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Chapter 5: PETE Mentoring as a Mosaic

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Introduction

Good mentoring is not an easy process. From the research literature on mentoring, we know that there are critical factors that affect the mentoring relationship and process: the selection of mentors, whether or not mentors and protégés are assigned, how formal or informal the relationship is, how mentors might or might not be rewarded for their contribution, and whether professionals can find the time for mentoring (Little, 1990; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). We also know that effective mentors possess rich and sophisticated content, curricular, and pedagogical knowledge, and they also have strong communication skills that can serve to support the protégé professionally and psychosocially (Kram, 1985; Stedman & Stroot, 1998; Stroot et al., 1998). From the studies in this monograph, we have learned that good intentions are not enough to facilitate good mentoring, and that good mentoring can be characterized in many different ways. In this final chapter we will provide: (a) an overview of findings from these studies, (b) recommendations with regard to mentoring and mentoring research, and (c) directions for future research.

Overview of Findings

Mentoring, as described across the profession in this monograph, is multidimensional, complex, and a valuable component in attracting and retaining high-caliber PETE professionals. This monograph has presented a snapshot of the mentoring experiences of K–12 teachers and higher education faculty. Throughout this monograph multiple theoretical frameworks have been applied to the examination of mentoring. Patton et al. (2005) applied a situated learning perspective to their examination of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation. McCaughtry et al. (2005) examined in-service peer mentoring using reform-type

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professional development (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birmans, & SukYoon, 2001; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Dodds (2005) grounded her study in workplace socialization and employed Kram's (1985) theory of mentoring in which mentoring serves both career and psychosocial functions.

These three studies, grounded in theory from social psychology and business, provide a starting point for future research that can guide PETE mentoring theory. As we highlight the major findings from the three studies reported in this monograph, we offer the notion of a mentoring mosaic as a backdrop. A mentoring mosaic provides a composite picture of the interconnected aspects of mentoring. As such, no single mentoring relationship can be all things to either participant. Therefore, we urge the reader to keep in mind the role, that multiple mentoring relationships play in the personal and professional development of both mentors and protégés. The major findings related to these three studies include:

1. Mentoring is a functional role filled by multiple people serving multiple "ends."
2. Communities of practice might act as a metaphor for some types of mentor relationships.
3. Training can enhance mentoring self-perceptions.
4. Prolonged contact with mentors enhances protégé perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional development and innovative curriculum implementation.
5. Mentoring is a pivotal, dynamic process more spiral than linear in nature.

Mentoring Is a Functional Role Filled by Multiple People Serving Multiple "Ends"

The idea that single mentoring relationships contribute more to the greater good for each protégé than just the sum total of all mentoring relationships is one of the messages throughout this monograph that for us strongly resembles a mosaic. When one looks closely at a mosaic, it becomes clear that each small component can stand alone, but when viewed as the larger whole, the mosaic portrays a different, often more significant perspective than does each individual component in isolation.

In this monograph, Dodds (2005) was the only author to frame mentoring based on her participants' perspectives rather than some a priori definition(s). All other monograph authors employed terminology and definitions of mentoring that implicitly presented an apprenticeship approach to mentoring (Danielson, 2002). This perspective holds that the mentor has more power or status than the protégé and serves as a guide and protector of sorts. Given this assumption, it becomes clear that less-experienced individuals are the logical recipients of mentoring, yet findings from these studies highlighted the reciprocal benefits of most mentoring (McCaughy et al., 2005; Patton et al., 2005). This reciprocal dimension of mentoring relationships can help us better understand the mentoring dynamic as the co-construction of new knowledge and understanding for both mentors and protégés.

