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PARADIGMS OF MENTORING PROCESS

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Abstract

The paper “Paradigms of Mentoring Process” focuses on the terminology of mentoring and examines how this process of mentoring can be translated into an organizational setup. The paper talks about:

1. The critical dimensions of the framework of Mentor-Mentee interface
2. The characteristics of each partner viz., Mentor and Mentee
3. What benefits both Mentor and Mentee get through such initiation
4. What are the stipulated do’s and don'ts, which provide a guideline for the Mentor and Mentee
5. Facilitation of laid out roadmaps
6. The possible pitfalls, which both the partner as well as the organization need to be aware of.

The paper also describes the role of mentoring in business organizations, which can positively impact the careers of the new entrants and prove beneficial both for the Mentor and the organization, if the process is inducted effectively.

PARADIGMS OF MENTORING PROCESS

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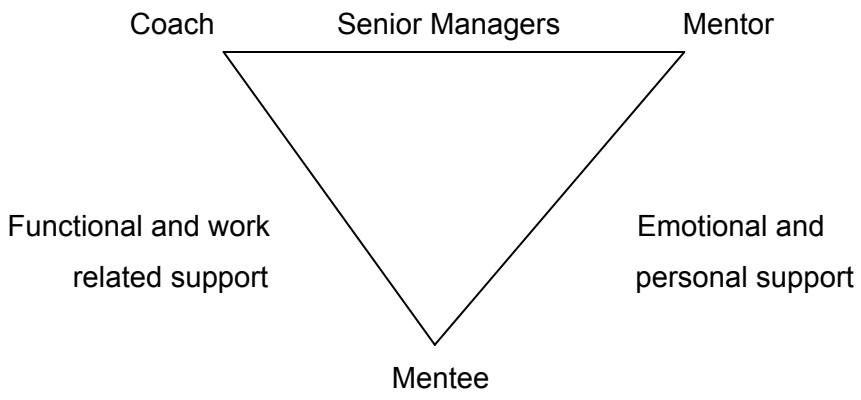
Mentorship is an important training and development tool for upward professional advancement in an organization. It is a fundamental form of human development where one person invests time, energy and personal know-how in assisting the growth and ability of another person.

The concept of mentoring is not new. The story of mentor comes from Homer's "Odyssey". When Odysseus, King of Ithaca, went to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted the case of his household to a mentor, who served as a teacher and an overseer of Odysseus's son. Similarly in Indian Mythology, the story of Chanakaya resembles the concept of mentoring. Today we often relate mentoring to our careers, but mentors can touch every facet of our lives if we take their offerings and apply them in various aspects of our lives. (6)

In an organization, senior managers are experienced people who, as superiors, also need to take the roles of coach and guide for the new entrants. Mentoring is an important aspect of these roles. Conceptually, there is distinctiveness in the roles of a superior, that of a coach and a mentor. Structurally, the three roles reflect the following interface:

FIGURE 1

COACH – MENTOR – MENTEE ROLE



- The Coach is the functional role the Mentee has access to in the operationalization of the tasks.
- The Mentor is the emotional support for adjustment and review of the Mentee's integration into the organization.
- The Mentees initiate an interface with both the roles --one functional and the other personal.

Adapted from unpublished consultancy report; Prof. Indira J Parikh, 2003

As a concept, this structural differentiation makes sense. However, its implementation creates some difficulties for both the superior and his subordinates and the Mentor and the Mentee. The dividing lines between the various roles are fine. There needs to be awareness and understanding by the organization, the seniors and the subordinates of their various roles. Only then can the Mentor – Mentee role impact the growth and development as well as retention of talent. The workshop on Mentoring was designed in this context.

However, in an organization, especially in Indian organizations, the concept of mentoring is new though they have now started to acknowledge the importance of mentoring.

However, before inducting the mentor-mentee interface, the organization needs to have the role clarity of who is a mentor and who is a mentee, and what does one means by the mentoring process.

OBJECTIVES OF MENTORING

The main purpose of mentoring is to provide an opportunity to the young people to share their concerns and get both moral support and guidance for their development. It involves the following:

- Establishing a relationship of trust
- Modeling behavioral norms for the new entrants
- Listening to the personal and job concerns of the new entrants
- Helping new entrants to search alternative solutions for their problems
- Sharing one's own relevant experiences so that cumulative experiences are shared and handed down
- Responding to emotional needs of the new entrants, without making him dependent on the mentor
- Building long and lasting relationships
- Creating awareness and a clear perception of organizational behavior and social and work culture. (7)

MENTORING PROCESS

Mentoring can be defined as: a significant, long- term, beneficial effect on the life or style of another person, generally as the result of a personal one-on-one contact. It is a process whereby the mentor and the mentee work together to discover and develop the mentor's abilities, to provide the mentee with knowledge and skills as

opportunities and needs arise and for the mentor to serve as an effective tutor, counselor and friend who enables the me to sharpen skills and have the mentee's thinking prowess.

