

Book Review:

Cases on Online Tutoring, Mentoring and Educational Services Practices and Applications

By Gray A. Berg

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IN this book the growth and development of mentoring and tutoring techniques from kindergarten to doctorate is briefly surveyed by the authors. This book is organized into fifteen chapters. The first chapter explains in brief about the telementoring for K-12 students and teachers, where chapter two and three briefs about pre college E-Mentoring system. Chapter four clarifies the new era for mentoring system by connecting the professionals as mentors and mentees from some of the most economically and geographically isolated communities. Next generation mentoring system which has the capabilities to mentor online was surveyed in chapter five and six. From the chapter seven E-Mentoring systems using social software was introduced. The later chapter gives the brief explanation about the community based Mentoring system for emerging doctoral culture. In chapter ten titled "Writing a Dissertation – university of phoenix style" emphasizes the writing and learning style to complete doctorate degree program successfully was discussed. Different methods and techniques for online tutoring are introduced in chapter eleven and twelve. The art of giving options to learners with collaborative method is discussed in detail at chapter thirteen and fourteen. Finally the application of E-Tutoring is briefly discussed in chapter fifteen. Each of the chapters more concise details are as follows.

Chapter 1 discusses about the telementoring for K-12 students and teachers. The author surveyed the methods used for mentoring at electronic "emissary service". It is a Web-based service that assists teachers and students with mentors located at different locations who is professionals in different disciplines, connects them for curriculum based learning. It has been started to serve teachers and students since February 1993 and on online since December 1995. The majority of the discussion is about E-mentoring basics, methods, supports, facilitation and integration. When using this services the challenges arise by the teachers and the solution to solve such problems are discussed in detail with sample

telementoring projects. The impact on teacher who has got expertise when working in mentor's project makes this chapter more interesting at the end.

An E-Mentoring network for science and engineering is given in chapter 2. An understating of MentorNet for e-mentoring to college and university, especially with a focus on few majors in science and engineering are discussed in this chapter. MentorNet was started in 1997 by Muller. It was a great success which has around 25,000 members from 200 campuses and mentors representing more than 2000 employers which supports 6000 mentors per year. The technology platform was developed to serve teachers to choose the mentors. There were few intelligent algorithms which refines appropriate set of mentors to those who queries to their related field. Not only the system search for mentors but also it supports numerous functionalities like administrative dashboard which is used to track the participation of mentors, Library that has collections of journal articles, conference papers, white papers, Communications which used to broadcast MentorNet's work, research, newsletters, reports, Forum for mentors and teachers to compare and share practices and issues. The author emphasizes the challenge face by the MentorNet in the terms of development related to cost, since the complete service is free.

Chapter 3 discusses about Girls E-mentoring in science, Engineering and technology (GEM-SET). In this chapter author more deeply explains about women in science and engineering (WISE) and women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). All the students are provided free subscriptions to GEM-SET digest in which they can access to scholarships and internships information, direct access to mentors and tutoring in some selected school. The student who participates in this program has the benefits of expanding network skills, learning how to effectively mentor and be mentored, and expertise in the field of their interest. In the last section of this chapter author briefed the discussion of student

services provided by GEM-SET like WISE learning community, WISE undergraduate mentoring program, and WISE women in nanotechnology (WIN).

Chapter 4 introduces the history and evolution of iMentor. It is an online service founded by Griffin in 1990. iMentor was later upgraded as a web based tool, including front end communication tool for mentors and mentee pairs to structure their relationships and extensive tool for staffs to manage the program on the back end. After five years of development iMentor system becomes the best-of-web-innovations that allows any organization to have independent, secure, and safe mentoring system. It was launched as a national initiative in late 2007. Though lot of tools supports in iMentor system, the developers made it as commercial system. In this chapter the tools provided by the iMentor system is explained along with the utilization of mentors and mentees. Current challenge faced by iMentor system is that to increase and maintain the quality of the system. This achieved by quality recruitment and to prevent staff from burnout through growth phase.

To increase the dropout rate of school students, the next generation of mentoring system was introduced in chapter 5. The author briefed about “icouldbe.org” mentoring programs in this chapter. This program is to mentor the young people who do not have access to quality education resources. icouldbe.org provides an immense platform to connect mentors who offer practical and individualized advice, information and expertise. To ensure security and privacy the icouldbe.org introduce a password login system where the mentors and mentees are able to login for their usage. The author explains about how e-mentoring can change the dimension of the world at middle section of the chapter along with the curriculum process used in icouldbe.org program. The challenges faced by the icouldbe.org program is discussed in last section of the chapter which emphasis the security issues and continuous up-gradation process of the system.

Solving the problem of mentor system in lacking of high profile mentors in the local region is briefed in chapter 6. The author surveyed the issues and challenges related to online distance mentoring system in this chapter. The case study was presented on online distance mentoring for urban regions in Greek to transfer pieces of valuable expertise. The goal of this project is to bridge the gap between urban and cosmopolitan mentoring methods. The new E-mentoring approached was introduced with new forms of teaching material. Architecture for complete E-mentoring system was developed including network communication examples. Evaluation of this work was done with the number of efficient users in this system. Finally the challenges that are face by this project are exemplified at the last section of this chapter.

