

Collaborative Mentoring for Developing Core Competence of the Institute

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Abstract

The authors introduced the concept of collaborative mentoring which is whole institute mentoring for implementing the innovations, reforms, and changes at the institute level to achieve the vision of the institute. The concept of core competence is the collective core abilities of the institute in the form of capacity, capability, and willingness to perform and achieve the vision of the institute. The schemes of statutory bodies for the institute, faculty members, and students are stated in the literature review. The system model of core competence is described. Approaches, roles of the mentors and benefits of collaborative mentoring are stated in the context of NEP 2020. Towards the end of the paper, suggestions are noted for institutions to implement collaborative mentoring.

Keywords: Collaborative mentoring, core competence,

Rationale

The core competence of the institute differentiates it from the rest of the institutes in the world, leads the education sector and competes with other institutions. The core competence becomes the base for formulating the vision of the institute which is novel and attracts the stakeholders to get collaborated with the Institute for mutual benefits. The core competence of the institute is developed using collaborative mentoring for all people (leaders, faculty members, staff members and students) at the institute level for developing common competencies of the competency framework of the institute. Collaborative mentoring is organized for large and medium-size groups for developing common core competencies. It is organized for small groups for developing specialized and specific core competencies. In the 21st century the development of core competence at the institute level is essential to sustain the academic business in the world of work, continuously face the challenges, prevent complex problems, and continuously improve the core competence and performance.

The educational institutions are expected to develop 21st-century skills in the students and predefined outcomes defined by regulatory and accreditation agencies (NBA, 2019), (NAAC, 2018). There is a number of other abilities which are to be developed in all the students as mentioned in the national education policy 2020 (MHRD, 2020). The core competence of the institute is developed using various training, mentoring, coaching, guiding and counselling (TMCGC) approaches at the institute level for academic leaders, faculty members, technical staff and students for developing a high level of core competency and proficiency.

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In this paper, core competence, collaborative mentoring, benefits of collaborative mentoring, and approaches to implementing collaborative mentoring to develop the core competence of the institute using TMCGC are briefly described. This paper is an expansion of the research work completed recently on higher and technical education in India. The responses received for the study, literature review and experiences of the authors are the sources of information for this paper.

Literature review

University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) announced schemes for institute mentoring, faculty mentoring and student mentoring. (UGC, 2019a) launched Paramarsh scheme for mentoring the non-accredited institutions to improve their quality to get accreditation by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The scheme adopted a hub and spoke model for mentoring the institutions which is an excellent example of collaborative mentoring among institutions. The salient features of this scheme are a selection of core areas of performance for mentoring the institution, the expertise is pooled from multiple sources, and pairing of the institutions is created by mapping, preparation and implementation of a mentoring programme. (UGC, 2021) made provision for mentoring of faculty members throughout their careers combining training and mentoring to perform professionally in their institutions. The document covers all aspects of training and individual mentoring of teachers in higher education. UGC addressed the provisions of the national mentoring mission stated in NEP 2020. (UGC, 2019b) launched Deeksharambh a student induction programme with an aim to help students to familiarize themselves with the new surroundings, develop a bond with fellow students and teachers, develop sensitivity towards social issues and imbibe human values. Mentors implement the Deeksharambh following a collaborative mentoring approach which will result in the development of the core competence of the institute. (UGC, 2019c) launched a faculty induction programme encompassing 10 modules of 175 hours duration to motivate, develop abilities and perform the multiple roles of teaching, research and service. Collaborative mentoring at the institute level is organized to support and encourage faculty members to use student-centric competencies.

