

Mentoring Mentors Explicitly

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Introduction

This paper is on mentoring mentors. In addition, an introduction to explicit instruction will be given and this may be able to inform the mentoring process in you own contexts. At the UP College of Education, we do not have a formal structure about mentoring. It is an attempt to put together experiences on mentoring and describe a systematic manner of going about mentoring of students during their thesis/dissertation work.

Can Mentors be Mentored?

The first question that needs to be answered is: “Can mentors be mentored?” When one is perceived to be a mentor, can s/he still be mentored considering that he is already at the top of his game and presumably, there is nothing else for him to learn. The answer is, yes. Certainly, mentors can still be mentored. There is always someone who can mentor a mentor.

However, there are certain obstacles. First is that the prospective mentor might be too busy with his/her own research. In the context of the UP College of Science, in the laboratories of the National Institute of Physics or any research laboratory, one might actually think that mentoring takes too much time away from his or her own research activities.

The second obstacle is that the expert might not really know how to be a mentor. He many not know where to start. How does this process begin?

The third obstacle is that the authority may not be facilitative of another’s learning. It may be the case that since the mentor is the expert in a given area or in a particular discipline; the mentee may have the tendency

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to bow to the ideas of the mentor. Thus, instead of facilitating learning, the mentoring relationship might be restricted to a learning subject matter or mastering techniques or approaches in a particular area.

Fourthly, a teacher may not know how to share power and teacher-student is a power relationship. Here, I decided to specifically use the word teacher because it does not have the focus of research advising and mentoring a younger colleague, but only teaching.

Different Academic Relationships

The different academic relationships are master-apprentice, mentor-protégé, adviser-advisee, supervisor-student, tutor-tutee and coach-trainee.

Let us begin with the master and apprentice relationship which is most relevant in the arts. In this type of relationship, the mentee is someone who is watching and observing. Then, the master (or mentor) teaches the apprentice to construct what the mentee wants to construct.

The second relationship is between protégé and mentor. The mentor tutors the protégé who is selected from a pool of people. A protégé is one who is considered special and the only one worth mentoring from among this group. I do not think that the academe has the luxury of selecting only one person to mentor.

The third academic relationship is the adviser-advisee relationship. The advisee asks the adviser on what courses to take, which teachers are excellent, and how the research will proceed. This is similar to supervisor-student relationship. It is not really clear what the differences are between adviser-advisee and supervisor-student arrangements. I suspect that these are just different names for the same type of arrangement and that the nomenclature changes depending on what part of world the mentoring is being done.

The fourth one is tutor-tutee. In education parlance, when we say tutee, it means someone who needs additional support or instruction. Therefore, this would be the opposite of the mentor-protégé. A tutee is someone who needs extra attention, extra time, or extra explanation. Therefore, the tutor would be one who has the qualities and competencies to address such needs.

Finally, inspiration from the business and sports areas brings use to the coach-trainee relationship. In sports, the coach and the trainee would have the implicit supervisor-student relationship. In business, they pretend that they are peers. The coach is just a mentor for a particular skill and s/he can become a trainee in another skill area under another coach. More often than not, however, the coach has a higher position in the hierarchy of company. But the bottom line is that it is still a student-teacher relationship.

These arrangements have different emphasis regarding the type of

relationship which will progress between the teacher and the student. Nonetheless, as in all student-teacher relationships, in the mentor-mentee arrangement, someone has to manage the learning.

Mentoring, Mentors and Mentees

Who are the mentees?

I will start with junior colleagues, since my topic is on mentoring mentors. There will be greater multiplier effect if we mentor younger faculty members or junior colleagues first. The second group of people to mentor will consist of the novices, novices in the position or the laboratory. Novices are those who are considering and are not quite decided yet on their area of study and therefore the mentoring will only be on an informative and exploratory level.

