SWOT Analysis of Mentees for Productive Mentoring in Tertiary Education: Perspective Bangladesh

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Abstract

At the tertiary level, the mentoring involves academic guidance and self-awareness. The purpose of this study was to explore how first-semester to eighth semester Bangladeshi mentees [students] can be involved in a year-long mentoring program at a private university through the SWOT analysis. Thirty-eight undergraduate Bangladeshi students of a private university were surveyed at the beginning of the productive mentoring program. Findings revealed the majority of mentees regarded the mentoring program as worthwhile and they are very eager to know their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and   their threats as a positive start. Some first-semester students who were paired with older students had a mixed experience. Implications for mentoring programs using amalgamation of faculty, staff, and experienced mentors are discussed.

Keywords: SWOT; mentoring; mentees; productive; undergraduate.

1.Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of Bangladeshi mentees participating in a year-long mentoring program at a private university in Dhaka [State University of Bangladesh].Mentoring has been described in a multitude of ways in several discipline bases including psychology [1], business [2;3], education [4], and management   [5]. As it relates to university students, the mentoring literature base is stated with examples of mentoring as a function of career planning [6], social orientation to the university [7], and academic support and guidance [8] and personal SWOT analysis. In this article I examine how a mentoring program should start with SWOT analysis for first semester to sixth semester students, and have an effect on their self awareness and the nature of the relationships mentees established with their mentors.

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1.1 Background

In its extensive form, mentoring is the process of a well-informed person facilitating the development, maturation and evolution of another person of lesser experience. While most research on mentoring examines formal pathways to mentoring, informal mentoring can be just as impactful [9;10]. Sands, Parson, and Duane [11] noted there are four general functions of a mentor: a *friend* who serves an interpersonal function; a *career guide* who promotes professional insight; an *information source* who provides practical advice about academic expectations; and an *intellectual guide* who can offer constructive criticism about empirical pursuits. While one can argue each function of a mentor has specific utility, oftentimes faculty will engage in one approach to the exclusion of the others or naturally gravitate toward a particular function [12].

Evidence suggests that mentoring is critical early in adulthood and/or during important life transitions, such as the first year of college[13]. For most of the Bangladeshi students who are for the first time coming from villages to the capital city and leaving home for the first time are experiencing independent living as a young adult. Having the guidance and support of an experienced person can help students make a smoother transition.

As the faculty-student relationship is a primary one in postsecondary settings [14], most mentoring falls into the realm of academic mentoring.

At some universities faculty mentoring is an expectation for those working with the students majoring in their respective discipline and can best be likened to advising [15]. In this way, mentoring is an extension of the advising duties faculty assume. The relationship may be concise and not comprise much support beyond coursework planning or internship scheduling.

Research demonstrates that students who perceive faculty as respectful and accessible showed greater self-confidence in their chosen career path [16]. Students also reported higher self-esteem, self-efficacy, and fulfillment when engaged in social mentoring relationships with faculty. In many ways, the interpersonal relationships students have with professors will determine their satisfaction with the college experience [17] and sense of belonging to their university [18]. So the goal is to having students feel connected to the university by way of positive faculty interactions.

Since the mentoring relationship involves a more knowledgeable person with a younger, less experienced person, peers can also provide useful mentoring support. [12]

Authors [19] maintained, "Peer mentoring focuses on a more experienced student helping a less experienced student improve overall academic performance… [the mentor] provides advice, support, and knowledge to the mentee" [19: 122]. In their study of a peer mentoring leadership program, the authors mentioned that student mentors viewed their roles in important and useful ways. As mentors, they learned the importance of time management, team-building, communication skills and leadership theory. Working with first-year students, the mentors saw their contributions as providing a "connecting link" for new students with pertinent campus resources [19: 125] and a "learning coach" [19:126] to help first-year students persist to graduation.

SWOT analysis, which delves into a business' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, is used widely in firms and classrooms to distill fragmentary facts and figures into concise depictions of the strategic landscape. [20].

