Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (All Submissions)

0234

H3 | Beaumaris 2
Chaired by Jennifer Leigh

Thu 12 Dec 2019

09:45 - 10:15

Mentors matter! Building a mentoring culture throughout academic practice.

Kay Guccione[1]

[1]*University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom*

Research Domain: Academic practice ,work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract: Mentoring is popular with Higher Education developers for assisting early career academics to evaluate their position and plan for success in competitive academic job markets. The academic may thus be confronted by several programmes offering development in different areas of academic practice. Mentoring skills encourage reflection, sense-making, and problem solving and can be further employed by mentors across a wide range of academic practices includingorganisational leadership, research leadership, and teaching. Experienced mentors also act as 'champions' who influence within their Departments to promote and create new structures for mentoring for staff and students. This paper argues that as well as developing new staff holistically within a programme, we must support senior staff to utilise their mentoring skills as part of a congruent 'integrated academic practice' beyond the programme. It also demonstrates the importance of good mentoring experiences in seeding the growth of a developmental research culture in higher education.

Paper: Context

Mentoring is an important instrument for enabling novices in any field to develop specialist expertise. Popular with Higher Education developers mentoring assists academics to evaluate their position and to plan for success in an increasingly competitive academic job market. Mentoring provides an opportunity for new lecturers to make interpersonal connections, enabling informed and supportive professional development (Donnelly and McSweeney, 2011; Turner et al, 2016), and can enhance the development and profile of underrepresented groups in HE if inclusively deployed (Sotello Viernes Turner & Gonzalez, 2015). Findings from Gardiner et al (2007) indicate that over time mentoring increased women mentees' sense of confidence as an academic and increased retention and career progression compared to those who were not mentored. Both mentoring and the closely related discipline of coaching offer positive effects for early career cohorts, increasing self-awareness and sensemaking (Lech et al, 2017) decreasing perfectionism and increasing writing productivity (Kearns et al, 2008) and decreasing thoughts of dropping out of the higher degree (Godskesen and Kobayashi, 2015). Effective academic mentoring relationships have been characterized by reciprocity, mutual

respect, clear expectations, and shared values (Straus et al, 2013) leading Mullen et al (2009) to propose mentoring as a mechanism for growth of more supportive research cultures. Further, employing a relational-collaborative approach, Lewis et al (2017) utilised mentoring to redress organisational norms and develop new cross-cultural models of academic success, embracing diverse approaches and populations.

Given the range of applications for development by mentoring, there is a temptation for the different functional areas of universities to each seek to design mentoring programmes that serve their own objectives for developing staff. The academic 'mentee' may be confronted by several programmes, separately developing them to be e.g. world leading researchers, excellent teachers, and/or, women who succeed as senior leaders.

This paper will:

- Demonstrate the value of a 'one programme' approach to mentoring academic staff;

- Show how mentoring as a skill set can be integrated across a wide range of academic practices; and

- Make recommendations for how others can adopt and adapt the approach.

A mentoring framework for academic development

The Academic Mentoring (AM) programme provides a scaffold of mentor development training, relationship management, and supervision for mentors (senior academic staff) and mentees (early career academics). Within this framework, individual mentoring relationships develop flexibly, focusing on growth towards each mentee's personalised objectives, which may include specific research, teaching or leadership goals; career planning, navigation or transitions; or support for resolving career obstacles and complex relationships. Mentors utilise a (low advice) coaching approach, to encourage reflection, sense-making, and problem solving within the mentee's own life-context.

The programme's outcomes have been consistently positive and mentees report an increase in engagement (motivation, confidence), better working relationships, enhanced career strategy (awareness, decision making, planning), and career outcomes (promotions, funding, publications) (discussed in Guccione, 2018) in line with the Gardiner et al (2007) categories for mentoring programme outcomes.

In addition to skills development, mentors indicate positive benefits in other areas of practice, beyond the mentoring programme.

Research Questions

(1)   How is the mentoring repertoire utilised by mentors, in their practices beyond the mentoring programme?

(2)   How does engagement with mentoring promote a mentoring culture?

Methodology

Through a structured conversational process, case studies were co-constructed with 20 academic staff (11 F / 9 M; 11 STEM / 9 HASS) who had mentored at least 3 times, on the programme. Conversations covered their mentoring history and experience in relation to three themes: their development as academics, their practice as research leaders, and their teaching and learning experiences. These themes have been recurrent in the mentor end-of-programme evaluation data, and so were selected for more in-depth investigation due to both their prominence, and saliency as academic practices. After drafting, each mentor had the opportunity to reflect on, amend or add to their case study before thematic analysis.

