DEVELOPING LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: UNIVERSITY FACULTY EXPLORE SELF-MENTORING™

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Abstract

In higher education, where new faculty may lack assurance to lead in the university setting and where it is critical for faculty to learn how to lead successfully in this environment, self-mentoring can provide a means for faculty to build confidence through self-developmentto which all faculty, new and existing, can become leaders in any setting.

Keywords: Self-mentoring, coaching, mentoring, higher education faculty, leadership

Introduction

Faculty in higher education is akin to other systems when it comes to providing a strong program of support for newly hired instructors. Brightman (2005) suggests there are three components for teaching to improve at the college level. The first two factors are a valid and reliable student evaluation instrument accompanied by a norming report for comparative and diagnostic information. The third, and what is believed to be the most significant, is a mentoring process. The purpose of this paper is to review practices of support that are available to new faculty with focus on a study applying self-mentoring, a new program that has recently gained international attention.

I.

Mentoring and coaching are often used in the same breath(Garvey, Stokes, Megginson, 2014); as well as interchangeablyin conversations.Even more multifariousare the numerous meaningsassigned to each practice in any given situation and by any profession.Mentoring and coaching have become nationwide emphases in both education and business in the US as research increasingly suggests that professionals benefit from the guidance and service of a mentor(Allen, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008).

Across the Atlantic Ocean in the United Kingdom, Robert Garvey, a business professor at York St. John School of Business has examined historical references to search for the origin of the two practices – coaching and mentoring. In terms of mentoring there are multiple different beginnings of mentoring that originatedin ancient Greece. Coaching is not referenced until decades later but also has a presence in early history. Garvey is author of a six volume series entitled the Fundamentals of Coaching and Mentoring (2014). Regardless of the ancestral roots of these two practices, they certainly have a strong presence today in both business and education.And yet another practice has recently yielded positive results from preliminary studies in leadership development. Self-mentoring is currently movingto the forefront and gaining national attention as a complementary practice or viable alternative for individual or group mentoring and coaching programs(Bond & Hargreaves, 2014). Self-mentoring evolved from a dire need. A retired superintendent transitioning into higher education as a new faculty member found the task overwhelmingly daunting due to a disconnect with an assigned mentor. This is not to suggest that the mentor was lacking in expertise or ability, but a chasm was felt that could not be overcome. The fledgling faculty

member began to draw upon her innate and learned leadership skills from decades of practice in the field. She developed a plan for surviving her first year that involved setting expectations, developing strategies, gathering and analyzing data, networking, and monitoring her progress. At the end of the year, pleased with her success, the former superintendent began to share the process that she so aptly named 'self-mentoring' with others (VaASCD, 2014).

The Art of Self-Mentoring

Self-mentoring is the act of leading oneself in an unknown environment or even hostile settings if necessary. Self-mentoring isthe process of an individual of any age, profession, gender, race, or ability—YOU—taking the initiate and accepting responsibility for self-development by devoting time to navigate within the culture of the environment in order to make the most of the opportunity to strengthen competencies needed to enhance job performance and career progression(Beckford 2013; Bond & Hargreaves, 2014). Self-mentors are given steps to lead while accepting responsibility for their personal and/or professional growth.

Integrating new hires into anorganization is a critical aspect of leadership development and sustainability(Lambert, 2003). She believes leadership is a process, not an innate or taught set of individual skills.Lambert, a scholar in the field of leadership development, states that leadership includes problem solving, broad-based skillful participation, conversations and stories among colleagues, and task enactment in the environment.While leadership is also viewed as a key to sustainability (Fullan, 2000), commitment is viewed as equally important. Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, and Lipton believed in 1999, and it still holds true today, that unless those involved are committed to change, prevailing behaviors will return. Self-mentors, in comparison to using other practices, aremore committed and passionate aboutsustaining their success (Carr, 2014). A sense of accomplishment is so motivational that they endeavor to sustain the personal empowerment and self-efficacy (Bond & Hargreaves, 2014).Avil Beckford, (2012) agrees that self-mentoring puts you in the position of power. You take control of your life and journey on the path that is right for you.

Barth (1999) views leadership as everyone's work and explains that leaders grow when they engage with others to make sense of theworld, reach out to the newly hired, commit to shared outcomes and develop their identities as owners of their system - the organization. Self-mentoring strengthens the existing culture in a system. Itis a structured process for employee induction in the organization but it also provides leadership opportunitiesamong seasoned members ready to move into leadership roles, those identified for future administrative roles, those serving as support to new hired, and those who are struggling but willing to take an initiative to alter their course.Research suggests that there is increased self-confidence and self-efficacy by self-mentors(Bond & Hargreaves, 2014; Carr, 2014),which strengthens the connection and commitment to the institution.

