The International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching

Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of The International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching! The idea of the journal reflecting the various interests of the mentoring and coaching community was first raised some 10 years ago! The idea has had a long incubation period but now it has come of age.

The journal has two main sections: Reviewed and Professional papers. The Reviewed papers have three categories:

- A Personal View
- Research Based
- Debate

And the Professional section also has three:

- Professional skills
- Cases of practice
- Focus

The academic reviewed papers section rigorously follows conventions of all academic journals in the form of double blind peer review Harvard style referencing. While the professional practitioner section is subject to rigorous editorial review. Both sections provide good quality writing and interesting comment.

We also welcome book reviews.

In this edition we have collected papers from the UK and the US and a wide cross-section of sectors are represented from consultants working in business to educationalist working with young people. The IJMC welcomes papers from all fields of mentoring and coaching.

Issues

The field of mentoring and coaching is expanding rapidly and with this expansion comes many challenges. Mentoring and coaching activity is found across the full spectrum of human activity from school children to top executives. Many of the issues raised in these contexts are in fact very similar - What do we mean when we talk of mentoring and or coaching. Is there a difference? Does the difference matter? What about codes of conduct? Standards and qualifications? Accreditation and supervision? What is the current state of research in the field? Are just some of the concerns and then there are the issues of process, relationship building, scheme design and management, skills development, boundaries, evaluation and ethical issues.

The IJMC welcomes papers on all these issues and any others not mentioned.

The Papers Peer Reviewed

We have four papers in the academic section. The first is a research paper from the US by Troy Neilson and Regina Eisenbach. It is an interesting piece of research that focuses on the quality of mentoring relationships and the nature of the meetings. Using structural equation analysis, Neilson and Eisenbach clearly demonstrate the strong links between the quality of mentoring relationships and mentoring productivity. This research is important and provides those in the mentoring and coaching community with some helpful data which can be applied in a range of contexts. For example, in mentoring for diversity, the results of this research clearly show that the necessary ingredients for good quality mentoring are similar values and attitudes as well as high quality feedback within the relationship which makes the difference. This finding challenges the idea that it is important to have similar gender or racial backgrounds in mentoring pairs as a prerequisite to high quality mentoring.

The second paper from Paul Stokes and Lis Merrick offers us some insights into the challenges of mentor supervision. It draws on research and offers up a model of supervision for critique. This is early work on an important issue but it does represent a move forward in this debate and provides us with a starting point.

The third paper is in the "debate" category and raises some important issues in the field of youth mentoring. It is the result of some collaborative work led by Prof Ray Pawson. Again, it is early work. The paper also raises issues about the nature of the various approaches to mentoring research and attempts to take a pragmatic line on the subject. You may like to join in the discussion on this one.

Following on from the Pawson paper, in the "personal view" category, David Clutterbuck offers us a view on approaches to research. David is calling for a better understanding of mentoring through high quality research. Here he is perhaps suggesting that in the UK we need to do more research in the US tradition to really start to understand the issues. Perhaps you would like to reply in the next edition?

The Papers - Professional

We have five articles in the practitioner section. The subject of supervision has been the topic most hotly debated so far on the European Mentoring and Coaching Council's new discussion forum. There are strongly held views both for and against. In this our first edition we hear the case for supervision. That comes from the Chair of the EMCC Standards and Ethics Group who outlines his personal views on the role of supervision in coaching.

We also hear from Fiona Eldridge and German-based Sabine Dembkowski about their newly developed coaching model. This is likely to be of interest to coaches who can use it to structure their coaching practice, and also to those hiring coaches who can use it as a selection tool.

There are two interesting articles offering cases of practice. The first concerns one individual and her coach. You may remember "Ruth" from Radio 4's series on coaching as a stress-busting technique. For the inside story of coaching under the media spotlight, we asked Ruth's coach Pauline Willis to offer us her story.

The other case study article outlines the experience of two employers, Cable and Wireless (World-wide) and a UK government department, in using coaching in conjunction with 360-degree feedback. It has been written as a result of reflections between the coaches and company sponsors involved so there should be some interesting insights.

Finally, for this edition's focus piece, we asked Stockholm-based EMCC member Lena Mangell and her colleague to give us the low down on coaching and mentoring in Sweden.

Please do email us and say what you think about this first edition of the e- journal. We will be really pleased if you think it's great: make sure you subscribe - well, we have to get an advert in somewhere! We'll be equally pleased if you write and explain why you didn't like it. Even better would be if you felt the need to write an article for us.

Bob Garvey and Alison Carter

Not All Relationships are Created Equal: Critical Factors of High-Quality Mentoring Relationships
By Troy R. Nielson and Regina J. Eisenbach

Abstract

Further understanding is needed of factors that contribute to more productive mentoring relationships. Empirical studies have primarily focused on demographic characteristics of the relationships (relationship duration, type (formal or informal), and composition, gender and race of participants). Drawing from the interpersonal relationships literature, this study tests the notion that the perceived quality of the relationship itself significantly influences how much mentoring actually occurs. Structural equation analysis was performed with data from participants in 150 mentoring relationships. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between relationship quality and mentoring productivity. The analysis also indicated that participant social similarity (in terms of attitudes and values) and feedback quality had significant positive effects on the quality of mentoring relationships. Implications of these findings are discussed and further research opportunities are presented.

Scenario 1: A young undergraduate student wanders into a professor's office one day asking about the possibility of joining a Ph.D. program. That chance encounter led this person to join the doctoral program. Under the professor's guidance, this student learned what it meant to be an "academic"; she learned about research, teaching, service and all that goes into the job of "professor."- In addition, the professor gave her emotional support. When she felt the program was too difficult and she wanted to drop out, he comforted her and made her realize that those feelings were completely normal. In the end, the student went on to complete her degree, get a good job, and become a contributing member of her profession.

Scenario 2:- On his first day at work, a new employee meets with his boss. The employee is aware of the experience that his boss has and looks forward to learning from him. A couple of years go by, and the employee gets advice from his boss on how to get ahead in the business. As more time goes by, the employee realizes that this advice is not consistent with his values. Furthermore, he notices that the only people who are mentored by his boss are those who don't challenge his views. One day, the employee challenges his boss; at that point, all mentoring activity ceases. The boss went so far as to specifically say that he would no longer mentor the employee. The relationship thus ended badly for the employee. He felt betrayed and angry; he even began to wonder if he should leave the organization.

The common thread in these two scenarios is the depiction of the quality of mentoring relationships. The first story illustrates a productive relationship; both parties benefited from their association. The second story, unfortunately, shows how a bad mentoring relationship can cause both career and personal anguish.

The business world has undergone a paradigm shift from the Industrial Age to the knowledge economy (Clawson, 1996; Pinchot & Pinchot, 1994; Webber, 1993). Furthermore, some noted scholars (Drucker, 1993) assert that knowledge should not be viewed as simply one more resource to be added to the usual factors of production, but that knowledge is the only meaningful resource in today's economy. Since knowledge has become such a critical resource, then the people within which that knowledge resides become the primary sources of competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1995).

Drucker (1993) adds that today's companies are in constant competition for highly skilled and dedicated people. Such people can be found externally to the organization, but another strategy is for organizations to focus more attention on the development of their own employees.

Organizations are increasingly relying on mentoring as such a development tool. It was reported that 60 out of Fortune magazine's list of the "100 Best Companies to Work for" have instituted mentoring programs (Branch, 1999). Increasingly, organizations see added value in developing the potential of their employees and mentoring is viewed as one valuable mechanism for accomplishing that objective.

The purpose of this study is to add to previous research by studying a less examined area of mentoring: namely, factors influencing the productivity and quality of mentoring relationships. In this study, we propose and test a theoretical model of factors that we expect to affect the development of such relationships. Moreover, this research extends previous studies and makes important new connections between the mentoring, communication, and interpersonal relationships literatures, with the intent of shedding new light on how participants can enhance the quality of their mentoring relationships.

Theoretical Background And Hypotheses

A traditional definition of mentoring, which will be used in this research, is that mentoring consists of a unique developmental relationship between two individuals, a mentor and a protege. The mentor is generally a higher-ranking employee who has advanced organizational (or industry) experience and knowledge and who is committed to providing guidance and support to the proteges career development. This definition has been used often in mentoring research (e.g., Fagenson, 1989; Kram, 1985; Scandura, 1992).

Academic research on the mentoring process has proliferated in the past decade. Studies have reported that mentors provide career development, psychosocial support, and role modeling functions for proteges (e.g., Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Scandura, 1992). Consistent findings on the benefits of mentoring for proteges include receiving more promotions (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Scandura, 1992) and having higher incomes (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991). Furthermore, proteges report higher career satisfaction (Turban & Dougherty, 1994), job satisfaction (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992), socialization (Chao et al., 1992), and lower turnover intentions (Scandura & Viator, 1994) than nonproteges.

Most mentoring research contains an implicit assumption that once an informal relationship has formed, it will be productive and satisfying to the participants. However, research and personal experience inform us that not all relationships are equally productive (Baum, 1992; Kram, 1985; Scandura, 1998; Thomas, 1990), especially in formal mentoring programs (Chao et al., 1992). And despite recent research on mentoring networks (Higgins & Kram, 2001), and mentoring quality (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000), there is still insufficient empirical research about factors that contribute to the quality of mentoring relationships. There have been valuable qualitative studies of mentoring relationships that have provided important insights about relationship quality and the role of conversation and dialogue in those relationships (e.g., Alred, Garvey, & Smith, 1998; Borredon, 2000; Clutterbuck & Megginson, 1999). Nevertheless, we felt it important to further examine, using an empirical approach, relationship quality and factors that improve the relationship. In this study, we defined mentoring productivity as the amount of mentoring functions (career development, psychosocial support, and role modeling) that are provided and received over the

duration of the relationship. The few empirical studies that have examined relationship factors and their impact on mentoring productivity have focused on demographic characteristics.

Demographic Factors and Mentoring Productivity

The three demographic variables that have been reported to influence mentoring productivity include: (1) relationship duration, (2) relationship type (formal vs. informal), and (3) demographic composition of the dyad (i.e., gender and racial composition).

Relationship duration and type (formal or informal). These two factors are discussed together because of their interconnectedness in previous research. Informal mentoring relationships have been found to last significantly longer and to provide more career development functions than formal mentorships (Chao et al., 1992). Informal proteges reported significantly higher levels of career-related activities than formal proteges.

Demographic composition. According to Ragins (1997), the demographic composition of the relationship will impact the amount of career development, social support, and role modeling functions that are produced in the relationship. For example, minority mentors will likely have less organizational power and will be less able to provide career development opportunities to proteges. Psychosocial and role modeling functions have been found to be higher in same-gender and same-race mentoring dyads than in diversified relationships (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Thomas, 1990). Racial diversity in the relationship has also been shown to be negatively related to the amount of psychosocial support provided by the relationship (Thomas, 1990). Thomas (1993) has also demonstrated that cross-racial relationships can be highly productive when both mentor and protege have similar attitudes for dealing with their racial differences.

This study goes beyond demographics and examines four distinct categories of relationship factors - relationship quality, interaction characteristics, source valence, and communication characteristics - that are expected to influence the productivity of the mentoring relationship.

Relational Quality: Key to Mentoring Productivity

Although demographics and power may explain some variance in the productivity of mentoring relationships, it can be argued that they are insufficient predictors of mentoring productivity. We submit that the quality of the relationship is the critical (and mostly neglected) factor leading to the amount of mentoring that actually occurs. A recent study showed that protege satisfaction with the mentoring relationship significantly contributed to positive work and career attitudes by the protege (Ragins et al., 2000). However, this research stopped short of exploring possible antecedents to mentoring relationship quality. We developed a model (see Figure 1) that hypothesizes three critical antecedents of mentoring relationship quality: interaction frequency, source valence, and communication characteristics.

Figure 1

Theoretical Model of Factors Influencing Productivity in Mentoring Relationships
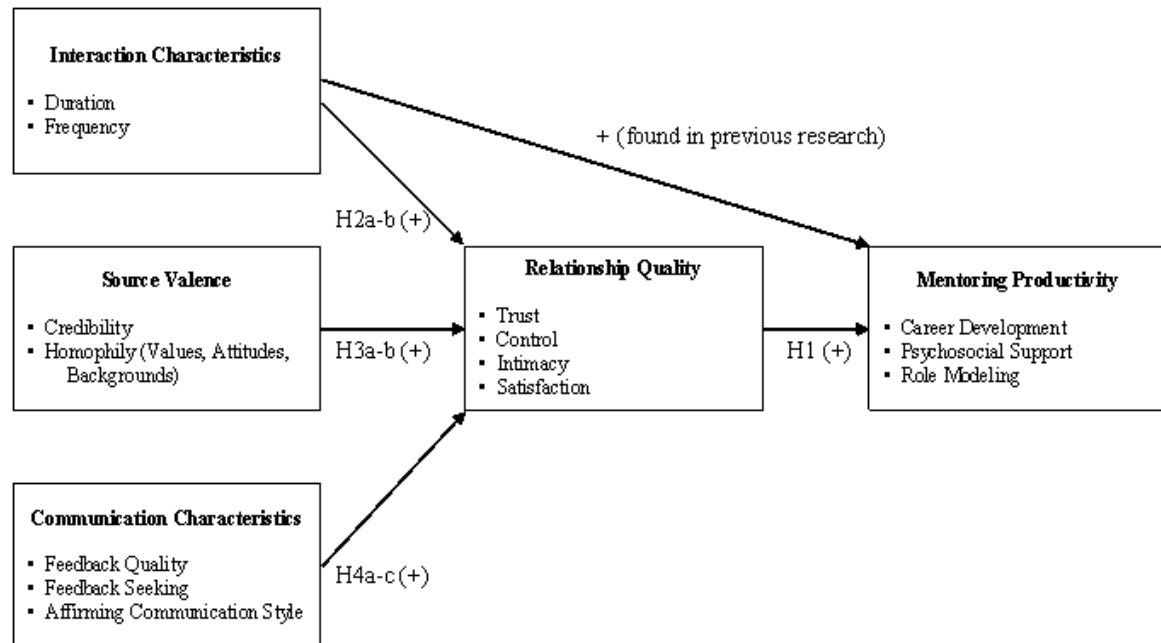
The central premise of this model, which has its roots in interpersonal relationships literature, is that when a relationship is viewed by both parties as satisfying and of high quality, they are more likely to help each other and produce what is desired by each party. Research on interpersonal relationships has identified four dimensions of relationship quality that influence relationship outcomes: trust, control, intimacy, and satisfaction (e.g., Canary & Spitzberg, 1989; Millar & Rogers, 1976). Trust refers to the level of interpersonal trust between mentor and protege. Control does not signify who is making decisions but the level of agreement on how decisions are being made and the relative influence of each party on the relationship. Intimacy focuses on the degree of familiarity that the mentoring partners have with each other. Satisfaction is a general assessment of how pleased a mentoring participant is with the other member of the mentoring relationship and with that particular relationship overall. The study by Ragins and colleagues (2000) measured relationship quality only by relationship satisfaction.

Substantial support exists for the model's hypothesized positive relationship between relational quality and mentoring productivity. First, Clawson (1980) argued for both trust and intimacy as key differentiating factors in the amount of learning that subordinates obtained from interaction with superiors. Second, recent theory and research on interpersonal trust suggest that trust is an essential predictor of risk-taking behavior in relationships (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). When mentors back proteges for promotions or challenging job assignments, they are often placing themselves at some risk. If the protege fails, then the mentor's reputation can be damaged (Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Scandura, 1994). Increased visibility that often accompanies involvement in mentoring relationships augments the risk in mentoring relationships. Third, according to Kram (1985), the most productive stage of the mentoring relationship should be the cultivation stage, characterized by the evolution of trust, norms and performance expectations. The separation stage following cultivation is described as the protege and/or the mentor deciding that the mentor's

influence and guidance are no longer needed. In other words, the level of control desired by each participant has changed. Kram (1985) also alludes to dissatisfaction with the relationship as a primary catalyst for separation.

H1: - - - Mentoring relationship quality will be positively related to mentoring productivity.