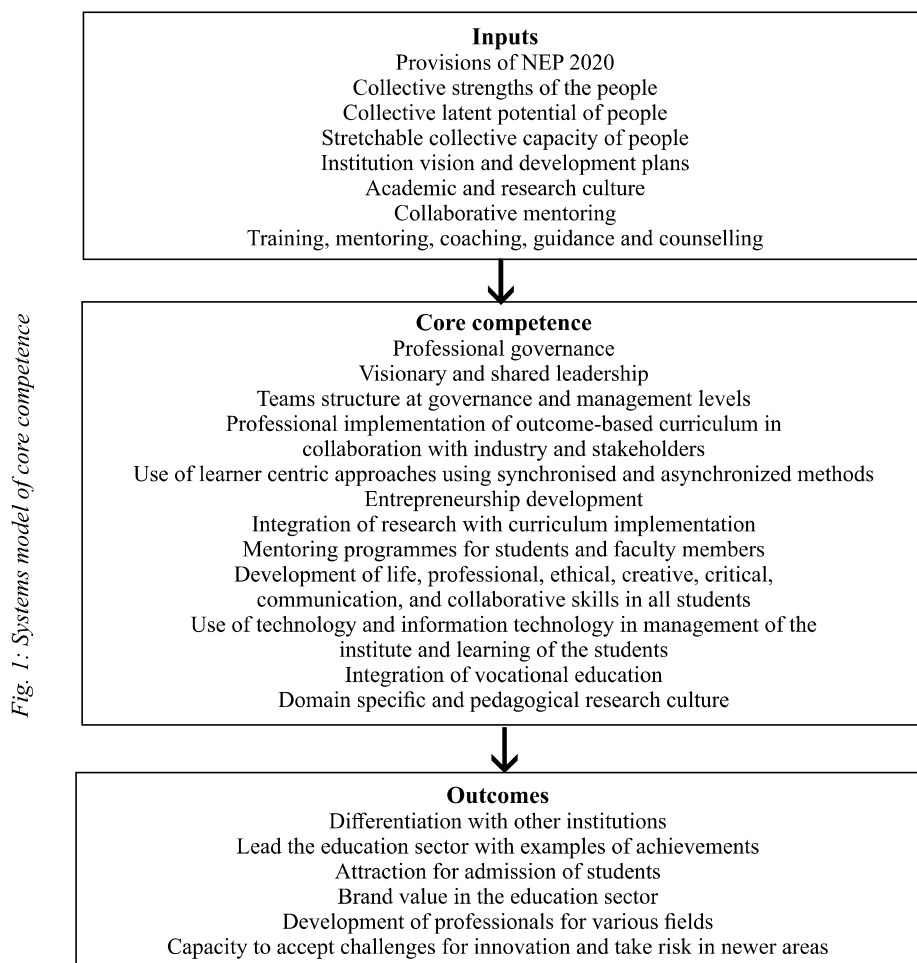
(Semiyu Adejare Aderibigbe, 2014) studied the critical constructivist approach to mentoring incorporating apprenticeship, reflective, social-constructivist and participatory strategies to learning. (Chang, 2011) analyzed the concept of core competence from strategic management and human resource management perspective and developed a framework of two paths i.e. human competence and organizational context that contribute to organizational competitive advantage. (Serrat, 2009) stated that coaching and mentoring concentrate on the person and are a form of change-facilitation. The author described the situations in which coaching, and mentoring are conducted. (Michael, 2008) quoted John Whitmore GROW model i.e. establish goals, explore reality, generate options and wrap up. The author describes the mentor and coach and draws the parallels between mentoring and coaching. (Curry) studied collaborative mentoring as a systems approach to support beginning educators. The author's applied systems theory to create a mentoring framework applied a feedback loop for elements of collaborative mentoring and provided flexibility to institutions to integrate the structure. (Gupta, 2008) described the strategies for the whole institute's proactive counselling to address the major issues, challenges, and problems and at the same time prevent them in the next cycle of implementation.

Core competence

The core competence of the institute is defined as essential collective competencies of the people working in the institute and collective competencies which can be developed to develop the core strengths of the institute which make the institute successful and unique. It is the collective capacity and capability of the people aligned to the vision of the institute and the requirements of the external environment. The core competence is derived from the competency framework of the institute which is developed for achieving the vision of the institute. The higher education institutions are implementing innovations, reforms, and major changes aligned to the provisions of the NEP 2020, therefore the core competence of the institute will evolve with the progress of the innovations in the institutions.

A systems model of core competence

A system model is used for managing the institute and its function. A systems model for core competence fits in with other systems models. A system model for developing the core competence of the institute is stated in Fig. 1. The inputs, processes and outputs are stated which improves with the implementation of collaborative mentoring at the institute level.



