MENTORING: PROS AND CONS FOR HRM

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Abstract

Mentoring has received considerable coverage in recent decades and this is evident by the proliferation of research and popular literature available to the reader. It has been hailed as an important human resource management strategy, a career tool, and a workplace learning activity for men, women and minority groups in a variety of organisational settings such as hospitals, large corporations, schools, universities and government departments. In this paper we review the literature on this ubiquitous yet elusive concept. We begin by exploring what is meant by mentoring, the functions of mentors, three different categories of mentorship, and the benefits and hazards for the mentor, mentee and organisation. In the final part of the paper we highlight some of the implications of setting up a formal mentoring program for human resource managers.

Mentoring is an elusive term with many variations in the way it has been defined. Researchers have not yet come to any consensus over a functional or scientific definition. The general meaning of the term 'mentor' was derived from Homer's epic story, where Mentor was the wise and old friend of Odysseus. When Odysseus fought in the Trojan War he entrusted Mentor with the care, guidance and education of his son, Telemachus. The generic meaning of a mentor, then, is a 'father' figure who sponsors, guides and instructs a younger individual who is known as a protégé.

Two important studies conducted in the 1970s which acted as catalysts for subsequent research and interest in the area of mentoring were provided by Kanter (1977) and Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McKee (1978). In both of these studies, the authors proposed that access to a 'mentor' was advantageous to a protégé's career outcomes. Furthermore, it provided the mentor with certain benefits, too, such as rejuvenation of his or her career, and the satisfaction of assisting another develop his or her capabilities. In Men and Women of the Corporation, Kanter (1977) observed that

being mentored not only yielded the most desirable jobs for protégés, but also it enabled them access to the power structures within the organisation. In Seasons of a Man's Life (1978) Levinson et al. saw that mentoring was not only 'sponsorship' (as denoted by Kanter, 1977), but was an important developmental process in adulthood. For example, they described mentoring as an 'intense' and 'complex relationship' where the mentor plays the role of 'peer and parent', and takes on roles such as teacher, advisor, sponsor and friend (pp. 97-98). This definition of a mentor is somewhat akin to the original meaning of mentor, following Homer's story, since it implies a more experienced other, i.e. a father figure, who provides counsel, support and guidance to a protégé's professional and personal life.

At this juncture we would like to say what a mentor is *not*. Contrary to some research (see Beasley, Corbin, Feiman-Nemser & Shank, 1996; Woodd, 1997), we would argue that mentoring is not the same as peer assistance, peer tutoring or peer mentoring. As Jacobi (1991:513) states, 'relative to their protégés, mentors show greater experience, influence, and achievement within a particular organization or environment'. We consider 'experience' to be the operative word in this description.

Furthermore, we do not see 'executive coaching' (a buzz word which has emerged in popular management and training journals in the United States in the late 1990s) as being the same as mentoring. Executive coaches have been described as 'mentors for hire' (Brotherton, 1998:82); those who 'help executives hone their people skills as opposed to their business skills' (Filipczak, 1998:30), and persons 'from outside the organization … [who] … attempt to improve [an executive's] performance on the job' (Judge & Cowell, 1997, Abstract). Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck (1999) go on to state that many executive coaches in the United States are licensed psychologists who provide short term advice which aims to assist executives improve specific competencies or solve specific problems (Hall et al, 1999). Thus, we would argue that any form of coaching (i.e. the process of developing specific people or business skills or competencies) is but one of a number of roles that a mentor carries out. We agree with Kram (1983) who states quite clearly that mentors play many roles and one of these is the coaching function. Other roles played by mentors are discussed in the next section.

FUNCTIONS OF A MENTOR

Another way of understanding mentoring is to view it in terms of the functions or roles it performs. Since the 1980s, a number of researchers (see Noe, 1988a; Kram, 1983, 1985) have grouped the roles or functions performed by a mentor into two main categories: career and psychosocial support. Included under the umbrella of career functions provided by mentors are sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure and visibility, and challenging work assignments (Kram, 1983). Included under the umbrella of psychosocial benefits protégés enjoyed are encouragement, advice and feedback, as well as an enhanced sense of competence, effectiveness, and clarity of identity (Kram, 1983). This division of functions, i.e. career and psychosocial, is useful as it illustrates that mentors fulfil a wider role than simply that of career facilitator.