The next issue is to examine the critical antecedents of high-quality mentoring relationships. Three sets of variables are investigated in this study that are expected to influence relationship quality: (1) interaction characteristics, (2) source valence concepts, and (3) communication characteristics. The underlying notion in selecting these constructs is that effective communication is vital to the quality of any interpersonal relationship. Considering the types of functions that mentors provide to proteges (e.g., coaching, counseling, problem-solving), it is logical that communication plays a particularly critical role in the dynamics of the mentoring relationship. Mentoring relationships that have become destructive rather than productive reveal communication breakdowns as essential elements in the dysfunctional relationships (Baum, 1992; Kram, 1985; Scandura, 1998). We included interaction characteristics because these variables represent opportunities for mentors and proteges to interrelate. We incorporated source valence variables to account for a participant's motivation to communicate with the mentoring partner. And finally, we examined specific communications attributes that focus on individual communication skills.

Interaction Characteristics

Interaction characteristics refer to those aspects of the mentoring relationship that affect how much communication actually occurs. Frequency of interaction and relationship duration, as depicted in Figure 1, are predicted to positively influence the quality of mentoring relationships. Increased interactions should result in the building of trust and intimacy, and the clarification of expectations that will lead to more solid relationships and subsequent productive mentoring activities. The duration of informal mentoring relationships has been found as an important factor in the amount of mentoring that actually takes place (Chao et al., 1992), so this path is also depicted in the model but is not listed as a study hypothesis.

H2a: - - - Interaction frequency will be positively related to mentoring relationship quality.

H2b: - - - Relationship duration will be positively related to mentoring relationship quality.

Source Valence

Source valence can be defined as the perceived characteristics of an individual which influence the affective bonds and attitudes that others hold for that individual (Garrison, Pate, & Sullivan, 1981). The underlying argument with source valence is that the perceptions a mentor and protege have of each other will influence their motivation to communicate in the relationship. The higher a person's valence for the other member of the relationship, the greater the desire to communicate and build a quality relationship. Two dimensions of the source valence construct will be utilized in this research: credibility and homophily (McCroskey & Wheeless, 1976). Source valence concepts have been found to predict different levels of intimacy in diverse relationship contexts (Garrison et al., 1981).

Credibility. The five dimensions that constitute source credibility are competence, character, sociability, composure, and extroversion (McCroskey, Hamilton, & Weiner, 1974). Credibility has been reported to be positively related to voluntary exposure to communication (McCroskey et al., 1974), acquisition of information (Lashbrook, Snavely, & Sullivan, 1977), and persuasive ability (Andersen & Clevenger, 1963). These findings applied to mentoring suggest that when mentors and

proteges perceive each other as credible, more information will be communicated (both personal and job-related). Proteges will be more likely to follow the advice of mentors who are perceived to be credible. This line of thinking is consistent with Hunt and Michael's (1983) argument that effective mentors tend to be successful in their careers. Research indicates that credibility also enhances a protege's attractiveness to potential mentors (Kanter, 1977; Olian et al., 1993).

Homophily. Also known as social similarity, this construct is defined as perceptions of similarities between individuals in terms of specific social characteristics. One of the fundamental communication principles is that homophily increases the frequency of communication attempts and enhances communication effectiveness (Garrison et al., 1981; Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Like credibility, homophily consists of multiple dimensions: attitudes, background, values, and appearance (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1974). Social similarity has been found to increase liking (Lincoln & Miller, 1979; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989) and positive relationships have also been found between social similarity and the quality of leader-follower relationships (e.g., Phillips & Bedeian, 1994). Mentoring scholars have raised concerns about the effectiveness of mentoring in diversified relationships, noting the complexities that are introduced by a lack of similarity in backgrounds, communication styles, and work histories (cf. Ragins, 1997; Thomas, 1993). Therefore, the following hypotheses are predicted by source valence concepts.

H3a: - - - Credibility will be positively related to mentoring relationship quality.

H3b: - - - Homophily will be positively related to mentoring relationship quality.

Communication Characteristics

Communication is a ubiquitous element of interpersonal relationships. However, research on the influence of communication concepts on mentoring relationships has been noticeably absent, with the exception of an informative treatise of how non-linear learning and dance-like conversation affects mentoring interactions (Alred et al., 1998). The model of mentoring productivity developed for this study posits that the what (feedback) and how (style) of communication will impact the quality of the relationship, which will then influence mentoring productivity.

Feedback. Organizational researchers and psychologists have concluded that feedback is an important component of career development and personal learning (London, 1997). In mentoring relationships, where the mentor is attempting to help the protege develop new skills and prepare for promotional opportunities and more challenging job assignments, the importance of effective feedback should be even more significant. Despite the potential value of feedback, a recent meta-analysis revealed that almost 40 percent of the effects of feedback on performance have been negative (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Two components of feedback effectiveness are the feedback quality and the willingness to both seek and give feedback.

Feedback quality. London (1997) summarized four critical factors that contribute to feedback quality. First, the content of the feedback should be clear, specific, and easily understood. Second, the feedback should focus on situations or behaviors that the person receiving the feedback has the power to change. Third, feedback needs to be provided in a timely and consistent manner. Finally, feedback should be given in such a way that the recipient can take the comments and apply them to improve his or her performance. The expectations of proteges in mentoring relationships include the transmission of valuable performance feedback from their mentors, so the quality of such feedback becomes even more critical.

Feedback seeking. Another important factor in mentoring relationships is how willing each participant is to seek and give feedback about both individual performance and the development of the relationship. Feedback seeking in organizations may be done by either monitoring the environment for cues or by active inquiry of other organizational members (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; London, 1997). Even though seeking feedback can provide beneficial insights to employees, many are reluctant to seek feedback due to the potential for criticism and damage to egos (London, 1997). In fact, research suggests that those employees who need performance improvements the most are the least likely to seek feedback (Karl & Kopf, 1993). In mentoring relationships with participants who are hesitant to seek or provide feedback, the key elements of relationship quality are likely to suffer, along with the amount of practical career-related information being communicated.

Affirming style. Affirming style is a cluster of communicator style dimensions that demonstrate support and affirmation of another individual's self-concept (Infante & Gorden, 1989). Drawing from initial conceptualizations and empirical research on communication style (Norton, 1978, 1983; Montgomery & Norton, 1980), Infante and Gorden (1989) identified the dimensions of being attentive, friendly, and relaxed as essential to an affirming communication style. For this study, the dimension of openness is added because of previous support for the importance of openness in productive supervisor-subordinate relationships (Clawson, 1980). An affirming communication style is positively related to perceptions of communication competence, relationship satisfaction, and organizational commitment (e.g., Infante & Gorden, 1989, 1991). Participants in mentoring relationships that communicate with an affirming style would be expected to have higher quality relationships. To develop and maintain productive mentoring relationships requires greater cooperation, reciprocity, mutual commitment, and interpersonal skills than in the past (Kram, 1996). The concepts of feedback quality, feedback seeking, and affirming communication style have been found to be important predictors of satisfaction and productivity in other types of interpersonal relationships.

H4a: - - - Feedback quality will be positively related to mentoring relationship quality.

H4b: - - - Feedback seeking will be positively related to mentoring relationship quality.

H4c: - - - Affirming style will be positively related to mentoring relationship quality.

Methods

Procedures and Participants.The current study was part of a larger effort to examine mentoring attitudes and relationships at a large healthcare organization. The definition of mentoring relationships used in this research was provided to 400 managers who had expressed willingness to participate in the study. Of these 400 managers, 223 (56%) reported that they were in ongoing mentoring relationships with other organizational members, including 88 respondents who reported being in concurrent relationships as both mentor and protege. Respondents who indicated they were mentors in one relationship and proteges in a different relationship were asked to complete two surveys, one for each relationship. From the 311 surveys distributed, a total of 150 usable surveys were returned (48%) from 134 respondents (60% of the 223 potential respondents). Characteristics of the respondents that comprised this study's sample were 41 percent males, 95 percent Caucasian, 80 percent married, 92 percent having at least a bachelor's degree, 42.4 years old, and worked 48.3 hours per week, with an average of 12.6 years of employment with the sample organization.

Measurement

Unless otherwise noted, the items used to measure each variable were based upon a five-point Likert scale, with the anchors being "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree."- Internal reliabilities for each scale will be listed along the diagonal in the descriptive statistics table (see Table 1) presented in the results section. More detailed information about the measurement component of this study are available from the authors.

Mentoring functions. Mentoring productivity was measured using Scandura's fifteen-item mentoring scale (e.g., Scandura, 1992; Scandura & Ragins, 1993). This scale includes items for each of the three main mentoring functions provided to proteges: career development (six items), psychosocial support (five items), and role modeling (four items).

Communication characteristics.Feedback quality was assessed using six items adapted from previous research on the necessary elements of effective feedback. Feedback seeking was measured with a five-item scale focusing on the frequency with which one person in the relationship seeks feedback from the other person. Both of the feedback variable scales were developed specifically for this study based upon concepts reported by London (1997). Affirming style was measured using a modified version of the Communicator Style Measure - Short Form (Montgomery & Norton, 1981), that has been used in previous research (e.g., Infante & Gorden, 1989). This instrument consists of sixteen items (four items per dimension) covering the four desired style dimensions (friendly, relaxed, attentive, open) of the affirming style construct.

Data Analysis

The relationships in the model (see Figure 1) were tested with structural equation modeling. Structural equation modeling allows for all the relationships in the model to be tested simultaneously and also takes into account direct and indirect effects. Structural equation modeling also accounts for random measurement error and more accurately reflects the relationships of interest. Mean scale scores were computed to create single indicators for each latent variable. This was necessary because of the sample size relative to the number of parameters being estimated by LISREL. This approach has been used in several studies and is used to correct for random measurement error (e.g., Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Renn & Vandenberg, 1995; additional details about this technique are available from the authors).

To determine the model's fit with the data, several indicators of goodness-of-fit were examined for the specific information each provides. The GFI (goodness-of-fit index) and chi-square provide a measure of the extent to which the covariance matrix estimated by the hypothesized model adequately fits the observed covariance matrix (James, Mulaik, & Brett, 1982). The CFI (centrality fit index) gives the best approximation of the population value for a single model (e.g., Medsker, Williams, & Holohan, 1994). The RMSR (root mean square residual) is considered because it gives a measure of the average difference between the model-predicted covariances and actual covariances measured by the data (Medsker et al., 1994). Finally, the PNFI (parsimony normed fit index) combines both parsimony and goodness-of-fit into one indicator.

Results

Descriptive statistics will be presented and then results from the LISREL analysis will be presented in two parts: (1) assessment of the overall model, and (2) examination of the individual model hypotheses.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables used in this study. Significant positive correlations were found for all relationships between source valence, communication, relationship quality, and mentoring variables, with one exception. The only correlation among those variables that was not significant was between homophily and feedback seeking (0.11). Respondents reported significantly more career development and role modeling activities occurring in their relationships than psychosocial support activities (t = 15.51, p < .001 and t = 17.50, p < .001, respectively). Finally, the mean score of the relationship quality scale (4.14 out of 5) indicates that the typically reported positive qualities of most informal mentoring relationships held true in this study.

Table 1

Factors of Mentoring Productivity

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations[a]

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Interaction Frequency	4.43	0.63	---										
2. Relationship Duration	4.03	3.57	-.07	---									
3. Credibility	4.16	0.56	-.11	.19*	(.75)								
4. Homophily	3.53	0.57	.02	.09	.47*	(.73)							
5. Feedback Quality	4.07	0.55	-.10	.03	.49*	.35*	(.79)						
6. Feedback Seeking	3.49	0.70	-.09	.04	.38*	.11	.50*	(.74)					
7. Affirming Style	3.63	0.56	-.15*	.06	.62*	.52*	.54*	.44*	(.87)				
8. Relationship Quality	4.14	0.56	-.09	.25*	.54*	.54*	.62*	.41*	.53*	(.93)			
9. Career Development	4.11	0.64	-.06	.24*	.44*	.38*	.65*	.50*	.41*	.67*	(.86)		
10. Psychosocial Support	3.12	0.82	.14*	.31*	.26*	.32*	.27*	.35*	.26*	.48*	.47*	(.79)	
11. Role Modeling	4.20	0.63	-.16*	.17*	.59*	.42*	.67*	.47*	.46*	.65*	.58*	.39*	(.80)

[a]N = 150. The numbers in parentheses on the diagonal are coefficient alphas.
* p < .05

Assessment of the Overall Model

To test the overall goodness of the theoretical model, the fit statistics for the model were computed and compared with a null model, as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Based upon the results from the LISREL analysis, the theoretical model was moderately effective. The overall fit of the model was good with critical fit indices (GFI and CFI) close to the desired level of .90. The GFI was .89 and the CFI was .85, while the RMSR was .06 (values of .05 or lower are best) and the PNFI was .35 (the higher the number, the more parsimonious the model). The theoretical model was significantly better than the null model (M n) as expected.

Individual Hypotheses

The standardized path loadings of the theoretical model are presented in Figure 2. Of the eight predicted paths in the theoretical model, four were significant. The four significant paths were relationship quality to mentoring (H1), relationship duration to relationship quality (H2b), homophily to relationship quality (H3b), and feedback quality to relationship quality (H4a). Although all the predictor variables except interaction frequency were positively correlated with both relationship

quality and mentoring, when they were tested simultaneously the important factors of mentoring productivity were relationship duration, homophily, feedback quality, and relationship quality.

Figure 2

LISREL Path Coefficients of the Theoretical Model of Mentoring Productivity (nonsignificant paths are indicated by dashed lines)
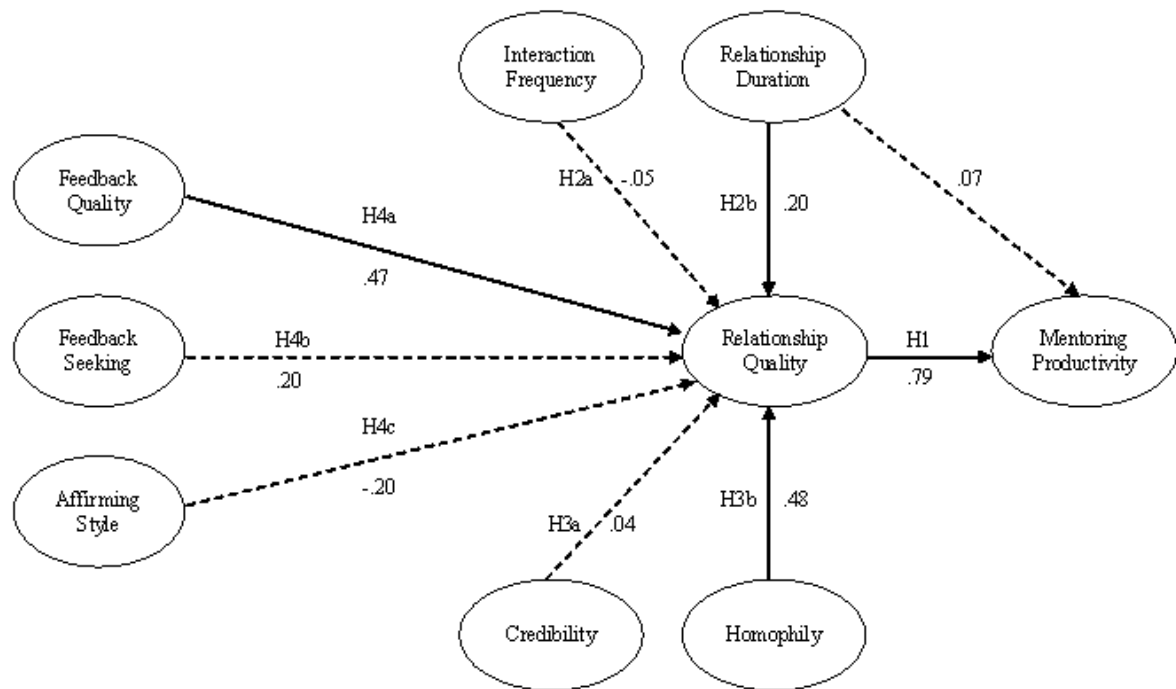
Since homophily was significant to relationship quality, an additional regression analysis was performed to determine which dimensions of homophily (attitudes, background, values) were most critical to the quality of mentoring relationships. Results indicated that the attitudes and values dimensions were significantly related to relationship quality, whereas the background dimension was not significant.

Discussion

Discussion of the Results

An essential finding of this study is the importance of relationship quality to productive mentoring activities. The correlations (Table 1) reveal that relationship quality is positively associated with each of the three mentoring functions. Even when a direct link is added between feedback quality and mentoring (suggested by post hoc LISREL modification indices), relationship quality and mentoring still have a significant positive relationship. The findings underscore the importance that mentoring participants should place on the process of developing the relationship itself and not focusing solely on the outcomes of the mentoring process. These results reinforce the findings from the recent Ragins study (Ragins et al., 2000).

