

**Title - Mentoring****Keywords** - Employability; Personal Development Planning**Name** - Chris Dutton, Gillian Parfitt, Ken Wooward**School / Department** - School of Service Management**Institution** - University of Brighton**Activity** - The mentoring of undergraduates by industry professionals**Group** - Undergraduate**Aim** - To contextualise the learning of the student.

To offer an alternative perspective on personal and professional development

**Context / Background** - The School of Service Management facilitates the education of approximately 700 undergraduates each year. A quarter of these students study for a degree in hospitality management. As with any vocationally relevant course there is a need to balance academic rigour with industrial 'work readiness'. Indeed the UK National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education stated that "all institutions should, over the medium term, identify opportunities to increase the extent to which programmes help students to become more familiar with work, and help them reflect on such experience" (Recommendation 18: NCIHE, 1997). The students are encouraged to contextualise their learning through constant reference to industry and to take an industrial placement. However, the mentoring of students by industry professionals during their academic studies offers an alternative perspective.

**Example** - Following research completed with the help and support of the Savoy Educational Trust, a Level 2 elective (Mentorship) was designed and developed with two specific objectives. Firstly to encourage the students to appreciate and understand the value of mentoring as a developmental tool and secondly to personally benefit the students from being in a mentoring relationship with an industry professional from the hospitality industry.

Each year the students who elect to undertake the 'Mentorship' module engage in a series of workshops that explain, discuss and debate the concept of mentoring. Specifically, issues such as the benefits, challenges and relationship stages are addressed. Following this, the students are then introduced to the mentors, a group of experienced hospitality managers and professionals who have been fully briefed as to their role and responsibilities. This is done via a brief resume of each mentor. On the basis of this, the students select a mentor and both parties are encouraged to meet with the facilitation of the module tutors.

The students are provided with a workbook, which encourages them to prepare before each meeting with their mentor and to reflect on the outcomes

of the discussion. Two pieces of assessment are required. The first, an academic paper that examines a specific issue connected with mentoring; the second, a series of reflections of their time spent with their mentor.

**Results / Feedback** - From the research conducted and module feedback, the perceived benefits of this activity are that the student received significant support for their academic studies, through advice and guidance from the mentor; that the knowledge of the industry is increased; that this activity may well lead to improved job opportunities either with the mentor's organisation or an associated organisation; and the personal support with the mentor being seen as a 'helping hand'. To succeed, protégés are required to be 'enthusiastic', 'open minded' and 'motivated'. Alternatively, mentors need to be 'willing', 'approachable' and 'knowledgeable'. The protégés were particular keen to see the mentors as 'contactable'.

It is interesting to note that some students remain in contact with their mentor long after they have graduated and indeed some of the students have found full-time employment with their mentor's organisation.

**Other Comments** - It was not difficult to recruit the mentors who offered their services willingly and were primarily ex-students or contacts of the School. What was surprising was how much the mentors enjoyed being part of the programme citing 'personal satisfaction' as a significant benefit for themselves.

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