Chapter 7 discusses about the peer-to-peer E-Mentoring system using social network. In this context the author briefed about education methods introduced in Australian Catholic University (ACU). There are six colleges operated under the ACU group of education. Among the six colleges, Canberra campus was dedicated for giving the graduate diploma program

in education. It was started in the year of 2005; currently there were approximately 800 undergraduate and 200 graduate students. In this program the student teaches commence exemplary lessons in theory of educating students, assisting students and evaluating their own talents. In the year 2007 first time in E-mentoring history ACU introduce peer-to-peer teaching methods at school. In their studies they used social software in the form of collaborative web logging which similar to blogging. The voice discussion tool is also integrated along with web logging. This makes the students to have more interaction with the mentors.

The art of developing the creative writing skills under UCLA extension writers program was case studied by the author in chapter8. The main aim of this program is to provide best mentoring method for those who interested in develop writing skills. Method of providing feature film mentorships was introduced in this program in which the students are provided virtual internship at production companies and studios as script readers. In the start of this chapter the authors surveyed the background and the history of UCLA extension writers program and then how the writers program successfully delivers the e-mentoring for global students is briefed. At the mid sections of this chapter the author explains about tools that provides for personalized feedback and methods to develop individual writers in global literary and entertainment communities. Finally this chapter is concluded with challenges face by the developer and future direction is exemplified.

Designing of an online community of practice to support an emerging doctoral culture faced at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) was discussed in the chapter9. In literature review a few proposed methods that solve the similar issues and solution was discussed. The aim of this development program is to provide an environment in which faculty and students interact regularly in both formal and informal manner. This is achieved by providing office space for part time doctoral students near mentor professors. By this method the students and mentors work together in both formal and informal ways.

Chapter 10 briefs about the overview program of doctoral course at the School of Advance Studies at the University of Phoenix. In this chapter the author discuss about the knowledge, basic requirement and course structure for doctoral student. The philosophical knowledge need to know by the student for their successful completion is also succinct in this chapter. Complete course structure is designed and mentored in online for those who pursue doctoral program. In the middle section of this chapter the author emphasis about the role of each person involving this program. The eight week long course where taken for the student in “how to write dissertation” was explained in the last sessions of this chapter.

Chapter 11 gives the detailed study of leading United States online learning center provided by Smarthinking. It is an online learning center where many online learning courses like general education, degree-specific, etc are provided for students. Smarthinking operates similar like call center where

the professionals in and around the globe mentors 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. In this chapter the author briefly discussed about the background technology, technology challenge and concepts of online training of Smarthinking. The core technology of Smarthinking is they use virtual whiteboard which allows the students and mentors to collaborate in virtual space in both synchronized and unsynchronized manner.

Online tutoring through VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) was explained in chapter 12. The author of this chapter invented and patented this method of tutoring technology. Similar concept to chapter 11 was discussed in chapter. The tutoring was achieved through virtual whiteboard where the students and teachers can login to virtual whiteboard for their homework help or skill-gap tutoring with instant text messaging method. The author gives the usefulness, importance and effectiveness of online tutoring in the middle section of this chapter with some security issues in online tutoring.

Chapter 13 demonstrates the methods of commercial tutoring provided by Sylvan learning centers. It is an internet based service provides individualized academic support as the centers. Sylvan learning gives the full access of education without concerning about the geographical locations. The author of this chapter explains about the methods and technology background to Sylvan. The more interactive methods are demonstrated by the author in the mid sessions of this chapter. The elaborated methods of successful attributes that Sylvan has created is detailed in this chapter including (a) staff, training, and support (b) staff to participant ration (c) Curriculum and instructional techniques (d) Consistency and alignment with school curriculum (d) Appropriate content for age and skill level and (e) Use of multiple methods to reach different types of learners. At the end of the chapter the author gives the research evaluation of Sylvan online where it proves statistically that academic performance was increase when using such online tool.

Globally distributed inter-culture course is observed with collaborative reflection was discussed in chapter 14. The author briefly explored the techniques used for collaborative inter-culture reflective practice with multiple tutors sharing an online journal with other tutors throughout the globe. By this means the facilitation and structure which supports reflective dialogs in inter culture globally distributed teams. In the middle section of this chapter the author explains which an real time example that used currently in e-China Inter cultural Pedagogy Research Project based at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. Finally at the end of the chapter the challenge faced by the collaborative reflection is discussed.

Chapter 15 discusses the application of e-tutoring and its inference in Indian National Open University. The author explained about the Indian education standard since the year of independence and also importance of e-education in earlier section in this chapter. Course offered and e-tutoring methods and education structure in Indira Gandhi Open University (IGNOU) was briefed in mid-section of this chapter. In later sections the growth of usage of internet and telephone

subscriber in India was strategically given. Finally the e-learning development with respect to IT growth is demonstrated.

In summary, this book provides valuable and comprehensive discussion for online tutoring and educational services, while keeping the focus on the real-world cases. The author manages to maintain the balance between coverage in the preliminary learning to higher education. Admittedly, the book does not seem to be designed for a handy resource for educators seeking quick solutions or strategies for coping with problems in their workplaces. Rather, it would serve as an inspiring guide to explore under-researched areas in the online educational services. Working as an academic myself, I found the book to be useful and usable for my own undertaking in enriching the education in college level. I am confident that the education professionals, educational leaders, academics and those who are interested in changing education landscape in general will find resonance with the author's perspectives.