Faculty mentoring programme at Norbuling Rigter College – Analysis through the lens of self-determination theory.

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the faculty mentoring programme through the framework of self-determination theory (SDT) at Norbuling Rigter College (NRC). The main goal was to examine how the principles of SDT—namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are expressed within the dynamics of faculty mentoring relationships and their effects on the experiences of mentees. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study utilized semi-structured interviews alongside thematic analysis for data collection and interpretation. Participants, comprising both mentors and mentees, were selected through a purposeful sampling method to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. The interviews concentrated on the roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in shaping motivation, engagement, and overall satisfaction among mentees. Thematic analysis revealed key themes that were framed within the context of SDT principles, providing valuable insights into their significance in the faculty mentoring program. The results underscore the importance of the faculty mentoring program in advancing the institution's mission and fostering the professional development of both mentors and mentees. Additionally, the program has highlighted various challenges faced by early-career academics and has proposed essential strategies to address these issues.

Keywords: faculty mentoring, self-determination theory, qualitative research,

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thematic analysis, autonomy, competence, relatedness, motivation, mentorship

Introduction

The faculty mentoring programme at Norbuling Rigter College (NRC) was launched on 29 August, 2023, marking a new beginning for faculty community. At the core of this initiative is the professional growth and development of faculty members with senior faculty providing the essential supports and guidance that the new faculty members need to thrive in their teaching and research. The programme is designed to encourage mutual learning through exchange of knowledge and insights about the institutional standards and best practices. Building upon the vision and mission of the institute, this programme aims to help faculty members, enhance their academic performance, develop their leadership skills, and navigate their career paths with confidence. Faculty mentoring programme is deemed crucial to enhancing the academic and professional growth of tutors.

Beyond the professional development and personal growth, this programme aims to develop a deep sense of belonging and community amongst the faculty based on the belief that high morale enhances motivation and productivity. This ultimately contributes to the student's academic progress as well, and also creates an environment where everyone in the institution feels supported through shared resources, such as research skills and collaboration. Such practice enables faculty members not only to achieve their own academic aspirations but also to contribute meaningfully to the vibrant community at NRC. Thus, the faculty mentoring programme was initiated to create a nurturing environment where ideas can thrive and everyone has an opportunity to grow together.

Launching the faculty mentoring programme is an exciting yet challenging journey for mentors as they take on the responsibility of supporting their colleagues. Mentors can play important role in this programme serving as guide in personal growth and professional development of their mentees. Their commitment to nurturing these relationships is essential for creating a thriving academic environment. In this regard, incorporating Self-Determination Theory (SDT) into the programme can offers a valuable perspective on enhancing engagement and intrinsic motivation amongst the

mentees.

Incorporating the self-determination theory can provide the different perspectives in enhancing the engagement and intrinsic motivation through three basic psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness and competence. Incorporating the principles of self-determination theory can encourage greater intrinsic motivation within the mentees which can help the overall outcomes such as enhancing collaboration, job satisfaction, improved teaching skills and mentoring practices. Encouraging autonomy empowers mentees to take control of their own learning journeys. At the same time, fostering a sense of relatedness helps create strong, supportive connections between mentors and mentees. When mentors actively engage with their mentees and provide constructive feedback along with skill-building opportunities, they can significantly boost their mentees' confidence and abilities. By embracing these principles, we can cultivate a vibrant learning environment that sparks greater intrinsic motivation within mentees. This does not only enrich personal and professional development but also enhance the overall success of the mentorship programme. Ultimately, when mentees thrive, the entire academic community benefits, creating a culture of collaboration and shared growth that uplifts everyone involved.

By exploring Self-Determination Theory as theoretical framework, this paper seeks to understand the factors that contribute to effective mentorship. With this knowledge in hand, mentors at Norbuling Rigter College can refine their approaches, tailoring their support to better meet the needs of their mentees. Ultimately, this exploration aims to enhance the mentoring experience, fostering more meaningful connections and growth for everyone involved.

