



International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education Emerald Article: Do mentors learn by mentoring others?

K.N. Rekha, M.P. Ganesh

Article information:

To cite this document: K.N. Rekha, M.P. Ganesh, (2012),"Do mentors learn by mentoring others?", International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, Vol. 1 Iss: 3 pp. 205 - 217

Permanent link to this document:

http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/20466851211279466

Downloaded on: 05-11-2012

References: This document contains references to 32 other documents

To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by Emerald Author Access

For Authors:

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service. Information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

With over forty years' experience, Emerald Group Publishing is a leading independent publisher of global research with impact in business, society, public policy and education. In total, Emerald publishes over 275 journals and more than 130 book series, as well as an extensive range of online products and services. Emerald is both COUNTER 3 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

Do mentors learn by mentoring others?

Do mentors learn by mentoring others?

K.N. Rekha and M.P. Ganesh

Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai, India

205

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the study was to understand the learnings of adults (who are undergraduates, post graduates or working professionals) who volunteered to be the mentors to make a difference in the life of the adolescents who are from underprivileged backgrounds.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors conducted their study in a not for profit organization (NPO) which has a unique mentoring program called Dronocharya Ekalavya (DNE) mentoring program in Hyderabad, India. The authors conducted telephonic interviews with 15 mentors using a semi-structured questionnaire and also administered an online survey to 59 respondents. Since the study is a qualitative research, results cannot be generalisable.

Findings – The findings of the study conclude that mentors do learn from the mentoring program organized by NPO. Mentors learnt soft skills such as interpersonal skills, leadership skills, etc. Also they learnt to build rapport and trust. The study highlighted the changes in behaviors of mentors such as self-realisation, and change in attitude.

Research limitations/implications – Social desirability effect might have impacted the results but all efforts have been invested in carefully handling the data. A possible longitudinal study can focus on comparing learning outcomes of mentors at the beginning of the mentoring program with learning outcomes of mentors at the end of the mentoring program. Future research could focus on how and what do they learn from each other by expanding the study to many organizations.

Originality/value – There is no empirical research conducted to study the benefits gained by mentors through mentoring program, especially referencing to youth mentoring. This study will help organizations (both NGO and other businesses) understand the benefits of mentoring to the mentors.

Keywords Mentoring, Adolescents, Learning, Rapport building, Trust, Employability

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The topic of mentoring has been receiving considerable attention recently among practitioners, academics and in industry as a means to professional and personal development. Traditionally, mentoring has been defined as a process wherein the older experienced individual acts as a guide, counselor and a friend to a younger, inexperienced individual. Though there are a large number of mentoring programs organized and practiced in various countries, the research to-date tends to be restricted to America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand (Evans *et al.*, 2005). Until recently, there was a lack of international research into mentoring (Evans and Ave, 2000), especially in an Indian context. This has motivated us to conduct a study. We welcome work by Manju George and Mampilly (2012) in *IJMCE* Issue 2.

Mentoring, as a specific intervention, has increased in popularity, particularly in terms of mentoring youth in schools within the field of positive youth development (Herrera *et al.*, 2007). Mentoring involves investment of an experienced individual's time, commitment and efforts to nurture, develop and guide the less experienced individual. The major area of focus in youth mentoring has been the development and the growth of the mentees. At the same time, there seems to be a lack of research in the area of what do mentors, learn and gain by volunteering to be the mentor. In this



International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education Vol. 1 No. 3, 2012 pp. 205-217 © Emerald Group Publishing Limited 2046-6854 DOI 10.1108/2046685121127946 context, our study highlights what mentors learn through mentoring others. Since Mullen and Noe's (1999) research, there has been a move to examine information sharing between mentor and mentee, as evidenced in the (2012) publication, edited by Fletcher and Mullen. It remains evident, however, that further research into the benefits to mentors in terms of learning a youth mentoring context is still needed.