'The SWOT analysis was first devised as a business tool in the 1960s by business icons Edmund P. Learned, C. Roland Christensen, Kenneth Andrews and William D. Guth. In 1982, [21]. Heinz Weihrich took it one step further, constructing a 2-by-2 matrix to plot out the answers to the four key questions for easy comparison. Strengths and Weaknesses were across the top, and Opportunities and Threats in the bottom row. This remains the most common and effective way to conduct the analysis." [22].Few people realize that a personal SWOT analysis can do the same for an individual in pursuit of his or her career goals. So in this study Mentor wanted to reveal her goal of mentoring .

Ian Christie, founder of BoldCareer.com, [23] said that while most professionals look at their strengths and weaknesses, a SWOT analysis takes things a step further by forcing people to think about the external factors that bear heavily on the health and direction of their careers. As in the study, researcher is a mentor in a private university should know the external factors which effect students drop out and other problems at campus.

"Looking at the quadrants together can be a creative way to think about where you are in your career and the directions you could take," [23] Christie wrote on Monster.com. So mentor can take their directions about the creative ways of attracting students or mentees to the various university club or co- curricular activities.

SWOT can also help people become the best versions of themselves, said MarloZarka, co-founder of coaching partnership Designed Alliance**.** He again said "Self-assessment is a key activity in striving to achieve a sense of one's personal best," Zarka told Business News Daily. "The SWOT analysis exercise ignites an enhanced awareness of what one brings to the table in a balanced light of both advantages and challenges. Organizations roll out elaborate schemes to remain competitive as well as innovative. Why wouldn't individuals want to achieve the same level of excellence for themselves?" [22].

The implications of this work indicate that Bangladeshi private university students may need more structured and academically-focused mentoring than support that primarily emphasizes socialization and interpersonal bonding which will be possible by assessment through SWOT analysis.

1.2 What is SWOT and Why SWOT analysis for mentees are must

SWOT analysis involves identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of a company or a person. This study provides a useful examples of questions you can ask your mentees to help you to get started for productive mentoring . Since this is a personal analysis of mentees , tried to complete this independently with them first then seek outside perspectives from peer or other members of the community.

- Strengths include skills, experience, talents, qualifications, and personal qualities.
- Weaknesses are any aspects of these in which one believe he/she have a deficit that is affecting her/him in work.

- Opportunities are possibilities in ones environment, such as career opportunities, new projects coming up, time and space and opportunities for learning and development.

- Threats are the factors in environment that might limit them or hold them back.

Spark strategic insight and distill fragmentary facts and figures into coherent backdrops for strategic planning [24]." "Superior strategic insights are scarce intellectual assets that facilitate securing competitive advantages, while ignorance and strategic misconceptions often comprise costly deficits" [25;26; 27.]

In this context we should remember what Zarka said **,** "SWOT analysis can fail to be effective if it is simply treated as a 'laundry list,' without any tie-in to how the elements identified in the analysis can be put into play for the individual carrying out the assessment," Zarka. "For example, how can the identified strengths move the needle in the endeavor to achieve a key goal? Or how can one navigate a potential threat once it is identified, so as to ensure no ground is lost?" [22]

1.3 Factors Related to SWOT analysis : [28]

- ***Internal factors***

The first two letters in the acronym, S [strengths] and W [weaknesses], refer to internal factors, which means the resources and experience readily available to you. Examples of areas typically considered include:

➢ Financial resources [funding, sources of income, investment opportunities]
➢ Physical resources [location, facilities, equipment]
➢ Human resources [employees, volunteers, target audiences]
➢ Access to natural resources, trademarks, patents and copyrights
➢ Current processes [employee programs, department hierarchies, software systems]

- ***External factors***

External forces influence and affect every company, organization and individual. Whether these factors are connected directly or indirectly to an opportunity or threat, it is important to take note of and document each one. External factors typically reference things where mentors ,mentees or institutions do not control, such as:

- Market trends [new products and technology, shifts in audience needs]
- Economic trends [local, national and international financial trends]
- Funding [donations, legislature and other sources]
- Demographics
- Relationships with suppliers and partners
- Political, environmental and economic regulations

1.4 Quantifying Mentoring prospective

A SWOT [Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats] analysis of mentees is a simple and effective way of examining their own capacity and help them to identify areas for improvement. It is a method of reflection which helps to explore their practice in detail and highlights areas which are often not obvious to them . If the mentors use the results of the Quantifying Mentoring Prospective assessment through SWOT for development of mentees will be a true start for mentoring. As the result will vary from mentees to mentees so the advices and directions .It will be very easy for mentors to give plan for the upcoming months in the relationship of mentor-mentee. This study revealed future chances of some Bangladeshi diversified students so the researcher as a mentor at her university could imagine the whole process of mentoring as a birds eye view.

