ABSTRACT
        Mentoring has become an accepted and desirable part
of the preservice preparation of educational administrators. This
paper focuses on the responsibilities of those who are being
mentored, often referred to as "mentees" or "proteges." It is argued
that mentoring is a teaching-learning process to which participants
bring specific responsibilities. Data were collected through
telephone and onsite interviews with 45 experienced school
administrators (mentors) and 10 aspiring principals (proteges).
Findings indicate that proteges need to bring the following skills
and attitudes to the mentoring relationship: (1) a basic
understanding of the teaching process and the nature of leadership in
general and in effective organizations; (2) good listening and
communication skills; (3) openness and collegiality; and (4) a
commitment to mentoring. It is recommended that universities provide
training for proteges before they begin a mentoring partnership.
Findings also suggest that mentoring may not fit the learning styles
and needs of all individuals. In conclusion, proteges are partners in
the mentoring process of learning, and they bring an important set of
responsibilities to the relationship. (LMI)

# MENTORING IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

# WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROTEGES?

by

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# MENTORING IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

## WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROTEGES?

In the past few years, considerable attention has been directed toward the potential value of mentoring relationships as a way to enhance the quality of professional development opportunities available for school practitioners (Daresh & Playko, 1992; 1994; Kirkham, 1994). This has been true not only in the United States, but in numerous countries around the world (Caldwell & Carter, 1993; Walker & Stott, 1993) where efforts have been directed toward the improvement of preservice preparation, formal induction, or ongoing inservice education for classroom teachers (McCann & Radford, 1993) and educational administrators (Daresh & Playko, 1988). The majority of analyses to date have been conducted on mentoring programs available for teachers (Noller & Frey, 1983; Zimpher & Reiger, 1988; DeBolt, 1992; Wilkin, 1992; McIntyre, Hagger, & Wilkin, 1993; Daresh & Playko, 1994). While we do not wish to suggest that this work has not been important and highly influential in helping us to appreciate the complexity of mentoring for educators, our purpose in this paper will be to focus more specifically on the use of mentoring as a way to enrich professional development for school leaders. Educational leadership may emerge from a variety of role incumbents in schools; indeed, there is a critical need to appreciate the fact that leadership on the part of classroom teachers needs to be appreciated more fully. However, here we are speaking directly about leaders who hold formal roles in schools, such as principals, superintendents, or headteachers (UK).

The process of mentoring for school leaders has been reviewed according to a wide array of alternative issues. Research has been carried out to determine the desired characteristics of those who would serve as mentors (Wasden, 1988; Parsloe, 1992), the nature of effective mentoring processes (Torrance, 1984; Zey, 1985), and the kinds of information that should be provided to mentors as they are trained for their roles. This paper focuses on a relatively unexamined factor in effective mentoring relationships, namely the responsibilities of those who are being mentored, often referred to as "mentees" or "proteges." It is our assumption that mentoring is in fact a type of teaching-learning activity. As such, there is a need for clear articulation of responsibilities for the teacher (i.e., mentor), and also for the student (i.e., protege). As a result, this paper has been prepared to address the following objectives:

1. To present recent research which has looked at the nature of mentor-protege relationships as part of newly-developed administrator preparation programs, with a goal of understanding more completely the responsibilities which must be assumed by proteges if these types of leadership development programs are to be effective.

2. To make recommendations for more effective preservice administrator preparation programs which utilize mentor-protege relationships as standard features of program design and delivery.

## Study Background

In recent years, there has been a clear and consistent call for changes to be made in the ways in which people are prepared to move into roles as educational administrators in the United States. Groups such as the Danforth Foundation, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, and the University Council for Educational Administration, while diverse in many ways, have tended to join with one voice to recommend ways in which people are to be made ready to step into formal leadership positions as principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and other roles. While specific practices for improvements have been varied, there has been a common suggestion that more field-based preparation and clinical learning experiences ought to occur as standard features of preservice programs. In conjunctions with these types of efforts, the use of experienced administrators in the field serving as preservice administrative mentors has ' .en widely viewed as an effective practice.

Mentoring as part of the preservice preparation of educational administrators has become accepted as a desirable part of preservice programming. While it is clear that considerable unevenness often is found in the precise nature of such activity, it is also clear that a knowledge base related to mentoring for school leaders has emerged to guide program development. This knowledge base has provided guidance in such areas as benefits which appear for mentors and proteges, training programs for mentors, matching for mentor-protege relationships, and desirable characteristics of mentors. In fact, most aspects of mentoring programs and practices for school administrators have been studied sufficiently to provide an adequate image of what happens in this form of guided instruction and the formation of future educational leaders.