Even though the primary goal of any mentoring relationship is mentee development, Haggard *et al.* (2011) highlights that mentoring is deemed to be a learning partnership and hence mentors do benefit from these relationships. Also, considering the amount of time, the level of commitment required and efforts to be invested in mentoring others, not all mentors are motivated to participate in the mentoring relationship. Hence it is obvious that mentors seek mentoring relationships not only for mentees development but also "to serve their own developmental needs" (Allen and Eby, 2003).

Researchers have studied how mentees benefit in the youth mentoring context. Some of the benefits are increases in engagement in education, training and work (Shiner *et al.*, 2004) improvements in academic attitudes (e.g. scholastic efficacy), performance (e.g. overall performance in science, written and oral language specifically) and behaviors (e.g. fewer unexcused absences) (Herrera *et al.*, 2007), and decline in aggression (Cavell and Hughes, 2000). The primary goal of our present study is to explore what mentors learn through mentoring to enable such benefits to be consolidated for youth mentees.

Youth mentoring

Youth mentoring is characterized by a personal relationship in which a caring individual provides consistent companionship, support and guidance aimed at developing the competence and the character of a child or adolescent (MENTOR, 2003). It is based on the premise that supportive adult relationships are important for personal, emotional, cognitive and psychological growth (Eby *et al.*, 2007). It typically involves assistance in meeting the adolescent's academic, social, career and/or personal goals. Adolescents from under-privileged background have limited contact with the positive role models outside the immediate family and believe that their opportunities for success are restricted. Moreover, they have limited or no knowledge of the level of education that is needed for the chosen profession. Thus, the notion of "imagined self" proposed by Levinson (1978) becomes very appropriate here. This corresponds with research by Fletcher (2000) in terms of imaging a positive possible self, research in turn based on work by Leondari *et al.* (1998). Research shows that mentees internalize the attitudes, behaviors and the traits of the individuals they wish to emulate. Thus, mentees identify individuals as mentors from whom they can learn.

Philip and Hendry (2000) identified four general explanations for why adults mentor a youth:

- (1) to make sense of their own past experiences;
- (2) to gain insights into another person's life;
- (3) to establish a different type of relationship; and
- (4) to build skills in providing a helping relationship.

Haggard *et al.* (2011) proposed three core attributes of workplace mentoring that distinguished mentoring from other kinds of relationships based on the insights derived from Eby *et al.* (2007). They are reciprocity, developmental benefits and regular

and consistent interaction over some period of time. Thus, based on these insights Do mentors learn we propose that mentors do learn from the mentoring relationships in the youth mentoring context. In order to understand this, we studied a mentoring program run by a non-profit organization (NPO).

Mentoring and learning

Learning plays a vital role in everyone's life, not least in learning to mentor and be mentored. Kolb (1984, p. 38) states that, "learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience." More often learning occurs when individuals have an interactional experience with the environment. As Dewey (1938. p. 44) noted: "As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands, contracts. He does not find himself living in another world, but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned as knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow." Learning becomes still more effective when the individual is involved in activities of increasing complexity. According to Kram (1996, p. 140) personal learning is defined as "knowledge acquisition, skills, or competencies contributing to individual development, including the interpersonal competencies of self-reflection, self-disclosure, active listening, empathy, and feedback. Such development invokes a greater understanding of oneself as increasingly connected to others." Mentoring plays a crucial role in the learning of individuals (Allen and Eby, 2003). Lankau and Scandura (2007) conceptualized mentoring relationship as mutually beneficial relationship involving reciprocity that helps both mentors and mentees grow, learn and develop together. Mentoring is a two way learning process.

Experience as a source of learning

Dewey (1938) theorized that experience serves as a focal point for lifelong learning and development. Kolb (1984) proposed a four stage cyclical model of knowledge development. The four stages are: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Kolb proposes that learning can occur in any of the stages in the cycle. In our study, we propose that individuals learn by experience through active involvement in the mentoring session (concrete experience). They also learn by observing, listening and reflecting on various issues that occur in the session (reflective observation). The experience gained in the session will be thought and conceptualized (abstract conceptualization) and will be applied in the work place (active experimentation).

In the following sections we explain the organization of the mentoring program we studied.

