

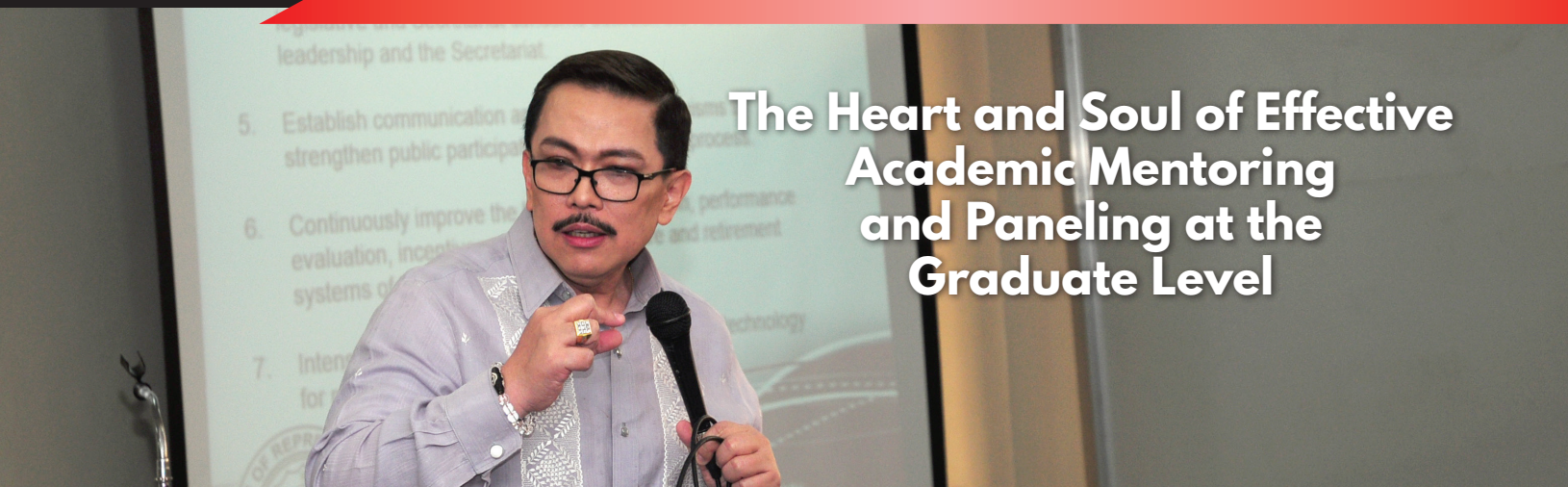


SAN BEDA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT DIGEST



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The Heart and Soul of Effective Academic Mentoring and Paneling at the Graduate Level

It is very important that faculty members who mentor and panel graduate students ensure that these students learn meaningfully and productively, but independently, during their entire academic life. According to Mezirow (1996, p. 162), “learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action.” Mentoring and paneling graduate students, therefore, should be anchored on genuinely transformational learning, which is more centered on qualitative changes in a way of knowing, instead of change in behavioral repertoire or increase in the quantity of knowledge gained. This is connected to developmental learning, which is not simply to impart information, but also to create in learners an enthusiasm for thoughtful discrimination among conflicting ideas and to counter rigidity of belief (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000).

Dr. Divina M. Edralin

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MENTORING WITH A HEART

There is no globally agreed-upon definition of mentoring, and there are varying views about what mentoring relationships are supposed to be like. There are many assumptions on what good mentoring is, however, mentors are not inevitably naturally endowed with effective mentoring skills. Mentoring includes career guidance and support; and personal, psychological, and social aspects (University of Rhode Island ADVANCE, 2005). It is a dynamic process that requires perseverance. According to Stoddard (2006), effective mentoring starts with the heart. It is totally caring for, and committing to, your mentee from the beginning until the end of the academic journey. I offer this compilation of some guidelines to help faculty who are engaged in mentoring relationships and paneling roles at the San Beda Graduate School of Business (GSB). Its purpose is to make thesis/dissertation mentoring and paneling an integral part of the GSB procedures and practices.

The short-term goal for the mentor is to help mentees align their competencies, passion, and interest with the thesis/dissertation work that should be completed and successfully pass the oral defense. The long-term goal for the mentor, on the other hand, is to shift to a deeper level the technical and behavioral competencies of the mentee, as well as enable such mentee to grow as a person and to feel a sense of achievement and pride



in completing the final academic requirement of the degree. This means that the mentees' "habits of mind and point of view" have been transformed profoundly.

