

**THE EXPERIENCES OF MENTORS IMPLEMENTING
A MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME AT A HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

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**The experiences of mentors implementing a mentorship programme at a
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This dissertation is dedicated to...

All the people I worked with on the mentorship programme, the supervisors, the coordinators, the mentors and the mentees. It is through your inspiration that this dissertation was birthed. May your dedication and commitment to helping others remain with you. Interacting with you has always encouraged me to want to do more, and you have made my mentorship experience a fulfilling journey. I love you all.

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I Aubrey Tebogo Tsebe (student number 28263163) declare that:

**The experiences of mentors implementing a mentorship programme at a
higher education institution**

is my own work and that all references appear in the list of references.

AT TSEBE

Date

SUMMARY

This study represents a shift in focus with regard to studies related to mentorship. It endeavours to go beyond documenting the prevalence of mentorship to understanding the experiences of mentors and factors that encourage participation in mentorship programmes.

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the experiences of mentors during the implementation of a mentorship programme at a Higher Education Institution (HEI). The purpose of this study, has guided the following two questions for the current study:

1. How do mentors experience the implementation of a mentorship programme?
2. How can the understanding of such experiences inform theory on mentorship programmes in Higher Education Institutions?

I made use of a case study research design. Four participants were purposively selected for this study based on their potential to provide data relevant for the study as they were part of the recently ended mentorship programme. Data was collected over a period of a week by means of semi-structured interviews and reflections. In this study I made use of qualitative approach, and a thematic method of analysis was used for identifying, analysing and reporting themes.

The results of the study indicated the following results:

- Mentors had a general definition of their mentorship experiences as personal life event(s).
- When mentorship was viewed as a personal life event, it was found to have an emotional aspect which creates a platform for learning and development.
- Positive experiences, as mentioned by participants in this study, included an opportunity for personal growth and development, how mentors and mentees

benefited from being part of the mentorship programme, and positive relationships between mentors and their mentees.

- Negative experiences referred to by participants included difficulties of correspondence between mentors and mentees, lack of mentee attendance at mentorship meetings, gender and racial issues and mentors' uncertainties about what to do in the programme and feeling a lack of guidance.
- Decisions regarding exclusion and inclusion criteria of mentees into the programme, support from mentorship supervisors and finding mentors who demonstrate good qualities were identified as challenges in mentorship implementation.

Key Concepts

- Experiences
- Implementation
- Mentorship programme



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BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout my academic career, I have dedicated much time to mentorship programmes, in which I have been a mentor. It has been intriguing to note that the mentorship programmes, in the different institutions that I have been part of, have been successful despite having made use of different approaches in the implementation of their programmes. It appears that institutions adapt implementation processes to suit their contextual needs (Filella, Lara, Soldevila, Nadal, Ribes, Agull & Carrillo, 2008). This suggests that institutions are aware of, and acknowledge, the uniqueness of their students and their social context (Jama, Mapasela & Beylefield, 2008). Therefore, I concur with Terblanche (2007) who states that mentorship differs depending on the social context where it is implemented.

However, having been involved in some mentorship programmes within academic institutions, I was intrigued that the implementation of these mentorship programmes appeared not to have been founded on South African scientific literature and studies. Even if there had been some available literature, the probability was high that they were based on international studies due to dearth of mentorship literature within South African context (Enrich, Hansford & Tennets, 2004).

As social context has been indicated as a critical aspect of implementing mentorship programmes (Jama et al., 2008); such dependence on international studies to implement programmes within South African context may raise concerns about contextual sensitivity and applicability. Even though an account might be provided for such a concern, the question arises whether the same programmes, implemented based on literature from South African studies, would have achieved the same results? Does a positive answer then assume a relationship between international studies as compared to the ones from South African context? It is, therefore, my intention that the findings of this study will shed some light on the above questions.

Even though the definition of mentorship might be debated (Jones, Walters & Akehurst, 2001); the relationship between people and their context as a fixed and key aspect of mentorship cannot be argued (Jama et al., 2008). Therefore, it is suggested that individuals involved in mentorship are more important than mentorship as a concept, as they are the ones who reflect the consequences of the mentorship programme (Trickett & Moss, 1974).

In order to try understanding the concerns above, I endeavour in this chapter to first look at the nature of the current study, by discussing the rationale behind this study, and the purpose it aims to achieve. I subsequently present the research questions based on the indicated concerns and the suggested literature gap. This is followed by an overview of the full research report looking specifically at the theoretical framework, the planned methodological approach, key concepts and ethical consideration of the study. I conclude the chapter by presenting an outline of all the chapters in this study.

1.2 RATIONALE

In my inquiry, I have noticed that most literature on mentorship yields studies from abroad and not much scientific work has been written on the topic within the South African context (Enrich et al., 2004). With the prevalence of mentorship programmes conducted locally, this limitation of literature on mentorship is very alarming. Even though the existing literature presents general perspective of mentorship, its implementation seems to be contextually based on the needs of the stakeholders (Filella et al., 2008). Therefore, it is essential for contextual factors such as the institutional needs or rationale and the type of mentor-mentee relationship to be taken into consideration when engaging in a study about mentorship.

McDonald, Erickson, Johnson and Elder's (2007) study has been sensitive to one of the above contextual factors by taking into consideration the relationship dynamics occurring in mentorships. However, this study was focused mainly on the mentor-mentee relationship, and the perspective on how mentorship programme might assist with the student's transition to full time employment. This study seems to be

more oriented towards work, rather than focusing on mentorship as a support structure for students within academic institutions. Nevertheless, according to my knowledge, there is limited literature that captures the experiences of the mentors in a mentorship programme, especially during the implementation process. Therefore, it is my personal interest in mentorship, and familiarity with the limitations experienced within such programmes, that have propelled me to engage in this study.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study is to describe and understand the experiences of mentors during the implementation of a mentorship programme at a Higher Education Institution (HEI). The research is scientifically important as it aims to provide a platform for mentors to share their experiences, thereby contributing to current theory on mentorship, and subsequently informing practice. In addition, the current study has a broad meaning for scholarship to assist those who might also be planning, or intending to implement, similar programme.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study, has guided the following two questions for the current study:

1. How do mentors experience the implementation of a mentorship programme?
2. How can the understanding of such experiences inform theory on mentorship programmes in Higher Education Institutions?

1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.5.1 EXPERIENCES

Experiences could be seen as the skills or knowledge that a person has due to a period of time they have engaged in doing something (Driscoll, Parkers, Tilley-

Lubbs, Brill & Bannister, 2008; Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Riley, 2009). These studies also emphasise that experiences are either positive or negative, as described by the participants. In their study on the subjective experiences of depressed mood amongst medical students, Niekerk, Viljoen, Hbeiter and Scribante (2008) measured such experiences using constructs such as the students' perception, wishes, hopes and subjective views of satisfaction. These constructs were taken into consideration in the current study. As they form an integral part in concept conceptualisation of the word experience. In this study, an experience is defined as "knowledge and skill that you have or one gains through doing something for a period of time" (Hornby, 2005, p. 513).

In the current study I have chosen to focus on the whole range of possible experiences, namely the negative and positive experiences, that mentors could gain through their engagement in a mentorship programme. Therefore, I concur with Scott (1998) in conceptualising experiences as a conscious process associated with recollection of mentorship events as influenced.