To extend this notion of mutuality, both practitioner-based studies in this monograph included higher education faculty as either mentors or significant influences on mentoring relationships. Although higher education faculty were not

the sole mentors for K–12 practitioners in the Patton et al. (2005) study and were not mentors per se in the McCaughtry et al. (2005) study, these higher education faculty benefited from the involvement of K–12 practitioners as partners in various mentoring relationships. Dodds (2005) also extends the notion of mutuality in higher education when she discusses the influence of peer mentoring among the different career stages of the professoriate (e.g., mentoring relationship between an Assistant Professor and Professor).

Dodds (2005) examined how female faculty recall and make meaning of the mentoring experiences that influenced their career paths. She also contributed by using extensive qualitative measures instead of the more widely employed survey approach to data collection. Results from this study indicate that PETE women reported many instances of mentoring from a variety of people in their lives, from childhood through adulthood and into their early professional training and careers. These mentors taught them basic values as a foundation for career success and skills that created opportunities and challenged them in order to further the protégés' abilities. Mentors provided knowledge to negotiate institutional cultures and expectations for research and teaching. Participants actively engaged in mentoring processes, recognizing multiple forms of mentoring and bringing a range of conceptions and beliefs about mentoring to those relationships. The participants' examples of mentoring strongly supported both psychosocial and career development functions found in other research (Kram, 1983, 1985), although the psychosocial functions might precede career development functions. Participants referenced mentoring networks, often of a serial nature, more than dyadic relationships. These participants also referred to the fact that their own personal agency contributed to their perceptions of successful mentoring. In general, these participants reported that their mentors helped clarify the protégé's goals and career pathways rather than remaking protégés in their own images.

Overall, the use of multiple individuals as mentors, whether peers (McCaughtry et al., 2005), colleagues at a different educational level (Patton et al., 2005), or persons out of education altogether (Dodds, 2005), suggests that a mentoring mosaic approach that focuses on creating learning partnerships across the profession plays an important role in attracting and retaining high-caliber professionals.

Communities of Practice Might Act as a Metaphor for Some Types of Mentor Relationships

One step in the process of learning to foster mentoring relationships is the need to have multiple mentoring relationships in order to meet different personal and professional needs. This relationship constellation (Kram, 1985) has been addressed in each of the preceding chapters, and its value is intuitive. Whereas one individual might provide guidance about teaching, another might provide insight about an institution's political atmosphere, and yet another might suggest ways to navigate systematic/structural obstacles. The preceding studies begin to address specific gaps in the existing mentoring literature relative to the need for such a constellation approach to mentoring. Both Patton and associates (2005) and McCaughtry et al. (2005) noted that the majority of practitioner-based mentoring research examines the process of mentoring relationships as opposed to objective outcomes of such relationships. In the existing literature, mentoring relationships

are described as primarily hierarchal in nature. Based on this, Patton et al. created communities of practice to foster ongoing, long-term, reciprocal mentoring. Although these authors did not suggest a particular means to objectively evaluate mentoring relationships, they did encourage the development of reciprocal mentoring communities comprised of members from the intersecting groups. In addition, the notion of legitimate, peripheral participation allowed these mentoring communities to address the power–trust–vulnerability triad of concerns in order to foster more meaningful relationships (Patton et al.). Regardless of the participants' status in the project, the need for each member of the community to feel safe and valued was identified as critical for mutual learning to occur.

Training Can Enhance Mentoring Self-Perceptions

McCaughy and associates (2005) explored two additional gaps in the existing mentoring literature. First, they examined the influences of peer mentoring on newer teacher colleagues. Second, they examined how teachers learn to mentor. The influences of peer mentoring among K–12 teachers are important to examine given the logistics and realities of implementing mentoring systems in K–12 schools. In this mentor-based professional development project, mentor teachers were successful in increasing their self-perceived mentoring abilities over time. Mentors, however, felt less competent and questioned their abilities when they lacked specific content knowledge (e.g., pedometers). Overall, the novice teachers believed that their mentors did assist their teaching and career development. Related to the concept of peer mentoring is the need to provide structured training to mentors regardless of level, experience, or education. Mentor training should include a clear understanding of the needs and dynamics of the protégé. Mentors should be provided with opportunities to meet regularly with other mentors in order to (a) share experiences and solutions, (b) problem solve difficult situations, and (c) experience a sense of mutual empowerment from professional interactions with other mentors.

