Development and Implementation of a Mentoring Programme at a Historically Disadvantaged South African University

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ABSTRACT Mentoring is an intentional instructional improvement strategy which, in most cases is mutual. It is one of the strategies used to support and develop new academics in their work. This study sought to explore the factors that affected the development and implementation of a staff peer-mentoring programme for junior and senior academics at an institution of higher learning in South Africa. The study focused on a peer mentoring project funded by an outside body where junior academic members of staff desiring assistance in developing their research capacity in order to complete higher degrees and increase research output teamed up with experienced members of staff as mentees. This was a mixed methods research where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected through questionnaires with semi structured and open-ended questions. The findings of the study showed an impact of mentoring on preparing the next generation of researchers. The greatest impact could be seen in the completion of further degrees, presenting papers at conferences and refining the papers for publication The study recommends greater funding for the mentoring role, workload relief for mentors and training staff to become effective mentors as this would provide an effective but cheaper form of staff development,

INTRODUCTION

Academic staff support and development remains a challenge in higher education institutions. Entering practice in any profession including teaching offers a challenge to new practitioners. It is a transition which can be stressful and challenging as new demands are made upon individuals who are seeking to consolidate their skills. It is therefore a period when the practitioner is in need of guidance and support from the experienced, in order to gain confidence and competence (Matters 2001). As a result, some higher education institutions have put in place measures to provide academic support and development for their academic staff. While some research has documented that mentoring is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for enhancing total quality teacher development, it is none the less a major contributory factor causing effective teacher development (Gratch 1998; Yip 2001). Studies on mentoring in schools and universities show that mentoring has a positive outcome for both mentors and mentees and these include developing collegiality, networking, professional development and personal satisfaction (Bell and Treleaven 2011). Additionally, benefits for mentees can include higher rates of retention and promotion and better perceptions of themselves as academics (Gardener et al. 2007).

At a Historically Disadvantaged University in South Africa referred to in this article as the University of Higher Learning (UHL), under the auspices of external funding, a mentoring programme was put in place to assist in the development of the members of the academic staff in conducting research. Mentoring has become more prevalent as a career development tool in organizations (McManus and Russell 1997; Russell and Eby 1993). Individuals learn a great deal through their interaction with others especially those with different backgrounds, expertise and seniority in their organizations (Lankau and Scandura 2002). In their study on mentoring of junior staff in Higher Education, Collins et al.

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(2009) found new teachers who said, "We do not know what we do not know".

Aims of the Study

The aim of the pilot mentoring project was to develop and implement a Peer-Mentoring programme for academic staff in order to create a conducive, non-threatening environment to nurture a new culture of professional development and best practice. One of the challenges of a Historically Disadvantaged University (HDU) is to attract and keep competent professionals who can mentor (officially or unofficially) junior staff in developing research skills; this is against a background of large classes with underprepared students and often inadequate facilities. It was hoped that by launching an official mentoring programme the benefits would become evident and set the ball rolling, so to speak, for more and more staff to become involved. The aim of this study was to examine the extent to which the Peer mentoring pilot had developed the research capacity of junior staff by assisting them towards completion of a higher degree or developing a research paper for publication.

Definition of Mentoring

Various definitions of the mentoring process have been discussed in literature and all of them agree that the main purpose is development; some apply this development to mentees alone while others postulate that it benefits both mentor and mentee. Researches have shown that mentoring is viewed as a working relationship that contributes to personal growth and an important organizational process as well as a vehicle through which individuals can enhance personal learning (Kram 1996). According to Seabrooks et al. (2000), mentoring is a nurturing process in which an experienced teacher, usually skilled in specific subject areas, serves as a role model for teaching the subject; encourages, counsels and even befriends a novice or less skilled teacher. Research indicates that the mentor not only aids the new teacher with instructional challenges and paper work hurdles, but also provides emotional support in the form of encouragement, empathy and compassion (Delgado 1999). An effective mentor in an education setting provides the new teacher with counseling, sponsorship, friendship, encouragement

and teaching advice (Shannon 1988 in Watson 2006). Therefore, the presence or absence of a professional mentor/friend can have a powerful impact on the success or failure of a new teacher. If the concept of mentoring is not practiced in the proper way in faculties, it runs the risk of tokenism or extinction.