Leadership Support: Coaching, Mentoring & Self-Mentoring

Coaching, mentoring, and self-mentoring each have parallel yet exclusive characteristics, which inherently brands each practice, or combination of practices, valuedfor organizations. Individuals immersed in a new environment require skills to navigate through what can be treacherous waters. An organization is a living, breathing, and ever-changing complex system of interlocked subcultures (Schein, 1992). This system of interlocked subculturesis networked to accomplish the goals of an organization (Lezotte & McKee, 2002). Individuals must first have an understanding of the system in which they are embedded, in order to perform and identify implied or often un-implied expectations from the

environment.An individual can rely on a mentor to provide guidance. An individual can use a coach to guide them through challenging areas. An individual can accept responsibility and learn to self-mentor or apply a combination of the practices. It does not matter how the individual weaves his way through a maze of complicated layers of the system, only that he does it to hisability and preference. An individual must use whatever resources are available to her in concert to have a successful experience. This can be challenging for even the most experienced.

Coaching, mentoring, and self-mentoring, each provide support for individuals navigating within an environment, but each have a unique approach that should be aligned with the needs of the individual and the organization.There is a stronger relationship between coaching and self-mentoring in comparison to mentoring as shown in Figure 1.1.

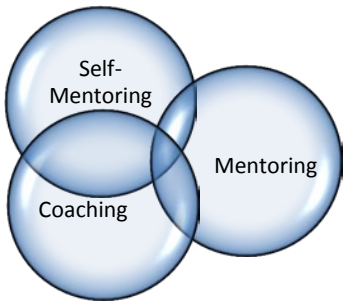

Figure 1.1 Coaching, Mentoring, and Self-Mentoring

This exists primarily in the shift of power to the individual in both self-mentoring and coaching practice, which is not as prevalent in mentoring practices whereas the mentorguides the process. Central to all three practices is the idea of self-development (Huang & Lynch, 1995). Each practice advocates for the personal and/or professional development of an individual.

Coaching is a process that guides an individual or group of individuals for the purposes of improving personal or job related performance. The basic tenant, that individuals have the answers or they can find the answers (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998) has not changed over the years. Coaching continues to focus on what the individual, referred to as the coachee, wants whether it is personal transformation or a performance goal to be achieved (Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2014). In most coaching situations, the coachee controls the meetings and dictates the pace as well as the agenda (Whitworth, et. al).

Mentoring alsouses someone with experience and often older, a mentor, to provide formal or informal guidance to amentee, a lower ranking individual with less experience or new in the profession or position(Schoenfeld & Magnan, 2004; Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009;Alred & Garvey 2010).This guidance is built on a relationship of trust. The power of mentoring is in the opportunity for collaboration, goal achievement and problem solving (Ragins & Scandura, 1997; Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009; Thomas & Saslow, 2011).When the pairing of a mentor and a mentee is compatible, a relationship of trust can build; however, when the mentor and mentee are mismatched, the results are often disastrous and referred to as ‘negative mentoring’ (Scandura, 1998; Allen, Eby, O’Brien, & Lentz, 2008; Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2008; Burk& Eby, 2010). There are five types of negative mentoring practice experiences: general dysfunctionality, mismatch within the dyad, lack of mentor experience, manipulative behavior, and distancing behavior (Allen, et al;Burk & Eby). General dysfunctionality can be the mentee’s personal problem interference or a negative attitude by the mentee to the work environment, individuals in the setting, or a general lack of responsibility. Dyad mismatch is when both the mentor and mentee report a mismatch in personality or work ethic. Lack of mentor expertise occurs when the mentee believes the mentor lacks the necessary skills—interpersonal or knowledge driven—to serve as mentor.

Manipulative behavior exists when the mentoring position is used for power, influence, or political manipulation. The final type of negative mentoring is distancing behavior, which results when the mentor intentionally neglects to provide proper guidance or sufficient time to the mentee. In spite of these negative scenarios, mentoring practices and programs remain indispensable in providing new hires with essential support.

Given the background of coaching and mentoring, self-mentoring is a practice that requires additional study. Hence, a study to gain insight was formulated.

