

# Impact of Mentoring on Career Development of Students

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## ABSTRACT

*Raising academic and student standards has generated increasing concern in recent times; particularly due to the availability of multiple career options and seemingly the inability of institutes to compete positively. As a step to tackle this concern finding alternatives of improving the productivity of students and academics is seen as an important step in maintaining the standards. Mentoring a term very commonly used in the corporate world today is seen as a catalyst for career success and an effective tool which enables individuals to make wise career choices as well as develop themselves in the right direction. This study is a descriptive study intended to understand the mentoring relationship and its benefits to the students for analyzing their career choices and development. Mentorship as a concept in organizations has been by far used as a retention and developmental tool. Many developed countries have incorporated mentoring programs in their education systems which has proved to have positive outcomes across four domains of graduate learning: academic, career, psychological, and social.*

*Keywords: career development, counselling, sociopsychology, employability, mentoring and internship*

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of mentoring dates back to the ancient Greek era. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the time when Ulysses was on his journey to Troy, he left his son in guidance of a trustworthy teacher, a mentor, with instructions to take care of the boy and raise him as his own child (Gentry, Weber, & Sadri, 2008).. Donaldson, Grant-Vallone and Ensher define "mentoring" as when a senior person or mentor provides knowledge, suggestion, and emotional support to a junior person or student over a period of time. Mentoring is considered as a core component of the duties of academic institutions, to facilitate successful achievement of student academics. It has been recognised as a catalyst for career success and a facilitator of career selection, advancement, and productivity (Sambunjak, Strauss & Marusic, 2006). Mentoring has a long tradition in higher education (Greyling & Rhodes, 2006). In the traditional academic model, a mentor holding expertise in a discipline may seek students to nurture. He may encourage them to undertake particular research, write part of an article or contribution to a book, or become research assistants or associates on a large project. During this process, the younger academic learns skills, gains opportunities and acquires information about resources required for fulfilling his ambition. In addition, the younger academics (mentees) learn to understand and 'decode' the corporate culture (Chesterman, 2001; Giber, 2004 cited in Greyling and Rodes, 2006).

Career management is carried out in organizations as part of career planning and employee development. It is a popular developmental tool used by organisations to train junior staff members. Also termed as the Buddy system. In recent years, mentoring has emerged as a strong response to the career and psychological issues of youth. Across colleges and university campuses of the countries, mentoring programs have been initiated and run on a rapid scale with increasing numbers of college students working one-to-one with young people in schools, community agencies, and other settings. According to experts at Deloitte's Future of Work practice, the future job seekers will increasingly need to identify coaches or experts who can help them get better faster – organisations, small workgroups and wider and more diverse social networks."

## THE CONCEPT OF MENTORING

The word mentor means a one-to-one relationship between an experienced person and a less experienced person (Okurame & Balogun, 2005). Mentoring programs exist for teachers, youth, and in higher education

setting for lecturers and students. Mentoring is a purposeful pairing of a more skilled person with a lesser experienced one, with the predetermined objective of having the lesser skilled person develop specific competencies (Park & Yoo, 2005; Murray, 2006). Lai (2005) describes it in terms of three dimensions – Relational refers to the mentor mentee relationship, Developmental refers to how mentors mentees develop professionally and personally in direction of a goal, Contextual is the cultural situational features of mentoring. In an organizational setting Hanford and Ehrich (2006), referred mentoring as a developmental program that can be used to increase a group/individual potential to carry out particular duties, to get familiar with new techniques, and work on all aspects of the mentees. Mentoring is also viewed as integral to workplace learning, receiving career help, as also for developmental, psychological and social support (Cummings & Worley, 2009).

### **CONCEPT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

Career development is a lifelong process of developing one's career. Greenhaus, J. H., Callanan, G. A., and Godshalk, V. M. (2009) in their study titled "Career management" stated that current career-development definitions vary from the individual to the organization. According to Okurame (2008), career development is a developmental process which extends over the entire life span, through which individuals develop their capacity and engage in activities and lifestyle which directs them towards their goal. Murray (2006) describes career development as a dynamic process that requires individuals to engage in the ongoing assessment, analysis, and synthesis of information about the world of work and self. Career development suggests establishing certain career goals and deciding what criteria may be desirable in attaining the set goals. Hall's (1996) in his study mentioned that "protean career" captured the individual nature of career progress, driven by the person and evolutionary in nature; rather than fostered by and bound to an organization. Career development function has evolved and changed from responsibility of the organization to individual responsibility. That is the employee himself is responsible for his own career.

### **NEED FOR MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS**

The Gen Z inherits unequal networks as they enter professional fields of business and management. Students whose parents attain a bachelor's or a more higher education are more likely to be acquainted with individuals working as CEOs, Professionals, lawyers, etc. As income inequality grows, these gaps increase. Today, children from wealthy families are spending on enrichment activities that in turn increases their access to informal mentors, coaches, tutors, and leaders who they come across through everyday life. Young adults from the top socioeconomic status report nearly double the number of non familiar adults they come across in their lives as compared to their peers from the middle or lower status. All these gaps mould the upcoming young people's later career plans and prospects. Mostly the students of postsecondary section report turning to their informal social networks for college major and career advice.

College student mentoring programs are based on Kram's work from a corporate context. She proposes that mentoring serves two primary functions: career development and psychosocial support. For college students, career development can be thought of as academic support and includes mentors promoting academic success and facilitating mentees' efforts to complete their degrees as explore career choices suiting their preference.

