Axes of Difference and Areas of Inquiry in Mentoring and Tutoring

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Abstract:

Mentoring and tutoring are terms used to refer to a broad range of supports and learning experiences, and while the terms seem simple and straightforward, mentoring and tutoring are often complex processes, as illustrated in this edition's articles.

Keywords: Education | Mentoring | Tutoring

Article:

Mentoring and tutoring are terms used to refer to a broad range of supports and learning experiences, and while the terms seem simple and straightforward, mentoring and tutoring are often complex processes, as illustrated in this edition's articles. Given the broad range of supports and learning each term encompasses, as well as the overlap between the terms, it can be difficult to discriminate between them. Generally, however, tutoring is narrower in scope—typically focusing on academic learning—and more short-term in duration, while mentoring tends to be broader in scope, involving guidance, wise counsel, and encouragement along a broader spectrum of skills, behaviors, and experiences, and mentoring tends to be more long-term in duration and in effect (Goodlad, 2013). Irby (2012) drew distinctions between mentoring, coaching, and tutoring by stating: "In general, mentors can coach, but coaches hardly ever mentor, and mentors and coaches can tutor, but tutors rarely mentor or coach" (p. 297). Further delineating how mentors and tutors engage, she indicated:

> Mentoring is generally long lasting and involves a shared relationship. Additionally, there is a focus on the deeper development of the individual being mentored such as with his/her job goals, self-esteem, and perceived success. A mentee usually is the one who selects a mentor. … Tutors work on a specific goal for a short-term event; however, the payoff of that goal may impact the future of the tutored individual. For example, there may be a tutor for a second grader in math to help the student to gain confidence and understanding of the second-grade math concepts. The confidence and understanding gained during the tutoring sessions can impact the student's future attitude toward and

achievement in math. Tutors may be assigned by the organization or may be engaged for assistance by the tutee. (p. 297)

In this edition, the first of the five articles focuses on a tutoring program, while the others focus on mentoring programs.

Beyond distinguishing between the terms tutoring and mentoring, there are many types of tutoring and mentoring. Indeed, there have been efforts (e.g. Berghmans, Neckebroeck, Dochy, & Struyven, 2013; Philip & Hendry, 1996; Sipe, 2005) to provide a typology of tutoring or mentoring. Such efforts often quickly become complex, messy, and incomplete (Sipe, 2005). For example, do we wish to categorize programs by structure, format, tasks/practices, purposes, and roles? It may be productive to consider the many categories of difference within tutoring and mentoring by articulating them as axes of difference. Drawing on the work of Philip and Hendry (1996) and Sipe (2005), Figure 1 provides an exploratory framework for considering these axes of difference.

Figure 1. Axes of difference for mentoring and tutoring programs.

Using these axes of difference as a framework, the five articles in this edition illustrate the diversity of types of tutoring and mentoring. For example, MacGillivray and Goode focused on a site-based (*location*), group (*arrangement*) tutoring program that provides homework support

(*purpose*) for students whose mothers are homeless and suffering from addiction (*context*). In contrast, Cutright and Evans' article examined a one-year (*duration*) peer (*relationship*) mentoring program for undergraduate science-technology-engineering-mathematics (STEM) students (*target population*) embedded within a one-credit course (pseudo formal; *formality*) oriented toward helping students transition from high school to college and increasing retention in STEM programs (*purpose* and intended *outcomes*). In addition to the diverse ways in which the tutoring/mentoring programs studied in this edition vary along axes of difference, this edition's articles also reflect the immense variety of areas of inquiry around mentoring and tutoring. For example, MacGillivray and Goode focused on the dynamics among tutors in the aforementioned tutoring program, while Davis and Fantozzi examined preservice teachers' desires and expectations regarding the roles their mentor teachers serve. In their study, they build upon previous work by Butler and Cuenca (2012) on the roles of mentors as emotional supports, instructional coaches, or socializing agents, and Davis and Fantozzi expanded this framework by introducing the role of mentor as gatekeeper. These are but several examples of the ways in which the articles in this edition reflect axes of difference of mentoring/tutoring programs as well as the immense variety of dimensions of mentoring/tutoring programs that may serve as the focus of scholarly inquiry. With this diversity in mind, we provide an overview of this issue's articles as follows.

MacGillivray and Good, in their article, *Analysis of the Dynamics among Tutors in an After-School Tutoring Program in a Homeless Shelter for Families*, used Bourdieu's (1986) constructs of *social capital* (the power, esteem, recognition, and respect afforded through networks of people) and *field* (setting in which networks of people are located) to examine the contestation of power and influence among tutors in an after-school tutoring program at a homeless shelter for women battling addiction and their children. Three tutors—actors in the sub-field of the tutoring program at the homeless shelter (field)—leveraged different strategies to maintain or disrupt the existing hierarchy in order to influence and control the nature of the tutoring program. While many researchers of after-school tutoring programs have focused on academic outcomes of these programs, MacGillivray's and Goode's work demonstrates the importance of looking beyond outcomes and into dynamics that influence the nature and structure of tutoring programs and ultimately how those programs serve or disserve students. Further, their work illustrates the importance of examining sub-field dynamics for possible influence on the larger field.

