

**Editorial**

**Mentoring and Role Modelling in Educational  
Administration and Leadership:  
Neoliberal/globalisation, Cross-cultural and  
Transcultural Issues**

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Many, if not most, of my writing comes from experience, as it does for many scholars – either observing situations and events, being among those involved in these, and the many discussions with students and colleagues about the experiences they have gone through in many countries I have visited or worked in. This topic of mentoring and the related role of role modelling initially came to me shortly after doing my doctorate in a mentoring mode with Christopher Hodgkinson in Canada, and my ideas about this were reinforced when I was mentored in informal postdoctoral work with Wolfgang Mommsen in Germany in the 1990s. Since that time, I have mentored some of my doctoral students, particularly in the last few years working with several in the Arabian Gulf. It was time for me to revisit my research and understanding of this topic after going through several years of research trips, guest lecturing and collaborative projects in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, followed by several years in the Gulf learning about the embeddedness of such roles in



different societal arrangements and cultural norms (e.g., Cullingford, 2016).

The opportunity to return to the topic came recently when I attended a presentation on mentorship in universities, only to discover that they really didn't mean mentorship – but matching people with others in different fields, for mostly three to four hours of career advice sessions in a year. It struck me that what they outlined was typical of a neoliberal idea of supportive relationships that I encountered years ago in first working on mentorship in the 1990s – preplanned programmes that had little to do with actual mentorship and confusing it other supportive and learning roles of teaching, supervising, advising, coaching, role modelling (which does not require personal contact), et cetera (Samier, 2000). What I discovered at that time in researching the topic is that mentoring is a complex, long-term relationship that takes about two years to establish, forms through a synergy of personality and character, and requires working with someone in the same field who has acquired a level of mastery over a long period of time, and lasts for at least five years and often for decades. These qualities are required for the multidimensional mentoring relationship that includes not only an educational role, but also an emotional one for support and a political role in protecting the protégée from organisational politics (e.g., Herman & Mandell, 2004; Laverick, 2016). The necessity of working together for a long period of time creates the trust necessary to these pairs, and in cultivating not just decision-making and the acquisition of knowledge but exercising judgement and applying principles and values to complex work and situations. And, perhaps most importantly, the relationship is unique to the pairs working together – there is no rubric or predetermined list of activities and characteristics that apply to all mentoring relationships.

Many organisations, I found in the 1990s, had tried designing mentoring programmes but had few of the authentic criteria for it built in. Still, much of the literature on mentoring and the programmes designed do not take into account types of diversity, nor that

mentoring is an embedded construction in the society and culture in which it forms. In my time in the Gulf, I learned that formative relationships take on a very different character due to Arab cultures, expatriate origins, Islamic values, and the geopolitical conditions of these countries. There were a number of new questions that arose for me in my Gulf experience: Can an expatriate mentor or be a role model for a Gulf graduate student? Can cross-gender mentoring and role modelling be successful? Can they be done cross-religiously? Can they transcend cultural difference and social norms – is there a common humanistic set of values? Can one divest oneself of colonising qualities as a Westerner working in a Gulf context? A few of my doctoral students in the UAE had some data on these roles and short discussion subsections in their theses, so I was able to enter their conceptions to some extent.

So, I came away from that recent presentation very irritated. And then I did what I usually do in that state of mind and contacted a colleague. In this case, I (fortunately) wrote to Kadir Beycioglu, editor of this journal, about his running a special issue on mentorship and role modelling to address their underdevelopment in the educational administration and leadership literature, especially internationally. But, being shrewd and insightful, Kadir said it was a great idea, but what did I have in mind? Which of course meant writing a draft call for papers. Which I did quite quickly, needing to work off the frustration and irritation I was experiencing in a cathartic activity.

A couple of questions came to mind in designing the call for papers for this special issue, in addition to the issues discussed above. First, what has been the impact on educational relationships over the last 50 years of neoliberalism, globalisation and market models? What are mentorship and role modelling from social inclusion (e.g., Colley, 2003; Vidyasagar & Hatti, 2018) and ethno-cultural (e.g., Johannessen, 2016) perspectives? What are mentorship and role modelling from diversity and postcolonial perspectives, especially for minority and marginalised students (e.g., Grant & Simmons, 2008; Hinsdale, 2015)? Initially, I was thinking about the forms that take place in Islam, but a



special issue on this could be broadened to a number of other countries. I also discussed the idea with a former doctoral student and now co-editor and co-author, Eman ElKaleh in the UAE (some of the ideas in this introduction came out of these discussions). The purpose of this special issue then became providing an opportunity for others to explore how mentoring and role modelling are conceived, what values are involved, what forms they take and what challenges and barriers may exist.

What I found in the UAE, for example, especially among more devout Muslims is that role modelling is central to Islam and was a part of their everyday thinking - mostly focussed on the Prophet Muhammad, but also could include other well-known figures like Salah ad-Din, Harun al Rashid, King Hussein of Jordan, Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet, and his later wife Aisha. And the mentor factor in the Emirati doctoral students' theses demonstrated that for women Emiratis who were really excelling had a mentor with a relationship that went back many years. Sometimes it was someone in the family, like an auntie or uncle, or someone they had started their professional education with, with whom they kept up a long term relationship. And for the UAE, the founder of the country, Shaikh Zayed al Nahyan, is a strong role model for men and women.

While mentoring and role modelling are often referenced in educational, and mainstream administrative and leadership literature, there is relatively little literature on them in educational administration and leadership, particularly in international and cross-cultural contexts, although some literature is appearing as noted in references above. What effect has neoliberalism had on these roles, and what is the impact of globalisation? Have the incursions of business and market models affected mentorship and role modelling adversely, for example, by standardising, managing and regularising it, in other words, kitschified it by mounting designed programmes that allow little variation or depth, and may, in fact, correspond poorly to the full range of academic and scholarly responsibilities and activities?