Purpose of the study

The faculty mentoring programme plays an important role in personal growth and professional development, as mentor provides the guidance and support that enhances the mentees' confidence. This nurturing relationship enables mentees to develop essential skills and emotional resilience which helps them in navigating life's challenges and seize opportunities with greater assurance. This study aims to investigate the faculty mentoring relationship through the framework of self-

determination theory, emphasizing the key components of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. And by examining how these elements contributes and shapes mentee experience, the study seeks to provide valuable insights that can improve the effectiveness and satisfaction of faculty mentoring program, empowering growth of mentees through usage of self-determination theory within any educational institution. The main research questions that were explored are the following: 1) What are the contributions of faculty mentoring programme to building the sense of community amongst the faculty members? 2) How has the faculty mentoring programme at NRC helped improve professional growth and development of mentors and mentees? And 3) How do the principles of self-determination theory (SDT) leverage mentor-mentee relationships and strengthen mentees' engagement and motivation at Norbuling Rigter College?

Faculty mentoring programme: relationship, roles and impacts

Mentoring is multifaceted in nature with various functions. Kram (1985) identified two functions of mentorship: career and psychological. The career mentorship includes coaching and exposure while psychological mentorship includes role modeling and emotional support. Similarly, American Psychological Association (2006) describes that mentorship encompasses facilitating of numerous emotional and professional supports including but not limited to giving advice, wisdom, counseling, coaching, and professional settings. Mentorship is a reciprocal relationship that involves guidance by the knowledgeable person and contributes in collaborative learning (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). This relationship can help improve not only the performance of the mentees but it also contributes to professional development of the mentors and enhance institutional cohesion as well.

In higher educational institutions, faculty mentorship programme is deemed crucial component of professional development. It has profound impacts on retention, engagement of faculty and the overall success of an institution. A study by Baker and McCluskey (2019) shows significance influence and contribution of faculty mentor-mentee relationship, a formalised process in which less experienced faculty is guided

by experienced faculty as mentor, to the growth of mentees in teaching and research. Eby et al. (2013) asserted that mentorship can help career development of individuals and promote collaboration among faculty which will improve the performances of mentees. In their study, Baker and Lattuca (2010) found faculty improving their instructional methods and research output under such mentorship programme. Further, they argued that faculty mentorship provides mutual benefits through interaction and exchange of ideas and knowledge between the mentors and the mentees. Mentors do not only deliver and share knowledge but also gain fresh perspectives and refine their relationship with newer inputs.

Effective mentorship acts as an agent of personal and professional development which is crucial for retention of faculty members and institutional staffs (Baker & McCluskey, 2019). The early career academics, especially who are disoriented with their roles, require mentorship thereby enhance the potential of retention (Higgins and Kram, 2001). The sense of belonging and commitment to the mission and vision of its institution (Strayhorn, 2012) can uplift the morale of faculty and strengthen the institutional capability to retain the faculty and students.

Challenges in mentorship

Faculty mentoring programme is crucial in tertiary education and academic success, it has a massive influence on personal and professional development of faculty and students. However, there are several challenges that constraint the effectiveness of mentorship. Johnson (2007) noted that communication is one of the most important aspects of mentorship hence miscommunication and lack of clarity can result in disengagement. The lack of clarity in communication can hinder the implementation of successful mentor-mentee programme. More concerning challenge in mentorship as noted by Allen at al. (2007) is the mismatched expectation which undermines the effectiveness of their engagement and level of support that reduces commitment. Generally, this issue of feeling unsupported emerges from the lack of initial consensus on goals and roles (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). The mentorship programme that does not align with the expectation and need of the faculty does not result to successful implementation as there will be lack of participation from both mentors and mentees (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

'Time' is another important factor in faculty mentoring. Especially in educational institution, availability of time is crucial to achieving the objectives of faculty mentoring programme. At times faculty are burdened with heavy research, teaching, administrative task, and other institutional responsibilities, which adversely affect the faculty dedication to mentoring (Higgin & Kram, 2001). In addition to time aspect, sufficient training for faculty mentors and availability of institutional support systems are important factors influencing successful delivery of faculty mentoring approach (Lunsford & Lunsford, 2010). Absence or lack of institutional support can lead to inconsistency in mentoring (McCormack, 2016).

More importantly, psychological factor can greatly shape the mentoring relationship. Zachary (2011) found that the new faculty feels intimidated by their mentors in mentorship programme which results in reluctancy in seeking support. Psychological factor, such as self-doubt diminishes the objectives of mentorship as mentee does not engage in the mentorship (Eby et al., 2013). On top of that, lack of systematic evaluation and constructive feedback also hinders the mentorship by not making any progress and adjustment (Tinto, 1993).