Mentoring is a developmental relationship typically occurring between senior and junior individuals in organizations where the senior and more experienced provides guidance and support to facilitate growth and development of the less experienced (McManus and Russel 1997; Yip 2001). A mentor can observe a new teacher's teaching and provide feedback and friendship which are essential for professional growth (Cookson 2005). Not only are mentored beginning teachers more confident, they are also supported in "exploring, sharing, reflecting and refining their knowledge and skills about teaching" (Seabrooks et al. 2000: 222). In other words, it is a process during which one individual, usually a more senior and well respected individual, and the mentee, usually a novice, develop a relationship where the focus of the relationship is the personal and professional development of the mentee which also benefits the mentor.

Mentoring Models

Literature provides two models of mentoring, namely the traditional model and the current model. The traditional model is described as a process where the mentor is considered the source of wisdom, guidance and expertise. Current theory on mentoring describes the mentoring process as a mutual learning relationship in which both the mentor and the mentee gain knowledge (Zachary 2000). The mentor and mentee are deemed to be in a collaborative relationship based on mutual respect, trust, and a commitment to growth in both parties. Together, they set and achieve their goals, take risks, make mistakes, accept each other's strengths and weaknesses, and grow and develop (Zachary 2000). A critical component in the process is reflection. Together, the mentor and the mentee reflect on their progress towards their goals, determine how to continue the learning process, and acknowledge and celebrate their success. The reflection process and a disposition of openness to learning from each other can result in new skills and knowledge for both parties (Za-

chary 2000). The more traditional conceptualization of mentoring tends to focus on superior-subordinate dyadic relationships in the workplace (McManus and Russell 1997; Zachary 2000). Thus this study took from the newer mentoring model which sees the mentoring process as a mutual learning relationship in which both the mentor and the mentee gain knowledge and it sought to investigate the extent to which mentors and mentees reflected together on their progress towards their goals as this would help both to learn from each other.

Mentors usually serve career and psychosocial functions (Kram 1985). Career functions include sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching, protection and providing challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions include role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling and friendship (McManus and Russell 1997). Mentors also serve as role models for mentees. If a mentee identifies with a mentor, he/she may try to emulate the mentor's attitudes, values and behaviours (Kram 1985). The desire to be like their mentors may motivate mentees to be more proactive in information seeking (Lankau and Scandura 2002) and this would result in increased learning. Through modeling (Bandura 1977) the mentees may strengthen their own performance of work activities. Mentors are viewed as a resource for personal learning (Lancau and Scandura 2002). Self-learning is represented in the systems of thinking which is represented in the capacity to look beyond the self and see relationships among organizational aspects (Kegan 1994; Lankau and Scandura 2002). Researches on adult learning have noted that such learning involves personal development and change of behaviour, attitudes, or even personality (Roger 1983). In this view, a mentor should possess desirable qualities which will be imitated by the mentees. Rawson (2000) discussed the importance of "learning to learn" which involves formulating new ways of understanding, of interacting with others and of self-perception, resulting in personal development.

For a study to be deemed a theoretical perspective, it has to identify and discuss a 'theory', 'framework' or a 'model' it is based on (Ehrich et al. 2001). Mentoring involves a developmental relationship between a senior and a junior individual where both are expected to learn. Therefore this study is premised on social learning theory. Some detail of social learning theory is furnished below. This study was underpinned on the mentoring model which sees mentoring as a mutual learning relationship in which both the mentor and the mentee gain knowledge.

Theoretical Framework: Bandura's Social Learning Theory

This study is informed by the social learning theory. The theory is premised on the view that individuals learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling of other people's behaviour, attitudes and outcomes of those behaviours. "Most human behaviour is learned observationally through modeling and from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (Bandura 1986, 1977: 46). He further explains human behaviour in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences.

For learning to take place, Bandura (1977) points out conditions necessary for effective modelling such as attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivation. Firstly, it is pointed out that the person who wants to learn must pay attention. It is argued that factors such as effective attention, complexity and functional value of the action may increase or decrease. Secondly there is need for retention where the observer must be able to remember the behaviour that has been observed. This can be enhanced through rehearsal. Thirdly, there should be motor reproduction where one should have the ability to replicate the behaviour that has been demonstrated. Lastly there should be motivation where learners must want to demonstrate what they have learned. One way of increasing motivation is for a learner to have a good reason to imitate to become proficient. People are more likely to engage in certain behaviours when they believe they are capable of executing those behaviours successfully. This means they will have high self-efficacy. In layman's terms, self-efficacy could be regarded as self-confidence towards learning. Social learning theory maintains that human beings tend to emulate the behaviour they see in others whom they respect and admire. If people observe positive, desirable outcomes in the model's behaviour, they are more likely to model, imitate and adopt the behaviour themselves.