Collaborative mentoring

Collaborative mentoring is a scientific process of identifying collective latent potential, core strengths, opportunities for developing the capability and stretching the capacity of the people (leaders, faculty members, staff members and students) in the context of reforms taking place in higher education, vision of the institute, institute development plan, and favorable conditions in the external and internal environment to develop unique collective core competence of the people to achieve the vision of the institute. Collaborative mentoring is a large group mentoring in which all institutional members are involved as a mentee to design and implement improvements in conventional areas and innovations in the newer areas. The collaborative mentoring for the development of core competence of the institute is not one to one or to very small group or peer mentoring or reverse mentoring which is used to develop personal and professional competence of the individuals rather collaborative mentoring fosters such mentoring institution-wide. It is not training in a small group for developing specialized competencies, but it is for the whole institute. Collaborative mentoring is no substitute for leadership, facilitators for managing change, and grievance handling mechanisms at the institute level.

Benefits of collaborative mentoring for developing core competence

1. The professionally trained mentors use collaborative methods of mentoring for developing higher-level abilities for large and medium-sized groups. The heterogeneous group of people results in better outcomes. The mentoring is carried out in large and medium-sized groups, so it develops competence in all the participants. (MacGregor, 1992) stated that collaborative learning is an umbrella term. The mentors use collaborative mentoring incorporating many mentors at the institute level for developing the core competence of the institute.
 2. The mentors harness the full potential of collaborative mentoring to develop the collective core competence of people. Collaborative mentoring is organized in contact mode and on digital and social platforms. Professionally trained mentors scientifically design collaborative mentoring, effectively implement, and evaluates the impact on the development of core competence of the institute.
 3. Collaborative mentoring is useful for developing higher-level cognitive abilities such as analyzing the complex situation from different perspectives, resolving issues, solving complex problems, generating unique alternatives for a given situation, visualizing something new, planning for development and innovation, and the like.
 4. Collaborative mentoring is useful for developing effective domain higher-level abilities such as team building, interpersonal communication, relationship building, trust-building, culture building, and institutional building.
 5. Collaborative mentoring is used for developing higher-level cognitive abilities and the development of affective domain abilities as a byproduct of collaborative mentoring. In some situations, the main aim of collaborative mentoring may focus on developing higher-level affective domain abilities such as professional ethics, safety, hygiene, and quality.
 6. The mentoring is integrated with the core academic and research activities, regular events, and goals of the institute so it does not require extra time, effort and resources. It creates conscious learning by doing in the right way.
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7. Collaborative mentoring produces by-product learning which may be much more than main learning in many cases. The synergetic effect of learning is harnessed in learning of core competence and byproduct learning in the collective collaborative mentoring process.
8. The mentoring results in collective capacity development, capacity building, and confidence-building for innovation change, and reforms.
9. Mentoring involves all people in the process leading to change and innovations, therefore commitment, involvement, and ownership of the change are assured in the collaborative mentoring process.
10. Collaborative mentoring involves all the people of the institute, so it results in culture and people building for accepting the challenges of change. The successors are available to take up any position in the institute.
11. The mentoring process develops many mentors with the purpose to mentor the faculty and students, so it brings a spiral effect in the improvement of the core competence of the institute.
12. Collaborative mentoring ensures the socialization of people in the current and desired academic culture of the institute. This academic culture will get enriched year after year as people will further contribute to it.

Approaches for implementing collaborative mentoring

The right combination of approaches should be used to develop the right core competence of the institute. The mentors use a combination of methods to develop the core competence of the institute. The mentors consider the people as a resource for learning and encourage their involvement in the learning process may be about the policies, rules and regulations, culture of the institute, systems and processes of the institute or plans and procedures of the institute in order to improve it collectively under the mentorship. The mentors use a wide spectrum of activities for developing the core competence of the institute using the following approaches

Conduct awareness sessions

The weaknesses are selected and prioritized related to the performance of the institute as a whole and these weaknesses are addressed by conducting awareness workshops to stimulate thinking and generate strategies to remove the weaknesses. These workshops are the beginning of collaborative mentoring in the institute. Similarly, the collective strengths are identified and further refined to effectively implement the institute development plan.

Conduct workshops

The strategies to remove the weaknesses are further refined collectively through discussion, debate, and feedback in the workshops. The mentors involve all significant stakeholders in the workshop to make them understand the importance of removing the weaknesses and offer their ideas to refine the strategies. The collective strengths are used to remove or cover the weaknesses. The explorative workshops are organized to identify new opportunities and expand the academic business horizontally and vertically. The diagnostic workshops are organized to diagnose the problems, value system, culture and align them with the vision of the institute. The design and development workshops are organized to design the innovations, reforms and change.

