

Mentoring Model

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Table of Content

1	Introduction	1
2	Mentoring Relationship	2
2.1	Starting phase	2
2.2	Operational phase	2
2.3	Closing phase.....	3
3	Knowledge Sharing Workshops	4
4	Roles and responsibilities	5
4.1	Mentor's role.....	5
4.2	Student's (mentee's) role	5
4.3	Role of University	5
5	SECI model in Mentoring implementation	7
6	Benefits and risks in mentoring model	9
7	Conclusions	10

1 Introduction

This document describes the Mentoring Model, which is a model used as a supplement for the *ENGINE* learning model created in the RADICAL project.

In the project application the aims regarding the mentoring model were described as follows: “Concerning the additional activities the RADICAL project aims to build new and more effective cooperation structure between VET teachers and in-company trainers. The structure follows the model used in the Meyer Turku for years: For a professional close to his/her retirement age, a junior member of staff will be selected. The junior member will be working at the same department working with similar tasks. One of the most essential parts of the junior staff member job is job shadowing, where he/she gains valuable skills and knowledge from the senior staff member. One purpose for the RADICAL project is to conceptualize and transfer these kinds of methods into the whole sector in Blue Industry and in the VET in it.”

The objective of the mentoring model is, that the student will have an experienced mentor to support him/her throughout his studies and that the mentor will share tacit knowledge as well as help the student to build his competences and network in the company.

2 Mentoring Relationship

This chapter discusses the relationship between the mentor (company representative) and the mentee (student). The companies participating in the model will nominate a mentor to each student.

In a smaller size company mentor and in-company trainer are most probably the same person. In a very large company, the student will work in different departments and thus will have several in-company trainers. In this case, the mentor can be one of the in-company trainers or another senior professional.

The mentoring relationship will last throughout the studies, i.e. almost 4 years. Mentoring is a supplement to ENGINE learning model, which will support the student's growth in addition to the actual workplace learning and academic learning from university of applied science. Mentor can give career guidance and help with networking at the workplace. It is possible to divide the relationship to three phases: starting phase, operational phase and closing phase.

2.1 Starting phase

In the beginning of the starting phase, mentor and mentee will be introduced to each other. Company has selected the student from the applicants at the beginning of spring term of student's first study year.

Mentor and mentee will have their first session during the spring and get familiar with each other as well as agree about the objectives, mentoring meeting schedules and rules.

These will be documented into a "mentoring agreement", which can be rather free form and will be shared with both parties.

2.2 Operational phase

In the operational phase, mentoring meetings will be carried out. The interval and frequency must be at least one meeting per semester. Mentoring meetings should not be mixed with evaluating the results of workplace learning. It is possible that the student has a different person as his/her mentor and then a different professional instructing his/her learning related to a specific subject. Naturally, it is important that the mentor knows where in the organization the student is carrying out his/her learning at each semester and what kind of duties he/she has had and will have next.

The student will be responsible for organizing the meeting, and he/she will also maintain the minutes of the meetings and write the discussion topics into a mentoring diary.

With the regular mentoring meetings, a consistent routine of discussions will be established. Topics of the meeting can be e.g. discussing some key learnings from various events at the workplace. These events can be people, process or performance-related. Key thing in the mentoring meetings is open communication.

The mentor will ensure that the student will get the DNA of the company. He/she will communicate to relevant functions and people who the new student is and what is his/her plan. The mentor will highlight the value of relationship building in work environment.

2.3 Closing phase

Before graduation, the mentoring relationship will be ended. The parties will agree about the end and make conclusions of the relationship.

3 Knowledge Sharing Workshops

Students, TUAS staff and mentors involved in Engine studies will have a workshop once per semester. The purpose of these workshops is to share and combine information and knowledge, present learning cases and do networking. This will benefit all three parties and will make the learning model unique.

The main objectives of the sessions are:

- Knowledge sharing and knowledge increase
- Widening perspectives outside own company and its processes and challenges
- Networking with other students and professionals

The planned duration of the workshop will be one day. The mentors will be invited to participate for half-day and one of the mentors will be asked to make a keynote presentation in the workshop.

