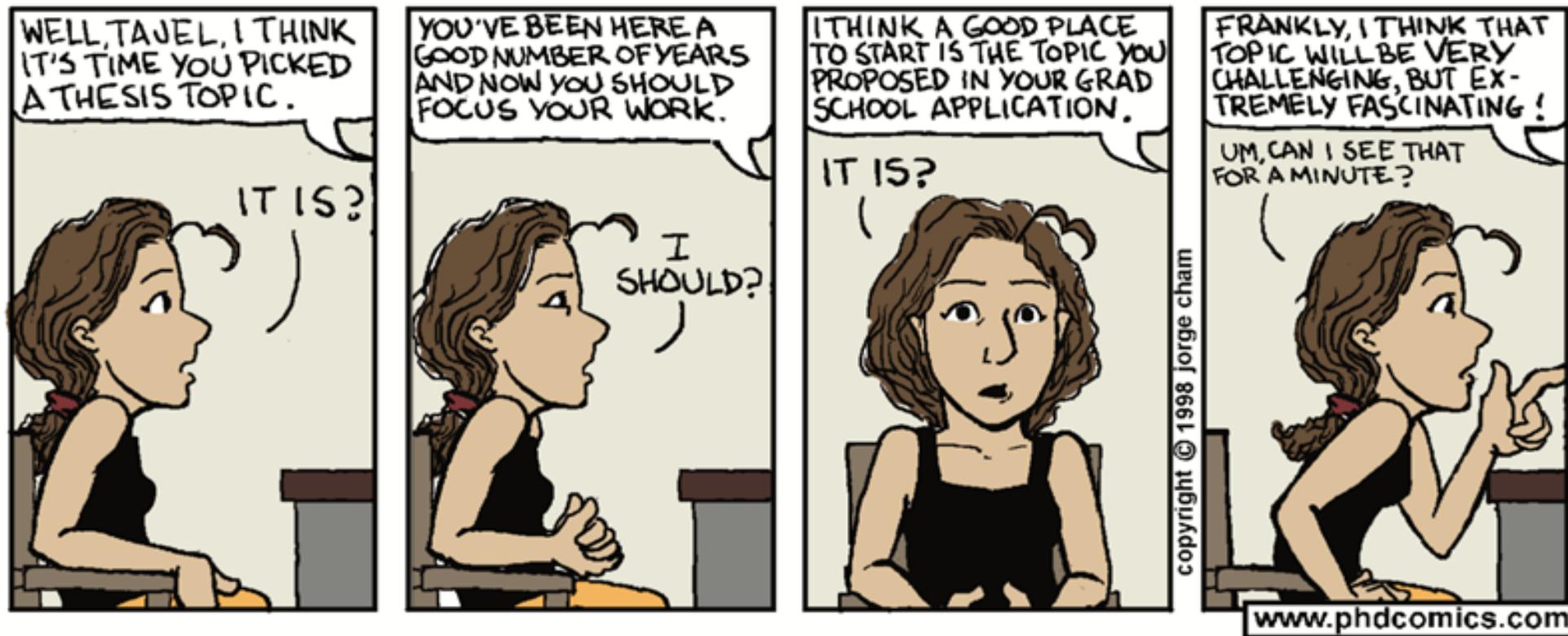




# **Mentoring Graduate Students:** *Effective Ways of Achieving Mutually Benefiting Results*

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# Does this story sound familiar?



# What is mentoring?

- Words and expressions that come to mind when I think of mentoring:
  - Capacity strengthening
  - Service
  - Investment in next generation
  - Cheap labor??
  - Spoon-feeding/Hand-holding
  - Reproduction
  - Others?

# What is mentoring?

Mentoring goes beyond advising

A mentor does much more than guide the mentee's academic progress

# What is mentoring?

- *Mentoring is [an] intricate, long-term, one-on-one relationship that goes well beyond simply providing information. True mentoring is a complex process between professor and college adult learner that supports a mutual enhancement of **critically reflective** and **independent thinking**. (Galbraith, 2003)*

# What is mentoring?

- A close, individualized relationship between a graduate student and a faculty member that develops over time and that includes both caring and guidance.

# Who is a mentor?

- According to Zelditch, 1990: Mentors are:
  - Advisors: people with career experience willing to share their knowledge;
  - Supporters: people who give emotional and moral encouragement;
  - Tutors: people who give specific feedback on one's performance;

# Who is a mentor?

- According to Zelditch, 1990: Mentors are:
  - Masters: employers to whom one is apprenticed;
  - Sponsors: sources of information about and aid in obtaining opportunities;
  - Models of identity: the kind of person one should become to be an academic

# The ideal mentor:

- Has knowledge and expertise;
- Has a passion for mentoring;
- Is personally interested in developing another person's career and well-being;
- Is ready, willing and able to share wisdom, knowledge, professional experiences, and technical expertise.

# The ideal mentor:

- Has an interpersonal as well as a professional relationship with mentee.
- Advances the mentee's academic and professional goals consistent with the mentee's interest.
- Sensitive to the mentee's culture, ethnicity, gender, etc.

# What is expected of a mentor?

- Model professional responsibility
  - Consciously act with integrity as teacher, researcher and author.
- Help students understand graduate school expectations, including the norms and criteria for academic excellence
  - Be careful to avoid jargons that new students might find intimidating

# What is expected of a mentor?

- Encourage adequate time management:
  - Work with the student on developing schedules and meeting benchmarks.
  - Share techniques and practices that have been useful for others
- Oversee professional development.
  - Not just how to conduct research and write for peer-review journals, but also budget management, human resource management, grant procurement, etc.