Conduct creativity sessions

The strategies are further value-added generating creative ideas to enrich the strategies and prioritize them to remove the weaknesses. The mentors conduct creativity sessions using creativity tools with institutional members to develop novel ideas on core competence. The mentors use individual and group strengths to further articulate the strategies to remove the weaknesses of the institute and tap the strengths of the groups and institutes for achieving the vision of the institute.

Conduct action learning

The whole institute learns using an action learning approach that is contextual, major problem-oriented, and innovation-focused. The weaknesses at the institute level are removed using the action learning approach which is a competence building, people building, and culture-building approach. For example, mentors introduce, integrate, and institutionalize the outcome-based education in letter and spirit using action learning. Similarly, research will be integrated with all undergraduate programmes offered by the institute. Research can be integrated using action learning.

Conduct search conferences

The search conferences result in the design of innovative strategies for implementing the new concepts in education. The concept of developing entrepreneurship, ethical abilities, cultural values, social values, life skills, constitutional values, creative abilities, critical thinking, collaborative skills and interpersonal skills are formally and consciously developed in students of the 21st century. The mentors develop the core competence of the institute using the search conferences.

Institutional programmes and projects

The mentors use the institutional programmes and projects to develop the core competence of the institute. The selection and implementation of the right project aligned to the vision of the institute is a powerful source for developing the core competence of the institute.

Use of social media

The mentors use the social media and learning management system of the institute to provide a canvas to institutional members to express their creativity, feeling, opinions, views, critiques and suggestions related to the core business of the institute.

Conduct group discussions

Group discussions are commonly used methods in educational institutions for resolving issues or solving problems or designing innovations. The mentors use these methods to generate new ideas, evaluate the worth of something and encourage effective decision-making. There are various group discussion methods such as group discussion, panel discussion, and focus group discussion. The mentor use variants of these methods using scientific tools and techniques to develop the core competence of the institute.

Organize symposiums, seminars and conferences

These are organized on significant issues, problems, emerging themes and areas of innovations. These are organized for internal members of the institute to understand,

develop, improve and innovate the systems and processes of the institute and develop the core competence. These are useful in developing leaders, mentors, and coaches for the institutional members in key performance areas of the institute. Along the same lines, national and international events are organized to understand the developments taking place all over the globe and share their experiences.

Conduct team-building sessions

Institutions are facing challenges, uncertainties, competition and recession in terms of admission of students to educational programmes, funds to run the institute, decreasing package and placement of students. These situations are overcome using team-building exercises to develop synergy, flexibility, accountability, proactiveness and core competence in the institutional members to make a difference. Successful teams organize and reorganize themselves to deal with any situation, prevent problems, and implement innovations. The team structure is created in the institute to deal with complex situations and achieve challenging goals. These teams are horizontal and vertical, formal and informal, and statutory and voluntary. The mentors build all teams in a context to develop the collective core competence.

Conduct reflective sessions

The reflective sessions boost up and accelerate the development of the core competence of the institute. Reflective sessions help in taking corrective and preventive actions.

Conduct cultural and sports events

Cultural and sports events tie up institutional members for a common cause. People come to closure and become a community to achieve the challenging goals of the institute. These events develop many skills in the organizers such as planning, organizing, leading and implementing.

Organize community development events

These events are organized on a mass scale involving stakeholders to contribute to the benefit of the community, environment, safety, livelihood and skill development. Collective competence is developed through these events.

Accept megaprojects

Megaprojects accepted from government organizations or industry are multidisciplinary and multidimensional that create opportunities to develop the core competence of teachers and students and improve the quality of education as a whole making it relevant and purposeful.

Encourage to attend training programmes

The training programmes conducted at the institute level for all people are useful for learning and applying learning for collective performance and developing the required culture in the institute. Similarly, the people are encouraged to attend relevant training programs available on SWAYAM and other learning platforms to develop collective competence in one go with a purpose.