THREE CATEGORIES OF MENTORSHIP

A simple yet clear categorisation of the different types of mentoring arrangements is provided by Byrne (1991). She identifies three main categories and these are discussed as follows.

Traditional Mentoring

Mentors in the traditional sense are significant others who use their knowledge, power and status to assist protégés to develop their careers. Traditional mentorship (Byrne, 1991) is the oldest form of mentoring and has been a common source of patronage in the arts and sciences throughout history.

One of the major features, and at the same time, one of the major disadvantages of traditional mentorship, is its highly selective and elitist nature (Byrne, 1991). In this type of mentoring arrangement, it is usually the senior member in the organisation who elects to initiate a relationship with a younger member who is recognised as having potential or talent. Consequently, mentors will have natural leanings or biases towards some protégés and not others. The work of Odiorne (1985) suggests that some mentors have strong biases towards people of their own religion or cultural background. But is it favouritism or human nature for a person to like and help another because he or she has similar values and shares similar interests? We would argue that if a mentor selected a protégé primarily because he or she shared a number of things in common with the mentor, to the exclusion of the protégé's qualities and professional competence, then this would be discrimination. Another illustration of what we deem to be unfair treatment is the situation where male mentors select only male protégés because they perceive males are automatically the best candidates for the job. This is an example of sexism since it is discrimination based on a person's gender.

One of the main reasons that mentoring programs began to be formalised in the late 1970s by both public and private organisations, apart from the fact that mentorship had been recognised as a beneficial process for the mentor, mentee and organisation (Zey, 1988), was to address the problem of 'homosocial reproduction'. Kanter (1977) coined the expression, 'homosocial reproduction' to describe the informal ways that males sponsor and promote the careers of other males within corporate settings. She said that this happens because people tend to be attracted to and comfortable with others who are of a similar gender or who have a similar mind-set or worldview. Thus, traditional or informal mentorship, which has always been a highly selective process, has tended to discriminate against women. Research to date indicates that women in managerial (Noe, 1988b; Ragins, 1989; Kanter, 1977), academic (Bogat & Redner, 1985; Byrne, 1989) and other professional contexts such as education (Clarke, 1985; Patterson, 1994; Shakeshaft, 1987) experience a lack of mentoring opportunities, and it seems that

'homosocial reproduction' is one of the reasons women continue to be excluded from traditional mentorship.

Mentorship moved from being an individual process (i.e. traditional mentorship) to one conceptualised as a policy issue (formal mentorship) in the latter part of the twentieth century (Byrne, 1991). The evidence of this movement has been demonstrated by the proliferation of formal mentoring programs available in public and private organisations throughout the world. This movement occurred because organisations could see the potential of mentoring as a powerful learning and developmental strategy which could be used on the job. Furthermore, the establishment of mentoring programs was seen as an important affirmative action procedure not only in the USA and UK (Edwards, 1995; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995), but also in Australia (Sheridan, 1995).

Professional Mentoring

Unlike traditional mentorship which is an individual and idiosyncratic process, with selection dependent on the personal choice of the individual mentor, professional mentorship is a process which is promoted and encouraged by top leadership as part of mainstream staff development. It is not a compulsory aspect of an organisation's operation, but a tool which management encourages (Byrne, 1991). For example, participants in a professional program (e.g. senior staff) would be allowed the choice of whether they would participate in the program, and also the choice of the 'mentee' (this term is more appropriate to use within a formal or professional mentoring context, since protégé connotes selective patronage (Byrne, 1991)).

One of the major advantages of a professional mentoring scheme, then, is that it contributes to the mandate of affirmative action legislation, since it attempts to dismantle barriers which prevent mentorship from being accessible to women and other minority groups. Its major disadvantage is its success is not guaranteed since the program is not compulsory, but voluntary.

