

Mentoring: an experience report from a mentee to a tutor

*Tutoria acadêmica (“mentoring”): relato de
experiência de um tutorado à tutor*



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ABSTRACT

Mentoring is a modality in which a more experienced person, called tutor, closely follows, guides, and stimulates - from his experience, knowledge and behavior - a young beginner in the university journey. Experience report of a former tutor and active student is a mentor of a Mentoring Program, from seven fortnightly meetings with students of the first year of the Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences course between March and May 2017. The tutor was responsible for assisting with a responsible teacher commentary, graduates on the daily issues of the University and for raising requirements of the software of the tutorials on various topics, assisting them in the process of entry and adaptation to university life. It was a moment of exchange of experiences, ideas, discussions, and orientations on themes that involve the active, professional and social inside and outside the University.

Keywords: Tutor; Mentoring; Universities; Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

RESUMO

A Tutoria Acadêmica (“Mentoring”) é considerada uma modalidade em que uma pessoa mais experiente, denominada tutor, acompanha de perto, orienta e estimula – a partir de sua experiência, conhecimento e comportamento – um jovem iniciante em sua jornada universitária. Relato de experiência de um ex-aluno tutorado e que atualmente é tutor de um Programa “Mentoring”, a partir de sete encontros quinzenais com estudantes do primeiro ano do curso de Fonoaudiologia, entre março e maio de 2017. O tutor foi responsável por auxiliar, juntamente com a docente responsável, os graduandos quanto às questões cotidianas da Universidade e também por levantar demandas pessoais dos tutorados quanto a diversos tópicos, auxiliando-os no processo de ingresso e adaptação à vida universitária. Foi um

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momento de troca de experiências, ideias, discussões e orientações acerca de temas que envolvem o âmbito pessoal, profissional e social dentro e fora da Universidade.

Palavras-chave: Tutor; Tutoria; Universidades; Fonoaudiologia.

INTRODUCTION

The word “mentoring” has been described as “legal authority to exercise the function of a guardian” and “power of guardianship” and a figurative meaning of “protection, support and defense” (MICHAELIS, 2017).

In line with the definition described, the Mentoring Program began to be developed in the United States and Europe in the 1970s and were later introduced into health courses, especially in nursing schools (BELLODI e MARTINS, 2005).

In the context of health education, mentoring is considered a specific type of helping relationship in which, essentially, a more experienced person, called tutor, closely monitors, guide, and encourages – based on experience, knowledge, and behavior – a beginner in their path of personal and professional development (MARTINS e BELLODI, 2016).

In Brazil, this modality is considered relatively new and is offered by approximately 32% of Brazilian medical schools (AGUILAR-DA-SILVA et al., 2009). In addition to the structural limitations that exist in most medical schools, factors such as the lack of qualification of the tutors and/or the lack of formal recognition of the programs hinder their implementation.

At the Ribeirão Preto Medical School of the University of São Paulo (FMRP – USP), the implementation of the Program started from a preliminary basis with internal discussions between the institution and the Center for Educational and Psychological Support (CAEP) about the process of admission and adaptation of students to the University. In 2023, a pilot project was carried out with the students at the Medical School, with the aim of identifying the students’ motivation in relation to the University and the profession, and to help them in various aspects related to the academic, professional, and personal spheres. Since then, students enrolled in all the courses of the

institution (Medicine, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Biomedical Sciences, Nutrition and Metabolism, and Biomedical Informatics) have been invited to participate in the program during the first semester of their first year (FMRP, 2017).

The person in charge of the group must be a teacher of the course and can count on the participation of former students of the course itself, involved in postgraduate programs (Master, Doctorate, Residency, Apprenticeship, etc.), with an ethical and professional model, good interpersonal relations, and familiarity with the profession, who become tutors. The meetings are voluntary and take place from the first days of the teaching activity to meetings that take place every two weeks, lasting approximately one hour, at times that do not interfere with mandatory academic activities (FMRP, 2017).