Mentees can be students and research advisees, and beginning professionals. In education, we mentor beginning teachers and the process is quite unique. When we mentor novices, we focus our efforts on training them to make good instructional decisions. This will help them convey or impart content or skills better. Teachers need to know how to attend to spontaneous situations occurring in the classroom so that they can apply "fix-it" strategies to help their students understand and gain the competencies they are aiming to teach.

Then, finally, and this includes all of us, mentees are persons who need introduction to a new area of study or endeavor. For example, if I decide to go into boxing, I will have to find a trainer or coach for boxing. I'm sure that while he is teaching me how to box, I will eventually teach him to give better instructions.

Here are two definitions of mentoring:

1. a relationship between two people in which one offers support, guidance, and assistance to the other who is a learner in the senior person's field (Hoover and Frieman, 2002); or
2. an intense caring relationship in which persons with more experience work with less experienced persons to promote both professional and personal development (Caffarella, 1992).

The first idea presented in the two definitions is that it is a relationship, and because it is a relationship, it goes back and forth and is interactive. In this relationship, one person is more knowledgeable and more experienced than the other. This other one is the junior one and is the "recipient."

The first definition limits mentoring to the scope of professional development. The second definition, however, includes both professional and personal development.

Characteristics of successful mentoring

The characteristics of a successful mentoring are: (1) it should be reciprocal. It is not just one person doing all the talking. (2) It should be creative. It is a thinking process: the two minds must meet. (3) Both mentor and mentee should be connected to a vision. In education, when I mentor, I always think of how to make the teaching good, what will make the learning by the children more fun, more meaningful. (4) The mentoring should be informed by disciplinary understanding. (5) It should be guided by professional and ethical practice. (6) Mentoring should be transformative: the mentor should become a better mentor and the mentee should grow and develop depending on their goals and arrangement. In a transformative relationship, both parties change.

What happens during mentoring?

The following usually happen simultaneously during mentoring. The mentor can be: (1) giving direction or guidance, (2) giving instructions, (3) giving feedback, (4) critiquing of performance or work, and/or (5) collaborating on projects or outputs. These particularly happen during thesis advising, checking lesson plans, discussing a paper. They happen all the time. How do these happen during the mentoring process?

Mentoring in the academy can have different levels of involvement from the mentor. In Figure 1, the intensity of the involvement of the mentor is rather low. It is really the student who selects. The mentor can become a role model or a source of inspiration or the epitome of particular character and professional traits that are valuable to the student.

When the mentor is actually contributing into the professional advancement of the mentee, s/he looks at the career development. A mentor may say that certain career paths are available and that one or two are preferable. In Figure 1, this is the second type of mentoring arrangement and the involvement of the mentor is from middle to high. Often times, the thesis/dissertation adviser becomes involved in this manner with a student's research. When a mentor aims to advance the career of a mentee within a given organization or institution, the intensity of his/her involvement becomes stronger. The mentor may actually be seeing the mentee as a protégé rather than just a subordinate with promise.