Interaction characteristics. Frequency of interaction between mentor and protege was not a significant explanatory variable to either relationship quality or mentoring productivity. One possibility for this lack of significance is that the measurement of frequency did not account for either the length of the interactions (time spent together) or the quality of those interactions. Duration of the relationship was positively related to relationship quality but not to mentoring productivity. These results of relationship duration contradict the findings reported by Chao and colleagues (1992) in a study that did not include the relationship quality variable. This is not to say that mentoring relationships of longer duration are not more productive, but that the cause of their higher productivity is stronger relationship quality.

Source valence characteristics. Credibility and homophily were strongly correlated with relationship quality and with all three mentoring functions. However, when examined by structural equation modeling, homophily was found to be the significant factor in relationship quality. The implication that socially similar mentoring relationships are more productive is not a new one. It has been described in negative terms because of its impact on more diversified work forces. However, an important finding from this study is that it is similarity in values and attitudes that makes the difference, not similarity in backgrounds. Results of this study support the findings reported by Thomas (1993) in his study of cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Compatibility in values and attitudes is important for productive mentoring to occur.

Communication characteristics. Of the three communication variables tested in this study, the most important in terms of the overall model of mentoring productivity was the quality of feedback provided by the mentor to the protege. The quality of feedback occurring in the 150 ongoing relationships in this study was fairly high on average (mean=4.07). Feedback quality was found to not only be an important factor in the quality of the mentoring relationship, but also in the mentoring activities themselves. This finding suggests that even when the mentor and protege may be struggling in their relationship with each other, productive mentoring can still occur if the mentor provides specific and timely feedback about the protege's performance.

Feedback seeking behavior and an affirming communication style were positively correlated with relational quality and with the mentoring functions, but when examined simultaneously with the other predictor variables, they were not significant predictors. Perhaps the amount of feedback seeking in mentoring relationships is influenced by the perceived quality of the feedback that has already been given. For example, if a mentor observes a protege perform some job-related task and then immediately gives the protege specific feedback on what the protege did correctly and what could be improved the next time, then the protege may be more likely to seek feedback in the future.

Implications for Mentoring Theory and Practice

An important implication for mentoring theory from this study is the exploration of what occurs in ongoing mentoring relationships. Relationship quality is a construct that needs to be included in subsequent research on mentoring productivity. Previous mentoring research has consistently demonstrated the mixed results of diversified mentoring relationships (cf. Ragins, 1997), but empirical evidence for the variance in productivity of these relationships has been lacking. This study is a needed step toward explaining how relationship factors impact mentoring productivity. Furthermore, this research goes beyond case studies and anecdotal descriptions of productive and unproductive mentoring relationships. Providing empirical evidence of critical relationship factors that are influential in productive mentoring relationships can serve as a basis for further theory building of mentoring relationship dynamics.

This study also makes an important contribution by linking the literatures of communications and interpersonal relationships to that of mentoring. Because mentoring is a unique type of interpersonal relationship (e.g., Kram, 1985) and communication skills have been identified as critical components of mentoring activities (Kram, 1996), more mentoring research should incorporate key constructs drawn from these relevant bodies of research. For example, one research question could explore whether there is a difference in the way effective mentors communicate their proteges' weaknesses to those proteges.

As organizations encourage informal mentoring activities or strive to implement formal mentoring programs, two implications for mentoring practice from this research may be of value: (1) seek to find mentors and proteges with similar values and attitudes, and (2) train managers on the art of giving quality feedback and relationship maintenance. Mentoring scholars have voiced concerns about the complexities of cross-gender and cross-cultural mentoring relationships for some time now. One of the concerns for organizations who want to develop their minority employees is how to select mentors who will be productive with people different than themselves. This study reported that homophily is indeed a critical factor of the perceived quality of the mentoring relationship. However, the important dimensions of homophily were attitudes and values, not backgrounds or status. Similar to the findings of Thomas (1993) that consistent attitudes about discussing racial issues in his sample of mentoring relationships led to more productive relationships, the findings of this study imply that organizations need to try to match up employees based upon similarities in work and life values as opposed to demographic criteria such as gender and race.

Another implication of this research for organizations is the need to train managers better in their interpersonal skills, especially in terms of giving quality feedback. Lack of interpersonal skills has frequently been cited as a reason why managers fail. Executives have reported that MBA programs typically have not prepared future managers effectively in the area of interpersonal communication (Whetten & Cameron, 1998). The importance of feedback quality to both relationship quality and mentoring productivity found in this study indicates that organizations would be well served to commit more time and resources to training the skill of giving effective feedback. Research on performance feedback has found that managers often are uncomfortable providing the constructive, specific feedback needed for performance improvements (London, 1997). As shown in this study, mentors who really know how to develop the organization's human resources know both how and when to give feedback.

Research Limitations & Future Opportunities

Perhaps the greatest limitation of this study is that all of the measures used were derived from the self-reports of respondents. The findings could be influenced by common method variance, response consistency effects, or other issues common to self-report methods. This limitation is not uncommon in research on mentoring (e.g., Turban & Dougherty, 1994). The perceptual nature of this topic increases the appropriateness of this method of data gathering. Furthermore, a review by Crampton and Wagner (1994) challenges the validity of general condemnation of self-report methods. Harmon one-factor tests (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) were conducted to test for common method variance. No significant evidence of these effects was found.

Another limitation is the recognition that the model tested in this study represents an incomplete view of the factors that enhance mentoring relationship quality. The variables used in the model were purposefully constrained to those drawn from the communication and interpersonal relationships literatures. Additional independent variables (e.g., personality and attitudinal variables) need to be examined in the future.

A third limitation of this study is the generalizability of the findings. Although the study did include respondents from many different types of occupations (e.g., accountants, vice presidents, physicians, laboratory technicians, hospital administrators), it was conducted in one organization in the healthcare industry. The current model of mentoring productivity was found to an appropriate model for the informal mentoring relationships in this particular organization. Further testing of the model should be conducted with formal mentoring relationships and in more culturally diverse organizations.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the research does not allow much insight into the nature of the variable relationships over time. For example, it is not clear how the interaction of relationship quality and mentoring productivity plays out over the course of the relationship. It is very likely that as proteges benefit from more of the mentoring activities produced in the relationship they will perceive the quality of the relationship in an even more positive light. While a reciprocal relationship may well exist to some degree, we have good reasons for our confidence that relationship quality is a better causal predictor of mentoring productivity, rather than productivity causing relationship quality. First, research in interpersonal relationships suggests that the higher the quality of the relationship, the more that parties in the relationship will seek to produce outcomes important to that relationship (Millar & Rogers, 1976). Second, Mayer and colleagues (1995) argue convincingly for a causal sequence in which trusting relationships lead to risk-taking behaviors in those relationships and subsequent outcomes. Finally, in an effort to partially address this concern, post hoc LISREL analysis was conducted on the current dataset. The causal direction of relationship quality and mentoring productivity was reversed resulting in substantially poorer fit indices. This, however, does not diminish the need for longitudinal studies of the mentoring process to address issues of causality. It should also be noted that this limitation is common to the empiricist approach of our study (as opposed to a social constructionist perspective on this relationship).

In conclusion, mentoring and other work-related relationships have been argued as having a more central role in the success of individual careers in the current business environment (Hall, 1996; Kram, 1996). Also, additional concerns have been voiced about the productivity of cross-cultural and cross-gender mentoring relationships in the face of more diversified workforces (Ragins, 1997; Thomas, 1993). For these reasons, research on factors of productive mentoring relationships is critical. Findings from this research suggest that mentors and proteges with similar attitudes and values develop high-quality relationships and that both mentors and proteges need skills in providing specific performance feedback. The skills of giving and receiving quality feedback are often overlooked by both organizational training programs and business school courses. In the current business environment high-quality developmental relationships should be even more important to individual and organizational success. But such relationships do not materialize magically; consequently, we need to further our understanding of the factors that contribute most to productive mentoring relationships.

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Mentor Development & Supervision: "A Passionate Joint Enquiry"

By Lis Merrick & Paul Stokes

Abstract: In this article, the authors examine the relationship between the developing experience of the mentor against the formality and functions of supervision required in mentoring. They develop a conceptual schema for mentor development and supervision, which is offered to practitioners and mentoring researchers as a starting point for further discussion and research.

Introduction

What is mentor supervision? How might we think about this in relation to mentor development? These are the questions we seek to address in this article as we explore what mentoring supervision might mean and what functions it can perform in mentoring. John Rowan in Inskipp and Proctor (1995) describes supervision as "a passionate joint enquiry" (p. 4), which is an interesting label for what is developing into a new and perhaps slightly controversial trend in the field of mentoring. However, Hess (1980) comes closest in our view to offering us a clue as to why supervision in mentoring is worthy of discussion. He defines supervision as "a quintessential interpersonal interaction with the general goal that one person, the supervisor, meets with another, the supervisee, in an effort to make the latter more effective in helping people" (Hawkins and Shohet, 2002 p. 50).

In other words, he recognises that all professional helpers - including mentors - need to address their own skills development so as to continue to be effective. This seems persuasive enough to merit further investigation of what mentoring supervision might mean and how it might be useful.

Whilst Feasey (2002, p. 2) points out that: "the concept of supervision has existed in the world of work and learning, especially the learning of skills and tasks, for as long as the recorded history of work has existed", supervision is a relatively new field of practice within mentoring. This is somewhat surprising given that - as is often pointed out - the origins of mentoring go back to Greek mythology. This may be because - as Feltham (2000) and Stokes (2003) discuss - like counselling, mentoring is becoming increasingly governed by national standards and frameworks, as part of a desire to 'professionalise' mentoring. Whatever, the drivers for this trend, supervision is developing into a prominent topic in mentoring.

Although mentor supervision is a new practice, it is nevertheless a well-defined feature within the world of counselling, social work and psychotherapy. It is predominantly from these areas of work that the ensuing discussion on supervision will be drawn from.

What is Supervision?

A mentor supervisor appears to mean many things, but the common themes taken from two recent focus sessions with a cross section of mentoring practitioners, led by one of the authors in May and June 2003 include:

- Being a mentor to the mentors,
- Being able to explore techniques and help with problems,
- An opportunity to reflect on own practice,

- To support a mentor who feels out of their depth,
- As a mark of good practice for the profession,
- To support with ethical issues,
- To be available for the mentor as an emotional safety valve.

This echoes Barrett's (2002) work, which puts forward the following benefits of being supervised:

- Preventing personal burn-out,
- A celebration of what I do,
- Demonstrating skill/knowledge,
- Helping me to focus on my blind-spot(s),
- Discovering my own pattern of behaviours,
- Developing skills as a mentor,
- A quality control process; and
- Providing a different angle on an issue.

Barrett's (2002) work aside, there has been relatively little attention focused on mentoring supervision in the mentoring literature. However, the importance of the supervision role is apparent in other helping professions, with critical discussions emerging in psychoanalysis (Kutter 2002); medicine (Marrow et al, 2002); education (Blasé & Blasé, 2002) & social work (Maidment & Cooper, 2002). This critical reflexivity may be due to changes in the way other helpers understand the supervision process. For example, Law (2000), when exploring counselling, argues that "the original concept of supervision as primarily an element of training has altered and its role as a means of providing monitoring, support and education for counsellors throughout their careers has taken on greater significance" (p. 27). This suggests a more holistic view of helping through supervision than simply training or advising hence drawing it closer to mentoring in terms of its breadth of scope. In this vein, Feasey (2002) argues:

"The supervisor is very much a mentor and model for the counsellor in training. She models emphatic attention and the ability to offer insightful reflection as well as to inculcate the values of the counselling code." (p. xi).

This widening of the notion of supervision in other professions has coincided with increasing concerns with how mentors might be developed within the mentoring community (see Garvey & Alred, 2000 for a useful discussion of educating mentors). Hence, there seems to be a general readiness to explore what supervision means for a range of such professions/disciplines and what roles/functions it might fulfil.

Kadushin (1976) in his work on social work supervision describes the three roles of supervision as "educative, supportive and managerial". Similarly, Proctor (1988) in considering counselling supervision, uses the terms "formative, restorative and normative". Hawkins and Shohet (2002) have linked these processes to create three main functions for supervision in the helping professions:

- Educative/Formative, which develops the skills, understanding and abilities of the supervisees by encouraging reflection on their work.
- Supportive/Restorative, which concentrates on allowing the supervisee time to become aware of how the impact of the work they are involved in is affecting them and to deal with these reactions and emotions.
- Managerial/Normative, which in reality is the quality assurance aspect of supervision, the supervisor helps the supervisee to consider their work, identify their blind spots and work within ethical standards.

Whilst we might explore the issue of supervision in much more detail, our aim here is to explore the issue of mentoring supervision as distinct from supervision in other helping relationships. In this sense, Hawkins & Shohet's (2002) categories seem sufficiently generic to use as a starting point for this discussion.

Exploring the relationship between different supervision functions in mentoring and level of mentor development

Considering the paucity of roles and functions viewed as part of mentor supervision, it seems important to create a conceptual framework around these ideas to assist in making sense of this subject. It makes sense to start with the literature on counselling development as Kram (1985) identifies counselling skills as an integral part of mentoring as part of its psycho-social function (see Stokes, 2003 for a more critical discussion of the relationship between counselling and mentoring).

Hawkins and Shohet (2002) offer four categories of counsellor development listed below:

- The Novice
- The Apprentice
- The Journey Person
- The Master Craftsperson

Whilst it can sometimes be unhelpful to artificially compartmentalise human development, this sort of framework is helpful as it offers a typology which the helper can compare themselves against and begin to identify for themselves what their development needs might be.

We have generated some similar stages for mentor development and offer them to be used as a device for mentoring practitioners to aid reflection on their own practice. We will use these categories to structure the following discussion on mentor development and supervision. These mentor development categories are as follows:

- Novice Mentor
- Developing Mentor
- Reflective Mentor
- Reflexive Mentor.

Each of these stages will now be explored in relation to mentor development and the implications for supervision.

The Novice Mentor

A Novice Mentor is someone who may be new to mentoring, with little or no experience of mentoring in practice. This does not mean that they are untrained or unskilled, but that they have relatively little experience as a mentor of participating in a live, dynamic human mentoring process. They may well have been mentored themselves or used mentoring skills in their work/profession but may not have thought of themselves as a mentor before. As a result, such a mentor may well have development needs that are different and distinct from more experienced mentors. For instance, they will need to become familiar with the protocols of mentoring within their particular scheme and what its aims and objectives are. They will therefore need help and support in defining/refining their approach,so that it is consistent with their scheme. Clearly, they will also need help in gaining access to the various theory and models of mentoring that exist.

Implications For Supervision

Whilst there will be a number of development agendas for the Novice Mentor, one of the important functions of the supervisor at this stage is to ensure that mentoring is operating in a way that is congruent with the aims of the scheme. This closely resembles what Hawkins & Shohet (2002) call the management/normative function of supervision.

This 'quality assurance'/audit function has two main purposes:

- To check the mentor's ability as a mentor i.e. are they using the key skills of acceptance, empathy and congruence with their mentee?
- To bestow what Feltham (2000) calls the "aura of professionalism" to ensure scheme credibility in the eyes of its sponsors

Within organisational schemes, where supervisors may be organisational members, this affords the supervisor the opportunity to intervene to avoid any damage to the mentee as well as to the reputation of the programme. This intervention is likely to be indirect i.e. helping the mentor to rectify or repair any damage done but may also be direct where the supervisor may need to intervene personally - this is where the role of supervisor and scheme organiser may be conflated, which can create difficulties and a conflict of interests. (see Megginson & Stokes, 2003)

The Developing Mentor

In one sense, all mentors might be considered to be developing and continuing to learn but in this context, the Developing Mentor is someone who can no longer be considered to be a novice, as they have some experience of mentoring 'under their belt' and understand the 'rules' within their particular scheme/context. They can use a well-known mentoring model/ process (eg Kram 1983) they can follow within a mentoring conversation and they will have an awareness of some of the skills and behaviours required by an effective mentor (see Clutterbuck & Megginson, 1999 for examples of skills/roles involved). However, this knowledge and repertoire of behaviours is basic and their comfort zone as a mentor is still fairly limited and confined to small repertoire of behaviours.

Implications For Supervision

At this stage, the Developing Mentor needs to start to identify other ways of mentoring so as to expand their effectiveness as a mentor. The supervisor may therefore need to pay more attention to supporting the mentor in their process development and in recognising the dynamics within a mentoring relationship. This closely resembles what Hawkins & Shohet (2002) refer to as the educative/formative supervision role. The supervisor will need to model some of the behaviours involved in order to help the mentor acquire these skills and may indeed coach them specifically in these areas where appropriate.