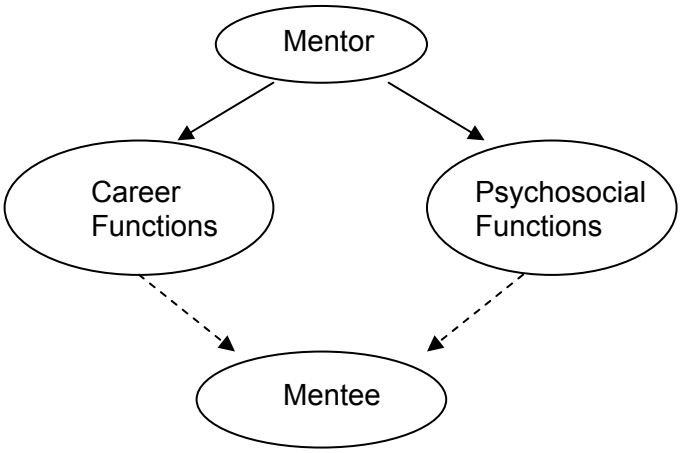
A mentor is often described as a parent-like figure for the mentee. A male mentee is also known as a protégé and a female mentee as a protégée .The mentor-mentee interface is unique among the dyadic relationships. The relationship often grows to be the most intense or emotionally charged. This interface is the most important element of the psychosocial development of the individual and is an equally important device for influencing commitment and unfolding of the self-image. (7)

A mentor relationship has the potential to enhance career development and psychosocial development of both the individuals. There are two types of mentoring functions:

- Career functions
- Psychosocial functions

FIGURE 2

TYPES OF MENTORING FUNCTIONS



- Through career functions including coaching, protection, exposure and visibility and challenging work, the new entrant is assisted in learning the roles of organizational life and is groomed for further growth and development.
- Through psychosocial functions, which include role modeling, counseling and friendship, the Mentee is supported and initiated in developing a sense of competence, confidence and effectiveness in the managerial role.

***** Kram, Kathy E*;* 'Phases of the Mentor Relationship'*; Academy of Management Journal,* 1983, Vol. 26 No. 4, 608-625.

Both these functions have a specific focus and the mentor is expected to play certain roles vis a vis the mentees.

Table 1 presents the appropriate role for each of the two functions:

TABLE 1

MENTORING FUNCTIONS

CAREER FUNCTIONS	PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONS
Sponsorship	Role modeling
Exposure and visibility	Acceptance and confirmation
Coaching	Counseling
Protection	Friendship
Challenging assignments	

- Kram, Kathy E*;* 'Phases of the Mentor Relationship'*; Academy of Management Journal,* 1983, Vol. 26 No. 4, 608-625.

Through these functions, the structure, role and processes of Mentoring earns recognition and respect from the superior as well as from the subordinates for developing and enhancing the new entrant's managerial talent as well as his personality.

Career functions are possible because of the Mentor's experience, organizational rank and influence in the organizational context. It is this structural role relationship that enables the Mentor to provide sponsorship, coaching and exposure and visibility to help the new entrants function effectively in the organizational world. The Mentor thus develops support among subordinates and respect among the organization for developing talent for the organization. Both individuals benefit from these functions and thus strengthen their respective positions through the relationship.

In contrast to career functions, psychosocial functions involve an interpersonal relationship that fosters mutual trust and intimacy. The quality of this interpersonal bond helps the new entrants to identify with the Mentor and to find a role model. In addition to providing a role model, the Mentor counsels the new entrants on the dilemmas and

problems, which the new entrants will encounter in the organizational system. Each individual experiences acceptance and confirmation through interaction with other. (2)

A good way to describe the quality and skills used by mentors is to represent into symbolic types. These types are not necessarily exclusive. Infact, some mentors may combine various types. These types are summarized in the following table:

MENTOR TYPES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

“Call me if you need me”	Generally passive orientation; willing to help but expect mentee's to take initiative
“I wish I could but I can’t”	Show willingness to mentor; have personal, organizational or other blocks/impediments in actually investing time and efforts; Sulking types
“It is difficult, but I still try and mentor	Know and understand organizational, or personal impediments; still able to invest time and effort; problem solving types
“Story teller”	Use parables, analogies and metaphors to make their point
“Watch me do it”	As coaches, like to demonstrate and show how a task is to be done
“Go ahead, do it. I am watching”	As mentors and coaches, like to be more supportive and willing to let others try on their own; empowering and developmental
“I care, therefore I mentor” – Nurturing	Add feminine dimension of caring,