About the organization

We chose a NPO located at Hyderabad, a city which is situated in one of the southern states of India. It has a vision to create an equitable and strife free society. It offers a unique leadership development program called the Dronacharya Ekalavya (DNE) Mentoring program which pairs adolescents (needy children who are in class 8, 9 and 10) from underprivileged backgrounds in city slums and rural villages with undergraduate, postgraduate and working professionals who act as their mentors. The care, personal attention and encouragement that the youth receive from their mentors help realize mentees' potential and take responsibility for their own lives. The personal mastery and leadership program coupled with the experience of mentoring enable the university students and young professionals to become more socially aware leaders. Currently, the program is serving 1,200 students from 15 government schools in Hyderabad.

The DNE mentoring program

Typically, the duration of the DNE program is for a year. It is a one-on-one mentoring relationship where mentors and mentees are matched based on a characteristic that they share. An example of such a shared characteristic is a common language that they speak to enable them to communicate and understand each other easily. A male mentor is always allotted a male mentee and a female mentor is always allotted a female mentee. Mentors meet their mentees at their respective schools every Sunday for about two hours. However, it is up to the mentors and mentees to decide on the location and timing to meet according to their convenience. The initial few days comprise ice breaking sessions wherein the program coordinators organize games for the mentors and mentees for enabling them to get to know and be comfortable with each other. The real interaction between mentor and mentee starts after the ice breaking sessions but it is during the initial interaction process that the mentor tries to find out the interests and likes of the mentees as a basis to build rapport with them.

The DNE program provides mentors an opportunity to face real life challenges in establishing relationship, building rapport, trust and confidence between mentor-mentee. Thus this program provides an opportunity to increase awareness of self and of others and thereby to enhance mentees' communication, leadership and interpersonal skills. The crucial aspect of this program is that each mentor has volunteered to "make a difference" in the student's life.

The NPO measures the impact of the mentoring program for the mentees every year and has found that the mentees attain increased self-esteem, self-awareness and knowledge about academic and vocational aspects after attending the mentoring sessions. They have not, however, measured the impact of mentoring on the mentors. It seems surprising there were no observations or surveys conducted to measure the impact and effectiveness of mentors and their learning even when the individual development of mentors is also one of the objectives of NPO. Hence, we attempted to study the impact of mentoring on mentors and learning or on insights by mentors. We present only the learning or insights of mentors in this paper.

Importance of the study

The Confederation of Indian Industry and the Boston Consulting Group published a report that estimated that India would face a "talent gap" "as existing educational institutions do not impart employable skills"[1]. Individuals would require soft skills such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, time management and team player abilities to perform well in any industry (Gopalakrishnan, 2008). Hence, it is imperative for the individuals to become competent and trained in those soft skills. Mentoring program provide individuals (mentors) a practical experience in all these areas and prepares them as employable individuals. One of the objectives of NPO is to impart these soft skills to enable the individuals to become employable. Mujeeb, the President of NPO explains, "Participating in our program (DNE) and mentoring a youth gives them an exposure to enhance their self-confidence, helping behaviors, and increasing several other skills such as communication and interpersonal. Thus this program plays a crucial role for individual development."

Our primary goal in this study is to understand what mentors learn through this Do mentors learn mentoring program. Allen et al. (1997) cited personal growth and learning as a benefit of mentoring for mentors. There has been considerable anecdotal evidence suggesting mentoring others may serve as a source of mentor learning, but research has vet to adequately evidence this claim. (Allen and Eby, 2003). Allen's (2007) subsequent research showed that we know relatively little about mentors' experiences since the majority of previous research focussed on mentees' experiences/outcomes. More specifically, the research on mentoring as a form of learning is limited (Lankau and Scandura, 2007). Hence, our attempt is to study the learning of mentors.

