

Reflections of a novice mentor

[Business](#), [Management](#)



I have learned and experienced first hand that a mentor is someone revered by a mentee (the students I help) as a knowledgeable guide molded into wisdom by his vast experiences in a field desired by a mentee to be part of. He takes a special interest in the mentee, or his protégé, as he takes her under his wing and guides her in decision-making, attitude, behavior and specific tasks related to the field he is mentoring her with. Mutual respect, trust, understanding and empathy are values embodied by an effective mentoring relationship. I realize that learning in a mentoring relationship is not one-way. Both parties benefit from it - the mentee, for obvious reasons of imbibing wisdom from the mentor, and the mentor, for being updated on current trends that he needs to incorporate in his mentoring. A mentor must enrich his knowledge with research.

In our tutorial sessions, learning is very palpable. Motivation is high in the positive learning environment we tutors were able to create. Sometimes, the direction of learning is from the tutor to the student, other times, the student provides new learning to the tutor. This flow of learning vacillates as tutor and student interact. Sometimes, learning happens with group interactions, where each member contributes his or her own learning. Such learning is internalized when the learner is on his own and does his own individual learning. I learned from my readings of Vygotsky's principles that interactions are likely to go through a process called intersubjectivity. This is when two people are engaged in a task and begin from different understandings but with interaction, comes to an agreed, shared understanding. I have experienced this many times when explaining some difficult concepts to my tutees. At first, we initially debate opposite

arguments but upon more understanding of the concept because of listening to each other's opinions, we end up seeing the concept in one direction. I try to be patient considering our cultural differences, and sometimes the language barrier gets in the way. However, if I persist hard enough, I do get through to them no matter how long and difficult it takes.

With the students, I helped, and the limited time I spent with them, I gained insights into how much a teacher does and can do. Initially, I felt inadequate as a tutor when first faced with a heterogeneous group. However, I realized that taking cues from the girls' behaviours and following their lead were good indicators that I was on the right track.

I know as a mentor, I have to develop patience, since some students can be very challenging. Misbehaving students and those who have much difficulty understanding the subject matter may easily inflame anyone's temper but I know that I have to keep a calm demeanor and handle such challenging situations with integrity and grace. I should always remember that as a role-model, I have to exhibit positive character that my students can emulate. I believe the most important thing that I learned from this experience is to respect students' ideas and way of learning. My initial feelings of inadequacy led me to take cues from them, and I realized that in doing so, I can be more successful in establishing better rapport with them.