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ABSTRACT

Faculty who mentor online doctoral candidates face many of the same challenges and opportunities as those mentoring doctoral candidates in traditional, face-to-face modalities. The main difference is that E-Mentoring is based on interacting in the online space rather than interacting face-to-face, which may present challenges for both the candidate and the mentor. The concept of mentoring, which originated from Greek mythology, defined a close relationship between the mentor and the student. In Ancient India, the word Guru from the Sanskrit language stood to symbolize a caring mentor and expert teacher. Structured E-Mentor programs are formalized programs which provide training, coaching, advice, and structure to increase engagement through the online dissertation phase of doctoral education. Doctoral Mentoring relationships are an intrinsically a deeply human process. Mentoring involves the nurturing of a novice or a less experienced person (protégé) by a seasoned and experienced person acting as the mentor in providing guidance, support, and dissemination of required knowledge for a given area of expertise.

Doctoral mentors play a large role in guiding the doctoral candidate through the dissertation process from identifying their topic through conducting the research study. E-Mentoring doctoral candidates in online doctoral programs entails many of the same opportunities and challenges as serving candidates in programs that are offered in a traditional, face-to-face modality. The difference is E-Mentor interaction takes place 100% of the time from anywhere. The E-Mentor chair/candidate relationship begins as soon as the doctoral candidate completes doctoral content courses and begins the dissertation process. This article focuses on E-Mentor the online doctoral student throughout the dissertation process and the techniques that chairs and committee members can frame, and guide their candidates as they travel through their doctoral dissertation journey.

Introduction

What is Mentoring?

The concept of mentoring has been around for thousands of years, coming to us from Homer’s Odyssey. Mentor was the teacher of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. But Mentor was more than a teacher. He was all things to all people-half-god and half-human, half-male and half-female. Mentor represented the union of both goal and path. As the Mentor represented the yin and the yang of life, so also mentors must pull and push their mentees. Mentoring requires strength in two different but complementary behaviors. First, mentors must lead by guiding interaction with their mentees. Mentors invest themselves in their mentees and uplift them. Secondly, Mentors must support mentees. Mentors push their mentees to become their best by encouraging development in areas of expressed need in their inventory ((Peterson, 1993).

Evolving from a historical perspective, the concept and process of mentoring have been and is a vital tool for development of human potential (Hernandez, 2001). Mentoring is utilized in practically all fields of human endeavor: sports, higher education, organizational management, youth development, and the doctoral dissertation process. There are two types of mentoring: Natural mentoring occurs through normal relationships of “friendship, collegiality, teaching, coaching, and counseling. In contrast, planned mentoring occurs through structured programs in which mentors and participants are selected and matched through formal processes” (Hayashi & O’Donnell, n.d., p. 1).

Kram (1983) describes the phases of the mentoring relationship that provides an influence on protégés. Kram’s phases include:

- an initiation phase, during which the time the relationship is started;
Role of the E-Mentor Dissertation Chair

Mentoring in Europe has existed since at least Ancient Greece (Purcell, E., Wray, M. J., 2000). Since the 1970s mentoring has spread in the United States educational environments. E-Mentoring became popular in the 2000s as internet and online teaching, and learning tools became the norm in online education.

The role of the E-Mentor is centered on a commitment to advancing the doctoral candidate’s doctoral journey through personal engagement that facilitates sharing guidance, experience, and expertise. Like any relationship, the mentor/doctoral student relationship evolves a new form that is significantly different from the past, or the relationship ends entirely. (Kram, 1983, p. 614).

E-Mentoring Evolves

The demand for Internet-based teaching and learning programs continues to grow as more and more online programs are being offered, especially at the graduate level. A significant transformation in higher education has evolved as the adult student attempts to remain competitive in a rapidly changing world. The transformation of teaching and learning and the creation of learning communities has opened the door for the expansion of the E-Mentor and the graduate doctoral learner. Internet-based virtual learning has created new ways of mentoring the doctoral learner in which exchanges between the student and Chair become significant and critical to dissertation success. E-Mentoring has evolved since the beginning of the Internet. Different techniques may be used by E-Mentors according to the situation and the mindset of the doctoral candidate, and the techniques used in modern organizations can be found in ancient education systems, from the Socratic technique of having the accompanying method of learning used in the apprenticeship of the American Indians to the Middle Ages (Au -rey & Cohen (1995)).

There are many definitions of E-Mentoring depending on the context. Single, and Muller defines E-Mentoring as:

A relationship that is established between a more senior individual (mentor) and a lesser skilled or experienced individual (protege), primarily using electronic communications, that is intended to develop and gain the skills, knowledge, confidence, and cultural understanding of the protege to help him or her succeed, while also assisting in the development of the mentor. (Single & Muller, 2001, p. 180).