Prolonged Contact With Mentors Enhances Protégé Perceptions of the Impact of Mentoring

Throughout the mentoring literature there are generally two major approaches to mentoring: formal and informal. As outlined in Dodds' (2005) chapter, informal or spontaneous mentoring typically lasts longer and has more fluid goals—often the result of the self-selection of participants—whereas formal mentoring uses assigned mentors based on protégé need and mentor capability (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Even though a protégé's transition into a new professional role is usually the target of formal mentoring systems, this arrangement concomitantly allows mentors to develop young talent while passing on their experience and wisdom. Similarly, the second and third chapters of this monograph provide evidence of the value that longer term mentoring can provide to K–12 teachers. Both of these projects included year-long interventions that provided mentoring and related support for that time. Whether formal or informal, mentoring experiences should be local and contextually relevant. The individual value of mentoring typically lies

in the take-home-ability of the lessons learned in the mentoring relationship. Similarly, it is important to provide the personally meaningful, professionally challenging experiences that improve professional praxis in a convenient and timely manner.

Formal mentoring. The overarching goal of formal mentoring is typically the advocacy and retention of high-caliber professionals because formal mentoring has historically been used to attract, retain, and foster the development of early career stage professionals. Whereas both formal and informal mentoring include reciprocal aspects, it can be assumed that any dyadic mentoring relationship provides participants with different yet equally important benefits.

Informal mentoring. Typically, informal mentoring is driven by choices based on needs or strengths. The development of an informal network of mentors can often spring from unexpected events. For example, becoming involved in a grant, playing in a golf tournament, sharing some teaching ideas on the way to or from a faculty meeting, or participating in a service project are all activities that can lead to informal mentoring experiences or relationships. Although such relationships are less structured, they are at least as powerful as systematized, formal mentoring programs. As shared by Patton and associates (2005) and Dodds (2005), informal mentoring is one of the most powerful tools in fostering professional development. Once referred to as the “good old boy’s network,” this type of system still exists but now includes a variety of sub-groups (i.e., women, minorities). The important point is that when professionals with common interests and divergent resources connect, the benefits can be abundant and are typically reciprocal.

Mentoring is a Pivotal, Dynamic Process More Spiral Than Linear in Nature

Mentoring can have a considerable impact on different career stages of PETE professionals. As mentors and protégés, it is important to realize that decisions made now will impact professional development and career options down the road. The ability to mentor or find mentors that can provide sound career advice and/or support can play a critical role in solidifying mentoring relationships and reaping mutual benefits. Dodds (2005) shared her participants’ views of the pivotal and dynamic role of mentoring. Two insights into the pivotal nature of mentoring were revealed through multiple participants. First, participants shared the impact of their mentors’ modeling of successful professional behavior on the professionals they themselves became; mentoring began early in the participants’ lives and continued well into their professional careers. Second, through active participation in protégés’ lives, mentors encouraged and assisted the participants’ college attendance and career planning. Both the pivotal and dynamic aspects of mentoring were equally important for many of Dodds’ participants.

The spiral nature of mentoring is similar to the spiral nature of learning, as highlighted in the two chapters focused on K–12 teachers. For example, according to Patton et al. (2005), it was not until the communities started to intersect that more acceptance and potential learning took place. There was a need to balance the notion of “give and take” in order for more actual mentoring to occur. In fact, at certain

points of Patton and associates' project, some of the mentors reported feeling like each step forward with their protégé was followed by two steps back.

This spiral notion can be aligned with Kram's (1985) mentoring phases of initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition, and the associated career development functions of sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenge, and exposure. Although there is some logical temporal sense in Kram's mentoring phases, the specific career development functions are spiral in nature and might overlap, not occur often or at all, or occur based on contextual factors.

