



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 36, 2022

**A new decade
for social changes**

www.techniumscience.com

ISSN 2668-7798



9 772668 779000

Informal mentoring in prison. Guide for volunteer mentors.

Cristina Magdalena Toma

Bucharest University, Doctoral School of Psychology and Education Sciences,
Romania

magdatoma2005@yahoo.com

Abstract. The idea of mentoring is used in different areas of life – they vary from students' support to help for drug-addicted people. Today mentors can and should provide expertise to essentially less experienced individuals to help them advance their careers, enhance their education, and build their networks. While mentoring is an important aspect to leadership training, it doesn't hold to a typical training environment or process. It is tradition has existed even longer than traditional training. Mentoring is a unique and valuable volunteer service in prisons. It can often be the foundation for fundamental, positive change. Mentoring is provided so that each prisoner or ex-prisoner will have a positive influence in life and have a positive contact to assist the prisoner upon release. Mentoring is intended to enhance personal growth through the sharing of experiences and wisdom and to offer a framework for teaching and modeling values and life skills (Sapouna et al., 2011). Mentoring it is mentor's and mentee's interaction with a common objective.

Keywords. informal and formal mentoring, volunteer, inmates, prisons

1. Purpose of Informal Mentoring

1.1. Definition of mentor

According to Kram (1983), mentoring is a relationship between a young adult and an older, more experienced adult that helps the individual navigate the world of work. Parsloe and Wray (2001) note that mentoring is a one-to-one relationship that can be defined as a process of supporting personal learning and development (Parsloe&Wray, 2001).

The literature describes two types of mentoring: formal mentoring and informal mentoring (Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992).

Kram (1983) argues that mentoring fulfills two important functions: the first function is related to support for career development and the second function is psychosocial support, involved in the personal development of the young mentee.

Regarding the benefits of mentoring, some authors note that mentoring programs generate benefits for the mentee, the mentor, and the organization. It is therefore a social phenomenon in organizations where everyone wins (Zey, 1997).

Mentors are people perceived as experienced and competent individuals and are engaged to provide support and career development to mentees (Kram, 1983).

A mentor is a person who oversees the career and personal development of another, usually younger individual, by teaching, advising and providing psychological support and sometimes promoting and/or sponsoring mentoring (Zey, 1997).

Mentor who works in prison is a person who passes on his / her knowledge, skills and experience which are useful for the professional and personal improvement of the prisoners or ex- prisoners. The mentor's assistance is important in integrating theoretical knowledge of social work into the sphere of practical work (Morselli, et. al., 2006).

Mentors, using their own learning experiences to help the learner when it teaches, he teaches himself. In a theoretical sense this study describes the concept of mentoring, as well as specific mentoring roles: leader, guide, expert, advisor, supporter, role model, and motivator (Delaney& Milne, 2002).

Mentor who works with mentee is a "concierge" who opens the doors to opportunity. This role involves contact, the mentor helps the learner to get acquainted with the professional environment people create their own network, which could be utilized in achieving objectives.

Mentor may choose to be a specialist dealing with only one role or performing several roles. There is only one universal role - mentor is a facilitator.

1.1. Formal and informal mentoring

Many organisations feel they are familiar with may even have plenty of mentoring taking place amongst their people. There are differences between informal mentoring and formal mentoring. Both forms of mentoring have effect between the mentor and learner relationship quality, but they are not the same things. Formal and informal mentoring has similarities which influenced the success of mentor and mentee cooperation.