Findings:

RQ1. How is the mentoring repertoire utilised by mentors, in their practices beyond the mentoring programme?

(a) Organisational leadership: Mentors indicated that their mentoring skill set, and their identity and profile as a mentor, enhanced their performance in senior or managerial roles in their departments, helping them to gain confidence, and consolidate their transition to organisational leadership.

(b) Research leadership: Mentoring practices transferred directly into the research groups of the mentors increasing the ability of academic staff to induct, develop, motivate and appraise junior colleagues, and to create productive and supportive research environments.

(c) Teaching enhancement: Mentors described how they apply the core pedagogies of person-centred dialogic learning, and critical questioning, in one-to-one and small group settings, and noted that their mentoring ethos and experience was used to evidence their applications for Higher Education Academy (HEA) accreditation at the Senior Fellow level.

RQ2. How does engagement with mentoring promote a mentoring culture?

In addition to the expanded reach and impact of mentors' personal repertoires described above, mentors discussed how their positive experiences of the impact of mentoring had led to their being mentoring 'champions' who influenced within their Departments and Schools by: (a) promoting existing mentoring opportunities to colleagues (through staff meetings, induction processes) and (b) by creating new structures for peer-mentoring, mentoring within taught curriculum, or mentoring to enhance existing promotion or probation processes.

Recommendations for enhancing congruency

Division of mentor development into functional silos fails to recognise the commonalities in academic relational practices demonstrated here, for example, how strong coaching skills are a common feature in good mentoring, in good supervising, and in good teaching and tutoring. Gillaspy (2019) argues that a staff member with multiple roles and job demands must be 'coached congruently', that is, with their 'development as a whole person' at the centre.

Furthering that call for congruence, this paper argues that we must also support staff to interweave their skills to develop a congruent or 'integrated academic practice' when it comes to applying their own coaching and mentoring skills in the support of others. It also demonstrates the importance of good mentoring experiences in seeding the growth of a developmental research culture in higher

education.

- Donnelly,R.,& McSweeney, F.(2011). From humble beginnings: evolving mentoring within professional development for academic staff. *Professional Development in Education*,*37*(2),259–274.
- Gardiner,M., Tiggemann,M., Kearns,H.,& Marshall,K.(2007). Show me the money! An empirical analysis of mentoring outcomes for women in academia. *Higher Education Research & Development*,*26*(4),425–442.
- Gillaspy,E. (2019). Developing the congruent academic through an integrated coaching approach. *International Journal for Academic Development*,DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2019.1593175
- Godskesen,M., & Kobayashi,S.(2015). Coaching doctoral students – a means to enhance progress and support self-organisation in doctoral education. *Studies in Continuing Education*,*38*(2),145–161.
- Guccione,K.(2018). What's the value of mentoring early career research staff? *Leadership Foundation for Higher EducationCase Study*,1—24
- Kearns,H., Forbes,A., Gardiner,M., & Marshall,K.(2008). When a High Distinction Isn't Good Enough: A Review of Perfectionism and Self-Handicapping.*Australian Educational Researcher*,35(3),21–36.
- Lech,A.M., van Nieuwerburgh,C., & Jalloul,S.(2017). Understanding the experience of PhD students who received coaching: an interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Coaching: an International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*,11(1),60-73
- Lewis,C., & Olshansky,E.(2017). Relational-cultural Theory as a Framework for Mentoring in Academia: Toward Diversity and Growth-fostering Collaborative Scholarly Relationships. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*,*24*(5),1–16.
- Mullen,C.A., & Hutinger,J.L.(2009). At the tipping point? Role of formal faculty mentoring in changing university research cultures. *Journal of in-Service Education*,34(2),181–204.
- Sotello Viernes Turner,C., & Gonzalez,J.C. (Eds.).(2015). Modelling mentoring across race/ethnicity and gender: Practices to cultivate the next generation of diverse faculty. Sterling, VA: Stylus LLC.
- Straus,S.E., Johnson,M.O., Marquez,C., & Feldman,M.D. (2013). Characteristics of successful and failed mentoring relationships. *Academic Medicine,*88,82–89.
- Turner,R., Huang,R., Poverjuc,O., & Wyness,L.(2016). What role do teaching mentors play in supporting new university lecturers to develop their teaching practices? *Professional Development in Education*,*42*(4),647–665.