Teacher Observation Sheet:** quality standards for LCA in the classroom,](#)
- [**Learn & Lead Lesson Analysis Template:** guiding questions based on LLI values,](#)
- [**ULCA Action Plan Template:** following the sequence “Experiment – Reflect – Adjust – Apply.”](#)
- **Teacher’s Learning Journal:** reflective notes after each session,
- **Portfolio Section:** digital or printed record of growth and insights.

6. Core Competencies and Growth Dimensions

Within the ULCA Mentoring Support framework, teacher competencies are understood as dynamic, evolving capacities that develop through continuous engagement in experience, reflection, and application. This perspective aligns with the Learner-Centered Approach (LCA) Teacher Development Framework, where teacher development is viewed as a holistic and process-oriented transformation rather than the acquisition of isolated skills.

Competence, in this context, is not defined as a fixed state or measurable outcome, but as an ongoing developmental process. It is shaped by real teaching situations, reflective dialogue, and the teacher's ability to interpret and respond to complex learning environments.

The concept of **living competencies** reflects this understanding. These competencies:

- evolve over time,
- are context-sensitive,
- integrate cognitive, emotional, and relational dimensions,
- are continuously reshaped through experience and reflection.

This approach ensures that teacher development remains authentic, meaningful, and directly connected to classroom practice. However, to effectively support this ongoing development and ensure its practical applicability, it is crucial to provide teachers with tangible frameworks for self-assessment. To bridge the gap between abstract competencies and observable practice, this methodology advocates for the use of developmental rubrics and behavioral descriptors meticulously mapped to the five core competency areas. These descriptors do not serve as rigid grading metrics, but rather as reflective navigational tools, allowing teachers and mentors to objectively identify current developmental stages and collaboratively set concrete, actionable goals for professional growth.

6.1 Alignment with the LCA Teacher Development Framework

The ULCA competency model is aligned with the LCA Teacher Development Framework, which emphasizes:

- learner-centered teaching as a core principle,
- the integration of cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of learning,
- the importance of reflective practice and self-awareness,
- the development of teaching as a relational and adaptive process.

Within this framework, teacher competencies are not assessed in isolation but observed as part of a dynamic interaction between teacher, learner, and learning environment.

The mentoring process within ULCA serves as the mechanism through which these competencies are developed, supported, and continuously refined.

6.2 Core Competency Areas

The ULCA Mentoring Support methodology defines five key competency areas, understood as interconnected and mutually reinforcing dimensions of professional growth.

1. Pedagogical Creativity

Pedagogical creativity refers to the teacher's ability to design and facilitate meaningful learning experiences that respond to the needs, interests, and abilities of learners. It includes:

- adapting teaching strategies,
- creating engaging and relevant learning situations,
- responding flexibly to classroom dynamics.

2. Reflective Capacity

Reflective capacity is the ability to critically analyze one's own teaching practice and transform experience into learning. It includes:

- observation and awareness of one's actions,
- critical and analytical reflection,
- identification of patterns and relationships,
- generation of insights leading to modified action.

3. Communicative Intelligence

Communicative intelligence refers to the teacher's ability to establish meaningful connections with learners and engage in effective professional dialogue with mentors and colleagues. It includes:

- active listening,
- clarity of communication,
- responsiveness to learner needs,
- the ability to facilitate dialogue and interaction.

4. Emotional Balance

Emotional balance reflects the teacher's ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions, as well as respond empathetically to others. It includes:

- emotional awareness,
- self-regulation,
- resilience in challenging situations,
- cooperative and relational competencies.

5. Innovative Leadership

Innovative leadership refers to the teacher's capacity to take initiative, inspire others, and contribute to the development of learning-oriented environments. It includes:

- leading by example,
- openness to change and innovation,
- willingness to experiment and take risks,
- contribution to professional communities.

6.3 Development of Competencies through the Mentoring Cycle

Each of these competencies develops through active engagement in the experiential mentoring cycle:

- **Experience** provides real situations that challenge existing competencies.
- **Reflection** enables awareness and identification of strengths and areas for development.
- **Understanding** supports the integration of experience with theoretical and pedagogical knowledge.
- **Application** allows competencies to be tested, refined, and strengthened in practice.

This cyclical process ensures that competencies are continuously developed and adapted to changing contexts.

6.4 Integration of Internal and External Dimensions

A key feature of the ULCA competency model is the integration of internal and external dimensions of teacher development.