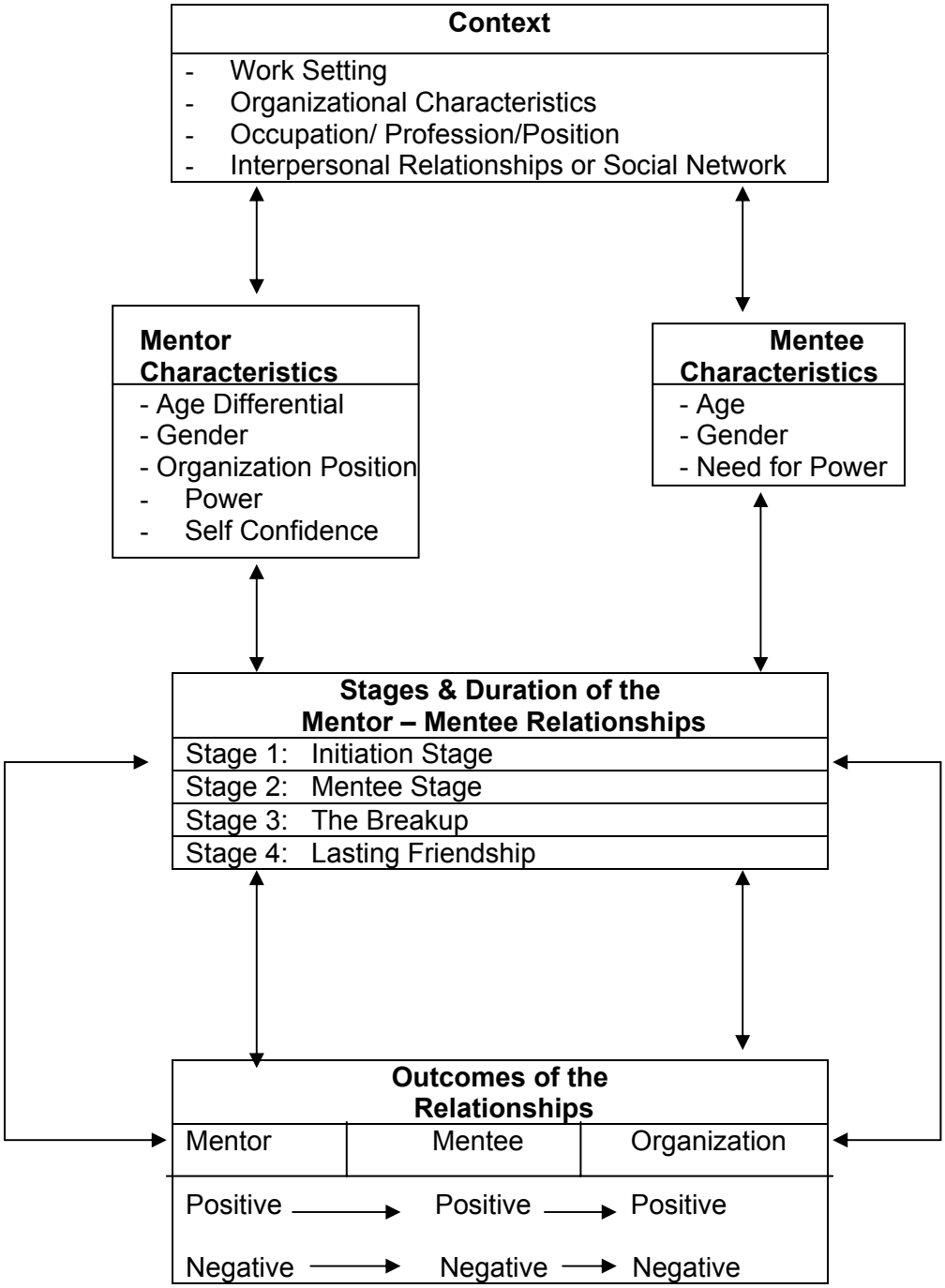
parent types	supportive functions with masculine action oriented dimensions; can combine caring and nurturing with task orientation
“I walk around and I mentor”	Tend to be more pro-active and on the move; generally keen observers of events and persons; tend to offer help and support on their own
“I reflect therefore I mentor”	Combine reflective and coaching/counseling skills, to promote learning from day to day work
“I suffered therefore I mentor	Empathize with mentees needs; recognize the benefits of mentoring, which they could not receive; hence motivated to mentor
“I was mentored, it was wonderful, therefore I mentor”	Empathize with mentee needs; recognize the power of mentoring; act to reproduce this power in their own life
“Mentoring empowers, therefore I mentor”	See the links between mentoring, coaching, delegation and empowerment of self and others; hence see it as a growth opportunity
“I manage, therefore I mentor”	Have internalized values and skills; extend these to their daily work practices and processes

(3)

The mentor-mentee relationship is time bound in nature. The key players are the senior managers who are in the organization for many years or recently joined senior mangers and the new recruits who have just entered into the organization. The new recruits are on the threshold of learning and absorbing their own roles in the organizational structure and system. Conceptually, the mentor-mentee relationship is of the following nature:

