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Training Faculty on Mentoring Students in Higher Education in Post-Pandemic World

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TRAINING FACULTY ON MENTORING STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

Introduction

Improving the competence of educators to support the future generation is a major challenge for faculty developers. Teachers are obligated to develop along with their changing era to create an effective educational environment. The post-pandemic world has put forth a novel stage for educators to step on, which seeks their potential in both educational and supportive aspects. The mentor training program guides educators to an additional role that would impact the students' wellness. It is important to initially seek teachers' perspectives on the challenges of the student world. This helps them think empathetically about the possible troubles undergone by their Gen Z learners. In India, students spend their prime time and age in the educational environment. Thus, training is necessary to properly guide teachers on mentoring to bring out the desired outcome in students, especially in higher education.

Program Framework

The conscious competence model (CCM) was used to lay the foundation for the mentor training program. The model comprises 4 stages of competence from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence in learning skills. This training program was set on the first two stages which are unconscious incompetence and conscious incompetence. Unconscious incompetence is the stage when the individual is unaware of the deficit of skills [1]. In the first stage, educators were requested to define mentoring in their own terms. Coding for the qualitative analysis of the data were used which included words such as: guiding, nurturing, information, mutual, share experience, engage in growth, relationship, support, advise and learning. The data collected from teachers consisted of terms in relation to teaching rather than mentoring. This showed similarities to the unconscious incompetence stage of the teachers. This allowed them to understand their deficit in mentoring the students which led to the second stage of the competence model [2]. Educators were made aware of mentoring, mentoring skills, student characteristics, and common challenges among students. Further training is necessary for the teachers to completely understand and execute mentoring. [3]

Methodology and Structure

Participants and Research model

The participants of the mentoring program included Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant professors in Higher Education Institutes in Tamil Nadu, India. The participants included 50 female faculties and 40 male faculties. The participants had teaching experience from 1 year to 27 years. The faculties who participated in the program had never attended mentor training programs prior. The evaluation research model was used to study the mentor training program effectiveness. Evaluation research, according to Borg is the scientific way to collect data about educational programs to determine their value [3]. The current study used quantitative and qualitative surveys to inquire about the value and merit of the program.

Procedure

The program was developed based on the survey collected from the teachers on the areas in which they thought students need their support. Identifying the common challenges in the

perspective of the stakeholders with regard to students through formative evaluation prior to the program supported the facilitator to engage faculties in the training program through various tools and techniques. The common challenges were segregated based on content into four major areas: physical, cognitive, emotional, and social. The physical area was further subdivided into nutrition, body image, addiction, and sleep. The cognitive area was subdivided into study skills, goal setting, motivation and time management. The emotional area was segmented into self-awareness, and self management. Finally, the social area focused on relationship mastery and communication challenges. Educators getting awareness to support students in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social areas provide a holistic approach to student wellness [4]. The program also provided awareness of the student characteristics of the current era, the Gen z learners. The preferred learning styles and unique approaches to knowledge were discussed. According to Ramirez [5], Gen z learners have different learning preferences compared to the other generations. The teachers were provided information on the basic idea of mentoring, mentoring skills, and mentoring roles. The definition and meaning of mentoring were elaborated to teachers to create a stronger foundation for mentoring training. The teachers were informed on the mentoring skills based on the research by Linda Phillips-Jones [6]. The tools were administered to teachers. The techniques were taught to teachers. The programme focussed on all the four dimensions of mentoring Gen Z.

Tools Techniques and Content

The tools such as Wellbeing Questionnaire, Intelligence Scale, Wheel of Life, EI Measurement, Ego gram, Alphabet Game, VAK Test, Time Management Activity, Cognitive Distortions, and TAT were used in the training. The techniques adopted are Student Issue Identification, Personal Mentoring Vision Statement Development, Mentors in teachers' life, and Mentoring Skill areas awareness. The content was focused on Physical Development (Nutrition/DIET/Exercise, Yoga Mudras, and Swish), Cognitive development (Brain Gym, Sensory Acuity, VAK, Cognitive distortions, Creative Visualization, Peak Performance, Achievement Motivation and Time management), Emotion development (Self-awareness, Stress Relaxation techniques, EFT, Gratitude Meditation and Energy Mastery), and Social development (Active Listening, Assertiveness, Contribution to society, Cultivating relationships and Transactional Analysis). These were elaborated to the teachers during the conscious incompetence stage. It is aimed to allow the teachers to identify and articulate issues among students.

