
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Mentees' Needs from a Mentoring Program: Towards the Development of a Mentoring Toolkit

Amabel Tangco-Siason¹✉, Jan Iris Faye Magramo-Basbas², Hilda Clavel Montaña³, Rosemarie Galvez-Felimon⁴, Catherine Ortizo-Roces⁵ and John Erwin Prado Pedroso⁶

¹²³⁴⁵⁶*West Visayas State University, La Paz, Iloilo City, Philippines*

Corresponding Author: Amabel Tangco-Siason, **E-mail:** atsiason@wvsu.edu.ph

| ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find out mentees' needs from a mentoring program, mentor characteristics that are considered desirable by mentees, and to develop the mentoring toolkit. It was based on a developmental research design. Through purposive or selective sampling, it involved eight (8) informants. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and mentoring chat records were used to collect data, which was then analyzed using NVivo Software under the guidance of the qualitative content analysis technique. A duly-validated researcher-made instrument was used to evaluate the toolkit's acceptability. Mentees' needs included study abilities, thinking skills, resource management, teaching skills, personal and family concerns, and articulated mentors' desirable characteristics, according to part one (1) of this study. The five (5) components of the toolkit that was developed were listed in the second (2) portion of this study. Targets, Ideas, Plans, and Supplements were the four (4) parts of the toolkit. The toolkit also includes six (6) mentoring blocks, and the physical attributes, objectives, content, usefulness, and self-help aspects of the toolkit were all evaluated outstanding ($M = 3.92$). Mentoring programs are useful in determining the needs of mentees as well as providing a basis for developing materials that are useful to both mentors and mentees.

| KEYWORDS

Mentees' Needs; Mentoring Program; Mentoring Toolkit; NVivo Software;

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1. Introduction

Mentoring originated in Homer's *Odyssey*, a Greek epic in which Odysseus entrusts his son Telemachus to Mentor, a friend, to assist in the boy's upbringing while he was away at war with the city of Troy. As a result, the modern word "mentor" stems from Homer and refers to a process in which a mentor guides and protects another (Agholor et al., 2017; Gee & Popper, 2017). Since then, mentoring has been extensively studied, as shown by the abundance of research studies and popular literature available to us in recent decades (Dada, 2020). It has become a hot topic in business, academia, and other fields over the last few decades (Gee & Popper, 2017). Mentoring has recently been studied as a crucial human resource management technique, a career tool, and a workplace learning activity (Ehrich and Hansford, 1999; Dada, 2020). McKinsey (2016) pointed out that literature was scarce on student mentorship by faculty, and most of what has been written conflates mentoring with teaching. Law et al. (2020) clarified that mentoring programs hold the potential to be part of a university's strategic plan to help students be successful. University mentoring programs that include formal mentoring; recruiting and selecting mentors; matching mentor and mentee; mentor training; setting of appropriate boundaries; and establishing the frequency of interaction between mentor and mentee (Campbell, 2008; Law et al., 2020) became powerful means of enhancing the professional success and personal well-being of faculty members (Sorcinelli et al., 2016), which can also benefit students. While students became major recipients of effective mentorship programs, scholarly works overlooked to explore mentees' needs which go beyond what we ordinarily expect from classroom teaching (McKinsey, 2016) aside from the desirable characteristics of mentors as role models (Thiry & Laursen, 2011; DeAngelo, Mason, & Winters, 2016; Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford, Pifer, 2017; Law et al., 2020).

Some research points to the need for a mentoring program. According to Hudson et al. (2015), the Philippines, despite having created guides for use by faculty in field study courses and preservice teaching, still needs to build systematic mentorship strategies to maximize its educational potential. Moreover, close student-faculty engagement is a critical determinant in college student learning and success, according to educational research. The majority of research on undergraduate mentoring, on the other hand, focuses on structured mentoring programs for specific groups of students by non-faculty professionals or student peers (McKinsey, 2016). In the case of preservice and beginning teachers, mentorship programs can assist them in meeting the demands of the profession and adjusting to their new work environment (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). According to Lyons (2012), a variety of factors influence students' disengagement from mentoring. Mentor-mentee connections, students' desire for independence, time constraints, mentoring practices, and non-registration for the semester all have an impact on mentoring participation in a study conducted in the United States. Moreover, Andersen and West (2020) published a study on improving mentoring in undergraduate education that included information on retention, perseverance, long-term advantages of mentoring, student engagement, student support, role models, types of mentoring programs, mentoring platforms, and mentor training.

