A Comparison of Mentoring in Higher Education and Fortune 1000 Companies: Practices to Apply in a Global Context

Lisa Kahle-Piasecki
Tiffin University

Sheila Doles
The Mentoring Collaborative

This research reviews the similarities and differences the authors found in their individual research of best practices in two types of mentoring programs –those in higher education and those in Fortune 1000 companies. Additionally, a comparison of mentoring programs, that are formal, informal, and random constructs; as well as methods used in assessment and evaluation that cross boundaries of mentoring environments for successful relationship outcomes are examined.

Mentoring, long considered an effective tool for developing relationships and transferring knowledge from a more experienced individual to a less experienced individual, is a concept that has expanded in definition in recent years to include non-traditional relationships beyond face-to-face mentoring. Mentoring programs are frequently supported by technology, can be reversed, external to an organization, or with peers.

A common dilemma found in both professional and academic mentoring, is the degradation or dissolution of mentoring programs over time due to a lack of commitment to assessment and evaluation requirements. This situation occurs pretty evenly on the part of participants, program managers, and institutions; and the rate of occurrence is more frequent than desired. Inadequate consideration to the design, staffing, or available funds, all become factors in whether or not a program will render a positive process and outcome. Without these best practice elements, a mentoring program is on its way to being doomed before it even gets off the ground.

Mentoring programs continue to be a useful tool for enhancing the performance of employees and students, transferring knowledge from more experienced individuals to less experienced individuals and for the retention of employees and students. The benefits of mentoring programs, both formal and informal have been documented in countless studies during the past 29 years beginning with Kram's (1985) research on mentoring in organizations.

Mentoring has become a core strategy in leading and managing many organizations today (Lavin Colky & Young, 2006) even though the programs in organizations today are changing. Mentoring programs in the 21st century are no longer thought of in just the traditional pairing such as the teacher and student, but now non-traditional relationships can be formed either electronically, with groups or peers, or a combination of several types. The programs now usually extend beyond face-to-face mentoring and are frequently supported by technology (Muller, 2009). While one-on-one mentoring is used in most programs, and is the model most people prefer (Management Mentors, 2013), technology is creating

opportunities for more individuals to be mentored and to be mentored internationally by a global mentor through expanding geographic boundaries.

The importance of utilizing technology to mentor across continents and cultures should be acknowledged. Recent hiring patterns of large U.S. multinational corporations show an increase in overseas workforce (Wessel, 2011). As more companies are faced with developing employees for management positions overseas, a strong mentoring program can assist in talent management and retention of high potential employees.

In higher education, documented mentoring programs indicate that mentoring, in its many forms and capacities can and does impact positive overall student outcomes (Doles, 2008). "Great strides have been achieved in student retention through research, advanced philosophy and practice related to how institutions can increase retention for diverse populations and in diverse environments. The complex task of developing methods in higher education to benefit students is yet before us" (Tinto, 2006).

BEST PRACTICES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the academic arena, mentoring has grown in popularity, with more faculty and staff involved than simply through natural relationships of student and faculty or staff mentoring relationships (Zachary, 2002, p. 27). Doles (2008), examined mentoring efforts at a large United States Midwestern public university over the past ten years. Online surveys, focus groups and interviews with faculty, staff, administration and students were conducted to determine historical and current mentoring activities across the University and provide qualitative data for analysis. Observation of formal mentoring relationships among first-year students was achieved through a pilot program begun at the university.

Based on the research and data obtained in the academic arena, the most effective practice to achieve successful mentoring in the higher education setting is to create a mentoring culture across the university at all levels (Doles, 2008; Lindenberger, 2006). Mentoring increases student engagement with the university. A mentoring culture must be established as a part of the university fabric in order to achieve optimal outcomes for student success. Mentoring benefits all levels of educational pursuit, from kindergarten to post-doctoral training. As mentoring programs are developed for incoming freshmen, upper class students must also be included in the group to enrich interactions in the development of the peer mentoring component of a formal mentoring program.

Unless a mentoring program is embraced by the university and made a part of the institutional fabric, the program will become something other than what was originally intended due to lack of support and sustenance. Programs that last often exist on the fringe of institutional life. They fail to become a part of mainstream campus life and become limited in their impact, or must find their point of impact from outside the university structure (Tinto, 2006, p. 8).