The supervisor needs to support the mentor in identifying a mentoring process that is effective for them to utilise and working with them to aid their understanding of the different phases and stages of the process, skills required etc.

Pilgrim and Treacher (1992) identify this as more effective than a formal training programme, arguing that "much more emphasis should be placed on the training function of the supervisor and far less on formal teaching" (p. 105). In this sense, we are comfortable with calling this the Training Supervision function.

Interestingly, one of the authors (Merrick) is working closely with Deutsche Telekom on their "Mentoring for Women" programme in Germany, where no formal training takes place, but mentor supervision is utilised on a monthly basis to "train" the mentors in the process and skills required.

Gaining an awareness of the boundaries of the relationship and what skills they are required to use is particularly important for the Developing Mentor. Mentors who are able to participate in a comprehensive programme of mentor training may have gained much of this knowledge on the programme, but not necessarily had the time for experiential role and real play to practise the process and skills sufficiently. They may be in the situation of practising their skills in their real life mentoring relationship, similar to the Deutsche Telekom example. Or perhaps, they may have received minimal training to become a mentor initially. The supervisor needs to explore these development needs with their supervisee and help them to identify ways of fulfilling them.

The supervisor is still holding a definite position of power in this relationship with the mentor. The meetings may be part of a course of meetings, which have been pre-arranged and the supervisor is clearly looking for a level of development, which might need to be formally recorded within certain mentoring schemes.

The Reflective Mentor

The Reflective Mentor is someone who has a fair amount of experience as a mentor and has successfully extended their repertoire of skills beyond that of the Developing Mentor.

They are probably aware of most of the different approaches to mentoring theory and practice and have developed an awareness of context and their own identity as a mentor within the mentoring community. They are now in the position, on the basis of both their experience of mentoring and of being supervised, to begin to critically reflect upon their own practice and to further develop their skills and understanding of different mentoring approaches, drawing from other mentors, their supervisor and from other helping professions.

This process should have begun to some extent within the Developing Mentor stage but becomes central at this stage. It is distinct from the Developing Mentor stage in that the Reflective Mentor would have had the chance to reflect on some of their experience as a mentor through the lens of their supervisory discussions. Hence, the Reflective Mentor is someone who has begun to take some responsibility for thinking about and directing their own development as a mentor and who has started to incorporate ideas developed within supervision and elsewhere into their mentoring practice.

Implications For Supervision

One of the important aspects of effective supervision for the Reflective Mentor is that the supervisor is able to demonstrate emphatic attention and insightful reflection to the mentor. Mary Cox writes in Feasey (2002): "What I want from my supervisor is intelligent listening, experienced reflection, realistic mirroring, perceptive confrontation and a sense of personal warmth and humour" (p. 141).

This development function is a combination of Hawkins & Shohet's (2002) role of Educative/Formative support and of a supportive function, where through reflecting on and exploring the supervisee's work, the supervisor focuses on developing the skills, understanding and ability of the mentor they are supporting. Therefore, there are two changes in focus here. Firstly, the supervisor is focusing more on the mentee and the 'work' of the mentor whilst at the same time encouraging the mentor to begin to recognise how the mentor's own experiences (including those as

a mentor/supervisee) are beginning to impact upon their mentoring work. Secondly, the supervisor is supporting the mentor to develop their own internal critically reflexive capacity.

The Reflexive Mentor

The Reflexive Mentor is someone with considerable experience as a mentor and may even be a mentor supervisor themselves. They have developed sufficient self-awareness, , with the help of their supervisor, to critically reflect upon their own practice and to identify areas for their own development, as well as being more competent in detecting and using their own feelings within mentoring conversations to inform their practice. They are however, astute enough to recognise that there is nevertheless a need to continue with their development and to understand the dangers that lie in complacency in terms of rigidity of approach. In this sense, the Reflexive Mentor who needs supervision to assure the quality of their helping skills and to prevent blind spots or damage being done through arrogant or careless interventions.

Implications For Supervision

For the effective supervision of a Reflexive Mentor, the supervisor would need to be a highly competent, flexible and experienced mentor themselves as the range of supervision required might range from very gentle support when a problem occurs, as a 'spot mentoring' transaction or conversely adopting a strong critical position in order to challenge the potentially complacent supervisee. As a result, the frequency of supervision may differ, depending on the needs of the supervisee. For instance, Feltham (2000) refers to a highly experienced psychotherapist Arnold Lazarus who does not use regular supervision: "I probably ask for help or input from others mainly when I run into barriers or obstacles or when I feel out of my depth. If things are running along smoothly, why bother, but if there are some problems that make you feel lost or bewildered, or when you feel that you are doing OK, but could do better, why not bring it to the attention of somebody else, and discuss the issues?" (Dryden 1991, p. 81)

Conclusions

From the preceeding discussion, we have generated (see [Figure 1](#)) a schema for mentor development and supervision, which attempts to summarise and map the key dimensions of that analysis. This schema contains a number of assumptions, which need to be articulated. Firstly, we are assuming that the mentor's development increases as they become more experienced as a mentor and as a supervisee. This is because they have more development experiences to reflect on and more opportunities as time goes to take action on the basis of these reflections. We are also assuming a decreasing level of formality and authority on the part of the supervisor as the mentor develops. This is because the mentor/supervisee becomes more adept at recognising the 'lessons' for themselves and the supervisor is used more as a sounding board/critical friend than as a careers advisor or coach (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 1999);in that sense becomes akin to the skilled mentee.

In offering the functions of mentoring supervision, we have attempted to make distinctions between the different emphases that mentor supervision might have at different stages of a mentor's development. Hence, whilst both the Reflective and Developing Mentor need what Hawkins & Shohet (2002) refer to as educative/formative supervision, the Reflective Mentor is likely to benefit from less direct input from the supervisor than the Developing Mentor.

It is important to be clear about our claims and intentions in offering the framework. Whilst the categories generated are based on our experiences of scheme design and mentor development, they are not research based in the sense that they have been inducted from a qualitative research study

of mentoring supervision. Also, many of the examples and references are drawn predominantly from the business mentoring literature and do not specifically address any differences that might occur in volunteering mentoring or mentoring in education, both of which have considerable bodies of work to accompany them. However, our hope is that our categories for supervision might generate some debate and research into how supervision might be conducted within these sectors.

Furthermore, we have described the functions and categories of mentor as though they were clear and distinct which is likely not to be the case in practice. Our reason for doing this is to pay attention to the different needs that a mentor might have and how different aspects of supervision might be needed. However, in practice, it is likely that all four supervisory functions will be at play within the same supervisory conversation. This raises some challenges for the supervisor in practice; in particular, it raises the tensions that might arise from being responsible for quality control of mentors on the one hand and having an empowering/developmental conversation with them on the other. This is a similar tension in the mentoring relationship, particularly when line managers mentor those lower down the management hierarchy.

Indeed, there is a clear need for such research to take place and this article is not intended to take the place of that. Rather this is intended to be a conceptual framework to be used as a starting point for mentoring researchers and practitioners alike to develop their own approach to mentor development and supervision.

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Mentoring and Evidence Based Policy

by Ray Pawson, Annette Boaz, Lesley Grayson, Queen Mary and Fay Sullivan

Abstract

This paper reports on some work in progress, which is part of the current UK Economic and Social Research Council's Research Methods Programme (www.ccsr.ac.uk/methods). Policy making has always veered wildly between the pragmatic and the ideological. Currently, we are in the midst of a drive towards the former under the slogan 'what works is what counts'. The chosen instrument to support modern decision making is the systematic review of the available research evidence. But it is an instrument in the making, with a host of methodological difficulties awaiting anyone attempting research synthesis. The authors outline the potential and pitfalls of attempting a systematic review in the area of mentoring and offer an invitation to readers of the journal to help shape the investigation.

Introduction

If ever two notions were destined to meet, it was these. On the one hand there is 'mentoring'. Like all the best ideas it is simple and bold. It is also intuitively appealing and massively so. It is hard to imagine a situation in life in which the novice cannot gain some benefit from the trusted advice of a wise counsellor. And so the vision has spread, with mentoring schemes being applied to all stages of the life cycle and every corner of human conduct. Then there is 'evidence based policy'. This is a more sturdy and truculent beast. Its hallmark is caution. Before it is prepared to spend a dime on building interventions, accrediting institutions, training practitioners and so forth, it needs a lot of persuading that the underlying idea is sound. Hence the watchword - 'show me the evidence'.

So what happens when the hare of mentoring encounters the tortoise of evidence based policy? It was with such a contrast in mind that the present authors won an award under a recent ESRC initiative. We should add at once that it was not these lavish metaphors that gained the funding. Ours is a hard-headed methodological inquiry. Systematic review is a relatively new method in the social science toolkit and still in need of development. It struggles when the intervention to be reviewed is poorly defined and complex, and when the programme targets are many and varied. In particular, it is difficult to synthesise research when the original inquiries themselves vary in quality and in approach. Readers will not be surprised to learn that all of these terrors await the reviewer of research on the effectiveness of mentoring. This paper is a record of our halting first steps into the field.

Seeing the Wood for the Trees

The first stage in every systematic review is a ground clearing exercise. Our objective is set at the start, namely to sift, sort and assess the evidence on the efficacy of mentoring. But such a goal is hopelessly ambitious given the ubiquity of mentoring programmes. Mentoring exists in a multiplicity of different styles and formats. It is targeted at an unusually diverse range of issues and problems. It is undertaken by a miscellaneous array of individuals and assimilated, perhaps, by an even more varied bunch. There is thus a danger - quite a common one in the world of systematic review - that one ends up trying to compare 'apples and oranges'. Hopes for mentoring have verged on the ecstatic, but even its most enthusiastic supporters now recognise that success depends on it being

applied in the right way and in the right circumstances (Freedman, 1999). A review examining mentoring across the life course (from birth-giving to bereavement) and from the top to the bottom of society (from the rehabilitation centre to the boardroom) is bound to fetch up with a melee of hits and misses. The solution, here and in general, is to tighten the question posed by the review. What is needed is a sound rationale for limiting the investigation to certain sub-fields of mentoring activity in order to ensure that the evidence collected compares like with like.

A first step in systematic review is thus to 'get a feel' for the array of available literature - not for the purpose of assessing the evidence, but simply to map the coverage of the mentoring process. We have extracted some of the main claims and key aspirations for mentoring in Table 1. The mentoring community may like to think it of as a kind of 'self-description'; it is an attempt to draw together the multifarious ways in which mentoring programmes are envisaged by its stakeholders. The various terms, idioms and concepts are compiled on the basis of a first trawl through the literature, using a fairly broad search strategy with a range of bibliographic databases that are likely to be included in the formal searches later in the review process . Our efforts at seeing the wood amidst the trees are summarised in Table 1, which is an attempt to pull together on a single page all the various manifestations of mentoring that we uncovered. It is broken down into four columns, each describing a different facet of an intervention. Much of the content of the table should be self-explanatory. We have no space here to expand and expound on every entry but some synoptic points are in order.

What Works? What is it about mentoring that works? What is the mechanism, the engine of change?	For whom? What sort of mentor, what sort of mentee?	In what circumstances? What mentoring relationship, organisational setting, policy domain?	In what respects? What are the aims? Are the changes attitudinal, behavioural, organisational or what?
Key activity (much overlap) Role modelling Sitting by Nellie Kindness of strangers Helping Coaching and tutoring Counselling Sponsoring Taking under wing Shared experience Befriending, bonding, trusting Natural link (vs. formal role) Promoting reflective practice Fair, non-judgemental assessment Mutual teaching and learning Direction setting Progress making	**Mentees - general types** 'Youth' and sub-types 'Disadvantaged', 'disaffected' 'Beginners' in general 'Offenders' 'At risk' groups - 'Parenting teens', 'NEET', 'One-parent' children 'Race'/'ethnic' groups 'Gifted'/highly motivated 'Workplace' categories - nurses, managers, headteachers etc. etc. **Mentees - sub-distinctions** *N.B. each of the above will subdivide - but also* Screened/unscreened Attached/detached Volunteer/non-volunteer **Mentors - general**	**Relationship distinctions** Matched/unmatched Peer/non-peer Short term/long term Formal/informal, planned/natural Group/individual (both ways) Pure/bricolage Stranger/acquaintance Directive/non-directive Mentor/mentee initiated (or joint) Hierarchical/reciprocal (status) **Setting Distinctions** Conservative/liberal values Communitarian/self-interest Complex/simple systems Private/public sector Home/community/site-based Geimeinschaft/Gesellschaft **Domains and programmes** Business, social care, corrections, education, employment	**Intended outcomes** Personal growth, self-actualisation, confidence, self-worth, increased human/social capital, empowerment School achievement, attendance, discipline Engagement, employability, career guidance Offending behaviour reduction, rehabilitation, alcohol or drug reduction Job performance and skills, staff retention, leadership potential, professional development Awareness of opportunities, start-up potential Recycling (mentees become mentors) **Distinctions:** Instrumental/personal Personal/interpersonal Cognitive/behavioural Latent/manifest Individual/communal

Moving on Widening activities and horizons Apprenticeship, showing ropes Passing on wisdom Navigating the unknown Been there, done that Proximal (family) relationship development Social capital - 'tour of middle class life'	**types** Marital status, age, sex, past experience, organisational position etc. **Mentors - sub-distinctions** *N.B. each of the above will subdivide - but also* Screened/unscreened Trained/untrained Volunteer/paid	*Government programmes*: Youth Justice Board, CXS, EAZ, Excellence in cities etc. *Dozens of sub projects -* literacy summer schools, work-related learning, family literacy, ICT etc.	Transitions/achievements

The first column amounts to a glossary of the diverse activities carried out in the name of mentoring. It captures the many and varied claims about which precise activity within the mentoring process makes for change. There is no unanimity. The very title of this journal embodies this dilemma. Some see 'coaching' (towards a goal) as a different entity from 'mentoring' (the person) whilst others see them as part and parcel of the same thing. Some see the key activity as the provision of a 'role model', whilst others insist on 'clear goal and direction setting' as fundamental. There is no need to rehearse all the other claims for the 'active ingredient', other than to note that not all of mentoring's deeds are seen in a flattering light, with some authors perceiving the activity as 'sitting by Nellie' or as 'fleeting tours of middle-class life'.

In the next column we turn to the providers and recipients. Clearly one of the key factors of successful mentoring lies with the characteristics of mentor and protege. Ambitions here are boundless, with Clutterbuck's phrase (2001), 'everyone needs a mentor' apparently having been taken to heart. This column merely initiates an endless list of key sub-categories of mentees. 'Youth', perhaps, take pride of place, with the 'disaffected' being mentoring's most prominent niche. Terminology stampedes in the effort to describe such recipients (our favourite is the 'NEET' category utilised by the UK Connexions Employment Service - 'not in education, employment or training'). 'Workplace' mentees are the other main target, once again captured by countless distinctions in rank and duties. Mentors, by contrast, are not quite so variable in character, but strong opinions are held on whether such matters as their 'age', 'race' and 'gender' are vital. According to the literature, it is not only the (given or acquired) characteristics of individuals that make for success, but also their state of readiness for mentoring, with opinions varying on whether partners need to be 'screened', 'trained', 'paid' etc.

The third column takes heed of prevailing ideas on the circumstances that promote or hinder successful mentoring. Mentoring does not take place in a vacuum and, throughout the literature, its settings and institutions are considered important. The first and most immediate context is the type of relationship forged between the parties. The table lists some of the common distinctions in the initiation, duration, and membership of the partnership, which may be telling. Beyond this lies the location of the activity, with home, work, community and site based mentoring providing quite different challenges. Also considered important is the wider culture in which mentoring takes place is. We found, for instance, many claims that the care and compassion offered in youth mentoring was a puny sword in the face of the deeply structured inequalities of modern society. The fact that such mentoring is often embedded in government programmes may also be significant by dint of the in-built resistance that 'veterans' of such schemes often develop. Mentoring programmes in the

private and business sectors have to face a quite different set of structural constraints. Inculcating the right values may be less of a problem here, but unanticipated outcomes such as 'perceived favouritism' are said to occur in when mentoring is a key to success in pyramidal organisations.