The Philippine Business for Education (PBE) implemented the Scholarships for Teacher Education Programs to Upgrade Teacher Quality in the Philippines (STEP UP) in December 2014 to attract the best and the brightest students to join the teaching ranks to improve the image and quality of the teaching profession. The Australian government is funding this scholarship campaign as part of the Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) program, which aims to produce high-quality teachers who are ready to work in public schools. Free tuition and ancillary costs, monthly personal and dormitory allowances, semester book and uniform allowances, basic health aid, graduation fees, Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) review support, and a mentoring package are all part of the scholarship package (PBE, n.d.).

Through the STEP UP Mentoring in Life-long Education (SMILE) Program, scholars were allocated a mentor with whom they were required to have monthly mentoring sessions, either individually or as a group. The mentor develops a mentoring plan based on the STEP UP scholar's needs assessment, stated goals, and objectives for the year. This plan serves as a framework and overarching guide for mentoring activities, notably training and development workshops, in which both the scholar and the mentor have action steps to achieve goals in academics, personal development, and career exploration.

PBE takes pride in being the first and only organization in the Philippines to offer a scholarship program that also incorporates mentoring. Is this strategy capable of providing students with tangible and long-term benefits that will aid their academic and personal success? Advocates for the program think that the mentors' supervision and assistance will produce more competitive and efficient teachers who will live up to the organization's slogan "The Best, Teach." As a first-of-its-kind initiative in the Philippines, a research study along these lines will assist stakeholders in strengthening future mentoring programs. As a result, this research was carried out to shed light on the mentees' needs via the lens of a mentoring program, and eventually, the creation of a mentoring toolbox.

Towards improving the mentoring program, the researchers found that the needs and concerns of the scholars are rich sources of ideas for developing mentoring materials to help improve the program. In this context, toolkits, also known as toolbox in this study, are collections of flexible and adaptable educational resources that focus on a single subject or audience (Monroe, 2000). Furthermore, toolkits are a collection of adaptable resources that allow people to learn about various difficulties and find practical solutions to them. Thus, a mentoring material, TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholar, was developed. Likewise, they were intended to be simple to use for practitioners, to provide direction without being prescriptive, to be adaptable and clear to tailor to the local environment, to provide a complete repository of relevant materials, and to provide verifiable value to users (Conole & Fill, 2005). This two-part research project sought answers to the following research questions:

Part I. Mentees Needs

1. What are the needs and concerns of scholars as revealed by the Mentoring Program?
2. What mentor characteristics are considered desirable by the mentees?

Part II. Development and Evaluation of the Toolkit

3. What mentoring modules were developed and included in the TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars?
4. What is the level of acceptability of TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars?

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design

A developmental research design was used to describe the needs and concerns of the different scholars. It was anchored on constructivist epistemology, which sought to explore what has assumed a socially constructed reality through a detailed description of an event under investigation (Pedroso, 2021; Pedroso, Siason, & Siason, 2021). The development of the toolbox followed the analyze-design-develop-implement-evaluate steps (ADDIE model) with revisions (Kurt, 2018) along the process.

2.2. Informants

To identify the informants, purposive or selective sampling technique (Jones, 2020; Brown, 2019; Holloway, 2013; Domingo, 2018; Pedroso, 2021; Pedroso, Siason, & Siason, 2021) was adopted. Referrals were made by mentors to identify initial informants. The set of final informants was composed of eight (8) STEP UP scholars under the teacher education scholars from West Visayas State University-College of Education for the school year 2016-2017. Variations in terms of programs were considered. That is, two (2) scholars from each of the following year levels and programs were included in the sample: 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year, and Diploma in Teaching program. After the profile of all STEP UP scholars was determined, the final set of informants was chosen. Based on the profile, they were diverse in terms of sex, curriculum year level, and course or area of specialization. Most importantly, the informants were those who agreed to take part in the research. Since the study also aimed at gathering data on mentor characteristics, the researchers also considered that the informants were assigned to different mentors.

In the development of TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars, the researchers were also the developers of the different mentoring modules. On the other hand, three jurors evaluated the toolbox. Two are doctorate holders in education, majoring in Psychology and Guidance and one has a doctorate in education major in Curriculum Development. One of the three served as a former mentor of the STEP-UP scholars.

