



Implementing a mentoring model for teachers in the tertiary education environment

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ABSTRACT

The need for a mentoring programme as a professional development mechanism to support the academic practices of teachers resulted in a pilot study funded by Ako Aotearoa, the New Zealand Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, being carried out at the Universal College of Learning (UCOL), Palmerston North, a New Zealand polytechnic. The study involved implementing a formal mentoring programme positioned within a six step model which encompassed mentor and mentee selection, mentoring training, establishment of the mentoring partnership, mentor and mentee communities of practice, evaluation of mentoring effectiveness and a process for celebrating success. Twenty-six teachers representative of a cross-section of gender, age and teaching disciplines across the three regional UCOL campuses engaged in dyad mentoring partnerships over a period of six months. At the conclusion of the programme, summative interviews were conducted with the individual participants resulting in several key findings such as the integration of community of practice meetings as a support mechanism for mentoring participants. Changes in learner-centred teaching approaches, increased reflective practice and the development of a leadership capability framework for UCOL indicated that mentoring is a practice that supports teacher professional development. The findings have highlighted how the six step model helped to determine essential programme components and provided a framework in which to situate mentoring as an organisational support mechanism for teachers. In this report, the model will be described, providing the reader with an opportunity to contextualise the model in their own institution, with a specific focus on the implementation of an institute-wide mentoring programme.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There has been research conducted about the value of mentoring processes within the New Zealand University sector, however this project involved implementing a model of mentoring training and support as a case study at one New Zealand ITP, Universal College of Learning. The project strategically aligned to UCOL's learning and teaching plan as it aimed to enhance teaching quality and therefore learner success.

Until 2009, UCOL had not had a dedicated resource to provide mentoring as a support mechanism for academic teaching staff; an earlier mentoring scheme had been initiated but was not sustained. UCOL's rationale for implementing a mentoring system was to

- achieve better student retention and success as a result of enhanced teaching quality,
- develop staff capability to promote reflection and self-review and
- increase staff satisfaction through sharing of teaching best practice.

1.2 Research aims and expected outcomes

This project aimed to enhance teaching quality and learner success at UCOL, a strategic initiative aligned to UCOL's learning and teaching plan. It was expected that this will be achieved by

- building on the leadership capabilities of mentors,
- enhancing communication and relationships across UCOL's three campuses
- creating collaborative and collegial networks across the campuses to support the sharing of teaching best practice.

The implementation of a model for mentoring that provided a contextualised framework for supporting learning and teaching practices would be implemented across UCOL's campuses.

The expected outcomes of the project included:

- creation of a space for the sharing of teaching best practice;
- establishment of a centralised mentoring support mechanism for academic teachers;

- observable changes in learner-centred teaching approaches;
- support of continuous workplace learning in the scholarship of learning and teaching.

It was possible to draw an inference from the literature that mentoring had a positive influence on staff such as increased reflective practices and the willingness to try new approaches in their teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Harper & Sawicka, 2001; Hezlett, 2005). Student success would be in part gauged through semi-structured interviews that we intended to use at the end of the formal mentoring partnership period.

1.3 Data collection and analysis methods

Data collection

Two methods of data collection were used in this project, focus group interviews and individual summative interviews. Both methods applied a semi-structured interview approach. Semi-structured interviews are often less formal in the pre-determination of questions and structure of the interview schedule. This interview method was chosen to provide participants with a degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and any particular areas of interest.

Three focus group meetings were conducted at each of the three campuses, during which the researchers asked pre-prepared questions (refer Appendix A). Kitzinger (1995) believes that the interaction within a focus group enables participants to re-evaluate and re-consider their own understandings of their specific experiences, as much as eliciting information for the researcher. The summative interviews were conducted with the individual participants at the conclusion of the mentoring partnerships (refer Appendix B). Using a semi-structured interview approach in the focus group meetings enabled the participants to reflect on and give additional feedback in their responses to each question in the summative interview.

Data analysis

Thorne (2000) highlights the need for the data analysis approach to help with “understanding how the data was sorted, organised, conceptualised, refined and interpreted” (p. 69). The data

analysis approach taken in this project involved revisiting and coding each focus group and summative interview transcript, followed by a thematic analysis of the data. Gibson (2006) describes thematic analysis as the coding of categories in relation to the data which enables the grouping of different data under an umbrella term. In this way, the data can be regarded as ‘of the same type’. Development and refinement of the key themes that emerged occurred by a repeated studying of the transcripts, to consider possible meanings and how these connected with each other and linked to the central project objectives.

