Effects of Poor Mentoring

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The Origin of Mentoring

The tale of Mentor derives from Greek mythology. The story can be found in Homer's Odyssey. The king of Ithaca, Odysseus, was charged with leading an army in the Trojan War. Odysseus had to leave his family behind. He entrusted his son Telemachus to Mentor, the son of Alcumus. Mentor was a trusted friend, teacher, and counselor to Telemachus.

When the war ceased, Odysseus did not return home, instead he wandered for ten years in an attempt to return to his home. Telemachus ventures in search of his father. Athena, the War Goddess, takes the form of Mentor and accompanied Telemachus in search of his father. Once reunited and take back the thrown.

Mentees are can also be referred to as “protégés”. The term Mentor means trusted advisor, friend, teacher, and or someone who is wise with knowledge one seeks. Throughout history we have been shown examples of mentoring relationships from Socrates ad Plato to Freud and Jung. A mentor invests time into assisting another person grow and develop different abilities. Mentoring is a
process that can be complex. It takes place between the mentor and the mentee
building a relationship that supports a mutual enhancement of critically reflective
and independent thinking (Galbraith, 2003).

**Mentoring**

Relationships occur and develop between individuals on many different
levels and in many different ways. Some of these relationships include: coaching,
career counseling, protection, sponsorship, friendship, and role modeling. A
question often asked is if character can be developed in mentoring. If character can
be developed is it being done so properly? Callahan (1998) expressed moral agents
(in this case the mentors) retaining the right and obligation to evaluate the moral
appropriateness of any order. This means the mentor has the responsibility of
ensuring that character is developed in the proper way to ensure mentees success
once the mentor is no longer in place. Callahan (1998) also discussed being
accountable for the decisions made in the favor of order. One has to hold mentees to
high standards regardless of what he organization says is adequate. When you take
on the role of being a mentor you must do so for the right reasons. This will be discussed later. Rutter & Giller (1983) discussed the importance of "one good relationship," and Garmezy (1985) stated the significance of adult role models in promoting the healthy development of highly stressed youth.

Mentors and mentees can have a disposition to be moral. Research concerning mentoring benefits continues to grow on the contrary the factors related to what motivates one to become a mentor research is scarce. What contributes to the motivational component in respect to mentoring? There is much dedication and commitment required to be a mentor, not all individuals have the ability to assume the role (Allen, 2006). Little is known about individual differences (outside of demographic factors) that may aid in the explanation of differences in mentoring behavior (Allen, 2006). Another component essential in mentoring is the knowledge component. Knowledge is often pointed out as being accrued through experience (Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001). The more experience a mentor has in an area the better fit they will be to mentor.
Mentors must be aware that individuals take in knowledge informally, and unconsciously so it is important they always set a positive example for their mentee (Swap et al., 2001). Knowledge can be transferred with no intention to teach or learn (Allen, 2006). It has been recognized even within organizations the importance of mentoring to transfer knowledge between individuals within the organization. Research shows that mentees who were given a mentor within an organization performed better and experienced rapid promotion (Swap et al., 2001).

Another component of mentoring is the Thinking Component. Research shows teaching critical thinking skills is one of the toughest challenges today (Thomas & Smoot, 1994). Attention on positive thinking is an important element of life success (Huitt, 1998). It is important mentors aid in the development of critical thinking skills in their mentees. Lastly there is the component of emotion. Mentors are to provide emotional support to their mentee. The mentee looks to the mentor to lean on in time of need. It is important for the mentor to be consistent in
supporting. Mentors and mentees must remain resistant to temptations and situational influences. Not only are mentors to educate their mentors but they are also there to help them develop proper morals. One does not want to mentor a smart individual with no morals (Lewis, 1947).

Mentors must next question how to assist in the formation of character in a mentee. What virtues are essential to an individual in order for them to be successful, happy, and lead a fulfilling life? Aristotle argued that happiness is the ultimate good we seek. There are two types of virtues with respect to mentoring; cardinal virtues and professional virtues. Cardinal virtues are: justice, temperance, courage, wisdom, humanity, and transcendence. Professional virtues are: conscientiousness, trustworthiness, and compassion. Aristotle stated, “Neither by nature, then nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and they are made perfect by habit” (Strike & Ternasky, 1993, pg 8). In other words nature does not automatically make one “good” we become good by continuing to do good. The practice is what perfects the daily walk.
Character is a function of experience, reflection, and inspiration. Aristotle also argues one learns to be good by finding meaning in the practices of being good (Strike & Ternasky, 1993). What one learns in their youth is vital to the habits that are formed with growing age. With experience we learn to be good by finding meaning in the practice of being good. A mentor can tutor mentees on how to be virtuous. This can be done by the integration of motivation, thinking, emotion, and knowledge. Mentees may also need guidance to help them understand past experiences while also being exposed to new experiences. The new experiences should provide reach in character and the ability for character to be tested. It is important to also let the protégé hear stories that are relevant to their own struggle. Aristotle also argues we are not born with morals they are taught. If this is true positive mentoring becomes even more important (Strike & Ternasky, 1993). In reflection we learn to be good by incorporating goodness into our world-view and self-concepts.