FIGURE 3

NATURE OF MENTOR – MENTEE RELATIONSHIP



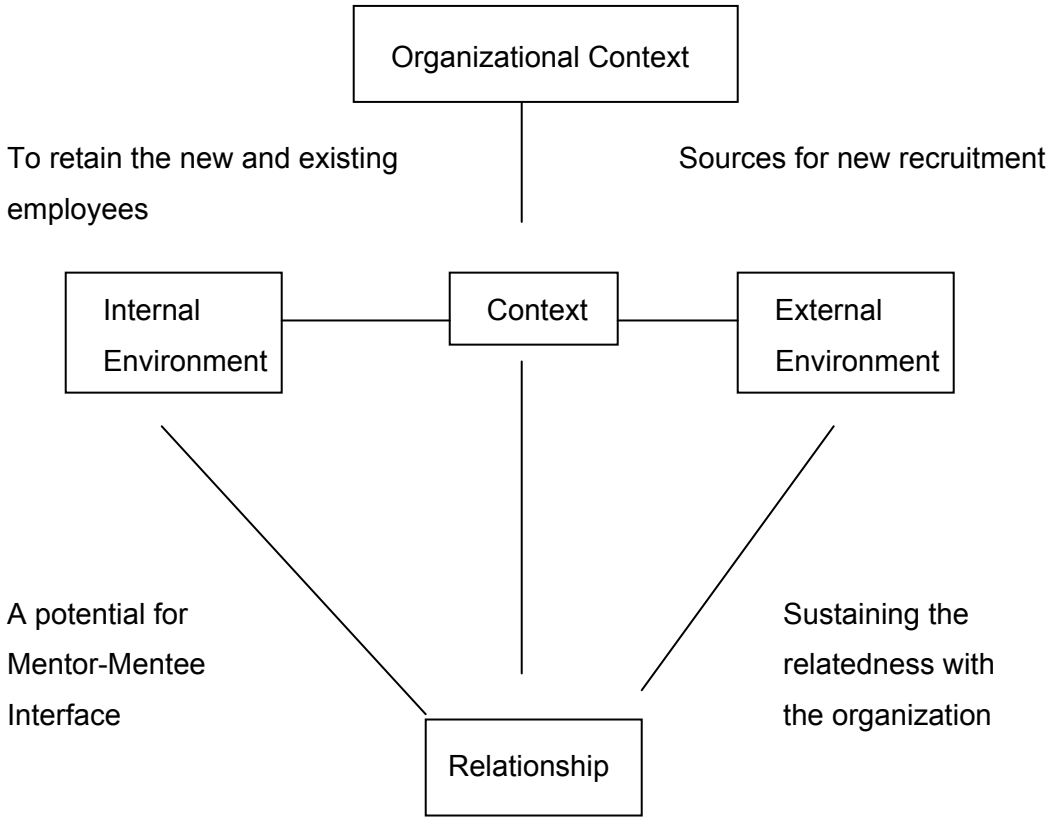
(2)

The model in Figure 3 presents the complexity and the need of Mentor-Mentee interface in any organization. The model suggests that there is a context in which Mentor-Mentee interface is located. Both the Mentor and Mentee reflect certain characteristics. The interface goes through stages and phases of evolution, growth and departures.

The Mentor – Mentee relationship becomes crucial at the time when the Mentor has to let go the Mentee. However, the outcome of such relationship can be either positive or negative for the Mentor, the Mentee and the organization as shown in the Figure 3

Mentoring process has the potential to strengthen the relationship of existing people and new entrants. The focus is on the relationship through which the mentor-mentee facilitates each other's learning about the external and internal environment and understanding of the aspirations and ambitions as well as the possibilities within the organization. This process needs to be located realistically in the existing structure of the organization. (7)

FIGURE 4
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
OF MENTOR – MENTEE INTERFACE



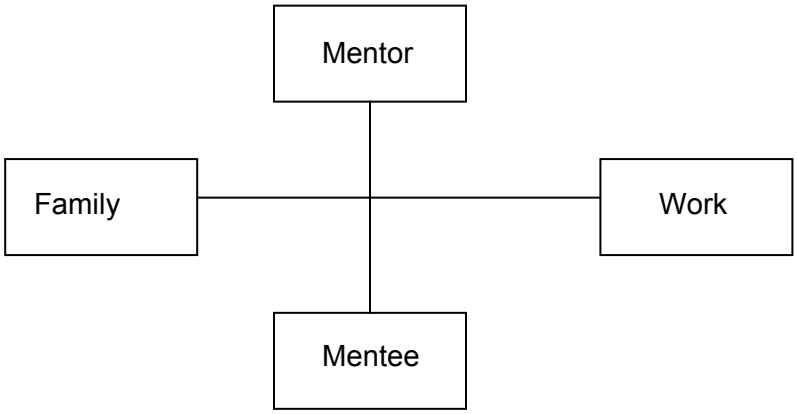
- Organizational culture is driven by internal and external environment
- The internal environment responds to the direction, vision and mission of the organization
- The external environment creates challenges for the organization

Adapted from unpublished consultancy report; Prof. Indira J Parikh, 2003

However, during the interface between the mentor and the mentee two contexts emerge – the family context and the work context in which the mentor and mentee roles are activated.

