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Evidence-Based Practices in Mentoring for Leadership Development

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Effective mentoring for leadership development requires nuanced practical considerations. The authors outline aspects of effective mentorship, highlight considerations for practitioners and mentoring programs, and offer critical perspectives on mentoring.

Defining Mentoring and Why It Matters for Leadership Development

Higher education scholars have identified mentoring as an important tool in leadership development (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Hastings, Griesen, Hoover, Creswell, & Dlugosh, 2015; Komives, Longerbeam, Mainella, Osteen, & Owen, 2009). Mentoring is recognized as one of the most promising practices for both leader and leadership development because of its effectiveness at facilitating development (Day, 2001). Mentoring embeds

Published in *New Directions For Student Leadership*, no. 168, Winter 2020, pp. 75–84.

doi: 10.1002/yd.20410

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leadership development within the ongoing experiences of a developing leader—an increasingly desired feature of leadership development interventions (Day & Liu, 2019).

Each mentoring opportunity generates unique leadership development experiences and outcomes. An effective mentoring relationship satisfies the need to develop and sustain positive relationships; linking mentoring to positive affective, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes (Allen & Eby, 2010). Mentoring develops intrapersonal and interpersonal competence in the mentee, expanding their understanding of organizations and achieving greater social capital (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). Mentorship also positively influences outcomes like leadership self-efficacy, political skills, and socially responsible leadership (Chopin, Danish, Seers, & Hook, 2013; Dugan & Komives, 2010). Mentors themselves also benefit from increased pride and satisfaction, refined leadership competencies, stronger confidence, improved job performance, and higher levels of generativity (Hastings et al., 2015).

Different types of mentoring relationships yield unique leadership development outcomes. For example, while mentoring from faculty positively predicts the majority of leadership values associated with the social change model (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996), peer mentoring fills gaps by influencing leadership values such as commitment and collaboration (Dugan & Komives, 2007, 2010). Additionally, peer mentoring plays an increasingly important role as students develop their leadership identities (Komives et al., 2009). When students are mentors to peers or younger students, higher levels of generativity, and therefore social responsibility, often follow (Hastings et al., 2015; Rossi, 2001). Given the important role of mentoring in leadership development, we first outline aspects of effective mentorship, specifically highlighting considerations for practitioners and mentoring programs. Then, we discuss critical perspectives on mentoring before providing future research directions.

Factors That Contribute to Effective Mentorship

Effective mentoring emphasizes the *support* feature of Van Velsor, McCauley, and Moxley's (2004) assessment, challenge, and support

leader development model. Challenge creates disequilibrium; thus, support mechanisms like mentors can help developing leaders establish new equilibrium after change (Van Velsor, McCauley, & Moxley, 2004). Mentors should develop challenging experiences to encourage the extension and refinement of existing knowledge structures and skills without overwhelming abilities, thus hindering cognition and emotion (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Support through mentoring helps developing leaders maintain their motivation to learn and grow (Van Velsor et al., 2004). Additionally, mentoring can be a critical reflection tool for leaders, thus addressing Day and Liu's (2019) argument that leadership development should occur as a result of lifelong experiences and the meaning made from those experiences.

Mentoring relationships help develop the mentee's ability to acquire knowledge, skills, and self-confidence to become a better student, employee, or organizational leader (Burke, 1984; Fagan & Walter, 1982). Cornerstones of mentoring practice include a dyadic environment, long-term commitment by mentor and mentee, regular and consistent interactions, and both formal and informal investments in personal growth, career development, psychosocial development, and leadership empowerment (Campbell et al., 2012; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). While mentoring is intended to develop the mentee, both the mentor and the mentee mutually benefit (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

Mentoring for leadership development requires long-term investment in both personal development as well as leadership empowerment (Campbell et al., 2012). In comparison to other developmental interactions such as coaching or advising, Hastings and Kane (2018) highlight mentoring as a process, not an event; thus, mentoring for leadership development is not well-suited for short-term, skill-based development. Due to the investment in personal development, mentoring relationships require commitment from both mentor and mentee to engage in a close relationship. Additionally, mentoring requires a willingness to go beyond scheduled meetings to provide just-in-time reflective processing for the mentee.

Although mentoring research has not identified a singular list of characteristics common among successful mentors, the context of the relationship determines desired mentor characteristics (Bearman, Blake-Beard, Hunt, & Crosby, 2010). More globally, relationship-building

qualities such as empathy, self-concept, authenticity, transparency, and vulnerability have been identified in numerous studies as important mentor characteristics that can support students (Allen & Eby, 2010; Fries-Britt & Snider, 2015). Personal attributes such as strong interpersonal skills, emotional stability, open-mindedness, and self-awareness are advantageous to intercultural mentors (Liang & Grossman, 2007; Miller, 2015; Rhodes, 2002; Woods et al., 2013). Further, the mentor's cultural sensitivity, cultural intelligence, cultural competence, and emotional intelligence have also demonstrated a significant effect on mentoring relationships, particularly intercultural mentoring relationships (Miller, 2015; Osula & Irvin, 2009; Rhodes, 2002).