In short, social learning theory implies that in a mentoring relationship, on one hand, the mentor has to have some qualities which are admired by the mentee. On the other hand, the mentee should also possess the qualities that support attention, retention, motor reproduction and be motivated. This study, which is underpinned by Bandura's social learning theory as the theoretical framework set to investigate the efforts made by mentors to be good role models as well as efforts made by mentees to learn from their mentors since such characteristics are very important in a successful mentoring programme.

Overview of the Mentoring Programme at UHL

The Mentoring Programme at the University of Higher Learning was developed and maintained by the Teaching Development Unit in the Teaching and Learning Centre. A needs assessment in the form of an informal survey of academic staff revealed that there was a real need for developing a formal mentoring programme. For the pilot programme, a Mentoring Application Questionnaire based on a similar form developed at the University of Wellington, New Zealand, was used. This method identifies the specific, rather than general mentoring needs of prospective mentees, and also the expertise on offer by possible mentors. It also informs the Mentoring Reference Group (MRG) of specific preferences, which are needed for the matching process. In the pilot programme, the emphasis was on the development of teaching and research skills in junior staff; however, there is also a perceived need for mentoring in academic leadership.

Mentoring Reference Group

For quality assurance purposes, a Mentoring Reference Group (MRG) was established to effectively oversee the programme. The purpose of this group was, firstly, to assist with the matching of mentors and mentees, secondly to evaluate (but not police!) the progress in each relationship, lastly to act as a 'safety net', should problems develop. In other words, the MRG acted as a body with which complaints could be lodged and which could then address the problems.

The MRG comprised of two staff members of the TLC, one acting as convenor, plus one staff member from each of the participating faculties. The main functions of the MRG were to convene *ad hoc* meetings when necessary as well as organizing occasional social gatherings (once a term) of all mentors and mentees, with the aim to further develop collegiality and give the opportunity for participants to share their experiences in a broader forum.

Matching: This is a very critical stage in the whole mentoring process, where the skills on offer by possible mentors should be matched as nearly as possible to the expressed needs of mentees; what is even more important is that mentor and mentee should be psychologically compatible. For successful matching the MRG had to rely on the input of senior colleagues considered for the mentoring programme, based on their experience. Because we wanted to attract people to participate in the programme, in the pilot stage we only set up relationships which had a very good chance of being successful. For this very reason the pilot programme had a very small number of participants, but we hoped the mentees would, in the process, be developed as potential mentors, so that the MRG would have a progressively larger number of potential mentors to draw from in the coming years.

The actual steps in the matching process included the following: (1) The Teaching Development Unit (TDU), with the assistance of Deans and (academic) Directors, were asked to call on staff to participate and complete the questionnaire; (2) designated people within the TDU screened the applications and did a preliminary matching, which was then discussed with Deans and Directors; (3) proposed mentors were informed as to who their suggested mentee(s) was/were, and had the opportunity to decline or accept the nomination; (4) the mentee was thereafter informed of who the proposed mentor was and again had the option to decline or accept; (5) in the final briefing session, the mentor and mentee(s) in each group were assisted to draw up an agreement, for which they could hold each other accountable. Two mentoring models were considered for implementation at the University of Higher Learning, namely:
- dyads (one-on-one in the same, related or even very different disciplines);
- triads (one mentor and two or more mentees), where there were two or more junior staff members in the same department who were more or less at the same level.

Both models were used at UHL as there were some mentors who were willing to mentor more than one mentee. In this particular project, one mentor had three mentees, one mentor had two mentees and three mentors had one mentee each giving a total of five mentors and eight mentees. However for statistical purposes the mentor with three mentees and who produced three different reports is regarded as three mentors.

Briefing of Mentors and Mentees

Three initial briefing sessions were carried out as discussed below:

*Briefing of Mentors***:** A two-hour workshop was held where the key roles of an academic mentor as academic adviser, career guide, facilitator, and confidante were discussed, as well as the usual expectations and fears of mentees. The drawing up of a mentoring contract and practical ways of managing mentoring events were also explained. In addition, the uniqueness of each relationship and agreement was emphasised. Mentors were afforded an opportunity to express their expectations and fears so that effective routes towards fulfilling those expectations (and avoid fears from being realised) could be elucidated. Mentors were also given a self-evaluation form to ascertain their own skills level and further their own development. This helped to alert mentors to their own shortcomings.

