

## Preparing In-Service Teachers for Exploratory Action Research: The Potential of Mentor's Mediation Discourse in Promoting Conceptual Thinking

*B. Salomi Snehalatha*

### Abstract

Drawing from Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory of learning, this article explores the potential of mentor's mediational discourse in shaping the conceptual thinking and learning of teacher researchers. Informal mentoring support was provided over a period of six months to four in-service teachers involved in an exploratory action research project funded by the British Council. Conversations were an important component of the mentoring process in this project as they were purposefully used by the mentor to mediate the mentees' conceptual thinking and promote their learning. Analysis of conversations revealed three different types of conceptualizations - explicit guidance, rationalizing and visualizing - used by the mentor to prompt reflection and construction of knowledge. The data also suggests that novice teacher researchers need dialogic support which can be provided by a model of conceptual thinking during conversations. The study has implications for teacher educators and teachers who volunteer to mentor their colleagues, especially in an informal context.

**Keywords:** mentoring, action research, conceptual thinking, mediation, socio-cultural theory, mediational discourse

In teacher education literature, conducting a scientific and systematic inquiry into classroom challenges and problematic situations is considered a necessary skill (Elliott, 1994; Burns, 2010; Smith, Padwad & Bullock, 2017; Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). Teachers are first questioners