MODEL IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

2.1 The participant group

A group of academic staff were selected from each of UCOL’s three campuses. Each campus has its own culture and this meant that there was a difference in the formality between how the groups formed and worked. These campuses are in three different regional locations so the researchers were aware that managing a consistent process for data collection was paramount. Participants signed consent forms to indicate a willingness to take part in the research. (Appendix C).

Faculty Deans were asked to identify those who would respond positively and had prior knowledge about the enhancement of access to organisational, professional and technical knowledge, along with information about cultural norms and specialist information pertaining to teaching and learning. Each campus approached this in a slightly different way. For example, Campus A Deputy Principal instructed a group of senior managers to take part; Campus B Faculty Deans were notified of the pilot project and those who the Deans considered would be interested (either as mentors or mentees) were identified. The list was then vetted by Leader for Teaching Excellence and the suggested mentors who had no Adult Teaching qualifications were removed. Programme Leaders and Heads of School (HoS) were asked to approach each staff member first and then others who had heard about the project and who had indicated to their HoS that they wanted to take part were included. On Campus

C the Campus Manager worked in consultation with the researchers to identify a small group of mentors and mentees. The way in which the groups formed was important to the functioning of the groups throughout the trial. The group who had been instructed to attend was not so positive and undertook the training with reluctance. How the partnerships formed and performed during the trial was indicative of the difference between those who voluntarily engaged and those who were instructed to do so.

As well as being invited to participate in the research project, the mentees were encouraged to consider this as an extended professional development opportunity, rather than a compulsory attendance to remedy a deficit in their teaching. All of the cohorts of mentees were new teachers who had less than two years teaching experience and either had only just engaged in adult teaching qualifications or had just completed a Certificate in Adult Teaching. The mentor cohorts were identified by Faculty Deans as experienced teachers (four years or more) who were positive in their outlook to teaching and learning and had good institutional knowledge. The demographics comprised:

- i. Campus A had five mentors attend training and of the four mentees identified only two fully engaged;
- ii. Campus B had six mentors and seven mentees engage;
- iii. Campus C had four mentors and four mentees (although one mentee left the Institution part way through the trial, one was unable to take part in Community Of Practice groups (CoP's) due to part time work hours and one didn't fully engage.)

2.2 What they did

On each campus the mentors and mentees attended mentoring training sessions. The training workshops focused predominantly on investigating and acknowledging the skills of effective mentors and mentees. Listening, questioning and problem solving skills and techniques were unpacked and put into the mentoring context through a series of case studies. The purpose and value of a 'community of practice' (CoP) was introduced and the benefits of CoP's in this context were identified. Pitfalls and potential challenges were identified and discussion

about how these could be minimised took place. The training workshops involved both combined groups of mentors and mentees and separate training for mentors and mentees respectively across the three campuses. The training was crucial to the understanding of mentor and mentee roles and also to the development and performance of each partnership. At the conclusion of the training the mentees were encouraged to meet with as many mentors as they wished to, in order to find someone with whom they felt they could develop a good mentoring partnership.

2.3 How the mentoring partnerships were formed

Partnerships were either matched by the two researchers or were chosen by the mentees. Both systems worked well for different groups but also came with their own set of comments such as, *“What do I ask a mentor in order to find out about them?”* and *“This is like speed dating”*. One of the campus groups asked the researchers to do the matching; some of the participants in this group had apprehensions about whom they were matched with, for example, one of the female mentees did not want a male mentor. A female mentor in this group was matched with a younger male colleague and received comments from other colleagues about this partnership. Another of the mentors agreed to mentor two teachers who were very different in nature and discipline areas. There was a certain amount of trust within this group and the training had allowed the mentees to talk about how the partnership could come to an end at any point, but this was not an option that was needed by any of the mentees.

2.4 Implementing the mentoring model

The ten stage model designed for this project was split into a six stage implementation model, with an additional four stages which involved the researchers completing the data collection and analysis aspects of the project. The following process details the six stage model design.

Stage One: Mentor and mentee selection

Mentors and mentees selected ensuring a cross section of programmes and involvement of staff from three campuses.