1.5.2 IMPLEMENTATION

I view implementation as a process of executing the mentorship plan to reach the objectives of the programme. It involves the process of taking into consideration, and prioritising, aspects of the programme most critical for tracking and reporting in order to make adjustment where necessary (Logic Model Development Guide, 2004).

1.5.3 MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

Allen (2002, as cited in Sangole, 2006, p. 7) provides a simplified definition of mentorship as "a reciprocal relationship of both mentor and protégé". For the purposes of this paper, I define mentorship as conceptualised from the current mentorship programme as a process that includes a relationship between an experienced person and less experienced person, engaged for the purpose of facilitating growth in their area of focus or interest. To prevent confusion, it is important to note that the term 'mentorship' and 'mentorship programme' have been used interchangeably.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.6.1 ECOLOGICAL THEORY

In this study, I made use of the Ecological Theory as my theoretical framework. In application of this theory, I have drawn on the work of Trickett (1978) who discussed, among other things, the understanding of human experiences within larger social contexts. This theory is, therefore, used as an interpretive framework for this study, highlighting the interdependence of relationships between the different levels of the system. I believe that focusing on the different systems as a whole fits well with the relational aspects of the mentorship programme. In this study I apply the Ecological Theory as a lens through which to view literature on mentorship holistically, as well as its interdependent relationship with other parts of the system. That is, each level provides a different perspective in which mentorship experiences might be understood and analysed.

1.7 RESEARCH PARADIGM

An interpretivist approach was followed in an attempt to understand mentors' experiences of the implementation of a mentorship programme at a Higher Education Institution. A support service, such as a mentorship programme, takes place within a social context, and therefore, the reality of mentors' experiences is highly dependent on their subjective views as received by the researcher (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of mentors, with the intention of gaining a deeper understanding of what it means to implement a mentorship programme at a HEI, and such an understanding can inform mentorship theory? Therefore, I found it most suitable to work from a qualitative research approach.

Qualitative research focuses on acquiring meaning and understanding of a phenomenon. In this approach, information is gathered through words, films, photos and so forth, to make analyses and interpretations, and “... the researchers are interested in ways people make sense out of their lives, in other words, qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called ‘participant perspectives’” (Slavin, 2004, p. 124). Therefore, this approach is most suitable for my study, and holds the promise of helping me to best answer my research questions.

1.8.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.8.2.1 Case Study

A case study provides a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, and acknowledges the impact of the context on the cause and effect of a situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008). The focus is on a bounded system, and “the emphasis is on arriving at a complete description and understanding of the constructs being studied, despite the small numbers of persons involved” (Struwig & Stead, 2001, p. 8). Therefore, looking at mentorship programme as a bounded system, and focusing only on mentors, a case study seems to be the most viable design to answer my research inquiry.

1.8.2.2 Sampling

The current study makes use of a non-probability sampling method of purposive sampling. In purposive sampling participants are selected based on their best ability to help the researcher understand the problem and answer the research question (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, the criterion for inclusion within the sample for this study was that the participants be people who served as mentors in the mentorship programme. This means, at the time of this study, mentors were no longer in mentorship positions as the mentorship was no longer running. This criterion does not include mentees or mentorship coordinators, rather, only those who served in the role of mentors.

1.8.2.3 Data Collection

a) Semi-structured interviews

For this particular study, semi-structured interviews were employed in order to gather information. I decided that a semi-structured interview would afford me the best opportunity for personal and intimate engagements in which “open, direct, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p.317), whilst still being able to maintain some measure of control over the interview through preset questions (Melia, 2000; Whiting, 2008 citing Sorrell & Redmond, 1995). With semi-structured interviews, the interviewer still has a clear list of issues to be addressed, and questions to be answered (Denscombe, 2004). I, however, concur with Vithal and Jansen (2001) who state that any question formulated and posed to participants should be done in a broad and general manner so as to avoid the manipulation and subsequent unnatural quality of responses.

b) Document Analysis (Programme Policy Documents)

Prior (2003, as cited in Cohen, Mannion & Morris, 2007) states that documents are useful in rendering the phenomena under study more visible. Even though documents have limitations (Bailey, 1994 as cited in Cohen, Mannion & Morris, 2007), I trust that the mentorship documents used in this study will provide me with critical primary data (see, Appendix E).

c) Reflections

Enrich, Hansford and Tennets (2004, p. 532) report that the “mentoring process has been identified as a vehicle in facilitating reflection because it provides opportunities for mentors and mentees together and alone to reflect on their practice, reconsider what they are doing and why, and work toward improving their professional practice”. Therefore, reflections from mentors have also been used as additional data for analysis.

1.8.2.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

a) Thematic Analysis

“Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This form of analysis is a qualitative method whereby the researcher is actively involved in analysing data through identifying patterns or themes within the data, and then analysing and reporting such patterns. This process can even be extended to include the interpretation of the significant issues which might arise from such patterns, but the fundamental aim is to organise and describe the data collected.

1.9 QUALITY CRITERIA

1.9.1 CRYSTALLISATION

Crystallisation is used in qualitative research, as compared to triangulation in quantitative research. It is the practice of ‘validating’ results by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis (Maree, 2007, p. 40). One way in which this study ensures crystallisation is by using a variety of data collection methods, such as the interviews, mentorship policy documents and mentors’ reflections.

1.9.2 TRANSFERABILITY

A case study helps the researcher to provide a rich description of a bounded system; therefore, in using such a design, I believe my study will yield rich data that could be transferable to other similar contexts.

1.9.3 DEPENDABILITY

Dependability involves debriefing by peer and suggests that the research needs to go back to the respondents to check that their findings are dependable (Cohen,

Mannion & Morris, 2007). Therefore, through cross-checking with my participants and supervisor, I have ensured that my study is dependable.

1.9.4 CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability ensures that I have acted in a good faith, and I have not allowed personal issues to interfere with the study. Therefore, through peer editing, constant checking with my participants and consultation with supervisor, I have attempted to minimise the effect of this construct.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Due to the context of the research, and my close involvement with the mentorship programme at the HEI, it could be difficult to ensure the anonymity of participants. Although I have privileged access to some of their personal information, I do not have consent to use for this study. In light of this, I will only share participants' personal information if consent has been granted by them. In addition, due to the organisational structure of the mentorship programme, it is also possible for participants to be identified. This limitation was discussed with the selected participants prior to their consent, and might have affected the quality of their responses. However, typically of qualitative research, reported experiences and constructed truths are also valuable in creating personalised knowledge.
- In case of publication of my research, further adjustment will be made to details of my participants to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, from the public. Participants will be given a chance to read the research prior to publication and give their consent.
- Due to my close working relationship with some of the participants, this could hinder the quality of the interviews. It is possible that they might intentionally leave out some essential information assuming that I know it and would automatically include it. Therefore, such assumptions will be discussed with

each participant to ensure they completely understand the ethical nature of this study.

- With regard to the potential harm this study might have on the positive image of the Institution, I worked meticulously with my supervisor to ensure that the research report will not in any manner taint the positive image of the Institution which serves as the focus of this study, without compromising the findings and scientific rigour of the study.
- The study was conducted with the consent of the Department of Student Affairs. This ensures that the outcomes of the study are not reported in a way that could be negative towards the mentorship programme of the Institution of focus.
- All participants were above 18 years of age, therefore legally able to give personal consent to participate in the study.