Best practices in mentorship

Effective mentorship enriches mentees growth and also contributes to the institutional culture and professional development of mentors. Zachary (2011) noted that one of the fundamentals of effective mentorship is to set well-defined goals to guide the mentorship process and framework of measuring the success, such as mentee expected to acquire specific skills, or knowledge in particular areas, or achieving academic or professional milestones. Similarly, Eby et al. (2013) also stated that the defined goals can help in setting roles and expectation which can result in productive engagement. In addition, the prepared and trained mentors can engage more meaningfully and create supporting environment (Johnson, 2007).

One important practice in mentorship according to Allen et al. (2007) is incorporation of 'motivation and engagement strategy' by the mentors as measures that help mentees to take proactive roles in setting their personal goals and areas to seek guidance. Eby et al. (2013) stated that by empowering mentees, mentees have

autonomy in their choice that results in commitment and greater engagement in mentorship.

Furthermore, mentorship programme is successful when mentees feel they are provided opportunities to develop their skills rather than them feeling being burdened. Crisp and Cruz (2009) also found that the mentees are more engaging in the environment that enable them to build their competencies. In regards to developing mentee's competency, Baker and Lattuca (2010) stated that the building a strong connection between mentors and mentees can enhance the mentorship programme. Hernandez et al. (2016) noted that the informal conversation and interaction can play vital role in strengthening the bond between mentor and mentee which indeed can instill the sense of belonging to the institution. Thus, assimilating the Self-Determination Theory in mentorship can make individual more motivated as it fulfills three important psychological needs of individual: autonomy, relatedness and competence (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

Materials and methods

A qualitative research methodology has been employed to do ethnographic inquiry on faculty mentoring programme at Norbuling Rigter College through the lens of self-determination theory. Ethnographic approach as a form of qualitative research methodology ensures studying of the phenomena or respondents in their natural environment rather than in a laboratory, allowing in gaining insights on the social interactions in a given natural environment. This immersive nature allows the researchers in the mentorship context and gain the detailed exploration of the principles of SDT enacted in interactions between mentors and mentees. This approach provides insights into the social and cultural context, thereby enhancing the understanding of effective mentorship that meets the psychological needs outlined in SDT. Thus, through ethnographic approach, this study examines an in-depth insight of respondents on faculty mentoring programme. The sampling frame includes all faculty members participating in the faculty mentoring programme at Norbuling Rigter College. This group consists of 6 mentors to share their experiences and 6 mentees to express their expectations from faculty mentoring programme.

Semi-structured interviews based on contextual interviews have been chosen as data collection method. For the purpose of study, 6 mentors and 6 mentees were interviewed through a face-to-face interview. The interview was scheduled at the convenience of respondents and provided enough time, approximately around 30 minutes each to reflect on their experiences. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes within the data. This analysis involves a systematic process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting the interview transcripts. The data were consolidated by focusing on themes that provides insight and understanding on mentoring program through self-determination theory at Norbuling Rigter College.

Result and Discussion: Academic community creation

By assigning experienced faculty members with those seeking guidance, the faculty mentoring programme has cultivated a supportive academic community that encourages collaboration and engagement among the faculty. This initiative has not only strengthened the faculty mentoring relationship but has also enhanced the overall learning experience, which aligns the findings of Crisp and Cruz (2009) regarding the mutual benefits of mentoring. While mentors gain leadership skills, mentees receive valuable insights and guidance that contributes to their personal and professional growth. The mentors and mentees at NRC recognise the value of their engagement, as they learn from one another and grow together in their academic journeys. All the mentees responded that the guidance and the support from their mentors enhanced their skills and knowledge and also inspired them to reach full potential in their career of teaching. One mentee mentioned:

> "… the mentoring is not one way flow of information and support. As a mentor I have learned a lot from my mentee such as the importance of adaptability and fresh perspectives that led me to consider in reflecting my own approach of dealing with people. For instance, through mentorship, my understanding of the various challenges faced by students has enhanced my empathy. In a way this enriches not only professionally but also

ensures the inclusive academic community"

The faculty mentoring relationship as a collaborative approach enhances institutional cohesion by boosting stronger engagement among faculty members, ultimately developing a sense of belonging within the institution. For mentees, mentor's support and guidance are crucial to confidence and capacity building, and also help develop the sense of belonging to institution.

