# The Journey of the *Principles of Adult Mentoring Inventory*

*In the early 1990s, I had finally reached what most doctoral students would agree is that memorable point when a dissertation topic is the only remaining requirement on the obsessed radar screen. I too had heard all of the stories about ABD (all but dissertation) scholars who for a myriad of reasons, had never completed the doctorate. Fortunately, of the three mentors who were significant influences in my own life and educational travels, the third was my own doctoral advisor—Dr. Michael Galbraith.*

As a teacher myself at the Community College of Philadelphia since 1968, I had gradually learned that my continuing one-to-one dialogues with students outside of class were often as important to their sustainability as adult learners as the quality of instruction inside the classroom. My own cumulative experience certainly validated what my later research would reveal—cognitive and affective

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## By Norman H. Cohen

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connections engaged in at an interpersonal level outside of class were essential factors in supporting the retention and enrichment for many adult learners, especially those from nontraditional backgrounds (Jacobi, 1991).

## Development of the Instrument

The convergence of my own life history, my professional work as an instructor, and my positive experience in the early 1990s as a graduate student in adult education led almost naturally to a serious interest in a dissertation topic about the value of mentoring for adult

learners in college. I conducted the typical comprehensive literature review, with the preliminary idea that I would collect the already available instruments relevant to mentoring practice and then design my specific dissertation project. To my surprise, after exhaustive research, I discovered that no valid and reliable scales or inventories existed either for pragmatic use as an evaluation tool by participants in mentoring programs or as an instrument for conducting scholarly studies of mentoring as an educational activity.

After considerable consultation with my doctoral advisor, I decided on a two-part plan: (1) to determine if there were core mentoring behaviors, and then, if justifiable, (2) to develop an evaluation instrument that would enable professionals to assess their own interpersonal competencies as mentors to adult learners. I really had no preconceived idea about what the research would ultimately produce, or if a useable self-assessment scale was feasible.

When the complex project was finally completed, using a large community college as the target population, my own qualitative and quantitative research demonstrated two primary findings: A conceptual model of a composite *Complete Mentor Role* could be devised based on six separate mentoring behavioral dimensions (Figure 1), and a self-assessment scale grounded in adult

psychology and learning could be developed that would (1) reflect the extent to which a mentor was effective as a practitioner in the cumulative *Complete Mentor Role*, as well as (2) identify the mentoring proficiencies in each of the six distinct interpersonal competencies. The new instrument was entitled the *Principles of Adult Mentoring Scale* (Cohen, 1993).
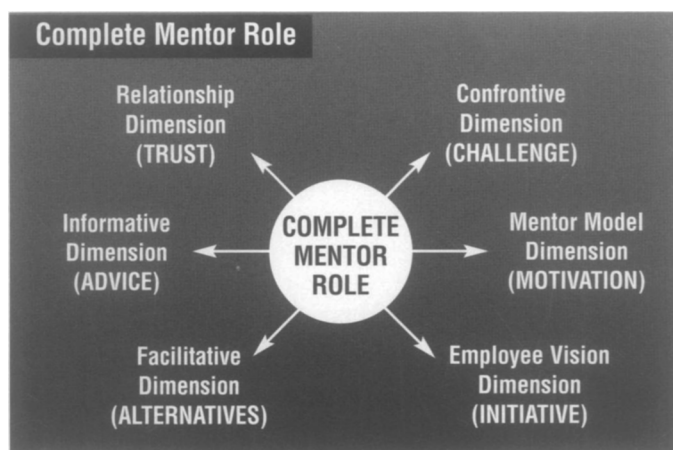


*Figure 1: Complete Mentor Role*

## The Complete Mentor Role

From an adult education perspective, academic and workplace mentoring can be considered as a one-to-one relationship in which mentors are similar to adult educators and mentees to adult learners. The two prototypes—the *Complete Mentor Role* and the *Informed Mentee* (Table 1)—should be applied as a blueprint to guide the development of adult mentoring relationships during the extended time frame typical of most organizationally sponsored mentoring programs. Although there is a general pattern of interpersonal development that will occur during the early, middle, and later phases of interaction, both mentors and mentees should be informed at the start that the six behavioral dimensions of the *Complete Mentor Role* are not expected to unfold in a rigid order that directly matches every specific action listed for that particular dimension of mentoring

Also, both mentors and mentees should be initially prepared at orientations to engage in mentoring dialogues and activities as mutually active participants. Moreover, they should be provided with the ongoing supplemental training and administrative support necessary for them to maximize their unique learning opportunity. If mentors and mentees enter sponsored programs with realistic expectations, they will more productively share in the dynamic experience of significant one-to-one collaborative learning, with the central focus clearly remaining on the career development of the mentee as the primary beneficiary. Certainly, the more aware and knowledgeable both mentors and mentees are about mentoring as a developmental process of learning, the more they can jointly contribute as practitioners to the final benefit of the outcomes.

