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# Analysis of mentors' psychological needs

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*CHAPTER THREE*

# CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

## 3.1. Introduction

Numerous studies (Bell, 1996; Clutterbuck & Megginson, 1999; Garvey & Alred, 2000 and Hay, 1995) explain that the wider context can provide opportunities for the fostering of mentoring relationships or alternatively put constraints on these relationships. This chapter aims to describe and discuss some of the factors, such as the wider context, with particular focus on legislation and the organisational context, that may impact on the mentoring relationship.

Since the democratisation of South Africa in 1994, the country was faced with the challenging task of cultivating economic citizenship in a socio-economic environment characterised by considerable structural imbalances and inadequacies (Visser in Samuels, 1994). The new South African government was faced with the longer term consequences of the Apartheid regime (Bhorat, Lundall and Rospabe, 2002). In the wider context, globalisation has had an impact on education; the apartheid legacy; chronic unemployment; the transition from school to the job market; poverty and the impact of HIV/AIDS are other factors to be considered. The main cause of poverty has been attributed to unemployment, which increased for the black population from 36.2% in 1995 to 46.6% in 2002 (Bhorat, 2003). The HSRC (2003) reports that in 2004 57% of South Africans were living below the poverty line of R1 290 a month for a family of four. Human Resource Development which encompasses the essential role of mentoring to assist in human training and development, is a key factor in tackling the dire unemployment and educational statistics.

The South African government is faced with educational, job-entry and training challenges as identified the Department of Education (2004). Human resource development is important in various sectors of South Africa, where training in human capital has been underdeveloped. Mentoring has been identified as one of the ways in which human resources and skills development needs can be met. An overview South African Labour Policy will be provided which will then be followed by a discussion on the organisational context affecting mentorship in South Africa.

## 3.2. Labour Policy in the South African context

The previous apartheid regime had ensured that social and welfare gains through the economy's industrialisation process remained the privilege of the White population (Bhorat et al., 2002). However, since the democratisation, the new government has attempted to rectify the imbalances of the past. The government has put policies in place that are specifically designed to address the legacies of Apartheid (DoE, 2004). For example, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was developed, as cited in a report by the DoE (2004), by the new government so as to meet basic needs; build the economy; democratise the State and society in general; develop human resources and build the nation. An important part of this reconstruction was the development of new education policies for the country (DoE, 2004) as current reality is that South Africa's human capital is exceptionally underdeveloped (Jacobsz, 2004).

At the core of the education policies developed by the DoE, was the establishment of a high-quality and integrated education and training system. The goal was that young people would be able to gain access to a broad set of knowledge, skills and values but that the system would also facilitate access to the specialised training needed to function within a dynamic and rapidly globalising economy (DoE, 2004).

The South African Schools Act (1996), the Further Education and Training Act (1998), and the South African Qualifications Authority Act (1996) have transformed the education policy environment. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) guarantees that everyone has the right to a basic education. According to the Green Paper

on Further Education and Training (FET), as cited in Jacobsz (2004), one of the most socially devastating factors impacting on the inadequate South African FET sector was the collapse of the youth labour market. The Green Paper (DoE 1997b) maintained that if efficiency and pass rates improved in future, the number of matriculants could grow to over 800 000 with an FET certificate most without jobs by the year 2005. Half of the estimated 4 million unemployed, are young people under the age of 30 with at least 9 years schooling. However, in the 2005 release of the South African matriculation results (DoE, 2005) by the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, MP, the national pass rate was 68.3% which was 2.4% down on 2004 (70.7%). The increase in the unemployment rate for students with tertiary education indicates that the shortage in the workforce is skills-specific (Burger, 2004). The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's Transformation Audit of 2004 reveals that tests undertook by students worldwide indicated that South African students performed weakly, even when compared with much poorer countries with far fewer resources than those that were available to African schools under apartheid.

The following table provides a breakdown of the South African education profile for individuals over the age of 20 as sourced by the 2001 Census by Watson (2004). The indication is that only 29% of the population have an education qualification higher than Grade 12 or Standard 10.

Table 2

*Education levels achieved – Percentage of people over the age of 20*

| Education levels achieved | Percentage |
|---|---|
| No schooling | 17,9% |
| Some primary school education | 16% |
| Completed primary school education | 6,4% |
| Some secondary school education | 30,8% |
| Grade 12/Std 10 | 20,4% |
| Higher education | 8,4% |

This illustrates the need for the government and other stakeholders to correct the inequities of the past and to lay the foundations for a successful economy and society in a globally competitive market.

Some of the policies put in place by government for the further education and training (FET) sector include macro-economic, industrial, labour market and human resource development (Jacobsz, 2004). Government co-ordination across these sectors is important for the success and the establishment of an FET policy framework that will promote the development of the human capacities, knowledge and skills of all South African citizens. However, for the purpose of the current study, the different macro, market and micro elements affecting further education fall outside of the scope of the aims of the present study. Particular focus was thus given to the labour policies that have been put in place to provide corrective measures and opportunities for previously disadvantaged South Africans.