Formal Mentoring

While professional mentorship indicates a shift in the way mentorship is consciously used and encouraged by management, formal or institutionalised mentorship goes one step further by making mentorship a systemic policy issue and a standard part of management practice. Thus it becomes a compulsory and core component within an organisation's staff training programs. In organisations which have formal mentorship, a handful of the senior staff and new or junior staff are involved. Douglas (1997:1) notes that formal programs are those that 'are assigned, maintained, and monitored by the organisation'.

Both professional and formal mentorship programs are more prominent in the United States than here in Australia, although programs within industry and government are beginning to be viewed here as important management tools (Cameron & Jesser, 1990). Consequently, most of the literature on formal programs has come from the United States

where formal programs have been used by corporations such as Johnson and Johnson, General Motors, banking organisations, and various departments within Federal and other Government agencies.

The major advantage of formal mentorship is it ensures that mentorship is extended to individuals and minorities who would not have been considered previously within the organisation. Its effectiveness, however, rests upon a number of assumptions, and some of these include: mentors will be committed to the program; mentors will be compatible with mentees; and mentors will be competent themselves in technical and interpersonal skills. Thus, formalising mentoring by making it a compulsory aspect of staff development, will not automatically guarantee its immediate acceptance and adoption. The final part of our paper alludes to some of the important issues that must be addressed when administering and implementing a professional or formal program for organisations.

It is important to note that the literature tends to use the categories of 'informal' and 'formal' mentoring arrangements (e.g. Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992; Fagan, 1988; Zey, 1991). The former term, 'informal', fits Byrne's categorisation of traditional mentorship, while the latter is concerned with mentoring programs some of which could be classed as 'professional', and others, 'formal'.

BENEFITS OF MENTORING

It becomes difficult to discuss the benefits of mentoring because formal and informal mentoring can be experienced quite differently. The role of the mentor, too, can vary enormously. For example, the intensity of the emotional relationship between mentor and protégé described by Levinson et al. (1978) is not usually a characteristic of formal mentoring relationships where a senior mentor is routinely assigned a junior mentee in the organisation for a short period of time to inculcate the junior into the culture, norms and processes of the organisation.

With this said, even within formal mentor programs, there can be considerable diversity and difference in orientation, context, and outcomes. For example, a formal mentoring program for an MBA graduate in a government department would be quite different from a formal mentoring program in a hospital where a student nurse is assigned to work with a nurse facilitator. While some processes may be common (e.g. information sharing and psychosocial support), it is likely that the fundamental goals or aims of the mentoring process would vary considerably in these situations. It seems that some mentoring programs have specific foci, such as improving academic performance (e.g. Hylan & Postlethwaite, 1998; Wrightsman, 1981), while others are concerned with inducting or socialising novices into a new role, such as MBA graduates. Affirmative action mentor programs also have a particular focus, since they are intended to provide learning and development opportunities, as well as foster supportive relationships and environments for members of minority groups within a range of settings, such as corporations (Ball, 1989).

Although the context and the goals of the mentoring arrangement does colour its particular orientation, an attempt is made in the next section to outline a number of benefits of mentoring for mentors, mentees (or protégés) and organisations. A brief summary of the benefits of mentoring programs is provided below in Table 1.

Table 1

BENEFITS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

MENTEE/PROTEGE	MENTOR	ORGANISATION
Career advancement	Personal fulfillment	Development of managers
Personal support	Assistance on projects	Increased commitment to the organisation
Learning and development	Financial Rewards	Cost Effectiveness
Increased Confidence	Increased Confidence	Improved Organisational
Assistance and feedback	Revitalised interest in work	Communication

 Source: Adapted from Douglas, 1997: 86

The list of benefits is by no means exhaustive; writers cite other important benefits of mentoring for the three groups shown in Table 1. While the above table is said to represent benefits of 'formal mentoring programs', research on informal or traditional types of mentoring can be found to support each of the benefits stated above. A discussion of each of these benefits is now provided

Benefits for the Mentee/Protégé

In the literature there tends to be a general acceptance of the benefits of mentoring programs for protégés/mentees. Career advancement is often identified as one of the key benefits a mentee or protégé enjoys as a result of being mentored. The research findings of Kram (1983) and Levinson et al. (1978) support this. Dreher and Ash's (1990) work is worth highlighting as they surveyed three hundred and twenty business school university graduates from two large universities in the United States and found that individuals experiencing extensive mentoring relationships reported receiving more promotions, had higher incomes and were more satisfied with their pay and benefits than individuals experiencing less extensive mentoring relationships.