FIGURE 5

ROLE AND CONTEXT OF MENTOR - MENTEE



- Family constituents of the primary system.
- Work constituents of the secondary system.
- Mentor's issues are centered at the work level.
- Mentees' carry issues of both primary as well as secondary systems.

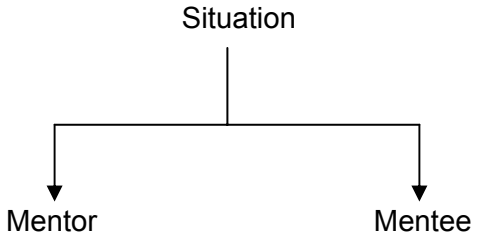
Adapted from unpublished consultancy report; Prof. Indira J Parikh, 2003

In an organization, the mentor role is largely focused on the work related situation, whereas for the mentee who comes from education and familial context it is usually centered both around the work as well as the familial roles. Both carry the baggage of unresolved issues from their various social and work contexts. The mentor carries the baggage of organizational issues such as unfair and unjust practices, delay or lack of promotion and being at the plateau for a long time. These are the secondary systems. The mentee carries the baggage of both primary and the secondary systems of education and now the organization. From the primary system, the mentee brings the

issues of authority, hierarchy and emotional residues of family structure and processes. In such a mindset, the mentor - mentee relationship may experience stress and difficulties. These residues disrupt the interface across the various roles in the organization and more specifically, the mentor - mentee interface.

The situational context does not have dynamic effect in the mentor - mentee interface. In any organization, the context of the mentor and the mentee reflects the following pattern:

FIGURE 6
SITUATIONAL CONTEXT



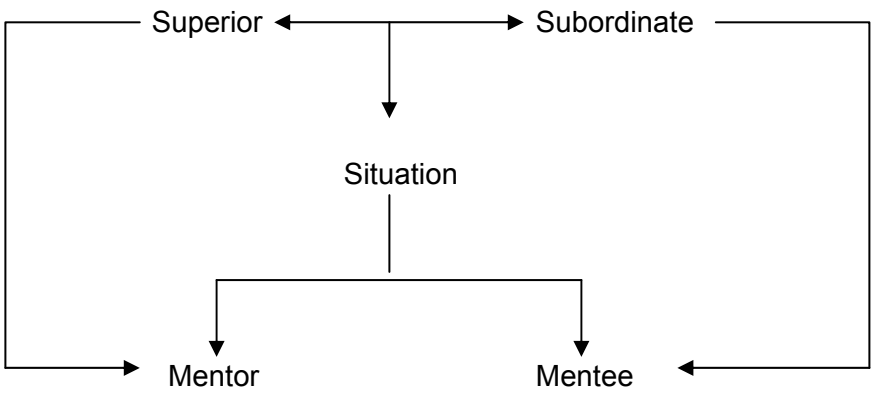
- In an organization, two situational contexts emerge
- The role of mentor
- The role of mentee

Adapted from unpublished consultancy report; Prof. Indira J Parikh, 2003

In any organization, the mentor and mentee roles emerge. However, simultaneously and primarily in the organization, there are the roles of superiors and subordinates, which revolve around tasks. These roles are also being played given the multiple work roles in the organizational context.

The overall nature of the mentor and mentee interface acquires multiple meanings, which need to be understood.

FIGURE 7
NATURE OF MENTOR - MENTEE INTERFACE
IN THE CONTEXT OF ROLE AND SITUATION



- In the context of role and situation, two roles emerge: Superior and Subordinate.
- The nature of organizational situation differentiates the interface as well as the roles.
- The roles could either be that of superior – subordinate or it could be of Mentor – Mentee.

Adapted from unpublished consultancy report; Prof. Indira J Parikh, 2003

In such a dynamic structure, the situation and role needs to be differentiated, as the same two individuals play the superior-subordinate and the Mentor-Mentee roles. If this is not clear, then both the superior and subordinate and the Mentor- Mentee relation will be affected. (7)

To understand as well as to facilitate the Mentor-Mentee interface effectively, the organization needs to know the characteristics of the categories of Mentor-Mentee.

CHARACTERISTIC OF MENTOR

- A desire to help
- Having experiences

- Good reputation for developing others
- Time and energy
- Up-to-date knowledge
- Learning attitude
- Effective managerial (Mentoring) skills.