Table 1. Differences between the informal and formal mentoring

Informal Mentoring	Formal Mentoring
The relationship grows "like Topsy", as needs or circumstances.	The relationship works within an agreed framework of frequency of meetings, timeframes, communication methods, structure, etc.
The relationship is rarely, if ever, evaluated.	The relationship is regularly evaluated, and measures established for assessing progress towards the goal/s.
The relationship may be very long-lived - sometimes many years long.	The relationship has a finite duration, beyond which the partners can elect to conclude it, extend it, or exchange it for a friendship.
The possibility of win/win benefits.	The likelihood of win/win/win benefits (for the mentor, mentee and the organisation).
Mentoring is initiated and maintained solely by the mentoring partners.	A mentoring program coordinator manages the start-up, progress and evaluation phases of the program.
Mentoring partners are matched by chance or serendipity, often with the mentor choosing the mentee.	Partnering 2 people is a facilitated process, with the mentee having the responsibility of choosing the mentor.

Aims of the relationship may be non-specific, non-existent or suggested by the mentor.	The aims of the relationship are specific, directed towards achieving goal/s which the mentee has clarified.
A primary criterion for accepting the mentor is a feeling of liking and respect.	A primary criterion for selecting the mentor is his/her ability to assist the mentee to achieve identified goal/s.
The relationship may not be called or recognised as "mentoring".	Both partners identify the relationship as mentoring, and seek to apply the appropriate skill and expectations to it.
There is no mentoring agreement.	A mentoring agreement forms one of the early cornerstones of the partnership.

Table 2. Similarities between the informal and formal mentoring

The requirement of free choice by both partners.
Dependence on a high level of rapport for success.
The opportunities for learning for both partners
The possibilities of crossing departmental or hierarchical boundaries and achieving improved networking.
Contagion: the opportunity to take the learning from one mentoring relationship into another, leading to continual improvement for all concerned.

2. Context, culture and individuality

2.1 Personal Security / Privacy

Mentoring is a unique and valuable volunteer service in prisons. Mentoring is provided so that each inmate will have a positive influence in life and have a positive contact to assist the inmate upon release. Mentoring is intended to enhance personal growth through the sharing of experiences and wisdom and to offer a framework for teaching and modeling values and life skills. Mentoring topics will be geared towards personal growth in ethical behavior and interpersonal relationships. Inmates may change or decline mentors at any time without any penalty and may request a new mentor. Mentors may decline to mentor an inmate at any time and may request a new inmate to mentor.

Successful volunteer mentors need to have two important qualities:

- 1) Faithfulness
- 2) Good listening skills

The success of mentoring process is one of the conditions essential to know the needs to inmates, their skills, social and family relationships, their professional capabilities to provide assistance. This implies a close mentor to the inmate to get as much information as possible about it. But this approach must have some limits considering the fact, that work is in prison and which must follow certain rules of conduct, security for mentors and inmates. For a good development of the mentoring process will be developed some rules to follow. These rules will be given for mentors in their instruction phase.

Mentoring can be done by anyone, at any time and in almost any place. Mentoring can be a one-off event or a lifelong relationship. It can be carried out informally, as part of a social interaction, or formally, as part of a highly structured new employee training programme. Many

people who have been mentored recognise that something special has happened, but they may not even have known what to call the experience.

Often, mentoring is a process whereby mentor and mentee work together to discover and develop the mentee's latent abilities, to provide the mentee with knowledge and skills as opportunities and needs arise, and for the mentor to serve as an effective tutor support person or example who enables the mentee to sharpen skills and sharpen her or his thinking.

Mentoring can also be almost unconscious. One person may, without realising it, do or say something which has an important effect on another.

2.2. The different elements of Informal Mentoring

2.2.1. Personalised Approaches

Every individual must be treated as an individual. Every person has different needs and different goals, therefore requires a personalised approach to help them move forward.

When you meet a mentee for the first time, you need to have an open mind. Listen to them, ask questions about what they want in their future and then support them as best as you can to move them towards their goals and aspirations – their dreams!

2.2.2. Identification of a support network

At the start of the mentoring process, identify who their support network is. Do they have family, friends or other professionals who they can also look at for support? This is just a question you need to ask and most importantly, keep this information on file, should you need to make contact with those people at any time during the mentoring process.