The role of the mentor in developing core competence of the institute

A small team of professionally trained mentors that are well versed with the developments taking place in the area of higher education all over the globe, requirements of the NEP 2020, the current level of core competence of the institute, and future requirements of education mentor the institute. The mentors prepare the collaborative mentoring plan for the whole institute identifying the issues, themes, problems, innovations requirements and the like and implement the collaborative mentoring plan. The team of mentors performs the following roles: -

The mentors act as mentors to identify the core strength of the institute or the core strengths required to achieve the vision or core strengths required to sustain, improve and innovate the academics and research in the institute in the context of NEP 2020 (MHRD, 2020).

The mentors act as a coach to develop the collective core competence of the institute to motivate people to take out the best of their capability and develop and build their collective capability in the context of the core business of the institute considering current and future challenges.

The mentors act as a guide to make strategic decisions aligned to the vision of the institute or articulate the vision of the institute in the context of NEP 2020 and prepare the institute development plan. The mentors guide the institute to prepare strategic, perspective and operational plans at the institute level and organize the institutional resources to effectively implement the plans. The mentors guide the capacity development and capacity building plan of the institute to develop the core competence of the institute to achieve the vision.

The mentors act as a counsellor to help solve the collective problems of the people of the institute. They conduct counselling sessions for solving collective behavioural problems of people. They use mass behaviour modification strategies based on behaviour modification and motivational approaches.

The mentors act as an igniter to conceive, design, and implement innovations in the academic, administrative, managerial, and financial areas of the functioning of the institute. They fire the collective fuel of the people to improve and innovate the core competence of the institute and implement the improvement and innovations to achieve the goal of continuous improvement in performance.

The mentors act as facilitators to organize core competence development events as discussed in this paper. They develop leaders and change agents to lead the events, innovations and reforms in the institute assigning a specific role in a particular event. They facilitate the process of developing mentors for small groups with a purpose.

Suggestions

1. The HEIs should constitute a core team of mentors to conduct mentoring sessions for all faculty members and students to develop capacity for implementing innovations, reforms and change. The HEIs should prepare a collaborative mentoring plan for the institute. The plan should contain at least one activity every month for all people. The team should be able to manage very large groups of people in contact mode and online mode.
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2. The HEIs should design and implement collaborative mentoring in core areas of functioning of the institute for all leaders, faculty members, and students.
 3. The HEIs should implement the Paramarsh UGC scheme for mentoring NAAC accreditation aspirant institutions to promote quality assurance in higher education (UGC, 2019a) which is collaborative mentoring in a true sense among institutions.
 4. HEIs should implement induction and mentorship programmes for teachers of higher education(UGC, 2021)
 5. HEIs should implement student induction programs following the guidelines issued by UGC(UGC, 2019b)
 6. The mentoring team at the institution level should be professionally trained to organize collaborative mentoring activities. The collaborative mentoring activities should be drawn from institute priority areas.
 7. The mentors should encourage faculty members and students to use a collaborative learning approach during workshop practice, laboratory experimentation, industrial training, and excursion for developing higher-level psychomotor abilities. Collaborative learning is used in integrating the previous learning and developing competence in all the students.
 8. The experiences of collaborative mentoring should be documented and published on the website of the institute.
 9. HEIs should integrate reflection, audit, and feedback systems in the collaborative mentoring system. The sessions of collaborative mentoring should be professionally designed to effectively develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes in people for implementing innovations, reforms, and change in the institute.
 10. The HEIs should ensure that the collaborative mentoring programme should not get converted into a training programme. It should result in positive outcomes in the form of the development of collective competence and willingness for change.
 11. The collaborative mentoring process should result in collective creativity, positivity, proactiveness, professionalism, professional ethics, team spirit, collaboration, acceptance, adaption, experimentation, transparency, and accountability. It should not result in conflict, confusion, negativity, frustration, fear, resistance, groupism, rumour, lag pulling, opposing each other, criticism and the like in the institutions.
 12. The team of mentors should create equal opportunity for all to share their views and feelings related to innovation, reform and change and participate in collaborative mentoring.
 13. In the subsequent cycle of collaborative mentoring new mentors should be inducted into the mentoring team to develop a pool of mentors for collaborative mentoring.
 14. The concept of collaborative mentoring should percolate down to departments, programmes, classes, and individuals. It should be incorporated in the mentoring programme of the institute along with other approaches and methods of mentoring.
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