Stage Two: Mentoring training

Mentors and mentees at each campus attended mentoring training facilitated by the researchers, involving a half day combining the mentors and mentees. As explained in the previous section of this report, separate training workshops for mentors and mentees respectively also occurred. The training workshops focused on the purpose and expectations of mentoring and the mentoring partnership. To complete the training, two more half day workshops were held (as separate groups) where role clarification and responsibilities more explicitly discussed.

Stage Three: Establishment of mentoring partnerships

Partnerships formed either by the researchers (on one campus) or through a process of 'interview'. Mentors and mentees were expected to meet at least once a month.

Stage Four: Establishment of communities of practice

During the six month partnership period, Community of Practice meetings were held bi-monthly at each of the three campuses. As well as an additional support mechanism for the mentors and mentees, these meetings provided the researchers with additional research data.

Stage Five: Evaluation of mentoring outcomes

At the conclusion of the mentoring partnerships an online survey of all participants was conducted. The survey was designed by the researchers using the online tool Survey Monkey™ with the aim to gather data regarding the whole mentoring process and the participant experience, including:

- mentoring training: content, usefulness, timing, any requirements before a partnership commences;
- the mentoring partnerships: process, content, timing, outcome for the mentee and mentor, the level of support that resulted.

Stage Six: Celebrate success

To recognise and thank the participants for their involvement in the project, the whole group came together at the conclusion of the six month mentoring partnership trial to share their experiences and 'conclude' the formal mentoring partnerships.

The following are the four additional stages that were planned to allow for the completion of data collection and the analysis of the project.

Stage Seven: Interim data analysis

Interim data analysis carried out by the researchers.

Stage Eight: Participant interviews

Three months following the conclusion of the formal mentoring partnership trial, each participant was interviewed. The interviews were conducted by both researchers, shared across the three campuses. Information collected at this point contributed to the final data analysis.

Stage Nine: Final data analysis

A final data analysis was carried out by the two researchers, to inform the final report and make recommendations for implementation.

Stage Ten: Final report and recommendations

A final report with recommendations for application of the mentoring model was submitted to Ako Aotearoa, the Deputy Chief Executive Academic at UCOL and the HR Manager at EIT.

THE FINDINGS

Analysis of the data collected from the research participants during the focus group meetings and summative interviews yielded extensive findings. The following section of this report provides a summary of the key findings and how they contribute to a substantiation of the original project objectives. The findings are reported on as they relate to each of the six stages of the mentoring model that was implemented at UCOL.

3.1 Stage One: Mentor and mentee selection

Stage one of the project involved an initial identification and selection of UCOL staff willing to participate in the project as mentor or mentee, engaging in a six month mentoring partnership. During the six month time-frame, the participants attended bi-monthly focus group meetings and completed an individual summative interview at the conclusion of the project. Following is a summary of the findings collected during Stage One.

Initial identification and selection of mentors and mentees

Three groups of participants were selected for engagement in the project, representative of the three UCOL campuses. The researchers had aimed for each group to consist of equal numbers of mentors and mentees. The findings highlighted how the way in which the three groups were formed significantly influenced the functioning of the groups throughout the project time-frame. For example, one of the groups had been instructed to be involved in the project, in comparison with the other two groups who had volunteered. The group instructed to engage as mentors and mentees undertook the initial mentoring training with reluctance and indicated that they knew very little about the project details and the expectations of their involvement in this. By the end of the six month project, this group of staff had either not established mentoring partnerships or had not maintained a partnership for the six month period after its commencement.

The two groups who had volunteered to participate in the project established mentoring partnerships immediately following the mentoring training workshops and maintained these

relationships throughout the six month time-frame. How the partnerships formed and performed during the project was indicative of the difference between the groups which voluntarily engaged and the group which was instructed to do so.

Mentor and mentee attributes

A plethora of mentor and mentee attributes were identified by the participants in response to questions asked during the focus group meetings and the summative interviews, regarding what they believed were the key attributes of the mentor and mentee. The researchers explained how these questions were relevant to the process of selection and subsequent mentor-mentee matching. The participants' responses also highlighted how they believed these attributes influenced the mentoring partnership, in terms of the relationship itself and the partnership structure and process. Table 1.1 (below) provides a summary of the key mentor and mentee attributes identified by the participants.