Authors (e.g. Byrne, 1991; Cobb & Gibbs, 1990; Cunningham, 1993) who describe formal mentoring programs often identify personal support and good human relations skills as key characteristics of the mentor's role. Indeed, some of the empirical literature (Noe, 1988a; Lewis, 1995; Sampson & Yeomans, 1994) has found that mentees value supportive behaviours such as encouragement, friendship, advice and guidance and see these as key benefits afforded to them through the mentor relationship.

A critical part of any mentoring relationship is learning new skills and becoming competent in the role one is performing. Beginning principals and Army Reserve School Instructors in studies by Brown (1995) and Read (1998) respectfully, reported that the experience of being in a formal mentor program enabled them to understand system expectations, be more prepared to handle the role, and thus perform their work competently.

Many formal programs stipulate as their goals, socialisation into the organisation's climate and culture (e.g. Gunn, 1995; Geiger-Dumond & Boyle, 1995). This was the case according to the recorded experiences of thirty-nine undergraduate students from Queensland University of Technology who participated in the field experience component of their degree course. These students reported that a major outcome of 'learning in the field' was the opportunity to be socialised into the role. They also commented on the increased confidence they experienced as a result of being integrated fully into the new role (Dunn, Ehrich, Hansford & Mylonas, 1998). Mentors in the study assisted students to develop their own potential, gain self-knowledge and in turn, self confidence.

The twin benefits of 'assistance and feedback' have been touched on under the umbrella of 'personal support' and 'learning and development'. Both of these benefits illustrate the valuable advice and guidance provided by mentors.

Other benefits from the literature include: performance and productivity ratings are higher for protégés than non-protégés; protégés are paid more, take more pleasure in their work, have greater career satisfaction; increased likelihood of success; less time spent in the wrong position; pygmalion effect; increased awareness of the organisation (Murray & Owen, 1991:42-47); more status and obtaining a role model (Phillips-Jones in Carruthers, 1993). The next section reports on the benefits to mentors.

Benefits to Mentors

It seems that there is not as much empirical research which documents the benefits of the mentoring process for mentors. While this seems to be so, many writers (e.g. Murray & Owen, 1991; Carruthers, 1993; Douglas, 1997) suggest that mentoring is a two-way process or 'a reciprocal relationship' (Jacobi, 1991:513). Some of these benefits are now considered.

According to a training consultant for a large organisation in Sweden which introduced a formal mentoring program for women interested in upper levels of management, mentors

identified 'the pleasure of giving away their knowledge and experience' (Antal, 1993). The mentors in the study derived considerable enjoyment from sharing their experience and insights with the women whom they mentored.

Mentor teachers also noted a sense of fulfilment in assisting novice teachers how to become better teachers. Other important fulfilling aspects of playing the role of mentor include the development of a close relationship with mentees (Murray & Owen, 1991:53-56); a sense of being recognised professionally, and a sense of being needed (Carruthers, 1993:17).

Clutterbuck et al. (1991:19) state that two organisations in the United Kingdom, AMI Healthcare and Midland Bank, see that mentees are a source of practical assistance to the mentor. In these organisations, mentees are used as 'robot arms' as they are involved in gathering information and other resources necessary for projects and work related tasks (Clutterbuck et al., 1991:19).