What are the challenges for expatriates mentoring and role modelling when teaching abroad, or for faculty in teaching and supervision foreign students from countries with different religious, cultural and political systems? Is there a problem with using behavioural models in mentoring that has little content or expertise in it, or which may violate religious and cultural values and norms? Has globalisation using mentoring and promoting particular role models advanced colonisation? Can mentoring and role modelling provide a social justice aim like advancing social inclusion? Can it be used to overcome and suppress negative stereotyping? Are there security and other risks in using foreign mentoring and role modelling?

There are a number of issues related to the definitions of mentoring and role modelling. To what extent is it a close, collaborative professional relationship between an expert or very well established professional and a novice, as defined traditionally composed of professional teaching, guardian protective, and emotion support roles? Should mentoring be distinguishable from other supportive roles such as teaching, supervising, facilitating, guiding, advising, peer teaching, coaching, etc., in other words has it become broadened to such a degree that it loses its particular qualities? What range of activities and dimensions of relationship does it include? How do race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity affect the relationship? What cross-cultural factors inhibit mentoring and role modelling? What effect does the culture, political system, economic conditions, and social practices have on role modelling and mentorship? Are there some cultures and religious groups for whom mentoring and/or role modelling are more important? Do they have distinctive phases, and over what period of time do they need to develop? Are there better ways to research these relationships, and does this necessarily involve using indigenous and culturally sensitive research methods recommended by authors like Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) in her *Decolonizing Methodologies*? Are indepth qualitative methods better, such as ethnography, hermeneutics and phenomenology, or auto ethnography?



The articles in this special issue examine a number of these conceptions and patterns of mentoring and role modelling. The majority of the papers are on school mentoring in a number of international contexts. Julia Mahfouz and Sonya Hayes explore the research results on studies conducted primarily in the US on school principal mentoring over the last decade in 'Principalship and Mentoring: A Review of Perspectives, Evidence, and Literature 1999 – 2019' aimed at how necessary it is to cultivate effective leadership. The emergent themes they found demonstrated that different conceptions and values are involved, and that successful mentoring was dependent upon two main factors: the pairing in the dyads, and the length of time they had to work as a pair as well as other factors that are being used in the relationship such as digital contact. One of the main conclusions of the study is that more research needs to be done in other international contexts. Henry Tran and Douglas Smith's 'The strategic support to thrive beyond survival model: An administrative support framework for improving student outcomes and addressing educator staffing in rural and urban high-needs schools' examines administrative and leadership mentoring in US schools located in environments that are diverse and have many social problems. They focus on the 'Thrive beyond Survival' model in which principals provide mentoring for teachers as part of administrative support, focussed primarily on employee needs to improve competences, self-efficacy, and increase teacher retention in cross-cultural contexts.

A number of papers examine non-Anglo context schools. Sotiria Michopoulou, Vasileios Stavropoulos and Efstathios Xafakos' 'Investigating the existence of mentoring support to school's new-entrant substitute teachers in the Greek educational context: the role of school leadership' was designed to determine if new school teachers were receiving informal mentoring in a system in which mentoring as a formal practice is only just being adopted and how this is related to the leadership style of principals. They found that novice teachers were receiving some mentoring from experienced colleagues, particularly on the history and culture of the school and having a more

positive emotional impact in their professional development, and some from principals with a more supportive leadership styles, helping them to integrate. Ferudun Sezgin, Emre Sönmez, & Mehtap Naillioğlu Kaymak's article, 'Mentoring-based learning culture at schools: Learning from school administrator mentoring,' is a phenomenological exploration of mentoring roles and behaviours of administrators in Turkey contributing to a learning culture, Their findings demonstrate that mentoring is necessary to developing professional competencies and values.

Two papers cover a broader contextual background focussed on cultural and other societal factors that vary. Benjamin Kutsyuruba, Lorraine Godden and Keith Walker examines the formal and informal mentoring strategies used with early career teachers in 'The effect of contextual factors on school leaders' involvement in early-career teacher mentoring: A review of the international research literature.' Their focus on contextual factors in a heuristic framework that influence these practices shows how culture, political system, social structure and practices, and organisational structures shape expectations, role construction and professional development, and provide insights into further development. Marjorie Ceballos' article, 'Mentoring, role modeling, and acculturation: Exploring international teacher narratives to inform supervisory practices,' focuses on the critical role of international, that is foreign, teachers acquiring adequate mentoring and role modelling and the cultural competence required to adequately serve their colleagues and students, and the knowledge and skills their mentors need to be effective. The article also focusses on how acculturation as a process is understood and practiced, reviewing literature on the topic through major databases over the last decade.

Two papers investigate higher education mentoring, focussing mostly on the development of academics and their careers. Takako Mino's 'Institutional mentorship in West Africa: Comparing government-regulated and university-led models' explores through case study analysis institutional mentoring programmes in higher



education in Ghana and Niger, focussing on varying styles and roles embedded in policy and leadership practices as they affect protégées' agency, development and aspirations. The results demonstrate that some programmes follow a coercive strategy that does not fulfil mentoring requirements, whereas leadership-based models focussed more on agency are effective. Baris Uslu examines the nature and role of academic intellectual leadership mentoring, comparing voluntary and institutionally designed programmes in 'Mentoring and role modelling through the perspective of academic intellectual leadership: Voluntarily and institutionally' using a systematic review. The findings demonstrate that many of the rationales for both are shared, and can enrich the productivity of both mentor and protégée, however, cultural and political factors have a strong influence positively and negatively.

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#### **About the author**

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