The quality of the mentoring relationship is paramount for mentee development in leadership self-efficacy (Chopin et al., 2013); thus, the presence of a mentor does not guarantee positive mentorship outcomes, although effective mentorship practices make a positive difference in achieving outcomes. The amount of time spent coaching by the mentor and the amount of mentor-initiated contact are positively related to a mentee's willingness to share leadership issues with a mentor (Solansky, 2010). Through role modeling leadership behaviors, protégés will likely emulate their mentors' leadership behavior (Godshalk & Sosik, 2000; Lankau & Scandura, 2002). Below, we offer specific recommendations to foster effective mentorship for student leadership development.

Recommendations for Effective Mentoring Practice and Programs

Developing capacity for positive relationship-building is critical for effective mentoring practice. The development of trust and building friendship first are among the two strongest factors influencing positive mentorship outcomes (Keller, 2010; Sipe, 2002). Mentors' consistency and follow-through are essential to the success of the mentoring relationship (Keller, 2010; Sipe, 2002). Additional practices among highly effective mentors across multiple youth mentoring studies include: taking responsibility for initiating contact with mentee, offering respect for mentee's viewpoint, involving mentee in determining the agenda, incorporating intentional fun, getting acquainted with

mentee's family, and being resourceful with mentoring program staff (Sipe, 2002). Relative to effective mentoring programs, key considerations are selection, operations, reflection, and training (Hastings, 2016; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2007; Osula & Irvin, 2009; Rhodes, 2002; Sipe, 2002).

Mentor Selection. Mentor *selection* for the mentoring program should involve rigorous assessment and evaluation of human relations talent and promise for positive influence (Hastings, 2016). Mentor selection should involve screening for mentors who understand the importance of trust-building and fostering friendship first (Miller, 2015; Rhodes, 2002; Sipe, 2002). Mentors have the capacity to significantly influence their mentee's life and the risks of receiving a poor mentor are high (Freedman, 1999; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Therefore, organizations must ascertain that an individual has significant time to commit to mentoring (Freedman, 1999) and no criminal record related to minors (Miller, 2015).

Program Operations. To prepare mentors to invest in their mentee's leadership development, day-to-day programmatic *operations* should involve providing structure to mentoring relationships (Hastings, 2016; Sipe, 2002). Specifically, organizations should offer regular, weekly meetings between the mentor and mentee, weekly reflection opportunities among the mentors, and bimonthly opportunities for mentors and mentees to engage in formal leadership development programming. Pairing mentors and mentees can involve matching on the basis of common talents and strengths, common interests, or a combination of both. A longitudinal approach to mentoring with frequent meetings is highly beneficial (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Mentors should work consistently with the same mentee over several years to provide the necessary environment for successful investment in the mentee's leadership development (Hastings, 2016). We recommend mentoring relationships exist for at least 1 year and meet weekly for a minimum of 2 hours.

Reflection Opportunities. Weekly meetings among mentors should include active *reflection* processes where each mentor can share successes and frustrations and receive guidance and support from fellow

mentor peers and program staff (Hastings, 2016; Sipe, 2002). Additionally, Vaccaro and Camba-Kelsay (2018) highlighted the importance of mentors understanding issues of power, privilege, and oppression and engaging in reflection regarding the ways their social identities and positionality influence their interactions with mentees who are from minoritized populations, such as racially minoritized students.

Mentor Training. Last, every incoming mentor should receive *training* before and during the mentoring relationship (Hastings, 2016; Miller, 2015; Sipe, 2002). Training topics might include program structure, selection and matching process for mentors and mentees, support services, communication skills, relationship building, and roles of the mentor (Redmond, 1990). Trainings for intercultural mentors may involve reflecting on cultural differences with their mentees (Osula & Irvin, 2009), establishing trust through open and honest discussions about race-related issues such as discrimination (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2007), and providing encouraging feedback that affirms the mentee's ability to meet high standards (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999). Such feedback is particularly significant with a mentee from a minoritized group, as overly negative feedback can perpetuate cultural stereotypes. In essence, some training is better than no training (Sipe, 2002), and we recommend specific training in interpersonal skills for leadership and investment relationship principles (Hastings, 2016).

Critical Perspectives on Mentorship

As globalization and diversity increases, faculty, student affairs professionals, teachers, administrators, and student leaders are increasingly asked to mentor people who are different from themselves (Young, Haffejee, & Corsun, 2018). Yet, achieving social justice and inclusion in mentoring relationships and programming on college campuses and beyond can be challenging. First-generation students (Soria & Stebleton, 2012) and students from minoritized racial groups, such as African American and Latinx students (Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford, & Pifer, 2017; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012) may have inequitable access to mentoring.