The majority of mentoring programs do not become institutionalized because the concept appears to be quite basic. Yet intense dedication and follow up must be involved for a program to be sustained and endure in the overall fabric of the higher education setting. Best practice methodologies (Doles, 2008, p. 25) should include: (1) sanction and total support of the university, to embrace the program for unity in operation, along with collaboration with university colleagues to intervene and avert student loss and attrition and provide avenues for reflection, interventions and innovative concepts, (2) a dedicated facilitator, experienced in student development and organizational development to guide and design programming structure, maintain a strong advisory council, and community and corporate connections as a core component to guide developmental stages in a successful manner, (3) ongoing research and assessment tools must be put in place to determine the effectiveness of the program and to gauge adjustments and advancements as deemed necessary to determine why students leave a university, what students look for and need in an educational environment and what is being done on campuses across the country with comparable and similar programs.

Higher education in the 21st century is a global enterprise. The number of international branch campuses has grown to 162, up 43% in just three years, according to a study by the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (Becker, 2009).

Research collaborations, joint teaching, and institutional partnerships link institutions across the globe (The Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement, 2014). The United States and many other countries are reaching beyond their own borders to create teaching and research centers in popular locations including China, India, Africa and the Middle East (Glenwood, 2011; Jaschik, 2009).

Mentoring to facilitate acclimation in new cultures and to new campus environments can only make college life much easier for students as well as faculty members travelling to teach abroad for their universities. In much the same way, mentors assist new students with adjusting to new environments as they migrate from high school to college life (Doles, 2008).

BEST PRACTICES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS IN FORTUNE 1000 COMPANIES

Organizations in the 21st century are experiencing a rapid rate of change and therefore exploring causes and consequences of failure of managers and other top officials. Studies on leaders in companies have shown that the majority of them attribute their success in whole or in part to the mentoring they received (Zachary & Fischler, 2010). Longenecker et al., (2007), found that managers' performance would suffer when there is a failure by the organization to select, promote, and develop talented people, and a failure to monitor actual performance and provide feedback. Mentoring programs that are evaluated and analyzed can help address this.

Kahle-Piasecki (2011), conducted a performance gap analysis on current mentoring programs in Fortune 1000 companies. A gap analysis is the difference between the ideal program and current program (Desautels, 2006). In the study of human resource (HR) directors in Fortune 1000 companies, HR directors were asked to select from a list of eight mentoring practices, those practices currently being used in their company. Those responses were crosstabulated with what HR directors selected as the top five most important and effective mentoring practices in their industry. Performance gaps were found in each of the mentoring programs practices listed.

TABLE 1
PERFORMANCE GAP ANALYSIS OF MENTORING PRACTICES

Mentoring Program Practice	% Effective	% Used	% Difference
Formal Mentoring	74	64	10
Informal Mentoring	72	74	-2
Electronic Mentoring	32	18	14
External Mentoring	38	28	10
Group Mentoring	38	20	18
Reverse Mentoring	18	6	12
Superior-to-Subordinate Mentoring	54	48	6
Peer-to-Peer Mentoring	48	46	2

Note. $N = 50$.

While it may not be surprising that formal (74%) and informal (72%) mentoring practices are effective as reported by the majority of participants, it is noteworthy that both practices were the top two reported most effective mentoring program practices in this study and the top two practices actually employed. A gap was found between both of these practices, however, with formal mentoring reportedly more effective as a practice than was actually used in the company (10% gap). A reverse gap (-2%) was found for informal mentoring with less HR directors reportedly using it than believed it to be effective as a practice. This may indicate that HR directors have experienced some difficulty with informal mentoring, which typically does not involve the use of a mentoring program facilitator and therefore no system of tracking or evaluation (Murray, 2006).

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessment is an extremely valuable and necessary tool as it relates to the demonstration of the cost effectiveness of programs. While mentoring programs require the support of institutional resources, they must provide empirical evidence that resources will become an investment that yields long-term benefits essential to institutionalization as well as long-term funding expenditures.

The needs and goals of the institution must be taken into account when ascertaining what methods will best suit the needs of particular students. Research has proven that in the academic arena a more formal mentoring program is irreplaceable. In addition, informal relationships enhance the structure of formal mentoring connections (Gibb, 1994, p. 38). A university must implement specific assessment steps within formal mentoring programs to measure relationship quality outcomes of mentees and mentors to maintain optimal participation and growth within the program. Survey responses taken throughout the academic year and ongoing feedback from students are important methods of determining levels of satisfaction that can be measured against students not in mentoring programs.