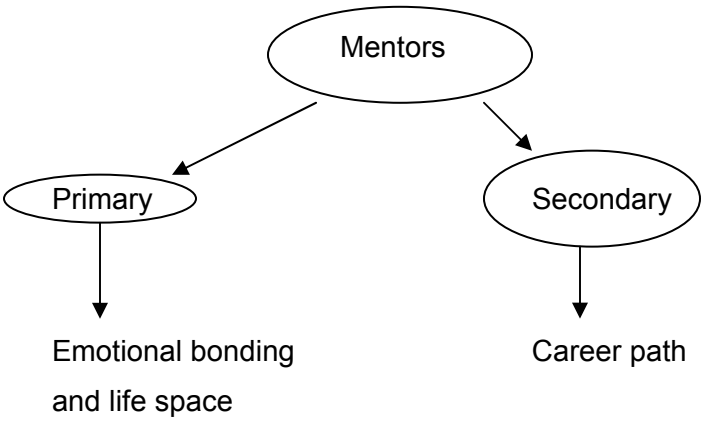
CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTEE

- Committed to expanding their capabilities
- Open and receptive to new ways of learning and trying new ideas
- Ability to accept feedback and act upon it
- Willingness to apply learning back on the job
- Focused on achieving desired business results
- Ability to communicate and work co-operatively with others
- Knowing when to ask for help
- Having a sense of personal responsibility and commitment
- Willingness to meet on regular basis.

Basically, the Mentor-Mentee are of two types as shown in the Figure 8. However, the types differ in the role as well as in the style of mentoring.

FIGURE 8

CATEGORIES AND ROLE OF MENTORS



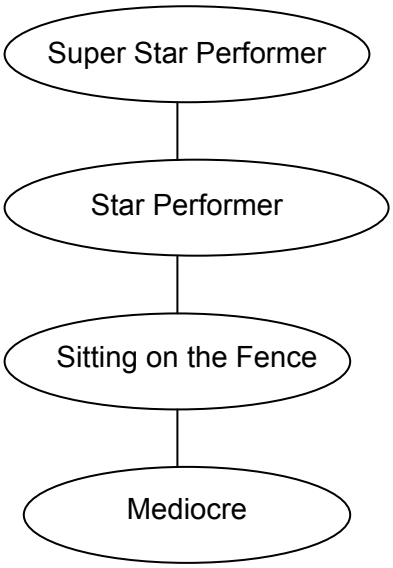
- Primary system reflects emotional bonding and life space.
- Secondary system reflects career path.

(1, & 7)

However, there are four categories of the mentees as shown in Figure 9:

FIGURE 9

CATEGORY CHART



- Some of the Mentees are super star performers of the organization.
- Some of the Mentees will be star performers.
- Majority of the Mentees in an organization will be of the 'sitting on the fence' category.
- Some of the employees will be mediocre.

Adapted from unpublished consultancy report; Prof. Indira J Parikh, 2003

The categories differ qualitatively. The SSP is the top performer and sought after by the organization. The SP is one who shows the signs of performance and follows close behind the SSP category. The majority of the Mentees fall in the third category, which is the SOTF category. These are the ones who when supported may move into the SP or SSP category. The Mediocre are the ones who may need mentoring most of all to start performing and doing their jobs.

The SSP and the SP require challenging work. They do not like to perform the routine jobs of the organization. They just need direction and there after are happy to be left to themselves to do their own work. They can deliver results effectively with just a little support from the organization. However the SSP and SP are in need of recognition and want to be in particular valued by the seniors and the organization as a whole.

Once the organizations identifies and categorize the Mentor, the crucial role of the Mentor starts. The Mentor has to balance his actions as well as his behavior. At the same time, the Mentor needs to know his role and act accordingly. To facilitate the process effectively, both the Mentor and the Mentee need to follow certain do's and don'ts on mentoring for ensuring better results.

DO'S FOR THE MENTORS

The following are some of the steps, which the mentor needs to follow during the mentoring process:

- Take responsibility for initiating the relationship
- Delegate responsibility for challenging tasks
- Be clear about the motives for helping the mentee
- Inspire creativity and independence
- Facilitate an atmosphere of trust and friendship conducive to a positive mentoring relationship
- Look after the mentees needs; at the same time consider your own as well. Be specific about what you want from the relationship and what you, as a mentor, are willing to give
- Facilitate the time for the mentoring process and keep the mentees appointments
- Display professional behavior and etiquette

- Facilitate a schedule of meetings and feedback session and stick to it
- Be a good listener and take the mentee seriously
- Be prepared for the relationship to end.

