

When Opportunity for Mentoring and Collaboration Knocks: Are You Ready to Answer

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Abstract

For new professional tenure-track faculty mentoring is advantageous in career and professional development. The contention is that ambitious tenure-faculty who is opportune to have a mentor at the beginning of the career is likely to continue and succeed in higher education (Holmes, Land, Hinton-Hudson, 2004). An appropriate mentor is fundamental to the success of skill set, experience based learning in the career and comprehension of cultural values in an academic environment. The question is "are you ready for guidance when opportunity for mentoring and collaboration knocks?" Literatures are available for peer mentoring, supervision of students in clinical setting, and supervision of qualified nurses. However, there are limited literature and published data on how to take advantage of mentoring when the opportunities arise in college. This paper will discuss mentor/mentee relationship, the advantages of having a mentor as a junior faculty, and suggested expectation to maintain the relationship.

Keywords: Mentor, Mentee, Junior Faculty, Opportunity

Definition of mentor and mentee

- a. Mentoring is the method through which two or more persons join forces to develop the profession or aptitude of an individual (Goodyear, 2006); McKinley also defines mentoring as an essential method of human development where one person devotes time, energy, and personal knowledge to assist another person in their professional and personal development. An experienced faculty may be assigned to a neophyte faculty for individualized guidance and continuing professional support during the provisional phase of academia (Peters and Boylston, 2006). Mentor uses compassion and collaborating relationship to add to the knowledge and skills of the mentee. Mentoring is usually seen as an experienced person and less experienced protégé for reasons of teaching and assisting the less experienced in advancement (O'Neil and Marsick, 2007). Mentoring is based on trust and mutual respect from both parties involved therefore, fostering the relationships. Mentor provides new perspectives, techniques, and tips on how to avoid common mistakes as a junior faculty Furthermore, mentoring can be viewed as the ability to reciprocate and collaborate learning relationship between two or more individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for assisting mentee toil toward accomplishment of clear and mutually distinctive scholarship. Consequently, a mentor functions as coach, connector, and networker, sounding board, problem resolution, and guide the mentee in professional growth. This guidance facilitates the professional adjustment and decrease the anxiety experienced by new nurse faculty in an unfamiliar environment.

2. Mentee

- a. Mentee gained support transitioning from either graduate school or bed-side clinical nurse to nurse-faculty from mentor. In addition, the supports of an institutional role model facilitate increased comprehension of the role expectations and awareness of academic requirement such as research and writing opportunities.
- b. Connie Vance (2003) stated that nursing environment is confused with lots of prospects and potential opportunity. With the support of an evolving mentor, the confusion of being a professional nurse either as a bedside nurse or nurse faculty is clearer and easier to steer.

3. Review of Literature

- a. Literature review was conducted using academic Search Premier and choosing Databases such as CINAHL, OVID, PsyINFO, PsyARTICLES, ERIC, EBSCO, Health Source Nursing/Academic edition, and on-line journal, using the key search terms “mentor”, “mentoring”, “mentee”, “mentee and mentoring”. References were hand-searched for relevance and limited to English language articles. Review of literatures identified the benefits of mentorship in transition of new faculty and finding compatible mentor. Literatures also disclose the significance of mentoring in the development and success of nursing faculty’s professions. However, there is no information available suggesting that mentee is ready for guidance when opportunity for mentorship and collaboration arises. A total of 50 articles were reviewed, only 13 articles were selected. Exclusions include editorials, dissertations, articles depicting formal and informal mentoring, youth peer mentoring, and group mentoring. Inclusive are narratives of personal experiences and individual one on one mentoring.
- b. In nursing mentoring serves as a special way of transferring knowledge and is focus on human association by establishing an affiliation between the experienced and non-experienced nurse (McKinley, 2004). In effect mentoring validates leadership and fosters leadership development of the mentee by focusing above the processes and skills to values and culture.
- c. Goode (2012) wrote about the role of the mentor related to midwifery students. Reviewing this article, the mentor supports the mentee to assimilate into established working environment within the inter-professional team which relieves the mentee anxiety, stress, and vulnerability of integrating into learning situation. In continuation, the mentors decide whether the student had met the required standards of proficiency for safe and effective nursing practice at the end of the program. In order to attain this conclusion, supports, encouragement, and advice were provided to the mentees. The mentees also gained the advantage of having someone to confide in. This type of relationship allowed the mentees confidence and knowledge of maneuvering through the program and institution. In contract, Cameron-Jones and O’Hara (1995) studied the role of mentoring at various professions with focus on nursing and the conception of role of mentor as a supportive friend to the mentee. Cameron-Jones and O’Hara postulated that in future the role of mentor will enumerate its more challenging characteristics.
- d. In a case study Hawker, McMillan, and Palermo (2013) investigates the components of an effective mentoring and mentee relationship in dietetics. The study identifies the relationship between mentor and mentee as a mutual and shared relationship in which both entities use insightful practice and realistic learning to build skills, knowledge, and attitude. The mentor and mentee in this case-study did not know one another prior to the mentoring relationship. As a matter of fact, both work at different facilities under the same organization. The mentee seeks out the mentor through the mentoring program of their organization. The mentor was an experienced clinician at a large metropolitan teaching hospital while the mentee is a new graduate posted to rural area and unfamiliar with the community. In the beginning both mentor and mentee met face to face but because of the distance, both decided to converse on scheduled phone time. This study recognized mentoring as a significant element of professional development activity (Hawker, et al. 2013).