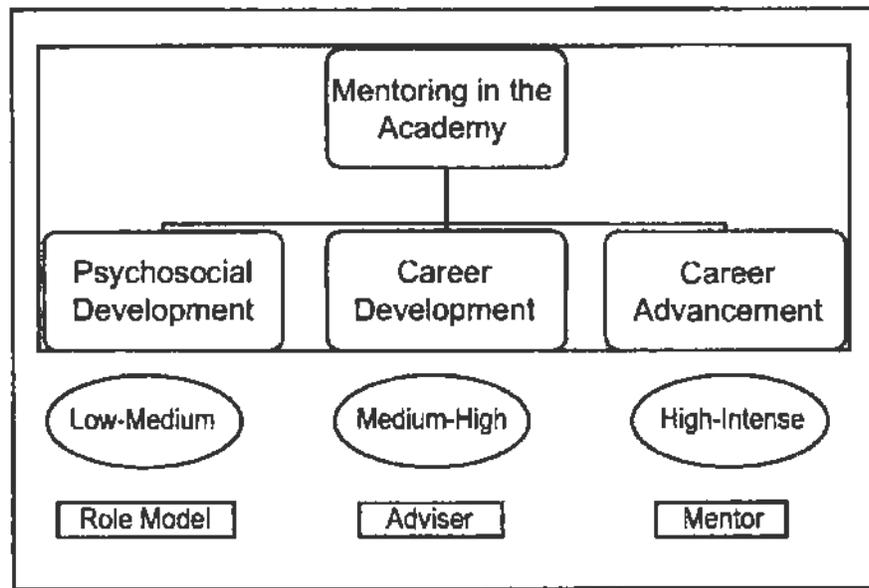


Figure 1. Role of mentor in the academy (From Mertz, 2001)

Who is a mentor?

A mentor is one who (1) can lead us along the journey of our lives; (2) is an expert or an authority; (3) is a willing collaborator; (4) is a guide who is not only concerned with the present (as in a thesis adviser) and (5) is one who not only shares what she knows now but helps the mentee acquire the skills to know more (looks towards the future).

The first definition is so demanding of a mentor and covers everything! With good mentors, we associate certain qualities such as those of willingness to serve as a mentor, genuine concern which does not begin or end with the thesis. A professional mentor looks towards future collaborations with a mentee and thus involves the student in writing papers or in conceptualizing or working on future projects.

Informal and formal mentoring

There are two types of mentoring, the informal and the formal.

We all engage in the informal mode more frequently because it usually occurs during undirected, incidental discussions. For example, when we come across an article in the papers or journals about an issue one of our students is interested in, we usually bring it up when we see them. Sometimes, such informal mentoring can overlap with social events or over a meal.

In the formal mentoring system, there is agreement between mentor and mentee. It has distinct phases and it may exist without the psychosocial considerations. It is usually focused on career advancement. However,

this agreement may not actually be explicitly discussed. Sometimes, mentors or mentees, by virtue of their personalities or schedules, strictly limit range of their mentoring conversations to business or work.

This formal agreement has four domains: First, respect and trust, which people always have trouble with. Second is power which people may not always appreciate. Third are boundaries which people always cross. And fourth is profession, which is dictated by the ethics of the profession.

Action points and stances for the formal agreement

Each of these domains may be translated into action points and stances. For example, in the domain of respect and trust, the mentor should trust the student to be a maturing professional and to be serious about the discipline. Additionally, the mentor has to behave respectfully towards the student. A good example is when a mentor critiques only the student's work and not the student. Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish between the two. When this confusion happens, students leave our offices feeling emaciated and shredded. Some no longer want to continue writing up their research anymore. There are students who drop out of programs because they feel that their mentor attacked them as persons or researchers. Sometimes, this convinces them that they will never make the cut as researchers and academics in their chosen field.

There has to be counterparting of stances. The student, on the other hand, has to remember that his work is being evaluated and that concern is at the professional level. The mentee must trust that the mentor is actually looking out for his development into a competent professional. Furthermore, the mentor will have the best interests of their profession in mind. He should treat his professor with respect due a more experienced professional.

The second domain is power and this is central to decision making. Mentors should let their students develop their thesis in their own style. Otherwise, we will develop or rear clones who will only do the same research that we do. The student also has to take responsibility for the way and the pace he or she will learn. Students should not blame their adviser if their paper is not finished in three years. The student has to take responsibility for that. And taking responsibility means acknowledging his or her power in this relationship. There should be no passing the buck.

Third are boundaries. This is where the line blurs. In some or perhaps many cases, professional boundaries flow into personal boundaries. Therefore, the mentoring relationship has to turn to more explicit avenues, or else, it will become convoluted. The mentor has to make a decision to discuss only about professional matters with the mentee during the mentoring session. In Reading Education, there are only four of us who can

advise doctoral students. Thus our consultation schedules with students are quite tight. When we set an hour for the discussion of the dissertation with a student, we therefore need to discuss only the dissertation during that hour, and then the next five min after the first hour can be for anything under the sun. There has to be some structure or else even the faculty member will be carried away.