### **MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS**

Scandura, T. A. (1992) in his research article "Mentorship and career mobility: An empirical investigation" inferred that career development behaviors include: coaching, sponsoring advancement, providing challenging assignments, protecting protégés from adverse forces and fostering positive visibility. Psychological behaviors of a person includes: Personal support, friends, acceptance, role modeling and counseling. Some of the researchers have found role modeling as a different third factor.

**Informal mentoring** is naturally occurring, supportive relationships students establish with older experienced individuals such as parents, extended family members, neighbors, teachers and others with whom students have regular contact. Informal mentoring involves the provision of general guidance and support like helping a student learn something new. It also promotes students' sense of well-being by changing opinions they may have of themselves. (Rhodes, Grossman and Resch, 2000). The connection may

be of short- or longterm, but in both cases mentoring has a lifelong positive impact on the student. Informal mentoring bonding are much more mutual than formal ones. A survey of mentors found that 83% of these responding indicated their relationships with students were established informally, whereas as solely % worked through formal mentor programs (*McLearn, Colsanto and Schoen 1998*).

Formal mentoring involves a structured and intentional approach to providing students those experiences and advantages just like those provided by informal mentors. Such initiatives are often facilitated by an agency or program dedicated to this purpose and encompass both one-on-one relationships between an adult and the student, or an older more experienced peer, a younger peer, and small groups of students working with an adult or older peer on a specific goal. In all cases, mentoring and guiding activities take place at regularly intervals over an extended period, and are most often only one element of a comprehensive program (*Sipe and Roder, 1999*). Formal mentoring programs place a strong emphasis on positive youth development, civic engagement and college and career exploration. They can be institute-based, community-based, and workplace-based. The sponsoring entity recruits and trains the mentors, matches them with their mentees, and provides support over the duration of the relationship (*Allen and Eby 2007*).

Another popular method of formal mentoring as part of career development is **Internship programs**. According to a recent Brookings study, early internships and mentoring offered through colleges were a key ingredient to creating pathways towards economic security. These experiences, the authors found, marked the chance for young people to create positive relationships with seniors, supervisors and mentors. These on going relationships, were found to have a positive impact on job quality a decade later. University students get connected with companies offering freelance opportunities. The goal of the institute and college should be to prepare students for good jobs and early career development through short term, paid, freelance projects or engagements that help them build credentials, begin to ascertain their specialized network, and explore career alternatives through the expertise of actually doing the work.

**Hierarchical mentoring** (e.g. student-faculty member or student-adviser) for college students involves individuals from two different social positions, such as faculty–student, adviser–student, or counselor–student. This is similar to a mentoring relationship in a business context where a senior manager mentors a junior staff person.

**Peer mentoring** (e.g. student-student) describes a relationship where a more experienced student helps a less experienced student improve overall academic performance and provides advice, support, and knowledge to the mentee (*Colvin & Ashman 2010*). Unlike hierarchical mentoring, peer mentoring matches mentors and mentees who are roughly equal in age and power for task and psychosocial support (*Angelique, Kyle, & Taylor, 2002; Terrion & Leonard, 2007*). Although a peer mentor might or might not be older than the mentee, there's a substantial distinction in every one's level of college experience.

## **BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS**

Mentoring serves totally different reasons, particularly supported the individual's age and desires. For example, most mentoring for high school students focuses on developing the knowledge, competencies, and confidence needed to successfully undertake their responsibilities (*Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, and Arthur 2002*). Mentors also help students cope with challenges such as absentee parents, an unstable home situation, or lack of familiarity with the world outside (*Rauner 2000; Freedman 1993*). By contrast, mentoring for students in college is directed toward helping them feel connected to the campus community for improved student outcomes (*Pascarella 1980; Community College Survey of Student Engagement 2009*). Mentoring relationships thus involve the provision of career, social, and emotional support in a safe setting for self-exploration that results in positive academic and personal outcomes for students (*Johnson 2006*).

- (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007) Students who meet often with their mentors are 52% less doubtless than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class.
- Young adults who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 55% more likely to be registered in college as compare to those who did not have a mentor. (The Mentoring Effect, 2014)

- Developing confidence and by offering challenges to set higher objectives, take risks and achieve at higher levels.
- Advice on balancing range of academic and professional responsibilities.
- Provides role modeling for proficient leadership and simplifying the development of augmented competencies and stronger interpersonal skills.
- It enables a perspective on navigating your career by getting an exposure to diverse viewpoints and experiences: Students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels report that mentoring helped them develop skills and behaviors which are essential to succeed professionally (*Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, and Hill 2003*).
- Direct access to powerful resources within your major or profession which facilitates the foundation of a lasting professional and personal network
- In addition to improved school attendance and a better chance of going on to higher education, mentored youth to sustain better attitudes toward school. (*The Role of Risk, 2013*)

## CONCLUSION

There is a huge gap between the formal knowledge being taught at colleges/universities and what the market actually needs. Mentoring programs can actually help bridge this gap and make counselling effective as well as students more employable. It has become vital for students to start preparing themselves for their life long careers while still at college and hence the mentoring programs will prove beneficial to the students as also the institute. It can greatly enhance students' experience and assist them in actively engaging in educationally-purposeful activities which are known to improve their success. Mentoring can help students in engaging as part of a bigger community; it will strengthen their ability to acknowledge their skills, abilities, and interests, and assist them in thinking through and accomplishing long-term goals. Mentoring will take many forms together with career exploration and life skills development. By pairing faculty or staff members with students over the course of academic year, with scheduled meetings in a comfortable environment, the students will be given the opportunity to talk about his or her academic needs, share his or her goals, and discuss issues and needs. The mentoring activities and support encourage academic quality, self-esteem, and individual growth of the students.

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