

TE WHAKATŪ KŌRERO WORKING PAPERS

Mentoring: The socialisation of learning

Polly Kobeleva and Luke Strongman

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Abstract

This paper explores mentoring in tertiary teaching and learning practices. Firstly, definitions of the term ‘mentoring’ are considered and distinctions made between mentoring, supervision and coaching. The authors discuss the functional and relational models of mentoring as an effective strategy in postgraduate supervision. The argument is made that mentoring involves, primarily, the ‘socialisation’ of learning. Secondly, the article reviews the socio-political context in which mentoring takes place, namely neoliberalism and Foucauldian power relations. The authors then investigate various mentoring practices, as well as their underpinning objectives, drawing on the theory of neoliberalism and Foucault’s concept of ‘power relations’. The role of the mentor and the expectations of the mentoree are examined in the context of formal and informal mentoring relationships. Thirdly, the sociocultural dimensions of mentoring are explored. These include metaphor as a means of articulating and aligning mentor–mentoree understanding in terms of identity construction, interpersonal relations, pedagogy, cultural and gender differences, competition and collaboration, accountability and rules, altruism, and equity. The article concludes with a brief review of research into the effectiveness of mentoring.

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Introduction

Origin of the term 'mentor'

The concept of the mentor is derived from Greek mythology, namely *The Odyssey*. Odysseus left home for a lengthy campaign in the Trojan wars and left Mentor, a friend and confidant, to care for his son Telemachus, whose character and education were shaped by Mentor in the hero's absence (Melrose, 2006, p. 58). Such a transaction involved trust and a type of parental relationship.

Mentoring in business

Mentoring in the modern context is about creating relationships between learners and teachers to improve educational outcomes. As well as being a form of interpersonal alliance, mentoring may also involve organisational allegiance. As Erdem and Ozen observe, mentoring is one of the oldest training methods after apprenticeship (2003, p. 569). There are mentoring regimes in almost all traditions of employment. These regimes are exemplified by unique exchanges between the more experienced and less experienced in the training process. Mentoring is a part of the intellectual capital of many organisations. The mentoring relationship is usually less formal than the hierarchical 'command and control' model. While mentoring is a part of the planned activity and formal requirements of the organisation, it is less formal in the application of learning styles, which may vary from dialogue to approbation and reward, advice, instruction, planning and counsel.

Bauer's definition of mentoring states that:

Mentoring is guidance by which an experienced member (a mentor) of an organization supports and assists a younger inexperienced protégé and provides him or her with information and opportunities for as long as the protégé requires this guidance. (1999, p. 212).

Thus mentoring is a pro-social behaviour that aims to ensure career advancement and psychosocial support in protégés. Other scholars suggest that career advancement may involve sponsorship, exposure to collegial and academic process, enhanced visibility, coaching, academic protection, and challenges. Psychosocial support enhances the mentoring relationship through

open communication, friendship, confirmation, affirmation, and acceptance (Erdem & Ozen, 2003, p. 570). Similarly, Holland observes that mentoring may enhance visibility for the mentoree and make decision makers 'more aware of the trainee's potential' (2009, p. 19). There is, however, no ubiquitous universally accepted definition of mentoring. Nor are there clear and unified goals for all mentoring programmes. It is therefore important to examine definitions and frameworks in the current body of knowledge.

Mentoring in academic contexts

In education, mentoring can be defined as a synergy that seeks to achieve educational outcomes through a process of co-creative normalisation. It occurs between a more experienced teacher and a less experienced learner, resulting in the professional development of both to their mutual benefit. Mentoring involves the planned coordination and investigation of academic activity within a context of teaching and research practice. It is generative in the sense that new work can evolve out of pre-existing relationships.

Intellectual and emotional relationships between senior and younger academics are a basic characteristic of working life in tertiary educational organisations. The 'intellectual capital' of mentoring is expressed on a continuum between a professional expert–apprentice relationship and a quasi-familial relationship. Mentoring relates not only to the exchange and fostering of specific aspects of skill and knowledge, but also aids the transition, negotiation and exploration of boundaries of teaching practices and research. It also redefines achievements, goals and limits in teaching, learning and research practice.

Functionalist and relational models of mentoring

Although mentoring has been discussed in academic literature since the late 1970s, it is still an underexplored aspect of communication (Chiles, 2006, p. 3). Holland (2009, p. 4) identifies two main types of academic mentoring – a restricted functionalist model and a relational model. In the functionalist model, there is a formal distance between the learner and the mentor, which creates a focus on specific learning. In the relational model, the learner is regarded as a 'valued equal'. While both models are effective, issues of respect and trust play a larger role in the relational model.

The mentoree is often working in a less certain environment than the mentor, who assists with positive transitions and changes in career practice. The word mentor is associated with the Spanish *orientar* – to orientate. Mentoring is related to the concepts of rearing and nurturing, which imply the ‘drawing out’ of educational outcomes rather than merely an instilment of rote learning or predetermined knowledge. A distinction can be made between ‘acculturation’ in the workplace that is structured and informal socialisation. In bringing these elements of formality and informality together in a relationship of mutual benefit to mentor, mentoree and the organisation, mentoring can be seen as a form of structured ‘socialisation’ of learning.

These relationships may be in a state of confluence in which boundaries are indeterminate – a co-creative synergy of professional and personal skills, as well as values and emotional regulation. As Fletcher observes, mentoring requires not the dictatorial ‘I know’ structure of address, but rather the ‘you and I’ approach of sustained mutual dialogue (2007, p. 3). As such, the creation of knowledge requires an exchange among researchers in conditions of unequal knowledge transfer.

Kaupapa Māori theory (the philosophy and practice of being Māori) also applies to mentoring. The *Kaiako Pono: Mentoring for Māori Learners in the Tertiary Sector* study identified cultural features that included: whānau (family), aroha (care and respect), manaakitanga (nurturing relationships), rangatiratanga (self-determination), kotahitanga (having a unified purpose), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) (Tahau-Hodges, 2010, p. 10). In this respect, a mentor can be seen as a ‘more experienced friend’ possessing the quality of ‘awhinatanga’ (helper, assister) or ‘tuakana/ teina’ (senior person working alongside a junior person) (Holland, 2009, p. 14; Tahau-Hodges, 2010, p. 10). The responsibilities of the senior person may not be clearly defined, which might foster creativity and autonomy and provide flexible boundaries. Mentors may also participate in distributed learning exercises, in which a learner might use a range of mentors for different sets of learning tasks (Holland 2009, p. 4).