Effective mentors should possess these essential qualities which can be grouped into four general categories: attitude

and character; professional competence and experience; communication skills; and interpersonal skills (Graduate School of Education, Portland State University). The specific qualities under each category are validated by my own experiences and observations of other model mentors in various schools:

Attitude and Character

- Willing to be a role model for other teachers
- Exhibits strong commitment to the teaching profession
- Believes mentoring improves instructional practice
- Willing to advocate on behalf of colleagues
- Willing to receive training to improve mentoring skills
- Demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning
- Is reflective and able to learn from mistakes
- Is eager to share information and ideas with colleagues
- Is resilient, flexible, persistent, and open-minded
- Exhibits good humor and resourcefulness
- Enjoys new challenges and solving problems



Communication Skills

- Is able to articulate effective instructional strategies
- Listens attentively
- Asks questions that prompt reflection and understanding
- Offers critiques in positive and productive ways
- Uses email effectively
- Is efficient in use of time
- Conveys enthusiasm, passion for teaching
- Is discreet and maintains confidentiality



Professional Competence and Experience

- Is regarded by colleagues as an outstanding teacher
- Has excellent knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter
- Has confidence in his/her own instructional skills
- Demonstrates excellent classroom management skills
- Feels comfortable being observed by other teachers
- Maintains a network of professional contacts
- Understands the policies and procedures of the school district, and teacher's association
- Is a meticulous observer of classroom practice
- Collaborates well with other teachers and administrators



Interpersonal Skills

- Is able to maintain a trusting professional relationship
- Knows how to express care for a protégé's emotional and professional needs
- Is attentive to sensitive political issues
- Works well with individuals from different cultures
- Is approachable; easily establishes rapport with others
- Is patient





More importantly, during the course of mentoring, these are the obligations and responsibilities that mentors should bear in mind:

- Set a clear structure and clarify expectations for the mentoring relationship at the beginning.
- Take the initiative to make the call to arrange for your first and subsequent meetings with your mentee.
- Be available and always schedule regular meetings (face-to-face and online) to keep tab of progress and address concerns.
- Ask the right and challenging questions in a friendly way at the right time.
- Pinpoint possibilities/options/leads on potential problematic situations in the course of doing the research, and avoid quick fixes to address the problems.
- Focus on helping generate significant and interesting research questions, appropriate frameworks, and robust methodologies. This can be done by freely sharing your experiences, what you have learned, and what you have done which are related to the mentee's work.
- Point out ways on how to more efficiently access data and what kinds of institutional support they should seek to facilitate the completion of their research.
- Harness the power of conversation and discourse. Discourse, means that "there is a dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view" (Mezirow, 1997, p.6) on the mentee's work every meeting.
- Listen with your heart, not just with your head. It means suspending judgment, listening for understanding, and providing an accepting and supportive atmosphere.
- Give constructive criticism, as well as praise. Affirm cheerfully and eagerly even the smallest output from the mentee's best effort.
- Treat all dealings and discussions in confidence, providing supportive guidance and specific suggestions for improvement.
- Make an agenda for, and list the output to be discussed in, the next meeting before you leave from each meeting.

Remember that mentoring with the heart and soul gives the mentor a feeling of satisfaction in assisting in the development of students, and the fulfillment of contributing to the overall transformation of the research culture in the institution.

PANELING WITH A SOUL

The role of accepting to be a member of a thesis/dissertation panel is a very challenging function in an academic institution, especially at the graduate level. Across countries, a thesis/dissertation panel is normally tasked to examine through an oral defense the completed research work on a particular topic of interest of a student or group of students. It is an academic process that requires appreciation of the

students' work from their framework. Traditionally, this is more of assessing the student's knowledge acquisition and integration of the principles, concepts, and theories that they have learned in their entire program.

I posit, that similar with mentoring, effective paneling starts with the heart to inspire rather than frighten, and lift the soul rather than dampen the spirit of, the students. Given that this activity is an entirely enduring journey, from the pre-defense until the final verdict is given at the end of the oral defense.

The immediate goal for the panel is to help the students realize the strengths and weaknesses of their thesis/dissertation and how it can be further improved. But the ultimate goal for the panel is not only to strongly encourage the students to publish their work in a reputable peer-reviewed journal, but to utilize their thesis/dissertation experience as a vehicle to level up their thinking process and how they view reality in their workplace and society.

