

Importance of Mentoring in Higher Education

Balu.L

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Christ University, Bangalore-560029, India
E-mail: balu.l@christuniversity.in

Abstract

Mentoring is a valuable strategy to provide students with the emotional and instrumental support students need to achieve the goal of a college degree. By providing information, guidance, and encouragement, mentors can play an important role in nurturing students' college aspirations, helping them prepare for their future. Mentorship programs are offered to support students in program completion, confidence building and transitioning to further education or the workforce. Today Internet has brought university alumni closer to graduating students. This research paper addresses the important challenges faced by students during the tenure of their graduation and how faculty mentors facilitate these challenges through mentoring process. Through an empirical effort author signifies the scope for mentorship in the near future in the field of higher education.

Keywords: Protégés, catalyst, Learning Collaboration

Introduction

Students all over the world face a number of problems which dishearten them. It leads to sheer desperation among the student community giving rise to student unrest. Student life has probably become more difficult than at any time before. There are so many challenges they have to deal with - study, time, money, relationships, job hopes, and more. Parents, previous experience and education does not always equip them in dealing with such pressures. Many students will not admit their problems due to various reasons and this affects their Future Prospects. And over a period of time these can badly hamper a student behavior. Usually students face general symptoms of emotional imbalances as part of growing up as adult and these become more pronounced because of the hectic student life. All such negativeness can be effectively controlled to the maximum extent with the aid of understanding and implementing the concept of mentoring in higher education.

History of Mentoring in Higher Education

A growing base of research in educational settings has also examined the benefits of mentoring (Russell and Adams 1997). Mentoring has been examined in general, special, and higher education (Campbell and Campbell 2000). Some research has explored mentoring and at-risk students, peer mentoring in secondary education, student teachers (Boreen and Niday 2000; Hawkey 1997), beginning teachers (Ballantyne, Hansford, and Packer 1995; Evertson and Smithey 2000; Gratch 1998), faculty and students (Campbell and Campbell 2000; Cullen and Luna 1993; Waldeck, Orrego, Plax, and Kearney 1997), and faculty (Goodwin, Stevens and Bellamy 1998). Prior studies have provided overviews of mentoring and examined forms and consequences of mentoring, particularly at the elementary and secondary education levels (Campbell and Campbell 2000; Cunningham 1999; Hawkey 1997).

Similar to mentoring within work organizations, formal programs exist in educational settings that assign students to mentors. Conversely, some mentorship relationships develop naturally without any formal structure or support (Campbell and Campbell 2000). In contrast, at least at the elementary and secondary level, mentoring relationships that are more structured and organized within classroom settings tend to be more successful (Barton-Ahood, Jolivet, and Massey 2000). The sections that follow present a brief overview of current research on mentoring within various educational settings.

Research on faculty-to-student mentoring is incomplete, and Goodwin, Stevens, and Bellamy (1998) suggest that only a few articles and books exist that have explored this phenomenon. Although mentoring among graduate students tends to be more common than at the undergraduate level, mentoring research in academic settings has largely excluded graduate student/faculty mentoring experiences (Cullen and Luna 1993; Waldeck, Orrego, Plax, and Kearney 1997). In an attempt to extend this line of inquiry, Waldeck et al. surveyed mentored graduate students to obtain a profile of the graduate student faculty mentoring relationship, identification and selection strategies, evaluations of strategies, mentoring functions, and satisfaction with the mentoring relationship. One striking finding from this research was the perception of difficulty among students at initiating mentoring relationships with faculty members. The authors suggest that increased sensitivity toward legal issues such as sexual harassment and ramifications of inappropriate relationships with students may discourage faculty from mentoring graduate students. Overall, however, students generally received more psychosocial mentoring functions and were satisfied with their mentoring experiences. However, Waldeck et al. acknowledge that the effectiveness of mentoring relationships among graduate students and faculty must be examined longitudinally.

