

## Synergizing Mentoring System in On-line Teaching-Learning Process

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**Abstract:** Online teaching and learning process has become new normal and being adopted by many higher learning organizations throughout the globe at the present scenario. Despite of the fact that online methodology is not being a new approach, major contribution of this process is confined in recent past to special learning aspects like certification programs, training programs in many countries. However, in present scenario, online teaching learning is playing very important roles as it has been well recognized throughout the globe as one of the better facilitation approaches of education and degrees. The salient implementation includes the academic processes with minimal time lapse and knowledge loss for the learning fraternity and hence become best option for possible best compensation in particular working professionals. Though this approach is very attractive, there is a greater need to address several issues most likely to identify during the online teaching learning process. One of the biggest needs in this regard is to avoid demotivation of learners and to enhance their positive learning skills so as to synergize the mentoring system in present online teaching and learning process as in the case of conventional practices. With a prior experience of authors in the assessment in online education, the present study is an attempt of proposed and preferable analysis of online global wide national mentoring approach which supports teaching faculty of different expertise includes fresh, moderate and senior faculty members acting as mentors in online teaching at demographically distant renowned Universities. The authors identified some reputed Universities (12 No.s) found active in online teaching learning process for survey, collection of required information and necessary discussions for better efficacy. Survey data with enthusiastic teachers from various selected Universities in India and other countries analyzed by using an interactive analysis approach to describe how the restructured mentoring system in online teaching and learning process can be utilized by teaching fraternity and to effectively implement for their concerned learners and courses. This synergized mentoring approach will have huge positive impact on the mentees to achieve their GOAL (Going Online As Learners). Besides this significant implication, the specific dimension of how physical distance impact mentors authenticity in mentoring has also been identified in the study.

**Keywords:** Online Teaching, Academic Processes, Salient Implementation, Surveys, Restructuring, fresh, Moderate, Experienced Faculty, Physical Distance, Mentoring GOAL

## Introduction

The COVID 19 pandemic outbreak aroused a paradigm shift in education sector by impacting the entire academic fraternity, stake holders as well as parents directly or indirectly. Since then, the academic organizations throughout the globe implemented more focus on online education apart from conventional mode as a precautionary measure and as an innovative approach to attract the more learners which includes working professionals from longer and remote areas with more perfection. In this context, several challenges are expected to be faced by organizations as well as the learner fraternity, which must be addressed to ensure more satisfaction to stake holders as well as all the academic organizations adopted this format. This alternative adoptive process needs to be restructured with better mentoring system in view of sustainable implementation with long run perspective.

In the process of mentoring, a special kind of relationship is expected to exist between the learners and their mentors by which mutual learning is possible. Further, the personal as well as professional development is possible for all the personnel involved because of accomplishment of commitment, trust, and the respect (Zellers et al., 2008). In general, in most of the countries, the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) invest strategically on their faculty members by giving lower extent of attention towards organizational learning. The change in organizational diversity and dynamics along with mobilization in faculty is observed in the recent times with broader societal circumstances and striving for excellence in R&D have contributed these changes (DeJanasz and Sullivan, 2004). Further, the latest technological innovations and the aspect of globalization helped the academic institutions to impart professional relationships that cross demographic, discipline as well as organizational boundaries. There is a substantial need for providing sufficient support for teachers to become leaders that develops them in both personal as well as professional means to meet the requirements of 21st century learners. Henceforth, the HEIs started the process of encouraging the process of learning within the institution, that fosters the employee and student mentoring relationships (Beane-Katner, 2014). The mentoring system by HEIs has been informal traditionally without the involvement of the institution and however, this process is not a best suited for the 21st century learners as well as faculties. This aspect, especially in the case for female and under- represented faculty who feels uncomfortable while establishing the informal type of mentoring relationship (Sorcinelli, 2000, Sorcinelli and Yun, 2007, Hyers et al., 2012). Keeping these aspects in view and for post COVID scenario, the process of mentoring system needs to be restructured for effective dissemination of knowledge by means of online teaching and learning to furnish equal extent of access to all faculties and also to inculcate the professional competencies (Chao, 2009). This aspect is very necessary for novice academics who are budding faculties, required to adjust to the environment quickly but lacks certain strategies to deal in the regard of matters related with teaching that includes the basics of curriculum and course development, technology imparted teaching, strategies for

enhancing active learning and outcome-based education (OBE) (Nyquist and Woodford, 2000; Remmik et al., 2011). Henceforth, it makes difficult to discuss and reflect on teaching learning process with the absence of scope for teachers who are new to profession.

