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Analysis of mentors' psychological needs

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CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

Mentoring is a developing phenomenon in many aspects of life. Mentoring interactions are appearing in schools for teachers, social services, the health services and amongst others in the business sector. Therefore, these relationships can be found in the public sector, the non-profit sector, the voluntary sector and the private sector (Garvey & Afred, 2000). This rise in the use of mentoring for development may be linked to the ideas of life-long learning and growth. Kram (1985) states that mentoring relationships are important for the career development of mentors and mentees. A mentoring relationship should be viewed as an individual tool used throughout one's lifespan. Incorporating mentoring relationships into one's life can assist with transition management in and out of various work and family stages. These transitions are becoming more challenging as the environment changes. Some of these challenges stem from the nature of work being radically changed by technology and organisations becoming boundaryless, virtual, flexible, and their work cycles shorter. These changes have implications for individuals and organisations with regards to career development and management. Challenges outside the work environment may include family changes, discovering a new religion or ethical decisions related to advances in medicine. To master these transitions, mentoring is a tool that can also be used as a change catalyst for an individual.

However, there is little consensus over a scientific definition, what the essential characteristics of mentoring are, the methods by which it should be conducted and who should undertake it (Stead, 1997). Many authors have commented that the definitional problem of mentoring can be partly attributed to the fact that missing from the mentoring literature is a lack of grounding in appropriate theory. It is also evident that there is a gap

in the research literature particularly within the South African context regarding mentoring. Thus the present study aims to provide information regarding mentors within corporate South Africa. This chapter will give an overview of the broadly acceptable definition of mentoring, the history of this particular relationship, types of mentoring relationships, roles and skills of a mentor as well as factors influencing the dynamics of the mentoring relationship.

2.2. Defining Mentoring

Mentoring is a process that is about enabling and supporting major change in people's life and work. It is about developing the whole person rather than training in particular skills (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 1999). These researchers assert that mentoring needs to be a process, which encourages new perspectives, changed ways of thinking and deeper self-knowledge. Levinson (1978) in his book The Seasons of a Man's Life, defined the mentoring relationship as one of the most complex and developmentally important in an individual's life. Essential functions in a mentoring relationship were identified by Levinson (1978) as teaching, guiding, sponsoring, socialisation into the occupation, counsel and moral support. Effective mentoring according to Paterson (1994) involves the transmission of skills, knowledge and attitudes as well as a level of trust and communication which permits the person being mentored, the mentee, to risk making mistakes and to develop personally and professionally. In Watson (2004, p. 8), Parloe defines the purpose of mentoring:

> "*… to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be*."

These definitions illustrate the important elements found within the mentoring relationship. The dual benefits on the relationship are indicated by the mentor for example using skills development to assist in the mentee growth as well as motivational skills to encourage mentees to take control of their own learning. As noted by Watson (2004), much emphasis is placed on the mentor's prior experience, skills capabilities and

the ability to motivate and support mentees. The following section will thus undertake to address factors relating specifically to the mentor.

2.3. Origins of Mentoring

The generic meaning of a mentor is a “father” figure that guides and instructs a younger person (Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent, 2001). Throughout history, mentoring has been a valued type of duty and career training task that included aspects of instruction, support, challenge and vision. Mentoring is a powerful and popular way for people to learn a variety of personal and professional skills. It is one of the oldest forms of influence, furthermore, mentoring literature attributes the origin of the term to Homer, one of the ancient Greek storytellers. However, African scholars have noted that mentors were commonplace in Africa long before the ancient Greek civilisation (Peer Resources Consulting Group, 2003). Nevertheless, in his classic tale Homer tells of Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, who before going on his journey to fight in the Trojan War, arranges with his trusted, wise and sensitive friend Mentor, to tutor and advise his son, Telemachus, during his absence (Souli, 1995 and Klasen and Clutterbuck in Watson, 2004). Odysseus’ choice of Mentor as a family friend to guide his son to kingship is symbolic for modern mentors.