In contrast, a related study by Ervin (1995) examines the experiences of women as both mentors and

protégés; study participants acknowledged that their academic mentors were unsupportive emotionally, unwilling or unable to give them feedback, and unwilling to share their knowledge. Findings from another study conducted by Bowman, Bowman, and Hatley (1995) on the issue of dual relationships between full-time faculty and graduate students suggest that more research is needed on the ethics of faculty-student relationships and that students should have more input on such relationships since mentoring, friendship, and social interaction affect the graduate student experience.

Campbell and Campbell (2000) conducted a survey study within a large West Coast university. In this program, faculty volunteer to mentor students and are paired based upon their shared academic interests. Findings suggest that students tend to assess the value of the mentoring relationship in terms of getting assistance from their mentors with academic matters. Faculty mentors, however, were more sensitive to the social benefits of mentoring students and developing a personal bond and friendships with their students.

The differences in perceived benefits suggest that further research is needed to explore what motivates faculty and students to participate in mentoring programs.

Mentoring and Importance of Faculty Mentors in Higher Education

Just uttering the word “mentor” may bring to mind images of supportive people in the past or present who have assisted us and continue to sustain us in our professional and personal lives. But “mentoring is a slippery concept” declares Patricia Cross (1999) in her foreword to Daloz’s second edition of *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners*. Indeed, a search through the mountains of literature and research concerning mentoring reveals differing definitions for the term. Levinson et al. (1978) defined a mentor as “teacher, advisor, or sponsor” (p. 97), leaving the term open to personal or professional connotation. Daloz (1999) gives mentors mystical powers, declaring that “mentors give us the magic that allows us to enter the darkness; a talisman to protect us from evil spells, a gem of wise advice, a map, and sometimes simply courage” (p. 18). Others choose to define mentors as helping more with professional life, such as Ragins (1997b), who describes mentors as people with advanced experiences and knowledge who are willing and, in most cases, committed to providing upward mobility and support to their

Protégés career development. Sands, Parson, and Duane (1992) add the idea of nurturing to their definition of a mentor: “professional guide who nurtures and promotes the learning and success of his or her protégés” (p. 124).

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.” - John Crosby

Mentoring process receives a lot of attention from the researchers, providing multiple definitions and perspectives on what exactly is mentor, mentee and mentoring process. At a given point of time most of us have experiences mentoring.

Traditionally mentoring is one of the ways used to transfer knowledge. It is described as the matching of a new employee with a more experienced person in the same role. Mentoring is a human resource development process whereby a more experienced (senior) / knowledgeable person (mentor) takes the responsibility of developing and empowering a less experienced (junior) staff member (protégé or mentee).

Kram (1985) defines a mentor as an individual who is advanced, experienced, and knowledgeable and is committed to career support to protégé. A mentor willingly invests time, interest, and support to help them with their upward mobility (Peluchette & Jeanquart, 2000 et al). These definition best suits the current role one teacher has to play to facilitate the challenges faced by the student community.

A mentor provides expertise to protégés to help them for different purposes like advance their careers, enhance their education, or build their networks. Mentoring is win-win situation where mentor, mentee and education institution all have developmental benefits. The institutional benefits of mentoring are numerous and cannot be rejected.

Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993), which suggests that a mentor is a senior experienced organizational member who specifically helps a young professional develop their individual technical, interpersonal, and political skills. Students in higher education come with the ambition of acquiring or sharpening their skill set. But they are in dilemma of analyzing and implementing the same, it is during this time faculty mentors facilitate students in helping them in skill mapping for their career.

Some authors rightly put mentoring as a “A Learning Collaboration”—a developmental caring, sharing, and helping relationship with a focus on the enhancement of the protégé’s or mentee’s growth and skill development. The focus of mentoring is on the mentee’s career and psychosocial needs. Mentoring is just-in time help, insight into issues, and the sharing of expertise, values, skills, and perspectives. Mentors function as a catalyst—an agent that provokes a reaction that might not otherwise have taken place or speeds up a reaction that might have taken place in the future. The outcome of this positive approach is involvement of mentees in research work, presenting research papers with mentors in national and international conferences. Some mentors do publish their combined research work in international journals, exposing the talent of a mentee, which becomes an intrinsic reward for a mentee.