Despite the conventional forms of mentoring systems viz., apprentice or senior-junior models have a distinguished places in the practices of mentoring, the present approaches of educator mentoring relationships need a diversified approaches which allow for personal learning path and results in improvement of democratic relationship than a adjutant relationship with the mentor. The process of mentoring should furnish a space for partnerships between the individuals in which the personals engage themselves in this process of learning which benefit each other, which also requires interchanging of the roles of both the mentor and mentee depending upon the experience and experience in respective subjects (Hobson,2012). The system of online mentoring, which is a computer-oriented process furnishes the activities like learning, communicating, suggesting, modelling, and promoting (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). This is really a versatile approach which will definitely, become a sustainable alternative to face-to-face mentoring in higher education, as it enhances the limitations of space and time by creating a democratic dynamic between the mentor and mentee (Schichtel, 2010; Kumar, S. and Coe, 2017).

## **Methodology and Methods**

### **Mentoring Functions**

Conventionally, the system of mentoring encloses career as well as psychosocial functions, in which the career related functions advance the mentees personal and professional development and the psychosocial functions enhances their self-efficiency as well as professional identity (Kram, 1985; Eby, Allen, Evans, et al., 2008; Crow, 2012). In HEIs, these set of processes or functions are categorized into 3 wide areas, viz., Educational, professional & Psychosocial enhancement (Crisp and Cruz, 2009; Hayes and Koro-Ljungberg, 2011, Kumar Johnson, 2017). The functions of mentoring generally focus on the educational development on academic planning of the programs and formal as well as informal teaching-learning process. The process of professional development furnishes certain perspectives into the behavioral and disciplinary properties of the career and provides the resources for research & development as well as professional development and by means of psychosocial functions, the mentees receive social as well as emotional support in their learning process, personal as well as professional development (Crow, 2012). If all the above things are achieved, the mentoring programs for faculty may enable and help them to decrease the feelings of isolation by enhancing the confidence, productivity, and professional growth by improving the self-reflection and the problem-solving capacities (Hobson, et al., 2009). Mentors are also accountable for improving the efficacy of novice teachers by exposing them to a variety of experiences for which they will be responsible (National Academy of Sciences, 1997; Carr, et al., 2003; Malderez and Wedell, 2007).

Both the conventional and online mentoring works are in the lines of same characteristics (Nieto, 2016). However, researchers argue that the system of online mentoring has 2 set of characteristics i.e., egalitarian and boundary less, that makes it qualitatively way different from the face-to-face format (Griffiths and Miller, 2005; Knapczyk, et al., 2005). Theerst-while means time & geographical distance dependent that allows mentees to acquire support which is not available in their working environment, and latter means to less communication mode and hierarchical dynamics. Further, the system of online mentoring contains an option of uniting the synchronous as well as asynchronous mode of communication, that provides more time to respond which facilitates a more sequential and effective engagement of the learners (Hobson, 2016). Henceforth, the system of online mentoring which is designed for novice faculty who are experiencing the real time situations or challenges in academics is substantially presumed as a competent means of providing support to them in the starting or early stages of career.