2.4. Mentoring Skills, Roles and Phases

Zachary (2000) identifies twelve generic skills to facilitate effective learning relationships which will briefly be described. These skills are:

- Brokering relationships: This skilfully making the right contacts and laying the foundation for mentees to connect with other people who can be a resource for further learning.
- Building and maintaining relationships: Mentors need to be able to build and continuously work on their relationship so as to sustain it.

- Coaching: Coaching is always a part of mentoring but coaching does not always involve mentoring. As a mentoring skill, coaching involves assisting the mentee with specific task knowledge.
- Communicating: Communication includes sharing knowledge; building trust; being genuine; effective listening; check understanding and pick up on non-verbal cues.
- Encouraging: This would include building confidence; motivating; gently pushing and inspiring the mentee.
- Facilitating: Facilitating is the means by which mentors enable learning. It is important that a hospitable climate for learning is engendered.
- Goal-setting: The mentor should assist the mentee to crystallise, clarify and set realistic goals.
- Guiding: The mentor assists the mentee to keep focus and to reach his/her objectives by preparing the mentee for the future.
- Managing conflict: The mentor should invite dialogue so as to understand different points of view.
- Problem-solving: Mentors should not solve problems for mentees but rather provide assistance in the problem-solving process.
- Providing and receiving feedback: Mentors need to know how to provide constructive feedback and provide a space for the mentee to ask for feedback.
- Reflecting: Reflection is a valuable tool to facilitate growth and development of the mentoring relationship. Reflection is the ability to step back, evaluate, process, assess and articulate learning and consider the implication of that learning for future action.

In a United States-based comprehensive study conducted with 250 medium to large size organisations, Gravett (2003) identified 5 core mentor competencies within the organisations who perceived their mentorship programmes as a success. These competencies were: the ability to design quality activities and discussions with mentees; tolerance for other perspectives; active listening skills; the ability to provide constructive criticism and the creativity to recommend various avenues and mechanisms for mentees to develop throughout their careers.

Gay in Stead (1997) notes the diversity of roles that mentors may be called on, which includes supervisor, teacher, negotiator, counsellor, entertainer and coach. Gibb (1994) identified a number of roles commonly involved in mentoring, which include helping improve performance; helping carer development and sharing knowledge.

A survey was conducted by Storey and Miller (2005) to assess a mentoring project that was designed to help 16 to 19-year-olds find a path to an apprenticeship or employment in a vocational setting. The mentoring project inferred that mentors and mentees benefited from the mentoring process. Mentors gained personal satisfaction; a sense that they gave something back to their community; made a difference in someone's life and learnt new skills. Mentees benefited by having someone impartial to talk to; someone to help them make the correct decisions; increased their self-esteem; their sense of achievement increased; obtained guidance from someone who had been in the same position and gained "inside" information about their career path. The mentor and the mentee according to the survey, both benefited from the relationship by an increased self-confidence; a commitment to something; improved communication, listening and interpersonal skills as well as gaining a different perspective on matters. In another study carried out by Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent (2001), benefits that were cited for mentors within business studies were networking, career satisfaction and improved skills. Studies cited within the educational field indicative of benefits to mentors were networking, reflection, professional development, personal satisfaction and interpersonal skill development. Common problems mentors experienced within the business and education studies were the lack of time and training. In business studies negative mentee attitude, jealousy and pressure were identified as problems for mentors. Within the educational research, professional expertise, personality mismatch, the extra burden associated with mentoring and frustration with the mentee were recognised. Gregson (1994) states that organisations which have used mentoring, have had reduced staff turnover in the groups involved in mentoring. This is attributed to the bond that binds the parties to the organisation as well as having a greater sense of coherence.

Four phases in the mentoring relationship were categorised by Zachary (2000), which states that knowledge of the phases contributes to creating a sound understanding of the learning that occurs in the mentoring relationship. Effective mentoring relationships begin by preparing the mentor and then move on to shape the relationship. The next phase is negotiation of the relationship based on mutual understanding of the process. The enabling phase creates the greatest challenge for mentor and protégé, as there is a high need for learner support. The 4th phase, or closure, is a continuation of the process that began the moment the learning goals were articulated. It continues until the goals are achieved and a decision is made to end or renegotiate the relationship.