The collaborative relationship between mentors and mentees plays a pivotal role in strengthening a sense of unity within the institution. Faculty members feel more connected to each other, fostering a strong sense of belonging through the guidance and support of their mentor. This is especially true for mentees who are new to the institution; the support and guidance they receive from their mentors greatly boost their confidence and help them feel a sense of belonging to the institution. The faculty mentorship programme is essential for engaging staff meaningfully and also serve as catalyst for retaining them within the institution. A mentee expressed that the supportive network truly made a difference in how individuals connect and thrive in their academic environment. One mentee noted:

> "the supportive mentorship programme has boosted my confidence in teaching and over time I developed the genuine sense of belongingness to college. And my mentor played pivotal role in assisting me to resolve the challenges of anxiety and developing the strong commitment to contribute college. I participated in the initiatives that enhances the academic environment and genuinely excited about my career"

Improving teaching skills

According to Baker and Lattuce (2010), mentorship programme can improve teaching skills and research output, and this holds true at NRC as well. Through consultation and engagement, mentor and mentee share their teaching insights and best

pedagogical strategies, encouraging innovative learning-teaching approaches. As a result, the lesson delivery improves leading to an improved student's engagement. New or less experienced faculty gain exposure to new teaching methods, such as educational technologies and blended learning which meet the diverse need of students. One mentee shared that through the faculty mentorship programme, he learned about various integrative educational technologies that promote inclusivity and accessibility in learning. He specifically mentioned platforms like Padlet, Nearpod, and the use of virtual learning environments (VLE) that have enriched his teaching practice.

The emotional support rendered by mentors has a significant impact on boosting the confidence of faculty members in their teaching and classroom management. As highlighted by Kram (1985), mentorship, encompassing dual facets of professional and psychological aspects, and emotional backing from mentors significantly influence mentees' performance. This emotionally supportive environment not only enhances individual confidence but also nurtures a positive institutional culture that prioritises well-being and professional development. A lady mentee also shared that emotionally supportive environment has made a remarkable difference in her teaching experience, emphasising how mentorship creates a sense of security and encouragement that empowers educators to thrive in their classrooms. Further stating:

> "the mentorship programme led me feel more valued and accepted which I feel is important in collaboration and sharing of resources. And the collaborative approach enables us to share our teaching ideas and strategies that inspire the students"

Faculty mentorship plays a crucial role in improving research capabilities, leading to greater research output. Through faculty mentoring programme, faculty members have the opportunity to disseminate their insights on research design and methodologies, which do not only support the research process but also boosts their confidence in undertaking research. Mentors highlighted the potential for creating a dynamic research culture through mentorship as it thrives on collaboration. This collaborative spirit does not only enrich individual projects but also strengthen the

overall academic environment, encouraging everyone to push the boundaries of knowledge together.

Professional development

The mentorship programme is important for personal growth and more importantly professional development for both mentees and mentors. Especially for the early-career academics, as noted by Higgins and Kram (2001), mentorship can be a powerful catalyst for personal and professional growth. It boosts the confidence and morale of mentees, encouraging them to fully commit and dedicate to the institution's mission. This programme also creates valuable opportunities for mentors and mentees to learn from each other with new faculty gaining insights from seasoned professionals. Through mentorship interaction, mentees develop essential skills such as effective teaching strategies, innovative pedagogical approaches, and classroom management techniques. For example, a mentee shared that the mentor helped in designing the target setting and work plan for the modules, emphasising the practical support that mentorship provides in enhancing in teaching practice mentioning:

> "I was little uncertain and uncomfortable in writing target setting and work plan for the module I teach. I sat with mentor for discussion and mentor helped me to understand the process and component of setting target and work plan. This helped me to structure my ideas in clear and manageable. I can now outline the steps and targets with clarity and confidence. I can now write my document with assurance and structured".

Mentors assume a pivotal role in encouraging their mentees to participate in professional development activities, such as conducting research and attending workshops. These opportunities not only help mentees connect and expand with industry professionals and professional networks, which can significantly enhance their careers. By facilitating mentees with various development programs, mentors also bridge the knowledge gap of mentees. This support not only enriches the mentees' experience but also opens doors to new opportunities, allowing them to

grow and thrive in their chosen fields.