*Briefing of Mentees***:** In a two-hour workshop, the purpose and goals of academic mentoring were clarified so that mentees had a clearer set of expectations. As with the mentors, mentees also had an opportunity to voice their expectations and fears and were given a self-evaluation form to assess their own readiness for the mentoring process. Like in the case of mentor's evaluation form, the mentees' evaluation form was meant to help them to realize their areas of need in preparation for the mentoring process. They were also informed about the 'contract' or memorandum of understanding between themselves and their mentors as the basis for the relationship.

Formal Introductory Briefing Session: On this occasion mentors and mentees were formally introduced to each other. The purpose of a written agreement as a memorandum of understanding, outlining the expectations of both parties, was again explained, and each dyad/triad was then given time to put it in writing, which had to be finalised during the session. Copies of the agreement were then given to each of the participants and the original filed at the Teaching and Learning Centre for reference purposes.

Mentoring Process

The MRG kept itself informed of the progress in each mentoring relationship in order to render timely assistance. Rather than a formal questionnaire, which may easily be viewed as 'policing', short person-to-person discussions were held quarterly as forms of formative evaluations between the mentor or mentee and a member of the MRG, with the overall impression then recorded by the latter for the information of the MRG. Both mentors and mentees had free access to the MRG to voice any concerns.

Formal, summative evaluations were conducted after six months and at the conclusion of each mentoring relationship, when participants were requested to complete an evaluation questionnaire. This helped to identify both general and specific problems and establish to what extent interventions from the MRG were successful or not, so that the programme could be adapted accordingly.

METHODOLOGY

Designed with a mixed methods approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research aspects (Denzin and Lincoln 2005), this study used questionnaires with structured, semi-structured and open-ended questions to collect data and examine the experiences of the mentors and mentees who had been involved in the mentoring programme. To formatively evaluate the progress of the pilot and to help identify problem areas, one of the authors met with each of the mentoring groups (mentor and his/her mentee(s)) on a quarterly basis. At the end of the first year of the programme a formal, anonymous evaluation was conducted in which all the participants took part. Questionnaires were administered both online and also using hard copies. Participants were asked to write their experiences which included the rate and quality of the meetings they had with their mentor; the extent to which their expectations were addressed by the mentoring experience and also suggest ways of improving the mentoring process.

In the process of analysis, a narrative inquiry approach (Riessman 1993; Clandinin and Con-

nelly 2004; Denzin and Lincoln 2005) was employed and substantive themes were deduced from the data. Two phases of data analysis were performed: (a) vertical analysis where responses from each respondent were individually analyzed, line by line and, (b) horizontal analysis where analysis was conducted across responses from different respondents for similarities and differences (Thompson 2000). The themes arrived at are discussed in the results below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the major themes that emerged from the data; the nature of mentoring relationship, mentoring meetings, benefits and challenges of the mentoring process, extent of goal achievement, and emerging suggestions for improving the programme.

Theme 1: Nature of the Mentoring Relationship

Participants rated the mentoring relationship on a scale of one to four with one representing poor and four representing very good and went on to substantiate their ratings with qualitative descriptions. Both mentors and mentees viewed their mentoring relationship as being good as demonstrated on Table 1.

Table 1: Nature of the mentoring relationship

	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good
Mentor	0	0	0	8
Mentee	0	0	4	5
Total	0	0	4	13

Qualitative data on description of the mentoring relationships shows that both mentors and mentees acknowledged the encounters as to have been worthwhile. Responses from mentees showed that mentors were dedicated and encouraging and this is demonstrated in some of the mentee responses below:

Mentor has shown genuine interest in my progress.

Mentor was always encouraging and helpful.

The relationship with my mentor was very good. He was very understanding, took time to have conversations with me. He was also very

understanding of my working conditions and how it impacted on the set goals.

One mentor who had more than one mentee pointed out that mentees tended to open up more during group discussions than when they met individually. Tinto (2000) points out that learning in groups gives learners social and personal support and thus increases their self-confidence. In turn this increases their persistence and throughput.