2.5. Types of Mentoring

Gray in Hunt (1994) distinguishes between spontaneous and formal types of mentoring. He further subdivides these types into informal life, informal career, planned career, planned project, organisation-wide planned mentoring and community-type mentoring. Gibb (1994) distinguishes between systematic and process mentoring. Gibb (1994) formulated a framework indicating the different paradigms that can be used to understand different individual and organisational accounts of mentoring. Systematic mentoring describes a boundary-structured approach, with clearly defined roles and set plans. This approach is taken by individuals who want to adopt a highly structured approach in which mentoring is seen as secondary in the organisation. On the other hand, process mentoring approach is followed by those who are concerned with the importance of the continuous development of the relationship. The course of that relationship, and its nature cannot be pre-determined, as it is dependent on the interaction of the people concerned over time. To summarise, Table 1 illustrates the differences in each mentoring approach.

Table 1

Systematic versus Process Mentoring Approach

	Systematic Mentoring	Process Mentoring
Attitude to structure	Specify the roles and set boundaries; make and follow specific plans.	Leave the roles open; negotiate over time.
The value of mentoring	Mentoring is useful, but not central to learning or development programmes.	Mentoring is central to learning and development, and is in itself important.
Typical interactions	Occasional encounters	Regular contacts
Focus	Short-term, action-centred	Longer term, personal
Attitude to highly formalised mentoring	No problems	Potential problems

However, it is important to note that formal mentoring programmes do not always involve a degree of interaction for psychosocial dynamics to become a major element. Instead, drafting a framework with which to analyse mentoring, by relating to the specific concerns of the mentor and mentee involved is recommended by the current researcher.

2.6. The Mentoring Relationship

The significance of relationships has been emphasised by many researchers. However, understanding the dynamics that affect the optimisation of these relationships throughout one's lifespan remains ambiguous. Relationships play a crucial role in the socialisation process. It can thus be postulated that structured relationships such as mentoring, are also a form of socialisation. The mentoring relationship can anchor a process in which "persons acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society" (Brim in Johnson et al., 1999, p. 385). Mentoring as described by Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent (2001), is fundamentally a process that exists within the

dynamics of a professional and/or interpersonal relationship between a mentor and a mentee. The dynamics of the relationship can be affected by gender, race, socio-economic status and characteristics like the personality of both mentor and mentee (Hale, 2000). Another significant key success factor which Hale (2000) identifies in establishing a viable and successful relationship is finding a “good’ match. A good match is believed to be whether the relationship supports and leads to learning for the mentor as well as the mentee. Despite the recognition to pair the mentor and the mentee, Hale states that there is no evidence of a consistently reliable approach to matching. The literature thus asserts that to engineer mentoring relationships is extremely difficult. However, Ragins and Cotton (1993) found that there was a strong relationship between willingness to mentor and the individual’s prior experience in a mentoring relationship. Their study also discovered other factors which influenced the willingness to mentor. For example, higher-ranking individuals reported stronger intensions to mentor, which was found to be in line with career development theories as noted in Kram (1985) suggesting that mentorship may be an important factor in mid-career stages. The study on the other hand found that members of an organisation with greater “tenure” or length of time employed, reported less willingness to mentor than newcomers. Bennetts in Hale (2000) distinguishes mentoring relationships from other relationships as the passing on of knowledge, skills and values. Bennetts also emphasises the importance of there not being a disturbance of constraints placed on this relationship, which brings to light the argument whether such relationships can be engineered.

It is important to note that mentorship is a complex relationship with many variables impacting on the effectiveness of that relationship. Internal factors would include the characteristics of the mentor (temperament, cognition, personality, psychological maturity, spiritual practice) and external factors like past experiences and social influences. Because mentorship relies on a transactional relationship, the mentee’s internal and external worlds will also affect the outcome of the mentoring relationship. To build effective learning relationships, mentors must firstly have a clear understanding of their own personal journey (Zachary, 2000). A failure to do so may result in the mentor projecting his or her own experience or agendas onto the mentee. Secondly, Zachary (2000) states that the mentor should understand the mentee’s journey. Thirdly,

the mentors should gain perspective, to look again at their journey and that of the mentee's. Bell (1996) describes effective mentors like friends, in that their goal is to create a safe context for growth and learning. Covey (1989) believes that the commitment made to the self and to others, is the essence of proactivity and growth. Through self-awareness and consciousness, talents are identified to be developed, and weaknesses are identified to be worked on. He then states that once imagination and independence are recognised to act upon this awareness, strength of character is built, which manifests positivity in life.