1.11 LAYOUT OF REPORT

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This chapter provides background information to the current study. I provide the introductory literature suggesting a dearth of literature on mentorship experiences which informs the rationale of this study. I provide a rationale, purpose of study and a brief research background to support my research questions. I conclude this chapter by focusing on the methodology section and the ethical aspects relating to this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review relevant literature on mentorship. I also provide a summation of the literature review focusing on the concepts, ideas and theories that stood out in helping me to understand the experiences of mentors on the implementation of a

mentorship programme. I conclude this Chapter with the theoretical framework which serves as an interpretive framework of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provide a more detailed account of the methodological processes I followed in this study. I discuss in more detail the research approach, design, and data collection process which influenced my choice of sample selection. I conclude this chapter with an outline of the data analyse process applied in this study.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the result obtained from the study through thematic analysis, and within the perspective of the stated theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter I provide a conclusion, integrating the study and focusing on the main findings, limitations, contribution and recommendations emerging from this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I offer a review of literature on mentorship which will serve as the theoretical basis for understanding mentorship as well as making sense of the findings of this study. The literature discussed here will also make up what I refer to as 'mentorship theory' in subsequent chapters. I commence this chapter by describing the legacy of mentorship, tracing back its emergence in history. I also provide literature-based support for the role of mentorship in the 21st century and its implementation within HEI. This is followed by a brief outline of literature on mentorship, pointing to the dearth of literature on mentorship experiences, especially within the South African context. I, thereafter, explore the key concepts related to mentorship, as well as pertinent themes, such as, mentorship experiences, mentorship at HEIs, and the changing landscapes of mentorship. I conclude this chapter by focusing on the theoretical framework which serves as the interpretative guide to this study.

2.2 LIMITATIONS IN LITERATURE

Mentorship has prevailed through historical times and has been dated to thousands of years back (Little, Kearney, & Britner, 2010). In fact several authors attest to the legacy of mentorships (Johnson, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008; Schrubbe, 2003). Terblanche, (2007) even traces it back to biblical times. Even though it seems that not much attention has been given to mentorship programmes at Higher Academic Institutions, mentorship is still presented as one of the greatest tools in the 21st century helping to smooth students' transitions from secondary to tertiary education, and from tertiary to employment and, thus empowering individuals.

Although literature in South African context on mentorship is limited, international studies have attested the positive impact of well implemented programmes (Schrubbe, 2003). Mentorship has been recognised and acknowledged for its role in the successful development of individuals within various professional fields (Johnson, 2007). Enrich et al., (2004), thorough meta-analysis study on mentorships in educational context, with specific reference to factors which, either contribute to the success of mentorship programmes, or act as impediments to, mentorship programmes elicited a plethora of results. They specifically reported mainly about critical issues which administrators must consider in implementing a formal mentorship programme (Enrich et al., 2004).

Follow-up studies in the field indicate a lack of research regarding the perceptions of mentors in mentorship programme (Allen, Eby & Lent, 2006). It further appears that when the issue of the experiences of mentors is addressed in literature, the literature is biased towards females (see Driscoll, Parkers, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill & Bannister, 2008; Patton, 2009 as examples). The noted pattern of much focus being accorded to females could be ascribed to literature reports that women are missing out on the opportunity for mentorship (Enrich et al., 2004).

However, despite these gaps in literature, mentorships programmes have been around for many years and continue to be implemented both internationally and locally. To fully understand the origins of mentorship programmes and their role in HEI, I now include an overview and discussion of the key concepts and themes unearthed in my review of literature on the topic.

2.3 MENTORSHIP

According to Jones, Walters and Akehurst (2001), there are some debates about the definition of mentorship. Russell and Adams (1997, as cited in Poeg, de Witt, Hutchison, Hayward, & Grayson, 2008, p. 23) define mentorship as “an intense interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced colleague (mentor) and a less

experienced junior colleague (protégé¹) in which the mentor provides development”. In a similar vein, Shannon (1998, cited in Billin-Pike, Kuschel, McDaniel, Mingus & Mutti, 1998, p. 119) define mentorship as “a nurturing process in which a more skilled or experienced person serves as a role model to teach, sponsor, encourage, counsel, and befriend a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/or personal development”. However Terblanche (2007, p. 95) cautions us about the misuse of the word mentorship in his assertion that “mentorship has become a fashionable word, visualised as a magic stick which can bring change by swinging it and uttering some magic words”.

Parallel to arguments such as the one above, there are various definitions of mentorship (Waghid & Van Louw, 2008). By virtue of the fact that mentorship is a key concept in this study, the lack of unison in definition is a significant concern as it is essential to gain firm understanding of the working definition of mentorship if we are to have any hope in engaging in discussions on the experiences on mentorship. Taking from the cited definitions above, I submit the essence of mentorship as a process whereby an experienced person (mentor) and less experienced person (mentee) engage in the relationship with the purpose of facilitating growth in an area of mutual focus or interest. Unlike, Driscoll, Parkers, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill and Bannister (2008) who presented studies which promote a hierarchical power relationship within the mentoring relationship, I concur with Allen (2002, as cited in Sangole, 2006, p. 7) in viewing mentorship as “a reciprocal relationship of both mentor and protégé”. This view is beneficial because it moves away from viewing mentorship as a one way process where only one member benefits, it instead advocates a more systemic view where the mentorship is viewed as a mutual relationship benefitting both members.

2.3.1 TRADITIONAL VERSUS FORMAL MENTORING

Literature points to two kinds of mentorships, namely: informal (traditional) and formal. An informal mentorship may be understood to be a less structured, with little

¹ The word ‘protégé’ refers to a ‘mentee’. Therefore, to limit confusion, this study will use the word ‘mentee’ with the exception of cases where there is a direct quotation and the word ‘protégé’ is used.

intervention, as compared to a formal mentorship, which is more structured and requires participants to complete application forms (Singh, Bains & Vinnicombe, 2002). Simply put, a formal mentorship is likened to Big Brother/Big Sister, as a kind of programme in which a youth at risk, or inexperienced youth, is matched with an experienced adult for guidance to facilitate positive outcomes (McDonald et al., 2007). While, informal mentoring, on the other hand, is naturally occurring, and as such, a young person is mentored by an adult whom he/she comes across through life (McDonald et al., 2007).

Even though mentorship is generally viewed in a positive light, there are ongoing debates about the value of informal-mentorships as compared to formal mentorship programmes. However formal mentorship is not without limitations. Enrich et al., (2004) point to the lack of consistency and clear guidelines on how such programmes are conducted as a significant weakness in this type of mentoring. In so far as informal mentorship is concerned, a study by McDonald et al., (2007), found that one of the strengths of Informal mentoring is that it helps in the transition to employment. In addition, Singh et al., (2002) submit that formal mentorship is a good avenue to bring about change and to transfer knowledge. Nevertheless, their study also found that informal mentoring was less effective among young women.

In their meta-analysis, Enrich et al., (2004), present an overriding view that, in relation to formal mentoring evaluations, informal mentorship reports consist of opinions and testimonials. In addition, results of literature reviews on several mentorship studies comparing informal and formal mentoring are generally in unison that informal mentoring is more effective than formal mentoring (Allen et al., 2006). This assertion is supported by several studies which argue that although formal mentoring is not better than informal, it is better than no mentoring at all (Allen et al., 2006).