### 3.2.1. Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and Learnerships

According to the 2003 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor as cited in a report by the DoE (2003), South Africa slipped from 19$^{th}$ to 22$^{nd}$ position out of the 32 countries that were surveyed. It was the only developing country, which recorded a lower ranking in the 2003 survey. South Africa fared poorly, not only with regard to entrepreneurial activity in the establishment of new businesses but also with regard to entrepreneurial activity in existing businesses. The poor performance was ascribed to inadequate education and lack of finance (DoE, 2003).

In an attempt to advance the skills levels of people who will be entering the job market, a skills levy has been instituted towards corporate South Africa and 33 SETAs were created in terms of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. In the government's Black Economic Empowerment strategy document (DTI, 2004), much economic success has been noted in the past decade. However, vast racial and gender inequalities in the distribution of and access to wealth, income, skills and employment persist and as a consequence, the economy continues to perform below its full potential (DTI, 2004).

All private and public employers are presently paying a 1%levy of their payroll into a fund. Eighty percent of the fund will be distributed to the SETAs. The different SETAs that have been set up in the various industries redistribute the funds to the employers and other training providers, mainly in a dual setting. That is, a combination of learning at a workplace and learning in an institution. The other 20% is earmarked for the National Skills Fund, which supports these major programmes (Boehm, 2000). The Draft Skills Bill of 1997 proposed to radically reconstruct vocational education and training in South Africa through a levy-grant system as an intervention and incentive to improve the general level of workforce skills towards higher productivity and global competitiveness. As mentorship has been defined primarily as a learning mechanism to empower and develop individuals through a more experienced individual, it appears that some South African organisations have utilised their in-house mentoring programmes to collaborate with the legislation and assist with learnership programmes within their organisation.

Learnership programmes that are proposed by the Department of Labour are mechanisms to solve the country's skills-development problems. The National Skills Development Strategy which was launched in 2001, set a target of assisting 80 000 young unemployed people into learnerships. As reported by the Minister of Labour, Membathisi Mdlandlana (United Nations Integrated Regional Information, 2004), "The National Skills Development Strategy introduced a set of grants and tax breaks to compensate employers for the extra effort they are being asked to make when contributing to the solution of this problem." Mdlandlana also mentioned that The Department of Labour has committed nearly four-hundred-and-fifty million Rand from the National Skills Fund to be channelled towards skills grants from SETAs, for employers participating in recruiting young unemployed learners so as to ensure that more learners can be recruited into learnership programmes.

According to Van Rooyen (1998), all stakeholders and role-players must understand progression and learning pathways leading from learnerships. Access into and articulation from the lower levels into further and higher education must be assured. The above-mentioned SETAs have been set up to overcome the shortages in skills and the

racial imbalances throughout the South African workforce. Thus, businesses are expected to set up learnerships to redress these imbalances. McGrath (2004) believes that employers need to become more serious about training, and how they can build their local providers; the state needs to provide a more enabling environment; communities need to take up a more active role in building their local colleges and learners need to take greater responsibility for their learning. As mentioned in Chapter 2, mentorship programmes have been introduced in organisations to assist and guide learners, entry-level as well as permanent employees with socialisation into the occupation as well as providing support (Paterson, 2004; Watson, 2004 & Kram, 1985).

## 3.3. The Organisational Context and Mentoring

Roodt in Denton and Vloeberghs (2003) asserted that the traditional South African corporate environment has the following features:

- A “them and us” culture which delineates a predominantly white management minority from the general workforce, which is a predominantly black and unskilled majority;
- Affirmative Action as a new criterion for jobs and promotion creates a lot of stress and a mixture of aspirations, peer group pressure and a fear for job security;
- Adverse labour relations with strong union backing and the tendency towards conflict;
- Ethnic and language diversity within the workplace, faction-fighting, as well as the way in which people continue to stereotype one another;
- The existing privilege and discrimination practices based mainly on race and ethnicity despite changes in legislation;
- The wealth and poverty gap that exists between the “have” and the “have nots”, and
- Illiteracy, which is rife among the greater portion of the labour force, and the ever increasing demands of technology and skills, rendering the majority of the black population unemployable.

According to Watson (2004) in a South African census conducted in 2001, approximately 18% of South Africans aged 20 years or more have no education, while approximately 8% of the population have post-school qualifications. The South African government compiled a report in the 1995 Government Gazette as cited in Watson (2004) identifying education, training as well as South Africa's previous apartheid education system as one of the major challenges faced in future. This report also recommended that entrepreneurial training for young people would expose them to the opportunities available in terms of career development and provide them with exposure in the marketplace. In light of the above and in accordance with the Skills Development Act (1998), mentoring can play a vital role to facilitate transformation in corporate South Africa and provide a way to address the tension in the South African corporate culture (Van Rooyen, 1998). However, even though mentoring was identified as an important tool in facilitating redress, there is limited research relating to mentorship in South Africa.