Research compared (Doles, 2008, p. 13) university mentoring models across 18 major institutions in the United States showing placement in the university structure for programs – from student affairs, to Science Technology Engineering Math and Medicine (STEMM) driven departments. In addition, a great deal of attention is paid to comments from mentors, mentees and faculty/staff who participate in mentoring programs. Awareness and proactive management provide input and feedback to the development of effective mentoring outcomes (Zachary, 2002, p. 29). With the need for increased diversity and the need for inclusion and acclimation of new students, formal mentoring programs are a key component to success in both areas (Tinto 2006, p. 12).

In training programs, a popular evaluation model used is Kirkpatrick's model (1994), first developed in 1959 and 1960 and updated in 1994 (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). The four levels of Kirkpatrick's model are: (1) participant reaction, (2) participant learning, (3) on-the-job change in behavior or transfer, and (4) final results of the training. The first level, reaction, is the lowest form of evaluation; final result is the highest level. Most mentoring programs evaluate the program's effectiveness on a short-term reaction and satisfaction level. In the case of e-mentoring, "little is known about the processes and outcomes related to e-mentoring beyond descriptive statistics collected about participant reactions to and satisfaction with e-mentoring programs" (Janasz, et al., 2008, pg. 399), despite the fact that continually evaluating a mentoring program is critical (Lawrence, 2008).

In the corporate sector, the costs of undertaking any learning initiative in an organization are always at the forefront and the return on investment (ROI) should be evaluated. A common formula for calculating a ROI is the ROI formula. In this formula, the costs of a program are subtracted from the total benefits to produce the net benefits, which are then divided by the costs (Phillips, 1996). In mentoring, the costs of administering the mentoring program would be subtracted from the benefits of retention and knowledge transfer.

Another method for calculating ROI used by PrimeLearning, Inc. (2001), relies on Kirkpatrick's model (Dessinger & Moseley, 2006). Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation; reaction, learning, transfer and results can be used by a business to determine if the training has impacted and taught the learners — reaction and learning, if learners have applied the learning back on the job —behavior or transfer of training, and if there is any measurable business impact —performance change or results (PrimeLearning, Inc., 2001).

Combining the calculation of ROI with Kirkpatrick's model will allow companies to determine if a mentoring program provides a benefit to the organization and will help the organization achieve the business results it desires by essentially adding a fifth level of evaluation to the model. The consequences of not evaluating a mentoring program are poorly trained employees and wasted money and time.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND FORTUNE 1000 CORPORATIONS

The similarities of mentoring programs between Fortune 1000 corporations and higher education show that formal programs are frequently used and effective (Doles, 2008; Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). Informal mentoring relationships are also effective in both environments. Formal mentoring programs have a structured or systematic approach to the mentoring process and are usually arranged by the organization. Informal programs are those relationships that develop on their own (Allen & Eby, 2004).

Additionally, corporations and universities, support the need for program assessment and evaluation to determine benefits to both mentees and mentors based on relationship quality outcomes. In observation of the research of Doles (2008) and Kahle-Piasecki (2011), corporate programs are driven by the type of program designed, where academic programs are more driven by demographic data. Academic mentoring varies by institution to some extent, but is always concerned with serving first year student retention, racial diversity, first generation students, and undeclared majors. In one study (Doles, 2008), the program showed a tremendous increase from six programs over a 10 year period, to 19 programs as of 2008 (Doles 2008, pp. 37 – 60).

Implications

The mentoring environment is changing due to strategic methods to structure programs both within corporations and educational institutions. Research on programs established through traditional and non-traditional methods show interesting correlations between successful and unsuccessful programs over time. Implications from following traditional program establishment methods and yet losing key institutional support members, can create ambiguous outcomes for otherwise successful programs. In the reverse, programs that are established following institutional guidelines may fail due to lack of commitment in funding, staffing and other support on the part of the institution.

Based on the research and data obtained through this project, the most effective manner to achieve successful mentoring in the higher education setting is to create a mentoring culture across the university at all levels (Lindenberger, 2006). A mentoring culture must be established as a part of the university fabric in order to achieve optimal outcomes for student success.