Evertson and Smithey (2000) examined the effects of support provided by trained mentors on the classroom practices of their entry-year protégés. Their findings suggest that preparing mentors does enable them to be more successful in supporting protégés' success. Specifically, protégés of trained mentors showed increased evidence of developing and sustaining more workable classroom routines, managing instruction more smoothly, and gaining student cooperation in academic tasks. Evertson and Smithey concluded that the presence of a mentor is not sufficient; the skills and knowledge of the mentor are critical to the relationship. Research from the National Center for Research on Teaching and Learning at Michigan State University (Gratch 1998) also suggests that mentors do not guarantee that novice teachers will become more skilled at teaching.

Clearly, mentoring relationships do not always provide the rosy outcomes depicted by much of the research. Gender, race, class, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and issues of power may affect how protégés and mentors interact and negotiate their relationship, both internally and externally, and ultimately affect the success of formal mentoring programs.

Cunningham reflects that most faculties do not perceive their schools to place much real value on the time spent in mentoring. Mentoring is generally not included in faculty role expectations, considered in load computations, or tracked in faculty or promotion reviews. Faculties are too busy with other priorities and, without the reinforcement offered through means such as load computations and inclusion in reviews, they will gravitate toward those duties for which they are compensated and reviewed. If mentoring is to increase in our academic community, administrations, boards and Universities will need to incorporate it in formal expectations.

Conclusion

The success of any mentoring programme in higher education today largely depends on understanding the attributes, of a mentor and mentee. Understanding the relevance of mentoring programme in academic institutions have long way to go. No institution today talk about meeting global competencies without creating globally competitive students. In this regard implementation of mentoring programme becomes a key for success in future for all academic institutions.

References

- Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., & Lentz, E. (2006). Mentorship behaviors and mentorship quality associated with formal mentoring programs: Closing the gap between research and practice. *The American Psychological Association*, 567-578.
- Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., O'Brien, K. E., & Lentz, E. (2008). The State of Mentoring Research: A qualitative review of current research methods and future research implications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 343-357.
- Ballantyne, R.; Hansford, B.; and Packer, J. "Mentoring Beginning Teachers: A Qualitative Analysis of Process and Outcomes." *Educational Review* 47, no. 3 (November 1995): 297-308
- Barton-Arwood, S.; Jolivet, K.; and Massey, N. G. "Mentoring with Elementary-Age Students." *Intervention in School and Clinic* 36, no. 1 (September 2000): 36.
- Boreen, J., and Niday, D. "Breaking through the Isolation: Mentoring Beginning Teachers." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 44, no. 2 (October 2000): 152-164.
- Burke, R. J., McKeen, C. A., & McKenna, C. (1994). Benefits of mentoring in organizations the mentor's perspective. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23-32.
- Campbell, D. E., and Campbell, T. A. "The Mentoring Relationship: Differing Perceptions of Benefits." *College Student Journal* 34, no. 4 (December 2000): 516-523.
- Cullen, D. L., and Luna, G. "Women Mentoring in Academe: Addressing the Gender Gap in Higher Education." *Gender & Education* 5, no. 2 (1993): 125-138
- Cunningham, Shelley. "The Nature of Workplace Mentoring Relationships Among Faculty Members in Christian Higher Education." *The Journal of Higher Education* 70 (July/August 1999): 441-63.
- Daloz, L. A. *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1999.
- Daresh, John C., and Marsha Playco. "Mentoring in Educational Leadership Development: What are the Responsibilities of the Protégé?" A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California, April 18-22, 1995.
- Dymock, D. (1999). Blind date: a case study of mentoring as workplace learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning: Employee Counseling Today* (11), 312-317.
- Ervin, E. "Power, Frustration, and 'Fierce Negotiation' in Mentoring Relationships: Four Women Tell Their Stories." *Women's Studies* 24, no. 5 (1995): 447-481.
- Ensher, E. A., & Murphy, S. E. (2010). The mentoring relationship challenges scale: The impact of mentoring stage, type and gender. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 1-14.
- Evertson, C. M., and Smithey, M. W. "Mentoring Effects on Protégés' Classroom Practice: An Experimental Field Study." *Journal of Educational Research* 93, no. 5 (May-June 2000):294-304.
- Ferrari, J. (2004). Mentors in life and at school: Impact on undergraduate protégé perceptions of university