Finally, in column four, we sketch the ultimate ambitions for mentoring. Mentoring is supposed to inspire change, but in what respects? Once again, the answer appears close to 'you name it'. Clearly, mentoring is considered to promote the protégé's development but the precise transformation is described in a myriad ways across the policy domains. The most obvious contrast is between 'reducing offending behaviour' and 'professional development'. However, it is the set of contrasts at the bottom of the column to which we would draw the reader's attention, for these are bones of contention within the mentoring community. Some see their task in terms of the personal growth of the mentee, some see the aim as the achievement of life's milestones, whilst yet others perceive the ultimate benefits at the communal level. To complete the picture, we note that mentors are also considered to benefit from the exchange, and that a mentee graduating to mentor status is much prized.

We trust that this brief sketch of the landscape of mentoring has given or re-affirmed to the reader a glimpse of its amazingly varied contours. Whilst this astonishing scope is good news for the coverage of a new journal, it presents a major headache for systematic review. And it is worth pausing for a moment to consider the implications for trying to conduct an orderly appraisal on what philosophers like to term, 'an essentially contested concept' (Gallie, 1956). Table 1 uncovers different viewpoints on mentoring from the word go. Alas, there is disagreement on 'what it is' before we even get to the juicy policy questions about 'why', 'whether', for 'whom' and 'in what respects' it works. This should come as no surprise. Meetings between mentors and mentees are not formulaic and scripted. They are impromptu and improvised, reactive and reflexive. No bolt-from-the-blue, then, that the claims for mentoring's active ingredient (Table 1, column 1) wash right over into the formal (educative and apprenticeship mechanisms) and back again to the informal (friendship and care).

This dilemma is actually a rather conventional one in systematic review. Remember that this is a description of our 'halting first steps' and here is cause to stumble before the review has actually begun. Should the reviewer be pre-emptive and go with a particular and restricted definition of mentoring - and try to follow its fortunes within the literature? Or, should the reviewer sit on the fence, appreciating that mentoring takes different forms with different capacities - and try to tease out some of the differential consequences within the literature? If she chooses the former, the reviewer will face difficulty in ensuring that the literature called upon, and the mentoring activities to which it refers, follows the preferred formula. If he chooses the latter, the reviewer risks being swamped in the potentially endless permutations of mentoring relationships and not having the capacity to track each variant. - -

Before we turn to our attempt to resolve this matter, a further complexity within the existing literature deserves at least a mention. The material uncovered in these preliminary searches not only spans the diversity of mentoring activities, it also comes in a range of different formats. Not only did we unearth what one might think of as orthodox 'empirical research' on mentoring initiatives, there are just as many 'critiques' and 'thought pieces' in the academic literature. And on top of this there is the 'grey literature' consisting of 'administrative reports', 'legislative materials', 'advice and guidelines' and indeed straightforward 'sales pitches' for the mentoring project. One of the hot topics in evidence-based policy is about the need to incorporate a greater diversity of evidence into the ruminations of the reviewer. Needless to say, the mentoring literature highlights this issue with a vengeance. How does the reviewer weigh and balance such a miscellany of

information? This is another highly technical issue mainly of interest to aficionados, so we rest content with a reference to our first working paper on the issue (Pawson, 2003). -

There is, however, one interesting sub-category of 'available literature' that is worthy of discussion in this paper - and that is the existing review. We had not expected to be the first to synthesise the available evidence on mentoring, but the sheer volume of previous attempts surprised us. Recall that our exercise was aimed at developing the methodology of systematic review. What was to be learned from the previous incarnations?

Reviewing the Reviews

The existing reviews of mentoring tend to focus on particular substantive domains. Perhaps sensibly, given its gargantuan presence, no one has attempted a complete overview of mentoring activities. What one tends to find, therefore, are reviews of nurse mentoring (Ehrich and Hansford, 2002), reviews of the mentoring of novice teachers (Wang and Odell, 2002), reviews of business mentoring (Hansford et al, 2002) and so on. We focus here on the most common field, namely 'mentoring programmes for youth', in which at least a dozen papers claim the status of a 'review of the evidence'. We produce a pen picture of four of them in this section. They come to rather different, and in some cases contradictory conclusions, on the efficacy of youth mentoring. Our aim in demonstrating this confusion is not to show that chaos reigns in the world of evidence based policy. The diverse conclusions to these reports are explained by the subtle differences in the questions posed by each review and the methods chosen to synthesise the evidence. Our conclusion points to a more modest role for systematic reviews. Once we are divested of the notion that they are 'definitive', we begin to see their utility.

Review 1: 'Meta-analysis'

The first example (DuBois et al, 2002) utilises an approach often considered as the 'gold standard' of research synthesis - meta-analysis. It begins by searching out what are considered to be the best primary studies in the field, namely those conducted by means of experimental trials. The hallmark of such inquiries is the comparison between the treatment group of youth exposed to a mentoring programme and a control group receiving no such support. If these two groups are identical prior to the experiment (ideally by randomly assigning subjects to the two conditions) then it is possible to measure the impact of mentoring by comparing their progress after the experimental period. This difference is known as the 'net effect' of a programme.

The second stage in meta-analysis is to pool the results of all the primary studies utilising this design. Aggregation is achieved by a complex statistical method involving 'stem-and-leaf displays', 'fixed effects models', 'random effects models', 'winsorization', 'd-indexes' and so on. We identify these in passing simply to note that the Dubois paper will be quite, quite indecipherable to the lay reader. The upshot, however, is clear. Some of the original experiments indicate that mentoring is a success. Others tend to point to failure. Meta-analysis is able to pull together the results of all the trials in one statistic known as the 'mean effect'. And, to cut a long story short, DuBois et al declare that 'overall, findings provide evidence of only a small benefit of program participation for the average youth'.

The authors do not rest content with this gloomy conclusion, however. Recall that the primary studies generate both success and horror stories. Meta-analysis is also able to investigate some of the factors, known as 'mediators', which might generate these different outcomes. On this basis, DuBois and colleagues show that the implementation details of mentoring programmes are all-important, with mediators such as 'ongoing training for mentors, structured activities for mentors

and youth, mechanisms for support and involvement of parents' being crucial markers of the best programmes. Their final conclusion is thus somewhat upbeat, 'from the applied perspective, findings offer support for the continued implementation and dissemination of programmes for youth'.

What might the policy maker and practitioner make of this? Our view is that the mixed message follows from the high levels of aggregation employed in meta-analysis. There is an inevitable loss of detail from the original studies, which are not only implemented in different ways but are aimed at a wide variety of goals including emotional functioning, academic achievement and career development.

A rather stunning example of this loss of focus is the key mediator identified in the Dubois paper. The authors investigate the type of youth most likely to benefit from mentoring and assert that their data reveal that youths considered 'at risk' are the ones most likely to prosper. Now this finding stands in stark contrast to many qualitative studies of mentoring (Watts, 2001; Colley, 2003) which show that the truly disadvantaged and dispossessed are very unlikely to get anyway near a mentoring programme. It is also hard to square with many process evaluations of mentoring (Rhodes, 2002) that show considerable pre-programme drop out amongst 'hard-to-reach' mentees as they face frequent long delays before a mentor becomes available. DuBois et al's finding thus refer to a rather curious sub-section of those who can be considered 'high risk'. They do indeed appear to emanate from the worst socio-economic backgrounds but consist only of those who have had the foresight to volunteer for mentoring and the forbearance to wait for an opportunity to receive it.

Our general conclusion from this first review is to 'beware the headlines'. In particular, we would say of meta-analysis that it is a useful method of describing aggregate outcome patterns but that its explanatory potential is quite limited. We also note, incidentally, that its technical complexities might tend to baffle the lay reader into thinking otherwise.

Review 2: 'Phenomenological Review'

For our second review, we shift to a completely different intellectual tradition. Roberts's (2000) study terms itself a 'phenomenological reading of the literature'. It starts with a passage on social science epistemology, in which the notions of Wittgenstein and Husserl are used to justify the idea that reviews should 'clarify' rather than seek yet more 'facts' (c.f. meta-analysis). Roberts thus embarks on a huge reading of the literature, not dissimilar to our own efforts described in Table 1 above. The crucial difference, however, is that he sets out to discover the 'essences' of the concept of mentoring. His view is that the meaning of mentoring has become distorted by overuse and overblown expectations. Its essential characteristics, however, lie hidden in the tacit wisdom of key stakeholders. One way of recovering understanding is by a slow 'empathetic immersion' in the literature, suspending one's own preferences in trying to sort out which concepts are held in common (and which are not) by those 'who write about it, think about it, imagine it and conceive it'.

Roberts's 'findings' take the form of a model in which mentoring is broken down into eight constituent parts:

- *A process form* - mentoring involves 'establishing rapport', 'direction setting', 'progress making' and 'moving on'.
- *A relationship* - the relationship must be one of 'mutual affinity'.
- *A helping process* - the relationship is always based on the 'provision of help and assistance' by the mentor.

- *A teacher-learner process* - the relationship always involves the 'transmission of knowledge and ideas'.
- *Reflective practice* - mentoring involves protégé learning how to 'stop and reflect upon and evaluate' their behaviour.
- *A career and personal development process* - 'individual growth' is the central aspect of mentoring but it should occur in the context of building 'opportunity' and 'mobility'.
- *A formalised process* - although 'informal mentoring' occurs spontaneously, in its modern usage mentoring requires 'organisation' by the institution requiring it.
- *A role constructed for or by the mentor* - mentoring always involves negotiation of a set of 'expectations and obligations' about how mentors should act.

The review then moves on to list another set of attributes sometimes associated with mentoring but on which Roberts finds no consensus in the literature. These 'contingent' features are 'role modelling', 'sponsoring' and 'coaching'.

How should this review be assessed? Clearly, such findings are not 'data' in the orthodox sense of the term. So do they have a role to play in evidence based policy? We are inclined to think so, if only in one particularly significant respect. The crucial lesson of this review is that policy makers should not perceive mentoring as some kind of treatment that can be switched on and off (c.f. review one). Rather, mentoring should be seen as an intricate relationship embedded within a complex, long-term process. A fully developed and successful mentoring programme may require an entire configuration of activities and processes to be put in place, covering the elements noted above. The model thus provides a useful developmental tool, providing a set of aspirations for those developing mentoring interventions.

Where we depart from Roberts is in his belief that he has reached and refined his model on the basis of identifying 'consensus' in the literature. Our view is that the term 'mentoring' is used in inconsistent ways through the literature (a view, incidentally, shared by our next reviewer). One of the consequences of the current mentoring 'bandwagon' is the massive inflation in the usage of the term. It is, of course, open to any author to suggest distinctions within, and place definitional boundaries around, an activity such as mentoring. These shades of meaning may ultimately help us to make sense of mentoring's triumphs and perils. It may be, for instance, that programmes sharing the features defined in Roberts's model have different outcomes from those that do not. But the inclination to close upon one definition over another is, in the last analysis, a matter of preference .

Review 3: 'Literature Review'

Our third attempt at synthesising the evidence on 'mentoring and young people' is a self-styled 'literature review' (Hall, 2003). Such an approach, which is also called 'narrative review', is often censured by those favouring meta-analysis for being unsystematic in its search procedures and prone to authorial bias in analysis. Let us see if these criticisms apply in this case.

Hall was commissioned to review a wide range of questions, and attempts to provide a comprehensive set of answers, which we summarise (rather abruptly) as follows:

- *What is mentoring?* An ill-defined concept.
- *Does it work?* Only modestly on some high risk-behaviours in respect of some educational and career outcomes.
- *What works?* Programmes require certain key features such as ongoing training for mentors, structured activities for mentors and youth, mechanisms for support and involvement of parents.

- *What doesn't work?* Mismatch in values and expectations between mentor and mentee. Inexpert or untrained mentors. Lack of integration with other activities.
- *Is there a case for regulation?* Research has little to say.
- *What are the views of mentees?* There is little in-depth research but views seem to differ.
- *What are the views of mentors?* Mentors may benefit just as much from the process as mentees, and also suffer equally when things go wrong.
- *What are the views of commissioning bodies?* They tend to be favourably disposed and have made rather over-enthusiastic claims.

So what of the merits of narrative review? Our stance - in this instance, and against some of the prevailing sentiments - is that the author has forwarded rather cautious claims matched to clear supporting documentation. If we have a criticism, it is simply that in its attempt to be comprehensive, the review has bitten off more than it can chew.

One instance of this lies in the evidence in respect of the 'does it work?' and the 'what works?' questions. Attentive readers may have noted that these findings are remarkably close to those suggested by DuBois et al (Review 1). And indeed they are, being taken almost verbatim from that study. Whilst there is nothing wrong, in our eyes, in reviews pulling in evidence from other reviews, it is apparent that Hall offers a prÃ©cis of DuBois rather than close critical scrutiny. There is something of a curtsey to the rigour and technical intricacy of the meta-analytic approach. We feel that statistical pooling has limitations, some of which are described above. Hall might justifiably respond that a massive overview just could not take cognisance of every analytic move in every primary study.

Other signs of an overburdened review are the 'insufficient evidence' and the 'too close to call' verdicts on some of the other questions posed. In particular, our preliminary search has revealed a mass of evidence in respect of mentees' views on their experiences. Likewise, the matching of mentor and mentee has received prolonged research scrutiny, which is beginning to bear fruit. Our general reaction to this third review is a sort of protective instinct, the wish to shield reviewers from the avaricious demands of review commissioners. They should expect breadth or depth, but not both.

Review 4: 'EvidenceNugget'

The What Works for Children (WWfC) team, based at City University in London, has produced a series of short reviews - known as EvidenceNuggets - on a number of major interventions aimed at children and younger people. Their report on mentoring (What Works for Children, 2003) has a number of distinctive characteristics:

- It is a web-based production capable of being revised and updated.
- It was instigated at a practitioner's behest and is designed to give clear policy advice.
- It is not intended to be a comprehensive inquiry. Rather it selects and dissects what it sees as the decisive research, thus unearthing the vital nuggets of evidence.

The conclusion to the investigation comes up front in the title: 'One-to-one non-directive mentoring programmes have not been shown to improve behaviour of young people involved in offending or other anti-social behaviour'. Readers will note an apparent contradiction with the more optimistic recommendations of other reviews. So how was this viewpoint thrashed out?

Existing reviews and original research are both drawn into the inquiry. It is of obvious interest here to consider the treatment of the research by Dubois and colleagues (Review 1). This is covered in a mere five lines, reporting only the broad conclusion of the small positive impact pooled across all

outcome measures. No mention is made of the bulk of the work on mediators (noted above), still less the repeated assertion that mentoring provides greater benefits for youth at risk because of individual and environmental circumstances.

The main focus of the WWfC review is a critical examination of the research on the US Big Brother/Big Sister Program (Tierney et al, 1995; Grossman and Tierney, 1998). These studies are normally considered as providing crucial positive evidence for the success of youth mentoring. The EvidenceNugget provides a withering methodological critique, pointing to inadequacies such as: omitting to report the number of 'failed partnerships' and 'replaced mentors'; not acknowledging the positive self-selection caused by screening and waiting lists; relying on self-reports to derive outcome measures; concentrating on short term gains; and so on.

Several other studies are reviewed using this admixture of condensed reportage and elimination by methodological critique. The final verdict is actually the Scottish one - 'not proven':

On the evidence to date, mentoring programmes *do not appear* to be a promising intervention for young people who are currently at risk of permanent school exclusion, those with very poor school attendance, those involved in criminal behaviour, those with histories of aggressive behaviour, and those already involved with welfare agencies. (p8, our emphasis)

The synthesis is noteworthy for its relatively light touch in terms of numbers of original studies reviewed and a relatively firm touch in the conclusions. Our verdict on this review is put in the form of a question. In their efforts to come off the fence and provide clear policy recommendations, have the WWfC researchers shifted from the notion of dispassionate review to the business of selectively choosing and appraising evidence to fit a pre-determined conclusion?

Conclusion: What can reviews achieve?

Remember that what this paper describes is just the warm-up lap. We remain at the starting gate, with a review of our own still to complete. What we have tried to do is to give some indication, to an audience of mentoring specialists, of the potential and pitfalls of systematic review. Mentoring is an intervention like no other, but its place in the world of public policy is the same as all others. It has its friends in the form of practitioners, theorists, and policy architects who are determined to press ahead with widespread deployment, accreditation and professionalisation. It has its foes, in the guise of other members of the same tribes, who have rival policy preferences to pursue. And then there are the sceptics who remain to be convinced either way.