There are other names for E-Mentoring such as telementoring, cybermentoring, and virtual mentoring. The Internet capitalizes on the strength of the E-Mentor to provide effective feedback strategies throughout the process. Online mentoring is occasionally compared unfavorably with face to face mentoring. Online mentoring limits the ability to pick up on visual or social clues, makes immediate feedback difficult and can often be seen as impersonal (Black, 2012). However, E-Mentoring can make participants more willing to offer honest feedback. E-Mentors often use video tools such as FaceTime, Google Hangout, Skype, and video chat through Facebook.

Blum and Musthead (2005) have strived to address vital issues associated with mentoring online doctoral students in their e-book. Conquering the mountain: Framework for successful chair advising of online dissertation students. The purpose of this book is to give online distance education faculty who are dissertation advisors explicit framework for enabling distance education doctoral student to complete a dissertation without ever coming face to face. Online doctoral programs are growing rapidly, and distance educators and administrators are seeking relevant educational paradigms and instructional strategies for their degree programs. The authors share their experiences working with doctoral students in a virtual environment and the paper will highlight a small portion of the insights on mentoring strategies from the e-book.

Students pursuing the doctorate face the same challenges as the long distance marathon runner. Training for the dissertation process is not unlike training for a marathon. It requires intense preparation, dedication, and skill. In many ways, conducting doctoral research and writing the dissertation is like running a marathon, enduring hills and valleys, motivating oneself along the way. It is a long and weary race but in the end will lead to the final race in the doctoral journey, defending and publishing the dissertation (Black, 2012).

As noted in The Dissertation Marathon (2012) the main contrast between running a marathon and writing a dissertation is that they both require an extreme amount of energy. In both situations, the marathon runner and dissertation writer can’t go all out at the beginning because they might not have the strength to make it through at the end. Marathon runners and dissertation writers must take every step carefully and slowly because every step, no matter how slow, will bring the finish line closer. Like a marathon, dissertation writing requires perseverance. This is why it is essential to condition the body and mind to endure. Working on the dissertation a little at a time at a time condition the body and mind. This severe even if it becomes tired and not in the mood. The candidate may get frustrated while writing each chapter but as the light at the end of the tunnel becomes brighter the candidate will become refreshed and want to continue.

E-Mentoring Through the Dissertation Process

The doctoral degree is the highest advanced degree in most fields of study. While the type of doctoral degree and the topic of the doctoral dissertation may differ, all the candidate and E-Mentor must understand the most important person on the dissertation team is the candidate (Black, 2012). This relationship may be thought as a marriage, where trust and communication become the main goal of the relationship. The E-Mentor guides the dissertation, helping the candidate to the finish line.

A key development in E-Mentoring, the online doctoral candidate, is the large pool of qualified faculty today. Today’s mentor brings invigorating experiences and perspectives to the doctoral dissertation process, but they also face many challenges. These challenges have necessitated a sophisticated change to the role of the E-Mentor in heightening the vital role of the E-Mentor to prepare the next generation of scholars beyond the dissertation. Today the title Dissertation Chair is often interchanged with the title Mentor or E-Mentor. Consider this multi-faceted definition of mentor/chair:

1. Faculty must exhibit genuineness
2. Faculty must be knowledgeable
3. Faculty must create a climate of trust
4. Faculty must create a climate of connectedness
5. Faculty must be willing to exhibit, demonstrate, and model personal and professional ethics (Fe-

In the online teaching and learning world, the E-Mentoring doctoral dissertation chair is challenged by these dynamics to ensure the doctoral candidates success. E-Mentoring doctoral candidates throughout their dissertation journey without traditional face-to-face interaction is not as easy as it seems. Distance mentoring complicates the dissertation process because the E-Mentor is not physically attached to the student for easy student consultation and teamwork at critical timelines throughout the process. The dissertation process for many doctoral candidates appears similar to a mountain looming in the distance, inaccessible, magnificent, but impossible to scale (Blum & Muirhead, 2005). Online doctoral students face additional challenges overcoming the barriers of distance education (Blum, 1999). Working in a distance education virtual medium requires more explicit objective setting than face-to-face teams (Helms and Raiszadeh, 2002).

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A s a cultivation phase, during which time the range of functions provided expands to a maximum;

A separation phase, during which time the established nature is substantially altered changes in the organizational context and/or by psychosocial changes within one or both individuals;

A definition phase, during which time the relationship evolves a form that is significantly different from the past, or the relationship ends entirely. (Kram, 1983, p. 614).
doctoral candidates conduct a research study and write a dissertation to complete their doctoral program. Conducting research and writing a dissertation is not easy, that is why a strong E-Mentoring/Doctoral Candi-
date relationship is key. Through the guidance, motiva-
tion, and specific feedback, the doctoral candidate will be
successful. E-Mentors stress to the doctoral candidate to
always have a positive mental attitude and keep an eye on
their goal; to become a Dr.