The Case Study

Two new faculty members from a university in North Carolina would be trained in self-mentoring and work independently in different settings applying the principals of this practice. A collective (multiple) case study approach was chosen since this study involved exploring multiple bounded systems over time and through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as observations, online interactive video recordings, emails, interviews, video, documents.

While the two faculty members were new to this university, each had experiences in higher education prior to taking this new position. The two facultymembers were also experienced in mentoring practices but new to self-mentoring. They worked in different colleges at the university and did not know each other prior to this study. Contact with each other would limited to the formal training sessions. A more detailed overview of each participating faculty member is provided.

Faculty memberA

As a new faculty member at a large southeastern school of nursing, faculty member A knew that an important first-year goal was to establish an understanding of the existing and potential networks which would help her to achieve her scholarly role definition there. Coming into this university as an associate professor with over 10 years' experience teaching at a variety of other academic institutions, shedecidedthat she would benefit from a program which enabled her to set goals and objectives while reflecting on her progress to clarify her new role at her new educational institution.

Faculty member B

While moving to a new area and university opened up paths for growth in a multitude of areas, for another higher education faculty member, it also created chaos. Opportunities come in many forms and can often be unsettling. Seeking to make meaning of the internal conflicts associated with her new position, to be successful and define what that meant to her, Faculty member B chose to take the invitation to join a self-mentoring project at the university. Mentoring was of particular interest to her. She had been a mentor to faculty and to students and believed mentoring to be both a moral choice and a spiritual fulfillment. At a previous university, she had taken doctoral courses in education and in one course, The Professorial Role, she had written a paper exploring the concept of mentorship.

Methodology

For this collective (multiple) case study, the primary question driving the study was: In what ways does self-mentoring support new faculty in a higher education setting?A grounded theory was consideredas this theory supports rich descriptive data that can be captured during participant interviews and interactions. The benefit is related to the participants' perceived reality rather than what the researcher, prior to conducting the research, assumed to be true. Grounded theory allows data to be collected in a variety of methods using editing strategies, which is less prefigured and permits searching for segments of text from interviews to generate and illustrate categories of meaning (Marshall and Rossman, 2010).

The faculty members met several times over a period of one year. Some meetings were in a face-to-face format and others were online using interactive video-conferencing. The sessions focused on the four levels of self-mentoring. Data wascollected before, during, and afterthe meetings. While the two faculty members attended the meeting together, the primary resource was the facilitator. Self-mentoring advocates for internal and external resources; it does not limit the interactions to a single contact but may require group contact. In most cases; however, a self-mentor will be self-mentoring outside of a study group format. Each participant signed a contract to self-mentor as a testament of personal commitment.

Level 1: Self-Awareness

During the first formal session, the participating faculty members discussed the leadership they had experienced in a variety of settings as well as leadership processes and traits. Before the close of the session, each faculty member was ask to compile a list of personal or professional expectations for their setting. Then they were asked to narrow the list to one expectation, which would become their primary focus for the next level.

For faculty member A, she planned to pursue a tenure and promotion application within her first few years here, so she realized that focusing her efforts on teaching quality, creativity, scholarly research projects, and success with publishing manuscripts were paramount. Previously, she would consistently volunteer for many service and community activities without viewing her contributions in a strategic way. What she realized now was that she needed to first set clear scholarship goals, and then view every opportunity offered to her as either a way to move forward with those goals, or as a distraction` which would take her time away from her goals. Joining a self-mentoring study on campus led by a university faculty member facilitator provided her time for reflection about goal setting, timetables and networking with other academics at her new university.

For faculty member B, mentoring was of particular interest to her. She had been a mentor to faculty and to students and believed it to be both a moral choice and spiritually fulfilling. At a previous university she had taken doctoral courses in education and in one course, The Professorial Role, she had written a paper exploring the concept of mentorship. She writes that she began to wonder, what is this education before me and how will self-mentoring help me answer and find the right questions?She believed that balance was essential as well as not losing the ‘self’ in all the demands placed on university faculty that ranges from high volumes of service, full course loads of teaching, to ongoing research projects and publications.

This is where the process began - a meeting with the university faculty facilitator for an overview of the practice and what would be expected as a commitment from each individual. Faculty member B described her first encounter with the university faculty facilitator as a person that was warm and inviting, which heightened her comfort in participating immediately.Each faculty member was given a self-mentoring manual (Carr, 2012)that contained an overview as well as multiple forms that could be used during the process to guide their efforts.