It is this third group to whom we address this paper. We have stressed the need to take a cool look at the evidence in order to gauge mentoring's worth, but we also hope to have demonstrated the difficulties in achieving such a dispassionate overview. Evidence based policy is a gangly youth, one that has outgrown its strength. Some over-enthusiastic advocates expect it to deliver clear verdicts - interventions of type X work, interventions of type Y do not, interventions of type Z are positively dangerous (Sherman et al 1997). No such simple messages are possible in the variegated domain of mentoring programmes. The other unrealistic expectation is more or less the opposite - that systematic reviews are comprehensive overviews, capable of providing policy advice on every nuance of the construction, implementation and impact of whole areas of programming. No such complete oversight is possible in relation to the gargantuan reach of mentoring interventions, which have bolted like a patch of rocket to every corner of the policy garden.

To the uninitiated, the most unsettling aspect of the four reviews we describe must be the utter inconsistency of their conclusions. The situation is not actually as desperate (or disparate) as it might

seem. What is happening is that, in their selection of primary materials, the various reviews are pulling in somewhat different- 'constituencies' of mentoring programmes and thus referring to somewhat different groups of youth mentees. And the great flaw with the studies is that these restrictions do NOT then make their way into the rather generalised policy pronouncements that follow.

Review 1 selects its programmes pragmatically, according to the search terms (e.g. 'mentor*', 'Big Brother' etc) and by the methodological criteria (the preference for RCTs) used to select studies for review. Particular studies are thus the unit of investigation, rather than particular types of programme, leaving us with no clear indication of the type of mentoring regime in play. This mode of selecting evidence also leaves us with ambiguities about the identity of the mentees. As we have seen, 'at risk' youngsters are said to have prospered in this particular subset of programmes. How this is measured is unclear from the review. But most assuredly the measure was not applied to the (considerable?) numbers of 'at risk' youth who were unaware of the programme, or who ignored it, or dropped out before a mentor was attached and the research was begun.

Review 4, by contrast, does offer a long definition of mentoring and indeed some clarification of the 'at risk' groups for which it concludes that mentoring is ineffective. The definition (2003, p2) includes such matters as the 'relative experience' and 'age difference' of mentor and mentee, the 'agencies' responsible for the referral, as well as the 'endurance' and 'character' of the partnership - though the key identifiers seem to be its 'one-to-one' and 'non-directive' character. Risk is characterised in terms of existing 'truanting', 'criminal behaviour', 'substance misuse' and 'aggression'. These two definitions are brought together in the titular policy advice: 'One-to-one non-directive mentoring programmes have not been shown to improve behaviour of young people involved in offending or other anti-social behaviour'. The problem in this case is that it is far from clear whether the studies called upon examine mentoring schemes that follow the prescribed definition and isolate the aforementioned risk-factors for study. Many of the programmes examined involve contact with welfare agencies and thus may be considered 'several-to one' and 'directive'. Some of the evidence on the negative effects of mentoring comes from peer-mentoring programmes, which clearly break the 'age' and 'experience' stipulation in the definition.

Our conclusion is that there is probably an element of truth in the seemingly contradictory reviews - because terminology is never effectively pinned down. 'Youth', 'risk' and, above all, 'mentoring' conspire to be the most evocative but elastic of terms and it should be the first duty of a review to clarify the different usages in play, rather than pitch in the concepts as policy pronouncements. We do not pretend that this is an easy matter, indeed we have tried to show the difficulties that follow if one tries to police a particular definition (viz. review2). The studies under review and the programmes to which they refer are unlikely to share that pre-given understanding. Hence, we conclude that is the reviewer's (onerous, colossal, awesome) task to appreciate that there are different conceptual preferences in play and to try to use the evidence to adjudicate between them, building slowly to a more complete picture of what it is about mentoring that works for whom in what circumstances.

So what can reviews achieve? Is such a comprehensive explanatory agenda possible? In our discussions with policy makers and practitioners we have tried to convince them of the following: that reviews are selectively comprehensive; they are searchlights rather than floodlights; they reveal a lot about a little. Above all we have tried to point out that different modes of research synthesis (as above) have strengths and weaknesses. If we truly aspire to evidence informed policy, what is required is a suite of reviews aimed at slightly different questions. It might appear that review 3 gets

closest to this agenda and we are content to end on this positive image (with a gentle reminder that we have multiple reviews in mind and that this solo effort bit off far more than could be chewed.)

We conclude in Table 2 with an indicative 'shopping list' of some of the diverse questions a review might tackle and some of the different ways in which the task of research synthesis might be conceived.

Table 2: A suite of reviews on mentoring

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1. Overall Aim

- Best buy review - What works?
- Explanatory review - Why does it work?
- Developmental review - How to improve it?

2. Review Topic

- New review: locate never previously reviewed area (e.g. peer mentoring the chronically sick).
- Focused review: locate specific subset of mentoring that has been previously subsumed in a more general inquiry (e.g. peer mentoring for teens in schools on drug misuse).
- Comparative review: contrast the fate of mentoring in widely divergent domains (e.g. entry into board membership, exit from drug culture)

3. Isolate a Component Process

- Who really benefits and who loses (e.g. what is the dividing line between the 'touchables' and the 'untouchables'?)
- 'Matching' mentor and mentee (e.g. what makes for compatibility, what are the contours and components of a good match?)
- Mentoring 'roles' (e.g. 'information purveyor' or 'wise counsellor' or 'role model' - which model works for whom and in what circumstances?)
- 'Grooming' for mentees (e.g. does success depend on the mentee having some willingness to participate and an appreciation of what's in store?)
- 'Professionalisation' of mentors (e.g. to what extent and in what conditions does success depend on training and accreditation and payment of mentors?)
- etc. etc.

Postscript - an Invitation

One of the grand utterances of the recent UK Commission on the Social Sciences (2003) pointed to 'interface management' between research and its users as a 'crucial challenge' facing applied social research in future years. The report points to a legacy of disappointment amongst research users who have found the research community and its outputs difficult to decipher. Research synthesis has a particular struggle in this respect in trying to transform voluminous evidence into straightforward policy recommendations. All of the above examples wrestle with this problem, with greater or lesser degrees of success (the DuBois research, it must be said, being an example of the latter).

We raise the issue here, since it is another feature of our own project. The utilisation of reviews can be greatly enhanced by the involvement of practitioners and policy makers. In particular, meetings at the start of the review process are useful for tapping into the knowledge of key stakeholders and for identifying the crucial questions to be explored. At a later stage, findings and their interpretation as well as appropriate forms of presentation may also be discussed. Our funding allows us to experiment a little with these possibilities and so we close by adding an invitation to our shopping list. What are the real priorities in mentoring research? Which issues are ripe for review? What would be on your shopping list? Readers interested in discussing these points should contact either of the lead authors of the report at the e-mail addresses given above.

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One of the remarkable aspects of mentoring is how extensively researched the topic has been. However, extensively-researched isn't the same as well-researched. Having had to trawl through hundreds of papers and a fair pile of dissertations for my own current doctoral research, I soon came to echo the thoughts of an anonymous business school faculty member who said; "When I was a journalist, I thought journalism was just badly-done academic research; now I'm an academic, I realise that research is often just badly-done journalism!"

Over recent months, I have been trying to establish what valid research in this area would entail. I have been less interested in issues such as sample size (though this clearly is an issue - the original research by Kathy Kram, on which so much subsequent research has been based, had a sample size of just 28 pairs1) or the accuracy of the mathematical analysis, as in the overall logic and structure of the research. I've also been concerned with that critical, but so often neglected question, how relevant and useful is this to the practitioner? What follows is to a large extent a summary of my own (painful) learning about research method in this field.

In a review (which we have yet to finish and publish) of formality and informality in mentoring, David Megginson and I found an almost totally divergence between the conclusions of academic papers and actual experience in the field. We concluded that this divergence was at least partially the result of failings in the structure and definition of much of the research.

So how does one test the quality and value of research in this field? Like the UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in his approach to joining the Euro, I have been using five tests. These are:

1. Definition Is it clear what kind of relationship is being measured? Some research mixes participants in structured programmes with those in informal relationships and some even with relationships, where one party does not realise they are part of a mentoring duo. Some papers mix in-line relationships with off-line (leaving aside the argument as to whether it is possible to be a mentor in a boss-subordinate relationship).

   There are, of course, dozens of definitions of mentoring, yet many studies fail to be precise about which definition they are following. Many, mainly US-originated definitions, emphasises sponsorship and hands-on help by the mentor; others, mostly European and Australian in origin, see such behaviours as unacceptable within the mentor role. Unless it is clear, which model is being followed in a particular piece of research, it is often impossible to draw conclusions with confidence, or to make comparisons with other studies. Meta-studies and literature reviews may compound the problem, because they tend to begin from the (false) assumption that everyone is measuring the same phenomenon.

   The issue is made even more complex by the recognition by some researchers in the area that multiple, simultaneous mentoring relationships are also a common factor. Clearly, the dynamics of one relationship within a web of others may be different from those of a single, intensive mentoring dyad.

   To increase the validity of research in mentoring, it is necessary in my view to provide a precise definition of exactly what kind of relationship is being measured and to ensure that all the samples lie within that definition. Some research has attempted to get round this

problem by asking people about broad helping relationships, but then the data is too general to apply meaningfully to specific types of mentoring relationship. Recognising that mentoring is a class of phenomena and that each phenomenon needs to be investigated in its own right, would be a major step forward in research quality in this field. (An interesting analogy is in the field of medical research, specifically into the origins of autism. Almost no progress towards an understanding of this condition had been made until recently, when researchers began to recognise it as a number of related and interacting sub-conditions.)

Context A wide variety of contextual actors can affect the relationship and the scheme. At a minimum, these will impact upon the intent (their own or that of third parties, such as the organisation) mentor and mentee bring to the relationship.

Other contextual variables include the level of training participants receive, the way in which they are matched (with or without an element of choice) and whether the relationship is supported as it develops (for example, by additional sources of learning and/or advice). Other contextual factors might include differences in race, age or gender.

Trying to account for all the contextual variables that might apply, especially when a research sample is drawn from many organisations or schemes would be very difficult to do without vast sample sizes. This suggests the need for relatively narrow selection criteria - for example, senior managers, in company-sponsored mentoring relationships of at least six months duration with a paid external, professional mentor; or young males 12- 15 from deprived backgrounds at risk, paired with male role models between 10 and 20 years older. The more variables subsequently introduced (eg gender variation), the larger the sample size will need to be to draw conclusions with confidence.

2. Process provides another set of variables. It is clear, for example, that e-mentoring differs in some fundamental aspects from traditional face-to-face mentoring. Simple process factors, such as frequency of meeting, can have a major impact on outcomes. At the very least, studies need to allow for or try to eliminate such variables. Studies attempting to link personality to success of mentoring relationships, for example, would be better grounded if they also investigated the degree, to which personality factors resulted in specific behaviours, perceived as helpful or unhelpful to the maintenance of the relationship and to the achievement of its goals. (This classification into maintenance and achievement oriented behaviours appears to be very relevant across the whole area of mentoring relationship dynamics.)

3. Outcomes Much of the research literature uses Kram's functions of a mentor (or the subsequent recasting of the functions by Noe2) as measures of outcomes. Yet the functions are a mixture of behaviours, enablers and outcomes and so for the most part unsuitable for this use. (Kram herself did not intend them to be used in this way, I am sure.) Moreover, outcomes are almost never related back to goals/ intent. The reality is that different types of mentoring relationship have different expectations of outcomes; and even different dyads within the same scheme. Failure to recognise these means that the purpose of the relationship is ignored - which suggests the research fails the fifth test, that of relevance.

4. It is also remarkable how few studies attempt to measure outcomes for both parties. Yet mentoring is an interaction between two partners, with the outcomes highly dependent on the motivation of both.

5. Relevance The so-what test is a standard element in guidance on research design, but it seems often to be honoured mostly in the breach. My own experience has been that I struggled to get co-operation from companies until I was able to articulate very clearly the practical value both of the expected research outcomes and of participating in the research process itself. Even then, maintaining commitment for a longitudinal study has proven very difficult. I recommend anyone designing future studies to convene at any early stage of research design a panel of practitioners - those, who the research is intended to inform and benefit - to help shape and ground the project.

There are many other failings in the general literature on mentoring - for example, the paucity of longitudinal studies, with a few exceptions3 (I sometimes despair of ever completing mine!). However, these many holes provide many opportunities for useful research and it is possible - with care - to mine the literature for useful indicators that can be tested in well-defined contexts. In the future, I am convinced that our understanding of mentoring will be enhanced by making the same shift of emphasis as the autism researchers, focusing on specific definitions and contexts to begin with and gradually building a richer, more complex model than currently exists.

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PS I am still gathering samples for my own current project and would welcome further corporate or individual participation. The role definition and context are that mentor and mentee are engaged in a mutual learning relationship, in which:

- The mentor has no direct authority over the mentee
- Both have received a minimum of half a day training for their respective roles
- The relationship is voluntary, with both parties having a say in their selection
- There is no element of sponsorship

PPS Many thanks to Kathy Kram and Belle Rose Ragins, for their initial critique of the arguments in this article

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1. 1 Kram herself makes the valuable point that sample size has to be relevant to the issue being investigated. So for a small sample, qualitative study may be appropriate to initial investigations of a topic, but less appropriate when there is already a body of accepted theory and practice. In addition, small samples investigated in depth may be more revealing in multiple complex relationship dynamics.

2. 2 For example, see Noe, R.A (1988), 'An investigation of the determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships', Personnel Psychology, 41, pp.457-479

3. 3 See, for example, Hunt, D, 'A longitudinal study of mentor outcomes', Mentoring International, volume 6, no's 2/3, Spring 1992, and Seinert, S. 'The effectiveness of facilitated mentoring: a longitudinal quasi-experiment' Journal of Vocational Behaviour, no. 54, pp.483-502, 1999

My own background lies in organizational development consultancy and psychotherapy. Having witnessed the growth of counselling in the 1980s and 1990s I can see significant comparisons with what is happening now in the coaching world. Counselling and therapy tightened up its act considerably during that period and many would say with good effect. Whilst it could be argued that the highly-unregulated nature of counselling in the 1970s and 1980s worked fairly well due to strong internal codes, values and ethics, there were many who felt that moves towards more stringent controls were overdue. These controls covered the approval of counselling training providers, guidelines on professional practice, including supervision and a set of standards and ethics for anyone calling themselves a counsellor.

Why be concerned about supervision?

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) is one body that has been created to promote good practice and the expectation of good practice in mentoring and coaching across Europe. I am involved with the EMCC Group focusing on developing ethics and standards. We recently published a Code of Ethics to which all coaches or mentors who join the EMCC will adhere and which we also wish to promote as best practice to the wider coaching community.

The Code includes the following statement:

> The coach/mentor will maintain a relationship with a suitably-qualified supervisor, who will regularly assess their competence and support their development and it is on the topic of supervision that I wish to focus in the remainder of this article.

I am pleased that there is increasing recognition of the importance of supervision for coaches. It is something that is quite rightly a requirement for psychologists, psychotherapists and counselors who wish to practice in this country. However, I am a little concerned that supervision is being projected as something of a necessary chore, something that gives an appropriate veneer to the profession of coaching, rather than as the crucial learning and support mechanism to the coach that it really is. What must be emphasised is the part supervision plays in protecting the interests of the coach and the person being coached.

What is Supervision?

The British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy states that "counselling supervision is a formal and mutually agreed arrangement for counsellors to discuss their work regularly with someone who is normally an experienced and competent counselor and familiar with the process of counselling supervision." (BACP Code of Ethics and Practice for Supervisors of Counsellors). The EMCC in our Code of Ethics has made similar comment on the core purpose of supervision and the importance of the supervisor being equipped to fulfill the role. I want to elaborate in this article on both those issues.

Supervision sessions are a place for the coach to reflect on the work they are undertaking, with another more experienced coach. It has the dual purpose of supporting the continued learning and development of the coach, as well as giving a degree of protection to the person being coached. Many coaches still work on their own and will enjoy little ongoing support and assistance. Coaching supervision may be the only regular source of learning and support many of them have.

From the client's perspective, the role of the supervisor should give confidence that that there is an element of external quality control over the coaching process, a check that the process is running smoothly and that all key areas are being adequately covered.

The coach themselves needs a safe environment in which they can explore what is happening for them in the coaching relationship. This is very important if the coach in any way feels "stuck" in the coaching relationship, unsure how to move forward. This can be for one of a number of reasons;

The first issue concerns diagnosis of 'pathological' conditions or those which have a greater psychological complexity e.g. broader personality disorders, addictions and so on. Whilst these are rare, they do crop up from time to time in executive clients. Most coaches do not have the background or experience to diagnose these conditions or the skills and knowledge of what to do if they are confronted by them.