Although structural barriers exist that can hinder minoritized student engagement in mentoring, giving college students access to mentoring relationships has become a national priority (Crisp et al., 2017). While mentees typically seek mentors similar to them, such as shared racial or ethnic background (Liang & Grossman, 2007), the availability of mentors who match the mentee demographics is often limited (Liang & Grossman, 2007; Ragins, 1997; Rhodes, 2002). For example, institutions of higher education, particularly Predominantly White Institutions, often do not have enough African, Latino, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) faculty and staff to match student demographics, thus resulting in increased intercultural mentoring relationships (Young et al., 2018). Race/ethnicity is just one aspect of cultural difference: mentoring pairs may also differ in household income, social class, timing of first postsecondary enrollment, cultural difference, gender, political affiliation, religious or spiritual preference, ability, age, and sexual orientation.

As demand for intercultural mentoring grows, research on the challenges and benefits of intercultural mentoring has emerged. Challenges specific to intercultural mentoring relationships include enhanced difficulty of trust-building due to racial tensions and societal expectations (Johnson- Bailey & Cervero, 2007) and demographic (e.g., ethnicity) and situational (e.g., power and position) disparities between mentors and mentees (Miller, 2015). When high-quality mentoring relationships exist, there are significant benefits for both mentors and mentees; for instance, international students who had a peer mentor, compared to non-mentored international students, spent significantly more time with cross-ethnic friends and demonstrated enhanced cultural empathy and social initiative (Woods et al., 2013). Mentoring also benefits first-generation students (Lightweis, 2014), as it has a positive effect on college retention and student persistence (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Peer mentoring is particularly important for underrepresented and first-generation students (Crisp et al., 2017). Peer mentors can support students in pursuing their degree as they play the unique role of modeling, affirming, and befriending students (D'Abate, 2009). Faculty mentors are more likely to occupy the position of advising, transferring knowledge, offering feedback, and setting goals.

Not only do mentees experience growth, mentors also show significant development. Being a mentor to someone of a different cultural

background has been correlated with enhanced cultural competence (Osula & Irvin, 2009), behavioral cultural intelligence, empathic concern (Young et al., 2018), and knowledge and skills related to interacting with diversity (Ragins, 1997). The development of these diversity skills is particularly salient for leadership educators and institutions of higher education given that diversity and inclusion are critical student learning outcomes (AAC&U & NLC, 2007; Dreschsler Sharp, Komives, & Fincher, 2011).

Additionally, those seeking to mentor first-generation students and students from minoritized populations should formally and informally reach out to these students (Soria & Stebleton, 2012) and propose that campuses develop formal mentoring programs to build institutional knowledge and identify academic programs (Jenkins, Miyazaki, & Janosik, 2009). Mentoring programs and relationships that target underrepresented students are particularly encouraged to train mentors on the barriers to graduating college and focus on their mentee's cultural strengths and advantages (Tovar, 2015). Intercultural mentoring programs, particularly those that adhere to the suggestions offered in this chapter, may help higher education answer the call of developing socially responsible leaders who foster inclusion and social justice.

Conclusion

Higher education governing organizations have identified leadership and social responsibility as two outcomes critical our nation's future (AAC&U & NLC, 2007; CAS, 2015; NACE, 2016; NASPA/ACPA, 2004), and many have positioned mentoring as an effective practice to achieve them. However, the prevalence of mentoring is not always an indicator of effectiveness (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008), and therefore, it is imperative that administrators of mentoring programs and initiatives develop empirically-driven practices to have a meaningful and significant impact on mentees; otherwise, more harm can be done than good (Freedman, 1999). Program outcomes, learning objectives, and activities targeting student leadership development through mentoring require special attention paid to effective selection, operations, reflection, and training. Leadership practitioners engaged with

existing mentoring programs may also find value in determining how well the existent program stacks up against effective mentorship program practices.

We encourage mentors and leadership educators to expand their efforts to assess the effectiveness of mentorship programs on their campuses. While assessment models in leadership education exist, the specific assessment and evaluation for mentoring is largely absent (Bureau & Lawhead, 2018). Thus, future researchers and scholar practitioners are encouraged to further qualitatively explore and quantitatively examine the antecedents and outcomes of successful mentoring relationships in a variety of higher education contexts, such as intercultural faculty mentoring relationships as well as peer mentoring relationships. Such research will help the field of mentoring refine their recommendations for practitioners.

The scholarly work presented in this chapter hopefully allows leadership scholars greater precision regarding the study of leadership development through mentoring, thus enabling stronger documentation of leadership mentoring's impact. By providing clarity around mentoring and its utility for leadership development, leadership educators can be better prepared to develop student leadership capacity according to need, deliver results, and translate leadership learning to transform students.

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