- mission and values. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 12(3), 295-305.
- Gratch, A. "Beginning Teacher and Mentor Relationships." *Journal of Teacher Education* 49, no. 3 (May-June 1998): 220-228.
- Goodwin, L. D.; Stevens, E. A.; and Bellamy, G. T. "Mentoring among Faculty in Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education." *Journal of Teacher Education* 49, no. 5 (November-December 1998) : 334-343
- Gratch, A. "Beginning Teacher and Mentor Relationships." *Journal of Teacher Education* 49, no. 3 (May-June 1998): 220-228.
- Hawkey, K. "Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships in Mentoring: A Literature Review and Agenda for Research." *Journal of Teacher Education* 48, no. 5 (November-December 1997): 325-336.
- Kram, K. E. "Improving the Mentoring Process." *Training and Development Journal* 39, no. 4 (April 1985): 40-43.
- Kram, K. E., and Isabella, L. A. "Mentoring Alternatives: The Role of Peer Relationships in Career Development." *Academy of Management Journal* 28, no. 1 (1985): 110-128.
- Mee-Lee, L. & Bush, T. (2003). Student mentoring in higher education: Hong Kong Baptist University. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 11(3), 263-271.
- Ragins, B. R. "Diversified Mentoring Relationships in Organizations: A Power Perspective." *Academy of Management Review* 22, no. 2 (April 1997): 482-521
- Ragins, B. R. "Diversified Mentoring Relationships in Organizations: A Power Perspective." *Academy of Management Review* 22, no. 2 (April 1997): 482-521.
- Russell, J. E. A., and Adams, D. M. "The Changing Nature of Mentoring in Organizations: An Introduction to the Special Issue on Mentoring in Organizations." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 51, no. 1 (August 1997): 1-14.
- Sands, R. G.; Parson, L. A.; and Duane, J. "Faculty-Faculty Mentoring and Discrimination: Perceptions among Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Island Faculty." *Equity and Excellence* 25, nos. 2-4 (Winter 1992): 124-129.
- Shotton, H. J., Oosahwe, E. S. L. & Cintrón, R. (2007). Stories of success: Experiences of American Indian students in a peer-mentoring retention program. *The Review of Higher Education* 31(1), 81-107. Retrieved September 21, 2010, from Project MUSE database.
- Smith, J. L. (2011, April). Mentoring improves organizations. *Face of Quality*, p. 14.
- Udeh, I. E., & Omar, A. (2009). Strategic Versus Gratuitous Mentoring: a preliminary investigation. *Proceedings of the Academy of Strategic Management*, 8 (1), 44-47.
- Terrion, J., & Leonard, D. (2007). A taxonomy of the characteristics of student peer mentors in higher education: Findings from a literature review. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 15(2), 149-164.
- Waldeck, J. H.; Orrego, V. O.P.; la x, T. G.; and Keamey, P. "Graduate Student Faculty Mentoring Relationships: Who Gets Mentored, How It Happens, and to What End." *Communication Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 93-109.
- Young, A. M., & Perrewe, P. L. (2004). The Role of Expectations in the Mentoring Exchange: an analysis of mentor and protege expectations in relation to perceived support. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 16 (1), 103-126.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