Methodology

Samble

The study included sample from an NPO situated in Hyderabad, India, In sampling, we chose individuals who were interested and available to participate in the survey. We conducted telephonic interviews with 15 mentors to understand whether or not they learn from the mentoring program. A total of 59 (23.6 percent) respondents out of 250 mentors participated in the survey. Among them 35 (59.3 percent) were male and 24 (40.7 percent) were female. The individuals were either students (undergraduate or postgraduate) or working professionals. The majority (66.1 percent) of them belonged to the 18-20 age group. The individuals interviewed for this study had volunteered to mentor an adolescent from an underprivileged background. Hence one would expect the commitment demonstrated by mentors for their mentees' well-being to be high. We chose individuals who had at least a year of experience in mentoring an individual. We obtained consent from respondents on the basis that responses would be kept confidential and used for research publication. Names of the individuals in this study are thus disguised.

Data collection

Primary data were collected using the combination of an online qualitative survey, and by conducting telephonic interviews with the mentors of the program. Survey consisted of open ended questions to understand the learning of mentors. Sample questions included "What have you gained through this mentoring program?" and "What are some insights that you have acquired from the mentoring experience?" We used semi-structured questionnaire that had questions focussed on learning of mentors to conduct the telephonic interviews.

Mentorship duration

Mentors reported the duration of their mentorship in years. In our study, 29 mentors had one year of mentoring experience and 30 mentors had more than a year of mentoring experience.

Results and discussion

Insights/learning of mentors

Mentors discussed what they have gained through the NPO mentoring program in their own words. We have categorized the mentors' statements and presented our findings in Table I.

Building rapport and trust

The key to creating effective mentoring relationships lies in the development of trust between two strangers (Sipe, 1996). Bickmore and Cassell (2001) observes that trust is

IJMCE 1,3	Sl. no.		Learnings	Sample statements
				cumple statements
210	1		Building rapport and trust $(n = 50)$	Learnt how to develop rapport and trust with the mentee. Some of the ways which I used were sharing personal information/details being open and friendly making frequent visits to his/her home being one of them approaching like a friend
				giving assurance that I am there to help them. showing care speaking to them in their language
	2	Interpersonal skills	Self-confidence $(n = 57)$ Self-awareness $(n = 54)$ Empathy and listening skills $(n = 30)$	providing the experience of small wins Learnt to stand strong in hard times Made me stronger as an individual Discovered myself Came to know positive and negative shades in me Came to know more about my inner self Started understanding others' problems Started acknowledging others' view points Realized that walk a mile in others shoes before coming to any conclusions Started becoming sensitive to others' needs Started to understand the other realities of life
		Communication skills ($n = 53$)	Listening skills have improved a lot after attending this program Learnt how to communicate with different people Ways of expressing things Whatever may be the persons thoughts, they are understood by others only when you have the boldness to put them forward and a right way to express them Ability to explain	
	3		Leadership qualities $(n = 47)$	Ability to put my point across effectively Learnt the art of inspiring others Got hands on experience in facing challenges Learnt the art of motivating others Conducted games for my mentees through which I learnt how to plan, and organize activities Took initiatives in organizing programs/new games for my mentees
Table I. Learning of mentors by mentoring others	4		Other skills $(n=20)$	Attained clarity on my goals/objectives Time management, thinking abilities, change of attitude, self-realization
	Note: n stands for no. of mentors responded			

a necessary element for all kinds of interpersonal relationships. To build a kind of trust that contributes to rapport building (Buskist and Saville, 2001), mentors and mentees have to invest time in communicating with each other. Usually, the mentor has to take the initiative in starting the conversation. Mentor Ram opined: "Initially, my mentee was very shy, not ready to talk. It took long time for me to break the ice with him.

by mentoring

He was looking very uneasy and was not comfortable. I started the conversation with Do mentors learn him. I tried several things to build rapport such as sharing personal things, interests. etc [...] Slowly, he started opening up with me." Another mentor Mohan stated, "I shared my personal interests, hobbies, my experience during my school days. Then, my mentee realized that 'He is also like me' and then started sharing things." The mentors have to personalize ways to build rapport and trust with the mentees. Through this process the mentors learn to take initiatives and invest efforts in developing ideas for building the relationship. Mentors learn the art of building trust and rapport which is an essential attribute to work in teams or to get work done through others in any organization.