Table 1.1 Key Mentor and Mentee Attributes

Key Mentor Attributes	% of sample n=	Key Mentee Attributes	% of sample n=
Builds trust in the mentoring relationship	13	Set own goals for the mentoring	12
Reliable and totally committed to the process	12	Aware of personal boundaries	8
Active listener	12	Don't expect the mentor to be superior to self	7
Gives constructive feedback	12	Open-minded	7
Manages the expectations of the institution	10	Let go of reservations	5
Passionate about teaching and learning	10	Prepare for meetings (it's not just up to the mentor)	4
Helps the mentee come up with their own solutions	9	Real consideration of the other person	4
Integrity	8		
Willingness to share expertise and own experiences	8		
Maintains confidentiality	6		
Awareness of personal boundaries	5		

3.2 Stage Two: Mentoring training

Four half-day mentoring training workshops were conducted across the three campuses. Two workshops were provided at Campus B due to the larger cohort of research participants. The workshops at the two regional campuses comprised combined mentor-mentee groups, whilst Campus C involved separate mentor and mentee training. Of the nine participants at Campus A, the four staff members who had been identified as mentors for the project attended a training workshop. However, the prospective mentees at this campus did not receive training due to circumstances outside the researchers' control. All of the eight participants at Campus C and the thirteen participants at Campus B attended training.

Feedback from the participants in the summative interviews indicated that mentoring training was perceived as crucial to the development and performance of the mentoring partnerships and should be an integral component of a mentoring programme. The participants identified a range of benefits they believed they had gained from the training including i) building relationships; ii) clarification of mentoring roles; iii) understanding the process of a mentoring programme and partnership and iv) an opportunity to consider strategies for managing potential issues in the mentoring partnership.

When the participants were asked whether they thought training should be provided separately for mentors and mentees, there was a mixed response. Some participants commented that they felt the training should be separate as this would allow the prospective mentors and mentees to explore the expectations and responsibilities respective to their role. Some of the participants also believed that separate training would enable people to be more open in their discussions about potential problems in the mentoring partnership and how they could manage these. There was unanimous agreement that training should be provided for both mentors and mentees. However, an additional comment made by three of the participants indicated that there was too large a gap between the training workshops and commencement of the mentoring partnerships.

The mentees who did not have the opportunity to attend a training workshop indicated that they had struggled with understanding the purpose of the project and the concept of mentoring. Interestingly, these particular mentees either did not commence in a partnership or their partnership was not sustained throughout the six month time-frame.

Near the conclusion of the training workshops, the participants were encouraged to consider using a formal mentoring agreement at the commencement of their mentoring partnership. Feedback from the summative interviews identified that some participants had used this concept. These participants found that the formal nature of a 'contract of agreement' had prompted the mentee to identify their goals for the mentoring and enabled the mentee and mentor to establish clear ground rules for the ensuing mentoring partnership meetings.

3.3 Stage Three: Establishing the mentoring partnerships

The dyad mentoring partnerships were established at the three campuses immediately following the training workshops. Different approaches to the mentor-mentee matching process within each campus were employed by the researchers. For example, the group at Campus B were happy for the researchers to carry out the matching whilst the two satellite campuses chose to complete their own partnership matching. Interestingly, even though the participant group at Campus B had asked to be matched, some of the participants voiced apprehension about whom they were matched with, one teacher stating, "*What do I ask a mentor in order to find out about them?*" In light of these two matching approaches, the participants at Campus B and Campus C commented that they felt the level of mentee choice in selection of their mentor was a critical influence on the resulting success of the partnership. As the findings have already highlighted, the mentoring partnerships at Campus A were not sustained.

Analysis of the data collected from the focus group meetings and the summative interviews highlighted several key influences that the participants perceived as having determined the effectiveness of their mentoring partnership. The most significant influence referred to the need for the mentee to identify goals for their professional development and how the

mentoring can support their achievement. For example, one of the mentees thought that her goals had determined the focus and structure of the mentoring meetings and had “*directed the structure of the partnership.*” Additionally, a mentor felt that it was equally important for both the mentee and mentor to agree on the outcomes both partners wanted to achieve from the mentoring at the commencement of the partnership.