Although traditional or informal mentoring may have an 'altruistic' side to it (Levinson et al., 1978:253) since the mentor willingly assists the protégé, the formal mentoring process is not always voluntary. The question arises, then, should mentors in formal mentoring arrangements receive financial rewards or should the experience of being a mentor be reward enough? A number of authors (Byrne, 1991; Jacoby, 1989) argue that mentors in formal mentoring programs should be rewarded for their involvement (e.g. increases to pay, bonuses, promotion or other incentives), and some formal programs do have financial incentives for mentors (see Fagan, 1989, in Murray & Owen, 1991:54).

Just as mentees have reported that mentoring has increased their self confidence, other research (e.g. Farren, Gray & Kaye, 1984; Murphy, 1996) has shown that mentoring enhances the self image of mentors as they are able to see themselves as competent, helpful and have 'personal currency' (Murphy, 1996). One mentor described it as 'an ego booster' (Farren et al., 1984).

Another benefit for the mentor is the notion of 'self rejuvenation'. Levinson et al. (1978:253) were among the first authors to recognise this advantage. In formal mentoring programs, this advantage has also been identified. For example, the mentors in Bush and Coleman's study (1995:66) reported on the valuable insight into current practice that they gained from working with a mentee, as well as a new interest in the job.

Benefits to the Organisation

Murray and Owen (1991) identify several benefits of formal mentoring programs for the organisation. Some of these include increased productivity, improved recruitment efforts, motivation of senior people, enhancement of services offered by the organisation and improvement in strategic and succession planning. An important benefit which was identified earlier in the paper for mentees is the development of skills and knowledge necessary for carrying out the role. It is evident that organisations can only benefit by

developing their employees' abilities and work performance. Some of these benefits are discussed below.

The development of managers or workers who can carry out the work effectively is one of the benefits of mentoring for the organisation. Induction is a highly appropriate means of developing employees which enables them to understand the new and competing demands of the position.

Increased commitment has also been identified as a benefit for the organisation. Fagan (1988) found that police officers who were mentored had higher job satisfaction, a stronger work ethic and less of an age/experience gap with their mentors than those who had not been mentored. Two of these findings suggest strong commitment and loyalty to the organisation.

According to Murray and Owen (1991), cost-effectiveness is one of the major benefits of mentoring. As they state, mentors tend to carry out their coaching role in conjunction with their regular position. The advantage is that mentees are afforded the opportunity to work with an experienced other (usually on a one-to-one basis) and there is no cost incurred for training, training rooms or trainers. With this said, however, there is little empirical research which supports this particular benefit.

The final benefit to the organisation that is discussed here is improved organisational communication. This is said to occur because mentors and mentees share knowledge and information regarding important matters in the organisation (Antal, 1993). A study by Geiger-Dumond and Boyle (1995) of a formal one year long mentoring program found that improved communication at senior and junior levels was one of the successes of the program.

THE DARKER SIDES OF MENTORING

In the previous section of this paper we outlined what are perceived as the potential benefits that may arise as a consequence of participation in a mentoring program. However, the literature does contain warnings regarding what Long (1997) has described as 'the dark side of mentoring'. Long has pointed out that

> An image is generally presented of a glowing picture of the wonders of mentoring particularly for professional development of staff, but at least some researchers and practitioners... are sceptical... In fact, under various conditions the mentoring relationship can actually be detrimental to the mentor, mentee or both. (p. 115)

Murphy (1996) in a study of middle aged male mentors identifies benefits that can be associated with mentoring. However, he also talks about the 'shadow side' of mentoring and uses such labels as 'the pain of fractured trust', 'the pain of letting go' and 'the pain of disappointment'. Douglas (1997) supports the views of Long (1997) and Murphy (1996) and suggests that much of the literature is one-sided and only focuses on the positive aspects of mentoring. Douglas goes on to outline the potential drawbacks of