Singh et al., (2002) allude to the systemic procedures that accompany formal mentoring, and how such formality might hinder the spontaneous running of the programme, and creativity, in process. Even though the above accounts accentuate the general limitation of formal mentoring, as compared to informal mentoring, mentorship literature also comes with its own limitations. The study by Allen et al.,

(2006) further provides a brief description of three limitations in mentoring literature. One of those limitations, which also relates to the focus of this study, is the lack of literature focusing on the perceptions of mentors, resulting in an incomplete picture of any programme. Therefore, by focusing on the mentors involved in a formal mentorship programme, their observation serves to support the rationale of the current study. Having offered an operational definition of mentorship and discussed the different types of mentorship; I move my exploration of the theoretical terrain on mentorship to literature discussing mentorship experiences and their significance to this study.

2.4 MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES

Like most student support services, mentorships also entail both negative and positive experiences. In their study on mentoring reviews and reflections (Sangole, Abreu & Stein, 2006), found that a general challenge in mentorship was the lack of clear communication. However, it is important to note that while some negative and positive aspects of mentorship are specific to the mentor, there are also challenges specific to the mentee.

Johnson (2007) points to positive mentorship experiences occurring within diverse contexts, including social, academic and professional fields. It appears that the experiences of participants in mentorship programmes vary extensively, and this gives rise to questions pertaining to the possible contributing factors to these diverse experiences. I submit that insight into the unique ways in which the individuals involved in mentorship (namely mentors and mentees), construct meanings relating to their experiences may be a useful point of departure. It is with this reasoning in mind that I turn to a discussion on the experiences of mentees, and mentors, respectively. I assert that such a discussion may be beneficial in generating further insight into the conceptualisation of the concept of experiences.

2.4.1 EXPERIENCES OF MENTEES

There is limited literature focusing on understanding the perspectives and experiences of mentees (Hall, 2003, as cited in Russell, 2010). Therefore, it appears

that this limitation has led to various studies focusing on the identification of mentorship experiences according to mentees based mainly on the potential negative (Eby et al., 2000).

In contrast to this, Johnson's (2007) study emphasises the positive experiences of mentees in mentorship programmes by elaborating on the academic benefits of mentorship, such as the increased possibilities of achieving academic aspiration. Another study, of African American college students, also focuses on the experiences and perspectives of mentees. It reports that 91% of students participating in a mentorship programme had positive experiences, while only 9% reported negative experiences (Brittian, Sy & Stokes, 2009).

Due to the nature of mentorship, mentors often seem to be benefiting most from the mentorship programme, and thereby, are the ones more likely to report on positive experiences. Thus, mentors more often seem to be on the receiving end of the mentorship programme. Eby et al., (2000) indicate that positive experiences of a mentorship for the mentees include that they receive counsel, advice and friendship from the mentor who becomes a model, assisting mentees to advance in their career.

Focusing on mainly the positive aspects of the mentees' mentorship experiences presents a bias view of mentorship experiences as a whole. Therefore, it is important to also be cognisant of negative experience where possible. According to Scandura (1998, as cited in Burk & Eby, 2010, p. 438) "negative mentoring has been defined in terms of dysfunctional mentoring outcomes such as dissatisfaction". However, negative experiences seem to be mainly implied by studies which focus on the qualities of a good mentor, which seem to suggest that a bad mentor would lead to negative experiences (Coddington & Satin, 2008; Hughes & Fraser, 2010). Some negative experiences that mentees might experience are associated with mentors who engage in destructive behaviours, such as being demanding, authoritarian and exploiting the mentees (Eby et al., 2000). These authors further cite the mismatch between mentor and mentees, poor mentoring skills, and inexperienced mentors as factors which might lead to negative experiences of mentees.

Although mentorship experiences involve a mutual process between a mentor and a mentee, negative mentorship experiences have been mostly attributed to the role of the mentor. Eby and McManus (2004) attribute the important role of mentors, as compared to that of the mentee, to the power a mentor has in the mentor-mentee relationship. Even though some mentees do think of alternative ways to end such a relationship, Burk and Eby (2010) indicated that the fear of possible retaliation from the mentor is the main factor preventing such a termination. As such, the mentee remains and endures the mentorship process despite the negative experiences.

2.4.2 THE EXPERIENCES OF MENTORS

The above subsection presented the mentors as the main culprits when it comes to negative mentorship experiences (Burk & Eby, 2010). Despite the lesser power that mentees have in the mentorship programme, some research provides support of the perceived role mentees' contribution to the negative relational role (Burk & Eby, 2010). In their discussion on the challenges in mentorships which result in mentors' negative experiences, Enrich et al., (2004) report that the challenges of mentors range from lack of time and training, personal or professional incompatibility and undesirable mentee behaviours and attributes (such as lack of commitment or unrealistic expectations).

However, such a linear view of mentorship experiences seems to be advantageous when considering positive mentorship experiences. Thus, not only are the negative experiences of mentees attributed to the mentor, but even the positive outcomes (Burk & Eby, 2010; Eby and McManus, 2004; Johnson, 2007). When it comes to the positive experiences of mentors in the mentorship process, they seem mainly directly linked to the success of their mentees. Myall, et al., (2008) report on the proud feelings that some mentors experience when watching their mentees develop and increase in skills and knowledge. Clarkson (1995, as cited in Schrubbe, 2004) prides about the glory that a mentor receives when his mentee achieves an academic success.

It further appears that the mentors' experiences also seem to be associated with the mentor's benefit of engaging in the mentorship programme, in addition to their

experience of having served as mentors (Myall, et al., 2008). With the significant role that mentors play in facilitating the development of mentees in their future career (Myall, et al., 2008) it is understandable why any benefit to the mentor could be viewed positively.

Nevertheless, despite this significant role, how mentors contribute to the needs of mentees in the mentorship programme, a lack of literature focusing specifically on experiences of mentors has been identified in this study. Studies which do feature the experiences of mentors seem to be based mainly on the role of mentors in the mentorship programme, usually in an attempt to gain insight into the experiences of the mentees (Ali & Panther, 2008; Myall, et al., 2008).

Furthermore, when viewing mentorship experiences from a general perspective, I noticed that the mentorship benefits are not limited to mentees only, but rather, to all stakeholders. According to Scandura, Tejada, Werther and Lankau (1996, p. 50), “mentoring is acknowledged to be of benefit to protégé, mentor and the organisation: The mentor gives, the protégé gets, and the organisation benefits”. Therefore, this mutual benefit seems to overshadow the limitation of mentorship experiences, especially those focusing mainly on the mentors. This limitation opens a gap within literature which could help potential mentors to make informed decisions on whether to participate in mentorships or not. It further limits the formulation of realistic expectation of both the mentor and mentees about the mentorship programme, which might lead to negative experience if based on erroneous expectation (Enrich et al., 2004).