Mentoree–mentor learning relationships

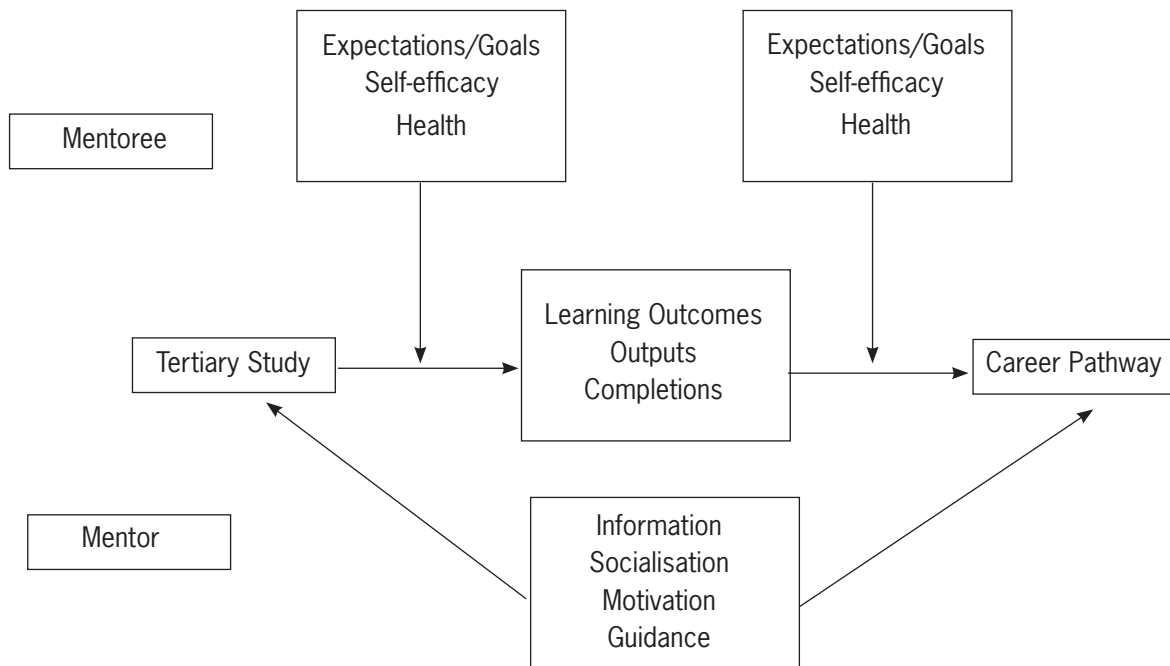


Fig. 1 Diagrammatical representation of the distributed learning experience of the mentor and mentoree in the tertiary educational organisation

Distinctions: mentoring versus coaching and supervision

The terms 'mentoring', 'coaching' and 'supervision' refer to distinct concepts. Although these concepts have related aspects and significant areas of overlap, they are sometimes used uncritically (Fletcher, 2007, p. 1). They each involve the collegial transmission of professional values, skills and knowledge. A mentor can be distinguished from a supervisor in that a mentor may augment the direct interventions in the learning process of the mentoree by the supervisor, offering contextual advice and guidance outside the immediate learning process. It is rare for a supervisor to also be a mentor for the same student. However, as Orland-Barak points out, there is a close alliance between teaching and mentoring (2002, p. 459). A mentor does need to be professionally recognised in the teaching system, and the role is more complex than just taking a single moral, ethical or pedagogical stance on a particular issue (p. 461). A mentor may attempt to integrate the mentoree's understanding through the implementation of reflective practices and by a dialogue that shapes the critical stance on fields of experience.

Mentoring differs from supervision in that the relationship between teacher and learner is frequently less formal and may purposefully complement life goals as well as academic goals. Compared with supervision, coaching is more performatively assessed. The intent of mentoring is to support professional learners through significant career transitions. Mentoring is associated with investigation and dialogue, while coaching is associated with structured encouragement towards training tasks.

Supervision differs from mentoring and coaching in that it is a sustained process for enabling the development of a specific aspect of a professional learner's practice (Fletcher, 2007, p. 2). Mentoring involves a collaborative relationship – one that offers a semi-formal structured process for dialogue, critique and 'scholarly orientation' between two or more professional learners. This allows the mentoree to embed new knowledge and skills 'from specialist sources in day to day practice' (Fletcher 2007, p. 2). Holland suggests that mentoring occurs both formally and informally, and that learning confidence is affected by social relations, levels of power sharing and trust. Optimum conditions follow from mentorees receiving support, stimulation and a sense of challenge (Holland, 2009, p. 3). Mentoring differs further from supervision in that the latter is concerned with the achievement of specific outcomes within a set time scale. These specific outcomes are enforced through surveillance mechanisms that adhere to third-party organisational requirements (Manathunga, 2007, p. 211). Mentoring, by comparison, incorporates self-supported direction. In terms of power relations, mentoring is seen as a more benign relationship than supervision – a form of socialisation of learning and disciplinary assimilation, rather than a relationship of surveillance and control (Manathunga, 2007, p. 214).

The role of mentoring in postgraduate supervision

In the current literature there is a consensus that mentoring is one of the most effective strategies in post-graduate supervision (Manathunga, 2007, p. 207). As Manathunga notes, postgraduate supervision seeks to guide the student's development into an independent researcher (p. 209). Mentoring augments this structured formative development through setting improvement goals and clear criteria, and non-evaluative observations and feedback, as well as through maintaining a responsibility for the integrity of the learning process and the well-being of the learner. Mentoring can provide a framework for academically socialising the mentoree into a disciplinary research culture, and assist with career development and provide emotional support, thus removing the

hierarchical relationship of the 'omnipresent' supervisor and docile, compliant protégé. According to Manathunga, mentoring research students involves 'orchestrating the evolution of students into independent researchers' (p. 209).

Mentoring needs to be flexible enough to foster an ability in the mentoree to sustain two contradictory subject positions. A mentoring relationship involves a subject who desires to act and be acted upon in terms of achieving educational goals. Imbalances of power between the mentor and mentoree can result from unequal knowledge or experience, as well as from unequal access to opportunities and sharing of resources. Manathunga challenges the concept that either supervisors or students are 'autonomous and rational' beings engaged in a purely collegial relationship, as that relationship may also be primarily defined by contractual obligations. Rather, mentoring is a 'site of governmentality', as well as one of academic friendship (p. 208). Rather than seeing mentorees as simply consumers or 'users', mentoring may offer a counselling dialogue that seeks to restore imbalances in subjective and objective relations, while also deconstructing the instrumentalist approach of supervision. As Jonathan Barrett states:

Under [a] proposed citizen model for tertiary education, students would be recognized as individuals with immanent human dignity, and envisaged as citizens of a fully inclusive, discursive democracy, rather than wealth maximizing consumers or instruments for achieving economic ends. (2007, p. 5)

The negotiation of a mentoring relationship may provide space that by mutual agreement enables immunity from the surveillance mechanism of supervisors, at least for a set duration or during defined goals. Storrs, Putsche and Taylor observe that mentoring involves a relational hierarchy and collaboration that advances the transmission of knowledge and may promote values of interdependence of the mentor and mentoree in a teaching relationship (2008, p. 185).

Holland (2009, p. 15) observes that the model of mentoring that is widely accepted is the relational (or developmental) model, which emphasises progressive steps in learning outcomes. It possesses the following characteristics:

- The mentor and mentoree are in frequent contact.
- Conversations are non-discriminatory (and may be non-reported).
- There are regular meetings.
- There are specific development areas or goals.