Providing mentoring training for mentors and mentees was also frequently commented on by participants. As well as referring to the advantages they believed they had gained from attending the training workshops, such as a clearer understanding of the mentoring roles and strategies for managing potential challenges in the partnership, one mentor’s comment indicated the important connection between mentoring training and the effectiveness of the ensuing partnership: “*Without the mentee having received mentoring training, this made the first meeting quite difficult as the mentee didn’t know what the whole thing was about.*”

Other key influences on the mentoring partnership included the need to establish boundaries early in the partnership, the importance of how the mentee and mentor are matched and the appropriateness of meeting spaces. One strategy for establishing boundaries, for example, was described as “*useful to have a written agreement at the beginning of the partnership. This provided a very specific focus in the meetings.*”

Several participants also believed that the success of the partnership relied on effective matching of the mentee and mentor. There were contrasting views in regard to this, some of the participants supporting the concept of the matching process being managed by a central mentoring programme coordinator whilst others were adamant that they would prefer to choose their own mentoring partner. Interestingly, one of the mentors clearly perceived that the mentor should not be the mentee’s manager, as they commented, “*As the team leader of the mentee as well as then her mentor, this match was not effective. I have power over her in terms of whether she will have a contract next year. Useful as a resource person in the mentor role but not for deeper teaching and learning things.*”

The issue of appropriate meeting spaces as influencing the effectiveness of the mentoring partnership was described by one of the mentees as *“useful to meet off campus. I felt more relaxed and could talk about a lot of things I wouldn’t normally in my own area”*. Their comment was supported by other mentees who had met off-campus. They all indicated that meeting off-campus was the ideal environment for regular mentoring meetings.

3.4 Stage Four: Establishment of communities of practice

An integral component of the six stage mentoring model was the provision of communities of practice for the mentors and mentees as they progressed through the six month mentoring partnership programme. In order to implement this aspect of the model and create an opportunity for data collection, the focus group meetings conducted at each of the three campuses over the six month period were based on the community of practice concept. For example, although the researchers had prepared questions and coordinated the meetings for the purpose of data collection, these meetings also provided the participants with the opportunity to come together at regular intervals and share common experiences, issues and expertise. The meetings were conducted separately for mentors and mentees.

During the summative interviews, the participants mentioned a number of benefits they believed they had gained from attending the focus group meetings, some of them emphasising the effectiveness of the community of practice approach taken in the meeting structure. One of the mentors commented how it had been *“helpful to hear how others are approaching their partnership and giving me food for thought about how I’ve been approaching mine”*, whilst four mentees talked about how the meetings had created a connection between the mentees, as there was an opportunity to *“talk to each other”* and *“it was a relief to find others experiencing what I am.”*

3.5 Stage Five: Evaluation of mentoring outcomes

The aim of this project was to investigate the influence of mentoring on the enhancement of teaching quality and learner success at UCOL by building on the leadership capabilities of mentors and creating collaborative networks across the three UCOL campuses.

During the summative interviews, the participants commented on a number of perceived and real outcomes they had achieved as a result of engaging in a mentoring partnership. Examples of specific changes included changing assessments, new course design, improved moderation practices and review of content. One of the mentees claimed *“I feel more confident in assessment design and I am introducing more innovative assessment tasks with my students”* whilst another mentee stated that they had been *“I have been learning ways to make learning more active, for example, independent learning, student research projects and suiting different learning styles.”*

Building relationships with others was described in a number of ways by a number of the mentors and mentees, such as *“having someone different to talk to about what’s going on in my area”* and *“good to have someone outside my department or discipline. I could speak more freely.”* One of the mentees who was new to teaching believed that the mentoring had helped them to *“integrate into the organisation and help familiarise me with staff and procedures.”*

Other mentees highlighted that they felt they had benefitted from the mentoring by receiving confirmation of their teaching, learning new ideas to experiment with and gaining a better understanding of the organisation. One mentee mentioned how he was *“not so over-whelmed by the whole situation now, as a new teacher.”* Help with making career decisions was an outcome identified by a mentee and a mentor. Both participants attributed this outcome to the support they had received from the mentoring partnership. As the mentee stated, *“I applied for a new job and the mentor helped me with this. They encouraged me to go further in my career and I feel that I can now.”*

3.6 Stage Six: Celebrate success

The key finding from this stage of the model involved the participants' perception that the opportunity to come together as a whole group at the conclusion of the research project encouraged further building of collegial relationships. Although the purpose of Stage six was designed predominantly to thank the participants for their engagement in the project, they avidly commented on how this aspect of the project provided an additional mechanism for networking across the three campuses.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this research project have highlighted a number of key considerations for the implementation of a mentoring programme within a tertiary education institution. The following discussion explicates these key points as they relate to each stage of the six step mentoring model that was implemented at UCOL for this research project.