The last domain is in relation to the profession. The mentor should regard mentoring as a high priority responsibility and should be a model of the highest professional ethics to the mentee. On the other hand, the mentee should respond to the mentor's constructive comments and work to integrate them in his work. He should also learn and apply the profession's code of ethics.

Table 1 summarizes the action points and stances for the formal agreement between mentor and mentee.

Table 1. Action points and stances for the four domains of the formal mentoring agreement.

Mentor	Mentee
Respect and Trust	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I will treat each student with respect. 2. I will criticize only the work; not the student. 3. I will trust the student to be a maturing professional. 4. I will trust the student to be serious about the discipline 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I will treat the professor with respect due a more experienced professional. 2. I will take all concerns about my professional growth to my professor before I talk to other people. 3. I will trust that my professor is concerned with my development into a competent professional. 4. I will trust that my professor has the best interests of our profession as his concern.
Power	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. I will use my power as the gate-keeper of the profession fairly. 6. I will let the student develop in her own style. 7. I will let the student make her own decisions and set her own priorities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. I will take the responsibility for my own learning and growth. 6. I will deal with the consequences of my decisions. 7. I will recognize my professor's responsibility to push for high standards in my professional performance.

Boundaries	
8. I will recognize the autonomy of the student in handling her family and social life. 9. I will focus on meeting the student's needs and not my own. 10. I will focus on putting my students in the forefront and staying in the background.	8. I will only ask my mentor for help with professional matters. 9. I will take full responsibility for the consequences of my own life choices. 10. I will set my own career goals based on my own values.
Profession	
11. I will place mentoring as a high priority responsibility. 12. I will model the highest professional ethics.	11. I will respond to my mentor's constructive comments and work to integrate them into my work. 12. I will learn and apply my profession's code of ethics.

Explicit Teaching

The explicit teaching cycle is shown in Figure 2. Allow me to emphasize that explicit instruction is actually very useful for mentoring because it provides the context in which the actions and stances discussed above can happen. Explicit instruction, like all instruction, begins by setting the objective. The process itself begins with the introduction, then the teacher models, provides practice—guided practice first and then independent practice, and finally evaluates. After this, a new goal is set. By keeping to this sequence, the mentor is able to stay on track and the mentee knows exactly when is happening in the mentoring process.

Here is an example of how this process might be implemented. Help the mentee identify the goals of the mentoring relationship. Make sure that the goal identified is the appropriate developmental need of the student at that particular time.

For example, let us assume that the objective is to gain competence in writing a journal article. Once the objectives are agreed upon, the mentor instructs through a variety of strategies, and methods. By modeling, the mentor is able to show how a problem may be solved or how to analyze data. Once the mentee has grasped what must be done, the mentor should provide numerous opportunities for the student to practice the new competency or skill. For instance, if the enroute objective is to write an abstract, then the mentor should instruct the student on the qualities of a

good abstract. They can evaluate some abstracts using the criteria and even improve badly written ones. To increase their competencies even more, ensure that the student has multiple opportunities to write abstracts. For example, provide the student with an outline so that they practice writing. They can also practice writing abstracts using extant journal articles.