- Although the mentor is usually more experienced than the mentoree in one or more areas of development, power and authority are 'discounted', so the agenda is mutually driven.

The authors suggest that the preferred definition of mentoring for use in the context of postgraduate supervision is that mentoring is a structured dialogue between a more knowledgeable party and a less knowledgeable subject that sets goals for positive attainment in a learning environment. Mentoring may entail personal transformation and the quest for autonomy, regulation and self-control. It is the product of a dialogue with an experienced practitioner seeking positive educational outcomes. Mentoring involves self-improvement of both the mentor and the mentoree, and guided assistance through a dialogic exchange to help them recognise mutual abilities and limitations. It also involves the mentoree seizing opportunities for personal development. As Dawes and Dawes note, mentoring should thus 'enhance self-esteem' and provide further links to education and employment pathways that ensure the integration of the mentoree into an educational community or workplace (2005, p. 45). From the humanist or socio-emotive viewpoint, mentor–mentoree interaction develops in a meaningful, supportive relationship.

The socio-political aspects of mentoring

Having determined the definitions and main applied contexts of mentoring, the authors will advance their theory that mentoring may be understood as the 'socialisation of learning' within education that is contextualised in part by a political agenda.

Neoliberalism

The mentoree as subject is part of an economic system. As Manathunga suggests, mentoring takes place as a function of neoliberalism and the ideologically driven agendas of governments to create 'self-disciplined, competitive and individualistic workers' (2007, p. 208). Manathunga goes further, suggesting that subjects under neoliberalism have an illusion of being autonomous, but are actually formed into relationships to serve global economic markets. According to Manathunga, mentoring masks the Foucauldian power relation. However, this view tends to objectify the relationship of mentor and mentoree. This relationship may be subjectively informed, since such masking would obscure rather than highlight the pedagogical purposes for entering into the mentor–mentoree relationship.

An argument can be made that neoliberalism serves to narrow the pedagogical agenda through its methodological positivism. Given this, mentoring may be a relationship in which such ideologies are explored in the broadening and deepening of teaching and research practices. As Devos (2004) and Manathunga (2007) point out, mentoring also draws on Foucault's social theorising positing the learning relationship as a 'site of governmentality'.

Power dynamics

It must be accepted that the mentor–mentoree relationship, situated within supervision pedagogy and within the framework of neoliberal organisation of the polytechnic or university, is subject to an implicit network of ideological and organisational power dynamics. However, within this network the mentor may attempt to resolve the tension that is created by the conflicting desire for autonomy and regulation within the learning environment.

This conflict is often most clearly experienced as a source of tension and ambivalence at the end of the postgraduate supervisory relationship, as a significant relationship characterised by both work and social relations comes to a conclusion. However, this is countered by the fact that the mentor will have imparted to the mentoree an understanding of the 'tensions in developing disciplinary-based, self-regulatory behaviours' (Manathunga, 2007, p. 211). For the mentor this may also be experienced as ambivalence about regulating the student's life and the cessation of that responsibility at the conclusion of the project. Thus there are contradictions between self-support and social and pedagogical guidance, in which organisational ideology forms an 'over-text' and 'cultural and social' norms form a subtext (Manathunga, 2007, p. 219).

Holland has observed that 'valuing interdependence over dependence and intimacy over distance may be easier for women than for men' (2009, p. 15). Thus gender characteristics may inform the process, style and outcome of mentoring. However, there has been little statistical research that has revealed large differences in the benefits of mentoring to either men or women.

Some question whether mentoring reflects a 'dominant identity' and stems from power-dependent hierarchical relationships (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Darwin, 2000; Holland, 2009). Clearly, mentoring benefits mentorees, but its outcomes are shared between the mentor, mentoree and the organisation (Chiles, 2006, pp. 20–22). Consequently, these outcomes – realised as 'social capital' – are an investment in both organisational resources and culture.

As Manathunga observes, mentoring is about the regulation of identities, involving subjective as well as objective evaluations or 'technologies of the self' (2007, p. 210). Mentoring is an ancient activity. It is not an invention of 'neoliberal agendas in government and university policies' (Manathunga, 2007, p. 210). Manathunga's argument centers on the instrumentalist approach, in which students may be constructed as 'rational and autonomous' through the guidance offered by the supervisory relationship. Thus mentoring programmes may be an attempt to 'smooth over' the rough edges of power inherent in supervision and the 'pre-production of disciplinary subjects' (Manathunga, 2007, p. 210).

Foucauldian technologies of the self, 'which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being . . . to attain a certain state of wisdom', tend to rupture the power structure afforded by formal supervision mechanisms (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). Academic power is manifested not only by the use of prescriptive action but also by reflection, which produces a form of self-correcting autonomy. The mentor's role is to achieve a level of

understanding with the mentoree, which makes learning possible. In order to be credentialed and acquire new skills, mentors not only 'check up and in' on their mentorees, but also help to shape their minds and consequently their bodies through self-disciplining techniques, thinking and writing tasks within disciplinary paradigms, and drafting ideas and receiving feedback (Manathunga, 2007, p. 211). Progress and success are achieved not through coercion but through a subtle process of self- and mentor-directed evaluation. Mentoring involves patterns of behaviour that shape those thoughts and actions of mentorees that display the identity of socialised scholars (p. 211). In this context, mentoring may be understood as an informal process of prolonged examination that heightens the mentoree's skills for negotiating the tasks associated with implementing research, teaching and learning. Foucault discusses the pedagogical context thus:

The school became a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that duplicated along its entire length the operation of teaching . . . The examination did not simply mark the end of the apprenticeship; it was one of its permanent factors; it was woven into it through a constantly repeated ritual of power. The examination enabled the teacher, while transmitting . . . knowledge, to transform . . . pupils into a whole field of knowledge. Whereas the examinations with which an apprenticeship ended in the guild tradition validated an acquired aptitude . . . the examination in the school was a constant exchanger of knowledge; it guaranteed the movement of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil, but it extracted from the pupil a knowledge destined and reserved for the teacher. The school became the place of elaboration of pedagogy. (1984, p. 198)

Mentoring may also include guidance in some aspects of the mentoree's personal life (Manathunga, 2007, p. 219). The mentor might feel twin urges of 'liberty and regulation, and autonomy and restraint' (p. 211). Additional restraints are typically used by supervisors to demonstrate the institutional power and responsibility invested in them. These include constructive interviews about work topics and guidance on work produced.

Autonomy

Mentoring overcomes the problems of inequality of power that flow from the hierarchical aspects of supervision as a pedagogical practice. It is about guidance through the teaching, learning and research environment as an exchange of pedagogical practice. As Manathunga (2007) points out, it is also a powerful form of normalisation and site of governmentality. As such, mentoring practices may seek to deconstruct and defuse issues of power relations inherent in supervision pedagogy. Through sustained guidance, mentorees are able to

transform themselves into independent researchers, with varying pedagogical input from mentors. Autonomous researchers with critical and creative thinking skills are nurtured and matured through a process of observation, imitation and dialogue with the supervisor. This is known as the master–apprentice model of mentoring, and fulfils the transmissive approach to education whereby the student is supplemented with the supervisor’s knowledge.