4.1 Stage One: Mentor and mentee selection

It has been highlighted in the findings from this project that the implementation of a mentoring programme within a large, three campus institution is multi-dimensional in nature and needs to be considered in this frame. From the outset of the project, the outcomes were influenced significantly by the approach taken to identify the participant groups from each of the three campuses involved.

Reflective of the mentoring literature across a range of disciplines (Clutterbuck, 2004; Hezlett, 2005; Milton, 2004), a list of mentor attributes contributes to the process of mentor selection. The mentor's history of teaching, a history with the organisation and their "*professional persona*" was indicated as highly valued by a number of the mentees. These participants commented on the value of having a "*teacher trained person*" who was able to assist with resources and share their own experiences. This feedback contributes to an identification of the effective mentor. However, a 'list' is only one mechanism for the

institution to ensure that the identification and selection of mentors is effective. Developing specific categories that itemise and prioritise the core mentor attributes desired by the institution would be an important process. These mentor attribute categories could be aligned to the goals of the mentoring programme, which reflect the strategic direction of the institution in relation to teaching and learning professional development.

4.2 Stage Two: Mentoring training

The mentoring literature in the higher education domain indicates strongly that mentoring training for mentors and mentees prior to engagement in mentoring partnerships is a recommended process within an organisational mentoring programme (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Harper & Sawicka, 2001; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2001). Interestingly, there continues to be minimal reference in the literature regarding training for the mentee. The findings from this study highlight that both the mentor and mentee participants thought they had gained a number of benefits from attending the training workshops, as they provided them with the opportunity to prepare for the mentoring partnership, gain a clearer understanding of the purpose and process of mentoring and establish professional development goals for the mentoring over the six month period.

In particular, the participants from Campus C and Campus B felt they were well equipped to engage in mentoring partnerships based on the learning they had gained. In comparison, as has been highlighted in the findings, the mentee participants from Campus A who did not attend any training commented that they did not understand the purpose of the project or why they were to become involved in mentoring partnerships. These participants did not engage fully in the project from the beginning or manage to maintain a mentoring partnership throughout the six month period.

4.3 Stage Three: Establishing the mentoring partnerships

It is evident in the mentoring literature that the effectiveness of a mentoring partnership is largely dependent on the mentor-mentee matching process (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007;

Darwin, 2004). Emphasis is placed on the need for mentee choice of their mentor. As the findings in this project illustrate, the mentees who chose to either select their own mentor or requested the researchers to match them indicated that this had a positive impact on the ensuing partnerships. However, one of the mentors at Campus C talked about the need for a template of questions or similar that the mentee could use when they first approached a potential mentor. This mentor felt that although the mentee should have a choice in the selection of their mentor, some assistance with this process would be useful. Findings from the data collected from the summative interviews also identified that successful matching depended largely on the mentor and mentee being from different disciplines.

In addition to the matching process of the mentor and mentee, the findings highlighted a number of other variables that the participants thought had been key influences on the effectiveness of the partnership from its commencement to its conclusion, including the provision of mentoring training, the availability of adequate meetings spaces and the intention of the mentee to identify their professional development goals. Inherent in the feedback regarding the matching process and consequent mentoring partnerships, the majority of the participants emphasised the need for a central coordinator to oversee the whole programme and in particular assist with different aspects of the mentoring process as required.

Based on the findings from this project, a conclusion could be drawn that the matching of mentors and mentees is an influential variable on the success of the mentoring partnership, with the mentoring partnership being a central structure of an organisation's mentoring programme.

4.4 Stage Four: Establishment of communities of practice

The establishment of a 'community' within the workplace provides a place where people can develop mutually supportive relationships, creating a context within which individuals define and negotiate issues that concern them (Clarke, 2005). A key finding from the participants at Campus B and Campus C was the usefulness of a community of practice structure being an

integral component of a mentoring programme. Based on their experience in attending the focus group meetings, participants referred to these meetings as similar to the community of practice concept, stating that they had benefitted from these meetings as well as the mentoring partnership.

There was also support from the participants at Campus B for the community of practice structure to comprise of mentor-only and mentee-only meetings, which they felt should be organised regularly throughout a mentoring programme period. A community of practice was perceived as providing mentoring participants with opportunities to share best practice and enhance collegiality across the institution. The desire for separate meetings for the mentors and mentees was explained as enabling people to talk openly about their respective partner or the partnership experience itself. Interestingly, the participants from Campus C were not concerned with the structure of the meetings but were in support of the concept.