A mentor’s role here is to help their mentee identify, build, and utilize their character strengths. To have a mentee practice a strength give them homework to
help them find meaning in experiences. It is important to stimulate a mentee’s mind by asking them questions (e.g. meaning of goodness). With inspiration we learn to be good when we are startled by events, such as, lifestyle changes, educational changes, and role models inspiring change. Mentors can expose protégés to similar role models who have accomplished acts that are attainable. A mentor must always acknowledge when their mentee has had peak experiences. They must be taught to reflect and integrate the experiences into their personal lives.

Mentors that are committed to mentoring are considered good mentors. Mentors commit themselves to delivering effective support. Strong mentoring programs require mentors to have training before they are paired with a mentee. Mentors are to be models of continuous learning. A good mentor is also accepting of their mentee, as they are yet still assists them strive to be greater.

Youth with the most challenging academic and social behavior problems need pro-active comprehensive and consistent systems of support (Lampsky & Johnson, 2010). School-wide discipline systems are typically unclear and inconsistently implemented – absence of a “social behavior curriculum” (Slavin &
Matten, 2004). Consequently, educators often lack specialized skills to address severe behavior and learning challenges. The time to handle these issues often does not exist and result in these students having to suffer with little to no help. These students are conserved at risk if they are likely to fail, either in school or in life (Lampsky & Johnson, 2010). Mentoring is an intervention that has been as effective in assisting with these issues (Carter, 2004). It is the responsibility of adults to step in to aid students who are at risk. Adults who have successfully completed school know the difficulties these students face and can assist in mentoring those students currently struggling in school (McPartland & Nettles, 1991).

Experts in the field of education tend to agree that mentoring activities can be a useful tool in reaching at risk youth (Carter, 2004; Coppock, 2005). Students need role models and a guide to assist them where parents and teachers often fail. Adult to student mentoring has been shown to help students achieve better grades, establish obtainable goals, and enhance their self-esteem when partnered with caring and supportive adults (Clasen & Clasen, 1997; Johnson, 2006). Research indicates that a positive, caring adult may offer an at risk youth substantial
emotional and instructional support that supplement the unmet needs of at risk youth (McPartland & Nettles, 1991). Slicker and Palmer (1993) saw an increase in students who had effective mentoring vs. those who had ineffective mentors.

Effective mentoring may offer a decrease to the dropout rate of students and also increase student attendance. Children between 9 and 15 are commonly at important turning points in their lives. These students are at the correct stage of development to absorb and benefit from skills and interactions of an adult mentor (Rhodes and Lowe, 2008).

Research on mentoring mainly focuses on character development of youth and children. It is time to dispel the myth that adults cannot change their character. With proper mentors adults too can change. This change will take time and patience because the adult has conformed to their environments. Sample (2010) explains that adults lack morals because moral education was abandoned. In order for mentoring to be effective the adults must be motivated to change. Mentors should look at themselves as developmental partners helping to facilitate character change.
The Effects of Bad Mentoring

It isn’t often one hears about the negative effects mentoring can have on the individuals involved. Aristotle argued that good is easier to achieve than bad. Why is it so easy to fall victim to bad mentoring? Too many adolescents fail to manage the formation of connections with caring adults because society have changed in ways that reduce the availability of caring adults (Scales & Leffert, 1999). A meta-analysis of evaluations of mentoring programs, a study by DuBois, et al., (2002) found the effects of mentoring programs are small, especially in comparison to other interpersonal interventions designed to improve youth outcomes. Scandura’s (1998) theoretical article exposed the negative aspects of mentoring relationships on to Duck’s (1994) social–psychological typology of the “dark side” of close interpersonal relationships. Some healthy relationships can turn into negative ones for reasons such as disagreements and violence (Duck, 1994).

There are some ways that mentors can have negative effects on their mentees. Instead of strengthening their mentee’s potential and identity, the mentor makes their mentee be more like them. When a mentor does this they make the
mentee become more dependent upon them. This handicaps the mentee. Paul Tough (2012) stated "If we can improve one’s environment in specific ways that lead to better executive functioning, we can increase improve prospects for success in a particularly efficient way." The mentee is not placed in an environment conducive to the building of his or her own character nor making choices for themselves. They will always rely on someone else. This makes the mentee’s confidence become weak and creates confusion in the process.