The current decade is expected to bring an enormous need for skills to keep productivity high due to the planned retirement of the baby boom generation (Kaye & Cohen, 2008). The expected mass retirement of executives in US companies has led many organizations to plan for a transfer of knowledge between top level executives and the next generation of business leaders. Mentoring programs are becoming more popular and pervasive in companies as one way to transfer this knowledge and provide future business leaders with the institutional knowledge and skills necessary to maintain and increase performance levels.

REFERENCES

Allen, T., & Eby, L. (2004). Factors related to mentor reports of mentoring functions provided: Gender and relational characteristics. *Sex Roles, 50*(1/2), 129-139.

Becker, R. (2009). *International Branch Campuses: Markets And Strategies*. The Observatory On Borderless Higher Education. Retrieved from http://www.obhe.ac.uk/documents/view_details?id=770

Desautels, B. (2006). The impact of organizational development. In J. Pershing (Ed.), *Handbook of Human Performance Technology* (pp. 571 - 591). San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

Dessinger, J., & Moseley, J. (2006). The full scoop on full-scope evaluation. In J. Pershing (Ed.), *Handbook of Human Performance Technology* (pp. 312-330). San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

Doles, S. (2008). *An Analysis of Undergraduate Mentoring at The University of Toledo.* (Master's Thesis). The University of Toledo.

Gibb, S. (1994). Evaluating Mentoring. *The Journal of General Education + Training. 36*(5), 32-39.

Glenwood, M. (2011). American Campuses Abroad*. The Chronicle Review*. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/American-Campuses-Abroad/129938/

Goldstein, I., & Ford, J. (2002). *Training in organizations*. California: Wadsworth.

Janasz, S., Ensher, E., & Heun, C. (2008). Virtual relationships and real benefits: Using e-mentoring to connect business students with practicing managers. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 16*(4), 394-411. doi:10.1080/13611260802433775

Jaschik, S. (2009). International Campuses on the Rise. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/09/03/branch#sthash.Q12SiEYW.Dpab99NK.dpbs

Kahle-Piasecki, L. (2011). *Mentoring: What organizations need to know to improve performance in the 21st century workplace* (Doctoral Dissertation). The University of Toledo.

Kaye, B., & Cohen, J. (2008, April). Safeguarding the intellectual capital of baby boomers. *T +D, 62*(4), 30-33.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1994). *Evaluating training programs: The four levels.* San Francisco: Berrett Koehler.

Kram, K. E. (1985). *Mentoring at work*. Glenview, Il: Scott, Foresman, and Company.

Lavin Colky, D., & Young, W. (2006). Mentoring in the virtual organization: Keys to building successful schools and businesses. *Mentoring & Tutoring, 14*(4), 433-447. doi:10.1080/13611260500493683

Lawrence, R. (2008). Executive mentoring: Turning knowledge into wisdom. *Business Strategy Series, 9*(3), 126-131. doi:10.1108/17515630810873357

Lindenberger, J. (2006). Building a Mentoring Culture. Retrieved from http://www.lindenbergergroup.com/art_mentor_cul.html

Longenecker, C., Neubert, M., & Fink, L. (2007). Causes and consequences of managerial failure in rapidly changing organizations. *Business Horizons, 50*, 145-155.

Management Mentors. (2013). Which corporate mentoring model is right for your business? Retrieved from http://www.management-mentors.com/about/corporate-mentoring-matters-blog/bid/94103/Which-Corporate-Mentoring-Model-Is-Right-For-Your-Business

Muller, C. (2009). Understanding e-mentoring in organizations. *Adult Learning,* 25-30.

Murray, M. (2006). Innovations in performance improvement with mentoring. In J. Pershing (Ed.), *Handbook of Human Performance Technology* (pp. 455-477). San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

Phillips, J. (1996, February). ROI: The search. *Training & Development*, 42-47.

PrimeLearning, Inc. (2001). eLearning: A key strategy for maximizing human capital in the knowledge economy. [White paper]. pp. 1-14.

The Center For Internationalization and Global Engagement. (2014). American Council on Education. Retrieved from http://www.acenet.edu/higher-education/topics/Pages/Campus-Internationalization.aspx

Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention*, *8*(1), 1-19.

Wessel, D. (2011, April 19). Big U.S. firms shift hiring abroad. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704821704576270783611823972

Zachary, L. (2002). The role of teacher as mentor. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *93*, 27-38.

Zachary, L., & Fischler, L. (2010, March). Those who lead, mentor. *T + D*, *64*(3), 52-57.