4.5 Stage Five: Evaluation of mentoring outcomes

The findings from this study suggest that mentoring does positively impact on professional practice and development of the individuals engaging in this mechanism of support. A significant question being asked in the mentoring literature is whether mentoring relationships lead to positive outcomes for the mentee (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Wanberg, Welsh & Hezlett, 2003). Based on the participant feedback from Campus B and Campus C, a number of the mentees and mentors felt they had made some changes in their practice and benefitted in their personal development as well. Within the literature, strategies that are connected with mentoring programme evaluation primarily focus on assessing mentoring process effectiveness and participant satisfaction or rely to a large extent on reflective feedback from the mentoring participants (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Stromei, 2000). Although specific evaluation strategies to measure the impact of mentoring were not employed in this current project, evaluation as an intrinsic mechanism within a mentoring programme would help to formally determine what influences mentoring as a support mechanism for professional development and provide a mechanism for measuring the outcomes as a result of staff engaging in mentoring.

4.6 Stage Six: Celebrate success

The provision of an opportunity for the research participants to come together as a whole group at the conclusion of the project resulted in a number of benefits and outcomes for both the participants and the researchers. As the findings highlighted, the participants appreciated the chance to meet each other and share their experiences with regard to the involvement as mentors and mentees in the project. They also felt that this meeting provided a mechanism for establishing new collegial relationships and/or further supporting existing collaborations across the three campuses.

Celebrate success, the final stage in the model, enabled the researchers to thank the participants for their involvement in the project. Additionally, organising the group to come together provided the researchers with an opportunity to discover

- i. which staff members would be willing to continue in a mentoring programme within the institution;
- ii. who would be willing to continue in the role of mentor and
- iii. whether any of the current mentees were interested and willing to assume a mentor role in the future

4.7 Limitations of the project

The researchers acknowledge the limitations of this project, particularly with regard to the research being undertaken in one higher education context. This did not allow for any comparative analysis of how mentoring can be used as a professional development support mechanism in other contexts. Also, accessing all of the participants across the three campuses was difficult, given the nature of the participants' diverse teaching schedules and, as will be highlighted in the findings, the degree of motivation to engage in the project from some participants. This latter limitation resulted in a lack of consistent feedback from all of the participants, inevitably influencing the data analysis and findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have developed from the findings of this project. They are based on the extensive feedback gathered from the participants and aim to provide other institutions or individuals with strategies to enhance the implementation and sustainability of an institute-wide mentoring programme.

5.1 Mentoring profile templates

The development and use of mentor and mentee profiles would assist the participants about to engage in a mentoring programme in finding out significant information about each other. The profile could include categories of the individual's teaching context, student cohort information, level of teaching experience, discipline expertise, degree of organisational knowledge. These profiles would be available for both mentors and mentees at Stage One of the programme, the selection and consequent matching of the mentor and mentee.

5.2 Mentor questions template

The development of a template of questions that the mentee can use when they are in Stage One of selecting a mentor would assist the mentee when they first meet a prospective mentor. The template could include questions to ask the prospective mentor so that the mentee can find out if this person is the mentor they are looking for, for example, questions about the mentor's discipline area, their level of experience with teaching, whether they have particular areas of teaching expertise. This also gives the mentee a high degree of choice in who they will receive mentoring support from.

5.3 Commencement of the mentoring partnerships

It is recommended that a 'meet and greet' event be organised prior to the mentoring partnerships commencing. This provides the opportunity for the mentors and mentees to establish an initial level of familiarity and to meet others involved in the mentoring

programme, which could lead to future networking and building of collegial relationships. Also, in the UCOL context specifically, a ‘meet and greet’ event would provide the opportunity for the three separate campuses to come together.

5.4 Co-mentoring option

As this project has evidenced, a critical component of the mentoring partnership process involves the mentee identifying their professional development goals and how mentoring can support them in achieving these. A mentee’s goals may highlight a number of different areas in which they require support. To reduce the assumption or unrealistic expectation that one mentor can provide multi-dimensional support, a co-mentoring option is suggested. This could be in the form of a mentee being assigned two mentors who have two distinct and different sets of skills and knowledge. This composition of a mentoring partnership would need to be explicit and all parties involved made fully aware that the mentee is accessing support from multiple sources to enable them to achieve their goals.

5.5 Discontinuation of the mentoring partnership

The development of a letter template that enables either the mentee or the mentor to discontinue the mentoring partnership would be a useful tool, if either person felt that they were not benefitting from the mentoring support or that the mentee-mentor relationship was not compatible.