Theme 2: Mentoring Meetings

In some cases, mentors and mentees were able to hold meetings as scheduled during the mentoring process. However, a few problems with the mentoring process were pointed out especially in terms of following meeting schedules and the time factor. This is shown in responses such as the following:

The problem was meeting according to schedule because of different time schedules and commitments

Due to different schedules, our meetings were limited, but meaningful.

The workload and pressure of work in the workplace meant that we re-scheduled meetings.

The programme has helped me a lot—mentoring very encouraging: workload had a negative impact.

However, the mentors and the mentees made efforts to put some measures in place such as having flexible times. The parties were able to make alternative arrangement such as rescheduling where the initially agreed schedule could not be met for example, one mentee said, "I could consult with my mentor outside the planned schedule." The constraint of time in mentoring programmes is also reported in other research studies. After evaluating a formalised peer mentoring pilot, Parsons et al. (2008) report that time management was the greatest difficulty causing factor affecting the peer mentoring programme they evaluated.

Theme 3: Benefits and Challenges of the Mentoring Process

Both mentors and mentees found the mentoring process to be highly productive, stimulating and motivating. When probed on whether they would encourage colleagues to enter into

similar mentoring relationships all participants were positive as shown Table 2. One mentee had this to say, *The relationship with my mentor was very good. He was very understanding, took time to have a conversation with me. He was also very understanding of my working conditions and how it impacted on the set targets.* This resonates with findings from a study by Cureton et al. (2010) which revealed that participation in the mentoring programme impacted positively on, relationships with other staff, increased productivity and encouraged people to engage in more activities that enhanced the institution's reputation.

Table 2: Evaluating the mentoring programme

	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good
Mentor	0	0	0	9
Mentee	0	0	2	7
Total	0	0	2	16

While the programme was found to be beneficial, however, several challenges were enumerated in the qualitative, open-ended responses. Time emerged as the major challenge confronting the mentoring programme. As one mentor quipped,
The only problem is the time factor. We are very busy with teaching, research and administration in my department. Thus we do not have too much time to discuss and deal with other issues. If I were mentoring someone in a distant unit, the exercise would have been a near failure because of the time factor. this quote is too long and hence needs to be indented
Another mentor concurred, *I spend a lot of time travelling and I wish I had more time outside scheduled meetings to discuss with (name supplied).* Similarly, in a study on mentoring by Oti (2009: 8) "…all three case studies perceived the role of mentoring as being squeezed by other demands made by external influences and factors. Time is required for effective mentoring. This has a cost implication and impacts on funding."
One mentor commented that although the mentorship arrangement was fruitful at first, circumstances beyond both mentor and mentee control resulted in an abrupt end to the relationship;
Mentee was over-extended because she fell pregnant which placed an extra burden on her.

My partnership arrangement was quite fruitful at first, but ultimately did not yield the desired results because, despite mentee's strong enthusiasm towards the programme, and strong desire to develop her research capabilities, she could not combine the demands of work and mentorship with the challenges of pregnancy. Even so, mentee eventually resigned from UHL, thus bringing an end to the mentorship relationship that showed immense promise.
The mentee in the partnership mentioned in the preceding paragraph concurred that although the relationship had lasted a short time it had been beneficial to her. She wrote in the rather long quotation below that,
It was unfortunate that at the time when I registered for the mentoring programme, I found out I was pregnant. My workload increased dramatically, because I had to teach all my courses in the first semester because I was going to be on maternity leave during the second semester. One of the set goals in our contract was to submit an abstract for a conference and attend a conference. That was achieved, except that when the time came for the conference, I was also due to give birth. Despite what may seem to be failings, the programme and my relationship with my mentor have planted a seed. I have also managed to sustain my relationship with my mentor even though I no longer work for the institution.
One of the mentors felt that because most of the mentors were seniors and managers of the mentees in the work place this led to a misconception of mentoring by some potential mentees. A call was made for strategies to increase mentee buy-in. The mentor commented,
I have a sense that many of our colleagues who need to be in a mentorship relationship do not sign up because they do not understand it. They may look at it as disguised "juniorisation" or "subordination". Yet these could be the same colleagues who indirectly are (or inwardly desire to be) in some mentorship relationship…
This shows the need to demystify the mentoring programme so that mentees can see it as an opportunity for development rather than a strategy to coerce them to do things in particular ways. The use of power relations in mentoring is raised by Colvin and Ashman (2010: 132) who write that, "Additionally, the nature of the relationship, *mentor* and *mentee*, reflects hierar-

chical ordering. Thus help, power, and resources tend to flow in one direction, creating the possibility for misunderstanding or misuse of such power and resources…"

