

Abstract

This research project investigated how students and mentors in the 2008 Melon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship experienced the benefits and difficulties of the mentoring relationship. With the help of the mentor students appeared to excel both academically and personally.

A qualitative research paradigm was used and unstructured interviews were conducted with five mentors and five students in the first cohort of the MMUF at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Mentoring reports completed by mentors were analysed and validated the content of the interviews.

Both mentors and mentees confirmed that mentoring was indeed a powerful tool for academic and personal development. They maintained that there was no way that one could develop academically and not develop personally. Mentoring relationships that did not succeed were attributed to no effort on the part of either the student or the mentor.

The mentors and mentees agreed that the benefits were mutual; they all learned from each other. Student development was observable and students reported that they were beginning to feel part of a community of scholars.

Keywords and phrases

- Mentoring
- Mentoring relationship
- Academic development
- Personal development
- Community of practice
- Undergraduate students

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

MATSIE REBECCA MABETA

21st day of September 2011

Dedication

I dedicate this work in memory of my late mother Dikeledi Elizabeth Mabeta whom I regarded as my coach, guide, tutor and friend. Unfortunately she died while I was collecting data. She will be sorely missed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this work: the MMUF fellows and their mentors for agreeing to be interviewed, having to think back to 2008; the 2010 MMUF cohort for their input; and the EDUC 7016 group, who also helped with the shaping of this report.

Most of all, my heartfelt appreciation goes to Professor Jane Castle, my supervisor, for her invaluable support during hard times when I couldn't cope with life. Your patience, understanding and hospitality during this research were highly appreciated.

Table of Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	16
 CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION	 1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Research Aim	4
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Background	4
1.6 Rationale	4
1.7 My own Mentoring Experience	5
1.8 Research Design and Methods	5
1.9 Organisation of the Study	6
 CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	 7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Mentoring	7
2.3 The Relationship between Mentor and Mentee	9
2.4 Mentoring across Gender, Race and Social Class	11
2.5 The Differences between a Mentor and a Supervisor	12
2.6 What is the Difference between a Supervisor and a Mentor in the MMUF?	14

2.7 Conclusion	14
 CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS	 15
3.1 Introduction	15
3.2 Document Analysis	19
3.3 Validity and Reliability	19
3.4 Sampling	20
3.5 Ethical Considerations	20
3.6 Data Analysis	21
3.7 Dissemination of Results	21
 CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH RESULTS: MENTORS	 22
4.1 Introduction	22
4.2 Interviews and Conversations with Mentors and Mentors’ Reports	23
4.2.1 Jeanette Hannaford	23
4.2.2 Prishani	25
4.2.3 Sani Roberts	26
4.2.4 Khoisan	27
4.2.5 Ebrahim Moodley	28
4.2.6 Analysis	29
 CHAPTER FIVE – MENTEES	 31
5.1 Introduction	31
5.1.1 Tshepo Moloi	31
5.1.2 Memsa Mphapuli	33
5.1.3 Kholeka Zungu	35

5.1.4 Seisa Ndhlovhu	36
5.1.5 Peter Chi pepereka	38
CHAPTER SIX – REFLECTION, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	43
6.1 Introduction	43
6.2 Overview	43
6.3 Discussion of the Research Results	45
6.3.1 Is Mentoring a Useful Tool in Person and Academic Development?	45
6.3.2 What Difficulties are Reported by Students and their Mentors in the Student-Mentor Relationship?	46
6.3.3 How do Students and their Mentors benefit from Mentoring?	48
6.3.4 Reflection on the Research Design	50
6.3.5 Conclusion	50
6.3.6 Further Research	50
<i>Appendices</i>	
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW WITH SEISA	52
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW WITH PETER	54
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW WITH EBRAHIM	58
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW WITH JEANETTE HANNAFORD	59
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW WITH MEMSA	63
APPENDIX F: ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER	68
<i>References</i>	69

Abbreviations

MMUF Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship

PAI Previously Advantaged Institutions

SRC Student Representative Council