Mentoring practices

Mentor–mentoree interaction

According to Mallard (2002, pp. 66–67), the mentor–mentoree interaction in academic institutions usually involves:

- discussion of areas of interest
- encouragement to publish and exploration of different possibilities for presentations and publications
- discussion about how to rewrite conference papers into journal articles, identifying appropriate journals, perfecting the craft of submitting abstracts for presentations, encouraging the mentoree to submit work
- sharing relevant articles with the mentoree
- developing study strategies
- providing advice about teaching practices
- providing motivation and empathetic encouragement.

Mentoring is frequently a creative process in which the understanding raised is greater than the sum of its parts. As Holland suggests, mentoring practices may include guided learning techniques such as modelling, coaching, questioning, diagrams and explanations (2009, p. 20).

Although mentoring might take a problem as a starting point, it is a course of ongoing development in which academic tasks, research and life experiences occur side by side. The intention is to increase both the mentoree's and the mentor's competency, as well as their capacity to learn about themselves, colleagues, third parties and their organisations, via a process of continual, incremental improvement. The mentor's role is to embody credibility and suggest courses of action that lead to enhanced research and practice.

Mentoring may involve a step beyond the immediate comfort zone into a zone of proximal development (Fletcher, 2007, p. 6). The mentor-coach and their collaborative learner may enter a relationship of methodological inventiveness and curiosity, in which the outcome to a learning problem is not a forgone

conclusion (Fletcher, 2007, p. 7). Group mentoring might involve a strategy of combining knowledge when several staff are brought together to produce a learning synergy.

While the mentor's role may be to guide mentorees into disciplinary cultural practices and norms, supervisors and mentors also 'bring out' innate abilities and talents (Manathunga, 2007, p. 215). The mentor strives to create an academically active and collegially engaged subject. Mentoring involves moving away from the overt displays of disciplinary power associated with traditional approaches to supervision, in order to develop the mentor's evolving identity as an active researcher.

Aims and outcomes of mentoring

Holland identifies both the promotion of the 'agency' of the learner and 'trust' as significant goals of mentoring practice (2009, p. 23). Mentoring can provide personal and professional friendship. The mentor attempts to guide the novice (who may be inexperienced and academically naive) to scholarly success.

Mentoring often combines academic guidance with training in associated life skills, which results in academically sustainable behaviours, networking and self-belief, with the goal of autonomous subjectivity in a community of objective dialogue. The mentor partners with others to produce research ideas and share advice regarding methodological practices (Mallard, 2002, p. 61). Thus, at least temporarily, the mentor-mentoree relationship aims at providing:

(i) highest-quality fit between education and interests; (ii) balance of career and family; (iii) confidence in abilities; and (iv) scholarly contributions (Mallard, 2002, p. 64).

Outcomes of mentoring may include role clarity, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Mentoring practices, when effective, encompass the structured socialisation of learning. According to Holland (2009, p. 21), these practices may increase competencies in:

- performance
- language (organisational acronyms and neologisms)
- building and maintaining relationships between staff members
- understanding power structures, organisational goals and values.

Mentoring schemes

Mentoring is a dynamic relationship between mentor, mentoree and academia (organisation and subject knowledge), with 'angles of values', skills and understanding, as well as a ceaseless shift between them. As Fletcher observes, mentoring schemes are not imposed on learning contexts, which are a *tabula rasa*, but operate in a situation where mentorees are already experts (2007, p. 3).

Mentoring schemes may be set up to:

- develop analytical and problem-solving skills
- facilitate effective working groups
- encourage young researchers
- share previous and current research practices, methodologies and findings, as well as mature perspectives on discipline-related subjects.

All of these objectives emphasise the importance of collegiality.

There is no definitive formula for nurturing mentorees – literature surveys demonstrate no clear model of what works infallibly in all situations (Mallard, 2002, p. 65). However, mentoring schemes help to provide structure to relationships, which may form spontaneously. The type of mentoring practice may vary according to the skills, needs and identity of the mentor and mentoree. A formal or informal mentoring programme may serve to support and resource underrepresented groups, including women and cultural minorities.

Informal mentoring partnerships develop within or without (or sometimes despite of) a formal programme. Yet these spontaneous formations are aided through discussion of purpose and expectations, and may be complemented by the desire to seek strategic external relationships with professional organisations. Crucially, mentoring is also about identifying and acquiring the skills and ability to produce scholarship (Mallard, 2002, p. 66).

Some studies found that informal mentoring relationships have more positive outcomes than formal relationships that operate with the support of the employing organisation (Blake-Beard, cited in Chiles, 2006, p. 19). However, as Ragins et al. point out, it is unlikely that failed informal relationships would be reported in the research literature, so they are not necessarily more successful, but are more easily terminated when they are proving unsatisfactory for one or more participants (2000, p. 1178). It is certain, however, that informal mentoring

relationships have benefits that resemble formal mentoring programmes, including, for example, decreasing problem behaviours and increasing psychological well-being (McDonald, Erickson, Kirkpatrick Johnson, & Elder, 2007, p. 1330).

Mentoring is aimed at relating to the whole being of the scholar at different stages of their career. A mutual and neutral meeting ground may be preferable to an area of predetermined power relations. Similarly, the establishment of principles, programmes and processes that reflect the interests of people behind a research project (the 'soul of scholarship' (Mallard, 2002, p. 69), as opposed to the objective 'view from nowhere' approach (Nagel, 1986) may be preferable in ensuring that mentorees are 'always/already autonomous scholars at all stages in their candidature' (Manathunga & Goozée, 2007, p. 309).

Socialising in research communities, providing emotional support, and broader development such as promotion, work satisfaction and commitment to organisational quality are all aims that unite relationships between mentors and protégés (Manathunga, 2007, p. 207). However, according to Ragins and Cotton (2000), simple presence does not automatically lead to quality outcomes, which depend, rather, on the quality of the mentoring relationship forged. It may be better to approach such relationships, at least initially, with no preconceived ideas about the expected outcomes (Ragins & Cotton, 2000).

As such, mentoring alliances explore roles to empower, improve relationships, assert reliability, and forge trust and an ability to communicate, within an ethos of being willing to learn (Erdem & Ozen, 2003, p. 570). For Dewey, mentoring involves 'experiential growth' in which problem solving and enquiry-oriented pedagogies address the social development of the learner and the quality of the total experience (Dewey, cited in Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 451). Such experience may include knowledge imparted through vicarious learning, and daily dilemmas serving as an acting ground upon which to explore professional development (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 451).