Similarly, in Patt Dodds' (2005) chapter in this monograph (in the sections titled, "What do protégés think they learn from their mentors?" and "How do protégés play active roles in their mentoring relationships?"), the author provides insight into the different ways that a mentoring spiral might function: (a) the same mentor can provide a protégé with different types of mentoring at different career stages, (b) the role that individuals (protégés) play during interactions with others across their career, and (c) multiple individuals serve different mentoring roles for a single protégé.

Much as we suggested in the preceding sections, it is often useful to have multiple mentors providing guidance in different career areas. This can be viewed as part of the mosaic or constellation of ideas we have used as a backdrop for this chapter. Additionally, approaching mentoring as a spiral, not a linear, experience might help mentoring participants grow as each person participates in the process along the career path.

Recommendations

From these studies we have learned that good intentions are not enough to facilitate good mentoring. Good mentoring is about facilitating learning relationships among the various interconnected aspects of a mentoring mosaic, such as formal and informal situations, dyadic relationships, multiple mentors and changing roles from protégé to mentor across a professional career, and the spiraling nature of mentoring over time. We argue that much of the work of mentoring is invisible work that many professionals engage in willingly. Whereas mentoring is not the only answer to attracting and retaining qualified PETE professionals, this monograph has provided evidence that mentoring can positively influence personal and professional growth.

There are times, however, when mentoring is not always positive for both parties, nor is it a one-size-fits-all experience. Remarkably absent from these papers were explicit mentions of power relationships, although participants' words conveyed implicit acknowledgment of mentors' greater power and the power dynamics are clearly part of the mentoring relationship. Positive aspects of mentoring might have seemed more salient (or best recalled) than were negative or confrontational experiences, or mentoring might have been viewed as a form of empowerment by protégés. Follow-up studies might explore the dynamics of power and empowerment, their effects on both protégés and mentors, and nuances of negotiation for disagreement or conflict (because no relationship is unilaterally positive).

Mentoring interactions and relationships must be carefully developed, fostered, and assessed in order to maximize the likelihood of retaining strong professionals. By identifying various aspects of good mentoring, we will be making mentoring more visible and thus be able to design better mentoring systems. Following is a

discussion of the practical insights gained from the studies included in this monograph, the implications of mentoring for K–12 and higher education professionals, and future directions for this line of inquiry.

We suggest the development of a nexus of relationships to meet personal and professional needs. Who comprises this network might not be as important a factor as the existence of such a network. Much of this monograph has addressed the interconnected nature of our profession across K–12 and higher education settings. Although there are many commonalities for professional mentoring regardless of work setting, there are contextual issues that influence mentoring practices.

Based on the results of these studies, we argue for the creation of a mentoring mosaic. Thus, instead of the mentor taking full responsibility for the protégé's learning, the protégé learns to share responsibility for learning, setting priorities, and resources and becomes increasingly self-directed (Zachary, 2000). Given adult learners' need to be self-directed (Knowles, 1980), the ultimate goal is that mentoring partners share the accountability and responsibility for achieving a protégé's goals.

Results from this monograph offer some guiding principles for building effective mentoring relationships. First, it is important to give both participants (mentors and protégés) a voice in the mentoring process. The notion of personal agency is valuable when protégés are seeking mentoring relationships. Personal agency places the protégé in a proactive role in which they become more active in their own mentoring process. As Dodds (2005) recommends, protégés should be proactive in seeking mentoring and mentors should be ever watchful for protégés who have that little spark and could be nurtured toward "more mature, productive faculty members" (p. 365). This level of personal agency is important in both formal and informal mentoring relationships.

Second, when developing formal mentoring programs, it is important to provide mentor training because few professionals ever receive formal mentor training. An important beginning point in the mentor training process should be the identification of contextually relevant mentoring competencies and ways to assess those competencies. Competency identification serves the purposes of explicitly identifying necessary mentoring skills, identifying the goals of a mentoring program related to the targeted mentoring skills, and providing a means to assess mentor effectiveness and/or growth in specific areas.