Often mentoring is seen as comparable to leadership, managing, apprenticing and coaching. It has been proposed by April (1999) that if leaders wish to be successful in an ever-changing environment, they need to create organisations in which others can find themselves balance, meaning and success. It requires leaders to learn more about themselves and others, and improving how they use their knowledge, skills and abilities in service to others and their organisation. Gregson (1994) stipulated that it is vital that there is an organisational culture in which mentoring can take place. Similarly, Kram (1985) highlighted that the organisational context is an important influencing factor in the mentoring relationship. Aspects like reward systems, appraisal schemes and the hierarchy of the organisation have an influence on the relationship. According to Johnson, Geroy and Griego (1999), a mentoring relationship is viewed as super-ordinate to these four contexts and can be an outcome of these structured relationships. Murray (1991) states that mentoring can develop either in a structured environment or can be a result of a spontaneous relationship. The traditional definition of mentoring as stated by Kram (1985) involves a relationship between a junior colleague and a senior colleague that contributes to a career development. However, Higgins in Kram and Chandler (2005)

stipulate that recent reconceptualisation of mentoring opens the mentoring field to new inquiry. Kram and Chandler (2005) state that there has been movement from a traditional focus on the mentoring relationship between senior mentor and junior mentee to one based on a developmental network comprised of a number of relationships that support a focal individual. A developmental network is defined by Higgins and Kram (2001) as a particular type of "egocentric" network that encompasses a "set of people a mentee names as taking an interest in and action to advance the mentee's career by providing developmental assistance". They state that the key distinction between an individual's social network and his or her developmental network is that the former includes all social ties, whereas the latter includes only those that are identified as of particular importance to career growth and personal learning.

Buckingham in Denton and Vloeberghs (2003) states that managers should spend more time mentoring by empowering employees and allowing decision-making to become a process with wider formal and informal consultation. Although this type of management style is more time-consuming and the results are not immediately visible (Denton and Vloeberghs (2003), the benefits of having employees part of the decision-making, fosters a buy-in culture to the organisation. However, Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent (2001) believe that even if formal mentoring programmes are part of an organisation's policy, there is no guarantee that mentoring will be automatically valuable for all stakeholders concerned. Much research indicates that the organisation should provide a climate conducive to supporting the relationship. The majority of South African mentoring relationships have traditionally manifested informally and spontaneously (A. Venter, personal interview, April 24, 2004). Within the South African context, opinions regarding the benefits of formal mentorship programmes are divided.

Hamilton (1984) asks a relevant question as to who in the South African organisation provides the mentorship. Roche in Hamilton (1984) found that over half of the mentors were department or division heads, and half were immediate supervisors. Outcomes regarding mentoring relationships for organisations in business and educational settings have been identified by Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent (2001). Positive outcomes include improved productivity, retention of staff, promotion of loyalty, an improved workplace

and that mentoring facilitates change in a business context. The educational context included improved education of students, support for the school, less work for staff and the retention of teachers. Negative outcomes within the business context consisted of high staff turnover, gender bias and costs. Lack of partnerships were identified as a negative outcome in the educational context.

### 3.3.1. The Learning Organisation

Smalley (1994) maintains that employees learn more and at a faster pace in a positive supportive environment. That is, employees must be free to express their viewpoints, challenge ideas, share their experiences, and learn from others, without punishment or embarrassment. Organisations that hope to develop effective managers must themselves develop a "learning organisation" philosophy. Samuels (1994) suggests that individual development depends on the individual's motivation to develop, to the extent that the environment allows for such development to occur. According to Handy as cited in Hunt (1994) as well as David Statt (2000), in a learning organisation, individual learning is encouraged as well as continuous collective learning about the organisation itself, with the aim of continuous improvement. They describe "the learning organisation" as one that learns from its environment as well as one which encourages learning in its employees. Learning environments are conducive to establishing effective mentoring programmes and many of these programmes are in need of improving trust-building between mentors and mentees (Hunt, 1994). When the mentoring experience is consciously and conscientiously grounded in learning, the likelihood that the mentoring relationship will become a satisfactory learning relationship for both mentoring partners dramatically improves (Zachary, 2000). Gregson (1994) believes that an organisational culture is needed in which mentoring managers are expected and encouraged to develop their employees fully, and in which employees are expected and encouraged to make a full contribution, to grow into their roles and to take on new responsibilities. It is thus essential to remember when designing and implementing a learning organisation, mentoring programmes may serve to enrich and enhance a culture that fosters learning.

## 3.4. Summary

This chapter highlighted existing environmental contexts, particularly focusing on the regulatory frameworks that have been developed so as to address the inequalities of access to education and employment in South Africa's past. The role of the organisational culture fostering mentoring relationships was also briefly addressed. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the current study, using the definitions within the current study which stresses the importance of learning in the mentor-mentee relationship.