Interpersonal skills

Rungadiachy (1999, p. 193) defines interpersonal skills as "those skills which one needs in order to communicate effectively with another person or a group of people" and listed competencies required for effective interpersonal interactions: self-awareness, effective listening, oral communication, helping or facilitating, reflecting, assertiveness and non-verbal communication. Various researchers list different skills required for interpersonal interactions (Chant et al., 2002). Howard Gardner (1983) defined interpersonal intelligence as the "ability to understand and interact effectively with others. It involves effective verbal and nonverbal communication, the ability to note distinctions among others, sensitivity to the moods and temperaments of others, and the ability to entertain multiple perspectives." Clearly, interpersonal skills and attributes have a crucial role to play in the mentoring of youth as the mentor is older than the mentee yet needs to understand his or her perspective.

Self-awareness. Self-awareness (awareness of one's strengths and areas of improvement) is the first and foremost step towards individual development. It enables mentees to capitalize on their strengths and invest effort in areas for improvement. A 360-degree feedback analysis is one of the tools being used widely in organizations with developmental perspective, including business as education. The primary objective of the tool is to create self-awareness. In this study in India, 54 (91.5 percent) mentors mentioned that the program enhanced their self-awareness which is imperative as the first step towards their own and others' individual development.

To quote an example, in one of the telephonic interviews with the mentee, the mentor Rama stated that "The mentee was afraid of Mathematics. So, I advised her not to be afraid of anything during the mentoring session. Later on, I happened to visit her home. They had a puppy in their house and I was afraid of it. So, I was hesitating to enter the house. My mentee said, 'Sister, you only advised me that one should not be afraid of anything. Then, why are you afraid of a small puppy?' Her words made me realize that one should be very careful before giving any suggestions." Mentors need sensitivity about what to share with a mentee.

Empathy and listening skills. Organizations are now filled with individuals with diverse background, values, and culture. It is very important for an individual to be patient, show empathy, be a good listener and be sensitive to others' needs. Through this DNE program, the individuals potentially gain develop all the above. Listening skills play a crucial role in the mentoring sessions. Since the mentees hail from different backgrounds, the mentor has to listen carefully to understand the mentees' thoughts, ideas, etc. Sometimes the mentee may not understand what mentor says. At such times, a mentor should be patient and should repeat the information so they understand about what the mentor meant. Youth mentors try to speak their language in order to understand their requirements and help them grow. The program helps mentors learn the art of listening, being patient, understanding and accepting others' perspectives (Table I).

Communication skills. Today's competitive and global organizations are the culmination of many cultures, languages and customs. It is vital for the individuals to learn how to communicate in a manner that others can understand without difficulty. The NPO in our study organizes workshops for self-development and improve communication skills to this end. Apart from these, the mentors also learn how to communicate effectively through experiencing the mentoring sessions with their mentees. The mentees hail from underprivileged backgrounds, mentors may have make stringent effort to help them understand unfamiliar perspectives.

The NPO in our study in Hyderabad organizes what they call learning circles every week to discuss challenges facing their mentors. Thus mentors get an opportunity to share their insights with their fellow mentors, and the coordinators. Individuals get an opportunity to speak to a large or small group and this is one of the important skills organizations look for in an individual while recruiting mentors. It is clear from our findings (Table I) that 57 mentors felt their communication skills increased substantially after participating in this program.

Self-confidence. Self-confidence is a very important attribute in a rapidly shifting, competitive environment. Feltz (1988) refers to self-confidence as one's belief that he or she can successfully execute a desired behavior (i.e. his or belief of "I'll get the job done"). The mentors often faces many challenges especially if they have no prior experience of youth mentoring for an individual. The objective of the program is to bring a change in the mentees' behavior such as increasing attendance in the school, studies and the pass percentage and also to improve mentees' personal development such as communication, confidence, etc. When mentors start seeing those changes in the behavior of mentees, mentors gain confidence that they can also a make a difference in an individual through their guidance. The majority (n=57) of the mentors who participated in the survey expressed a view that their self-confidence had greatly increased through this mentoring program. Thus it was not only the mentees who experience greater self-confidence but also mentors gain confidence in their capabilities for tackling new tasks.