Similarly it is often unclear just when it would be best to refer a coaching client for counselling/psychotherapy. Indeed the coach may lack knowledge of where to refer people to - for example in a complex bereavement situation which is clearly affecting performance.

Coaching will inevitably raise issues within the coach him/herself from time to time. Issues in the client may well trigger similar unresolved problems in the coach. This may well affect the coach's capacity to work clearly.

Supervision in counselling and therapeutic contexts will often focus on transference and counter transference relationship themes. It is not unusual for similar issues to arise within the coaching relationship also.

Beyond the above mentioned psychological themes it should be acknowledged that coaching clients often bring highly complex strategic organisational issues and dilemmas which can leave the coach feeling both stuck and inadequate.

The Supervisor and the Supervision Process

My experience of supervision leads me to believe that it is important for supervisors to have a background which encompasses strong psychological competence, such as diagnosis, referral, transference, counter-transference and personal development. Supervisors should also have a strong corporate background in order to understand the context and range of organizational issues.

The frequency of supervision will depend upon the volume of coaching being undertaken and, to a degree, the experience of the coach. I recommend a two hour supervisory session for every 25 hours of coaching undertaken by experienced coaches and one supervision hour to every 10 hours coaching for those in training or who are relatively inexperienced.

I feel strongly about supervision because I believe it to be the key element in bringing a degree of quality control to coaching and ensuring that it can justifiably claim to be a structured and ethical process and profession. Coaches should seek supervision for the benefit it will bring to their clients and themselves. Those seeking to employ a coach, either for themselves or on behalf of organizations, should ascertain the extent to which the coaches they talk to are engaged in a level of supervision which is appropriate, a level which will enable them to perform at their optimum and thereby develop fully the potential of the people they are coaching.

This is the dynamic role that a coach can play - to unlock a person's potential and help them achieve personal growth, either inside or outside of work. Coaching can therefore be of huge benefit to individuals and organizations and it is why it has attracted so much attention. However those involved in a coaching contract, the coach and the person being coached, must both be nurtured if those benefits are to be delivered. Through supervision the coach can get the support they need to enhance their capacity to build successful, nurturing coaching relationships.

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Introduction

Which ideas, models and processes do executive coaches use? Are they the best-kept trade secrets of people who prefer to produce results as if by magic? Or are models and processes used in a manner that is transparent for clients and shows them what coaches actually do and to involve them in the process?

Transparency increases trust. This is essential for any coaching relationship. Without trust the client holds back and does not reap the full benefits of the coaching relationship. It is our belief in the necessity of trust that led us to wish to uncover what actually happens in a coaching session facilitated by an excellent and effective coach. This article is the result of our quest to understand what makes a great coach and describes a new model to guide the coaching process.

We worked with and observed executive coaches in the US, England and Germany during coaching sessions with executives. Our guiding questions included:

- How does the coach achieve results?
- How does the coach have a positive impact on an executive's performance?
- What distinguishes an excellent coach from the average coach?
- From our observations and modelling and study of coaching models we developed the seven-step Achieve Coaching Modelâ"¢.

Our studies and training in the UK revealed that the model which has most strongly influenced the process of coaching today is the GROW model. This model was then used as the starting point for the development of ACHIEVE. -

## What is the GROW model?

Goal

Reality

Opportunity

What next

The GROW model developed by Sir John Whitmore is probably the best-known coaching model in the UK. Many coach training programmes use this model as the framework for developing the coaching relationship. A recent study (2002) conducted by the Work Foundation and the School of Coaching revealed that 34% of respondents stated that they used the GROW model, one third cited they used a variety of models and the remaining third did not know what model or process was used in their coaching activities.

So what is the new model? As we stated above, it is a logical progression from GROW and follows the development of a coaching relationship in a systematic manner.

The new seven-step model
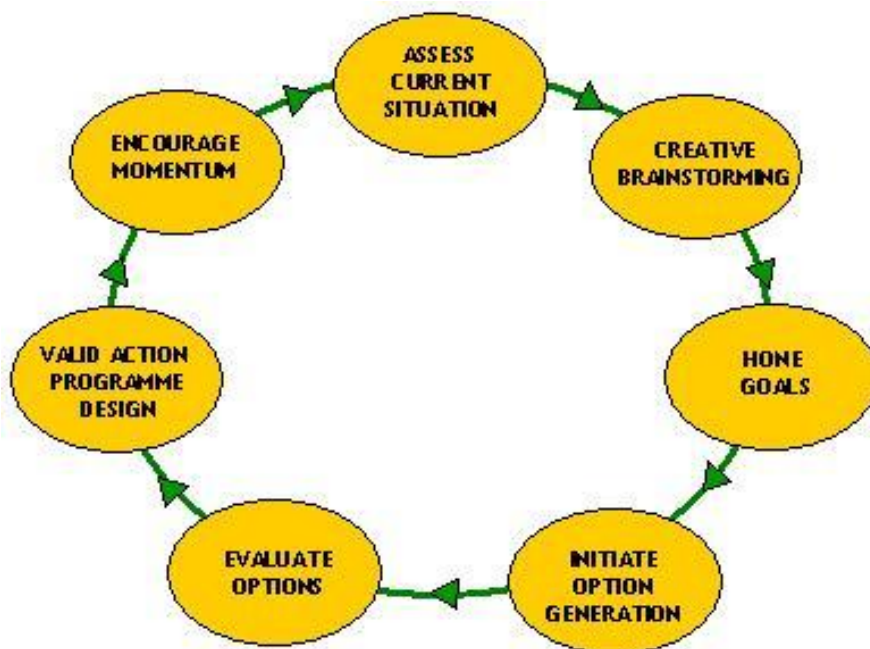
- o Assess current situation
- o Creative brainstorming of alternatives to current situation
- o Hone goals
- o Initiate options
- o Evaluate options
- o Valid action programme design
- o Encourage momentum

How the new model works

In this section a description of each of the seven steps is provided together with an overview of the skills and techniques which a coach can employ based on our direct observations of the best coaches.

Step 1 Assess the current situation

In this first stage of assessment coaches include all areas of a client's life. As one of the coaches we modelled in Germany explained, "... you cannot separate the different areas of an executive's life or for that matter anyone's life - they are an interlinked system". It is important to obtain an overview of the client's current circumstances before focusing on the chosen area.

The most critical coaching skills at this stage are: rapport building, the use of open-ended questions and active listening.

Great coaches establish rapport by employing three essential skills:

- Matching
- Summarising
- Respecting

Of the three, matching is key and involves matching both physiology and language:

- Posture (key) - especially spine and head tilt
- Gestures
- Facial expression & blinking (key)
- Breathing
- Voice - tone, tempo, timbre and volume

- Use of language - key words, common experiences and associations

The use of open-ended questions requires the client to answer with more than a simple yes or no. The purpose of this is to help the client to begin to explore his or her current situation which leads to different ways of thinking about it and ultimately to the self-generation of solutions.

In active listening coaches applied three techniques: repeating what was said word-by-word, reflective repetition (same sense) and interpretive repetition. In the latter step some coaches went as far as testing hypotheses and synthesising information from the client. All coaches observed their clients very carefully at this stage and had developed a high degree of sensory acuity. Sensory acuity includes observing such things as very small changes in skin colour and tone, the tightness of the muscles around the mouth, blinking rate and breathing rate. They showed genuine curiosity towards the client and their stories and were demonstrably keen to learn more about them. Based on the initial assessment the shaped the specific course of the coaching programme together with the client.

Step 2 Creative brainstorming of alternative options to a client's current situation

Clients who have either hired an executive coach themselves or where the organisation suggest one often experience a "stuck state". This is a situation where the client feels trapped as if there are no alternatives or keeps circling around the same issue without being able to generate new options for behaving differently. Top coaches ask open questions at this stage that allow the client to open up and/or view the problem from an entirely different perspective. A simple question such as "What would you do if money would not be an issue?" or "What would you do if you knew you could not fail?' really stimulate the client to think in a very different way. Questions like these have the power to invite very open brainstorming at this stage. It also was important for the coach to pace then lead the client. That is to continue the rapport building and gradually ease into a new approach once the client is following the movements and language of the coach.

Throughout this stage the coach observes the client very closely as even small facial changes or other shifts in physiology can be indicators that the client is beginning to change.

Step 3 Hone goals

At some point during the first few coaching sessions the coach and client begin to work on goals. Sometimes clients know exactly what they want however others require more help in formulating the goal. Whatever the starting point, all great coaches spend significant time to work with the client to hone the goal they wish to achieve from the coaching. In the numerous sessions we observed it became clear that it is not a strictly linear process as the coach and client work back and forth until the goal is clearly formulated. In addition, we noticed that great coaches made sure that goals formulated in the right way we recognised that they conform to the principles of SMART goal setting. SMART as an acronym has been quoted many times and there are several different translations for the acronym especially for the A and the R. All are good: Achievable, Attainable, Actionable, Reachable, Relevant, Realistic.The best coaches we observed asked penetrating questions about the goal to ensure that it had real relevance to the client rather than just being a restatement of organisational goals or a socially expected goal.

To be achieved a goal needs to become real to the client. As one US coach explained, "The more it matters to the client the more it acts as a magnet it will draw in the person rather than the person having to push for it." In fact for her this was the most critical issue in the process. Only those goals

that have personal relevance and meaning are ones that are likely to be achieved and bring fulfilment in the longer term.

Further to this we observed that great coaches made additional efforts to help the client to build a complete projection of the goal by exploring how it will look, sound and feel when they have achieved the goal. A US coach stressed that the "aim of a small series of questions at this stage is to build a very real picture of how the goal will appear. This has the effect of making the goal seem achievable and helps the client have a much clearer idea of what they are endeavouring to achieve. By giving the client the experience of really sensing the goal the coach is giving the client the opportunity of testing that this is what they want and also gives them a benchmark to measure their progress against as they work towards the goal."

Step 4 Initiate options for goal achievement

They then move on to helping the client to initiate a wide range of options for behaving to achieve the desired goal. This is an important stage where we noticed that novice coaches are inclined to rush ahead and begin to make suggestions to the client rather than taking it slowly and allowing the client to generate his or her own options. One key skill here is according to a British coach "to know when to be silent and provide space". Long pauses are perhaps embarrassing in everyday conversation but they are a vital part of the coach/client relationship. A period of silent reflection may in fact be the most productive for generating fresh ideas and new ways of thinking about an issue. If the client generates options he/she also becomes more constructive in the face of other challenges that may appear in the future which currently appear to be unrelated to the subject of the current coaching sessions.

Having produced a range of options they establish criteria with the client for evaluating the different options.

Step 5 Evaluate options

For this to be successful requires the coach to understand the world of the executive and to be skilful in asking questions to help the client to weigh up the different options. We observed a German coach who used a matrix where he asked the client to evaluate the options in terms of short and long-term costs and benefits. Other top coaches asked clients to write things down as a list and then come back to them several days later with a fresh eye before determining which option was most appropriate. The coach also needs to be able to synthesise the different options so that a more comprehensive approach may be formed. The less experienced coaches we observed easily became impatient and rushed into the action plan design. Again a critical skill here is the development of patience to allow the clients to come to their own decisions.

Step 6 Valid Action Plan Design

This is the action planning stage where coach and client work together in developing a concrete plan to bridge the gap between where the clients are at present and where they desire to be. In our studies this step was revealed as critical to a successful outcome of the coaching partnership. A real difference emerged between coaches that were very successful and those that merely went through the motions. Good coaches are very rigorous and gain commitment from the client for action with concrete time lines and a clear statement of if and what support they need. The experienced coaches work with simple tables where they integrate all action items. They also ask for very precise questions about how the client will know when they have achieved each action - this provides key performance indicators which are again self-generated.

It also appears to be important that the client summarises the action plan in writing, often in an email, and commits to follow-up contact with the coach after each session.

Step 7 Encourage momentum

The final step in the process is ongoing. The coach encourages momentum and helps the client to keep on track. As a German coach explained, "however it is done (in person, by phone or email), it is vital that the coach should maintain contact with the client to maintain motivation and demonstrate belief in the client. The coach continues to encourage action that leads to the desired outcomes, motivates the client when the going gets tough, challenges when complacency sets in and demonstrates belief in the client. In this way the relationship is ongoing and the client knows that they have a partner who is solely dedicated to helping them achieve their goals".

Concluding remarks

The aim of this article has been to describe and provide insights into the practices of great coaches. The result of the observation and analysis of coaching models is the Achieve Coaching Modelâ„¢. The model provides a clear and transparent process. Coaches can use the model to structure their coaching sessions and coaching programmes without it being a straightjacket which does not allow for flexibility and individuality. For those thinking about hiring a coach it provides transparency of what actually happens in a coaching session and coaching programme and can help with evaluating coaches when choosing with whom to work.

Trademark applied for

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I have written elsewhere about personal coaching for stress and the details of Ruth's stress coaching programme and will not repeat those issues here. The purpose of this article is to share my experience of being a coach in the media spotlight.

Initial reservations

As part of my undergraduate degree I took a course entitled The Psychology of Mass Communication where I learned about how much power the media have to construct what we, the mass audience, perceive to be reality. Ever since this time, I have found it vaguely disturbing that the processes of creative editing and use of sound and visual effects can, in the hands of the unscrupulous, serve to construct whatever reality will sell the most newspapers or leverage the highest TV ratings.

So, from this early time, I decided that the world of media was a dangerous one and where 'reality' is whatever the editor wants to make it. An editorial god-like whim can result in a 'cut and paste' exercise that can make you either look a competent, personable and engaging professional or a complete pillock. This has associated potential consequences for your professional image.

This is why, under usual circumstances, my first response to anything to do with media involvement is to pass it over to my colleague Anna Britnor Guest. Anna has something of a performing 'arts' background and studied theatre and documentary form as a major part of her undergraduate degree. She also writes regularly for a variety of business journals and, as such, is experienced in the 'ways of the media and editors'.

Many of my personal fears about the media are founded on a realistic assessment of what actually happens in the media world. It is, however, a reality that applies to parts of, rather than to the whole of this world. So, I felt that I could no longer allow my negative stereotyping of 'the media' to get in the way of what was actually an excellent opportunity to promote coaching as a 'stressbusting' intervention.

Since the Coaching and Mentoring Network (CMN) was founded in 1999, media exposure in a variety of forms has actually been one of the most effective tools we have used for marketing. So when I was selected for this 'stress coach' role, I decided that it was simply too good an opportunity to miss.

An unusual 'contracting' process

When the producer, Lynne Jones, phoned and confirmed that I had been selected as the stress coach I asked how the listeners/volunteers had been selected and allocated to the different stressbusting interventions. This was for me a very important question. Coaching is not right for everyone or every situation so matching people with stressbusting techniques was a very important issue.

All reasonable steps were taken to ensure that appropriate clients would be identified for each approach. Listeners selected for inclusion in the programme were those who the producer felt had stress related issues that would most importantly be: -

Interesting to a wide audience and;

Not involve deep psychological issues.

At the time I wondered how the BBC would manage to 'screen out' any deep 'psychological issues', because the causes of individual reactions to stress can be very complex even when the presenting issue appears to be quite straightforward. I concluded that they probably could not, because this is actually very difficult to do without specialised training in psychological assessment. I decided that I was happy to take part in the programme, but made a professional commitment to provide whatever support was necessary to meet Ruth's needs, irrespective of the artificial and arbitrary time limitations dictated by programme scheduling.

Being selected by a BBC producer for a coaching programme to resolve a work related stress issue had the potential to launch aspects of Ruth's personal life out into the public domain, which should not be there. So, without knowing what 'depth' of issues were going to emerge as well as knowing how fickle and exploitative the 'media' can be, I was very highly motivated to make sure that Ruth's individual rights would be respected. I was also keen to ensure that as the contracted 'professional', they would respect my expertise and manage the process accordingly.

The BBC producer allayed my fears by providing strong assurances that they would not broadcast anything that either Ruth or I were not happy with and that they would respect whatever 'boundaries' we felt to be appropriate. The key for me was meeting the producer Lynne. In person she came across as an extremely personable and ethical professional: the complete opposite of what I had expected and feared.

Outcomes for the client

Ruth started her programme without really understanding what the BBC had in mind for her and, like many people, she had never heard of 'coaching'. After we had worked together for a few weeks, Ruth told me that when she had first contacted the BBC she had known for some time that she was not coping but had not known what to do about it. When the offer from the BBC came up, she said that she was at the point where she "would have jumped into a bath of cold spaghetti" if the BBC had told her to do it.