2.4.3 CONCEPTUALISING EXPERIENCES

When reading and writing about experiences within the context of education, the first prominent name that comes to mind is that of John Dewey. According to Clandinin (2000, p. 2), “For Dewey, experience is both personal and social where both the personal and the social are always present”. Based on the understanding that an experience is personal and contextually defined, I assert that it may be useful to offer a discussion on the manner in which experiences will be conceptualised in this study. I base my conceptualisation on the seminal work of Joan Scott (1998), who

conceptualised mentorship experiences as a conscious process associated with recollection of mentorship events. This recollection takes a retrospective approach as it reports on past events, therefore is reflective in nature. Scott's conceptualisation is especially relevant to this study for the following reasons:

- Firstly, it provides the view that experiences are related to events at a conscious or active awareness level. This excludes any form of experience that takes place at the unconscious state.
- Secondly, it incorporates the concept of reflection in recalling events. Reflection is a critical aspect of this study, serving not only as a method of data collection, but also, as a strategy to help me as the researcher, find expression for my own personal thoughts.
- Finally, this view takes a retrospective look at events, thus focusing on past events. The retrospective nature of this view relates to the approach of this current study, which also takes a retrospective look at the experiences of mentors regarding mentorship.

2.5 MENTORSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Cross, Shalem, Backhouse and Adam (2009) cite international studies indicating that transition between school and university is associated with stress, anxiety and tension. It is through the assistance of supportive structures such as mentorship relationships that students in HEI's are able to successfully go through the transition to adulthood (McDonald et al., 2007). Often in mentorship programmes implemented at HEI, both the mentor and the mentee are transitioning to adulthood, and therefore the mentorship experience offers the opportunity for mutual benefit. Therefore, mentorship serves as an asset in this regard as it has been supported for its contribution in education (Schrubbe, 2004).

The contributions of mentorship to academic success within HEIs are viewed within a cluster of other mediatory factors. Rhodes, Grossman and Resch (2000 as cited in Brittan, Sy and Stokes, 2009) present improved family relationships, self-worth and scholastic competence as important mediatory factors. This highlights the fact that

one cannot limit the positive outcomes of those involved in mentorship programmes to mentorship alone (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2007). Therefore, viewing mentorship in isolation, as the only determining aspect for academic success, might provide a narrow view of students' success. Such a view is further limited in that it fails to view students holistically, existing within multi-contexts.

Despite the array of factors involved in the academic success of those involved in mentorship's, involvement in mentorships remains a significant contributory factor for positive impact in the lives of students (Patton, 2009; Schrubbe, 2004). Within HEI's, mentorship as a student support programme helps to create a secure environment where students can reach their potential. In their research, Brittian et al., (2009), highlight the importance of retaining students, reporting on the crucial role played by the institution's atmosphere in increasing the retention of students through models structured within mentorship programmes.

In conclusion, I concur with Clarkson (1995 in Schrubbe, 2004, p. 327) that "there is no greater satisfaction and reflected glory than what is experienced through the academic achievement of one's protégé". Therefore, mentees are expected to show commitment in shaping their future (McDonald et al., 2007). However, as in some instances, mentors choose mentees perceived to have the potential to produce desired results (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2007). Therefore, it could be misleading for one to attribute much success of mentorship to only the mentor without credit to the mentees as well. Upholding the view of mentorship as a mutual process, both the mentor and the mentees should be acknowledged for the success of the mentorship programme.

2.6 CHANGING LANDSCAPE

2.6.1 THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION CONTEXT

This study is positioned within the South African context, a country characterised by diversity in cultures and languages. One of the most distinct developmental aspects of the country is the radical educational changes that have occurred over the last ten years (Swart & Pettipher, 2007). These educational changes are marked prominently

by the introduction of inclusive education, a term used to describe “educational policies and practices that uphold the right of learners with disability to belong and learn in mainstream education” (Green, 2001, p. 4). Furthermore, Green (2001, p. 5) points out that, “inclusive education is proposed not simply as one option for education, but as the strategy most likely to achieve a democratic and just society”.

When discussing educational inclusion in South Africa, it is necessary to refer to the government’s White Paper 6 policy and its objectives. The main purpose of Inclusive education is to address learning diversity in the South African context (Department of National Education, 2006). Taking into consideration both the historical context of South Africa, and international studies, the policy attempts to address learning barriers. Thus, the ultimate aim is to create an inclusive environment in educational institutions where each learner is provided with the necessary services and resources to optimise educational growth. However, it appears that most learners are only accommodated and not included (Department of National Education, 2006), as such, learners end up in educational contexts lacking the necessary support services.

Furthermore, South African studies focusing on racial imbalances in educational contexts, show that most black students face high stress levels in adapting to the challenges of academic and campus life associated with tertiary education (Bojuwage, 2002 as cited in Morrison; Brand & Cilliers, 2006; Naidoo, 1999). It is in light of the above that mentorships have become one of the most essential support services offered at higher institutions catering for such situations (Morrison et al., 2006).

2.6.2 SOUTH AFRICAN VERSUS INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

With the plethora of international studies on mentorship, it is difficult to sidestep the limited literature within the South African context (Enrich et al. 2004). When discussing any concept that relates to service delivery within the academic context, it is incumbent to present an account of the concept of globalisation. Globalisation has been defined as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many

miles away and vice versa" (Held, 1991 as cited in Torres, 2002, p. 364). As education is one of the main sectors of any nation, it does not come as a surprise that "a major area that globalization has directly impacted is education, and this impact is multi-faceted" (Conroy, 2008, p. 1). In his article, Buenfil-burgos (2000) analysed the negative impact globalisation has had within an educational context, looking specifically at its impact on policy development and implementation. "One of the primary effects of globalisation on tertiary education is that higher education systems are compared with and measured against each other" (Tierney, 2009, as cited in Wolhuter, Higgs & Ntshoe, 2010, p. 197). That is, globalisation sets a universal benchmark for nations to meet. However, for most nations, the standards become just too high to be reached.

I argue that such benchmarking could encourage students to perform better as they commit to improving their academic performance in order to meet the benchmark, and thereby enhancing a nation's competitiveness, however; the opposite can also occur. As some nations attempt to keep up with such standards, the students become the hardest hit. It is the students who have to rise to meet the demands put on them with the hope that through their collaboration, their educational institution can be found competent on global scales. This high academic standard could be a challenge to maintain and as such, students could have difficulty adapting to the standards of HEI (Bojuwage, 2002 as cited in Morrison; Brand & Cilliers, 2006; Naidoo, 1999).

In summation, the above account suggests that globalisation imposes subtle challenges on students. In this context, mentorship programmes serve as critical tools to help students cope with the challenges and demands of HEIs.

2.7 LITERATURE REVIEW: A REFLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

I conclude this literature review by taking a critical reflection of the literature I reviewed. It is my contention that understanding these discussions, and the questions they trigger, will provide me with a sound comparison for the results of this study. It is also this literature review which serves as summary of the overall literature of this which I refer to as mentorship theory in the next chapters. It serves

as the main theoretical basis for understanding the findings of this study and in addressing the secondary question.

The first section of this study focuses on the concept of mentorship. The main conclusion from the section is that informal mentoring is more effective than formal. That is, even though formal mentorship might have benefits and is supportive in its motive, the formality might hinder the development of a safe, creative and personal relationship. Since the current mentorship which the study focuses on, is a formal programme, this review triggers the following question: “is the mentorship programme then consistent with the above studies suggesting that formality might hinder the development of a safe, creative and personal relationship”?