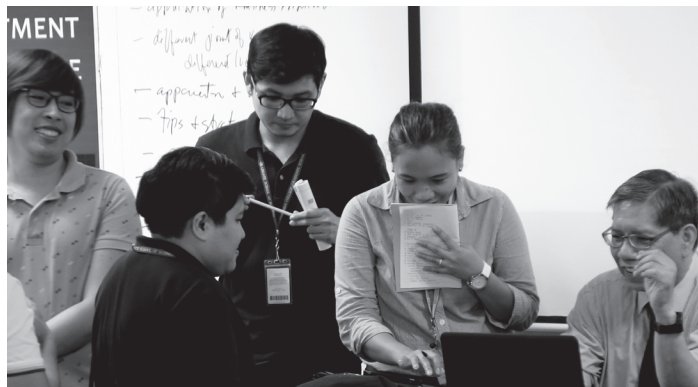
Effective panelists should possess these 10 top-ranked essential qualities based on the feedback of students who defended their thesis/dissertation, my experience, and encounters with other thesis panelists in various schools:

- knowledge of research content
- communication skills
- compassion
- critical thinking
- sense of humor
- respect of students
- ethical
- inspiring
- facilitative of the process
- willing to go the extra mile

Finally, it is imperative that, during the course of the thesis/dissertation defense, these obligations and responsibilities should be remembered by the panelists:

Before the Defense:

- Read thoroughly the paper.
- Double check/verify from sources the claims that are doubtful or not well substantiated.
- Mark the portions/pages that you want to raise during





the actual defense.

- Write down clearly all your feedback on the comments sheet.
- Indicate concrete suggestions to improve the paper.
- Confer with your co-panelists and the mentor on the major points you consider critical on the paper.
- Declare any conflict of interest that can affect your judgment.

During the Defense:

- Facilitate the discussion by asking appropriate questions at the right time.
- Ease the tension (e.g. inject humor, unfreeze the student).
- Clarify the point that you want to convey by giving examples or showing computations.
- Give the student time to think for the answer. A short moment of silence is very helpful.
- Avoid sweeping statements to judge the students.
- Remind the student to adhere to proper decorum when necessary.
- Cite specific data from the research to prove your point or support your argument.
- Listen attentively to the explanation being offered and commend the right answers.
- Have follow-up questions to probe or help generate the needed answers.
- Use kind words generously. It lifts the morale of the student.
- Be conscious of your non-verbal language. It frightens the student.
- Control the pitch and tone of your voice. It makes the student defensive or clam up.

After the Defense:

- Explain clearly and persuasively the recommendations for improvements of the paper.
- Recognize the strengths of the paper and the students' efforts in preparing the thesis.
- Confer with co-panel members on the final verdict on the student.
- Be available for consultation to help the students finish the revisions in a short time.

Finally, I highly recommend, that mentors and panelists who wish to perform their role with their heart and soul and to encourage development, must purposefully concentrate on strategies that can be harnessed to invoke profound approaches to learning. In this way, students are assisted to shift from generalizations and practices related to learning as "knowledge acquisition," toward generalizations and practices that emphasizes on the possibility of learning as transformation or "changing as a person" that will develop critical thinking (Mezirow, 1997).

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About the Author



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TEACHING FOR PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teachers



In his book, *The Adventures of a Bystander*, the foremost management guru Peter Drucker reminisced about his two fourth grade teachers who were to him both first-rate and outstanding. And yet ironically he claimed, they failed to teach him what both they and he needed to learn. I was rather taken aback by his claim and I thought there might have been something amiss in the text. But reading on gave a full disclosure of what he meant and I was impressed. Miss Elsa and Miss Sophy, while sisters, are unique individual teachers who exhibited and exemplified two ways of teaching and learning.

Miss Elsa and Miss Sophy both taught with passion and excellence but in two different ways. Miss Elsa was a pedagogue who taught with the intensity of a taskmaster and instructed the student on how he is going to be evaluated, monitored as to progress and criticized as need be. Miss Sophy would let her student try things, always willing to help but never offering advice or criticism.

Drucker further remembers that Miss Elsa had authority; Miss Sophy was entirely child-centered. Miss Elsa was the very perfection of the Socratic method; Miss Sophy was a Zen master.

Finally, Drucker declared, “Miss Elsa and Miss Sophy taught me that teaching and learning of high quality and with a high level of intensity of enjoyment, are possible. These two women set standards and they gave examples.”

I chanced upon a book written by a certain Dr. Antonio N. Torralba, who is currently the Dean of Education of the University of Asia and Pacific, “*The Joys of Teaching*” bylined “Be a Teacher...A Great Teacher.” It was serendipitous. Just like Peter Drucker’s Miss Elsa and Miss Sophy, the author shares the “joys and exuberance of teaching; the whys, “the whences”, the hows, and the wherefores of teaching.”