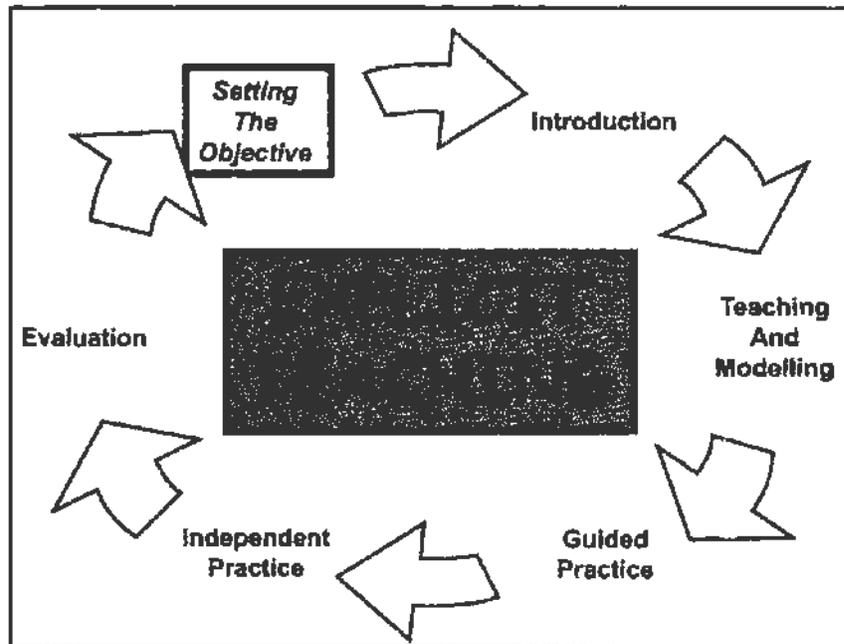


Figure 2. Steps in explicit teaching cycle.

An important element of practice is the use of scaffolds to learning. These should be introduced and used to assist the student during the beginning of instruction. Gradually, these should be withdrawn until the student shows that they are no longer needed to optimum performance. Good mentors scaffold, increase expectations, scaffold again until the learning goals are met. For both parties to know the progress of their mentoring arrangement, it will be important to integrate assessment venues and avenues—self, collaborative, critiquing, feedback giving. Some mentors are more critical than others. However, whether focusing on the weaknesses or the strengths of a student's work, make sure that the student understands what he or she has to do next to improve the work itself. Therefore, each level or form of assessment should inform the student about the progress of his or her work while at the same time enabling the mentor to reflect on the instruction or mentoring arrangement.

Table 2 summarizes these little steps that can help us in effective mentoring.

Table 2. Little steps to help mentor more effectively.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow for some informality 2. Meet frequently 3. Manage the agenda and the agenda setting 4. Offer alternatives 5. Demonstrate how these can be done/attained 6. Acknowledge the benefits of mentoring to you, as mentor to your mentee 7. Encourage self-assessment

In addition, here are a few more suggestions that might make the mentoring arrangement more productive. One is to allow some informality whilst engaging in a structured or explicit mentoring arrangement. Another is meeting frequently. What is good about this is that each meeting need not be too long. Third, make sure that every mentoring meeting has an agenda which ideally the student should propose. Though the agenda is usually negotiated, encouraging the student to set it actually fosters the development of responsibility and self-direction in the student. Finally, I would like to stress that it is also important to make the student realize that the mentor benefits from the meeting as well as the mentee. I believe that this anecdote will make my point. Several years ago, I had a student from a university in the South who was doing his PhD in Reading Education. While writing his dissertation, he resumed his teaching post and was only able to come to Manila during the summer term. Obviously, this was the only time we could discuss his work in person. Yet I noted that he rarely set an appointment, though we would bump into each other in the library or the corridors of the Benitez Hall. Finally I asked why he was not coming to see me?

His explanation shocked me. He said, "I do not come for consultation because you are a doctor and I do not have enough funds to pay for consultation fees." After overcoming my surprise, I explained that it does not work that way in UP. As an enrolled student, he could meet with his research adviser as often as needed so that he can finish. In addition, I also emphasized that he was helpful to me because his research data helps me understand students even more. Apart from being clarified about the nature of a dissertation adviser-research student relationship was, he needed affirmation that he was not wasting my time. I operationalized this by asking him to write a synopsis of our mentoring sessions. Each entry had two parts namely, "What I Learned" and "What I Shared". These logs helped him get over his preconceived notions that mentoring only benefited the student and most importantly, the log was able to help him

assess his own progress as a research student.

I hope this helps in answering your own developmental needs in mentoring student research. Thank you for inviting me today.

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