Publications on Health Education practices with students entering university identify certain periods as critical points in university life, often characterized by conflicts arising from adaptation to the environment or unavoidable choices that can affect academic performance and integration into professional environment (CEZAR, 2012).

In addition, the excerpts of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) on “Human Rights Violations in the University of São Paulo” and the “1st São Paulo Forum of Support Services for Medical Students”, which published the “Letter from Marília”, a document signed by five medical schools, recognize the responsibility of educational institutions to support the process of entering and adapting to university and the promotion and recovery of the mental health of their students (SÃO PAULO, 2015; ESPIN-NETO, 2016).

Therefore, it is important to implement programs in health courses to help students with issues related to their university life and possible shortcomings and/or inadequacies arising from this path. The essence of these programs is based on the action of teachers and tutors dedicated to intensively stimulate the process of students’ interaction with the university universe and living with the peculiarities of the new profession.

The aim of this paper is to on the experience of a former student who was tutored and is currently a tutor in a mentoring program at FMRP – USP.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a experience report of a former student of the Speech and Hearing Therapy Course at the Ribeirão Preto Medical School of the University of São Paulo (FMRP – USP), who was tutored by the Mentoring Program during his first year of undergraduate studies in 2013, and who is currently a Master’s student in the Postgraduate Program of the same institution and was the tutor in charge of the incoming students of the Speech and Hearing Therapy Course in 2017.

The relevance of publishing an experience report is focused on the problem exposed, as well as the degree of generalization in the application of procedures or intervention results in other similar situations, that is, it serves as a collaboration with the methodological practice of the field to which it belongs (IZECKSOHN, 2017).

There is a lack of published reports on this topic, which would be essential to support the exchange of ideas, positive and negative aspects, and benefits for mentors and mentees in program across the country and around the world.

The Speech and Hearing Therapy Course was created in 2003 at the Ribeirão Preto Medical School of the University of São Paulo, with 30 full-time places per year. The FMRP -USP Mentoring Program for the Speech and Hearing Therapy Course began in 2009 and since then has seen significant progress and benefits from the participants and the teacher in charging of mentoring. Currently 128 students are enrolled, and the 30 first year’s students are informed and invited to participate in the program at the beginning of their academic course.

In 2017, the program began in March, during the first-year students reception week of the institution’s seven courses. There was a total of seven meetings during the semester, between March and May. The meetings were held every two weeks, at a specific time that didn’t interfere with required academic activities, and in common location for students to attend classes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout the year, CAEP offers meetings, discussions and training to mentors and professionals at the Center to exchange experiences, debate and make decisions about

tutoring, as well as guidance on the psychological and psycho-pedagogical support offered in specific cases to students who need it. The model, based on minimal hierarchical disparity, allows for the sharing of experiences, opinions, personal plans, and daily problems, providing an opportunity for interaction between mentor and mentees, as well as personal and social support at the university level (BUDDEBERG-FISCHER et al., 2012).

At one of these meetings, the instructor in charge of tutoring raised the possibility of having a former student, experienced in the role of “tutor” and currently pursuing a master’s degree at the institution, serve as a tutor for the new class. The student in question, who had had a very positive experience with the tutoring program during his first year of study, readily accepted the challenge.

The Center’s professionals were responsible for preparing the tutor candidate by presenting the theoretical principles and foundations of the program, conducting an individual interview with the aim of verifying their aptitudes and possible contributions. It should be noted that the role of the mentor is to guide, teach, help in the search for knowledge and to ensure that the students achieve his or her personal goals. They may work individually or with small group of students. (BOTTI e REGO, 2008).

In 2017m the program began in March, during the first-year students reception week of the institution’s seven courses. A total of seven meetings were held during the semester, the last one in May. First, an informational talk was given outlining the foundations, goals, and direction of mentoring, after which the mentors were introduced and the classes for each of the courses were divided.