According to Covey (1989, p29) correct paradigms will infinitely affect personal and interpersonal effectiveness. Covey (1989) describes a paradigm as a "mental map" in which individuals interpret the world through these maps by categorisation of the individual's reality as well as their value system.

> "The more aware we are of our basic paradigms, and the extent to which we have been influenced by our experience, the more we can take responsibility for those paradigms, examine them, test them against reality, listen to others and be open to their perceptions, thereby getting a larger picture and a far more objective view. "

Employee performance can be improved when the mentee feels someone is taking a genuine interest in him or her (Wright, 1998). Greater formal attention is being paid to mentoring as a mechanism to assist employees to achieve their full potential (McKenzie, 1995). It is also purported by Wright (1998) that effective mentoring is about forming a strong working relationship between the mentor and mentee which can be built through helping the mentee gain confidence, gain a clearer focus, become more committed to their work; to help the mentee feel valued and maximise their potential and to be a critical friend. Thus to work at a meaningful level with a mentee, psychological skills need to be used, because without these skills lasting changes in performance are unlikely to occur. However, Akinwunmi (1995) believes that psychological skills are not enough to facilitate growth in learners. This author defines psychological skills as techniques to improve life management. For example, he includes assertiveness, self-esteem, time management, stress management, leadership and motivation as techniques. He states that while these techniques are valid, trust, reciprocity and respect are missing from

relationships based on techniques only. Thus, Akinwunmi (1995) puts great emphasis on self-assessment as a means to growth, as Akinwunmi (1995) and Covey (1989) state that there is no short cut to developing personal congruence. It arises only from the sincere and ongoing search for feedback and the genuine analysis of self in social interaction. The need for special relationships such as mentors is integral to the process, just as it is for the learner. These two arguments form the basis for the rationale of the current study, by analysing mentors' psychological needs so as to enhance the mentoring relationship.

2.7. Formal versus Informal Mentoring Programmes

Ragins (1999) stipulates that mentoring can be a formal or informal relationship between the mentor and the mentee. The informal relationship is more spontaneous and occurs on an ad hoc basis whilst the formal relationship is more structured where the more experienced individual is matched with a less experienced individual. Kram in Samuels (1994) states that informal mentorship has the potential to facilitate career psychosocial development of individuals, which include role modelling, acceptance, confirmation, counselling and friendship. However, Lindenberger and Zachary in Friday and Friday (2002) stress the importance of implementing a formalised mentoring programme by first formulating a corporate mentoring strategy that aligns the mentoring programme with the organisation's strategic positioning. According to Friday and Friday (2002), the integration of effective mentoring strategies, processes and programmes into the corporate culture of an organisation can contribute to its competitive advantage. Figure 1 illustrates the framework described in which formal mentoring programmes are not phased out but rather used as a sustainable and effective tool on a continuous basis. On the other hand, in a comprehensive study conducted by Gravett (2003), mentoring initiatives that have enjoyed ongoing success have some common characteristics: the duration of the formal mentor relationship is limited to 18 months; mentees are asked to become mentors themselves after moving through at least one successful relationship; the organisation finds ways to utilise the newly-developed skills and competencies of mentees; and the successes of mentor-mentee teams are acknowledged and publicly recognised.