2.Methodology

The Mentoring Program by the slogan "Rise by Lifting Others" is a new initiative at the State University of Bangladesh among other private universities of the country. Advisors are responsible for overseeing the Mentoring Program and all faculty members of all the Departments support to the initiative.

The goal of the program is to provide new students with curricular and co-curricular support, offer resources for programming [e.g., career development, networking],career counseling and encourage personal growth . Students were selected by the department to participate as mentees. No incentive is offered to mentors, other than giving back to the campus community by helping to integrate incoming students into the culture of the university . Research Questions are attached with the article.

The implications of this work indicate that Bangladeshi private university students may need more structured and academically-focused mentoring than support that primarily emphasizes socialization and interpersonal bonding.

When I have got the answers with SWOT matrix , there were two ways to analyze the information and build a strategy: matching or converting.

Matching means connecting two of the categories to determine a course of action. For example, matching strengths to opportunities shows mentor where to be aggressive and take action. On the other hand, matching weaknesses to threats exposes those areas mentor should work on or situations to avoid, and lets mentor to know where to be more defensive of in ones position in relationship with mentees.

To convert is to turn negatives into positives — in other words, converting mentees weaknesses into strengths, or threats into opportunities. This can mean growing a skill set through education, or finding a creative way to feature a weakness as a strength.

2.1 Participants

In total, 45 students of English studies department of State University of Bangladesh have participated in the SWOT analysis of mentees for Mentoring Program. It is a starting point of the mentoring that I believe. After finding out the result it became easy for me how to start mentoring and from where to start my journey as a

mentor for diversified mentees.

2.2   Data Collection and Analysis

The survey was conducted through a feedback form and all the participant/ mentees [35] were requested to answer the questions carefully. Some Mentees do this through online form [10]. The survey had both open- and closed-ended responses to allow for a greater understanding of individuals' experiences [29]. Students were asked questions such as what their strengths and they feel about the university ,do they feel privileged, Do they think they are achieving goal as a student of the university, how effective are their language skills to meet the demand as a student of English literature and language , What are their talents? Do they think they can unwrap their talents through the co curricular activities organized by various clubs of their institution.

Quantitative responses were analyzed through a statistical software program and are presented with graphical statistics along with description. Qualitative responses were analyzed through an open coding system. Students' answers were read through one time for an initial sense of the data. Then, the researcher went back and grouped similar ideas together and finally reduced them to specific themes and categories.

3. Primary data analysis [survey findings]

Findings about strengths and weaknesses of mentees for SWOT analysis are given below by graphical chart **.** After conducting the survey I have found mixed results. It is required to read the questionnaire for better understanding of the graph.
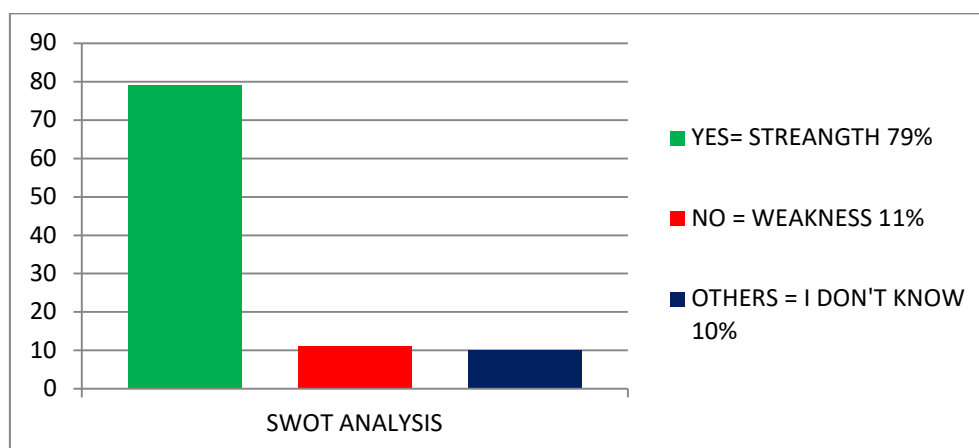