Closely related to the perceived 'juniorisation' mentioned in the preceding paragraph which seemed to scare off potential mentees, a sentiment expressed by one mentor who had two mentees was that because he was the mentees immediate supervisor, they tended to seem to want to just please him as shown in the following quotation;

I am the HOD and the mentees are my junior colleagues…since I am their boss, they tended to try to please me. I also observed that when I met them together, they opened up more than when I met them as individuals; they were more relaxed and the relationship was more beneficial even to me. Maybe if I mentor others in other divisions, they may be more open when I see each one privately. Why not try this one next time? All in all the mentoring exercise was worth the time.

Theme 4: Goal Achievement

All the mentees had to formulate goals at the beginning of the mentoring process and agree on these with their mentors. Monitoring and reporting on progress would then happen during scheduled meetings. Below is a list of all the goals of the mentees which all concerned research development. Some of the goals were common for most mentees and the number of mentees who listed a particular goal is indicated in brackets.

  * Complete a masters degree (3)
  * Further studies (PhD), participation in conference presentations(1)
  * Writing for publication (2)
  * Write a paper and present it at a conference(5)
  * Write a PhD proposal(2)
  * Presenting and analysing findings of a research project (1)
  * How to prepare a seminar presentation paper(1)
    Conducting research in my discipline(1)

The mentees were asked to indicate the number of goals achieved with comments where applicable and the following were their responses. Some of those who listed their goals as completion of a postgraduate degree were already at

advanced stages of their studies and needed mentorship to finalise these (their) studies.

  * *All two goals achieved (!)*
  * *One (primary) goal achieved*
  * *One goal achieved and two others partially completed*
  * *One goal achieved*
  * *One goal completed, some progress in the other three*
  * *Four goals achieved*
  * *One completed, the other two not (but a little progress)*
  * *One completed (M degree), fair progress on another two,*

From an academic point of view, the programme can be regarded as successful, both as regards motivation and output. The following are some of the mentee comments that illustrate satisfaction with progress towards goals achievement.

  * *I managed to complete my M-degree and have registered for a PhD. I presented a paper at a national conference and have completed two portfolios for modules in the PGDHET'*
  * *The programme has helped me to set some major objectives for career development and have registered for a PhD. My mentor is highly motivating, approachable and easy to work with.'*
  * *I had to adjust my targets because of work commitments, but was able to submit my M-thesis early this year. The mentor has helped to motivate me towards this accomplishment and I am now encouraged to tackle the other goals originally set.'*
  * *I am currently working on a seminar paper (which will be offered soon), but my schedule is extremely tight because of a work overload. My mentor has been very understanding and supportive.'*
  * *A paper for an international conference with which my mentor assisted me (and credited as co-author) has been accepted.'*

Cureton et al. (2010) argue that allowing the mentee to set goals addresses their specific developmental needs but also allows the process to develop beyond its professional development aims.

Mentors also indicated that they had benefitted from the process. One of the mentors commented as follows:

This has been a valuable character building exercise. As a mentor it has helped me keep focus of what I do, knowing I have a role to play to inspire and encourage the mentee. I value this exercise and will be willing to continue with the current mentee or any other who is interested in being mentored.

This comment confirms the philosophical underpinning of the ccurrent theory on mentoring which describes the mentoring process as a mutual learning relationship in which both the mentor and the mentee gain knowledge (Zachary 2000). Further more on a study on mentoring by Cureton et al. (2010: 82) the results show that the mentoring scheme provided opportunities for professional development, recognised by both mentees and mentors and they write that " Both academic and research staff have reported that mentoring has enhanced their professional skills base; increased their perceived pedagogic effectiveness and enhanced their capability within higher education performance indicators."

Another mentor who had more than one mentee also commented, *I wanted the guys to complete their Masters programmes, inter alia, and they did that within the mentoring period.* The high success rate can be directly attributed to the fact that the programme was voluntary and all the participants were properly motivated. The expressed satisfaction in the cited comment by the mentor that the mentees had accomplished their goals is also evident in the literature. A study by Gillman (2006: 16) reports that, "Mentors valued their own contributions and took pride in personal achievements as they shared their experiences with others. Each had the opportunity to impact the life of another individual in a unique way, providing their partners with the benefit of experience otherwise not available."

