

Best Practices in Designing a Mentoring Programme for Soft Skills Development

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Abstract : The main objective of the study was to design a mentoring programme aimed at developing the soft skills of mentors. The mentors are all employed by a multinational corporation. The company had a mentoring plan in place that it did not yield the required results, especially related to the development of soft skills. This prompted the researchers to conduct an extensive literature review followed by a mixed methods approach to ascertain the best practices in developing the soft skills of mentors. The outcomes of the study led to the development of a structured mentoring programme using 25 modules to be completed by mentors. The design incorporated a blended modular approach using both face-to-face teaching and teaching supported by Information Communication Technology (ICT). Blended learning was ideal as the ICT component helped to minimise instructor-mentor physical contact as part of the health measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. The blended learning approach also allowed instructors and mentors an online or offline mode, so that mentors could have more time for creative and cooperative exercises. A range of delivery methodologies were spread out across the different modules to ensure mentor engagement and accelerate mentor development. This included: concept development through in-person instructor-led training sessions, concept development through virtual instructor-led training sessions, simulations and case studies, e-learning, role plays and interactive learning using mentoring toolkits; and experiential learning through application. The mentor development journey included formal modular competency assessments. All modules contained post-competency assessment consisting of 10 questions (comprising of a combination of explanatory questions and multiple-choice questions) to ensure understanding and deal with identified competency gaps. The minimum pass mark for all modular competency assessments was 80%. Mentors were allowed retake the assessment if they scored less than 80%, until they demonstrated understanding at the required level.

Keywords : mentor, mentee, soft skills, mentor development, blended learning, modular approach

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