### **Development of Survey Instruments & Adoption for Survey**

The present study is performed based on the conventional national mentoring approach which supports teaching faculty of different expertise includes fresh faculty(age group 27-35 years), moderately experienced faculty (age group 36-49 years) and senior faculty members (age group 50-65 years) acting as mentors in online teaching at demographically distant renowned Universities in India and other countries. Survey data with enthusiastic teachers from various HEIs analyzed by using an interactive analysis approach to describe how the restructured mentoring system in online teaching and learning process for online mode of education can be useful for teachers and to effectively implement for their respective learners. This synergized mentoring approach will have huge positive impact on the mentees to achieve their GOAL (Going Online As Learners). Besides this significant implication, the specific dimension of how physical distance impact mentors' authenticity in mentoring has also been identified in the study. The survey questions are developed based on the ICT mode adaptivity of different levels of educators, the capacity of the educators to deliver the contents via different teaching and learning processes and the effective student learning engagement. Online survey data by using Google forms were analyzed by utilizing an inductive analyzing methodology to describe the following research questions:

- How the system of online mentoring supports the fresh faculty members and learners in their professional development?
- How the sudden transformative experience from conventional to online mentoring influenced/affected the fresh faculty, moderately experienced faculty, and senior career faculty?
- How effective is the system of online mentoring and how it affects both the teaching and learner fraternity?

- In what ways, the physical distance impacts the mentoring process of teacher and student? What are the specific challenges that are observed during the process?

### **Results and Discussion**

The present study focused on certain practices which are followed in the process of mentoring and is an inquiry-based approach into the mentorship potential for in person development. This system of inquiry furnishes and helps to develop a perspective in the regard of socio-cultural in terms of both the teaching-learning practices, development in academics. Henceforth, the study is confined with emphasizing the program of mentoring and the experience of mentees and less concerned with the impact of the program of mentoring. Further, the study is concentrated only on experiences and not on the learning outcomes. The study includes the utilization of a grounded theoretical approach to qualitative research data which is embedded in a notion that collection of data, reviewing the data and theory standing in a relationship which is reciprocal to each other (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

It is empiricism that as the findings is descended from survey data; more or less, it is deductive as well, in the means that “linkage of statements” is imperative and is built by the researchers from the data. The main distinctive tool for the review is comparison which is, making comparisons ablest formation of categories, establishment of boundaries to the categories, segment assigning to categories, content summarization of each category and interconnecting them. The comparison also enhances the validity since it enables to create a solid basis for conceptualizing the concepts and the inter relationships between them to the same context that is external to the sample (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

### **Volunteers for survey**

45 fresh faculty members, 30 moderate career educators and 30 senior career educators voluntarily participated in this research by furnishing their experiences to the given survey questions in Google forms who are at demographically distant renowned Universities in India as well as other countries. The results of the survey for the furnished research questions in google forms are presented in Table1. Though the survey includes several other important questions regarding teaching learning activities, the results are furnished only for main spectrum of mentoring system.

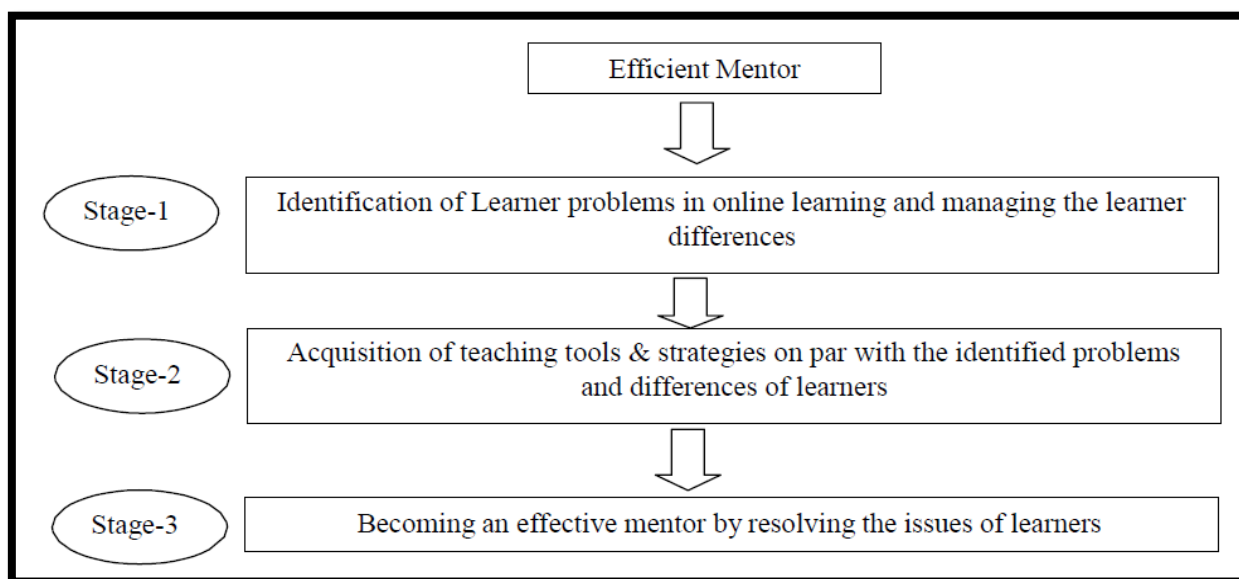
**Table 1: Survey analysis on on-line education mode from different levels of educators**