## The Principles of Adult Mentoring Inventory

The *Principles of Adult Mentoring Inventory* (Cohen, 1998) is the centerpiece of *The Complete Mentoring Program*. Having a model and inventory to reference effective mentoring behavior as a benchmark offers the possibility of constructive change because there is an actual standard against which mentors (and mentees) can measure their own applied level of skill. Table 1 provides a detailed description of a mentor functioning in all six behavioral dimensions: (1) *Relationship*, (2) *Informative*, (3) *Facilitative*, (4) *Confrontative*, (5) *Mentor Model*, and (6) *Mentee Vision*. As already noted, a highly focused list of mentee behaviors is also offered that directly complements the initiatives of an effective mentor. Individuals who enter mentoring programs designed to highlight one-to-one learning as a central approach to their career and professional development must be prepared to assume the basic collaborative obligations listed for *Informed Mentees* (Table 1).

Reports from many who have completed the *Principles of Adult Mentoring Inventory* indicate that its 55 statements and subsequent descriptions of the six mentoring dimensions are important as a concise education in the relevant behaviors of mentoring, and not just as a self-assessment tool.

## Purpose of the Scores

The scoring sheet provides a profile of overall competency in the *Complete Mentor Role* as well as separate scores for each of the six mentoring behavioral dimensions. The range of scoring possibilities—from not effective to highly effective—is intended to offer mentors a baseline profile of their current mentoring interpersonal skills, so that they can realistically assess their probable influence on mentees. Mentors are furnished with suggestions for improving their mentoring interpersonal skills, as well as encouraged to pursue initiatives to maintain their already established proficiencies.

One of the primary values of self-assessment scores is to establish a benchmark that can be used as a realistic starting point for guiding our own career growth, whether in self-directed or more formal learning pursuits. However, for the often complex professional development process to occur with reasonable regularity as a relevant activity, most of us will need to include some source(s) of objective and balanced evaluative feedback as an essential component of our professional development plans.

A truism long embedded in adult education is that if we are to maintain and improve our professional proficiencies, then reflective practice must be an essential element of our own individual learning and development over the life cycle. But for self-development to truly become an operational fact, we as adult educators must actively ensure that valid and reliable pragmatic standards are available against which adult learners can realistically measure the results of their continuing learning projects. In the spirit of this approach, and as a companion adult learner, I invite you to complete the *Principles of Adult Mentoring Inventory* (Appendix A).

## Publication of the Instrument

After receiving my doctorate in 1993, I conducted another study at a large government agency to establish norms for another context besides education. Versions of the scale were then published in *Mentoring Adult Learners: A Guide for Trainers and Educators* (Cohen, 1995) and

*Mentoring: New Challenges & Strategies* (Galbraith and Cohen, 1995). Beginning in 1998, I published eight additional books and a 90-minute video (all six behavioral dimensions were demonstrated) as an integrated set of materials finally referred to as *The Complete Mentoring Program (CMP)* (Cohen, 2002). Several of the books have been translated into Spanish and French.