DON'TS FOR THE MENTORS

The following are some of the pitfalls, which the mentor may like to avoid during the mentoring process:

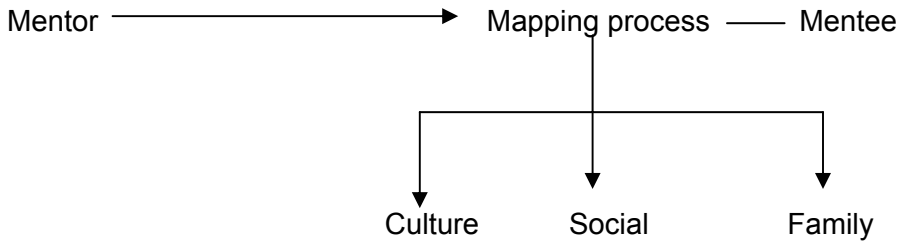
- Do not take responsibility for the mentee's duties
- Do not do the mentee's work
- Do not give up right away if the mentee resists help at first. He/ she may not recognize and appreciate the value of what you as a mentor have to offer
- Do not complain about your own problems. At the same time, do not be too critical
- Do not give advice without being asked
- Do not force the mentee to follow your footsteps. Let the mentee follow voluntarily
- Do not be too busy when the mentee needs your friendship or your support
- Do not have a preconceived plan for the final outcome of your relationship
- Do not compromise tasks for the relationship or relationship for the tasks. (7)

MAPPING PROCESS

The mapping process of the Mentor provides insights and sensitivities to exposure and understands the issues of the mentees. Unless the Mentor does the mapping of the socio-cultural and familial contexts the Mentor-mentee interface may not have the impact on the mentors.

FIGURE 10

MAPPING PROCESS OF THE CONTEXT



- The mentor has to do the mapping process of three contexts
- The mentor has to do mapping of culture, social and family contexts

Adapted from unpublished consultancy report; Prof. Indira J Parikh, 2003

The mentor needs to have an understanding of the maps and definitions of social, cultural and family contexts, which the Mentee, brings to the organization. The Mentor needs to sense the attitude as well as the behavior of the Mentee, which is the result of the dynamic interplay between the various systems of culture, social, and family roles. However, to further facilitate the Mentor in the mentoring process, the organization needs to lay out the road map and then needs to translate the road map in the organization process. (7)

ROAD MAPS

PHASE	DURATION	TURNING POINTS
PHASE 1: INITIATION	A period of six months during which time the relationship gets started and begins to have importance for both the mentor and mentees	• Fantasies become concrete expectations • There are opportunities for interaction around work, culture and tasks
PHASE 2: STABILIZATION	A period from seven – twelve months during which time the range of career and psychosocial functions will operate	• Both mentor and mentee continue to benefit from the relationship • Opportunities for more meaningful and interaction will increase • Emotional bond strengthens and more intimacy develops
PHASE 3: SEPARATION	A period from twelve – fourteen months after significant changes in the structural role relationship or in the emotional experience of the relationship	• Mentees no longer want guidance but rather the opportunity to work independently • Mentor needs to take a step backward • Because of job rotation or promotion, it limits opportunities for continued interaction • Separation may also cause concerns, anxieties or resentment
PHASE 4: REDEFINITION	An indefinite period after separation phase, during which the relationship is ended or takes on significant turn, making it more collegiate or friendly	• Stress of separation diminishes, and new relationships are formed • The mentor relationship comes to a formal closure • Resentment, anxieties and anger diminish; appreciation increases

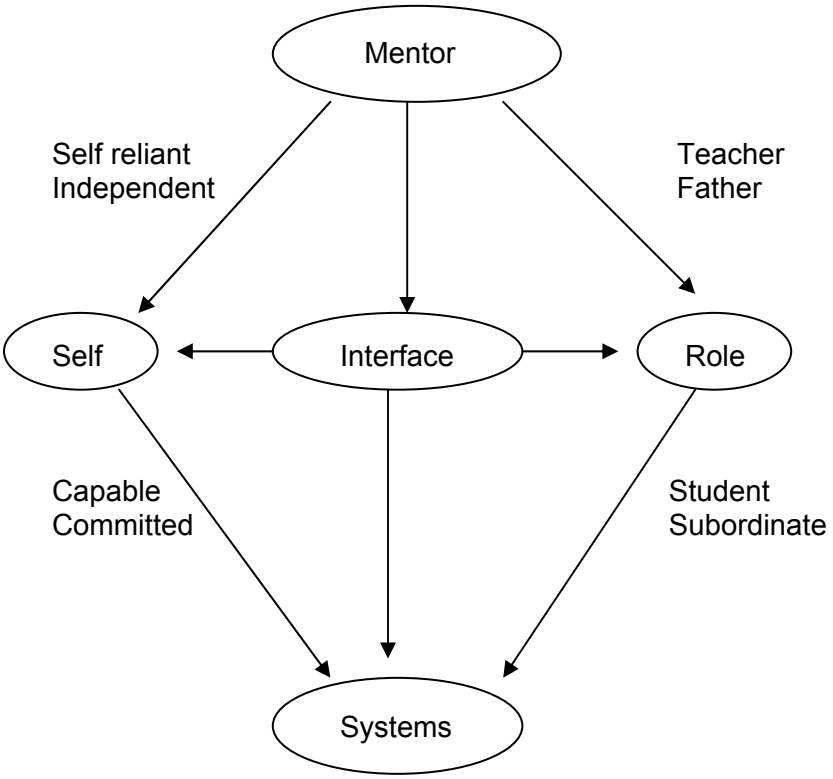
(5)

CODING PROCESS

Coding is the process wherein the individuals carry the do's, don'ts, shoulds and shouldn'ts of the system as well as the significant people in the relationship. This coding is so deeply embedded that often it is difficult to differentiate it from one's own reality appraisal of the choices and directions that one may wish to make to facilitate or inhibit the role taking processes in an appropriate manner.