Level 2: Self-Development

During the second session, each faculty member articulated the chosen expectation, developed measurable strategies, established an implementation timeline, selected appropriate measurement methods to assess and evaluate the progress, and incorporated peer and self-reflection time into a timeline. Bothfaculty members committed to a set amount of time each week to concentrate on meeting the expectation. This level of self-mentoring required organization, commitment, and dedicationfrom each self-mentor. Using journals to document struggles, breakthroughs, and processes is time proven age-old strategy (Bromley, 1989; Adams, 1990), both faculty members agreed to document their experiences. Self-

mentoring also suggests usingself-observation and peer feedback (Bond & Hargreaves, 2014; Carr, 2014).

Faculty member A

Faculty member A's data was quantitative.Sheused a spreadsheet to log observablechange over time.She began by establishing a simple Excel worksheet where she listed her professional goals for the next two years. She matched those goals to the appointment, reappointment and tenure document presently in use at both her school of nursing and her larger university. This enabled her to visualize both her accomplishments and those areas where gaps could be identified. She tracked her progress over the semesters – approximately 7 months - in meeting identified goals and to regularly question if a particular scholarly opportunity (requests for proposal, requests for abstracts, seminars and conferences, etc.) closely matched her strategic goals in her self-mentoring plan.

Faculty member B

After the first session, Faculty member B read the self-mentoring handbook that had been provided to both faculty members and began to complete templates in the manual. In the process of completing some of the pages in the manual, something felt unsettling and she struggled with the tasks. She explains that it just felt too sterile, too academic and she thought, How can I tailor it to my quest, me, at this point in time? The planning template was divided into sections, such as a contract with a goal and role to self during the process as well as time commitment. In addition there was a chart where goal, activity and time spent could be tracked. The work felt overwhelming and she sensed she was destined to failure in something that was intended to support the turbulence she felt in her job. She contacted the university faculty facilitator and explained what she was feeling. She was told to use the tools only as guides when needed as the forms were variations of the same task but designed to offer personal preferences.

She abandoned the forms in lieu of a journal and began the first page with an entry from The Wise Heart by Jack Kornfield (2008), a book she acknowledges as a favorite. She explained that the shift from completing forms to the journal was what she was been searching – balance and freedom to create herself in a new job.

Her plan, which the handbook helped by providing structure and prompts, was to embrace the process for emancipatory knowing using questions such as, what are the barriers to freedom, what is wrong with this picture, what is invisible and who benefits (Chinn & Kramer, 2008). She wanted tointegrate once again the practice of mindfulness meditation, yoga, journaling and Buddhist psychology teachings, all pieces of her life that she abandoned upon moving. She began to realize she had been unable to prioritize her personal needs above the demands of the new organization.

Level 3: Self-Reflection

The third levelcomplimented the previous session as each faculty member shares data they collected and how they incorporated peer or self-reflection into their timelines. The faculty membersexplained how theyallotted time for self- and peer-refection with personally chosen internal and sometimes external peers. Other faculty members,inside and outside of the respective departments, were identified as resources. Powerful conversations occur through peer-reflections (Harkins, 1999).Conversations provided opportunity to meet peers in other departments and colleges, to build support and often lasting relationships (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, &Switzler, 2012).

Level 4: Self-Monitoring

In the final level of self-mentoring, the emphasis iscontinued self-mentoring in the absence of any formalized structure or external support from the faculty facilitator. The faculty members were provided time to reflect and shared the results of bothefforts at self-mentoring. From reviewing recommendations and data, both faculty members developed a

plan for continual monitoring. New expectations couldbe developed for each year or continual work in one designated area would beequally feasible as well as practical.

Data Collection

Each faculty member collected data unique to their specific self-mentoring plan. Faculty member A maintained an Excel worksheet, journals, and notes from her experience. She tracked requests for proposal, requests for abstracts, seminars and conferences that were alignedwith her strategic goals in her self-mentoring plan. Faculty member B used a planning template she divided into sections, such as a contract with a goal and role to self-mentor during the process as well as a time commitment. In addition she maintained a chart where goals, activities, and time spent was tracked. She maintained a journal as well.

For the purposes of this study, a review of the documentation that supported each faculty member's efforts was important but more to the self-mentors as the data drove their efforts. Two exceptions were first, if either faculty member had been unsuccessful in their self-mentoring attempts and second, to align data from the interviews, documents, emails, and journaling with the process for any cross-referencing in establishing timelines or sessions.