Self-Determination Theory in mentorship

While the faculty mentoring programme at NRC has many benefits, there are several challenges that hinder its successful implementation. Over time, the relationship between mentors and mentees often declines, primarily due to mismatched goals and lack of clarity regarding their respective assigned roles. When mentors and mentees come into discussions with differing expectations, support and involvement, it can lead to confusion and frustration. As a result, the investment of time and energy in mentorship may start to feel burdensome for both the parties. This feeling of being unsupported often arises from misaligned expectations. To address this, NRC has developed a working document outlining broad terms of reference for mentors and mentees. It is essential for both sides to set clear goals, define their roles, and maintain open communication. This approach can foster a more effective and lasting mentorship experience. As stated by one of the mentors, the establishment of these foundations is a key to enhancing the programme's impact.

> "despite faculty mentoring programme guided by the terms of references (TOR), it is essential to set the expectation and goals of interaction between mentor and mentee which may also involve adjustment. I think it is important to have the alignment of mentor's agenda and mentee's expectation in which both the mentor and mentee have equal responsibilities. For now, the lack of clarity between mentor and mentee on their interaction is impeding the effective execution as it is confusing"

Furthermore, mentors have expressed that one of the biggest challenges they face is the time limitation to dedicate to mentoring. With their demanding schedules filled with teaching and various administrative responsibilities, it can be difficult for them to focus on their mentees as much as they would like. Even with a strong commitment to mentorship, many mentors often find it hard to strike a balance between their

numerous responsibilities and maintaining a meaningful, impactful relationship with their mentees. In addition, mentors believe that proper training could significantly enhance their mentoring skills. They feel that structured training would provide them with a clearer approach to mentoring, helping to eliminate inconsistencies in guidance and setting clear expectations. This, in turn, would create a more supportive environment for their mentees. Moreover, such training could equip mentors with the tools to implement effective evaluations and provide constructive feedback, fostering growth and development in their mentees while also enhancing their own mentoring capabilities. Ultimately, this would enrich the overall mentoring experience for both parties.

Some of the mentees shared that one of the main challenges they face in participating in the faculty mentorship programme is the lack of confidence when approaching their more experienced mentors. This feeling often emerges from a feeling of inadequacy and the fear of reaching out to the experienced mentors. Such barriers can significantly hinder engagement and communication between mentors and mentees. For mentorship to be impactful and effective, it is essential to create a programme that encourages engagement and empowers new faculty members, helping them overcome their confidence issues to develop their personal and professional growth. One mentee pointed out:

> "my mentor has extensive experience; I am indeed hesitant to
> disturb and take away the time which he may be investing on
> important matter. Additionally, I often feel that my doubts are
> minor issues that are not worth discussion"

Mentees, especially with low confidence and self-esteem, often find the mentorship to be challenging, particularly when it comes to approaching experienced mentors unless the mentors actively allot time for them. This dynamic can make the mentorship programme feel ineffective. While mentors are eager to support and guide their mentees by sharing their skills and knowledge, the perceived distance between them can seem insurmountable. Mentees frequently grapple with self-doubt, worrying about being judged based on their mentors' expectations. To enhance the effectiveness of faculty mentoring, integrating Self-Determination

Theory (SDT) which focuses on fulfilling the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (as noted by Deci and Ryan in 1985) is deemed beneficial. By designing their support systems to bridge this gap, mentors can help cultivate the confidence of their mentees, enabling a more positive and productive mentoring experience for everyone involved.

In a way, embracing the principles of Self-Determination Theory in mentorship allows mentees to actively participate in determining the expectations and values of their mentorship, ensuring the experience more engaging and meaningful. This results in boosting the confidence. The NRC's initiative to enhance the faculty mentoring programme is designed to improve academic performance and help mentees navigate their career pathways with confidence. Through the sharing of ideas and skills, this collaborative approach can truly transform the mentorship experience, fostering a supportive environment where mentees feel valued and motivated to succeed.