2.3. Data Collection

Data on the needs and concerns of scholars as well as mentor characteristics were gathered primarily through a series of focus group discussions (FGD) which was scheduled based on the scholars' availability and most convenient time. Two (2) FGDs that lasted for at least two (2) hours were conducted. The FGD sessions were attended by the different informants and assisted by the mentors. Voice recording was employed for easy handling of the oral proceedings. Additional supporting data were taken from the mentoring chat records and notebooks. Open-ended questions relating to the needs and concerns of scholars were raised, which also made the informants open to sharing their ideas. The informants spoke in a dialect and in English in their FGD. No one else except the researchers had access to the data shared by the informants. Thus, confidentiality was upheld. Data collection lasted for six (6) months.

In evaluating the acceptability of the materials developed, a duly-validated researcher-made instrument was adapted (2019, in Siason, 2021) as it was appropriate for the nature of the material under review. This instrument highlighted the following criteria: a) physical attributes; b) objectives, c) content; d) usefulness; and d) self-help features. The scale that follows was used to rate the different items included in each criterion.

Responses	Point/s	Interpretation
Strongly Agree	4	Exceeds the set criteria
Agree	3	Meets the set criteria
Disagree	2	Below the set criteria
Strongly Agree	1	Does not meet the set criteria

2.4. Data Analysis

The voice recorded sharing of the informants in the FGD and transcripts from the mentoring chat records were transcribed and electronically stored for easy access. With the use of NVivo Software, themes were easily identified aside from being guided by the qualitative content analysis technique of Hsieh and Shannon (2005). Although they are not intended for generalization, the themes were vital for the development of mentoring modules for TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars.

In analyzing the acceptability of the TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars, the scale that follows was used. Mean was used to describe the acceptability of the toolkit.

Scale	Description	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	Outstanding	The toolkit is excellent for mentor and scholar use.
2.51-3.25	High	The toolkit is adequate and appropriate for mentor and scholar use.
1.76-2.50	Moderate	The toolbox is inadequate but has some components that can be appropriate for a mentor and scholar to use
1.0-1.75	Low	The toolkit is inadequate and inappropriate for mentor and scholars use

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Part 1. Needs and Concerns of Mentees

The data collected from the informants and documents showed that concerns of the scholars pertain to study skills, teaching skills, self-awareness and personal development, resource management, and personal and family concerns. Figure 1 shows that study skills are the most frequently shared among the concerns. On the other hand, personal and family concerns have the least occurrence in the data.

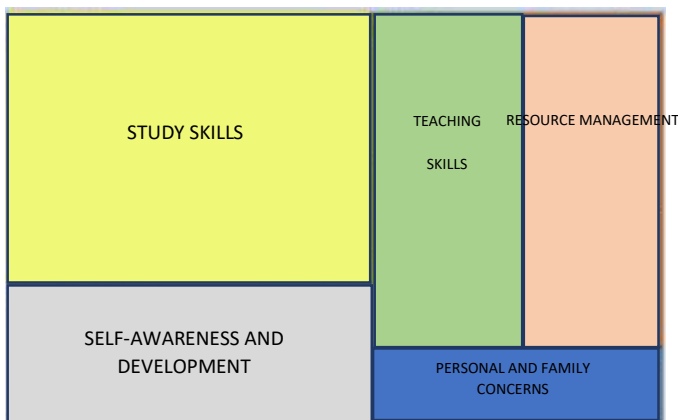


Figure 1. Hierarchy chart of scholars' concerns generated thru NVivo.

Study Skills. These are approaches applied to learning that assist students to be successful in schools in the way of passing an exam or obtaining good grades (Bulent, Hakan & Aydin, 2015). Several studies have shown a significant relationship between study skills and students' academic performance (Awang & Sinnadurai, 2011; Hassanbeigi et al., 2011; Bulent, Hakan & Aydin, 2015). For students who strive to maintain the grade requirements of a scholarship program and aspire to graduate with honours, developing effective study skills is crucial. One mentee mentioned that as a scholar, she has this personal understanding of being responsible for her studies in order to maintain good academic standing. She said:

"When you're a scholar, you need to really maintain... It's your responsibility..."

Several scholars admit that they need to improve their skills and habits when it comes to studying. Common concerns they have include making a study plan, maintaining regular periods of study hours, finding additional resources or references to supplement their lessons, techniques or strategies in studying, especially in difficult subjects, and dealing with distractions such as gadget use and social media engagement.