Learning to teach may be a contextualised local activity in mentoring, as mentoring offers instructional tools to help novices connect theory to practice and develop problem-solving skills (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 452). The mentoring 'time and space' are shaped by multiple dilemmas, which reflect the complexity of the classroom or learning experience and involve the context-bound knowledge of specific scenes and situations in which problems are resolved (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 452). The mentor may be seen as a juggler, whose experience is informed by educative 'identity kits'. These kits function as the mentor is attempting to find consistent values where there appear to be none, or to reconcile conflicting resources in problem solving (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 461).

Mentorees may experience:

- vulnerability in their work or in dealing with contradictory demands from different clients
- accountability issues
- problems of practice in the educational system
- vulnerability in relation to their professional identity (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 461).

The mentoring relationship will help to resolve these issues. Mentoring may also facilitate understanding of cultural issues, make hitherto private concerns public, and help to resolve personal issues, which may have an impact on learning experiences or professional teaching practices. Mentoring may be seen as the 'second language of teaching' (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 464), involving both a language of action and a language of reflection. Otherwise silenced voices may be heard in teaching practices, which is an acknowledgement that the learning environment is shaped by extrinsic factors, including social, organisational, and political contexts. Thus Holland refers to 'peripheral participation', whereby the learner operates at the edges of a community of practice and becomes a fully participating member after mentoring (2009, p. 7).

Sociocultural characteristics of mentoring

Mentoring takes part in a social and moral environment (Wight, 2009, p. 95). When conceived of as both a part of a network of organisational relationships and an immersion in subject-related practices, it stimulates moral imagination and learning (Wight, 2009, p. 98). As Wight observes, mentoring is involved with the construction of meaning and enforcement, or pro-social behaviours, which augment cultural institutions, such as family, religion, customs and law (2009, p. 102). Mentoring is thus a part of human capital. It is a useful practice that enhances and sustains the educative abilities of members of an academic society, and contributes to the stock of personal networks that an individual acquires through social relations and subject orientation (Putnam, 2000).

Wight further points out that mentoring reinforces behaviours that focus on others. The cues for behaviour are grounded in adaptations for survival and procreation, which may be mutually co-adaptive (2009, p. 105). Amiable and sociable relations matter to productivity and business. Feelings are links in an

organisation – they are both unifying, and trust and freedom serving (Wight, 2009, p. 108). Good mentoring involves intellectual excitement, positive interpersonal support, rapport, effective motivation, a commitment to learn, friendliness, approachability and respectful understanding (Jones, 2008, p. 95). Mentoring should be ‘system-centric’, involving a structured relationship with target learning outcomes (Jones, 2008, p. 96). This involves making the student confident, capable in the classroom and happier, and getting them to perform at a higher level. The correlated effects are increasing retention, enhancing dialogue and interchange between faculty members, and minimising stressful work situations (Jones, 2008, p. 98).

Expectations among mentors and mentorees may occur on many different levels, from concrete and explicit, to implicit, subconscious ones (St Claire-Ostwald, 2007, p. 46). Mentoring crucially enhances socialisation – that is, how an individual perceives and relates to culture. Components of ‘cultural baggage’ – how educators and learners synthesise and negotiate identity within a myriad of cultural groupings to which they are exposed on a daily basis, as well as the problems that prevent them from doing so – are all part of self-reflexive mentoring practice.

Wright, Titus and Cornelison (2008, p. 325) note two main factors that contribute to mentoring misconduct or deficient mentoring at the end point of the mentoring process. These are mentors who have not been active in collaboration, and co-authors who have not reviewed source data on which publications are based. Similarly, Holland notes that mentoring relationships have the potential for manipulation, bullying, sabotage, betrayal or harassment, if these factors are not guarded against or in some cases vigilantly surveyed (2009, p. 22).

Philosophy and pedagogy

Metaphors and experience

As Fletcher suggests, there is a 'lack of sufficient insight' into how mentoring and coaching relationships develop and are sustained (2007, p. 7). Mentoring is concerned with the formation of identity through the exchange of language, metaphors and experience. This realisation of 'possible selves' occurs in a dialogic context (Fletcher, 2007, p. 8). Thus the learning experience needs to be 'authenticated', rather than imposed (Jones, 2008, p. 96).

Metaphors shape and construct identity and the experience of others. At the same time they emphasise knowledge construction and mentor and mentoree empowerment. They also enhance the generative possibilities of language through analysis, synthesis and critical reflection (Storrs et al., 2008, p. 176). Metaphors and similes are multi-modal – they can identify or shape ideas between the self and others in multivalent ways. Metaphors shape subject orientation, as people construct meaning through interactions (discursive exchanges). The use of metaphors also helps to align the expectations of mentors and mentorees.

As Lakoff and Johnson suggest, conceptual metaphor theory holds that metaphors unlock meaning beyond conscious articulation (1980, p. 256). Through the use of metaphor definition may be given to cultural schemas, underlying principles, values and assumptions. However, although metaphors may unlock receptivity to ideas, metaphors do not do all the work. Mentoring in the metaphor mode is about clearing a pathway through the study environment via metaphor and discursive practice to enhance career goals and provide dialogue that facilitates learning.

A garden is commonly used as a metaphorical expression of a mentoring relationship. Thus the mentoring relationship is conceived of as being a growth space in which the mentors and mentorees can synchronise expectations, share new experiences, gain support and resources, and seek guidance on academic and career decisions. It is also a space for realising equity and restoring work/life balance by producing coherent stories that facilitate closing the knowledge gap and enhance learning practices and outcomes.

Mentoring reflects constructed realities and has a potential to shape new realities through reflection and enquiry (Mullen, Greenlee, & Bruner, 2005). The metaphor of partnership is advocated by Morrison (2003) to improve teaching and learning, while MacKinnon (2004) suggests a fiduciary metaphor for academic supervisors. Storrs uses the metaphor of the interdependency of nature in which each plant stimulates growth within an ecosystem of distributed learning and affects a fiduciary trust with a protégé in decision making (2008, p. 181).

While mentoring relationships may be constrained by institutional paradigms, they may also be generative. Identities as learners, teachers and researchers are evolving and complex. As Csikszentmihalyi (1997) suggests, identity can be conceived using the metaphor of the snowflake, rather than seeing identity as a single unitary self. Perhaps cultural identity should be viewed as multifaceted, as people have a number of selves or identities, depending on context and setting (St Claire-Ostwald, 2007, p. 46). Similarly, Holland suggests that 'distributed learning' within communities of practice is more common than long-term mentoring by a single individual. Mentorees who have multiple sources of support become more effectively acculturated and perform better than those who have only one source or no source of support (2009, p. 17).

Storrs et al. suggest that due to the generative and expansive capabilities of language use, metaphors need to be employed in specific ways to align expectations and realities between mentors and protégés through shared reflections that aid the negotiation of expectations and organise relationships in ways that are aligned with organisational and individual missions, goals and assumptions about practices (2008, p. 175).

Storrs et al. also note that the power relationship tends to favour the mentors because of their senior status and advanced knowledge (2008, p. 178). One survey found that 56% of mentorees and 35% of mentors described their relationship through a 'transmission' metaphor, in which mentors are custodians of academic and professional expertise. Surprisingly, the majority of mentors – 65% – used interdependent metaphors to describe their experiences, compared with 44% of mentorees (Storrs et al., 2008, p. 178).