Relatedness

The principles of relatedness of Self-Determination Theory can serve a crucial guidance in strengthening the faculty mentoring programme in college. It is because the concept of relatedness focusses on developing meaningful and strong connection between mentor and mentee. Mentees in NRC also responded that they feel more valued and welcoming with the mentors who are sociable and extrovert in nature, building atmosphere of strong sense of community. The sense of family fraternity enables the mentees to share their thoughts and aspiration openly and also challenge the views of mentors, thus creating the high level of engagement. A mentor also mentioned in the interview:

> *"I realised that the extroverted and sociable attitudes make much easier for my colleagues to approach me for interaction. I found that the proper rapport can enable conducive environment within which the ideas and concerns can be exchanged between mentee and mentor. I feel that the*

openness and approachable attitude can lead to more meaningful interaction, without fear or hesitation."

In academic environment, combination of support and empathy creates a nurturing and welcoming environment that fosters both intellectual and emotional development of mentees. Mentors are of the view that showing genuine concerns for the challenges their mentees face significantly enhances the value of the mentorship experience. In the case of mentors, developing a deeper sense of relatedness with their mentees is crucial. It helps the mentees feel more integrated into the institution and more comfortable in seeking support and guidance when navigating their paths. This supportive relationship empowers mentees to take risks and grow with confidence, resilience, and perseverance, especially when confronted with challenges. Ultimately, the feeling of relatedness does not only enrich their academic journey but also prepares them to tackle future obstacles with determination.

The open discussion through cohesive environment also enables the setting of the expectations and goals of the mentorship together. Through the shared mentorship goals and without fear of judgment, mentees can set personalised goals aligning to improve their teaching styles and also learning needs of the students. The clearer direction and purpose in the mentorship enhance the mentees academic development and also lead to reciprocal enrichment of the mentor's educational experience, which ultimately promotes higher learning-teaching standard in the institution.

Autonomy

The principle of autonomy is essential for creating a supportive environment where mentees feel empowered to take ownership of their learning and growth, ultimately strengthening the faculty mentoring programme. All the mentors expressed preparedness to invest more time in mentorship if they could collaboratively develop goals and areas of support with their mentees. This sense of ownership (autonomy) enhances their dedication and responsibility for personal and professional development, making the mentoring relationship feel like a valuable opportunity

rather than conceiving it as a burden. By allowing mentees to choose their preferences, support and guidance can be developed to align with individual aspirations. This mutual collaboration enables a symbiotic relationship that not only enhances the effectiveness of the programme but also promotes personal and professional growth throughout the institution. A mentor at NRC also observed that the mentees who feel greater freedom and autonomy in their roles tend to engage more openly and initiate conservations and seek guidance regularly. He emphasised on the proactive roles a mentor needs to take create conducive mentoring environment where mentees feel empowered to approach them comfortably.

Honest and open communication flourishes in a faculty mentoring programme that emphasises mutual respect and collaboration. When mentees are given the flexibility and autonomy to voice their thoughts, questions, and concerns, it significantly strengthens their confidence in sharing their perspectives and proposing solutions to challenges they face. This dynamic not only helps fulfill the programme's objectives such as enhancing teaching skills and research capabilities for both mentors and mentees but also fosters a warm rapport that encourages mentees to commit to their mentorship roles. Building confidence through this sense of autonomy is essential as mentees navigate their academic journeys while mentors benefit from the fresh viewpoints that their mentees bring to the table, enriching the entire mentoring experience. A mentee has this say:

> "I feel clear communication is important in ensuring the success of faculty mentorship programme as it enables us to develop trust and understanding. And with communication we learn and grow as there is exchange of knowledge and skills."

Competence

Enabling an academic environment where mentees feel capable and confident in their abilities is vital for the success of the faculty mentoring programme. When mentees believe in themselves, they can approach and tackle challenges with ease and respond towards it with an effective solution. For example, when mentors assign appropriate

challenges and provide constructive feedback, mentees are able to rise and successfully respond to it, developing essential skills and expanding their knowledge along the way. It is important on the part of the mentors to instill a sense of competence in the minds of the mentees as this is closely linked to developing a growth mindset in mentees. A mentee mentioned:

> "I am with a firm conviction that the small achievement that I have gained through the mentorship was incredibly fulfilling and also helpful. It has boosted my confidence and motivation to engage more actively in mentorship to make a positive change in my life."