These two excellent materials affirmed that teaching and learning are effectiveness exemplified. Stephen Covey in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, defined effectiveness as balance in one’s life. He cited Aesop’s fable, the goose and the golden egg. That while we desire a high egg production level, we should desire it at the preservation of the goose that lays the golden eggs. An imbalance or dysfunction will likely result in a mismatch as to make one ineffective in the long run.

Becoming a teacher and a facilitator or a coach in and out of the classroom required one to apply the principles of the seven habits by Covey.

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The Proactive Paradigm

It is common knowledge that teaching is not paying very well. I remember one of my students who wrote about his own personal satisfaction of the course just passed and how he lamented the fact that teaching was not commensurately recompensed to that effect. There is certainly a disparity if one measures the passion and the intensity, the service and the excellence that an effective teacher renders versus the amount of emoluments he gets. Why do certain baliws go for this profession called teaching? The answer lies in personal vision – a mental frame of reference, a paradigm that gives consideration to principles and values; not just to the quick and fast buck mentality; but to the ennobling effect of teaching. It is a mental map that one behaves himself into because it is based on principles and values. Onofre Pagsanghan of the Ateneo High School comes to mind. Mr. Pagsanghan has spent more than fifty years of his life teaching high school kids and feels very proud about his accomplishments – the students who are now business titans and chief executive officers in their companies. Despite the years, he is still the old teacher at the Ateneo High School. Is he less successful and happy than the students he taught in their teens? Certainly not. He is the replica of a person whose mindset is singular for the benefit of the youth.

The Personal Leadership Trait

Leadership comes from within and is tested as one goes through the crucibles of challenges and unrelenting change. A teacher cannot be a leader to his students if he does not demonstrate the qualities of leadership within himself. Mr. Joe Batten in his book, *Tough-minded Leadership*, said that leadership is love. To lead is to love. Without love, there can be no leadership. As the Good Book says, you cannot give what you do not have.

Personal leadership needs a mindset that cares about people. A teacher deals with hosts of students of different motivations, skills, experiences, and backgrounds. Were one to influence this bunch to greater heights, he has to be and have love in himself. “Begin with the end in mind” finds ample opportunity for practice and application between the

relationship of teacher and student. To visualize what and how we perform our tasks as teachers make for effective leadership in this kind of a relationship.

The Personal Management Trait

Many teachers, while they claim to want to teach just for the love of it, balked when faced with the reality that teaching requires a lot of menial work. From delivering the course to checking exam papers and commenting on term papers, and to include the requirements of the school for attending faculty meetings, planning sessions, writing and submitting business cases make the prospective or the existing faculty member think twice before taking a load. Indeed, teaching is not just going in and out of the train station where the faculty gets to class for one session per week and leaves without a trace to come back again the next week. Putting time and playing the role as a faculty member is a “high leverage” activity. Planning, organizing, and delivering the course work are all important. Understanding, empowering, and counseling students are equally as important. If he does not believe these things to be first things in his life, eventually, the faculty member would get burnt out because the demands of his other roles on his time and energy will take its toll.

This habit is connected to one’s own mission of personal leadership and proactivity. Without this connection and integrity, no teacher is going to succeed and become happy.

The Focus on Mutual Benefit

Two weeks ago, a poster attracted me – “No one dares to teach if he does not dare to learn.” Teaching and learning come at the same time. I learn while I teach and the students learn while I teach. There is a tremendous amount of synergy developing between the interactions of faculty and students in the classroom or elsewhere. We both teach and learn. It is a win-win paradigm.

In the academe, there are some faculty members who think otherwise; that they are in the classroom to teach and that the students just need to listen and to keep quiet





and talk only when asked. Some teachers can be rude and uncompromising, arrogant and dictatorial, rigid and unreasonable. Covey calls it the win-lose mindset. The psychological explanation comes from the “social mirror” validating such behavior. That the teacher is considered as a know-it-all person and is therefore always right.

But to be effective as a teacher, one must cultivate the “abundance mentality” instead of the “scarcity mentality,” as Covey says. So when we teach to transform, it is very crucial that we adopt a facilitative win-win mentality. After all, we are not superhuman. There is always an opportunity to learn and obtain mutually beneficial results. In the end, we are also major beneficiaries of the exchange.

The Empathetic Communication

Teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin helped expressed and achieved through effective communication. To learn is to diagnose first before prescribing. In Covey’s parlance, “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Socially, we are a people who want to talk and talk especially teachers because they are supposed to be the repository of academic knowledge which they want the students to partake. Thus, we intone in our class, “Listen to me for I will tell you the lessons from the store house of knowledge inside my head.” And when the students respond differently, we throw all sorts of brickbats, from being louts to being nincompoops.