Data Analysis

Manual data coding was used to check for patterns. The first cycle coding was in Vivo and a second cycle of coding utilized pattern coding (Saldana, 2009). Analytical data were collected from memos, observations, journal entries, open-ended questioning during seminars, individual and group interviews, and available documents.

During the first cycle coding, the faculty members' responses suggested they both were experiencing high levels of frustration with their performance in the new setting and lower levels of confidence in their ability than prior to their arrival. While each expressed a different source to the frustration, their frustration levels were similar when queried. They both were intelligent and accomplished faculty members with a previous track record of success. It was baffling to both as to why they were struggling in a new environment that was, by all accounts,akin to their prior positions. Regardless, each identified the expectations necessary for their success and mapped out a plan using self-mentoring to guide them through the process. While they both had similar expectations, the steps they took were different to accomplish the same goal. These two diverse methods formed the cornerstone of what self-mentoring is- a process that is unique to each individual.

Emerging from the collections of data were several reoccurring themes. First, the words, 'work' and 'overwhelm' were key words that emerged as both words related to the organizational management of task and work responsibilities or duties. Neither faculty members was able to assess the workload aligned with performance goals in the new environment even though both had successful track records in previously positions. Both faculty members had been comfortable in the previous setting as well as accustomed to what was expected. For Faculty member A, the new environment was overwhelming with demands and she was lacking a process for prioritizing projects that directly impacted her performance. Faculty member B, the new environment hindered performance due to an imbalance with workload pressures and time for personal activities unrelated to the position. It became important for this faculty member to recognize the need for this balance.

The second theme also related to management with the key word priority emerging as a pattern. A review of data suggested that both faculty members were unable to assess or separate what was a priority in the new environment. Even if they were able to identify the tasks or work, they were still unable to develop a plan. Both allowed distractors to block their leadership vision that had always worked efficiency in the past. The distractors varied for

both faculty members but had the same effect – the inability to organize as well as prioritize a plan of action. The more they became frustrated, the more they were unable to navigate in the new environment. More interesting is that both faculty members were assigned university mentors whom were unsuccessful, which resulted in both faculty members taking the initiative to self-mentor. Since the purpose of the study was not to determine why mentoring attempts were unsuccessful prior to self-mentoring, information was not captured regarding the mentoring practices.

Faculty member A credits self-mentoring as enabling her to identify this need and make this shiftthrough the data collection. This obviously had not been a problem for this faculty member at the previous setting but was a challenge in the new position.Faculty member B explained that the unsettled feelings she had from the new job with its expectations and stressors were an education for her. Self-mentoring provided the "space and means for diving into the feelings and ways-of-being that brought her back to herself and allowed for the creation of space in her job and the nourishment her core self". Second cycle coding yielded similar patterns during data review.

An additional theme that emerged from observational data was that both faculty members had a lower rate of confidence than expected for the years of experience and familiarity with their environment when they began self-mentoring. They lacked confidence in their ability to meet the challenges in the new position while they both acknowledged they possessed the skillset yet were unable to explain why they were incapable of applying these skills in the new setting without the use of self-mentoring. While it was a new setting, it should have been similar in performance objectives and goals. Both were perplexed as to why they were facing a challenge that was unexpected and neither could really explain it as the study began. Their confidence increased after self-mentoring. Both faculty members were, as they reported, operating with a level of confidence held previously or above. They both believed that self-mentoring greatly increased their confidence as being able to lead in their environment as well as prepared them with skills to navigate in a new setting.

From participation in self-mentoring, the faculty membersboth firmly believed and credited their success – increased performance and confidence – to self-mentoring. In other words, they were able to gain the self-confidence they possessed earlier in their careers simply by taking steps to analyze their new environment and identify the obstacles that created a challenge that prevented them from feeling secure in their roles. After the academic year of participation in this project, faculty member A shared that she learned more about goal setting and refining her potential contributions to this academic community. Faculty member B shared, "It's become a difference in the way I view myself at work. It's really taking that strategic perspective that I never had really had." Now, a year later, both admit they continue the process of self-mentorship to find balance in a busy and demanding academic world.

Conclusion

Self-mentoring can be a valuable practice for higher education faculty, new to the profession or new to the position. The study suggests faculty involved in self-mentoring gain confidence as leaders through self-selected activities. Both faculty members began self-mentoring to create meaning intheir new faculty roles at their university. Self-mentoring was a tool to assist them in focusing on their development. The faculty members were empowered to make decisions and determine the method to meet expectations. Leaders emerge when they have the confidence to make decisions and plan for their success.

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