The one area which has generally been neglected in existing reviews of the mentoring process, however, is critical to the advancement of our understanding of the interactive teaching-learning process which must occur between mentors and proteges. This area concerns the topic studied in this paper, namely the responsibilities that proteges have as learners. To date, research has not been conducted to identify more precisely the kinds of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that must be demonstrated by those who are mentored if they are to receive benefits from the mentoring process. Without such an identification of protege responsibilities, it continues to appear as if the only person

responsible for effective teaching and learning is the person who plays out the role of mentor. This would be unfortunate and incorrect because it would be similar to a view of teaching and learning effectiveness which would suggest that the entire instructional responsibility must fall on the shoulders of the teacher alone. Students and learners have clear and consistent responsibilities for their own learning.

## Methodology.

Data collection for this study began in the spring of 1992 when the researchers initiated interviews with experienced administrators who had been serving as mentors in Danforth Foundation-sponsored and similar innovative principal preparation programs in place at universities across the United States. During a two-year period, 45 individuals were interviewed concerning their perceptions of the kinds of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that they believed were necessary for individuals to demonstrate if they were going to gain as much as possible as proteges. Those who were interviewed had a range of experience serving as mentors in innovative principal preparation programs. Nine individuals had three or more proteges assigned to them over a five year period. Thirty-six of the mentors had worked with one or two aspiring principals. Of this group, five individuals had served as proteges as part of the principal preparation programs in which they participated as university students. In addition to the 45 mentors, ten aspiring principals now serving as proteges were also interviewed as a way to see verification of the views expressed by the mentor group.

Telephone and on-site interviews were carried out. In all, the respondents came from five different universities which had sponsored innovative principal preparation programs. No effort was made to ensure that each of these five different programs looked exactly alike. In fact, the only aspect of each program that was similar to other programs was the reliance on mentoring in field-based settings as a central feature of each university's effort.

Interviews lasted up to two hours and focused on ascertaining the nature of the exact skills, knowledge, attitudes and values which would be most helpful if demonstrated by those who are proteges in making mentoring programs as successful as they were initially assumed to be.

The following were the basic questions asked of all respondents as part of the interviews:

1. What is the knowledge that needs to be brought to the mentor-protege relationship by the protege, in order for the relationship to be effective?

2. What are the kinds of skills that need to be brought to the relationship by a protege, if the relationship is to be effective?

3. What attitudes need to be demonstrated by effective proteges?

4. What are the values needed by proteges if the mentor-protege relationship is to be as effective as possible?

5. How could proteges be better prepared to enjoy possible benefits from the mentoring experience?

## Findings

The interviews yielded the following findings related to the kinds of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that need to be demonstrated by proteges if mentoring experiences are to be as effective as possible, relative to successful field-based preservice preparation programs for future school administrators:

*1. The knowledge base that was identified as most important for proteges to bring to mentoring relationships included basic understandings of teaching processes and the nature of leadership in general.*

As individuals were questioned regarding the kinds of fundamental knowledge that they expected of proteges prior to beginning more formalized mentoring contact, the issue that appeared on a repeated basis was the belief that, in order to be good learners, proteges needed to have some basic knowledge related to effective teaching. This appeared to reinforce a strong image and value held in all of the innovative principal preparation programs, namely that the primary goal of any principal must be to enhance the quality of teaching in his or her school. As a result, effective proteges were said to be those who knew what was required in any teaching situation. The suggestion was made on a number of occasions that, if a protege was to learn from the mentor, it was critical to appreciate what constituted good teaching in the first place.

The second piece of knowledge that virtually all of the mentors and proteges indicated as being essential to effective mentoring relationships was said to be a general understanding of leadership behavior in effective organizations. As one of the mentors noted,

*How can someone know what to get out of a mentor-leader if they don't already have some idea of what successful leaders do in the first place?*

This same perspective was shared by several of the respondents. The point did not seem to be that effective proteges necessarily needed to know the latest research on leadership effectiveness. Rather, mentors expressed the view that, in order to have meaningful dialogue about the nature of what they believed were effective practices on the part of aspiring educational leaders, a basic vocabulary and language system needed to be available and shared by both the mentor and protege. Thus, when a protege was told that

the mentor believed that "more participative" leadership might be important in one situation as opposed to another, it was helpful if the construct of "participative leadership" were understood by all parties. In other words, the issue of knowledge related to effective leadership behavior was seen as an important communication link between the mentors and proteges.