Social relations

Intentionality and refinement of social relations are exemplified by the practice of the Johari window devised by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (see Fig. 2) (Luft, 1984, p. 60). Squares represent the spaces of knowledge and exchange in interpersonal communication: things that one knows but the other is blind to ('façade'); things that are known and shared ('arena'); things that one does not know about oneself but the other knows and may share ('blind spot'); and things that neither knows and that are not shared ('unknown').

Known to self	Not known to self	Mentors and mentorees
Arena	Blind spot	Known to others
Façade	Unknown	Not known to others

Fig. 2 The Johari window applied to the mentoring context. This indicates the various learning orientations between mentor and mentoree in the workplace.

As Fletcher (2007, p. 8) points out, the relations between the squares of the Johari window can explain how effectively mentors enable mentorees to develop towards their projected possible selves. Within the learning environment the Johari window is a measure of the cognitive relations of distributed learning. These relations can account for cultural differences, as well as register the part played by body language and the use of silence and language.

Most of mentoring activity occurs in the 'arena' of the Johari window. Through dialogue the mentor and the mentoree may negotiate the blind spot, unknown and façade squares, until they meet in the arena square. However, all mentoring involves the 'blind spot' and 'unknown' quadrants of the Johari window, because it involves cognitive activities that are additional to the practical performance of research and teaching, and that are tacitly, not formally, acknowledged within it.

Pedagogy

As Manathunga points out, the philosophy and rationale behind mentoring is that the mentor is more experienced and knows more about research. They can share their knowledge with the mentoree and help them develop disciplinary-based and other self-regulatory behaviours (2007, p. 210). Yet the mentoring relationship is not free from shifts in power dynamics (these may need to be constantly negotiated) and may sometimes be expressed as a struggle for control. Such shifts may be expressed as a lack of comfortable language about the mentor or mentoree, which reflects ambivalences and unresolved tensions (Manathunga, 2007, p. 210).

Lucas emphasises that a function of mentoring is the learning and enforcement of social and moral norms in the educational environment (1988, p. 38). These norms may cover everything from the ordinary (how to dress and speak) to the profound (cooperation, punishing transgressions). Mentoring also takes part within an economic exchange, which Hayek (1979) and Smith (2007) view as being associated with unconsciously learned and enforced rules.

The mentor will not only be concerned with imparting knowledge of convention to the mentoree, but also with applying institutional knowledge to the mentoree's own circumstances and situation. The aim of learning situational norms is enhanced productivity. Intuition and instinct may play a role in the mentoree's development, along with imagination, emotions and rational reflection, which comprise the experiential 'building blocks' of human interaction and the formation of moral conscience (Wight, 2009, p. 97).

Cultural differences

A debate continues as to whether cultural differences may be insurmountable in a supervisory context. The mentoring relationship helps to recognise, explore and diffuse the tensions that may arise from such differences.

Cultural differences are most apparent when there is a focus on socialising the mentoree within a dominant research culture that may be different from their source culture. Subjectivities may be as relevant as methodological differences. The mentor must be mindful of how cross-cultural differences of the mentoree may affect daily working practices (St Claire-Ostwald, 2007, p. 45). Cross-cultural themes may emerge that seem paradoxical – for example, the practical limits placed on time and social norms by religious differences.

However, social anthropological thinking holds that humans are born with the same physical characteristics despite exposure to different climates, foods, languages, religious beliefs, and family and kinship structures, which may constitute different emotional registers. Cultural awareness in the mentor-mentoree relationship is not only about recognising cultural differences, but also valuing them (St Claire-Ostwald, 2007, p. 47). The cultural parameters of the mentoring relationship may be expressed along a continuum of universalism versus particularism, and individualism versus communitarianism (St Claire-Ostwald, 2007, p. 49).

Productivity and 'soul'

Productivity is a measure of value, usually in a tangible form. 'Soul' is also a descriptor of value, related to the disembodied qualities of human experience. Soul is less tangible, because it is less clearly defined, yet it is understood as a qualitative measurement for well-being. In assessing scholarship, considering the result is one way to determine a faculty member's value. In relationships such as mentoring, however, it may not be the only way. In the continuum between instrumentalism and experientialism, the mentoring relationship results in more than just increased scholarly productivity. Mentoring also focuses on the value of research as residing in the individual – that is, on the process of nurturing as well as the product. It recognises a preference for 'balance, community, understanding, and acceptance' (Mallard, 2002, p. 59), where personal needs are considered and may be integrated within professional development needs.

While an academic career may be seen as a process of establishment, advancement, maturation and withdrawal, each stage may come with a set of different priorities. Mentoring most often (but not exclusively) occurs at the establishment and advancement stages. Mallard (2002) identifies peer relationships as important during advancement, as faculty members develop their own teaching and research performance goals. Mentoring may enable more efficient use of time (by removing unnecessary ambiguity, and providing motivational purpose and practical guidance). Important factors include setting clear goals, defining expectations, communicating well, and sharing values in a nurturing relationship and a climate of trust (Melrose, 2006, pp. 59–60).

Competition and collaboration

A problem that may arise for faculty members is a sense of disconnection or division that follows from a competitive race for money, promotion, or tenure. However, rather than being a solitary activity, good scholarship brings people together and reinforces research and teaching (Mallard, 2002, p. 65). Mentoring enhances communication, shared values and socialisation. It can promote dialogue and collaboration. It can help establish and foster a research culture that is characterised by a sense of belonging to a productive community. As such, diversity rather than dissention may be valued; complicity rather than contradiction; scholarly inquisition rather than doubt or disparagement (Mallard, 2002, p. 67). Productive staff members find time to network. Encouragement takes little time, is 'free', and at the same time increases the energy of those being encouraged.

Mallard also advises that when a staff member does not have enough time for research, they should write about what they do (2002, p. 67). Defining one's role and duties may clarify ambiguity in a research context. For example, hearing about the reasons for a lack of time and the research implications of teaching practices establishes interplay between current and extended roles. Collaboration may also overcome any lack of time / confidence barriers between the mentoring and teaching roles through task sharing.

A tension exists in that teachers are advised to keep a professional distance from students, which may conflict with the belief that a mentor should be a friend or confidant (Melrose, 2006, p. 59). Manathunga and Goozée point to the situation in which the role of the supervisor problematically positions them as a 'colonial operator' in relation to colleagues (2007, p. 310). Borrowing from the 'post-colonial' paradigm, this may not necessarily be a source of discomfort for the mentoree, but may add to the cultural complexity of the relationship.

Accountability and rules

Orland-Barak has pointed to concerns over issues of accountability and role boundaries in the mentoring process as the 'language of practice' (2002, p. 451). Given that mentoring is a semi-formal relationship, establishing boundaries that do not conflict with ethical or legal norms is important. Mentoring is seen as a language of connection to a socio-professional system of practice-based (representational) and functional (presentational) teaching and research. Thus conceived, the mentoring relationship aims to provide reflective improvement, which follows from learning from experience (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 456).