S. No.	Research Questions	Survey Results (Responses from the Educators)
1.	How the online mentoring system Supports fresh faculty members and learners for their professional development?	Online mentoring system provided opportunities to utilize different technologies related to teacher-learner, parent-teacher interaction in better way by virtual means. It can also be implemented in conventional teaching-learning process to effectively save time and efforts.
2.	How the sudden transformative approach from conventional mode to on-line mode of teaching influenced/impacted fresh faculty members, moderate experienced faculty and senior level faculty?	In the starting days of transformation from conventional mode to on-line, some specific problems were identified thought to get addressed in detail. In lateral stages, when habitude, it was found simple and felt easy way when compared to conventional mentoring system.
3.	How effective is the on-line mentoring system and how it effects the teaching and learning fraternity,	The on-line mentoring is really challenging as the learner retention is finding difficult in virtual mode, the mentoring found difficult when compared to conventional mode. However, slowly getting used.
4.	In what way the physical distance impacts the mentoring process of teacher and learner? What are the specific challenges that are observed during the process?	The physical distance creates forced isolation among the learners and also teachers which is really demotivating collaborative working environment. This impacts on the assessment and evaluation of learners.

**Proposed Model to synergize the Online Mentoring System**

Based on the obtained survey results from the fresh faculty members, moderate experienced faculty and senior career faculty, a typical model for online mentoring system is proposed that characterizes the transformative potential of the online mentoring experience which is emerged from the real experiences as found in survey data analysis and is furnished in Figure 1.





The Figure 1 furnishes a 3stage transformative experience. As the data reveals, the fresh faculty members can improve and develop themselves within the stage at which they enter the mentoring relationship i.e., they can acquire various strategies to resolve the problems, can acquire effective teaching strategies, and can develop themselves as a reflective teacher. The process of teaching and learning can move forward by following the cycle. However, based on the immediate teaching experience of these faculty they may revert to the previous stages of cycle for better improvement. However, in the other two cases, the mentoring system is bit better except in the variation in process.

### Figure 1. Three stage Transformative Experience

#### Conclusions

So as to be effective, the online mentoring system is to be synergized by acquiring new skills which must be taught and demonstrated as well. The process of pedagogical transformation starts with the teachers who cross verifies their practices with a deliberate intention to change themselves. The creation of an outstanding learner experience in the online teaching learning process is accomplished by various factors and effective mentoring is one of the crucial factors in this aspect i.e., extent and quality of interaction of faculty with the learners through proper assessment and evaluation along with necessary feedback during the course. Further, faculty development programs in the regard of online mentoring systems should be planned and executed rigorously, since it may be adopted as an effective alternative to the conventional system of teaching and learning process.

#### Ethical considerations

The authors obtained necessary permissions in advance from the authorities of different organizations from which the faculty members participated in the survey and necessary discussions. Necessary consent letters were issued to all the participant faculty members assure them of confidentiality and anonymity of the information they provided for their

psychological satisfaction. The participants were also informed in prior that their participation was only voluntary and they may withdraw at any time without any ambiguity. Pseudonyms were used for interviewees to conceal their identity. Data gathered was transcribed verbatim.

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