Leadership qualities

Mumford *et al.* (2000a, b) prescribe that effective leadership requires three competencies: problem solving, social judgment and knowledge. In this study, our findings show that the DNE program provides an opportunity to hone these competencies as leadership skills by providing mentors with a platform for practice. Mentors face many challenges such as lack of interest exhibited by mentees in participating in the program. To quote an example, a mentor Mohan opined, "One of the problems faced by us is that the mentee never shows up and is not interested in the mentoring session. I was not sure what to do initially to create interest in mentees." Though guidance is provided by the program's coordinators, it is the mentors who have to identify suitable solutions when problems arise because solutions typically vary from mentee to mentee. Mentor Rohini, for example, expressed a view that she repeatedly visited her mentee to enable her understand the importance of the mentoring sessions and also the benefits that she would gain through this

by mentoring

program. She met her parents and explained to them about the benefits of the program. Do mentors learn Moreover, the mentor regularly visited the mentee's school every Sunday even when the mentee did not turn up. The mentee eventually realized that her mentor was very committed in helping her and subsequently arrived for mentoring sessions. Thus this mentor has changed the behavior of her mentees by acting as a role model. Mentors are provided with an opportunity to take initiatives, and influence the mindset of mentees. These are essential qualities in a good leader. Though these challenges are not equivalent to challenges faced as NPO employees, mentors can develop these skills through this program.

Clarity of thought

If the mentor is to guide his or her mentee in aiming for a career, the mentor should first find out what he or she wants to become. In other words, the mentors need to follow the age old saying, "practice what you preach." So it must be that the mentor achieves clarity of vision about his or her own career trajectory before guiding the mentee. Through this process, self-discovery happens and the mentors gain clarity in their goals, career and achievements. Similarly in any organization, the individuals should have clarity not only in relation to their career goals but additionally a clear vision for the effective functioning of that organization.

Other skills required for effective leaders include taking responsibility for changing attitudes.

Other skills

Change in attitude

We noted in our research that mentors' attitudes towards his or her life had typically changed by the end of the mentoring program. One of the mentors, Sam explained that "Mentoring has changed my attitude from You (others) should be the change to I should be the change." Another interesting insight has been shared by mentor Rohini. She said that her mentee called her during her birthday to wish her "Happy Returns." She was amazed by her mentee's care. She felt really happy for her mentee's small gesture. She had never thought of this earlier. She never wished her mentee happy birthday. Then on she also started to call on her mentee's birthday and her other friends too. This experience made the mentor realize that changing small things in life can make others feel happy.

Self-realization

Our study says that the mentoring programs will help individuals develop soft skills and also certain behaviors, such as achieving a state of perceived self-realization, where the mentor in a youth mentoring program realizes that it is within his or her power to be the mentor desired.

Practical implications

The findings of this study suggest that mentors do learn by mentoring others. To quote from one of the mentors: "I became very patient, and my communication skills have improved. Also, I learnt an important lesson in my life that I should never ever underestimate anybody. Even though mentees hail from an underprivileged background, they are aware of things I was not aware of. My people skills in understanding others improved. I started taking initiatives in organizing programs with coordinators. My organization skills also improved."

Today's organizations look for the following two kinds of skills while recruiting a fresher: technical skills and soft skills. Technical skills include computer programming, machinery repair, etc., that the individuals learn in their formal education from a university/college. Soft skills include communication, organizing, interpersonal relationships, self-confidence, etc., that individuals learn through practical experience. Thus a mentoring program like DNE gives an opportunity for youth to develop these skills in a practical setting. Our study is intended to help organizations in India and internationally to understand the benefits of mentoring to the mentors. We hope that it will also help organizations to use mentoring programs effectively to nurture the talent that emerges among their young people as mentees.