## The Complete Mentor Role and The Informed Mentee

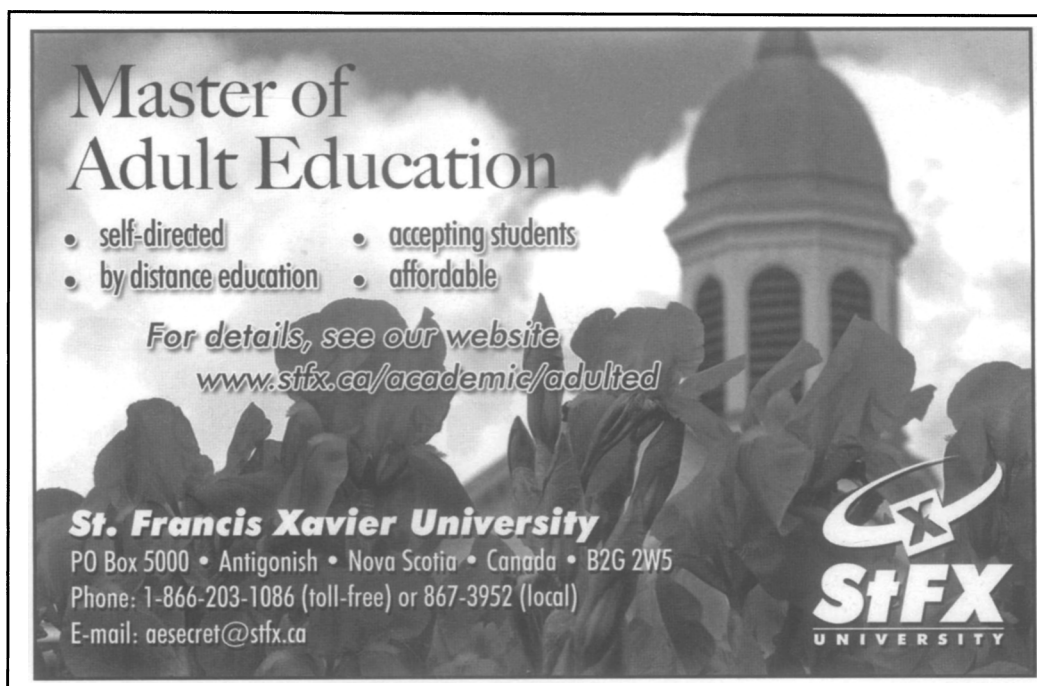| | The Complete Mentor Role | The Informed Mentee |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Relationship (Trust)**<br>• Shares/reflects on experience<br>• Empathetic listening<br>• Understanding/acceptance | **Specific Behaviors**<br>• Responsive listening<br>• Open-ended questions<br>• Descriptive feedback<br>• Perception checks<br>• Nonjudgmental responses | **Mentee Behaviors**<br>• Offers detailed explanations<br>• Expects mentor to listen and ask questions |
| **2. Informative (Advice)**<br>• Facts about career/education/plans/progress<br>• Comments about use of information<br>• Tailored/accurate/sufficient knowledge | **Specific Behaviors**<br>• Nonjudgmental responses<br>• Questions about present<br>• Review of background<br>• Probing questions<br>• Directive comments<br>• Restatements<br>• Reliance on facts | **Mentee Behaviors**<br>• Provides facts & records<br>• Expects mentor to review use and depth of sources |
| **3. Facilitative (Alternative)**<br>• Exploration of interests/abilities/ideas/beliefs<br>• Other views/attainable objectives<br>• Own decisions about career/training/education | **Specific Behaviors**<br>• Hypothetical questions<br>• Uncovering assumptions<br>• Multiple viewpoints<br>• Examining commitment<br>• Analysis of reasons<br>• Review of preferences | **Mentee Behaviors**<br>• Explains choices and decisions<br>• Expects mentor to pose options and other views |
| **4. Confrontive (Challenge)**<br>• Respectful about decisions/actions/career<br>• Insight into counterproductive strategies/behaviors<br>• Evaluate need/capacity to change | **Specific Behaviors**<br>• Careful probing<br>• Open acknowledgement<br>• Assessment of discrepancies<br>• Selective behaviors<br>• Attention to feedback<br>• Comments about potential | **Mentee Behaviors**<br>• Reflects on initiatives<br>• Expects mentors to examine goals and approach |
| **5. Mentor Model (Motivation)**<br>• Discloses life experiences as role model<br>• Personalize/enrich relationship<br>• Take risks/overcome difficulties in education/career | **Specific Behaviors**<br>• Offering thoughts & feelings<br>• Selecting related examples<br>• Realistic belief in ability<br>• Confident view of risk<br>• Statements about action | **Mentee Behaviors**<br>• Expresses main concerns<br>• Expects mentor to share ideas & feelings |
| **6. Mentee Vision (Initiative)**<br>• Critical thinking about career future<br>• Personal/professional<br>• Initiate change/negotiate transitions<br>• Respect for abilities/dreams | **Specific Behaviors**<br>• Questions about change<br>• Review of choices<br>• Reflection on present/future<br>• Comments about strategies<br>• Expressions of confidence | **Mentee Behaviors**<br>• Visualizes own future<br>• Expects mentor to share ideas & feelings |

*Table 1: The Complete Mentor Role and The Informed Mentee*

Many business, government, educational, military, community, nonprofit, health care, and religious organizations have now incorporated *CMP* into their orientation and training programs for mentors, mentees, and program managers. One program added a 7th category: the *Pastoral Dimension*. Also, many scholars have referenced the materials, and numerous graduate students have successfully completed doctoral dissertations which used the *Inventory* (version A) for post-secondary education or (version B) for business and government. Doctoral students have explored a variety of topics, including interesting studies that have used the inventories to: (1) compare and contrast the self-assessments of mentors with the post-program evaluations of their mentees, (2) analyze the importance of the amount of time spent in mutual dialogue and activities, especially in the early phases of the mentoring experience, and (3) and examine existing training models to determine the extent of compliance with the current theory and practice of adult mentoring represented by the concept of the *Complete Mentor Role*.

Mentoring as an educational and social legacy is now being restored to its proper place as a significant path for the sharing of knowledge, skills, and values in a diverse culture. With the growth of formal or sponsored programs, larger numbers of our citizens may now also participate in the personal and professional development offered by properly planned, reasonably structured, and appropriately supported one-to-one adult learning experiences.

## References

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