Wight argues that the mentor–mentoree relationship should distinguish between general rules (established by ‘habitual reflection’, or by association with the sentiments of others) and ethical rules as embedded in cultural or religious beliefs. Thus the mentor and mentoree may engage in critical reflection to assess the positive value of unconscious instincts, thoughts and experiences, while being cognisant that people have a capacity for individual thoughts and behaviours that defy rules and norms (Wight, 2009, p. 100). Wight also points out that moral laws are not absolutes – they are co-created within the educational environment and are capable of either restricting or liberating, resulting in positive or detrimental effects. Although there are accepted pedagogical constants, educational practitioners, including mentors and mentorees, must be fundamentally conscious of how moral judgements are embedded in cultural, political and economic institutions. They must consequently be capable of modifying behaviours to suit desired outcomes, provided these fall within acceptable parameters. Self-reflexive critical practices promoted by mentors are essential for maintaining the equilibrium of the learning environment.

Altruism

Wight observes that altruism, or selfless acts of generosity or positive disposition to another, may play a role in mentoring practices. He states that ‘. . . humans are postulated to have a natural predisposition to cooperate and trust others, a tendency the authors call “strong reciprocity”’ (2009, p. 103). Although altruism may be the exception rather than the rule, it is rational when reciprocity is expected.

In addition to maintaining efficient and effective group functioning, cooperation often produces better outcomes than competition/defection. As Lucas suggests, learning often takes place in unstructured and spontaneous social interactions that create positive spillovers into knowledge (1988, p. 38). Sawyer also notes that innovation frequently stems from collaboration, rather than individual effort (2007, p. 274). Trust, affection, sympathy and empathy are social lubricants, and novelty is often produced from the spontaneity of collaboration.

Language, of course, is fundamentally two-way (or more). It produces insight through communicative interaction, as well as critical reflection. As Wight observes, language has a capacity to retrieve knowledge that is embedded or not consciously organised (2009, p. 107). Natural attachments involving shared esteem and approbation may develop within the mentoring relationship. These supplement pedagogical engagements (Wight, 2009, p. 109).

Roberston (1999) defines two terms for the development of the role of the teacher. They may develop aliocentric (learner-centred) or systemocentric (teacher-learner-centred) teaching methods. Jones stresses the importance of moving the focus away from the teacher and on to the learner in a reciprocal arrangement of content sharing and skill building (2008, p. 96).

Mentorees: the trigonometric balance

For mentorees, mentoring is frequently a balance between objectivity, disciplinary practice or research performance, and personal issues. If the mentoree is ambivalent about the boundaries between supervision and friendship, this may have a negative impact on the working relationship (Manathunga, 2007, p. 218). Rebuilding confidence may be a matter of establishing an asymmetry of dependent trust within the pedagogy of normalisation. Thus mentoring is one mechanism that may enable the social use and distribution of knowledge in the workplace to be regulated, as well as a control on the positive and negative impacts of that regulation (Holland, 2009, p. 8).

A formula borrowed from trigonometry may help the mentoree identify which area of study and life skills they should focus on. The model works by allowing adjustments to be made in the focus of the study. A simple calculation of the mentoree's main orientation at any given moment of the relationship will give an indication in degrees of the course of direction required if the practice is unbalanced. Following Holland's notion of regulation, the system of trigonometric balance shown in Fig. 3 may function as a 'rule of thumb' to circumvent actual or potential issues through simplifying strategies.

Mentoree work/life objectivity foci

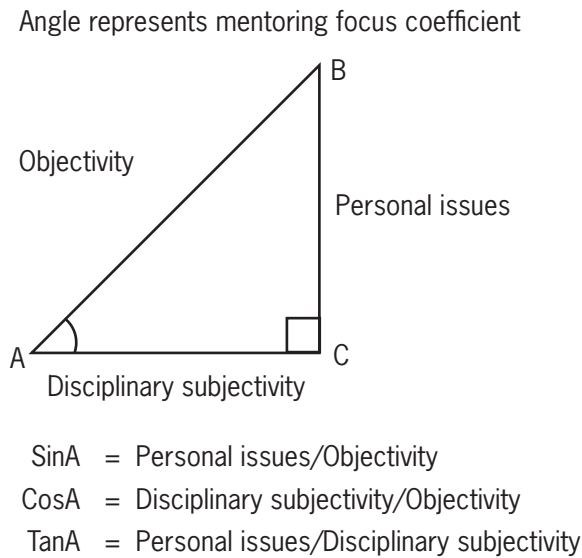


Fig. 3 The rule of thumb borrowed from trigonometry helps to redistribute the stressors of the main components of the mentor–mentoree relationship

The mentoree assigns a numerical value on a scale of 1–10 for each of the sides of the triangle. The three sides of the right-angled triangle represent the tripartite balance of central issues in post-graduate supervision (objectivity, personal issues, and disciplinary subjectivity). At any one time, any two issues may seem to dominate. A calculation provides the course of adjustment of focus required. For example, John is frustrated by the need to balance personal issues and objectivity in his approach to his studies. He assigns a value of 7 for his concern with objectivity and a value of 5 for his concern with personal issues. He can quickly calculate the degrees of adjustment of focus required by: $\sin A = 7/5$. Thus $\sin A = 45^\circ$. Disciplinary subjectivity is assigned the corresponding value of 4.9. John knows that to restore the balance in his learning path he must adjust the course of his focus in his studies to place as much attention on ‘disciplinary subjectivity’ as he is currently placing on objectivity. This simple mechanism for readjustment functions to realign John’s learning values with his desired focus, restoring the balance in his study.

Field parameters and characteristics

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of mentoring is shown to be different in different programmes and at different measurement points in the value chain. As no two mentoring schemes are alike, uniformity of results cannot be expected. However, of those significant measurements made, all showed positive gains among the measured cohorts.

Melrose (2006, p. 58) recounts the study by Taylor of the outputs of mentoree nurses in academia. Out of a population of 285, 56%, while they considered themselves to have been mentored, had not collaborated in research, 71.2% had not coauthored a paper and 74.27% had not presented a paper with their mentor. The success rate for the reported scheme for any of these important research activities was thus only 25%. A more telling result may have been determined by measuring the outcomes of the mentored group versus those of a non-mentored group. As such, rather than a measure of the success or otherwise of a specific mentoring scheme, the results of this study point to three key performance indicators for mentoring in advanced (not undergraduate) programmes of study. These are: research outputs, research collaboration, and transition through qualifications. Those who did not achieve may nevertheless have received value, either from other stages in the mentoring programmes, or tangential benefits to completion of their study programmes. Collaborative research outputs are the exception in many academic enterprises, not necessarily the rule of student outcomes in a study programme.