In their article, *Year-Long Peer Mentoring Activity to Enhance the Retention of Freshmen STEM Students in a NSF Scholarship Program,* Cutright and Evans examined the benefits and barriers to peer mentoring, especially with regard to retention in mentees' STEM program and transition from high school to college. In the final year of a National Science Foundation STEM scholarship program, seniors in the program provided peer mentoring for first-year STEM students within the framework of a one-credit course devoted to developing academic and soft skills. Because the peer mentoring occurred within the framework of a course, it is referred to as a pseudo formal mentoring program. Eight seniors and eight first-year students participated in the program. Cutright and Evans found that mentees generally believed peer mentor advice and instruction were more credible than that of their faculty mentors. Additionally, they determined that female mentors and mentees took the peer mentoring program more seriously than did their

male counterparts. Mentees reported that peer mentoring was the most positive component of the one-credit course. Mentees persisted in their program at higher rates than had the senior cohort, which suggests that the pseudo formal peer mentoring program may have had a positive impact on retention rates. They affirmed the need for further qualitative research with larger samples sizes that examines the dynamics and components within peer mentoring that may be related to student persistence in STEM programs. They also indicated the need for experimental or quasi-experimental studies with sufficiently large samples to determine whether peer mentoring has a significant effect on student retention in STEM programs, the effect size of such programs, and what moderating and mediating factors may be influential.

In the article, *Science and Mathematics Mentees and Mentors: Who Benefits the Most?* Taylor and Karcinski examined a STEM mentorship program, but their research focused on mentorship of science and math teachers, especially with regard to persistence rates. They studied novice teachers across five school districts who were newly degreed STEM majors participating in a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program which included a mentoring component. The mentoring program was collaboratively designed by district designees and university faculty. Some "essential" components of the program were consistent across all five districts, while others were differentiated by districts to meet the unique needs and context of each district. Taylor and Karcinski found that all five districts included the essential components as well as added their own components, and in three of the five districts, the mentoring services provided to program participants exceeded those provided for other novice teachers in their districts. District designees perceived that the additional components were beneficial to mentees and mentors. Taylor and Karcinski determined that mentees rated their mentoring experiences moderately influential. Mentors also reported that their mentor professional learning experiences were moderately influential. Both mentees and mentors reported that the mentoring experience changed their teaching practice in a number of ways. Attrition rates of teachers *during* their first year in the classroom ranged from a low of 5% to a high of 57% across districts. Most teachers who completed the first year persisted (returned to the same school for the next school year), and persistence rates varied across districts from 67 to 100%. Participants recommended that future mentoring models emphasize positive communication (encouragement instead of judgment), match mentees to a mentor who teaches the same content and is in close proximity, and increase contact between mentors and mentees.

Like the work of Cutright and Evans, Cinici focused on a form of educator peer mentoring in *Pre-Service Teachers' Science Teaching Self-efficacy Beliefs: The Influence of a Collaborative Peer Microteaching Program*. Cinici also concentrated on a STEM subject—science and on preservice teachers' (PSTs') efficacy. Framing the study using Bandura's (1997) theory of efficacy, Cinici studied 36 PSTs' efficacy before and after participating in microteaching processes. Microteaching involves a teaching setting that has been simplified, in terms of duration, number of students, complexity, etc. and provides a facilitative or supportive environment. Microteaching, as conceived by Long (1994), involves five phases, two of which involve peer mentoring: Phase 3 involves critiquing a draft teaching plan, and Phase 5 involves critiquing microteaching performance. Cinici found that preservice teachers' microteaching

experiences increased their efficacy initially, but then PSTs' efficacy declined modestly after their field experience.

Davis and Fantozzi in *What Do Student Teachers Want in Mentor Teachers?: Desired, Expected, Possible, and Emerging Roles*, examined mentoring for preservice teachers. More specifically, their work draws upon Butler's and Cuenca's (2012) conceptualization of mentor roles as emotional supports, instructional coaches, or socializing agents. Using this framework, Davis and Fantozzi examined the mentor role preferences of seven student teachers. Davis and Fantozzi found that participants, to varying degrees, preferred mentors who served as instructional coaches or emotional supports, and none indicated a desire for mentors who served as socializing agents. Further, they identified the role of mentor as gatekeeper. In this custodial role, the mentor teacher facilitates entre into the profession, primarily through access and sanctioned approval, which includes successful evaluations of student teaching and a letter of recommendation. Davis and Fantozzi advocate for open and frank discussions about mentor roles and preservice teachers' preferences for mentors who embody specific roles.

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