some mentoring programs for the organisation involved, the mentor and the mentee. Murray and Owen (1991), like many other researchers, suggest that the advantages of mentoring can be increased productivity, cost effectiveness, improved recruitment efforts, increased organisational communication, motivation of senior staff and improvements in strategic and succession planning. However, Murray and Owen (1991) also discuss what they see as the potential challenges or negative aspects of formal mentoring. The first issue they discuss is the implementation of a mentoring program when there are few opportunities for advancement within an organisation. In the opinion of these authors, a situation such as this can lead to frustration for the mentees. The second issue raised by Murray and Owen (1991) is the danger of allowing a mentoring program to proceed when there is not complete organisational commitment to the program. Thirdly, they express concern about organisations that have encountered difficulties in endeavouring to coordinate existing ongoing training or human resource programs with new mentoring programs. The fourth point raised by Murray and Owen (1991) is the potential difficulty to convince management to implement a mentoring program when there is a relative lack of hard data justifying the effectiveness of such programs. The fifth and final issue raised is the complexity and potential expensive administration associated with a mentoring program that incorporates cross-functional pairing.

Among the other researchers who have commented on the potential concerns or drawbacks of formal mentoring are Noe (1991), Kram and Bragar (1991), Wright and Werther (1991), Wright and Wright (1987), Tellez (1992) and Jacobi (1991). In summary, Noe (1991) spoke of the possible creation of a structure built around favouritism, Kram and Bragar (1991) the resentment that may arise among nonparticipants, Wright and Werther (1991) the unrealistic promotional expectations, Wright and Wright (1987) the over dependence on the mentor, Tellez (1992) whether the mentee has the correct mentor and Jacobi (1991) gender issues and the lack of a sound theoretical base for programs.

Clawson and Kram (1984) have reported a series of case studies that focus on informal or traditional cross-gender mentoring relationships. These authors point out that there are risks when the mentoring relationship becomes sexual, when others perceive the relationship as sexual and when the mentoring relationship becomes distant as a means of coping with sexual innuendo. There is a shortage of female mentors in organisations and for this reason, it may be difficult, in some contexts, for female staff to be included in mentoring processes. In other words, the 'dark side of mentoring' can be associated with particular risks and concerns for female staff members in some organisations. (See Bowen (1985) and Collins (1983)). Long (1997) and Flynn (1995) suggest that group mentoring can be used as an alternative to the one-to-one model. It is argued that group mentoring may help overcome shortages of experienced mentors and facilitate mentees learning from each other as well as from the mentor. It is feasible that group mentoring may help address some of the gender concerns associated with mentoring programs.

Two of the most comprehensive summaries regarding the 'dark side of mentoring' have been produced by Douglas (1997) and Long (1997). Each of these is now briefly reported.

Long (1997) describes thirteen potential concerns regarding mentoring. These concerns are identified as mentoring is time consuming for all concerned, poor planning of the mentoring process, unsuccessful matching of mentors and mentees, lack of understanding of the mentoring process, potential for mentoring to create work tensions, few available mentors-especially women, over use of available mentors, lack of access to mentoring for women and minority groups, reproduction of the mentor's work style, poor relationship between mentor and mentee, high visibility of mentoring program lack of clarity as to whether mentoring is linking to career advancement and insufficient funding or termination of funding before the program can demonstrate potential benefits.

In Table 2, Douglas (1997) summarises the potential drawbacks of mentoring relationships in the following manner.

Table 2

DRAWBACKS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

ORGANISATION	MENTEE/PROTEGE	MENTOR
Lack of organisational support	Neglect of core job	Lack of time
Creation of a climate of dependency	Negative experiences	Lack of perceived benefits
Difficulties in coordinating programs with organisational initiatives	Unrealistic experiences	Lack of skills needed for the mentoring role
	Over dependence on the mentoring relationship	Pressure to take on mentoring role
Costs and resources associated with overseeing and administering programs	Role conflict between boss and mentor	Resentment of mentees

Source: Adapted from Douglas, 1997: 86

Each of the concerns identified by Douglas (1997) in Table 2 has support from empirical studies conducted on formal mentoring programs. We now briefly elaborate on these concerns for organisations, mentees and mentors.