After this, some students will be also present their learning projects.

Time for networking between company mentors, students, and also university staff members will be reserved.

4 Roles and responsibilities

This chapter describes the roles and responsibilities of mentor, mentee and university in the mentoring relationship.

4.1 Mentor's role

Mentor is typically a senior representative in the company with long experience and wide perspective about the company and industry in general.

The mentor will enable a successful start of the student's journey in the company. He/she will provide targeted, individual coaching, timely feedback and guidance. The mentor will build a foundation necessary for future success and pass tacit knowledge to the student.

The mentor will do student induction to the company and its activities in general. There will be regular meetings between mentor and student. The mentor will provide opportunities to create a network in different functions of the company. The mentor will also co-operate with university representatives.

Good mentoring practices include eg. building trust and developing the relationship with the student, mapping the students' background and experience as well as future aspirations and communicating openly. It is important to ensure confidentiality, trust and full support to the mentee.

The mentor will answer mentees questions, but there is no need to have an answer ready for every question! He/she will share his/her own lessons learnt and build on his/her experience.

4.2 Student's (mentee's) role

Student will always organize the meeting and plan the content. He/she will think about his/her objectives and will be sharing those openly. The mentee will write the notes from the meeting and maintain a mentoring diary. He/she will utilize the advice from the meetings for his/her benefit.

4.3 Role of University

University of applied sciences will provide training about the mentoring model, mentoring in general and about the new engine learning model to company representatives and especially.

UAS will organize workshops with students and companies at least once / semester and will support the mentors and students when necessary.

University has a coordination role of the whole ENGINE model learning and one important part of the model are skilled and motivated mentors. University will help companies to recognize suitable candidates for mentors in the company.

University will collect feedback and develop the mentoring model continuously.

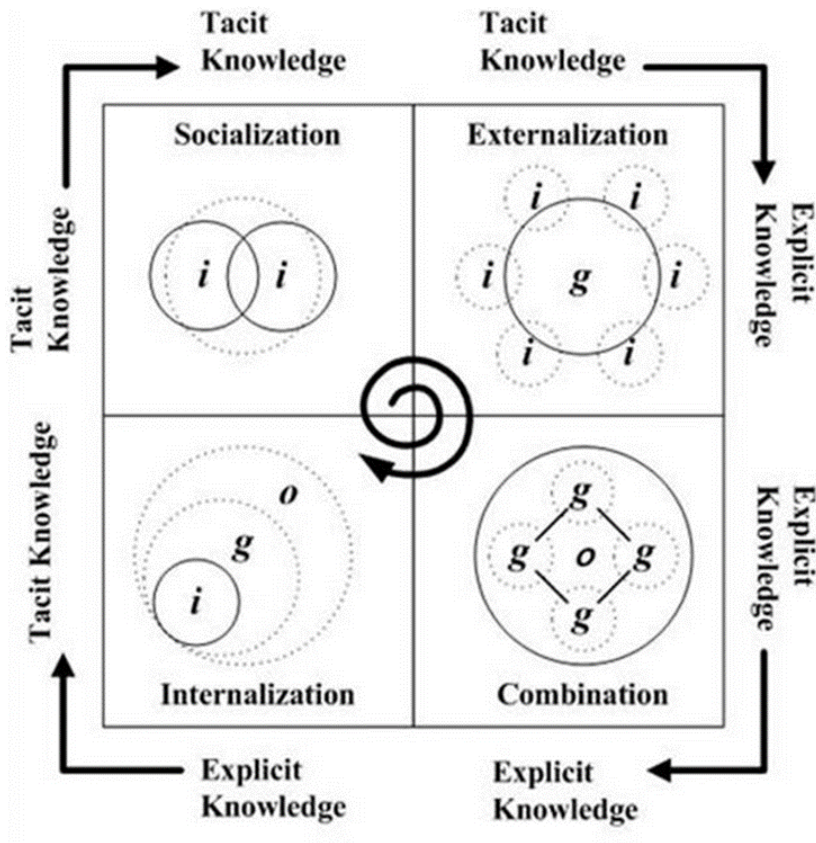
5 SECI model in Mentoring implementation

Transition of existing tacit (implicit) knowledge in industries is not very much taken into account in higher education. The mentoring process should, not only, pass the tacit knowledge from the company (and university personnel) to students, but also from company to university and university to company as well as between students.