# What is expected of a mentor?

- Link students up with opportunities within and outside the department and university:
  - Introduce student to faculty, alumni, staff, non-academic professionals and students who share the students professional interests and who may help to foster his/her success

# Mentoring styles

Kerlin (1997) identified six styles:

- 1. Uninvolved:** Too busy. Takes the need for the student to be independent to an extreme. Does not spend much time with the student. Simply leaves the students to fend for themselves.
- 2. Laissez-Faire:** Willing to meet with students but not ready to interact with them and provide constructive feedback.

# Mentoring styles

- 3. Negotiator:** Allows the student to take the lead and provides guidance only as necessary.
- 4. Proactive:** Similar to negotiators, provide guidance on as-needed basis. However, they take more of a leadership role and use their authority and experience to help students.

# Mentoring styles

- 4. Symbiotic:** Helpful but manipulative. The faculty member is helpful but also tends to use his/her power to get something from the student.
- 5. Autocratic:** Very authoritarian style; the advisor aims to reproduce himself in the student.

# Which is the best style?

- Depends on the nature and maturity of the student:
  - Dependent students may thrive better with a directive, autocratic mentor
- Should adapt to the needs of the student and level of maturity of the student
- Depends on the discipline: fast changing or slow-changing



**Effective mentoring benefits  
both the student and the  
faculty member.**

# Some benefits for the student

- Strengthens skills in research, conference presentations, scholarly publication, pedagogy, and grant-writing.
- Prepare students for dealing with stressful or difficult periods in future careers.

# Some benefits for the student

- Helps to make students more marketable and improve their prospects of securing better jobs.
- Knowing that someone is committed to their progress is therapeutic and can help to lower stress and build confidence.

# Some benefits for faculty

- Access to new knowledge, techniques and promising avenues for research through the students;
- Inferred glory and enhanced reputation through the work of former students;
- Richer networks;

# Some benefits for faculty

- Additional collaborators for current or future projects;
- Research assistants to help you accomplish your goals;
- Personal satisfaction of seeing your students succeed.



# Good mentoring practices

# Communicate effectively with students

- Let them feel free to come to you when they have a need or question;
- Meet with them formally at least once a semester;
- Follow-up with them when they miss appointments;
- Provide feedback to them promptly

# Provide encouragement and support

- Encourage students to:
  - Take calculated risks;
  - Share ideas with you and other faculty members;
  - Be free to change advisor if they so desire;
  - Believe in their ability to excel in graduate school;
  - Write papers for conferences and journal;
  - Look for opportunities for consultancies and scholarships

# Foster the student's networks

- Let them know about what other faculty members' research interests are;
- Introduce them to faculty and other graduate students who have cognate research interests;
- Help them connect with experts within and outside Nigeria;
- Involve them as co-authors on your papers.

# Treat students with respect and collegiality

- Respect their time and intellect;
- Keep notes during meetings with them and refer to those notes in subsequent meetings;
- Acknowledge their skills and prior experience;
- Demonstrate that you are willing to learn from them

# Provide a personal touch

- Be open and approachable;
- Be familiar with academic and non-academic resources on campus that can be useful to your student;
- Do not just be their academic mentor, show that you care for them as a human being

# Demonstrate ethical conduct

- Ethical conduct in your treatment of human and animal research subjects;
- Integrity in data collection, analysis and reporting;
- Integrity in co-authorship attribution;
- Shun plagiarism.

# Case Studies

*In each of the following cases, discuss what the problem is and how to resolve it.*

# The professional turned student

After obtaining his MPH from a university in the USA, Tom returned to Nigeria and got a job with the USAID. At USAID, he oversaw a reproductive health program. To assist him with some research activities, he hired Prof. A as a consultant many times. After about 10 years at USAID, Tom decided to pursue his PhD and sought Prof. A's advice and help. He was offered admission to the department where Prof. A taught. His advisor was Dr. B, a Senior Lecturer. Very soon, Dr. B started complaining that Tom was undisciplined, disorganized and insubordinate. For his part, Tom complained that his advisor was outdated and not familiar with the theories and methods relevant to the field. Eventually, Tom withdrew from the university.

# The busy advisor

Dr. Clement is a nationally acclaimed IT expert. As a result, he is highly sought after as a consultant by international NGOs. For some of his consultancies, he uses his doctoral students to prepare the deliverables. He is too busy to mentor his students appropriately. He hardly provides them with feedback on their work or monitor their progress. Most of the students assigned to him either request for a change of advisor or spend more years than expected to graduate.

# The disorganized student

Mrs. Davis is 46 years old; she decided to return to school for her PhD 20 years after obtaining a Master's degree. She owns a private secondary school and is the co-Pastor of her church. Running her school and her pastoral duties take so much time that she is neglecting her studies. She travels a lot within and outside Nigeria. On such travels, she always buys expensive gifts for her professors. She is in her fifth year of doctoral studies but she has yet to decide on the dataset to use for her dissertation. Her advisor is suggesting that she takes a leave of absence.



# **The good, the bad, and the ugly: Personal experiences in mentoring and being mentored**

# References

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