Scholars shared that during chat sessions with mentors, they are being mentored on the different strategies or techniques they can employ to cope with the academic demands. One scholar shared her difficulty:

"maintaining a regular study time due to workloads in school."

With this concern, her mentor assisted her in making a study plan by identifying the possible time of the day conducive for studying as well as ascertaining courses that she finds difficult that will be allotted more time. Another scholar said that she needs to learn more on:

"strategies to be used in difficult subjects."

A scholar mentioned that one of her benefits from mentoring was acquiring helpful techniques in studying her lessons. She said

"hindi lang nga study lang nga study, tagaan ka techniques kung paano bala maorganize ang imo mga study habits"

[it's not just about being told to study, but it's really giving us techniques on how to organize our study habits]

For example, mentors ask scholars to answer a questionnaire that will help them identify their learning styles and, based on the results, discuss strategies and techniques that will best suit their learning preferences.

A scholar reflected this on the chat record.

"I noted the things I do when studying, where, and the distractions I face when I study."

They were also encouraged to do a periodic review to enhance long-term memory and ensure that they set aside time each week to review materials from previous and upcoming lessons. Scholars were also advised to limit the use of their gadgets and social media accounts during school days and periods wherein they need to work on school requirements and when they need to prepare and study for examinations. In addition, they were also given tips on how to adjust to the varied personalities and teaching styles of their professors.

One more scholar shared the challenges she encountered in looking for resources and references to be used in her courses. She mentioned in the chat record that she is:

"having a hard time looking for reliable resources and books in the library."

Together with her mentor, they discussed possible solutions to address this concern, including borrowing books from other students and friends who have already taken the subjects, exploring online resources and looking for reliable sites, and visiting libraries of other colleges or universities.

Thinking Skills. These are tools that help learners go beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge in order to deepen their understanding and apply ideas, generate new possibilities and make decisions as well as plan, monitor and evaluate their progress (Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2007). College students' cognitive development involves their growing awareness of the importance and necessity to think and become actively involved in the learning process.

Thinking is an integral part of all learning and study tasks. Students are encouraged to sort, interpret, synthesize, and evaluate information. They are directed to analyze learning tasks, select appropriate strategies, and monitor their effectiveness (McWhorter, Severson, & Jones, 2011). Thinking as a skill refers to higher-order activities, such as analyzing, evaluating and explaining and to challenges such as problem-solving and evaluating complex arguments (Butterworth & Thwaites, 2013).

One common concern of scholars is improving their critical and creative thinking skills, which can be considered major cognitive processes involved in learning and dealing with daily situations in life. A scholar pointed out that:

"critical thinking is very important in our life... especially in decision-making... it is necessary for dealing with everyday life situations."

One scholar disclosed that through discussion with her mentor, she learned that:

"being inquiry-focused, flexible, inquisitive, prudent in making a judgement, and open to changes are characteristics of a critical thinker."

The scholars believe that creative thinking is a necessity in sustaining learners' attention and interest in learning as teachers. Two scholars mentioned that during mentoring sessions, they were able to discuss several ways on how they can further develop the skill. These include:

"Being a lifelong learner, attending seminars, sharing ideas, making connections as well as collaborating with others, reading books or materials on creativity, collecting teaching ideas, and practising creativity by experimenting and reflecting."

Another scholar wrote that through the chats, she was able to realize where to improve herself and learned the salient skills of a critical and creative thinker. She said,

"We should be responsible with any information we receive; we need to ask questions, validate, and evaluate by gathering further or additional information before we draw our own personal conclusions."

Resource Management. Management of time and money has been considered a challenge for scholars. These resources must be managed properly to ensure academic success.

Time Management. Wolters' (2017) study supported the idea that academic time management is crucial in self-regulated learning. Hoops and Artrip (2016) also found that time management is necessary for various aspects of college life.

Even though the mentees have their stipend, this is not enough to support their needs. Some of them need to work because they do not have financial support from their parents. In fact, some scholars are the ones supporting their siblings. Mentees enrolled in the Diploma Program had to attend Saturday classes, which are in conflict with their job schedule. Hence, time management concerns on how to balance work and studies arose.