Theme 5: Areas of Improvement

Respondents were also asked to answer a question relating to how the mentoring programme could have been made better and made a number of suggestions. These included more vigorous marketing of the programme, the need for assistants to mentors to ease workload and more comprehensive orientation/induction of mentors and mentees Meanwhile, based on a structured analysis of over 300 research-based papers on mentoring, Hansford et al. (2004) argue that if resources (both human and financial) are to be invested in mentoring programs, those responsible for planning and implementing programs must be willing to commit time, resources and energy to such programs.

Heavy workloads and time schedules were identified as some of the challenges affecting the effectiveness of the mentoring programme and some respondents gave suggestions on how this could be mitigated. The appointment of student assistants or graduate assistants to ease mentor workload was seen as one possible solution to the problem. As one respondent advises, *Funds permitting the institution could engage graduate assistants for staff on the mentoring programme to relieve them of some of their pressures* and another agrees, *Management support , perhaps by allocating assistants to mentors so that they cope with mentoring roles.*

For some mentoring partnerships that were constituted later after the initial briefing sessions had already been held, the mentors and mentees were only given guidelines and no workshops were held for them. This was picked up as a weakness by one of the mentors who had joined the programme late who had this to say, *A workshop on mentoring would have helped both mentors and mentees about some challenges of the mentoring relationships. Guideline documents were okay, but we rarely have time to read.* In the same vein, Oti (2009) recommends greater funding for the mentoring role and training staff to become effective mentors to other staff as this would provide an effective but cheaper form of staff development.

There was a feeling among some mentors that mentoring was not yet fully understood in the university. *I have a sense that many of our colleagues who need to be in a mentorship relationship would rather not sign up for the programme because they do not fully understand it.* There was a call for the need to publicise the programme to attract more mentors and mentees as shown in the two responses below; *The buy-in of (prospective) mentees is crucial. A focused publicity programme could explicitly state how programmes of this nature would enhance participants' growth chances at UHL.* Another mentor commented, *More publicity of the mentoring programme.*

CONCLUSION

As evidenced by the number of goals achieved within the short period of twelve months, it is apparent that mentoring has the

potential of increasing research output of the academic staff — the success reported by participants is encouraging. All mentees achieved at least one of the goals initially identified with some achieving all. The Mentoring Programme is of great value to the University and its teaching staff, because it develops the research capacity of both junior and senior staff, making for strong research teams within departments and schools. The pilot peer mentoring programme can therefore be regarded as a success.

However, as shown in the results, it is clear that although there are distinct benefits to the programme, the majority of academic staff simply do not have the time. It is proposed that the University investigates the possibility of providing mentors and mentees with teaching (or graduate) assistants to give them some free time. If suitable assistants can be found, they would certainly also benefit from working more closely with the mentors and mentees thereby receiving mentorship themselves.

Effective mentoring will take place provided the mentor demonstrates the activities in a clear and interesting manner so as to motivate the mentee to put into practice what he/she will have observed. Modelling of the desired behaviour as espoused in Bandura's social learning theory is one of the keys to the success of the mentoring process.

The researchers also see the future of the programme as lying in faculties rather than in a centralised university unit. Mechanisms would have to be put in place to induct Heads of Departments on the programme so that they can coordinate the programme in their departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A well-structured and properly managed mentoring programme is of great benefit to any university, but especially in situations – as is common in 'second tier' institutions – where there is a high percentage of staff who lack research experience, be it for a further degree or for a publication. Crucial elements for successful implementation are the following:

- Careful matching of the *personalities* of mentor and mentee; the mentor must be willing to share his/her experience and the mentee must be teachable.
- The National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa now makes funds available

for the appointment of internees attached to individual lecturers. The purpose is primarily to develop skills in the internee, but for the lecturer (be it as mentor or mentee) such assistance with everyday, mundane tasks, is invaluable. In order to encourage academic staff to participate, the University should apply for such funding to relieve mentor workload and thereby create time in their busy schedules by providing support.
- A proper monitoring system must be put in place; this should be *supportive* of both parties and should assist the parties to iron out any difficulties which may arise.
- The researchers also see the future of the programme as lying in faculties rather than in a centralised university unit. Mechanisms would have to be put in place to induct Heads of Departments on the programme so that they can coordinate the programme in their departments.

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