FIGURE 11

CODING PROCESS



- Mentor has to be system oriented and self-reliant.
- Mentee needs to have capabilities as well as abilities for further development and growth.
- Mentor plays the role of either a father or a teacher based on the kind of Mentoring required.
- Mentee is either his subordinate or a student.

Adapted from unpublished consultancy report; Prof. Indira J Parikh, 2003

Such coding helps the Mentor to identify the role that the Mentor is playing and the kind of mentoring that would be needed by the Mentee.

In Mentor-Mentee relationship only attitude is not enough. In a given situation, the mentor at times needs to confront or challenges the Mentee, so that the mentee is himself able to mobilize and take his own decisions. This will enhance the Mentee's self-confidence and strengthen the relationship. The Mentee needs to be confronted with the realities of the organization. Retention does not only mean agreeing to the Mentees expectations or catering to their whims and fantasies. Similarly the Mentor needs to be tough and assertive while also being sensitive and understanding. (7)

HOW MENTEES PERCEIVE MENTORS

Most mentee see the mentors in a helping role of some kind. But at the time of articulation, these needs appear to fall under two broad categories: emotional and personal support and work related/professional needs. However, the descriptive list, given below, sums up the nature of the mentees expectations:

- To help facilitate their settling down
- To act as a ready made friend in a strange place
- Someone to whom they can say what is in their heart
- Someone who could help in small, simple things like organization policy, culture and protocols
- Someone from their own background, who can give them career and job related tips
- A non-judgmental, non-evaluative senior and experienced person
- Someone who cares and is concerned about their activities and growth

- An experienced, senior person, with achievement and credibility, who can guide and advise
- A person with knowledge of organization to give insights into organizational life
- Someone to talk, share and reflect on day to day learning
- Someone to tell them if they are on the right track and learning the right things
- Someone to show them how to do the work and learn the necessary skills

However, many studies show that these expectations are rooted in the context. Most mentees are young and relatively new to the organizations. They are in somewhat strange and unfamiliar surroundings of locations and organizations. Majority of them feel lost and are in need of an emotional and supportive anchor. The need to relate to an experienced, elderly or senior person may reflect a familial type of role expectation from the mentors. (4)

However, through this process, both the mentor and the Mentee' facilitate the growth of their own personal and professional lives. These benefits are depicted below.

BENEFITS FOR THE MENTOR

- Increased motivation
- Challenge
- New insights and perspectives
- An opportunity for self development
- Increased self-esteem and pleasure
- The opportunity to positively influence the new entrants
- Increased peer recognition
- The opportunity to improve communication

BENEFITS FOR THE MENTEE

- A non- threatening learning opportunity
- Improved self-confidence
- Developing business expertise and technical knowledge
- Challenge
- Support and reassurance
- Networking/partnership opportunities
- Coaching
- Listening and reassurance (8)

However, Mentoring relationship does not always succeed. Some of the most frequent problems with Mentoring relationship are as follow:

MISMATCH BETWEEN MENTOR AND MENTEE

A mismatch can be a cause of failure in the relationship. One or both members of the relationship may feel uneasy with the other, or they may not be able to achieve the level of friendship necessary for the communication. At this stage, the new entrants need to be assigned to a different mentor. If the problem is identified during the first six months of the relationship, the change can usually be made in an amicable way with no hard feelings whatsoever on either side.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Problems in the relationship can also occur if the mentee expects or demands too much from the mentor. Therefore, it is important that the expectations are clearly defined from the beginning. The mentee need not expect the relationship to meet every need, nor for it to continue indefinitely.

BREACHES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

In order to develop the type of relationship in which the mentor can be effective, he or she first needs to be perceived as trustworthy one who is able to keep confidences

The Mentoring process helps both the Mentor and the Mentee to resolve issues. It is a value-addition process. The mentor can only provide direction and is up to the Mentee to decide whether to choose to follow the direction or not. The Mentee has to finally take his own decisions. This process will help the Mentee in decision-making and in choosing his course of actions. However, both the Mentor and the Mentee need to perform their roles within the stipulated boundaries; only then can the roles be effective and prove beneficial not only to the organization but also to their furthers growth and enhancements of the mentor and mentee's personal as well as professional worlds. However, simultaneously the organization needs to facilitate such process, regularize it in the organizational setup and translate the process into action. (8)

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