Third, it is important to develop formal mentoring systems that provide adequate stability and consistency across participants. This structured format should not necessarily translate to lock-step experiences, but instead should offer participants some guidelines for relating as mentor and protégé. This system should include: (a) participant incentives (e.g., release time, monetary support, resources, etc.); (b) formal expectations about each participant's role; (c) suggestions about the levels and types of contact; (d) flexible match-making networks; (e) mentoring resources for both mentors and protégés (e.g., textbooks, articles, websites); and (f) objective accountability measures (i.e., measurable feedback from both parties that influences future mentoring interactions). Hence, a more individualized approach (e.g., contract learning) to evaluating mentoring relationships should be considered. In giving voice to mentoring participants relative to relationship development and assessment, formal mentoring programs can create individual determinants of success.

K–12 Implications

Chapters 2 and 3 offered insight into how the mentoring process best works to impact in-service teachers' learning. Based on these findings, we offer some suggestions about how to maximize mentoring benefits for K–12 teachers. First, we agree with McCaughtry et al. (2005) about making K–12 mentoring contextually relevant, locally available, and collegial in nature. Second, Patton et al.'s (2005) suggestion to develop nonjudgmental relationships that are flexible with regard to formality is practical and relevant. Finally, both studies underscore the importance of the mutuality of the mentoring relationship. Both research teams interacted significantly with K–12 teachers in the K–12 setting and, therefore, offer first-hand insight into what was effective in their interactions. This methodology provided suggestions for helping teachers improve practice through mentoring.

Using reform professional development (Garet et al., 2001), McCaughtry and associates (2005) included components of successful teacher-centered learning that we feel could improve the development of evidence-based practice in K–12 settings: (a) keep the focus on active learning by participants; (b) make in-service programs long-term investments; (c) provide follow-up support subsequent to frequent training sessions; (d) create small work teams of K–12 teachers to foster community building and ownership in whatever project is being implemented; and (e) apply appropriate theoretical frameworks to learning experiences (i.e., adult learning theory; Knowles et al., 1998). These suggestions provide experience-based insight into ways the intersecting communities of K–12 teachers and higher education faculty can collaboratively improve mentoring and professional development efforts, thus improving the quality of our students' learning experiences.

Higher Education Implications

Although invisible in nature, mentoring is a means to a larger end because most formal mentoring in higher education starts with graduate students and moves through the career ladder of the professoriate (i.e., pretenured assistant professor to full professor). Given this, it seems logical that the focus of most higher education formal mentoring programs is to promote, tenure, and retain high-caliber faculty and therefore will vary by institution based on local expectations.

Relative to mentoring within higher education, key issues surround the provision and implementation of formal and informal systems. Formal mentoring provides the academy a way to protect its investment; after a university or other institution of higher education invests salary, support staff and materials, training, space, and a plethora of resources into each faculty member, it makes fiscal sense to maximize the likelihood of retaining that investment over time. Beyond the fiscal, however, is the professional benefit mentoring provides. As the next generation of PETE faculty approach retirement, the new arrivals in higher education firmly support the need to replace experienced faculty with equally prepared, yet less experienced, professionals. Logic supports the need for formal mentoring systems that have professional relevance for the protégé but also address the institutions' needs. Department-level mentoring can provide mentors and protégés with mutually beneficial opportunities to grow professionally, as well as provide consistency across generations.

Training, personal agency, flexibility, and accountability are keys to successful mentoring programs. Administratively, PETE will need to reconsider workload contract negotiations if mentoring is to be considered in the current mix of scholarship, teaching, and service. Currently, mentoring, if considered in any part of the workload, typically falls under the service umbrella. Whereas many institutions attend to service, the majority of colleges and universities emphasize either scholarship or teaching as the most important professorial function, with service usually the area receiving the least emphasis. Unless and until administrators are convinced of the valuable role mentoring plays in professional development, changing this perspective on the role of mentoring in the triad of teaching, research, and service will be a challenging course. Staying this course will be necessary if administrators are to be convinced to commit resources—time, money, people, and space—to the development of such programs.