The second section focuses on factors which hinder the success of a mentorship programme. The factors are: the lack of communication between the mentee and the mentor, the ineffective relationship between the mentor and mentee and lastly, professional incompatibility, undesirable mentee behaviours and attributes (such as lack of commitment or unrealistic expectations). The above factors serve as the basic principles of mentorship. It is my hope that this study will also shed some light on the above factors. However, even though the study does not aim to prove whether or not such factors played a role, it might provide a stance on whether the above factors are significant for this study and the kind the relationship that exists, if any.

There appears to be mixed reports between international and national studies on mentorship. International studies represent a general view of mentorship experiences, while the South African studies focus more on the educational context. International studies, which serve as the body of literature on this topic, also report on general positive experiences from mentorship and such findings are not gender specific. At Higher Education Institutions in South African, mentorship seems to be viewed as beneficial for bridging the gap between tertiary institutions and employment and to also help students adapt to the demands of higher education. A framework in this case could help in representing this mentorship view from an educational context.

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MENTORSHIP FROM AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

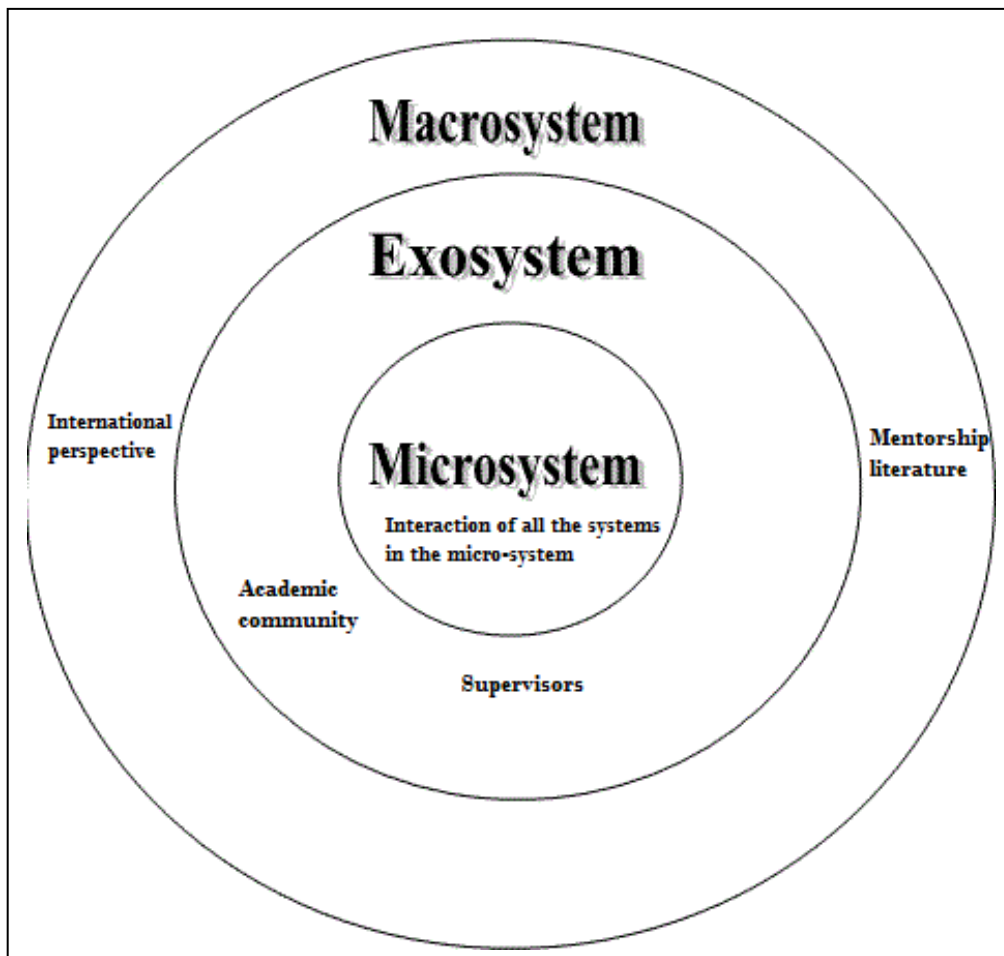


DIAGRAM 2.1: MENTORSHIP ECOLOGICAL MODEL (adapted from Urie Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

2.8.1 ECOLOGICAL THEORY

Ecological Theory is seen as part of the Ecosystemic perspective that “shows how individuals and groups at different levels of the social context are linked in dynamic, interdependent, and interacting relationships” (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwane, 2005, p. 44). In an article, Trickett (1978) discusses how Ecological Theory principles have been used for different studies, among these is the understanding of human experiences within larger social contexts.

Having referred to literature, I acknowledge that relationships are an integral part of any mentorship programme; therefore the Ecological Theory is beneficial as the interpretive framework for this study. Its focus on the interdependence of relationships between different levels of the system, focusing on different systems as a whole, fits well with the relational aspects of a mentorship programme. This theory also provides a platform for understanding mentorship holistically, as part of a larger system. Each level provides a different perspective in which mentorship experiences might be viewed. For the purpose of this study, the levels are viewed as follows:

2.8.1.1 The Macro-System (International Perspective of Mentoring)

This is the outer system representing the largest level of the system. The literature on mentorship is viewed on this level from a larger social system, that is, from an international perspective. As it was established that the international developments set the benchmarks in the field of education, this level therefore, serves as the dominant social structure, and has a reciprocal influence on other levels of the system. For instance, the literature review has indicated that there is limited literature on mentorship from within a South African context, implicating that the mentorship theory guiding mentorship within the South African context comes mainly from international studies. In addition, as such literature might also be applicable to the South African context, according to this theory. The focus should then be on how such interdependence plays out in the current study, especially related to the interpretation of data.

2.8.1.2 The Exo-System (Academic Community)

The exo-system includes systems which might have a role in the behaviour of the mentor, but the mentor is not directly involved in them. As this study is within the sub-context of a HEI, this might include the decisions or interactions of mentorship supervisors within the institution. This system might also include the institution's academic community where mentorship takes place, whether the environment is supportive or not. In addition, this is level where the literature from the South African context is constructed and also assimilated on an educational level, so that its relationship with the macro-system might be viewed.

2.8.1.3 The Meso-System

The meso-system focuses on the interactions between all the systems in the micro-system. Thus, the theory can be understood as incorporating all factors that influence the understanding of mentors' experiences in the mentorship programme. This is because the construction of theory also lies within the interaction of all factors in different levels of the system. What occurs at the ground level practice of mentorship (the micro-system) will have a reciprocal influence on the theory of mentorship in at the macro-system level and vice-versa.

2.8.1.4 The Micro-System (The Mentor and the Mentorship)

The micro level looks at the mentor as an individual, and relates to the research question. A mentor is an individual who must also be understood holistically. Every person lives within a particular context and has a past; therefore, all facets of their life need to be taken into consideration to form a complete understanding. Such a perspective acknowledges the view of Trickett and Moss (1974, p. 2) who, when analysing the general views of investigators, said that they have "shown that different environments have clearly different consequences for their inhabitants". The mentorship programme is seen as the immediate context for the mentors in this study, and therefore, it plays an integral part in structuring the experiences of all the role players.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

From my literature review it emerged that there is dearth of scholarship in the area of mentorship within the South African context, particularly with regards to the experiences of mentors. It is against this backdrop that the present study finds its relevance describing the experiences of mentors regarding the implementation of a mentorship programme at a HEI. Therefore, I aim to gain an in-depth understanding, and insider's perspective, on the experiences of these mentors. Furthermore, this research is significant because it offers mentors a platform to share their experiences, thereby contributing to theory on mentorship and its implementation within the context of HEIs.