Conclusion

Launched in 2023, the NRC's faculty mentoring programme has become a cornerstone for enabling faculty engagement and cultivating a sense of belonging to the academic community. In this collaborative environment, mentors and mentees learn from each other, driving both personal and professional growth. By bringing mentor and mentee together, the programme not only enhances the relationships within the institution but also strengthens its overall cohesion. This sense of community is essential for retaining faculty, as it creates a genuine feeling of belonging that keeps them connected and committed to the institution. Ultimately, the faculty mentoring programme at NRC is not just about guidance; it is about building a supportive network that empowers everyone involved.

Faculty mentoring programme enhances research and teaching skills which further promotes pedagogical strategies and the use of integrative educational technologies. The professional development of both mentor and mentee is another significant benefit as they gain valuable insights from one another and also expand their professional network. However, the faculty mentoring programme is hindered by the challenges such as mismatched goals and lack of confidence for mentee to avail the services.

To tackle these challenges, integrating Self-Determination Theory into the faculty mentoring programme can significantly enhance its effectiveness. This approach can empower mentees who may struggle with confidence and help abridge any gaps in goals and expectations within the mentorship. By emphasising the principles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the programme can foster a more supportive and engaging atmosphere where both mentors and mentees can thrive together. This nurturing environment not only encourages mentees to express themselves more freely but also strengthens the bonds between them and their mentors, paving the way for meaningful growth and collaboration.

Several themes emerged from the data analysis, particularly when applying the self-determination theory. Firstly, effective mentoring thrives when mentees feel a sense of autonomy in expressing their preferences alongside a sense of relatedness and competence in evaluating their own progress. Therefore, it is essential for the NRC to prioritise the alignment of mentorship goals between mentors and mentees, ensuring a shared understanding of objectives. Additionally, regular constructive feedback and open communication are vital for building trust within these relationships, an area that currently needs improvement at the NRC. Lastly, all the mentors have highlighted the importance of receiving specific training to enhance their skills in facilitating discussions, supporting mentees' autonomy, and providing effective feedback.

Based on the findings, the NRC can take several actionable steps to strengthen the faculty mentoring programme within the institution. Firstly, NRC management can facilitate workshops focusing on goal alignment, allowing mentors and mentees to collaboratively discuss their expectations, aspirations, and desired outcomes. This approach will help both the parties understand what they aim to achieve from their relationship, which will play important role in developing the productive mentoring environment. Moreover, engaging in the open conversation about the teaching philosophies and mentorship expectation promotes the supportive environment of continuous improvement, empowering mentees to enhance their teaching methods effectively. Thus, collaborative mentorship goal setting workshop can improve the teaching capabilities of the mentees and also enrich the learning abilities of the students, ultimately improving the educational performances of the institution. A

study conducted by Rehman et al. (2024) also indicated that the goal alignment is a vital component of successful mentoring programme as it creates self-awareness of the programme and also cater the targeted professional development planning, thus, enhancing the learning-teaching effectiveness.

Secondly, NRC management also need to consider implementing the specialised training programme focusing on developing the mentoring skills for mentors, as this would be highly beneficial. This programme should emphasise the importance of providing constructive, actionable feedback and supporting mentees' autonomy, thereby encouraging them to take ownership of their learning and personal growth. Through the encouraging environment, mentees can feel empowered to take ownership of their growth and improvement. The faculty mentoring programme gives mutual benefits to both the mentors and the mentees and has a significant contribution to the overall wellbeing of the faculty members. Horner (2017) stated that a structured mentoring programme positively affect job satisfaction, professional confidence, and wellness, contributing to improved retention rate. Therefore, investment in the mentorship will empower mentor and mentee to become effective in their roles and professional responsibilities. The trained mentoring environment will not only benefit the mentee's growth but also the institution in the long run.

Additionally, NRC management can establish a system of regular reviews to discuss the progress, challenges, and achievements related to mentorship goals. By doing so, management plays an important role in creating a supportive environment that allows faculty mentoring programme to thrive. Furthermore, implementing an anonymous feedback mechanism would enable both mentors and mentees to share their experiences and suggest areas for improvement, helping the college management identify specific needs and enhance the programme. It is essential for all the parties—college management, mentors, and mentees—to promote a culture of open communication, ensuring that mentors and mentees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns. Therefore, training sessions focusing on the importance of effective communication in building rapport and trust are crucial for the success of faculty mentoring programme at NRC.

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