Research implications and limitations

In this study, we examined the effectiveness of a youth mentoring program on mentors by analyzing learning outcomes of mentors at the end of the mentoring program. One limitation of this study is that it is cross-sectional in nature. To overcome this limitation, future research needs to involve designing a longitudinal study. A possible longitudinal study could focus on examining mentors' behavior exhibited at the beginning of the mentoring program with learning outcomes of mentors at the end. A second possible longitudinal study might focus on studying the performance of individuals who enter the organizations with experience of mentoring relative to the performance of individuals who enter the organizations without any.

A second limitation of this study is that we have focussed only on the learning of mentors. In order to overcome this limitation, future research in our particular context needs to focus on how and what mentors can usefully learn from each other as well as from their mentees.

A third major limitation of this study is that the social desirability effect might have impacted on our findings – we want mentoring to aid learning by the mentors as well as by the mentees. Despite our best efforts to avoid bias, it is inevitably present as we conduct analysis.

A further limitation of this study is that we focussed only on one mentoring program within an organization. Therefore, it is possible that our findings may not be generalizable to mentoring programs within other organizations or in those not focussing on youth. In order to overcome this limitation; future research should expand our small study to include many organizations.

Conclusion

This study's findings allow us to conclude by saying that mentors do learn by mentoring others. Mentoring enhances mentors' interpersonal, leadership and communication skills. These skills enhance not only a mentee's but also a mentor's chances of being employed by organizations. This study in one location in India is an initial step toward understanding the learning benefits of mentors in mentoring relationships. Continuing with this line of research, we have already initiated research into how and what mentors learn in business organizations.

The uniqueness of our study is that it has taken place in a location within a country where there has been almost no research into youth mentoring, particularly from the mentors' standpoint. Understanding that mentors can learn through mentoring others enables better mentoring programs to be designed which are tailored to fulfilling the learning needs of mentors as well as mentees. This has potential to enhance mentoring programs globally.

Do mentors learn

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge Mr Mujeeb Khan, Founder, Bhumi for giving us permission to study Dronacharya Ekalavya (DnE) mentoring program in their esteemed organization. The authors would also like to acknowledge Swathi, Rahul, Pallavi and Arun, volunteers, Bhumi for coordinating and providing all the support for interviews and data collection for their research.

Note

1. www.inclusion.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61

References

- Allen, T.D. (2007), "Mentoring relationships from the perspective of the mentor", in Ragins, B.R. and Kram, K.E. (Eds), *The Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research and Practice*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 123-47.
- Allen, T.D. and Eby, L.T. (2003), "Relationship effectiveness for mentors: factors associated with learning and quality", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 469-86.
- Allen, T.D., Poteet, M.L. and Burroughs, S.M. (1997), "The mentor's perspective: a qualitative inquiry and future research agenda", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 51 No. 51, pp. 70-89.
- Bickmore, T. and Cassell, J. (2001), "Relational agents: a model and implementation of building user trust", ACM CHI 2001 Conference Proceedings, Seattle, Washington, DC, available at: www.media.mit.edu/gnl/publications/reaSmalllTalkchi2001.pdf (accessed April 13, 2012).
- Buskist, W. and Saville, K.B. (2001), "Rapport-building: creating positive emotional contexts for enhancing teaching and learning", *American Psychological Society Observer*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 12-3.
- Cavell, T.A. and Hughes, J.N. (2000), "Secondary prevention as context for assessing change processes in aggressive children", *Journal of School Psychology*, Vol. 38 No. 3, pp. 199-235.
- Chant, S., Jenkinson, T., Randle, J. and Russell, G. (2002), "Communication skills: some problems in nursing education practice", *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, Vol. 11 No. 11, pp. 12-21.
- Dewey, J. (1938), Experience and Education, Macmillan, New York, NY.
- Eby, L.T., Rhodes, E.J. and Allen, T.D. (2007), "Definition and evolution of mentoring", in Allen, T.D. and Eby, L.T. (Eds), *Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 7-20.
- Evans, I.M. and Ave, K.T. (2000), "Mentoring children and youth: principles, issues and policy implications for community programmes in New Zealand", *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 41-9.
- Evans, I.M., Jory, A. and Dawson, N. (2005), "International: Australia and New Zealand", in Dubois, L.D. and Karcher, M.J. (Eds), *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 408-21.
- Feltz, D.L. (1988), "Self-confidence and sports performance", in Pandolf, K.B. (Ed.), Exercise and Sport Science Reviews, MacMillan, New York, NY, pp. 423-57.
- Fletcher, S. (2000), "A role for imagery in mentoring", *Career Development International*, Vol. 5 Nos 4/5, pp. 235-43.
- Fletcher, S. and Mullen, C. (2012), *The SAGE Handbook of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, Sage, London.
- Gardner, H. (1983), Frames of Mind; The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Basic Books, New York, NY.