5.6 Additional mentoring training focus

Feedback from the participants indicated that although they felt they had benefitted from the mentoring training workshops, additional content could be useful to include in future training sessions, particularly for mentors; for example, more in-depth material regarding communication skills and strategies including body language.

CONCLUSION

As this project has highlighted, mentoring is a multi-dimensional concept and practice when used as a mechanism for supporting and enhancing teaching and learning practices. The use of a process-oriented model for implementing an institute-wide programme acknowledges this multi-dimensional nature and consequently can support the institution to identify the necessary resourcing and additional support mechanisms needed for mentoring to be a legitimate professional development tool

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank all the participants in this research project, for without them we could not have achieved this! Also we acknowledge that some of them enjoyed this process so much that their mentoring partnerships have continued to meet and they continue to grow and reflect on their teaching.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Community of practice meetings

Potential Questions:

1. What are your first impressions of your mentoring partnership?
2. What have you found to be important in establishing the partnership?
3. What have you found to be important to create a level of trust in your partnership?
4. What is your perception of an 'ideal' environment and/or meeting space?
5. How have you found the 'formal' aspect of the mentoring partnership i.e., having to meet once a month, having to have a clear purpose?

Appendix B :

Interview questions

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE UCOL/Ako Aotearoa Mentoring Project

Date: _____

Name: _____

1. What positive outcomes (if any) have you experienced during or as a result of the mentoring partnership?
-

-
2. Have you made any changes as a result of the mentoring experience? If yes, what changes have you made?
-

-
3. What do you believe are the core characteristics the mentor needs, to influence the effectiveness of the mentoring received?
-

4. **What do you believe are the core characteristics the mentee needs, to influence the effectiveness of the mentoring received?**
-

-
5. **How do you think the organisation could influence mentoring and its outcomes?**
-

-
6. **How do you think the mentoring you have engaged in has impacted on UCOL, at an organisational level?**
-

-
7. **How do you think the experience and outcomes of the mentoring have impacted on student learning outcomes?**
-

-
8. **In your role as a mentor/mentee, how do you think the organisation can support you?**
-

Additional comments

Appendix C: Participant consent form

Consent form for participation and data collection through questionnaires and interviews

Project Title: Implementing a mentoring model for teachers in the tertiary education environment

I understand and have had explained to me the reasons for this research project and I have had a chance to raise any concerns I might have and to have my questions about the research answered clearly.

I understand that

- Any information I give is held in the strictest confidence and that I will not be named in any publication or other use of this material.
- The interview may be tape recorded to allow accurate interpretation of my opinions.
- The researchers will publish the material from this research in reports to funding bodies and in academic journals.
- The researchers may use information from this evaluation to present papers at academic conferences.
- The researchers may use this material at a later date to inform further research.
- I can withdraw at any time
- I do not have to answer any question I feel uncomfortable with.

I agree to participate in this research project funded by Ako Aotearoa and approved by UCOL and EIT research committees.

Signed.....

Date.....



RESEARCHERS PROFILES

Lesley has been involved in mentoring for the last fifteen years. Her position as the Teacher Development Advisor at the Eastern Institute of Technology in Hawke's Bay predominantly engages her in providing mentoring for academic teachers at all levels in their professional career. She has recently submitted her thesis on mentoring as a support mechanism for academic teachers in the higher education context through Curtin University in Perth, Australia. She has progressively presented and published her PhD research since its initiation at conferences in New Zealand, Australia and the USA. In 2010 she co-led this research project with Janet Walke, UCOL Palmerston North, using her mentoring model framework to implement a mentoring system for teachers within this institution.



Janet has worked in the education sector for over 30 years. She is a Senior Lecturer – Icon, at Universal College of Learning. Her position of Leader for Teaching Excellence at UCOL allows her the privilege to work across all three of UCOL's campuses. Primarily she leads the delivery of the adult teaching qualification at UCOL, where her interest lies in assisting teaching professionals to reflect on and better their practice in a supportive environment. Janet's other responsibilities at UCOL see her as the Team Leader for eLearning and STAR and she is co-ordinator for Ako Aotearoa's Central Hub. Janet has previous research experience – in 2009 she co-authored a project titled ***Professional Supervision: A vehicle for facilitating change in teaching practice***. This can be accessed on the Ako Aotearoa website.