Even without a job, some mentees had to battle procrastination and struggle with prioritizing things and spending free time or summer vacation productively and wisely. One mentee's statement also suggested a look into the workload of the students. She said:

"Everyday kis-a bala daw gaka bombard ka man sang damo nga information sa isa ka adlaw sa pila ka subjects tapos daw kabudlay man nga tun'an mo sya everyday"

[Every day, I was bombarded with a lot of information in several subjects; hence, I found it difficult to study all of them every day].

The mentees claimed that some of the helpful advice given by the mentors are the use of individual study plan, to do list, and calendar or planner. One of them shared:

"isulat mo gid ang imo schedule on the calendar."

[I had to write my schedule on the calendar].

Financial Management. One of the perks of the mentees as scholars is the stipend, but the stipend is not always released on time. The delay was definitely a problem considering that many mentees are financially dependent on the scholarship stipend. The problem is escalated among those who are considered as breadwinners of their families. There were cases when the mentees had to skip the payment of their rent that caused conflicts with their landlord/landlady.

Hence, mentees need to manage their financial resources in order to meet their needs and be ready during times when their stipend is delayed. The bright side is the mentees were not only interested to learn how to spend their money wisely; they were enthusiastic about gaining knowledge and skills on how to save and invest.

One mentee shared that one technique for her to be aware of her financial activities is to add all the expenses incurred for the day or week. The record helped her reflect on the amount she spent. She shared.

"Dako-dako gali ang gingasto so daw ma lessen mo, makasave ka"

[If I spent a big amount, I will then commit to lessen my expenses so I can save]"

Furthermore, she can allot a particular amount for savings so she will not be tempted to spend on unnecessary things. She further shared that self-discipline is crucial for financial management.

Teaching Skills. Because the participants of the study are preservice teachers, it is no surprise that teaching skills emerged as one of their concerns. In particular, lesson planning and demonstration teaching have been considered as an area in which they need more help. For one mentee, a mentoring session on demonstration teaching can help a lot. There are those who emphasized the need to improve their art of questioning, which can further enhance their teaching skills.

According to one mentee, a mentoring session on classroom management that may include strategies and styles, components of classroom management and effective practices can prepare them in facing their future students, the millennial students. The mentees are interested to know more about reflective teaching, content knowledge, pedagogy, and assessment.

Nuances in teaching, such as how to pronounce words correctly, were mentioned. In fact, communication skill, in general, is considered essential. As one mentee shared:

“Kay daw more on ga focus sa weaknesses namon so daw na work out ko man. Dayon ga enhance gid ya maam. For example, sa akon sa communication skills ko, I’m not that ano gid sa public like this maam. So hindi gawa, like for example ga stutter or wala ga establish sang eye contact so sang pag mentoring, daw na work out naman sa akon nga mentor.”

[Our mentoring sessions focused on dealing with our weaknesses, so I was able to work on them. For example, I needed to improve my communication skill, especially in public speaking. I stuttered and could not establish eye contact, but my mentor helped me overcome.]

Most of the mentees also look forward to teaching professionally. Hence, they look forward to having sessions on how to establish a teaching career by acing job interviews and eventually landing a permanent teaching job.

Personal and Family Concerns. Some of the concerns expressed by the scholars/mentees are focused on their personal and family concerns. They mentioned that, at times, problems at home could divert their attention and distract them from concentrating on their studies. One scholar shared:

“Sang first year ko maam di ko bala gawa ka concentrate kay damo gawa ya problema nga gaalabot. Ang studies mo kung paano dunganon. Amo na gani hambal ni Maam S nga di ka lang mag anu, di mo pag problemahon ang problema kay ara na na da, ang himuon mo subong focus ka studies, amo ran, ti nakabulig gid man ang mentoring. Pagkatapos sang family problem amo na sa school naman, about sa academics”

[When I was in my first year, I could not concentrate on my studies because of my problems. That is why Ma'am S said that I need to focus on my studies and set aside my problems. That is why, for me, mentoring can help. Then, after dealing with family problems, I have to deal with my academic concerns].