- George, M. and Mampilly, R.S. (2012), "A model for student mentoring in business schools", *International Journal for Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 136-54.
- Gopalakrishnan, H. (2008), "Arm yourself with soft skills to be employable", available at: www.thehindujobs.com/0807/2008070950080600.htm (accessed April 5, 2012).
- Haggard, D.L., Dougherty, T.W., Turban, D.B. and Wilbanks, J.E. (2011), "Who is a mentor? A review of evolving definitions and implications for research", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 280-304.
- Herrera, C., Grossman, J.B., Kauh, T.J., Feldman, A.F. and McMaken, J. (2007), *Making a Difference in Schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Impact Study*, Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia, PA.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984), Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Kram, K.E. (1996), "A relational approach to career development", in Hall, D. and Associates (Eds), *The Career is Dead Long Live the Career*, Joseey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, pp. 132-57.
- Lankau, M.J. and Scandura, T.A. (2007), "Mentoring as a forum for personal learning in organizations", in Ragins, B.R. and Kram, E.K. (Eds), *The Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research and Practice*, Sage Publications, London, pp. 95-122.
- Leondari, A., Syngollitou, E. and Kiosseoglou, G. (1998), "Academic achievement, motivation and future selves", *Educational Studies*, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 153-63.
- Levinson, D.J. (1978), The Seasons of a Man's Life, Ballantine Books, New York, NY.
- MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership (2003), *Elements of Effective Practice*, 2nd ed., National Mentoring Partnership, Alexandria, VA, available at: www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED502219.pdf (accessed November 13, 2012).
- Mullen, E.J. and Noe, R.A. (1999), "The mentoring information exchange: when do mentors seek information from their protégés?", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 233-42.
- Mumford, M.D., Zaccaro, S.J., Connelly, M.S. and Marks, M.A. (2000a), "Leadership skills: conclusions and future directions", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 155-70.
- Mumford, M.D., Zaccaro, S.J., Harding, F.D., Jacobs, T. and Fleishman, E.A. (2000b), "Leadership skills for a changing world: solving complex problems", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 11-35.
- Philip, K. and Hendry, L.B. (2000), "Making sense of mentoring or mentoring making sense? Reflections on the mentoring process by adult mentors with young people", *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 10 No. 10, pp. 211-23.
- Rungadiachy, D.M. (1999), Interpersonal Communication and Psychology for Health Care Professionals: Theory and Practice, Butterworth-Heinemann, Edinburgh.
- Shiner, M., Young, T., Newburn, T. and Groben, S. (2004), *Mentoring Disaffected Young People:*An evaluation of Mentoring Plus, Joseph Roundtree Foundation, York.
- Sipe, C.L. (1996), Mentoring: A Synthesis of P/PV's Research: 1988-1995, Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia, PA.

About the authors

K.N. Rekha is currently pursuing her PhD in Management from IIT Madras, India. Her area of research is on mentoring relationships in organizations in Indian context. She worked as a

Researcher in Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. Prior to that she was associated with Centre Do mentors learn for Organization Development as a Research Fellow and has a year of experience in teaching business management students. Her research interests include mentoring, learning, and leadership. K.N. Rekha is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: rekhathegreat@gmail.com

M.P. Ganesh is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Management Studies, IIT Madras. His PhD is in the area of virtual team dynamics. His research areas of interest include work teams, virtual and cross-cultural collaborations, and ethical decision making. He has published in reputed national and international journals.

by mentoring others?

217