Also, make sure the mentee tells those people who you are and how you are helping them, so if you did need to make contact with them, they know who you are.

2.2.3. Self-Development/Personal Development

There are many tools available to mentors, for use with the mentee. These tools can support the mentee in their self-development, including looking at their attitudes and beliefs.

Also, think about any training they could be signposted to, in order to aid their personal development, which can then have an impact on their choices in career roles and a possible self-employment role, if they choose this particular pathway.

2.2.4. Listening/Emotional Support/Spiritual Support

Never get emotionally involved with the mentee.

You can guide them through their challenges, but never get yourself involved in their dilemmas.

You also need to provide spiritual support, not just in terms of religion but also in terms of keeping focus on their tasks, their vision and where they should be heading to.

2.2.5. Tackling Victim Mentality/Learned Helplessness

All individuals at times in their lives have moments of helplessness when they fail. It's a time when the "physical wind" is knocked out of them. A time of sadness when the future looks negative and exerting effort is overwhelmingly difficult. For some people, the recovery is very quick, with the symptoms of helplessness dissipating within hours. For others, the helplessness can last for weeks, or if the failure is important enough, for months or longer.

Learned Helplessness is a condition, which appears to all people in everyday life, especially when something doesn't go according to plan. To start to break the condition of

learned helplessness, people need to stay focused, to be positive and view failure as something that didn't work or part of a learning process. You keep on trying until you get the correct results.

2.2.6. Promoting Informed Choice

As you work through the mentoring process with an individual, you will make suggestions for actions they could take to further their opportunities for success.

Don't let the mentee always think on their own what they could do. Your job is to inform them of opportunities that is open to them and that may be beneficial for them and their future. This not only impacts on them as an individual, but also the people around them (family, friends etc)

2.2.7. De-Institutionalise

When people are released from prison, they are very often institutionalised after being in a locked up environment for many months and years, where they are fed, told what to do, where to go. So, when they are released, they find themselves with many challenges, including how to cope in a busy city environment and with new modern technology.

In order to support the individual to de-institutionalise, you need to have regular contact with the mentee to make sure all is ok and engage them into meaningful activity.

2.2.8. Social Skills/Daily Operation skills

This links into de-institutionalisation, where they need support to have the awareness of new environments, behaviours within certain environments and new initiatives. An example of this is self-service checkouts at supermarkets, which may not have existed at the time of going to prison. Therefore, without being told what to do, people do not know how to work the machines. Things that are sometimes taken for granted. Support will be required to tackle these challenges, should they arise.

Table 3. What is expected of mentor and mentee

What does a mentee expect?	What does the mentor expect?
Somebody to talk to	Punctual Attendance
Flexible Informal Support	On-going training and development opportunities from the managing organisation
No Judgement Made	Mentee to listen and ask questions
Confidentiality of all discussions and activity held	Willingness to make a change
Signpost them to specialised services, where required	Development of a positive attitude
To be engaged in meaningful activity, where possible	To be notified by the mentee of any change of situation
Not forcing activity	Ability to accept constructive criticism
To be treated with respect and as any other individual	Mentee willing to try new approaches to move forward in a positive way
Personalised Approach	Commitment to the mentoring process
Somebody to guide them in the right direction	The mentee to want to be there and not coerced

Regular meetings and action points	To be notified of any change of contact details
Sensitivity of the situation of the mentee	Contact with the mentee at convenient times of the day
Cultural Sensitivity at all times	Respect

How mentoring is delivered

In each country, there may be differences in how informal mentoring is delivered but there are some common strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that apply everywhere. Some of these can be seen in the following SWOT analysis:

Table 4. SWOT analysis.