Figure 1: **F**indings about strengths and weaknesses

4. Summary of findings

4.1 Strengths of mentees

Majority of The mentees [80%] think that the university has an experienced and dedicated workforce and they are achieving their goals. 35% said there are lots of club activities ,seminar and workshop to unwrap their

talents   and potentials.70% of them   feel good when they think they are the students of the well reputed university [on UGC safe List] and they are aware of fake certificate selling universities. Most of the Mentees [65%]think that they are comprisingreasonably excellent facilities in contrast of their fees. Half of the Mentees affirmed that they are capable of maintaining the expenses .Most of the Mentees confirmed that the helping staffs and management are quiet prompt to solve any problem in campus.

 Researcher asked questions to the mentees with the view of Smith as she told to Business News Daily, "Don't limit yourself to the strengths that you're currently exhibiting in your job. List all of your strengths, even the ones that have been dormant for a while. And pay particular attention to the things that you have that your peers don't — how are you different, unique and special?" [22].

4.2   Weaknesses of mentees

One third of the mentees are comfortable with their language skills but two third of them are in challenge .They give them 20%-35% on their language skills. 10% -15% of mentees are not sure about their ability to meet the expenses and most of them are not clearing their dues. 10%-13% of mentees are not satisfied with the environment and management. 10%-11% of mentees do not know what to do with clubs or other facilities like career service section .

Most of them are unaware about the personal and institutional strengths .That's why I project the 'Others' segment in the graph . As I believe "Better instructions could mitigate some flaws [20]. And as Authors [30] intimated, improving situation assessment markedly entails replacing SWOT analysis, not merely refining it**.''**

It is important as we want to know about mentees "We often cannot see how we come across in our interactions with others, so their feedback is valuable," Zarka said. [20]

Figure 2. Findings about **opportunities** of mentees for SWOT analysis are given below by graphical   chart**.** After conducting the survey I have found mixed results. It is required to read the questionnaire for better understanding of the graph.
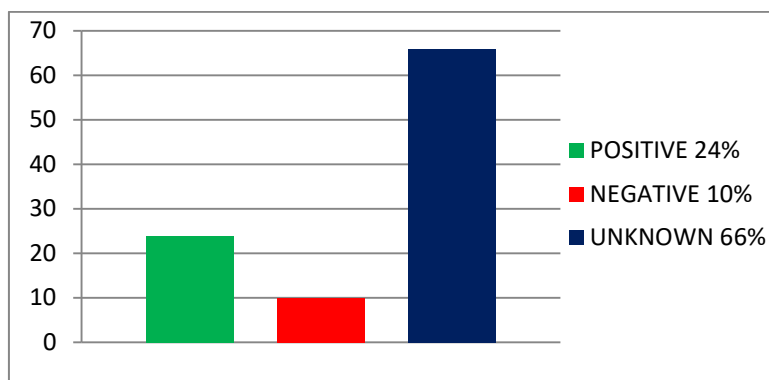

Figure 2: Findings on opportunities of mentees

5.Opportunities [personal and external]

35%-45% mentees thinks that their teachers and authority are developing new ideas for upcoming graduates.60%-75% agreed that authority help students with fund to arrange programs .Only 45% [most of them are from Bijoy campus]of the current mentees know about Career Service section,40% are unaware and 5% thinks its not helping them.70% of the mentees don't know anything about Collaboration with other foreign universities.10% think the university has no collaboration.20% of them are confused. 25% mentees are aware about alumni and what they are doing in job sectors but most of the mentees are not interested to know so they don't know. Female mentees said that they feel lucky to have Hostel facilities in cities like Dhaka.