Concerns for Organisations

For decision-makers in an organisation such as human resource managers, there are clearly concerns that arise from mentoring that might deter the implementation of a program. However, these potential concerns need to be perceived in relation to what Murray and Owen (1991) describe as the benefits of mentoring, namely, 'superior performance and high productivity' (p. 33) and 'goals are furthered; ... agencies can concentrate on managing and directing resources ... mentors ... make a positive difference in the lives of others' (p. 36). For organisations there seem to be two fundamental questions that must be resolved before a mentoring program is proposed. The first is a cost-benefit question that relates to whether the costs associated with implementation can be covered by the anticipated outcomes. This issue of costs is highlighted by Holt (1982) who contends that organisations rarely make a precise assessment of costs during the implementation stage of a program and the consequence of this is the eventual undermining of the program. The second question relates to a whether there is a willingness to demonstrate ongoing support for a program. Cameron and Jesser (1992) and Garrett (1990) have argued that a lack of commitment can totally destroy a mentoring program. It would appear that careful planning could minimise what are perceived as organisational concerns about mentoring.

Concerns for Mentees

The literature indicates that mentees can be hurt in a poorly planned and implemented mentoring program. Murray and Owen (1991) report that the unrealistic expectations of mentees can be forestalled when the roles and responsibilities are communicated to mentees. It is interesting that these authors recommend that mentees be informed about what the program does not imply. Long (1997) also stresses the importance of communicating to mentors the nature, if any, of the link between a specific mentoring program and career advancement. Perhaps a fundamental question for some organisations is the extent to which a mentoring program will have positive outcomes when it is clear that there is no obvious promotional path for participants.

Concerns for Mentors

There are many potential concerns regarding mentors. For instance, do they have the capacities required? Are they to be rewarded? How will they be selected? Will they be trained? What criteria will be used to match them with a mentee? Will they create an elite patronage system that excludes the socially different? It is questions such as these that must be considered when a mentoring program is being considered. Possibly one of the most complex question regarding mentors is stated by Long (1997) in the following manner.

> those that do qualify, most are already overburdened with organisational matters and professional responsibilities. To become engaged in another or possibly two

or three time-consuming mentor-mentee relationships is very demanding... there is a strong risk of overloading the few available mentors. (p. 126)

Although much of the literature regarding mentoring is directed toward discussion of formal mentoring, there is a growing literature base indicating that the outcomes of mentoring can be quite negative. The real question is what are the implications of such outcomes. Douglas (1997) has stated 'it is difficult to make sense of or simplify the overwhelming amount of practical advice they (the authors of publications) have to offer about developing mentoring programs.' (p. 41). It is worth noting that although there is a substantial amount of literature regarding mentoring this may be more 'practical advice' than research driven. Gaskill (1993) is an example of an author who believes that it is rather hard to reach any conclusions about the potential value of formal mentoring because of the paucity of research into organisational programs. Carden (1990), on examining the literature, has further complicated matters by indicated that there are certain researchers and theorists who argue that beneficial mentoring outcomes cannot be artificially created, but rather that these must arise through informal processes. Despite these views, it is our perception that some, and hopefully many, of the negative outcomes associated with mentoring can be minimised by time and effort being directed toward the design and implementation of theoretical sound programs.

The remaining section of this paper examines what specific authors have suggested are the major implications in developing and implementing a mentoring program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HR PRACTITIONERS: DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A MENTORING PROGRAM

In the early part of this paper we outlined a proposed categorisation of mentoring programs. The discussion that has followed has focused largely on professional and formal mentoring programs. This should not be taken as an indication that informal mentoring does not have a place in organisational life. Rather, it is likely that informal mentoring will continue to supplement other mentoring activities within organisations. It should also be kept in mind that some consider that informal mentoring is likely to be more productive as it is a natural rather than forced consequence of organisational life (Carden, 1990).

There is substantial literature that comments on the development and implementation of mentoring programs. Rather than endeavour to review all this literature, since it is beyond the scope and intention of this paper, we will focus on six articles that set out what are perceived as important elements in the designing of a formal mentoring program. These six publications were not randomly selected, rather they were identified in order to have data from a range of authors and publication outlets and these were - Berstein & Kaye (1986) *Personnel Journal*, Catalyst (1993) *A Guide to Corporate Programs and Practices*, Cobb & Gibbs (1990) *Journal of Management Development*, Collin (1988) *Journal of Industrial and Commercial Training*, Cunningham (1993) *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* and Gaskill (1993) *Journal of Career Development*.

