



PODCAST MINISERIES BY RTC AND TDR GLOBAL LAC

Mentoring as a Tool for Professional Development and Strengthening Health Research Networks

EPISODE 1: BASIC CONCEPTS

Karen Linares (KL): Welcome to this podcast series developed by CIDEIM as the regional training center and TDR global node for Latin America and the Caribbean. These programs are supported by the Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases - TDR. My name is Karen Linares and I will be with you throughout this series as we explore a key tool for strengthening research capacity: mentoring.

Throughout this podcast series, we would like to invite you to reflect on how mentoring can influence and enrich the panorama of scientific careers in the Latin American and Caribbean region, and how to use it to make a difference in environments and countries with limited resources.

The term "Mentor" comes from the Greek epic poem 'The Odyssey'. In the story, Mentor is a wise man and close friend of Odysseus, the king of Ithaca. When the king must leave for the Trojan War, Mentor takes charge of the training, preparation, and initiation of Telemachus as heir to the throne (2 – usar hasta throne).

The attributes of leadership, strategy, wisdom, expertise, advice, and support have been associated with the figure of the "mentor", defining a style of learning that has remained relevant since ancient times. "Mentor" became synonymous with a trusted advisor or teacher who helps others to develop themselves.

Mentoring improves learning and collaboration, and its application is highly beneficial in various fields such as education, science, business and personal development, and is also a very useful tool for the organizational development of a company or institution, as it seeks to promote the personal and professional growth of each individual, resulting in better business performance.

Let's dive into this topic with our guest, Antoinette Oglethorpe, a consultant, coach, speaker, and award-winning author with 30 years of experience developing leaders for multinational organizations. Antoinette developed the Mentoring for Success workshop, which we have used as the basis for this podcast to introduce you to some of the basic concepts and tools of mentoring. Welcome Antoinette, tell us a little bit about you and your work.

Antoinette Oglethorpe (AO): I'm Antoinette Oglethorpe, I run a training and coaching company we specialize in career management through mentoring and we have created some tools and templates and models to help managers, employees, mentors and mentees have meaningful conversations around

progression and professional development. And it's been my pleasure to work on a WHO sponsored mentoring program for TDR to help those people develop their professional careers through mentoring.

KL: Could you explain in simple terms what mentorship is? What is its main goal?

AO: it's a supportive relationship where an experienced individual known as the mentor guides and advises someone who is less experienced than them who is the mentee. They're not necessarily younger than the, they're just less experienced in the area that they want to develop in. And the main goal is to develop the mentee, so to help the mentee grow both personally and professionally. And they do that by sharing their insights, sharing their knowledge, sharing their experiences.

It's not about telling the mentee what to do, It's about providing guidance, encouragement and constructive feedback to help the mentee make their own decisions, come to their own solutions, navigate their career and ultimately reach their full potential.

KL: So, mentoring is a relationship between two people working together to achieve a goal. One person, who has greater expertise, collaborates, guides and acts as a facilitator to help the other person develop and strengthen professional skills or find a career path. How is mentorship different from other processes like training or coaching?

AO: Mentorship differs from training and coaching in both its approach and its scope. So, training focuses on acquiring specific skills and knowledge and in that scenario, the trainer or the teacher has the skills and knowledge and tells the person that's learning what the right approach is of what to do and that is not what mentoring is.

Coaching is on the opposite end of the spectrum; it typically involves helping the learner work towards specific goals and overcome obstacles and quite often that is about helping the individual draw on their own knowledge.

Mentorship, on the other hand, is broader and more relational. So it's less about instruction and more about guiding and sharing wisdom so in that respect, it's not like teaching and Coaching often has a structured time frame whereas mentorship tends to be a longer term relationship that evolves as the mentee grows, so typically training and coaching are short-term interventions and mentoring is longer term, not never ending It's not like marriage! But it can be longer term, so say 12 months, for example.

KL: What are the essential qualities of a good mentor and a good mentee?

AO: Okay, well, for the mentor, it's really about their communication skills and their commitment to the mentoring. So, a good mentor should be approachable, they should have empathy and above all, they should be good listeners. They also need to be open-minded and non-judgmental and willing to share their insights and experience.

Effective mentors are also patient, reliable and capable of giving constructive feedback in a way that encourages growth, and they need to be prepared to make time for the mentee and because above all, they should be genuinely interested and care about the development of this individual and committed to helping them succeed.



So, they need to be very much not about their own ego and everything that they know and how great they are, but instead, much more focused on their mentee and how to actually get the best out of them.

But the mentee It's actually about that commitment to their personal growth and being willing to take ownership for that development, so, they need to drive this relationship, they need to be the one that contacts the mentor, they need to be prepared for the mentoring conversations, they need to be clear on what they want to get out of the mentoring relationship, they need to also be open-minded because they might hear guidance and wisdom that is new to their thinking and they need to be prepared to take action and follow through on what comes out of the mentoring conversations.

KL: Thank you Antoinette for sharing your knowledge with us. In summary, the dynamic created between the mentor and mentee is key. Mentors not only transfer knowledge, but also provide guidance and promote leadership and critical thinking skills. On the other hand, the "mentee" stops being a "passive" learner and takes on an active and collaborative role.

We are at the end of the first episode of our podcast, where we learned some generalities about mentoring. In the next episode, Antoinette, our guest expert, will take a closer look at the roles of mentor and mentee, and we will share some useful tools to consider when starting a mentorship. Thank you for listening. See you next time!