At the first meeting, everyone was introduced to each other. The mentors identified themselves, described their educational background, area of professional activity, how, when and why they chose to study Speech and Hearing Therapy. The mentors were responsible for setting the schedule, respecting the suggestion regarding frequency (every two weeks) and non-interference with the academic routine. Students were informed that participation was voluntary, and that attendance would not be used as a criterion of evaluation and/or academic performance. However, the benefits and help that can come from participating in the Mentoring Program were emphasized. Therefore, meetings were

scheduled on specific dates, always Mondays, for one hour, in a place familiar to the students.

During the meetings, the participants raised demands related to their personal expectations of the course and the “university movement” to which they were subjected. They often spoke of moments of anxiety and uncertainty in the face of the new and the countless pieces of information coming from the institution from their experienced colleagues – which caused confusion during the amount of academic and personal news – as well as of difficulties in organizing and adapting to the study routine and the proposed evaluation methods. At this point, the mentor was fundamental in reassuring them, explaining their experiences during the undergraduate course, the paths they’d taken and the tips on demonstrating that the adaptation period requires patience and organization and that everyone’s abilities and limitations must be respected and placed as important elements of the “new life” (DINIZ e ALMEIDA, 2006).

The mentor was also responsible for soliciting the mentees’ own request for everyday topics of academic life and personal interest to be covered in the meetings. Information was presented on how to make full use of the university’s technological tools, how to get involved in scientific projects and research, how to prepare a curriculum, how to participate in extra-curricular activities (Academic Center, Junior Company, athletics and leagues), as well as the possibilities of postgraduate studies and the role of the professional Speech and Hearing Therapy in the job market. Based on the above, a series of presentations and discussions were held on the topics listed by the students, coordinated by the mentor and with help of the peer students, an undergraduate student who has already gone through the process of entering and adapting to the university and who was selected by the Center to participate in the preceptorship along with the mentos. A mentoring experience has shown that peers at the same level and age as the students being mentored can make connections in a more natural way, broadening the students’ engagement in programs with topics of their own interest (FERNANDES e COSTA, 2015).

Based on the excerpt, it can be said that the Mentoring Program carried out during the semester was extremely important for the development of relationships between mentor/student, student/student and mentor/mentor. Through the exchange of experience

between all those involved, it was possible to identify and resolve possible doubts and/or shortcomings on various topics related to the process of entering and adapting to university.

The participation of a student who has already undergone the mentoring process through the same program brings a wealth of experience, not only in terms of mentoring, but also in terms of course has attended and is attending, where has been exposed to the same peculiarities everyday life as current students, making it possible to effectively assist them in the challenges and daily tasks offered by the University environment.

Mentoring is important in health education, especially to improve academic support, reduce the risk of burnout, and promote the development of relationships within the profession and satisfaction with the future career. The paucity of published reports on mentoring groups in Brazilian medical schools is probably due to informal processes or even to the lack of publication of formal projects that are underway or have been completed. Sharing experiences can be important in the process of stablishing, improving and overcoming them, and can help ensure that a greater number of students have access to this support tool (CHAVES, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The Mentoring Program developed in the first semester of the Speech and Hearing Therapy course at FMRP-USP, promoted by CAEP, consisted of a total of seven meetings between March and May 2017, led by two mentors, one of whom was a teacher and the other a graduate Speech and Hearing therapist from the same institution.

They key players in the process, the students themselves, demonstrated that they had benefited significantly from participating in the Mentoring Program, sometimes reporting a sense of relief from the pressures characteristics of this phase of university life. From the experience described, the mentor had the opportunity to give back through his own experience in the Mentoring Program as an undergraduate student. Since he shared the same experience as the student he tutored, the ease communication and the establishment of interpersonal bonds contributed decisively to the creation of a strong relationship of trust and cordiality among all the participants, making the Mentoring

Program a favorable environment for exchanging experiences and discussing issues related to the personal, professional, and social spheres inside and outside the university.

It is important to emphasize the need for a greater number of publications on mentoring programs developed throughout the country, so that existing programs can be better grounded, improved and strengthened, as well as the implementation of new programs in and around the country.

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