



A review of principles and practices of mentoring with reference to selected modern techniques

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Abstract

Higher education system in India and across the world are always on a pursuit for best practices to be incorporated as a part of both the academic domain in the short run, and human capital leveraging in the long run. In this regard, mentorship has emerged as one of the much needed tool to awaken the dormant potential of candidates to serve as excellent initiators of change and development at the micro and macro level. The present study attempts to get started with mentoring by familiarizing with its rudiments, by understanding the role and scope of mentors along with laying down some best practices and techniques to meet varying needs.

Keywords: mentoring, modern techniques, pursuit

1. Introduction

The Cambridge English dictionary defines a mentor as, "a person who gives a younger or a less experienced person help and advice over a period of time, especially at work or at school"

However, this phrase pertaining to a mentor comes with certain exceptions, especially to that component which refers to the age criteria of the mentor and mentee. Field expertise, problem solving capabilities, level of trust involved is a few of the many parameters which decide the outcome pertaining to the success of a mentor in shaping the path of his mentee.

The person in receipt of the benefits of mentoring is called as the mentee, or a protege. The position of a protege is compared to that of an apprentice, and places utmost trust and faith in the abilities and qualities of a mentor in finding a suitable path to tread on.

A few traits of mentoring are laid down as

1. Knowledge dissemination on a routine and ad-hoc basis
2. Mental/emotional/psychological support to the mentee.
3. Enable professional development

It can here be understood that Mentoring is not the same as counselling. While counselling is taken up as a onetime measure to ameliorate an existing situation, mentoring surpasses counselling in terms of the scope and tools involved.

The focus of Counselling is to purely enable an individual choose an appropriate course of action that best suits a scenario with some degree of sensitivity analysis. On the other hand, mentoring takes up a comparatively holistic approach, not focusing on the problem in parts, but as a combination of the individual, the problem under consideration and the environment in which the individual works.

Based on the area under which mentoring is taken up, the corresponding terms coined are as follows

1. Academic mentor
2. Profession or trade mentors
3. Industry mentor

4. Organization mentor
5. Work process mentor
6. Technology mentor

In this regard it can be noted that the role of an academic mentor is the most comprehensive and all-encompassing of all types of Mentors. In fact, an academic mentor can align himself in a manner that enables him to fit into all the other roles, from his own dimension.

An academic mentor is considered to be a very positive role model who creates successful candidates, by tapping their untapped potential, and impact their dormant energy, with a view to enable self-analysis, self-realization, and independence in the long run.

One crucial component of an ideal mentoring system is to offer a conducive and protective environment where mentees feel both convenient and secure to express themselves.

American Psychological Association lists characteristics of effective mentoring to include

"The ability and willingness to

- value the mentee as a person;
- develop mutual trust and respect;
- maintain confidentiality;
- listen both to what is being said and how it is being said;
- help the mentee solve his or her own problem, rather than give direction;
- Focus on the mentee's development and resist the urge to produce a clone."

2. Research Design and Review of Literature

Research Design

The present study is purely based on secondary data, as material is drawn from various expert articles, websites, and previous studies published in the form of books and journals.

Research methodology: This article is purely descriptive in nature, as it elaborates on the need and scope of mentoring, along

with some important tools that can be employed with respect to the same.

Review of Literature

1. Abugre, J. B., & Kpinpuo, S. D. (2017). Determinants of Academic Mentoring in Higher Education: Evidence from a Research University. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 6(2), 20-36.

The major purpose behind this work is to contribute strongly to academic mentoring and in the process discovering some major antecedents of mentoring in institutions of Higher Education, providing them with the value of developing their internal human capital asset that can leverage their performance.

The study concluded stating that mentoring could always succeed as a holistic process, drawing support from professors and academicians of varying levels of expertise, therefore broadening the knowledge horizon.

One major contribution from the study is that it establishes a positive correlation between quality of academic life and effective mentorship.

2. How can an academic mentor improve support of tomorrow's doctors?

Fiona Robertson (4th year MBChB); Chloe Donaldson (4th year MBChB), Robert Jarvis (Academic Mentor, Dundee Medical School & General Practitioner) & David Jeffrey (Former Academic Mentor, Dundee Medical School & Honorary Senior Lecturer in Palliative Medicine, University of Edinburgh)

This study had taken up the role of mentoring with medical study candidates as the focal points. The students were asked to give a review on the aspects of a mentor's role which were found to be highly supportive and also throw light on barriers associated.

The study concluded with strong observations on the determinants of successful mentoring included the unique facility of having confidential meetings with students, believing in them and helping them to achieve their aims without having to assess them academically. Communication is effective because there is an atmosphere of trust, friendliness and a mutual respect. Mentoring depends on the character of the mentor and the individual student.