Family concerns may also include being the breadwinner of the family, managing sibling's misbehaviour and dealing with grief and guilt feelings due to the loss of family members. A scholar mentioned:

“Kay ang conscience ko kay wala ko ginaspak si tatay, tapus wala ko gapuli sa balay... kag sang nashare ko na... kag sang ginhambal ko lang bala kay ma’am nadula man. Everyday kung wala ko isipon nga sa jeep kis’a gatulo lang luha ko. Kung makita lang ko bala sang mga mal-am or tatay. ...and this last year lang man sang August, last 2016, si lola naman pero hindi na patas sang reaction ko bala nga unlike kay tatay nga grabe gid ano ko. ...nag lessen na gawa ang grief ko. Pero as time goes, ok naman ko. Ara bala nga mamiss mo na lang sila. Bali sang may nashareran nako ok na ako.”

[I am bothered by my conscience because I do not talk to my father, and I seldom come home. But when I started sharing this with my mentor, that feeling was somehow relieved. There are times that I shed tears when I see old folks while in public vehicles. The same thing happened with my grandmother; however, the impact was not that great as compared to my father's passing. Probably because I was able to share these feelings with my mentor]



Figure 2. Word cloud of scholars' concerns generated through NVivo.

Figure 2 agrees with Figure 1 that the scholars' most shared concerns are academic-related. But all the concerns are equally important as mentors also have to guide the scholars holistically. To provide the context in which these concerns were shared, the next section gives an overview of the mentor characteristics that the scholars find helpful.

Mentor Characteristics. Mentoring is a learning process aimed at helping mentees to develop more effectively. It is a helpful relationship that gives mentees the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with experienced mentors who share their knowledge and skills (Wong & Premkumar, 2007). The mentor is an expert who can help the mentee personally and professionally. The mentor can help the mentees enhance academic performance and development and at the same time become a role model and support system for the mentees (American Psychological Association, 2006).

The American Psychological Association (2006) listed down the characteristics of mentors such as being an experienced role model, providing acceptance, encouragement and moral support, sharing wisdom and counsel to the mentees, giving care and protection to the mentees, challenges and encourages appropriately, thereby facilitating growth.

A mentoring program was started at the College of Education as part of the package of services provided to STEP UP teacher education scholars of the Philippine Business for Education (PBED). The scholars were assigned to mentors who met them on a monthly basis.

Since mentoring became a part of what the students, particularly the scholars, can avail of, what does it take to become a mentor? What mentor are personal and professional characteristics needed to become an effective one?

A group of STEP UP scholars was gathered to find out what they thought their mentors possessed in terms of personal and professional characteristics. The scholars noted several characteristics which seemed to be common among the mentors.

One of the notable characteristics was the approachability of the mentors. One scholar said:

"very approachable gid tana si Ma'am bisan busy"
[Ma'am is very approachable despite her busy schedule].

This was corroborated by four (4) other scholars who also described their mentors as very approachable. The approachable nature of the mentors was related by the scholars to their being accommodating and making themselves available for the sessions. They see their mentors as really making time for them on top of their hectic schedules.

They viewed their mentors as someone who eagerly listened to them as a mother does. They likewise gave advice and shared insights that were full of wisdom. Another scholar shared that:

"the best gid si Ma'am sa advice and sharing insights."
[Ma'am is the best in advice-giving and sharing of insights].

In addition, another scholar expressed:

"gina share ya man kung ano ang mga na agyan ya and then maghatag sila sang advice. Hindi mo kun kis-a ma intindihan kung nga-a amo na ginhambal nila sa imo pero kapag na experience mo, ay sakto gali."

[My mentor shared her past experiences and gave advice. There were times it was difficult to understand what she said but when placed in a similar situation is actually true.]

The same thought was verbalized by a scholar relative to the giving of advice. The scholars' perception of their mentors as motherly may stem from the fact that teachers assume a loco parent's role in the school setting. The scholars felt good to have a sounding board as in the words of his fellow scholar,

"lain gid Ma'am ang feeling nga makapautwas ka"
[It's different from being able to release one's feelings].

The scholars also disclosed that personal characteristics such as warmth, concern, dedication, sincerity, inspiring, empathy and support were exemplified by their mentors. One scholar opened up by saying:

"na feel ko man nga ginabatyag niya man ang ginabatyag ko"
[I can sense that my mentor feels what I feel].

On the other hand, the other scholar disclosed that:

"nakita ko man kay Ma'am nga dedicated gid sila nga gina determine nila which time ka nga available"
[I saw Ma'am's dedication and the mentors made sure of our availability.]

The scholars also believed that their mentors serve as their role models who can inspire them to become holistically developed preservice teachers.