The six publications were analysed to ascertain the nature of important elements that should be considered in developing and implementing a formal mentoring program. The frequency with which the six authors identified specific issues is indicated in brackets beside each of the elements.

Articulation of goals/objectives/ purposes. (4)
Monitoring/evaluating and ongoing improvement. (4)
Clear exposition of roles, expectations and responsibilities. (3)
Allocation of adequate resources. (3)
Support from senior management. (3)
Establish selection criteria for mentors. (3)
Develop a training program for mentors. (3)
Establish a timeline. (2)
Appoint a coordinator of program. (2)
Provide visible recognition and rewards. (2)
Develop criteria for matching mentors and mentees. (2)

It would be unrealistic to suggest the above are the only issues that need attention in a formal mentoring program, or that the issues mentioned most frequently are more significant than others. However, it is probably reasonable to say that the eleven issues are such that they do would warrant some consideration by human resource managers contemplating a mentoring program.

The issues identified above reflect those which were mentioned by at least two of the six authors. In our opinion, there are a number of other components of mentoring mentioned in the literature that warrant examination for mentoring programs in specific organisational contexts. For example, Catalyst (1993) spoke of the need to communicate and promote mentoring programs and this does seem to be vital if the mentoring process is to succeed. Collin (1988) suggested that mentoring should be a staff rather than a line relationship and in our opinion this could be a contentious point for some organisations. Cobb and Gibb (1990) argue for the anchoring of a mentoring program in the strategic needs of an organisation and this seems to be an absolute must if the mentoring program is to achieve identifiable positive outcomes. Cunningham (1993) reported that it is necessary to identify possible barriers during implementation planning and that involvement in mentoring should be voluntary. It is perhaps difficult to conceive of an implementation plan that did not include in the considerations potential barriers and how to overcome these. Similarly, the authors of this paper might favour voluntary involvement in a program, but this is not necessarily the view of other researchers. Gaskill (1993) suggests that mentors and mentees should arrange meetings at their own discretion. This is not necessarily the case in all mentoring programs as in some contexts, the time, place and length of meetings has been specified.

Jorgenson (1992) talks about a no-fault exit clause in mentoring programs. In other words, there may be a need for staff to exit a program, knowing that there will be no criticism or retaliation. Another possibility is that staff involved in a mentoring program

may assume that they are on the promotion path. This may, or may not, be true and Gunn (1995) talks of the importance of communicating to participants that involvement in a program is not necessarily a guaranteed path to promotion. In most instances, we are inclined to think of mentoring on a one-to-one basis but this is not accepted by all and Heery (1994), as an example, advocates team-to-team mentoring as the way to go. The final example relates to one of the eleven significant elements mentioned above, namely the provision of visible recognition and rewards for mentors. Jacoby (1988) accepts this point and talks about an increase in base pay, bonus pay, status, privileges, perks and promotion. We are not totally convinced that a number of
senior executives in organisations would think in the same way as Jacoby.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have endeavoured to demystify the concept of mentoring by providing an analysis of the term, its history, the types of mentoring and the potential benefits and concerns that have been reported in the mentoring literature. In particular, we believe that human resource managers must be aware that mentoring is not an organisational panacea. There are concerns regarding the outcomes of mentoring, but it is our opinion that these can be minimised by careful implementation planning. Mentoring is a complex and sensitive organisational process and there is little doubt it can be a destructive force for organisations, the mentors and the mentees. The simple implication of this paper is that organisations should view mentoring as a potentially beneficial process that requires careful long term planning and skilful human resource leadership.

It is important to stress that there are many models of mentoring and that implementing a professional or formal mentoring program does not imply that procedures such as informal mentoring or peer mentoring should not be included in an overall human resources policy. Carden (1990) sees mentoring as one of a variety of advisory relationships that may be available to staff who are seeking career and interpersonal development.

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