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Organizing Adult Mentoring Activities at European Level

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Abstract

Mentoring plays an important role in professional and personal development of adults because it brings motivation for learning and assures lifelong learning premises. Adult mentoring is extremely important in an organizations life. The implementation of a structured mentoring program brings the organization benefits and motivation to their staff, and therefore growth. Even if mentors are volunteers in the mentoring process, they need to be trained to act properly.

This paper presents the arguments for implementing a mentoring program in organizations. It is also presented the FORMULA Project - a good practice example of mentoring program developed in 5 European countries. The project is promoting an adult mentoring model based on training the mentors and monitoring their activity with their mentees. The mentors in FORMULA project are disadvantaged adults. Through training they will receive the necessary tools and guidance to become mentors for others. The quality of the training courses is assured by the partner's experience. The permanent communication between partners and share of expertise are the key elements in developing a new concept of mentoring.

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Our society today tends to be increasingly characterized by differences and distances, and rarely by regular meetings between people from different cultural and social backgrounds. This often results in division and opposition, an “us and them” society even though society is founded on the relationships we develop. But it is through relationships with other people that you can change and develop. Mentoring is not just about the person being mentored, being a mentor is an experience for the mentor too. Mentoring is a double benefit, experience and learning.

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1. What is a mentor and mentoring

Mentoring has become very popular over the last few decades and come across in many different contexts; in schools and workplaces, and also one of the most popular means of trying to achieve social inclusion for socially excluded adults.

What is a mentor?

A **mentor** is an experienced and trusted adviser; an experienced person in an institution who trains and counsels new employees or students; origin - from the Greek Mentor, the name of the adviser of the young Telemachus in Homer's Odyssey (Concise Oxford English Dictionary).

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a long term relationship involving the transmission of knowledge through a link preference between two people. It is an interpersonal relationship support, consisting in exchanges and learning, in which a person invests his experience, wisdom and expertise gained, to promote the development of another person who has skills to acquire or/and professional objectives to reach. Mentoring is seen as an asset for the diverse needs of individuals and organisations, and throughout the professional lives, because nowadays linear careers, without transition or movement, for all practical purposes, no longer exist.

2. Implementing mentoring programmes in organizations

It is generally recognised that mentoring aims at supporting a person mobilize his/her own resources, to develop personal autonomy (including vis-à-vis the mentor). It is assumed that the person who chooses to be mentored is willing to accept the support of his/her mentor in personal development and facilitate the experiences of life transitions. Mentoring promotes the research and the implementation of own solutions, involves exchanges where honest communication and openness are fundamental attitudes.

The design of a mentoring training program in an organization is based on the expressed needs of the organization and its employees and focuses on aspects like staff integration, exchange of good practices etc. The needs analysis can be done in each department or by the human resources specialists.

Mentoring is a very good tool that organizations can use to increase employee's motivation, helps teams to bound and create a worm working environment. Mentoring can be developed as part of a formal program. As organized formal program, the mentoring has the advantage of being structured by tools that support the dyads, and ensures that more people benefit from the experience and skills of a mentor.

The most difficult part of mentoring programme is matching the mentor and the mentee. This must be carefully done in order to provide a successful mentoring experience. Activities carried out by the mentor together with its mentee during the mentoring programme will be focused on developing the mentees organizational culture, to better integrate the mentee in the organization's community and professional development. The personal and cultural development of the mentee is what makes a mentoring program different than a coaching one.

Mentoring benefits

To have or to be a mentor is something that is seen as an advantage for both. Mentoring is a win-win concept. So, let's note the specialist's opinion about those advantages:

For the mentor and mentee:

- Shared values, vision, knowledge, practices;
- Reinvestment of shared knowledge and creative continuity (renewal practices, innovations, ..);
- Consistency in practice;
- More effective collaboration;
- Innovation, increased creativity;

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