Other knowledge was also identified as important for proteges. Although specifics tended to vary from respondent to respondent, the basic message was that there was an expectation that proteges would come to the mentoring experience with some fundamental understanding of such managerial issues as school law, budgeting, personnel management, teacher evaluation, finance, and so forth. Mentors expressed views such as,

*I can't spend a whole lot of time stopping to deliver a lecture on clinical supervision to the protege. I expect him [or her] to have an idea of some of the terms and practices I'm using when we start working together in my school...*

Mentors did not expect proteges to be so well-prepared that they had no questions. However, there was a strong expectation that some of the initial "vocabulary of administration" had been acquired before going out into the field. Clearly the expectations for what this vocabulary might include varied somewhat from mentor to mentor. In a few cases, for example, there was a belief that, prior to serving as an administrative intern (protege), a person needed to know about the latest innovative practices that were being implemented in a particular school system. This was particularly true in one case where a mentor principal expressed frustration because proteges assigned to him were not aware of the latest information available regarding "Outcomes-Based Education" as it was adopted in his district. For the most part, however, mentors did not express concerns at this level of preparation by proteges. They simply wanted to make certain that when they talked about "due process rights under the law," or "state equalization support for school finance they were not going to have to spend a lot of time orienting interns/proteges to material they should have already learned in university classes.

*2. Two skills were repeatedly identified as critical to proteges success: Good listening skills, and the ability to articulate personal values and beliefs.*

Mentors described a variety of specific skills which they believed would be important ones for proteges to bring to their learning experiences in the field. "Good communication skills," "interpersonal skills," and "skills with working with people-- particularly in conflict settings," were all specified as critical skills. However, the single skill area which was specified by nearly every mentor (and all of the proteges who were interviewed) was the importance of listening skill as a part of the protege's collection of demonstrated abilities. In several cases, mentors pointed out an inherent contradiction found in suggestions that people could profit from mentoring relationships *without* an ability to listen to what was communicated to them by their mentors. In many ways, this

could also be classified as a critical attitude needed by proteges as well. If an aspiring administrator had the attitude that they could learn a lot from their mentor, they would likely be good listeners as well.

The second set of skills identified as critical by mentors was the importance of proteges having a keen sense of their own values and beliefs when they came to the field to learn. In all five of the programs from which the proteges were drawn, a central required activity was the articulation of a personal educational platform, often referred to as an educational philosophy. The majority of mentors indicated that they greatly appreciated the fact that the proteges with whom they worked had not only completed such an exercise on paper, but also the fact that they gave evidence of this reflective activity as they proceeded through their learning experiences at the side of their mentors.

> *It was really clear that, when we were discussing issues and practices that had no clear-cut "correct" way to do them, my interns had a personal sense of what they would do...what they thought was right or wrong. We didn't always see things eye-to-eye...in fact, we had some pretty heated arguments from time-to-time..but it helped me to know what people really believed...*

> *3. Attitudes that were identified as critical for effectiveness as a protege included openness to learning from colleagues, willingness to admit a lack of knowledge of some important areas of administrative practice, and desire to work with peers.*

If there was one comment that came up as a direct quote from multiple mentors, it was the belief that effective proteges had to want to "work as a team player." When that comment was made, further clarification was sought. For the most part, "working like a team player" did not mean simply doing what everyone else wanted done. Instead, it was indicative of a spirit of openness to learn from others, to seek advice, and to cooperate in the learning process. As the researchers examined the interview data, one comment made by an individual who had worked with several different proteges over the years seemed to be most descriptive of what others were suggesting:

> *Working with the principal interns is always a bit like working with kids in my math classes, or with kids who played on my basketball teams... The good ones knew that they didn't know everything, that they didn't have all the skills they needed to be all-staters, for example. They weren't afraid to ask me about their homework assignments, or things that I taught in class, or some of the plays we worked on in practice. They admitted that they had a lot to learn. But more important than that was the fact that they came forward and asked for help to learn more. There's nothing wrong with not knowing everything. There's everything wrong with pretending like you know everything, but you know nothing in fact. That's when kids fail a class, or they don't succeed on the sports team. The same is true of the interns I've worked with from [X University]. Some come*

*in here acting like they already know what it's like to be a principal, that they know what all the answers are. I can't do much with them. Others ask for advice from me, other principals in the district, the teachers, parents, other interns... Those folks I can help.*

The one attitude that mentors wanted to see, above all others, was a sincere willingness to learn. In most cases, mentors said that such an attitude was the major reward that they achieved out of working with proteges. By contrast, without an expression of wanting to learn, mentors indicated that the experience of working with interns or proteges was a lot of work with little pay-off.

### 4. Proteges had to value the potential of learning through a mentoring relationship in the first place if they were to be successful.