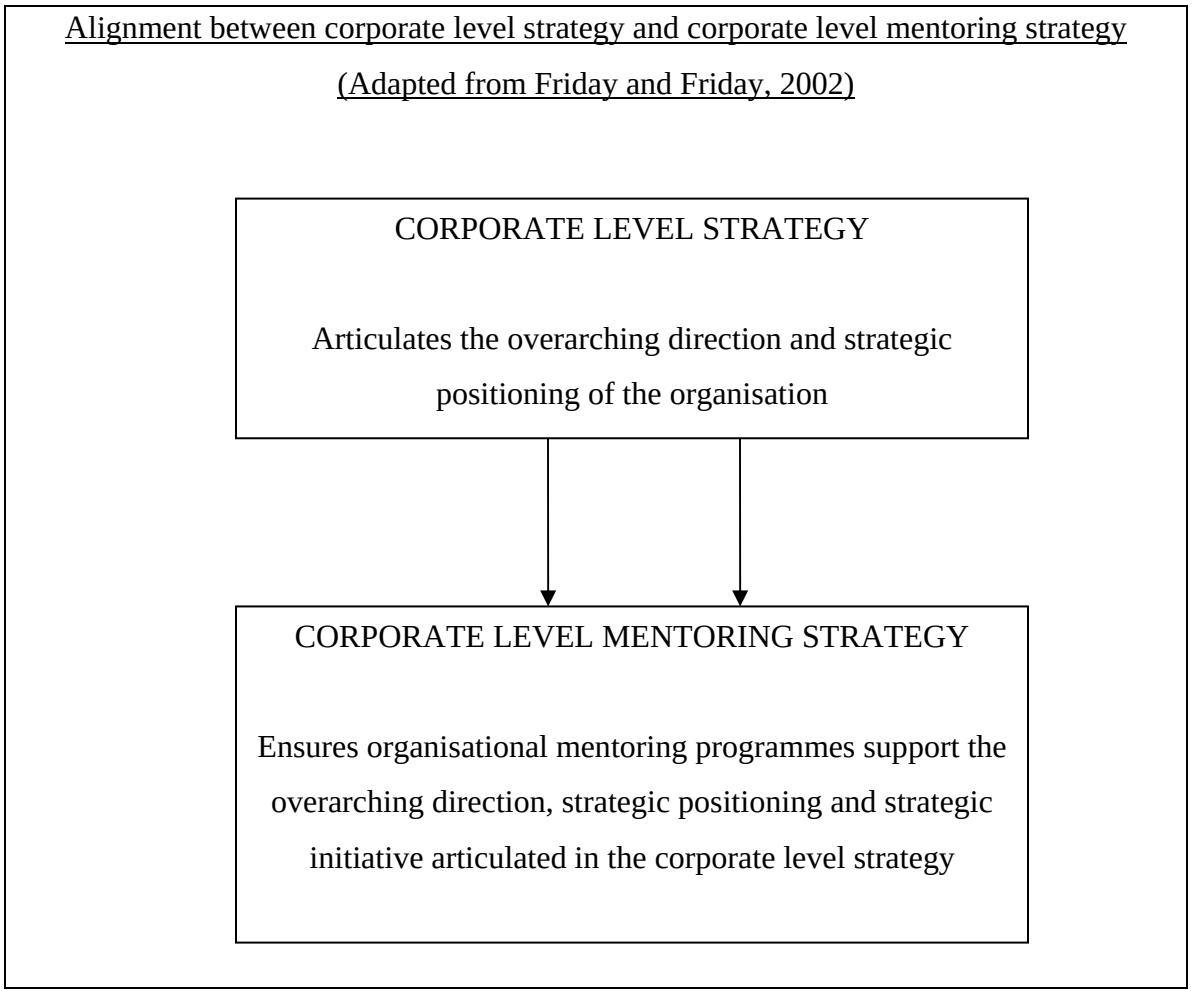


Figure 1

2.8. Focus on the Mentor

Gregson (1994) believes that not everyone has the capability of being an effective mentor. According to Gregson (1994), mentors should have the right attitudes and the right skills to be effective, as well as work within the right framework conducive to mentoring. However, Gravett (2003) believes that a good mentor is anyone from whom an individual can learn. Effective mentors are facilitators and catalysts in a process of discovery and insight, and love to learn (Bell, 1996). Mentors should be attentive through learning and listening for tasks and activities, which may help their mentees develop (Hunt, 1996). It is the part of a leader's (mentor's) role that has growth as its outcome (Bell, 1996). Lepani (1998) believes that to be an effective role model for self-development, the individual needs to encompass factors such as vision, good communication, inclusiveness, continuing learning and managing change. A change in