3. The Impact of Peer Mentoring on Mentee Academic Performance: Is Any Mentoring Style Better than No Mentoring at All?

International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2014, Volume 26, Number 1, 102-111
<http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/> ISSN 1812-9129

The goal of the study was to examine the effect of a peer mentoring program and, in detail, the impact of different mentoring styles on two indicators of mentee academic performance (average grade and number of courses passed) after 1 year and 2 years of study.

The study provided insight into the effect of a peer mentoring program on mentee academic performance. Mentees seemed to benefit from the peer mentoring program independently of the

mentor's individual mentoring style. Mentees passed a higher number of courses and achieved better average grades after 1 year and 2 years of study than non-mentees.

3. Discussions

Mentorship is always a meaningful commitment. It would not be out of place to mention that mentoring needs subtle understanding of various interrelated and interdependent factors. Every mentor may be guided by various principles, the foremost among them being:

1. Ensuring a win-win situation

A win-win situation is always a handy tool for all mentors to bring out the best outcome from the process. It gives the mentor learning outcomes such as managerial communication and strengthens negotiation tactics.

2. Integrity-it is only when the mentee is won over with respect to maintenance of confidentiality of facts divulged to the mentor; it is possible for effective and sustainable relationship to be harbored between the parties. Therefore, honesty of expression and integrity in maintaining confidentiality are twin factors in mentorship.
3. Active listening skills- a mentor cannot be prejudiced and thereby limit the free flow of thoughts of the mentee at the time of hearing out his problems, which may result in the mentee being slighted.
4. Serve as a role model- a mentor should serve by means of his own example and working pattern; which best inspires the mentee to tread on the same path. In this regard, it must be perceived that any deviation from what the mentor himself believes in; or a preach-practice gap may lead to the mentee losing complete or partial faith on the mentor
5. Adaptability to changing scenario

The mentee cannot be expected to produce the same outcome at different points of time on a given experiment. In this direction, the mentor is supposed to work out different probable situations to which the mentee may be exposed to and alter his working style accordingly. A rigid mentorship may result in missing out new opportunities.

Modern mentoring techniques and approaches

There are multiple techniques which can be used as effective ice-breakers and comprehensive strategies to pave way for ideal mentoring relationship. They include:

1. Appreciative Inquiry- refers to a technique which asks the mentee to recall one such achievement which had contributed to their past success. This event recollection in turn paves a way for the mentee to recollect what factors contributed to his success and makes him grasp what he can bank upon for future success.
2. Career scenarios
 This calls for a host of meetings and sessions between the mentor and the mentee, where the mentee is asked to map up a series of options, constraints, and aims as well as knowledge of opportunities that might be available.
3. Personal quality profile
 Whenever a mentee suffers from low self-esteem, asking him to list out qualities banking on which he best appreciates himself enables him come out of his esteem issues.
4. Force field analysis

It is generally applied whenever a course of action is studied with respect to its merits and demerits. It involves studying every course of action with due consideration to the positive implications and adverse outcomes, listed after a comprehensive discussion between the mentor and the mentee.

5. Mind mapping- also considered as the best of all methods in brainstorming, helps an individual coin as many facts as possible in a manner to be easily remembered. This may come as a handy tool to solve complex and elaborate detailed problems.

Table 1: The Mentorship Techniques May be Shown Summarized as Below

	Cause	Course	Outcome
Appreciative inquiry	A new perplexing challenge	Recall similar events	Determinants to success
Personal quality profile	Low self esteem	Listing out self-analytical best qualities	Self-motivation
Career scenario	Choosing the best course	Swot analysis	The best course
Force field analysis	Choosing the best course	Pros and cons	The best course
Mind mapping	Large data	Symbols and phrases coined	

4. Summary of Findings, Suggestions, and Conclusion

Some major observations on the principles and practices of mentoring are

- mentorship can be truly realized in terms of outcomes only when carried out for a sustained period of time
- academic mentorship is comprehensive and all-encompassing where traits of several other modes of mentoring are realized as well
- Flexibility and suspension of bias play an instrumental role in deciding key qualities of a mentor.
- The techniques of mentorship offer a wide array of opportunities for both the mentorship parties to establish long term success and realize a higher magnitude of benefits.
- The techniques of mentorship are identical, yet each technique has its own set of implications to be carefully pondered over by the mentor for its right application.

To conclude, no single method is found suitable to address candidates with varying potential, and varying with time, place, and utility sought. In this regard it shall be the prime responsibility of the mentor to clearly eliminate all ambiguity in the problem to be addressed and bring in an integrated and holistic approach in every phase that is taken with respect to his mentee.

5. Scope for Future Research

On a thorough understanding of guidelines and techniques of mentoring, studies are to be taken up on the role of an academic mentor, addressing the emotional and psychological part of the entire process. In this regard, the science and art of mentorship will benefit immensely with better quantitative approaches towards emotional and intelligence quotients of the mentees.

6. References

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