Benioff's study had a different emphasis, focusing on youth aged 15 to 18 who had committed one criminal offence. His findings indicated that after 2 years, 73% of mentorees had enrolled in college for further training or employment, and of the original cohort 61% had not reoffended (Benioff, cited in Dawes & Dawes, 2005, p. 45).

Fagenson, Marks and Amendola (1997), Ragins and Cotton (2000), Green and Bauer (1995), and Richard and Nemanick (2000) have shown that there are enhanced opportunities for career advancement and mobility, higher incomes, and improved socialisation and commitment to jobs for mentorees. Career advancement is a stronger motivation than psychosocial support as a person's mentoring career lengthens (Erdem & Ozen, 2003, p. 569).

A study conducted in the School of Information Management at Victoria University of Wellington on an informal mentoring pilot revealed that among mentors 45% became involved in the scheme for 'professional reasons' and 27% for the purpose of networking. Student motivation figures were 26% for professional career advice, 21% for academic assistance, and 14% for professional networking (McIntyre, Mendez, & Wellington, 2007, p. 6).

Relationships, gender and identity

Dawes & Dawes (2005, p. 46) reported that mentoring increased positive attitudes to work and family, enabled better relationships with peers, and raised mentorees capacity' to maintain relationships. Mentoring also helps with decision-making capabilities and increases self-esteem (Dawes & Dawes, 2005, p. 47). Melrose found that even in learning environments of limited resources where long-term mentorships were not available, women valued inclusion in projects over shorter periods and from multiple sources (2006, p. 59). Erdem and Ozen (2003, p. 571) found that although protégés' responses to mentoring are generally positive, scores related more to career advancement than psychological support.

Gender does not cause any difference in mentors' or mentorees' perceptions of the efficacy of mentoring practices (Erdem & Ozen, 2003, p. 572). The nature of academic positions does not affect the mentoring relationship either (Erdem & Ozen, 2003, p. 572). However, differences in motivation that relate to the length of mentoring have been observed. Short periods of mentorship bring about inclusion in an occupational network (Erdem & Ozen, 2003, p. 572), while longer periods of mentorship generate positive psychosocial support. The quality of the relationship as it functions through time and the depth of the relationship are related to the outcomes – the communication dimension is strong in shorter-term groups, but effective partnership does not develop over shorter periods (Erdem & Ozen, 2003, p. 573). In longer-term relationships, however, mentors and mentorees form better memories of formal and informal interactions.

Bogat and Liang suggest that there is little known about the variable effectiveness of mentoring between different genders (cited in McDonald et al., 2007, p. 1332). They suggest that prior research points to mentoring relationships for women contributing to psychosocial functions, and for men to instrumental functions, and furthermore that gender is unrelated to mentoring effectiveness. Research on distress in mentoring shows no gender differences in mentoring effectiveness (Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Notaro, 2002).

Storrs et al. found that mentorees held more traditional hierarchical mentoring ideals at the beginning of a programme and that mentoring ideals frequently differed from actual experiences (2008, p. 175). Thus, as Holland observes, mentoring is not just about factual information, but engagement and identification with others and the ways other people do things in the learning environment (2009, p. 7).

Barriers encountered during mentoring may reflect wider social issues. For example, Storrs et al. found that it is easier to establish an identity based on nationality, as opposed to an identity based on belonging to a cultural, professional, political, economic, or social grouping (2008, p. 49). However, the depth and duration of the mentoring relationship may overcome these perceived barriers. Thus, as Falk suggests, mentoring is about a 'reconfiguration of existing aspects of personal identity, knowledge and skills' (2006, p. 22).

Economy and equity

According to Wright et al., neoclassical economists explain informal learning as rational behaviour that is motivated by self-interest (2008, p. 95). Mentoring is self-reinforcing and 'other-reinforcing' for both mentor and mentoree, and contributes to a sustainable collegial environment. In this way social interaction is seen as 'spillover' or productivity enhancing. This process of productivity enhancement is dependent on flexible boundaries of communication that are regulated rather than transgressed.

Mentoring may thus be inspired not only by rational calculation, but also by group selection in which social drives may appear in the early stages without conscious decision making. As David Sloan Wilson observes, selfish individuals may outcompete altruists; however, internally altruistic groups may outperform selfish groups, thus confirming a multi-level selection theory (2007, p. 328). Sociability is a constant desirable human experience that provides a lubricant to group functioning involving both self-interest and 'other-regarding' benevolence. Thus mentoring serves to mediate between collegial and instrumental models. According to Wight (2009), mentoring can either be explained by altruistic enquiry and benevolence, or it can be seen as satisfying an agent's preference for the utility of others. According to Manathunga (2007), it can be seen as an enhancement of neoliberal ideology in providing a service to the organisation.

Collaboration may be seen as complex in higher education because of the tradition of individualism. Mentoring thus depends on a careful communication of details and directions and common learning pathways, in which decision making can be shared. Relationship equity may be shared or at least ameliorated by critical reflection on collaborative practice.

However, expectations and realities are rarely perfectly met. Mentorees are often expecting more formal hierarchical relationships and less interdependence, although they are surprised when a measure of interdependence and collaborative learning is experienced (Storrs et al., 2008, p. 182). Thus the gap between expectations and realities needs exploring. One possible solution is to establish a framework of mentoring dyads that can be shared to align expectations and smooth variances in status and power.

Transitions to employment

Mentoring is positively related to the likelihood of full-time employment, particularly when the mentoring relationship involves both selection and causation processes (McDonald et al., 2007, p. 1328). McDonald et al. suggest that mentoring enables the mentoree to become an effective staff member. Mentorees report better psychological well-being, more rewarding relationships and academic success, and fewer problems than peers (2007, p. 1329). The acquisition and maintenance of stable employment are important markers of the transition to effective longer-term working relationships. Understanding the factors that shape this transition, as well as the desires and interests of mentorees, is likely to enable successful career pathways (McDonald et al., 2007, p. 1329). McDonald et al. found that mentoring is positively related to the successful transition to young adult employment, with benefits from informal mentoring schemes resembling those of formal programmes (2007, p. 1330).

The timing of the mentoring is significant – the impact of a particular event is dependent on the life stage at which it is experienced. For example, mentoring is more important at 16–23 years of age than in early childhood. Regardless of whether or not mentoring is self-selected, it exposes people to new relationships with co-workers and employees, and imparts the competencies, skills and confidence necessary for work. The selection process is relevant – it is important that there is a sympathetic and positively effective bond. Mentoring helps attach people to work opportunities and the labour market through direct intervention

as well as behavioural modelling. For both the mentoree and mentor there is an enhanced sense of achievement derived from a sense of the self matching expectations. These improvements in self-esteem and the acquisition of work skills are the indirect effects of mentoring. The extended social networks offered by mentoring can enhance opportunities for stable employment, bridging the gap between current and desired positions. Although a close mentoring relationship is important, weak ties are more suited to the bridging function, as they may provide greater access to useful information (Granovetter, as cited in McDonald et al., 2007, p. 1332). The more connections proliferate, the more exposure there is to employment opportunities and positive work examples providing guidance, advice, and encouragement.

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