perspective that Clutterbuck & Megginson (1999) mention, makes mentoring such a powerful intervention, and it is the dynamics of personal reflective space that make this power manifest. These researchers believe that mentors help their mentees grow, effective mentors work on their own growth. Mentors most skilled at self-mentoring are those who choose a wide range of learning avenues (Bell, 1996). Learning, or directed growth, begins with a close personal examination. Covey (1989, p. 36) mentions that to achieve quality of life – personal effectiveness and rich, deep relationships with others – one needs to go through the natural process of work and growth to make it possible.

> "And trying to get high quality results with its techniques and quick fixes is just about as effective as trying to get to some place in Chicago using a map of Detroit."

2.9. Emotional Intelligence and Mentors

Currently, many people in organisations have undergone a breakdown in trust, uncertainty, loyalty, commitment, creativity, as well as distance between managers and co-workers (Watkin, 2000). Emotional intelligence according to Watkin (2000) encourages identifying and understanding of these issues in organisations. It proposes that employees increase their emotional self-awareness, emotional expression, increase tolerance, creativity, increase trust and integrity, improve relations within and across the organisation and thereby increase the performance of each employee and the organisation as a whole. Emotional intelligence is one of the few key characteristics that gives rise to strategic leaders in organisations (Hill and Jones, 2001). An individual with a high emotional intelligence is more empathetic, more understanding and approachable, they will share better relations with people around themselves in the organisation. Cooper & Sawaf (1997) suggested that emotional intelligence enhances the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connection and influence. Daniel Goleman (1998), in his book Working with Emotional Intelligence, suggests that emotional intelligence mainly has two components to it- personal competency and social competence. Personal competence determines how an individual manages him/herself. It consists of the following characteristics:

- Self-awareness- knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and
- Intuition;
- Self-management- managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources;
- Motivation- guiding ourselves or facilitating reaching goals;

Social Competence, on the other hand determines how an individual handles relationships. It consists of the following characteristics:

- Empathy- awareness of others feelings, needs, and concerns
- Social skills- proficiency at including desirable responses in others.

Related to being self-aware, Goldsmith (2002) believes that mentors need to understand their boundaries and limitations in their ability to help mentees. It is imperative that the mentor refer the mentee for counselling or to an Employee Assistance Programme for example, should there be a personal issue not relating to the job, as it could put the individuals as well as the organisation at risk. Covey (1996) writes that the material on emotional intelligence is something individuals know intuitively. According to him, emotional intelligence deals with another range of capacities, such as interpersonal relations, kinesthetic capacity, conceptual and creative thinking, perspective, proportion, and correlation.

2.10. Mentoring in the South African Context

The Institute of Business Advisors South Africa (IBA) in Watson (2004) identifies the mentoring relationship as an ongoing, long-term business counselling relationship between an experienced business advisor and client which covers a diverse range of topics as a business develops. According to Samuels (1994) opinions on the benefits of organisational mentorship are divided. Hofmeyer in Samuels (1994) believes that institutionalising mentorship goes against the spirit of mentorship, as the relationship

tends to evolve informally between two people. Cook et al. in Samuels (1994) noted that it is more likely in South African organisations for the mentors to be white and the mentees black, which reinforces the inequality of the relationship. However, Hunt in Samuels (1994) believes that formalised mentoring within the organisation can be successfully implemented provided that it is used within the context of the corporate strategy.

It has been noted by the researcher of the current study that very little research has been conducted on the psychological needs of South African mentors within an organisational setting. Thus, the current exploratory study attempts to identify South African mentors' psychological needs so as to facilitate their competency, growth and learning.

2.11. Summary

This chapter highlighted elements concerning mentorship and presented a critique on mentoring programmes within an organisational setting. Limited research has been conducted particularly on the focus of mentors in the South African context, therefore the current study proposes to address mentors' psychological needs so as to facilitate their growth and learning.

No mentoring relationship exists within a vacuum, thus the following chapter will briefly discuss the wider organisational and political context affecting mentorship specifically in the framework of South Africa.