In this chapter, I offer an account of the methodological process which I engaged in a bid to answer my research questions. What follows is a discussion of the various processes which facilitated data collection, analysis and interpretation.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative research does not represent a single research method as there are many methods associated with it. Qualitative research can be broadly defined as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures, or other means of quantification (Stauss & Corbin, 1990 as cited in Golafshani, 2003). I have, however, found Nieuwenhuis' (2007) definition the most comprehensive, describing qualitative research as a process where the natural environment is used as the study, or observation field, in order to gather information regarding a certain phenomenon, and using such information in a descriptive manner. Therefore, in this study, I have chosen an educational setting in which to gather data on the experiences of mentors regarding the implementation of a mentorship programme.

I believe that a qualitative research approach is well suited for this study because it offers me the unique opportunity to focus on, and gain meaning and understanding of, experiences of mentors from an insider's perspective (as it is personally and subjectively experienced by them). This is made possible by the fact that "qualitative research allows one to engage in an inductive exploration through the use of open-ended questions, which is essential in situations in which it is difficult to say what the variables are, which ones are important or how to measure them" (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 272). It further appears reasonable to employ a qualitative approach for this study as it addresses the shortcomings of more quantitative approaches. As Nieuwenhuis (2007) explains that numerical and statistical methods sometimes fail to comprehensively address aspects in the human and social sciences.

In qualitative research, "...the researchers are interested in ways people make sense out of their lives, in other words, qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called 'participant perspectives'" (Slavin, 2004, p. 124). It is noted that qualitative research is concerned with exploring a certain social phenomenon in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of it (De Vos, 2002). In order to do this, research needs to be conducted within a natural environment (Vithal & Jansen, 2001). Hence, in this research, the mentors' context was taken into consideration to find out, not only what was happening in the mentorship programme, but also, how the mentors made sense of their experiences. The focus is on detailed descriptions of all aspects of the person, facilitating holistic understanding where words and other forms of descriptions (rather than numbers) are used to convey what I have learned (Merriam, 2002).

Due to the fact that the literature search foregrounded the current dearth of scholarship on the experiences of mentors, especially within the South African context, I elected to make use of an exploratory research design. This type of design focuses on areas which have not been studied before, and allow the researcher to develop ideas and make recommendations for more focused research questions (Neuman, 2005 cited in Struwig & Stead, 2001).

3.3 INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

A paradigm can be defined as an all encompassing system of practice and thinking, which guides the nature of the research inquiry along the dimensions of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Blanche et al., 2006). An interpretive paradigm, therefore, reflects an “anti-positive stance which adopts a softer or subjective perspective which rejects the standards methods of natural science” (Maree, 2007). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008, p. 21) submit that “the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of the human experience”. This is the grand aspiration of this research to understand the inner world of mentors pertaining to their experiences of how the mentorship programme was implemented, according to the meanings they attach to these experiences. Moreover, I believe that an interpretive paradigm is well suited to this study because a support service, such as a mentorship, takes place within a social context. The reality of experiences of mentors would be highly depended on their subjective views as received by the researcher (Blanche et al., 2006).

An interpretive paradigm is characterised by a concern for the individual, a feature that stands in contrast to its positivist counterpart, which is oriented towards the view of human behaviour within the lenses of natural science (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008).

In conducting this study, I have taken into consideration the fact that the interpretive approach provides a platform for understanding subjective experiences, as well as the unique ability of a case study design to allow for the generation of rich descriptions. This association is supported by Cohen et al., (2008).

3.4 CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

Case study research design is typical of qualitative research. Miller (1985 as cited in Chauvin & Miller, 2009) views case study research as referring to the detailed examination of a single entity or a bounded system/case. Therefore, in this research, the mentorship programme represents the case of study. It is a bounded system

within a HEI, which I am able to study and provide some detailed description of its operation.

Case studies provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, and acknowledge the impact of the context on the cause and effect of a situation (Cohen et al., 2008). Even though case studies focus on a bounded system and involve only a small number of participants, the emphasis is on arriving at a complete description and understanding of the constructs being studied (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Therefore, it aims to provide an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through rich, descriptive data. However, Babbie (2005, p. 306) cautions that there are divergent views as to what might constitute a 'case'. He contends that "the case being studied, for example, might be a period of time rather than a particular group of people", adding that "the limitation of attention to a particular instance of something is the essential characteristic of the case study".

I, therefore, chose a case study research design for this study so as to gain a deeper understanding of mentorship experiences within the South African context at a particular instance in time. I focused specifically on the experiences of mentors within a specific HEI to provide rich description of these experiences. This choice fits most effectively with the purpose of this study.

From the above it is evident that case study research features many advantages, for example, the generation of thick descriptions. However, there are also some significant disadvantages associated with this method which cannot be ignored. Concerns have been raised regarding possible biases by the researcher, and results that are not open to cross checking possibly leading to subjectivity (Cohen et al., 2008). I, therefore, note that this study is supervised by an experienced researcher, with whom I had constant and regular discussions pertaining to all areas of the research process. This was done to limit any bias on my side.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

3.5.1 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

All participants were part of the mentorship programme within the HEI. The organogram of this mentorship is represented below (Diagram 3.1.). I concur with Terblanche (2007) who states that mentorships differ depending on the practice where they are implemented. It is therefore, important to understand the structure of the mentorship programme used in this study based on its context. In this structure, the Administrators manage the whole programme under the guidance of the Head Supervisor, who in turn answers to the Dean of students or the Vice-principal. The Chief coordinators work in liaison with the Secretary to ensure that all the administrative work is carried out efficiently. They also facilitate the work of the Coordinators, who in turn ensure that the Mentors are doing their work with the mentees. In this structure, it is the mentors who have the most personal contact with the mentees.