E-mentors do not have an online explicit list to help
online students succeed through the dissertation process
despite argument that “professors can learn advising skills
by following some systematic advising processes” (Davis,
2004, para 2). It is up to the E-Mentor and the doctoral
candidate to form a roadmap to complete all the mile-
stones in the dissertation journey. This roadmap sets the
stage to travel through the dissertation process with a fo-
cus on completing the doctoral candidate’s dissertation.
Sample roadmap instructions may look like this:

Complete the top portion of this project plan with your committee information. Then, review the activities and responsibilities below. These are the activities that must be accomplished to com-
plete your dissertation, along with who is responsible for each activity. Insert realistic due dates for each activity, based on your personal sched-
ule. Remember, you need to complete all activi-
ties and win the dean’s approval within five years of the completion of your dissertation. This is how completed form to your Mentor for review, com-
ments, and revisions. When you and your mentor have completed this project plan–contract, both
should sign it.

Now that the roadmap is complete and agreed to by the E-Mentor and doctoral candidate the fun begins...

The Dissertation Prospectus

The early stages of the E-Mentor/Doctoral candidate’s journey together focus on completing the doctoral disser-
tation prospectus. The prospectus, or the concept docu-
ment, as some universities refer to it, begins the process of
definition and clarification of a research project. When
complete, the prospectus should identify the problems the
proposed research study is designed to address and de-
scribe the importance and value of the proposed research.

The prospectus is developed for several reasons.

1. First, the prospectus brings together and summarizes
   in an initial formal statement the learner’s thoughts about
   their dissertation. This is helpful since it begins the pro-
cess of putting into writing the ideas that will guide the
dissertation. Second, the prospectus is used as the starting
point for the dissertation journey in which the doctoral
candidate begins detailed, serious work on their formal
proposa and dissertation. Third, the prospectus provides a
clear statement of the doctoral candidates dissertation’s
purpose, problem, hypotheses or propositions, design, and
method. The prospectus or concept document is an explo-
ration of:

   - The Researchable Problem Statement describing the
     general problem or observation that needs to be studied.
     The problem statement should include specific aspects of
     interest in the research, and very brief descriptive
     guidelines for completing and evaluating the prospectus.

   - The Purpose Statement, a highly refined short
     paragraph of several sentences clearly explaining and jus-
     tifying the proposed study, defining the method and why
     it is appropriate, stating the design and why it is appro-
     priate, identifying the key variables, the specific popula-
     tion of interest, and the location of the intended research.
     The structure of a proposal is closely tied to the purpose
     of the proposal (Grady, M. & Hoffman, S. S., 2007). A propos-
     al’s purpose is to explain and justify a proposed study to
     an audience of non-experts on the topic (Maxwell, 2005).

   - The Purpose Statement defines the reason for the re-
     search, validates its importance, determines the research
design, and ensures reliability. After reading the problem
statement, the reader will know why you are doing this
study and be convinced of its importance. In their article,
Strategies To Win: Six-Steps For Creating Problem State-
ment In Doctoral Research (2005) Drs. Kimberly Blum
and Amy Preiss from the University of Phoenix, School of
Advanced Studies stress:

Writing a problem statement can be challenging and
time consuming for both the candidate and E-Mentor
but because the problem statement drives the purpose of
the study, the choice of research design, and the resulting
considerations, agreeing on an effective dissertation
is critical to the success of the doctoral candidates’ disserta-
 tion (Burnier, 2014).

Once the problem statement is set, the candidate is
now ready to focus on the purpose of the study. The pur-
pose statement is the statement in which the objective of
the study is defined. A discussion of these specific
be effective, a research question must be manageable and
measurable answers. Research questions guide the in-
quiry of the research by narrowing and focusing the pur-
pose statement. They define the questions that the re-
Solving research questions and hypotheses. A well-stated
research question drives the investigation and implement-
ation of the research. Essentially, the research ques-
tion or hypothesis must be effective, clear, and answerable.

Once the problem statement is set, the candidate
will be able to set the purpose statement.

The Dissertation Proposal

Now that the prospectus is complete and approved by the
E-Mentor guides the doctoral candidate into the dissertation
proposal process. The first step is to agree on an original
and researchable dissertation study problem aligning it to
the dissertation topic that was approved by the E-Mentor.

Cooming up with the problem requires considerable in-
teraction between the doctoral candidate and E-Mentor.
Both agree that the problem statement is the most critical
critical element of the candidate’s doctoral dissertation. Accord-
ing to Simon (2001) the problem statement is the heart
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main elements of chapter. Once the E-Mentor reviews and approves Chapter 1 the doctoral candidate may move on to Chapter 2, the Literature Review. The literature review serves an important purpose in the dissertation. It supports the importance and timeliness of the dissertation topic and problem. The literature review is extensive in a dissertation proposal, and it is often the largest section.