Informal mentoring in higher education has historically resembled a country club; membership is granted upon attainment of a terminal degree. The classic “good old boys” network, although still in existence, is no longer the sum total of informal mentoring. Instead, colleagues seek out mentoring relationships based on needs and interests. For example, although a formal mentoring program might identify the specific number of publications, courses taught, and service projects one must complete, informal mentoring tends to provide collaborative insight into how those goals can be achieved. Based on conventional wisdom, this type of mentoring tends to be more sustainable as a result of the personal nature of such relationships. Whereas the goals of informal mentoring programs are parallel to those of formal mentoring programs, they tend to be more fluid and personally relevant.

Future Directions

This monograph sheds some light on the work of mentors in PETE. Generally, mentoring has been a form of craft knowledge (i.e., knowledge passed on from one mentor to the next, or the “tricks” of the trade); the work assembled in this monograph, however, begins to provide us with a systematic way of exploring the work of PETE mentors. Like most studies, the authors of these chapters have generated more questions than they have answered. In truth, this monograph was intended to be more comprehensive, but the challenges of conducting sound research on mentoring and mentoring relationships has proved difficult and consequently leaves the monograph short. As a matter of fact, the co-editors learned a great deal about how to mentor researchers, from research design, to data analysis, and through the writing process in the course of editing it. Across future studies is the resounding need to develop powerful qualitative and quantitative designs to answer important questions about PETE mentoring.

Although K–12 teachers and higher education faculty have been the participants in the studies in this monograph, there are important professional groups that have not been represented. Some viable lines of inquiry suggested by the monograph authors include an examination of

- the mentoring of doctoral students and early career assistant professors;
- the mentoring process from both mentor and protégé perspectives, taking into account both personal and cultural perspectives;

- mentoring across gender and ethnicity;
- the influence of policy on mentoring;
- the long term sustainability of mentoring in K–12 settings;
- mentor and protégé technology and curricular efficacies across a mentoring process;
- the existence of Kram’s (1985) phase model in mentoring relationships at institutions across Carnegie levels;
- and the transition from protégé to becoming a mentor.

In addition, according to the Carnegie Foundation (Huber, 1998), approximately one-third of the American professoriate teach at the nation’s almost 1,500 community colleges. Given the reality that these faculty are educating 39% of all students enrolled in higher education (Huber), the need to examine the mentoring of community college faculty is clear. Identification of these areas of needed research provides graduate students and faculty interested in examining mentoring with a full research agenda.

In conclusion, we believe that a research agenda that focuses on the invisible work of mentoring at all levels is warranted. As framed by Hargreaves and Fullan (2000; p. 52), “The old model of mentoring, where experts who are certain about their craft can pass on its principles to eager novices, no longer applies.” This quote concisely summarizes the need for PETE professionals to create and foster nonjudgmental mentoring relationships based on need and mutuality, rather than on academic rank or institutional employment. Similarly, the need to imbed flexibility into mentoring relationships is essential in developing reciprocal mentoring relationships that move our profession forward. Moving to a mentoring mosaic provides a way to directly address the power–trust–vulnerability triad, which can help break down barriers between teachers and researchers.

If mentoring is developmental, the sequence and timing of professionals’ engagement in mentoring relationships might differ by career choice, gender, individual background factors, or other aspects. Therefore, it would be important to study such factors if highly effective formal mentoring programs of the future are to be research based. Mentoring both within higher education and between higher education and K–12 teachers provides professionals with the opportunities to form connections with other professionals that can only serve to improve our communication, relationships, and eventually, the quality of our programs.

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