Strengths	Weaknesses
good listening and questioning skills giving constructive feedback non-prejudicial, non-judgemental motivating and encouraging learning and process champion education level (medium) work experience with people desire to work as a volunteer desire to learn concern for human issues time availability flexible work work with vulnerable groups (drugs and alcohol addicted, elderly persons, sexual offenders, young offenders)	lack of security knowledge prison security clearance lack of information about criminal subculture knowledge of other support organisations weak interpersonal, communication, teamwork skills weak ICT skills knowledge of motivational and personal development tools mental health problems lack of work experience in sector conflicting interests proven record of sustainability of mentors motivation
Opportunities	Threats
possibility to develop ability to give and take criticism offers networking opportunities possibility to develop ability to challenge, stimulate and reflect self-development increases self-satisfaction develops self-awareness offers opportunity to pass on knowledge, experience increases competences may offer career advancement opportunities improves teamwork, problem solving and communication skills opportunity to be aware of cultural and social diversity	mismatch of mentor/mentee mismatch of expectations parameters/boundaries not agreed in advance cultural mismatch broken confidentiality conflicting roles (manager /assessor/mentor) perception of others manipulation credibility risk institutionalisation

3. Conclusions

As we have already described in this article, there are fundamental characteristics of mentors for a mentoring relationship to be successful. Some of these features are :

- a) be experienced and competent and be perceived as such.
- b) to have satisfaction in teaching and supporting inmates, helping them to develop personally and socially.
- c) the activity should be voluntary.

According to Clutterbuck (1991), the mentoring relationship also depends on the mentee. Therefore, it is essential that he has the initiative, desire for change and motivation to commit to the relationship.

The success of a mentoring program depends largely on the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. According to the latest studies, some features are not just important, they are essential. Trust is so important in a mentoring relationship that it is classified by Kram (1983) as an essential characteristic.

Understanding is also fundamental because mentoring is a relationship that is mutually developed and benefits both members (Mullem, 1998). Respect- as in any other relationship, levels of relationship quality are distributed along a continuum, ranging from very satisfactory, unsatisfactory, to unsatisfactory (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). The greater the degree of satisfaction in the relationship, the greater the possibility of success in the mentoring relationship.

References

- [1] M. SAPOUNA, C. BISSET, A. CONLONG: What Works to Reduce Reoffending: A Summary of the Evidence. Justice Analytical Services, Scottish Government (2011). Available at http://www.antonioacasella.eu/nume/Sapouna_2011.pdf
- [2] K. E. KRAM: Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academy of Management Journal*, 26: 608-625, (1983).
- [3] E. PARSLOE, M. WRAY: *Coaching and Mentoring: practical methods to improve learning*. Sterling: USA: Stylus Publishing Inc. (2001).
- [4] G. T. CHAO, P. M. WALZ, P. D. GARDNER: Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, 45: 619-636 (1992).
- [5] M. G. ZEY: *The mentor connection: strategy and affiances in corporate life*. New Brunswick : Transaction Publishers (1997).
- [6] C. MORSELLI, P. TREMBLAY, B. MCCARTHY: Mentors and criminal achievement. *Criminology* 44: 17-43, (2006).
- [7] M. DELANEY, C. MILNE: Mentoring for Young Offenders- Results from an Evaluation of a Pilot Program. Paper presented at the Crime Prevention Conference. Sydney, Aus: Australian Institute of Criminology. (2002). Available at <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.520.22&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- [8] D. CLUTTERBUCK: *Everyone Needs a Mentor*. Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, the second edition, (2000).
- [9] E. J. MULLEN: Vocational and psychological mentoring functions: Identifying Mentors who serves both. *Human Resource Quartely*, vol. 9, 4: 319-331(1998).
- [10] B. R. RAGINS, J. L. COTTON, J. S. MILLER: Marginal Mentoring: the effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship, and program design on work and career attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43:1177-1194, (2000).

[11] J. S. Taylor: Training New Mentees: A Manual for Preparing Youth in Mentoring Programs. U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. National Mentoring Center. (2003).

[12] <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/library/publications/training-new-mentees-manual-preparing-youth-mentoring-programs>