Figure 3. Findings about threats of mentees for SWOT analysis are given below by graphical chart**.** After conducting the survey I have found mixed results. It is required to read the questionnaire for better understanding of the graph.
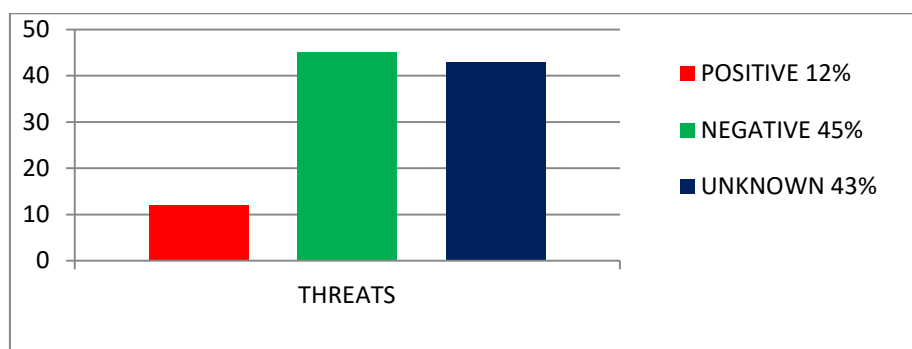

Figure 3: Findings on threats of mentees

6.Threats [personal and external]

25% of mentees gave feedback that they feel confused and threatened in comparison with students of other universities.60% of them said they don't feel any threats.15% of the mentees are unaware of threats.80% of mentees affirm that their teachers are aware about career trends so they design course accordingly.70% mentees have no problem with their mentors but 10% said they have some family issues which restrict them from fruitful mentoring, 20% of them are not interested in mentoring.35% of mentees feel they are neglected in terms of international competitions and inter-university competitions, 20% feel they lack ability to compete ,45% are not interested and unaware about such activities. The mostly agreed answer was the unfamiliarity of the name of their university among mass people and they think authority should take measure for this. 80% of the mentees who came from villages far from Dhaka confirm this, 20% of them assure that in cities like Dhaka, Chittagong , Sylhetetc in Bangladesh know the name. Male mentees feel the needs of Hostel facilities.

7.Limitations

Not all student participants completed the survey, so the experiences of the students who did not complete the study could differ substantially from those who did submit a survey. These students may have had positive

mentoring relationships or their experience was so negative, they choose not to participate at all. Following up with these students would provide another layer of context to the study. The most important thing of this survey is that the answers of the questionnaire would be change after having mentoring relationship with the mentors and the mentees. The most obvious limitations of SWOT analysis of mentees are:

- The risks of over simplification;
- The fact that vested interests can prevent weaknesses and threats from being acknowledged.
- The danger of information overload as there are no obvious limits as to what is and is not relevant.

8.Future Research

Mentors should take the following responsibilities after doing SWOT analysis of mentees of his institute for productive mentoring :

- Mentors could think how mentees can maximize the use of their strengths.
- Mentors should find out the way how mentees can overcome the threats identified.
- Mentors should suggest what mentees need to do to overcome the identified weaknesses.
- Mentors will guide how mentees will take advantages of their opportunities.

After doing SWOT analysis of mentees we could do SWOT analysis of mentors also.

9.Conclusion

Mentoring programs are useful ways to support students as they matriculate in post- secondary settings. For Bangladeshi students, the mentoring relationship can provide academic, social, and career guidance that is invaluable during the undergraduate years. This study revealed diverse starting experiences of student mentees in a year-long mentoring program. Administrators of the Mentoring Program must review these data in an effort to provide incoming students with strong mentoring matches that will connect them to the institution and encourage their persistence to degree. Providing extensive training to mentors, hosting informal and formal events, and having all participants reflect on their experience in the program will give the institution insight into the utility of the program. As the face of undergraduate education continues to change, administrators, faculty and staff must prepare underrepresented students for academic and personal success. Mentoring programs can be a bridge to reach these students early to ensure a positive university experience.

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