External dimensions include:

- observable teaching behaviors,
- instructional strategies,
- classroom management practices.

Internal dimensions include:

- beliefs,
- values,
- motivations,
- emotional responses.

The integration of these dimensions is further supported by the Learn & Lead Innovation framework and the 9 + 0–0 Principles, which deepen reflection and connect professional practice with personal development.

6.5 Competencies as a Developmental Path

Rather than being treated as separate categories, the five competencies form a developmental pathway in which:

- reflection strengthens awareness,
- awareness supports intentional action,
- action leads to innovation and leadership.

This progression reflects the transformation of the teacher from a practitioner focused on teaching performance toward a reflective professional engaged in continuous learning and development.

Conclusion

The ULCA Mentoring Support competency framework, aligned with the LCA Teacher Development Framework, provides a comprehensive model for understanding teacher development as a dynamic and integrated process.

By redefining competencies as living capacities and embedding them within the experiential learning cycle, the methodology ensures that professional growth is continuous, contextually grounded, and deeply connected to both practice and personal development.

7. Testing and Implementation

The implementation of the ULCA Mentoring Support methodology follows a structured yet flexible approach that reflects the principles of experiential learning and continuous development embedded in the Learn & Lead Innovation framework.

The process begins with **pilot implementation**, where mentoring is tested in real educational settings. This phase focuses on validating the methodology, refining tools, and building mentoring capacity through practical experience. It allows teachers and mentors to engage with the model in authentic contexts and generate initial insights.

The next phase involves **integration into practice**, where the methodology is embedded within existing teacher development systems. This includes alignment with institutional structures, professional learning processes, and school-level practices. The goal is to ensure that mentoring becomes a natural and sustainable part of everyday professional development rather than an isolated intervention.

Continuous evaluation is an integral part of the process. In line with the ULCA and Learn & Lead approach, evaluation is not based solely on measurement but on reflective dialogue and shared learning. Feedback from teachers and mentors supports ongoing refinement and adaptation of the methodology.

Finally, **dissemination and scaling** are supported through professional networks, training activities, and knowledge-sharing platforms. This enables broader adoption while maintaining the integrity of the methodology.

Overall, implementation is understood as an iterative process that mirrors the experiential mentoring cycle, ensuring that development remains responsive, context-sensitive, and sustainable.

8. Working with Portfolios

The professional portfolio is a central component of the methodology, serving as a structured record of the teacher's learning journey.

The portfolio reflects the stages of the experiential learning cycle — experience, reflection, understanding, and application. It provides evidence of development and supports ongoing reflection.

As a tool for self-assessment and dialogue, the portfolio enables teachers to track progress, identify patterns, and plan further development. It is not used for formal evaluation, but as a means of supporting learning and professional growth. By utilizing the portfolio in this way, the ULCA Mentoring Support framework ensures that teacher development is not just a series of cyclical steps, but a continuous upward spiral of self-leadership and professional identity formation.

9. Mentoring Dialogue and Reflection Practices

Mentoring dialogue represents a central mechanism through which learning is activated within the ULCA Mentoring Support framework. It operationalizes the principles of experiential learning by transforming teaching experience into structured reflection, meaning-making, and professional development.

In contrast to traditional approaches, where dialogue often serves as a tool for evaluation and feedback delivery, the Learn & Lead Innovation approach redefines mentoring dialogue as a developmental process. The purpose of the dialogue is not to assess performance but to support awareness, reflection, and ownership of learning.

Effective mentoring dialogue is structured, non-judgmental, and grounded in trust. It creates a safe environment in which teachers can openly explore their experience, articulate their thinking, and develop deeper insight into practice. This aligns with the broader ULCA and LLI framework, where learning is understood as a reflective and internally driven process.

9.1 Traditional vs. Learn & Lead Mentoring Dialogue

The difference between traditional and Learn & Lead mentoring dialogue can be understood as a shift from evaluation to development.

Table 3: The Evolution of the Mentoring Conversation

Focus Area	Traditional Dialogue (Evaluation-Oriented)	Learn & Lead Mentoring Dialogue (Development-Oriented)
Purpose	To assess performance	To support reflection and growth
Teacher role	Respondent	Reflective practitioner
Mentor role	Evaluator	Facilitator of learning
Focus	Teaching performance	Learning process
Questions	Closed, evaluative	Open, reflective
Feedback	Directive ("You should...")	Exploratory ("What might you try...?")
Errors	Seen as failure	Seen as learning opportunities
Outcome	Judgment, report	Insight, action, development

This transformation reflects the core principles of the Learn & Lead Innovation approach, where learning is constructed through dialogue and reflection rather than imposed through evaluation.