- e. Andrews and Wallis (1999) described the four stages of mentoring by Dalton/Thompson career development model as part of professional development. These stages include dependence, independence, supervising others and managing and supervising others. In the beginning mentee relies on the mentor direction and supervision. The second stage involves the mentor and mentee develop as colleagues with less supervision. As the mentee progresses in the career, the role of supervising or acting as mentor to other is developed. However, most people are stagnant in stage two and never progress to the role of supervising others. Other aspects of mentoring models are the classic one-to-one mentoring, group mentoring and individual or group mentoring with many mentors classified as multiple-mentor experience model and mentor among co-equals (Buddeberg-Fischer and Herta, 2006).
- f. Files, Blair, Mayer, and Marcia (2008) in a pilot program for academic female medical faculty, enumerated the role of peer mentorship in aiding advancement among female medical practitioners. Files et al. indicated that personal responsibilities, need for clinical practice and limited female mentors are some of the challenges confronted by female faculty members in quest of advancement as academician. These authors alluded to the fact that mentors not only act as role model in advancing career but also responsible for emotional and psychological support of the mentee. The allusion is a repeated statement literature.

4. The advantages of having a mentor

- a. In graduate school, the writer approached a senior faculty member for guidance and assistance in a research course. Under the direction of the senior faculty member, the writer was able to attain not only a graduate degree but certification in college and university teaching from another college within the institution. Upon graduation, the relationship continues; which allows the mentee the prospect of having experienced academician as a springboard when the need arises. This article arose out of a graduate student nurse seeking mentoring from a senior faculty member at an institution. The graduate student nurse will be referred to as the mentee while the senior faculty is considered the mentor. Struggling with some fundamental of graduate school courses, the mentee approached a senior nurse faculty member for assistance in a research class. The mentor listened as the mentee voiced frustration, feeling of inadequacy and confusion at not understanding evidence-based practice research. Mentee was aware of the fact the research paper must be completed in order to progress in the program. After listening, the mentor expressed understanding of the mentee frustration and stressful situation. Suggestion was made that mentee enrolled in a certificate course at another college on campus while in graduate school. According to the mentor, the reason for this suggestion was to divert the mentees energy and focus on positive subjects and accommodating environment. Following the course of action was most appropriate for the mentee at that time. Not only was the environment at the other college conducive and more relaxing, it allowed the mentee to regain confidence in order to complete graduate school. After graduation, the relationship continues with the mentee consulting with the mentor on specific requests for assistance as required.
- b. In this mentor and mentee relationship, having a mentor empowered the mentee to pursue an academic profession. As a junior faculty member, the benefit of the mentoring partnership is having the support and advice of an experienced faculty. This also eliminates the stressful situations where there was no professional support immediately available at the time. In addition, the mentor provides new perspectives, techniques, and tips on how to avoid common mistakes as a junior faculty. It is also advantageous to have the support of more experienced clinician to talk about the management of complex and difficult cases as enumerated Hawker et al. (2013). The mentee benefitted by having the availability of an experienced faculty member willing to discuss situations as the matter arises without feeling adjudicated.
- c. Maintaining the mentor/mentee relationship afforded the writer the opportunity to receive entry into networking circles of senior professors. Within the first year as nurse-faculty, the writer was able to attend and present papers at national and state nursing conferences. Another advantage of having a mentor is the ability to have safe place to ask questions and vent about unexpected circumstances. The writer would not be successful without the inspiring leadership of the mentor. Having someone to help when one is ready by showing the way facilitate settling into professional field of a faculty.

- d. An additional advantage is the recognition of the writer's strengths, weaknesses, and encouragement to explore new concept and taken risks in new learning opportunities. The mentor was very straightforward in criticizing wrong decision or action taken by the mentee without being judgmental and mentee obligated. A mentee therefore must be ready for hard criticism without taking offence at the mentor.
- e. With the above-mentioned the mentee was ready for guidance when opportunity for mentorship and collaboration knocks. As a result of the mutual understanding and trust between both parties the mentor invited the mentee to participate in a project. The project involved promoting healthcare in rural population in ways compatible to the culture of the people.
- f. An opportunity for a project presented itself with the mentor. Because of the mutual understand and trust between both parties the mentor invited the mentee to participate in the project. The project involved promoting healthcare in rural population in style compatible to the culture of the people. This project exposed the mentee to method of qualitative study, data collection, and analyzing data.

5. Responsibility as a mentee

6. Mentee must be willing to take guidance from the mentor. Mentor invest great time and energy in relationship with mentee, therefore, it is significant for the mentee to respect the mentor's time and effort in answering or address the mentee issues. Harrison (2010) indicated that each mentor and mentee has exceptional expectation and lots of resolutions can be accomplished by maintaining these expectations. The following are some suggestions for a mentee to nourish this opportunity and take responsibility for learning:
7. Mentee should discern that mentors are human and have responsibility. Consequently, mentee must be proactive in learning. This can be accomplished by the mentee being prepared with questions and ideas before meeting with the mentor.
8. The mentee must listen and be willing to accommodate suggestions.
9. Build trust and understand. It is complicated to become a professional scholar and assuming many unwritten and continually varying rules is a challenge. Being honest in explaining a situation when mistake arise, allows the mentor to rationalize the situation and suggest a resolution in way to prevent the mistake from reoccurring.
10. Development in discerning one's profession changes with time as a result both the mentor and mentee must reassess the relationship to keep what works and change what is not working.

11. Conclusion

- a. Goods (2012) inferred mentoring as a responsible and challenging role that demand commitment to the mentee and leads to a satisfying corporation that augment professional advances of those involve. A mentor, who acts as collaborator of success, encourages communication, where mentee is encouraged to remain independent. Both demonstrate respect, patience, and trust in their relationship. From personal experience, having a mentor for support has greater enhance and accelerate the development into the academic profession.

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