Program Evaluation method

The data was collected using the survey method. Both online and paper surveys were conducted to aid the evaluation of the program. The summative evaluation of the program assessed the effectiveness of the program using a feedback survey from the participants. Content analysis was used to analyze the common issues faced by the faculties. It allowed us to categorize and record the challenges into four areas. The feedback survey used the 5-point Likert scale to analyze the effectiveness of the areas covered in the mentor training program.

Evaluation/Feedback

The data collected from the teachers are represented in the tables. Table 1 shows the challenges among students from the perspective of teachers which helped in the framework

of the program. This table comprises major areas under which the challenges are categorized, the subdivision, and examples from the survey. The details of this table allowed us to infer on the topic that teachers need training in mentoring to further support their students.

Table 1 shows the common challenges among students from the perspective of teachers.

S. No.	Major Areas	Subdivision	Example
1.	Physical	Nutrition	Eating junk foods
		Addiction	Social media addiction Drug abuse
		Sleep	Not having a proper sleep schedule and awareness
2.	Cognitive	Study Skills	Low attention Level of understanding
		Goal setting and Time management Motivation	Delay in Submission Not Bringing required supporting tools Not completing assignments Lack of Motivation
3.	Emotional	Self-awareness	Body image Abilities
		Self management	Stress due to family issues Stress due to intimate relationships
			Dropouts/Distraction
4.	Social	Relationship mastery	Political involvement Hatred towards teachers/Parents
		Communication	Language problems Aggressive style of communication

Table 2 shows the percentage of the relevance of the training program to the challenges among students from the perspective of teachers.

	% of Highly satisfied	% of Satisfied	% of Neutral	% of Dissatisfied	% of Highly dissatisfied
Relevance	72	28	0	0	0

Table 2 shows the percentage of the relevance of the mentor training program in accordance with the challenges they addressed in the initial survey. It can be inferred that 72% of the teacher participants (n=90) are highly satisfied and 28% were satisfied with the relevance of the program to the challenges.

Table 3 shows the percentage of quality of the topics covered during the training program.

S. No.	Topic	% of Excellent	% of Good	% of Fair	% of Poor	% of Very poor
1.	Mentoring	66.67	33.33	0	0	0
2.	Understanding students	72.22	25.55	1.11	1.11	0
3.	Physical	67.77	27.77	3.33	0	1.11
4.	Cognitive	71.11	25.55	2.22	1.11	0
5.	Emotional	72.22	23.33	3.33	1.11	0
6.	Social	64.44	32.22	2.22	1.11	0
	Overall quality	**69.07**	**27.95**	**2.035**	**0.74**	**0.18**

Finally, table 3 shows the quality of each topic executed in the training program. The topic of mentoring was considered excellent by 66.67% and good by 33.33%. The quality of the topic of understanding students was considered excellent by 72.22%, good by 25.55%, fair by 1.11%, and poor by 1.11%. The topics on physical, cognitive, emotional, and social areas were considered excellent by 67.77%, 71.11%, 72.22%, and 64.44% of the participants respectively. The overall program has acquired excellence by 69.07% of the participants, good by 27.95% of the participants, fair by 2.035% of the participants, poor by 0.74% of the participants, and very poor by 0.18% of the participants. This shows that the majority of the participants have benefited from this training program.

Findings and lessons learned

The mentor training program helped educators to be better mentors. The awareness about mentoring helped the teachers move from unconscious incompetence to conscious competence. This awareness allowed educators to effectively understand and connect with their Gen Z students. The educators participated wholeheartedly in their programme. They were delighted to know many tools and techniques exist for improving themselves as well. For Instance, the wheel of Life, enabled them to have better understanding of their areas of improvement as well. Understanding their egograms made them to redefine their transacting style. And the list of benefits continues.

Conclusion and Future Research

The significant lessons learned through the training program are the various challenges faced by the students from the perspective of educators. It allowed the creation of this program that would aid teachers to be better mentors in the areas they perceive that students need their guidance. Through this program, their awareness has been evoked, but their competence in mentoring through training needs to be extended. Further research needs to be carried out to study the effect of training teachers to be effective mentors for students. Ultimately the beneficiaries of this training are students through their teachers. Hence the lessons learned paper signifies the necessity to train teachers beyond their professional knowledge to benefit the future generation.

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