9.2 Structure of Reflective Dialogue

Mentoring dialogue within the ULCA framework is structured around different levels of questioning that correspond to the experiential mentoring cycle.

Descriptive Level (Experience)

The dialogue begins with reconstruction of the experience:

- What happened during the lesson?
- What did you notice?

Analytical Level (Understanding)

The focus shifts toward interpretation and meaning:

- Why do you think this happened?
- What patterns do you observe?

Transformational Level (Application)

The dialogue moves toward action and development:

- What would you like to change next time?
- What experiment would you like to try?

This progression ensures that reflection evolves from description to insight and ultimately to transformation.

9.3 Example of Mentoring Dialogue in Practice

The difference between traditional and Learn & Lead mentoring can be illustrated through a typical classroom situation.

Table 4: Low student engagement

Traditional Approach	Learn & Lead Mentoring Approach
Students were not engaged enough. Why?	What did you notice about student engagement?
You should use more interactive methods.	When were students most engaged?
You didn't manage the class effectively.	What do you think influenced their engagement?
Try group work next time.	What would you like to try differently next time?

This example illustrates the shift from directive feedback toward reflective exploration, where the teacher actively constructs understanding and identifies a personally meaningful path for improvement.

9.3.1 Working with Reflective Resistance

To effectively implement the dialogue modeled above, the methodology must account for the reality that not all practitioners will immediately possess the vocabulary, reflective capacity, or psychological safety required. While the dialogue above illustrates an ideal scenario, this model must account for the fact that not all practitioners will immediately possess the vocabulary, reflective capacity, or psychological safety required to openly analyze their teaching challenges. Mentors must be equipped with specific scaffolding strategies. If a teacher responds with 'I don't know' or exhibits resistance to deep self-reflection, the mentor should utilize tiered questioning techniques and supportive interventions designed to gradually build the teacher's reflective capacity from the ground up, ensuring the process remains inclusive for practitioners at all levels of readiness.

9.4 Integration of the 9 + 0–0 Principles in Dialogue

The mentoring dialogue can be further deepened through the integration of the 9 + 0–0 Principles, which provide a structured framework for reflective thinking and personal development.

These principles can be used as guiding prompts within the dialogue:

Table 5: Reflective Questions Based on the 9 + 0–0 Principles

Principle	Reflective Question Example
Challenge	What is the real challenge for you in this situation?
Vision	What would success look like for you?
Obstacles	What is standing in your way?
Support	Who could support you?
Purpose (Why)	Why is this important to you?
Learning	What are you learning from this experience?
0–0 (Gratitude)	What can you appreciate about yourself in this process?

Through this integration, mentoring dialogue moves beyond technical reflection and addresses deeper dimensions of teaching, including beliefs, motivation, emotions, and professional identity.

9.5 Role of the Mentor

Within this collaborative framework, the mentor serves as a professional sounding board. Rather than directing the process, the mentor:

- co-facilitates the structure of the dialogue,
- engages in reciprocal reflective inquiry,
- collaborates with the teacher in the meaning-making process,
- mutually encourages academic experimentation and growth.

Importantly, the mentor does not provide ready-made solutions but creates the conditions in which the teacher can discover personal insights. This reinforces the shift from external control to internal ownership of learning.

9.6 Reflective Writing and Continuity

Reflective writing complements mentoring dialogue and strengthens its impact. Tools such as learning journals and portfolios enable teachers to:

- document reflections,
- track development over time,
- revisit insights and evaluate progress.

This continuity ensures that reflection becomes an ongoing process rather than a one-time activity.

Conclusion

Mentoring dialogue within the ULCA Mentoring Support framework is not merely a feedback mechanism but a structured process of learning. It connects experience, reflection, and action, enabling teachers to develop deeper awareness, take ownership of their learning, and continuously improve practice.

Through the integration of the Learn & Lead Innovation approach and the 9 + 0–0 Principles, mentoring dialogue becomes a powerful tool for both professional and personal development.

10. Annexes and Templates

The annex includes a set of practical tools supporting implementation, including observation sheets, reflection templates, action plans, and examples of mentoring practice. These resources ensure that the methodology can be applied consistently and effectively across different educational contexts.