According to Cooper (1988), a literature review seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate, classify and/or integrate the content of primary reports. The doctoral candidate will synthesize the literature as the E-Mentor reviews each synthesis of the candidates’ literature feedback will be provided to guide the student to completing an effective and supportive literature review.

Now that the E-Mentor has approved chapter 1 and 2, the candidate may move on to a steady pace focusing on how the study will be conducted. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the research methodology for the study. The chapter begins with a detailed discussion of the appropriateness of the method, the design, and how the chosen method and design will help accomplish the stated purpose. Extending the time required to the doctoral candidate to complete the changes recommended by the committee. Once the entire dissertation committee approves the dissertation proposal, the student then can move on to completing and gaining approval of their proposal by the Institutional Review Board to ensure that the study is ethical and will not violate any of the subject’s or university’s rights. With both dissertation committee and IRB approval the doctoral candidate may proceed at a rapid pace toward completing their dissertation journey.

The Final Dissertation
Pacing is key at this stage of the dissertation process (Black, 2012). In most cases the E-Mentor is not involved with the doctoral candidates’ data collection, but will need to ensure there is open communication throughout data collection so that the E-Mentor may advise on data analysis. Now that the doctoral candidate has completed data collection and analysis the next steps are for the E-Mentor to establish the guidelines for writing chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 is fairly easy to write since it basically reports the results of the recommendations of what they mean. The purpose of Chapter 4 is to report, in appropriate detail, the results produced by the completion of the systematic and careful application of the analytical research techniques employed. No statement should be made in the chapter that is not directly supported by the results of the data analysis.

In a brief introduction, the researcher will state the key features of and reasons for the data collection and data analysis techniques employed. In the body of the chapter, the writer reports the results and findings generated by the analyses of data without editorial comment. This chapter includes solely the analysis of data, the testing of hypotheses, and/or the careful dissection of research questions, introducing no interpretation of findings. The results of testing each statistical hypothesis must be clearly presented and without editorial comment. Significance of results and findings must be stated clearly, with appropriate qualifications and constraints. Tables and graphs can be used and are illustrative of the verbal presentation of data. Graphical representations do not take the place of a discussion, but they clarify the verbal presentation. The chapter ends with a summary of the key points covered in the chapter and transitions smoothly to chapter 5. Once Chapter 4 is complete the E-Mentor will evaluate the Chapter and provide detailed feedback to be sure Chapter 4 meets the doctoral dissertation template.

As the E-Mentor approves Chapter 4 the doctoral candidate may now move closer to the finish line. Chapter 5 concludes the research study, providing insightful conclusions into the implications of the inquiry for various constituents and the recommendations, supported and justified, emerging from the analyses and findings. This chapter includes the candidate’s conclusions and recommendations. Following an introduction to the chapter the conclusions the chapters are presented based on the literature review and the analysis of data. The candidate will introduce discussions that highlight the importance, significance, and meaning of the inquiry to constituents such as managers, employers, employees, researchers, communities, government agencies, business leaders, and others.

The candidate should clearly indicate how the conducted study is significant, following on the key features of and reasons for the data collection and data analysis techniques employed. In the body of the chapter the writer reports the results and findings generated by the analyses of data without editorial comment. This chapter includes solely the analysis of data, the testing of hypotheses, and/or the careful dissection of research questions, introducing no interpretation of findings. The results of testing each statistical hypothesis must be clearly presented and without editorial comment. Significance of results and findings must be stated clearly, with appropriate qualifications and constraints. Tables and graphs can be used and are illustrative of the verbal presentation of data. Graphical representations do not take the place of a discussion, but they clarify the verbal presentation. The chapter ends with a summary of the key points covered in the chapter and transitions smoothly to chapter 5. Once Chapter 4 is complete the E-Mentor will evaluate the Chapter and provide detailed feedback to be sure Chapter 4 meets the doctoral dissertation template.

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On to Rewards

As the new Dr. descends from the mountain peak, it is time to say “so long” but not “good-bye” to the E-Mentor. At this point the E-Mentor and new Dr. may face a sense of loss, but this is normal. The doctoral journey is an overpowering presence that consumes time and attention every step of the way. There is no greater gift for an E-Mentor than the satisfaction of seeing his mentee graduate and move on to extended professional opportunities but the relationship has not ended. E-Mentor and doctoral graduates continue collaboration beyond graduation. Collaborating on research, writing articles, and co-presenting at conferences adds not only to the graduate’s career but adds additional satisfaction for the E-Mentor. It is a good feeling to see your graduate prosper and move ahead in their career. It is now time for the E-Mentor to begin the next doctoral journey with a new doctoral candidate reflecting on their recent doctoral relationship. The doctoral journey is now over and the E-Mentor and new Dr. may now bask in their accomplishments.

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