Despite all of the rhetoric which has recently supported the need for people to find mentors if they are to succeed in various professional roles, there are still many who no doubt question the true value of such supportive relationships. Those interviewed as part of this study have suggested that, while it may be possible for some people to question the value of mentoring, they had probably better avoid becoming placed in programs which emphasize mentorship as a central feature of the preparation sequence for future school administrators. In other words, it is exceedingly difficult to "pretend" that one is committed to mentoring if one does not believe in this approach to learning. Mentors can tell if a person is not being honest in their relationship rather quickly, and that discovery will cause harm to a relationship which cannot be mended.

In a similar vein, it was learned that proteges had to value at least the potential of acquiring new insights and ideas as a result of their contact with their mentors. This was true even in those cases where there might be disagreement between mentors and proteges. In short, it was acceptable to listen to what a mentor had to say, weigh the idea as completely as possible, and then perhaps, reject the input. It was not acceptable to discount recommendations at face value. Perhaps this finding might also suggest that tact is a critical skill to be demonstrated by those who are involved in mentoring relationships.

### 5. There are ways suggested for improving the degree of preparedness for being mentored.

One of the consistent findings derived from the interviews with mentors was a strong suggestion that ability to serve as an effective protege can, in fact, be greatly enhanced through focused training and development. "Protege-ship," a term suggested by one of the mentors, can be a skill that can be acquired in the same way that people can somehow learn to be more effective mentors. However, there is an implicit assumption that not everyone can become a mentor or an effective protege, regardless of the training or preparation activities that may be offered.

In all of the programs from which the mentors and proteges were drawn, focused training had been provided to those designated as mentors. This training included a variety of things such as increased knowledge about leadership. the nature of mentoring, effective listening and communication skills, and so forth. Many mentors and a few of the proteges interviewed suggested strongly that equivalent training, perhaps in the form of a short course or seminar entitled something like, "How to Get the Most Out of Being Mentored," could be made available for people as they begin programs such as the ones described here. Most felt that it was incorrect to assume that people somehow had a natural ability to be able to articulate their learning needs to others. A structured learning experience, however, could serve to remedy that problem, and the mentor protege relationship could be much more effective.

The training programs designed to prepare people for their responsibilities as proteges could be very similar to the kinds of things included for the mentors. For example, time could be spent on the nature of effective listening skills, the dynamics of small group work, and probably, the nature of effective mentoring in general terms (so that people could begin to gain some insights out of what they would legitimately expect of their mentors). Further, it was also suggested that part of the protege preparation program might also include some information related to the value of assertiveness; teachers cannot guess what students want to learn, and the best way for students to make their needs known is through assertive (not aggressive or offensive) behavior. One of the strongest recommendations, given the fact that there is a high degree of overlap between the kinds of things needed for the preparation of mentors and proteges, is to ensure that training for both groups occurs simultaneously wherever possible and appropriate.

## Conclusions

As an increasing number of universities strive to improve the ways in which they provide preservice preparation programs for aspiring educational administrators, there are signs that more use will be made of mentor-protege relationships as an important part of these programs. While there may be general consensus that the use of mentoring may be quite a desirable approach in many ways, this practice will be greatly limited unless there is a complete appreciation of all the elements of such programs. Research reported here suggests strongly that one area that needs to be understood more fully by program developers is in the nature of being mentored, as opposed to simply knowing about the nature of mentoring.

One important implication for program improvement and practice derived from the research reported here might be that, in addition to training programs designed to prepare experienced administrators to serve as mentors, it was noted that quite a few respondents suggested that training might be provided to those who are to serve as proteges. Such training might not be quite as extensive as it is for mentors, but it might actually be a part of the mentor training. The rationale for this suggestion is that fulfilling the role of learner in any teaching setting is as complicated and demanding as it is for teachers to play out

their important duties. Consequently, proteges need some sense of what they are supposed to do.

Finally, an implication from this work might simply be a recognition that mentoring may not be absolutely the best way for all aspiring administrators to learn about their future careers and roles. Similar to the awareness that exists that not all children necessarily learn through the same instructional and delivery patterns, it might also be assumed that not all future principals are formed in the same way as all others. Mentoring may be seen as an effective innovative approach to the preparation of future leaders, but it may simply not be the most effective technique fitting the learning styles and needs of all individuals. Structured mentoring may not be for everyone; and not everyone can be an effective protege as a result. To deny that fact might indeed serve as a denial of an important part of most existing adult learning theory which holds that respect must be directed toward all alternative ways of knowing and learning by adults.

## Summary

In this paper, information concerning a recent study of the mentor-relationship for leadership development was presented. Specifically, the focus of the study described was on the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that should be demonstrated by proteges if the mentorship is to be successful. One of the most powerful conclusions reached as a result of this study is that proteges are indeed partners in the learning process of mentoring, and that they have an important set of responsibilities that must be brought to the learning setting. In order to enhance the likelihood that proteges will in fact live up to these responsibilities, training for proteges is also suggested.

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