The scholars identified professional characteristics essential in becoming a mentor. Other than the fact that mentors can give advice pertaining to the scholars' personal concerns, they (scholars) also received technical advice and information for their academic works. An instance was shared by one scholar:

"kung sa Speech class mahambal hambal kami, daw practice Ma'am, so ginapraktis na kami. Tapos ang words nga daw sala ang pag pronounce, daw ginakoreksyonan ni Ma'am"

[If we have an oral presentation in our Speech class, Ma'am listens to us and corrects our mispronunciations.]

Similarly, another scholar said:

"more on sa tips kung paano ma cope ang something for example kung paano ma enhance ang communication skills, which is daw down gid ako"

[I was given tips on how to enhance communications skills where I am low at].

The mentors also displayed a high sense of professionalism. In the words of a scholar:

"pagkita ko gid nga professional gid sia ya, Ma'am. Kay tam-an sia ka flexible sa tanan-tanan"
[The mentor is very professional, as shown in his flexibility].

Lastly, one scholar coined the term "stage work" to describe how the mentor orchestrates his/her various roles in the university yet is always available, disciplined, approachable, accommodating and eager to reach out to the scholar.

The scholars' sharings are corroborated by literature in search of the characteristics of a good mentor. Heeralal (2014) reported that students perceived certain characteristics of mentor teachers as good, like being knowledgeable, honest, and respectful. It was pointed out by Rowley (1999) that one crucial characteristic of mentors is the ability to communicate their belief that the mentee is capable of transcending one's challenges and difficulties to be able to achieve one's goals in the future. They can inspire and affirm the potentials of the mentees.

In a multi-case study done by Hudson et al. (2015), it was said that a positive mentor-mentee relationship is essential for the development of the latter. Findings revealed that positive relationships required the achievement of trust and respect by sharing information, resources, and expectations and by being professional, enthusiastic, and supportive with collaborative problem-solving. This would imply that mentors ought to be enthusiastic and supportive in order to be trustworthy and respected.

3.2 Part 2. TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars

The narratives on the needs and concerns of the STEP-UP scholars enabled the researchers in developing the mentoring modules that composed the TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars. The toolkit has four (4) parts. The first part, Targets, consists of mentoring block objectives to address the scholars' concerns and develop their knowledge, skills, and attitude. The second part, Ideas, is a collection of practical tips and best practices in addressing the different concerns of the scholars as well as in enhancing their potentials and capabilities.

The third part, Plans, is the application section. This will require the scholars to commit to writing the steps that need to be undertaken to effectively manage challenges they encounter and further develop the intended knowledge, skills, and attitude. Finally, the fourth part, Supplements, presents additional references and online resources for more techniques and strategies in

nurturing the scholars' knowledge, skills, and attitude. The toolbox also included six (6) mentoring blocks. Each mentoring block is described in the data information that follows.

3.2.1 Mentoring Block 1: Self-Awareness

Who am I? This is an important developmental issue that adolescents need to address. Adolescents need to engage in an inward journey to discover, understand, and accept the self. This mentoring block contains doable tips directed at helping adolescents arrive at a clear picture of their self-identity. Getting to know the self is very basic, and preservice teachers and scholars would benefit the most if they had me-time to introspect.

3.2.2 Mentoring Block 2: Personal and Family Concerns

Students encounter many challenges along the way. They can be intra- or inter-personal in nature. Many young persons are greatly affected when personal and family problems occur. Their studies become affected and can interfere with their motivation to learn. The contents of Mentoring Block 2 include strategies to handle life's difficulties as well as learn how to build and maintain healthy relationships.

3.3.3 Mentoring Block 3: Study Skills

College students may join higher education without a set of effective study habits. They get shocked and feel stressed when they are faced with many academic demands. Mentoring Block 3 will enable the students to identify their learning styles and learn valuable tips on how to study given the styles they have. They will also learn the value of developing study time skills, learning how to handle distractions, as well as test-taking skills and strategies.

3.3.4 Mentoring Block 4: Thinking Skills

The 21st-century skills include creative and critical thinking skills. In this regard, preservice students ought to cultivate their creative and critical thinking skills to be able to develop the same in their future learners. Mentoring Block 4 can help students become creative and critical thinkers by following the feasible strategies, whether inside or outside the classroom.