Experience has shown quantum leaps of growth in relationships because of empathetic communication. Students want to be heard and listened to. They have circumstances that we need to know and underscore when we deal with them individually and as a group. Is it not much more effective were the identification, analysis, and solution development to any particular problem, be it business or personal, to come from the students themselves and not from the all-knowing self-righteous teacher? In the process, they understand their language and own up to the solutions.

At best, he is coach and consultant; directing the process without dominating it so as not to stifle creativity and inventiveness. Piaget, a French scholar, defined teaching as “to let the students discover, invent, and to grow.”

The Third Alternative

Stephen Covey underscored the fruit of thinking win-win and empathic communication. He called it synergy which he mathematically formulated as $1+1=3$ or more. In the classroom situation, there are great opportunities for interchange between teacher and students on the one hand and student to student on the other. As such, a tremendous resource in knowledge and experience is shared between and among the participants. If the teacher is not self-assured, he will not see the interaction and interchange as a healthy transaction. He will react defensively and will not allow ideas that are opposed to his to flourish. He will shoot it down with cryptic and sarcastic remarks.

The idea of looking for a third alternative is value-additivity. What you and I know together as the norm may in fact be fostered, improved, and even challenged to be better. This is the benefit of listening empathetically; of understanding first and then to be understood. As Covey says, “Almost all breakthroughs were a result of break withs.”

The teacher has to develop maturity, integrity, and proactivity to be able to reap the benefits of the third alternative.

Continuous Improvement

Just like all other endeavors, the teacher needs to develop a mindset of always improving on his craft. He should “sharpen the saw” so that he will always be ready physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

If one is not physically fit by his nutrition and exercise, he will find himself incapable of grappling with the demands of teaching and facilitation. The greatest benefit to physical exercise is what it does to the mind more than the body. A sound mind in a sound body is an appropriate saying.

The mental dimension of teaching does not have to be overemphasized. We are in the business of knowledge. One does not dare to impart knowledge when he does not have it. So the teacher has to continuously exercise his brain by reading, writing, and doing critical analysis of problems. It does a tremendous miracle to one’s own personal growth when he makes his brain work.



What about the emotional and spiritual dimensions? Balance is the key to success. Thus, the teacher should not neglect the aspect of reflection and introspection; what he stands for; what motivates him; and what are important to him. Doing community service, church service, and just being with those that he loves make the teacher a balanced, secure individual. So that when he comes back to class, he is energized, refreshed, and ready to do battle confidently and with integrity.

Let me conclude this essay by quoting from the book, *The Joys of Teaching*. This is a story about five men seeking admission into the kingdom of Olympus; four of them trying to be the first in line in a bid to be the first one called in. Zeus is the presiding officer. He calls the first one at random.

“You, what are you and what have you done?”

“I am a lawyer, Your Majesty. I have defended the oppressed in the courts of law and have rendered my legal services free to the poor of the land.”

“Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter the kingdom of Olympus.”

“You, what are you and what have you done?”

“I am a doctor, O King. I have cured many sick people and have restored them to good health. For payment, I accept only what my patients are able to afford.”

“Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter the kingdom of Olympus.”

Zeus proceeds with the third and the fourth, a priest and an architect. The fifth man, quite elderly, was unobtrusive in one corner of the pearly gates. Zeus noticed how happy the old man was each time one of the four others was admitted into Olympus.

About the Author



Dr. Cesar A. Mansibang has over 30 years of corporate experiences tucked in his belt occupying various senior positions with engagement in finance, accounting and auditing, and human resource, organization development, and management consulting. He is also no stranger

in teaching in the Graduate School after gaining over 25 years as a faculty member in the Ateneo Professional Schools teaching in its MBA, MPA, MPM, Juris Doctor and MD-Medicine programs. He had contributed in the development of the industry after serving as the President of the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountant or PICPA. Currently, Dr. Mansibang is still in the practice being the Chief Finance Officer of a pharmaceutical distribution company. He teaches Finance Management in the MBA program of the GSB.

“And you, old man. You don’t seem to be as eager as the others to enter Olympus. And yet, your eyes brightened up whenever I made a decision to admit. What are you and what have you done?”

“Your Excellency, truly I am happy for the four because they have done a lot for humanity and have been deemed by you deserving of Olympus. For my part, I can’t say I have done really much, I was their teacher.”

“Hail! Teacher. You are the noblest of all. Come into Olympus. Sit by my right side and together, let us govern the entire kingdom.”

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