It is challenging for students to get access to companies' tacit knowledge. Students get tacit knowledge mainly during their internship periods. This is a very short time and amount of knowledge and is not enough to accelerate the graduate's "time to profit" phase, i.e. time when the employed person starts to earn for the organization. Tacit knowledge is hard to learn for the students. Tacit knowledge is personal knowledge which is hard to share. It can include skills and competencies e.g. how to weld or negotiate good prices. It is very hard to share by text and even teaching by doing is challenging. Tacit knowledge includes experience and often knowledge how to use your body in task. Implicit information cannot be expressed without action or situation, it is situational.

Nonaka & Takeuchi introduced the four-step model for tacit knowledge sharing (so called SECI-model).

1. Socialization, Social interaction as tacit to tacit knowledge transfer. Sharing tacit knowledge through face-to-face or share knowledge through experiences.
2. Externalization, Tacit to Explicit, e.g. concepts, images, and written documents can support this kind of interaction. When tacit knowledge is made explicit, knowledge is crystallized. Allowing it to be shared by others, and it becomes the basis of new knowledge. Transform own knowledge to form so that it is shareable without me.
3. Combination, Explicit to Explicit, (organizing, integrating knowledge), combining different types of explicit information. Combined, edited or processed to form new knowledge to larger concepts. The new explicit knowledge is then disseminated between people.
4. Internalization, Explicit to tacit (knowledge receiving and application by an individual). Explicit information is understood and has become a part of an individual's knowledge. Internalization is also a process of continuous individual and collective reflection. Then *new* round in spiral is started from socialization. Model is illustrated in picture 1.



Picture 1: SECI-model for tacit knowledge sharing (Nonaka & Takeuchi)

In the RADICAL project, practical ways to manage and guarantee the maximum level of transition of tacit knowledge has been developed and it will be realized through the knowledge-sharing workshops and mentoring relationships.

Socialization needs sharing time between industry representatives and students and industry representatives and university staff. This will be done during the workshops.

Students can externalize their tacit knowledge to explicit in their academic studies and combine this company level knowledge to knowledge gained from others and then provide this combined knowledge as development work for companies and university.

These rounds will be done at least once every semester, so there will be a possibility to enhance every stakeholders' knowledge and competences.

This kind of approach also provides new points of view and gives new information to companies. Students will gain most because they have the possibility to access new tacit knowledge, combine it with workplace learning and academic education, and use this all for their advantage in labour markets.

6 Benefits and risks in mentoring model

There are several benefits recognized in the mentoring model. The student will get support in building a network in the company and he/she will gain a lot of tacit knowledge as well as informal information about the company.

The student will get better opportunities and tasks with the help of mentor. Mentor may support him/her in the career development.

The mentor will get fresh points of view from the student and he/she will be able to enlarge his/her professional network through the networking sessions.

University will gain important information about the success of mentoring model and can do continuous development to it.

The biggest risk is that the company does not have enough resources for the mentoring. It is also possible that the relationship will not develop to be an open and trusting one and in this case it will not be beneficial for either party.

7 Conclusions

Mentoring can be a new thing for companies and there is a need for training. When succeeding in combining mentoring with the *ENGINE* learning model, these two together will form a special learning environment.

Mentoring is an important part of the *ENGINE* learning experience, where big part of learning will happen at workplace.

Mentoring model will be developed over time after it has been taken into use and some results and feedback will be available. Best practices will be observed and collected and then shared with participating companies and students.