Coaching is not for the faint hearted. As Ruth discovered, you need to be ready to understand yourself and have the courage to take responsibility for change. Ruth faced this challenge and her programme was successful because she has accepted personal responsibility for her own development and worked hard to achieve her goals. Ruth has undertaken psychometric assessments, learned breathing and meditation techniques, developed skills in assertiveness and negotiation, faced some difficult issues in her life, re-connected with appropriate supports in her community, enrolled in an Open University course, changed jobs and bought a house, as well as de-stressing and developing confidence through singing.

Ruth has achieved a great deal since she started the coaching programme. In my opinion, her biggest achievement has been that she decided to do something about her stress levels and then followed through on a personal commitment to action.

Reflections for the coach

It was a strange and unnatural experience having a coaching session recorded for the Radio. It was more difficult than usual to conduct the coaching session and manage whatever issues arose. The biggest challenge was that whenever the client or I said anything that was of potential interest to the programme makers, and this coincided with a paper scrunching or pen dropping to the floor, they will ask you to repeat what has been said. This seriously interrupts the 'flow' and is quite odd for those of us who are unused to being in a recording session. It is also quite disconcerting for the

client and in amongst all the breaks and distractions associated with getting the recording done it is easy to lose track of what was said and what points they are trying to make. The danger was that it could have been easier to stray onto issues and concerns that perhaps both the coach and client may have wanted to avoid.

The producer Lynne did however stick to her word and did not broadcast any part of the coaching experience that would have put any of Ruth's' deeper personal issues, inappropriately in the public domain. In terms of what was actually recorded, they focussed in the end on the initial 'contracting' session and then a final session where we reviewed overall progress and agreed future goals. This was supported in between and at the end by a couple of interviews with Ruth on her own. This was because the Nicework team wanted to get Ruth's impressions of whether the process had really worked for her as part of their 'experiment' to road test three different stressbusting techniques. This part was, for me, a bit like having a final assessment for a major practicum at University, only much more public.

Being a bit of an old skeptic, I still have concerns about dealing with the media even though Anna's experiences as a CMN representative have, so far, been universally positive. However, as far as the BBC's Nicework team and Lynne in particular are concerned, I feel that the programme was conducted in a totally ethical and professional manner.

Practice tips for working with coaching clients in the media spotlight

1. Ensure that your clients rights and needs are respected at all times

2. Understand the type media organisation you are dealing with. The BBC, for example, is bound by law to be fair, accurate and objective.

3. Find out what angle the journalist is taking because this will be the most significant influence on the final output. Are they doing a polemical piece, an informative piece or an investigative piece?

4. Make sure that the media representative who has approached you is actually who they claim to be.

5. Consider your own motives for getting involved very carefully

6. Be aware that the focus of any media activity is to produce a 'good programme'

7. Establish what the ground rules will be, and that you are happy with them, before you commit to anything

8. Set appropriate professional boundaries around client rights and confidentiality

9. Ensure that any agreements that are made are either written down or recorded in some way

10. Ensure that you are personally comfortable with the media representative you are dealing with

11. Be prepared to exit from the process if any of the ground rules are broken or boundaries crossed.

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Introduction

It is no secret that over the last ten years there has been a rapid rise in the use of personal feedback by organisations to support the development of managers. Usually known as multi-rater feedback or 360-degree feedback, it provides a method which organisations hope will help their managers to see the skills or behaviours they need to improve. Personal feedback solicits views about a manager from the full circle of relevant viewpoints - self, staff, peers, bosses, and sometimes customers and suppliers.

More recently we have seen an increase in the combining of personal feedback with other development methods such as development centres and coaching. The idea is that combining coaching with multi-rater feedback gives more opportunity for managers to reflect on the feedback with someone who can help them interpret it in context and in a private fashion. It also benefits action planning.

But some people have questioned whether giving personal feedback is "real" coaching. This article reflects on the implementation of two different multi-rater schemes with which the authors are familiar. We start by presenting the schemes in turn as case studies to explain how the coaching element worked and how important it became. Then we share the lessons learnt from two different practitioner perspectives: the coaches; and the scheme organisers.

Case Study 1

The organisation and context

This small UK government department employs 500 staff in total. It developed a training and development strategy which included plans to conduct for the first time 360-degree appraisal with follow up using executive coaches for its 16 most senior managers (including the CEO-equivalent) during 2001/2. This group were targeted because there was a generally low level of development activity among the group at a time when the organisation and its leaders were about to face a period of significant change.

The multi-rater process

The 360-degree instrument used was based on a behavioural competence framework for senior civil servants. The exercise involved distributing paper based questionnaires eliciting both quantitative data (i.e. scoring against behaviours) and qualitative data (i.e. real life examples). Completed questionnaires were analysed by external researchers and reports produced.

The idea was to use the reports to prepare the ground so that valuable time in coaching sessions was not "wasted" reading the report. The reports were highly personalised and suggested aspects of the feedback individuals might like to discuss with their coach. Reports were sent out one week before their first scheduled coaching session. A briefing pack for each coach was also provided with additional comments for the sessions.

From the outset that the data generated was confidential. Neither the individual"s manager not the HR department had access.

The coaching element

The purpose of the coaching was to:

- Support people in making sense of the feedback generated, and interpreting it
- Ensure the whole 360-degree process and feedback are accepted
- Encourage people to extract the maximum learning from the process
- Assist in progressing to an action planning so that personal development plans could be drawn up.

Each person was provided with one two-hour face-to-face feedback coaching session. Later the option of up to three further sessions to support PDPs was provided. Eleven people chose to receive at least one further session.

Participants were given the choice of working with a different coach if, after the feedback session, they felt their first coach was not "right" for them.

Evaluation and outcomes

The key success criteria set at the beginning was to increase the level of development activity among senior managers. The 16 participants received a total of 36 coaching sessions between them. The total time spent in sessions was 72 hours. 35 hours of this time was identified as time people spent reflecting on their own development. The organisation regards this time as a positive outcome. The individuals may not otherwise have spent any time on this kind of structured reflection, assimilation and review about their own performance and development.

The cost of report production was cheaper then the cost of the coaching sessions (especially when the opportunity cost of the executive"s time is taken into account as well as the coaches" fees). The organisation concluded the extra cost of personalised reports was worth paying.

Case study 2

The organisation and context

Cable and Wireless is a company supplying IP (Internet Protocol), voice and data services to business customers, and to residential customers in some markets, as well as services to other carriers, operators and providers of content, applications and internet services. The company employs some 30,000 staff world-wide.

During 2001 and 2002 the company arranged for its 85 global senior managers to receive personal feedback. There were two aims: firstly to improve performance and capability; and secondly to promote a consistent approach to leadership and management development across the group. To encourage the process, the executive board also took part.

The company believed that the roots of good executive development at this level lay in a solid, implementable personal development plan (PDP) and that personal feedback would assist the development of PDPs.

The multi-rater feedback process

The feedback was generated using a 360-degree web-based tool. The tool was bespoke software and used the "high performing" behaviours of the company"s Global Leadership Model that had been validated and benchmarked over the previous four years.

The feedback was completed by the individual, their manager and chosen respondents on-line. The results were to the coach on-line to help them prepare for the first feedback meeting and subsequently to the manager and coach together to help development planning.

The coaching element

The process did not involve coaching in the first year. The evaluation of the personal feedback process after the first year (2001) identified that introducing coaching was essential to maximise the benefit of the feedback itself and ensure the process supported PDPs. The feedback process, this time with coaching, was repeated with the same target group the following year (2002). Many of the senior managers were new.

There were five coaches, two of whom were internal and three external. The role of the coaches was to :

    manage the feedback sessions

    help individuals to identify strengths and development needs and prepare a PDP

    provide further support, if required.

The coaching comprised one or two sessions averaging 100 minutes each, some conducted over the phone, thanks to the geographic dispersal of the managers. Fifteen per cent of the managers chose to develop this into a longer term relationship supporting their performance improvement and the implementation of a PDP.

Evaluation and outcomes

The in-house evaluation at the end of the second year indicated that the coaching had added significant value when it came to improvements in individual performance. The coaching was also popular with participants; seventy-five per cent rated the coaching as excellent. Most managers reported now feeling able to identify for themselves specific development actions and produce a meaningful PDP in future. However only 33% of participants had discussed the content of their PDP with their manager. The company concluded the coaching component had been cost-effective and providing more coaching would have enabled the PDPs to have been taken even further.

Whole management teams going through the same individual feedback and coaching process proved particularly successful for the Asia-based managers. The Asian management team decided to use the process as a springboard to further team building and team culture work - unusual in Japan.

Although line managers were expected to be involved, it was felt that the role of the manager"s manager was not being sufficiently exploited. A good model was seen with the Caribbean based managers where this "grandparent" role was used effectively to help "nail" the benefits promised in each PDP by ensuring that the line manager supports its implementation.

A corporate side benefit was that identifying generic personal development needs across the company revealed a little more about prevailing behavioural styles that are important to long term organisation development and the culture of the organisation.

Lessons learnt from the case studies

Issues arising for coaches

So what do these case studies tell us about what coaches need to be aware of for working effectively within a multi-rater feedback context? Two main issues jump out. The first issue is related to forward planning. Coaches need to get the balance right between what can be achieved through the feedback report of the 360-degree exercise and what can be achieved through the one-to-one coaching sessions.

In practice the more personalised a feedback report, the more time consuming it becomes from the report writers point of view. In the Civil Service case study the organisation wanted to ensure the credibility of both the new competency framework and the feedback process. This was important given that people withint the organisation were not used to the giving and receiving feedback. Hence the emphasis on accurate data analysis, personalised interpretation and report presentation. The role of the coaching was considered secondary, a support to the multi-rater feedback process. In the Cable and Wireless case study however the coaching became the primary activity in the second year with the multi-rater feedback secondary, a support to the coaching and development planning. The feedback data arising from the model became a starting point for a conversation with a coach - just something for raters to hang observations on. Both approaches were sensible for the organisation culture and context in which they were being used. The challenge for coaches is to be clear about the context they will be operating in and to be sure that there are no "black holes" between the feedback generating process and the coaching sessions.

The second issue arising for coaches was the need to exercise judgement. There were a small number of individuals who, without a coach, might have ignored the data completely. Perhaps they might have been seen to do the exercise, but they had no intention of changing in any way. People have different reasons for this: some can feel railroaded by the compulsory nature of an exercise or by the timetable; for others there was an objection to the measures used. Using a coach makes individuals feel less like they are being funnelled through a system where the paperwork is more important than the person. A coach can focus on the individual. This might mean following a different route to enhancing personal development (different from that dictated by the set process). This allows those who would otherwise have gone through the motions to achieve something meaningful.

Something else we found interesting was how successful the sessions conducted on the telephone proved to be in the Cable and Wireless case study. Perhaps some coaches are inclined to be face-to-face "snobs" who see using a telephone approach as definitely second choice and second best. We have to put our hands up to this charge; we worry about missing out on the body language signals which are so useful for establishing rapport. The individual manager had to be committed to their own personal development in order for tele-coaching to be effective in the Cable and Wireless case. But then that"s also true for face to face work.

Issues for scheme organisers

So what do our cases tell us about issues that scheme organisers need to be aware of? The first issue relates to the selection of coaches. Typically coaches will suggest feedback on an individual"s

performance should be sought from a number of sources. This might include the coach observing the individual at work or use of psychometric tests. Coaches being hired to support a multi-rater feedback process usually have a much more limited brief than coaches in other contexts. They are also limited to dealing with feedback raised from two sources: from the multi-rater feedback exercise; and from the individual themselves. The lack of time implies that coach selection should bear in mind the need for a high degree of immediate personal credibility in the eyes of the coached. We feel this is a more important criteria than when selecting coaches for other work.

The second issue we identified is the need for scheme organisers to be realistic in their expectations of what can be achieved. In both our case studies there were a couple of individuals for whom the feedback exercise alone did not reveal any gaps in perception or weaknesses in performance or personal effectiveness. It may be that some individuals do not have development needs, at least in the sense of having no performance gaps against an organisational competency framework. Alternatively it could be that participants selected people to rate them who were unwilling or unable to comment adversely on their performance. Perhaps scheme organisers expect too much from a multi-rater feedback exercise. The organisation"s own performance management systems should be dealing with underperformance, rather than hoping a feedback exercise will uncover them and then hoping that coaching will deal with them.

Interestingly, even in the examples given where no gaps were indicated, the PDPs subsequently produced showed that development needs were identified and agreed. From this, scheme organisers in other organisations can be aware that they should not rely exclusively on a 360-degree exercise to identify development needs. The coaching process came into its own in these examples. This is because the coaches were able to use their questioning and probing skills to uncover possible development needs that may otherwise have been missed.

Another concern of scheme organisers is to budget properly. This involves estimating coaching time and its cost. In our two case studies it was clear that different individuals took different lengths of time to agree the relevant issues and move into action planning and PDP production. Thus scheme organisers may find it more helpful to budget for an average number of sessions/coaching contact time and expect variations from that average. This should lead to better individual outcomes than allocating everyone the same set length of coaching time.

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Growing in popularity in Sweden

Coaching and mentoring is very popular type of competence development in many workplaces in Sweden. There has been considerable growth during the past two or three years. Today almost every modern company/organization is aware of the positive outcome from coaching and mentoring.

There has been a tendency among companies in Sweden to stop sending their leaders on large leadership training programs. Instead, or as well, they offer their managers individually customized executive coaching or career coaching. Many also have internal mentor programs. Very often the mentors are line managers within the organization. To be a mentor in Sweden most often means that the mentor is not paid a fee, but is doing it for free.

But the demand for coaching is not just in the workplace. In Sweden private individuals may feel they need coaching to help with life balance or stress. There is a high level of openness and happiness about having your own coach. Unfortunately demand for coaching outside the workplace is not fully satisfied because of the cost.

An emphasis on career coaching

It is not just the leaders who are offered coaching and mentoring. Many employees are offered competence development programs in terms of career coaching.

This is a relatively new area in Sweden and has been born out of the large scale downsizing of companies and organizations. Many people are forced to leave their jobs and find new ones. To help them through this process they are often offered career coaching in a group or individually.

Many companies also see the advantages of career coaching in terms of competency development and employee wellbeing and therefore they are building up internal career centres for their employees. These career centres are often organized by the HR department and they buy services from external coaches.

The inspiration of Ericsson

Before 1992 career coaching services in Sweden were directed exclusively at unemployed people through employment service bureau /job centres and at school children as vocational guidance. But all that changed in 1992 when Ericsson, the telecoms giant, pioneered career coaching in the workplace by setting up an internal career centre for all employees

The purpose of this career centre was to support the employees to seek new challenges, to move around in the company and try new work issues. Top management supported the initiative but the centre staff were free to develop the services as they wished.

There were five people working at the award winning centre covering life and career coaching, executive coaching, mentoring and job seeking training. The team introduced a new way of thinking in the organization whereby you give the responsibility to the employees to take care of their own development and to communicate what they want to do to their manager.

It was at Ericsson that the approach called life&career planning was developed. It is not based on new principles, but it includes a number of materials and tools packaged differently in the way that it integrates competence development with wellbeing. Via methodological self-analysis, each participant explores their abilities, traits, values and interests and define goals for life and work. Life and career planning is about creating meaning in your life and work and this leads us to be more proactive. The method Life&Career planning is now a well known method in Sweden and is used by many coaches in many organisations.

Executive coaching

Working with intercultural issues is an important aspect for managers in global companies. Many of the managers in Sweden work in foreign cultures, and for some Sweden is the foreign culture! Managers seem to like coaching because they can book the coaching sessions whenever it suits their own schedule.

As in other countries the purpose of executive coaching is to support managers to enhance their insight, acquire new skills and change their behaviour by working with an external person over a period of time. Less common than elsewhere perhaps is an approach to delivery which integrates coaching with e-learning. The manager completes a Manager Profile Report based on a formal axiology, which studies how people think, how people value and compare different things, and how those thinking patterns represent and distort reality. After the report is fed back the manager receives 13 tailormade eLessons on how to improve management skills.

Then a plan is set up with objectives of the coaching and a time plan. Normally the coaching is done for 10 hours divided into 5 sessions for approximately six months. The coaching is aligned to the content of the eLessons. As work progresses, things may happen such as mergers or acquisitions or downsizing. In those situations such issues are added in the coaching.

About the authors

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