Everyone isn’t built to be a mentor. Just because one holds seniority and a position of power or authority this does not make them qualified to be a mentor. A mentor shall be an individual that experienced not only success but also hardships that can benefit potential mentee. Mentor matching is a key element in mentoring. Most people seeking a mentor are so desperate for mentorship and eager for advice they don’t allow the process to choose the mentor that will be the best fit for them. Many are unaware of the damage that can occur from finding a mentor lacking the qualifications and expectations of the mentee. It is also important to understand the
mentor's intentions before the relationship begins. Mentors that are willing to take a mentee under their wing with no ulterior motives can be difficult to find.

Research shows “similarity-attraction” effects suggest most mentors will have a positive reaction to choices the mentee makes that align with a path reminiscent of their own and a negative reaction to paths that clash with their own past choices (Lankau, 2005). If for instance a mentee was accepted to have an internship in Italy, the same internship their mentor had, but turns it down, the mentor may try to persuade the mentee they are making a terrible decision because the trip enhanced their life. The mentor does with only thinking about self and not taking into account what was good for them may not be good for their mentee.

Calabrese (2002) describes this similarly by the term mental map. In the text Johnson-Laird describes mental models as providing a unified account of deductive model reasoning. As individuals we operate with series of mental models to make sense of everyday life situations. Mental models can be used as a guide to eliminate assumptions and stick with only the facts. People are unaware of mental maps existence, so they fail to realize thinking is different from others. It is important
mentors remember their mentees have their own mind and it works as well as their own even if the thought process is different.

Research also shows then people who have less power (mentee) tended more closely to and better understood those with more power (mentor) than the other way around (Lankau, 2005). This means the mentee usually knows more about the mentor than the mentor knows about the mentee. This asymmetry shows the mentor may not have the best advice to give the mentee.

One negative effect of mentoring can be the mentor having an abrasive or intimidating interpersonal style. The protégé can find this style difficult to handle, which relates to a negative experience. Mentees may also be unresponsive to constructive feedback from the mentor this also results in a negative relational experience. The most common bad experience reported by protégés is mentor-protégé mismatch (Lankau, 2005). This can range from differences in values and personalities to even work styles. Neglect can also occur if the mentor is perceived as not being interested in helping in the development of the protégé. Protégés also
Protégés report that some mentors exhibit general dysfunctional, stemming from personal problems that can have an adverse impact on their relationship (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & Dubois, 2008). The Protégé’s perception of bad experiences is correlated with a wide range of outcomes. These outcomes include negative reactions to relationship, strained relationships, and less favorable attitudes (Eby, et.al., 2008).

**Critique**

Negative mentoring is an example of flawed social arrangement. Mentors are assigned with the hope they will improve someone’s life and unintentionally, or sometimes deliberately, cause more harm than good. With respect to the ethic of critique it is important the mentor assigned to the mentee is a quality mentor. When recruiting mentoring a diverse group of mentors should be chosen. Assigning an under privileged youth to a privileged adult does not determine success if the
mentor cannot relate to the mentee. There may also be a struggle between competing interests among the mentor and the mentee.

Under the ethic of critique it is important for the mentor to acknowledge flaws within themselves and their mentees. They must work to solve the problems that can later cause issues to arise. One must know their mentee and do what will be most effective for their relationship. With critique the mentor and mentee must acknowledge where they are and how they got there. One must also ask questions to get to the problem. When inefficiencies are not addressed no one will get any closer to solving the problem.

Hierarchy also plays a role in mentoring. As mentioned previously one's position does not determine ability to mentor. Hierarchy should not be used as a factor when mentor. It is important as a mentor to govern oneself accordingly. You must "practice what you preach". Be aware at all times you are being watched and remember to always demonstrate those acts required of your mentee.

Justice
Mentors serve the common good of mentees. All mentees have an equal opportunity to be placed with a mentor that is qualified to assist them. Mentors must have an understanding of multicultural differences. They must avoid social conditions that breed unjust relationships. Mentors must actively listen and have conflict resolution skills.

**Care**

Much of what is discussed in this paper addresses the ethic of care. A Mentor must honor the dignity of each person he or she mentors. Trust must be initiated and maintained allotting open communication. The goal of each mentor must be to promote the human development of each mentor they encounter. With care one must ask what the relationship requires of them to have positive effects. Care and justice are interdependent of one another and require mutual growth. The mentor and the mentee must have the ability to reconcile in order to move past disagreements.
References


