

# “Does Role Modeling Impact The Development Of Self Concept In First Year University Students?”

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### CONTEXT

- **White Paper 3(1997): “human resource development:** the mobilization of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society.
- **National Plan for Higher Education(2001): “to provide access to higher education to all** irrespective of race, gender, age, creed, class or disability and to produce graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to meet the human resource needs of the country.”
- **Tertiary Institutions: to produce graduates with the knowledge, competency and emotional intelligence** to cope with the changing needs of society thereby equipping them to be participatory citizens in our modern society.

## Mentoring

### A DEFINITION:

- SHANDLEY (IN JACOBI,2003)  
(1)*an intentional process of interaction between at least two individuals...*  
(2)*mentoring is a nurturing process that fosters the growth and development of the protégé ...*  
(3)*mentoring ...an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé ...*  
(4)*mentoring is a supportive, often protective process. The mentor can serve as an important guide or reality checker in introducing the protégé to the environment he or she is preparing for.*  
(5)*An essential component of serving as a mentor is role modeling*

### FACTORS WHICH UNDERPIN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTORING :

- **social support** to increase coping,
- **active involvement in learning** and shared learning communities
- **attachment to peers and the faculty.**

## Student Mentoring @ UWC

### AIMS:

- To facilitate the transition of first year students from secondary to higher education, **creating a spirit of interconnectedness in which the notion of “each one teach one” comes alive.**
- Mentors across six faculties are selected and trained to provide academic and social mentoring. Ratio 1:3  
Ongoing feedback from mentors and mentees used in conjunction with tracking and monitoring for quality assurance and to ensure that the changing needs of students are being met.

## Social Identity Theory

- Social identity theory proposes that the **membership of social groups and categories form an important part of our self concept.** When an individual is interacting with another person, they will not act as a single individual but as a representative of a whole group or category of people. (gender, age, religion, field of study, mentoring, etc)
- According to the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) the **concept of the self is changing at higher education level.** Erikson's Developmental Theory (1966), proposes that students may be at the stage of *identity vs role diffusion*. The self shaped in relation to role model. Neurological pathways increase - a ‘developmental window’ (Vaillant, 1977) when young adults benefit from mentoring . Young adulthood crucial phase to benefit from mentoring (Levinson, 1979). FY ability to have successful relationship with mentor influenced by own sense of identity and developmental readiness

## Role Modelling...its significance

- Role model: “an individual who is perceived to be exemplary, or worthy of imitation”
- The role model, like a mirror, helps the beholder to see the self. (Tinto, 1975). Mentor helps mentee see own potential (relates to Shandley's definition)
- By providing support, mentoring promotes a **sense of belonging or integration** ...that assist students in understanding the institutional culture...Role modeling, from this perspective, would also be a means of socialization Jacobi (2001).

### What mentees have to say: 1

- Moleli (2005) highlights the role of the university as a social institution:
- *"someone shows an interest in me ...it's good to know that there's someone ... a peer I can talk to ...this only happened once I knew I could trust him"*
- *"I have learned to explore life a bit deeper; but I'm still me"*
- *"My mentor has taken a lot of what she's gained from mentoring and passed it on to me"*
- *"I want to continue the chain of change"*
- *"I can now help other first years ...they tell me I must be a mentor"*

### What the mentees have to say: 2

- Upcraft et al. pointed out: "All first-year students must develop the interpersonal skills necessary not only **to build supportive relationships, but also to succeed in their many pursuits after college**" (p. 8).
- **Goals and aspirations:**
- *"I aspire to reach the academic level my mentor has reached"*
- *"She's helped me see what I can achieve"*
- *"My mentor has made me realize that I can achieve anything I put my mind to and stop saying 'I can't'"*
- *"I've realized that my goals are not so far fetched after all!"*
- *"it's nice knowing somebody who has achieved what I want to achieve"*

### What the mentees have to say: 3

- "Successful students are able to tap into internal resources" (Moleli, 2005)
- **Resilience** is modeled by mentors:
- *"they were where you are ... they understand"*
- *"I went through a tough period but she motivated me and I'm looking forward to the future"*
- *"I have many problems but my mentor just keeps telling me not to give up"*

### What mentees have to say: 4

- Students' self-perceptions of their academic abilities and intellectual self-confidence as compared to the abilities of other students "become more positive during their college years" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 219).
- **Self Awareness, Self Confidence And Self Esteem:**
- *"my mentor has made me aware of things that I didn't know about myself ... now I can work on those things"*
- *"my mentor made me think about the way that I see myself"*
- *"my mentor helped me feel confident about completing my studies"*
- *"they have an influence on your academic achievements"*
- *"the words he uses affects me academically and socially"*
- **Perceptions of mentor as a role model.**
- *"I don't necessarily see my mentor as a role model ... no one person is my role model ...I take a bit from everyone I admire or who inspires me"*

### What does this mean?

- ✓ Mentees incorporate aspects of their mentor's successful behaviours and make it their own.
- ✓ The mentoring relationship impacts on the mentees' self awareness, it influences their goals and aspirations, their resilience and their overall self concept.
- ✓ Role modelling in mentoring affects the development of the mentees' self concept
- ✓ When programmes provide mentors with structure through training and provide support and containment for mentors
- ✓ This will then enable the mentor to provide a containing, holding space for the mentee

### Now what?

- Current focus on **mentor selection** ... is there a need to explore **mentee selection**?
- Should mentoring be compulsory?
- The need for student incentives for involvement in mentoring and structured extra-curricular activities
- Mentoring should become part of the higher education culture
- Current focus of the programme on **academic support** of mentees than that of a relationship between student and mentors
- This underscores the need for adjustments within the programme so that all mentors can their broaden and embrace their role
- Mutual benefits for mentors and mentees? Further research...