3.3.5 Mentoring Block 5: Resource Management

Time is an important resource that, when lost, can never be regained. Like time, money is another resource that must be spent wisely and judiciously. Mentoring Block 5 will equip the students with the necessary skills to help them manage their time and money. Preservice teachers need to possess these skills to enable them to cope with the demands of teaching as well live within their means.

3.3.6 Mentoring Block 6: Teaching Skills

Student teaching interns and beginning teachers face some challenges as they start their teaching careers. Student teaching interns most especially have to learn how to translate the theories they learned from the professional education courses to the real world in the classroom. Mentoring Block 6 will supplement what they have learned in their various courses and touches on lesson planning, classroom management, student engagement, and communication skills.

The table that follows shows the acceptability of the TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars. It shows that the toolbox was Outstanding ($M = 3.92$). It was excellent for use by the mentor and scholar. On a closer look, the evaluation per criterion were also outstanding in all components namely: Physical Attributes ($M = 4.0$), Objectives ($M = 3.92$), Content ($M = 3.83$), Usefulness ($M = 3.89$), and Self-Help Features ($M = 4.0$).

	M	Description
Physical Attributes	4.0	Outstanding
Objectives	3.92	Outstanding
Usefulness	3.89	Outstanding
Self-Help features	4.0	Outstanding
Over All	3.92	Outstanding

Furthermore, the evaluators of the toolbox gave helpful comments for the enhancement of the mentoring blocks. The comments for improvement were thematized using the criteria in the evaluation questionnaire.

Physical Attributes. It was pointed out that some photographs should be removed because they divert the reader's attention away from the mentorship blocks' text. Another evaluator suggested that the work be checked for typographical problems and

some consistency in the tabular/template presentation to achieve a sense of uniformity and that necessary citations be made according to copyright rules. Before the Supplements, the references should also be provided at the end of the section.

Objectives. It was suggested that the toolbox achieve the goals for which it was created. There was no suggestion for improvement in attaining the toolbox's goals.

Content. The toolbox's contents are quite extensive, substantial, and well-organized. However, it was suggested that some materials, such as theories, incorporate the proponent's or theorist's name. It can be further improved by incorporating research-based content.

Usefulness. Positive feedback regarding the utility of the toolbox was pointed out, especially its usefulness for values clarification and values integration. The materials can be utilized for homeroom guidance activities. It can give a different flavour to homeroom guidance, an exciting activity. Novel ideas included in the toolkit can synergize and inspire future endeavours to better prepare the preservice teachers and scholars in mind and spirit. The toolbox can be replicated in other places to suit the context and people who will use such. The toolbox has the potential to help both mentors and scholars as it contains practical strategies and easy to follow format and is beautifully designed and crafted.

Self-Help Features. It was suggested that whenever an activity is presented, it should be coupled by processing questions and analysis so that there is some type of closure and not just asking them to answer the questions leaves them hanging.

4. Conclusion

Mentoring programs have proven to be effective in addressing personal and professional issues and inadequacies. Although academic concerns may be predominant among scholars, the impact of personal and family concerns on their personal and professional development is certainly undeniable. Even if it only accounts for a small portion of their concerns, the impact of family and personal experiences cannot be overlooked. Many people regard the mentor-mentee relationship as a professional responsibility in a mentoring program. It does, however, become a personal endeavour as both mentor and mentee learn from each other and acquire skills and life values to live by. On the one hand, toolkits may just be one of the many mentoring materials that can be developed. However, contextualized mentoring program materials, whose content is based on the needs and problems of the mentees, give both mentors and mentees a greater sense of personal importance and relatability.

The TIPS: A Toolbox for Mentors and Scholars may be used as material for homeroom guidance to reinforce specific needs of the preservice teachers. It may also be tried in a smaller group of scholars who are recipients of private and government scholarships. This may, in one way or another, produce quantitative data on the acceptability of the toolkit and help establish its reliability. Other evaluation instruments may also be utilized to help establish its acceptability. Other researchers are hereby guided to take extra care in utilizing the results of this study as the toolkit may probably fall short if adopted and used by other scholars with different programs and different needs and concerns, may it be in the Philippines or in other countries. Furthermore, scholars in this study may have expressed how the mentoring sessions have been helpful in dealing with their concerns and weaknesses; quantifying the impact of the mentoring program in terms of academic success and employment may also be considered. Despite the limitations, this research generated information on the needs and concerns of scholars and developed a toolkit which, in one way or another, triggered future research in conducting a further investigation related to this topic.

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