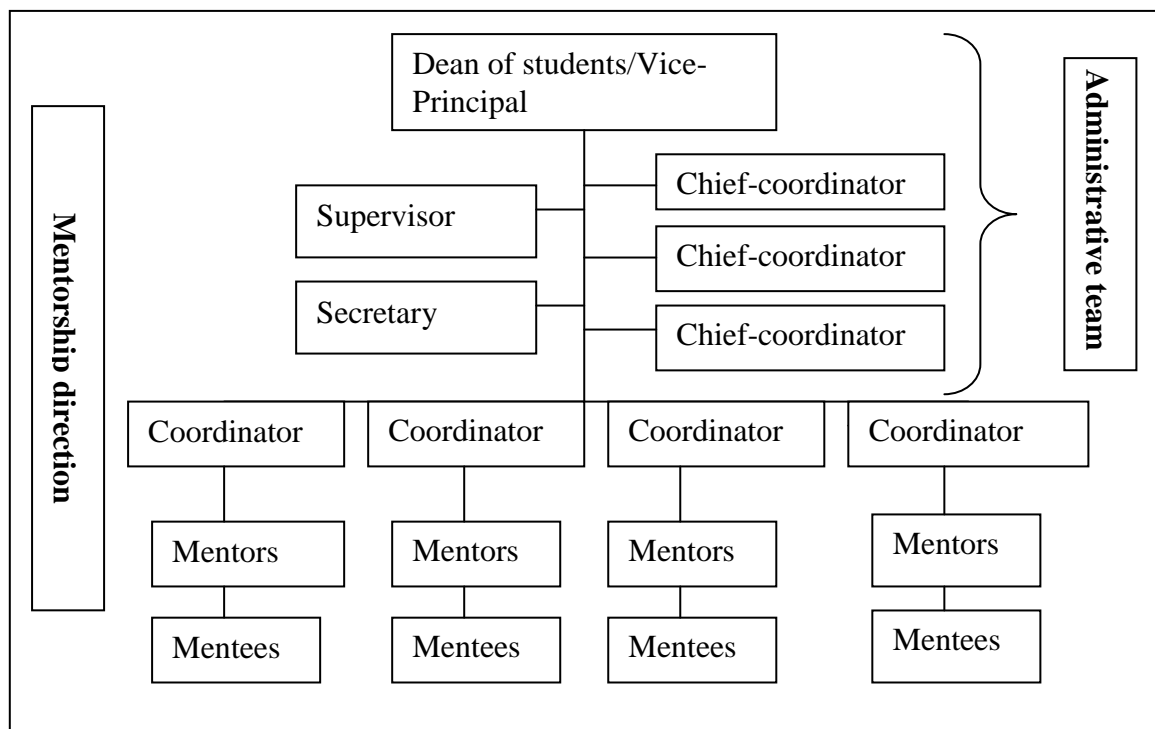


DIAGRAM 3.1: REPRESENTATION OF THE CURRENT MENTORSHIP STRUCTURE

I chose to make use of the non-probability sampling method of purposive sampling in this study. In purposive sampling participants are selected based on their best ability to help the researcher understand the problem and research question (Creswell, 2003). The criterion for selection in the current study was that the participant must have been involved in the mentorship programme a year prior to the study at HIE, which represents the larger bounded system in this study. The HEI in this study was also selected purposefully based on the ability it has to offer me the opportunity to understand the problem and address the questions of this study. The mentors should also be student at the selected HEI during the time that the study is conducted. This criterion does not include mentees or mentorship coordinators.

Following approval by the Faculty of Education's Dean at the selected HEI to conduct this study, invitation was sent out through emails and a word of mouth to former mentors at the Department of Education and only four showed interest to be part of the study. Therefore four mentors (who were known to me), were selected to be part of this study based on their potential to provide data relevant for the study as they were part of the recently ended mentorship programme. Working with this group was both a challenge and an advantage. I had been their former coordinator, and to some, even a former mentor. As such, this was considered a potential challenge hindering the researcher-participant relationship. However, it was also a noted advantage as I had already built rapport with the mentors through the mentorship programme, and they seemed relaxed and comfortable to share their experiences with me.

Mentors who met the initial criterion were informed that participation was in no way compulsory but instead, would be voluntary, and they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at anytime (without penalty) should they feel they no longer want to be part of the study. Having ascertained that the mentors fully understood the purpose and intents of the study, as well as the voluntary nature of their participation, I afforded them the opportunity to make an informed decision on whether they wished to be part of the study or not. All those who agreed to participate in this study were then selected, below is a diagrammatical representation of the biographical information of the participants. Note that pseudonyms are used throughout.

Participants	Gender
Man-aero	Male
Black-haven	Male
Mapat	Female
Ayobanation	Female

TABLE 3.1: INFORMATION FROM BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE²

3.5.2 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The case study aims to provide a rich description of a phenomenon; therefore, it is important to adopt various data collection methods to ensure that an in-depth knowledge is sought. Having elected to make use of a case study research design, I selected data collection techniques that were in agreement with the characteristics of this research design. Semi-structured interviews and reflections of participants were used as the main data collection strategies, while demographic questionnaires provided demographic information. These techniques are further discussed below.

3.5.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

In the present study I made use of semi-structured interviews in order to gather relevant data. A number of texts (Burns & Grove, 2005 cited by Fontana & Frey, 2005; Polit & Beck, 2006; Whiting, 2008, as examples) cite the differences between structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. They are all in agreement that semi-structured and unstructured interviews are typical for a qualitative study. The unstructured interview is specifically useful for studies wherein the investigator will have a prolonged stay in the field, and has no predetermined set of questions (Patton, 2002).

² Participants provided their own pseudonym in order to ensure confidentiality of their identity

I have chosen to use semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method for this study based on the assumption that it will afford me with the unique opportunity for personal and intimate encounters in which “open, direct, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 317), whilst still being able to maintain some measure of control over the interview through preset questions (Whiting, 2008 citing Sorrell & Redmond, 1995 and Melia, 2000). Taking from Vithal and Jansen (2001) I noted that, any questions formulated and posed to participants should be done in a broad and general manner so as to avoid the manipulation and subsequent unnatural quality of responses. I therefore, generated the questions below to guide my conversations with the participants.

1. How do you define, or what do you understand by, the word experiences?
2. The implementation stage of the programme is associated with various factors, what are some of your positive experiences looking specifically on the implementation process of the programme?
3. What are some of the negative experiences you have had on the programme?
4. What do the above experiences mean to you?

It must be noted that the construction of these questions was informed by literature, as well as by the purpose of this inquiry, which is to provide in-depth descriptions of the experiences of mentors. It was my intention that the above questions would generate conversation towards data shedding light on the study’s research questions.

- How do mentors experience the implementation of a mentorship programme?

Subsequently, from the findings of the above questions, I hope to address the second question of this study

- How can the understanding of such experiences inform theory on mentorship programmes in Higher Education Institutions?

Authors such as Oakley (1981 cited by Whiting, 2008) warn that trying to control the interview process, by rigid questioning, does not respect the role of the participants, and treats them as if they are there just waiting to produce data. In a similar vein, Denscombe (2004) emphasises that the questions should be open-ended, and there is more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest. It was, therefore, vitally important during these interviews that I ensured the interview process was respectful and flexible. My understanding of the use of semi-structured interviews prepared me to be flexible regarding the order of topics I had considered. Perhaps more significantly, to allow the interviewee to develop ideas and provide detailed and rich descriptions of their experiences.

A review of literature on the interview process revealed that the following factors were significant to consider.

3.5.2.1.1 Interviewer Effect

Whiting (2008 citing Rubin & Rubin, 2005) submits that an interview can be influenced by the gender, professional background, ethnicity and age of both the interviewer and interviewee. She also states that participants often feel more favourable towards interviewers who are similar to themselves (Whiting 2008 citing Fielding, 1994).

I guarded against this effect by relying on the positive relationship I had built with the mentors in the programme during the time I served as their mentor, coordinator and fellow student in the same campus. I believe this lessened any anxiety or concerns from the side of participants. However, I am also cognisant that such relationship might have lead to participants proving me with information they assumed I was expecting, rather than just being honest with their experiences. As such, I have encouraged the mentors to be as honest as possible about their experiences.

3.5.2.1.2 Audio Recording

Whiting (2008) submits that recording an interview contributes to a more relaxed atmosphere as it frees up the interviewer from the distraction of note taking, enabling

him to concentrate on interacting with the participant. Therefore, I made use of an audio recorder ensuring vital information was not overlooked in the interview. In addition, the recorder (as the main data collection unit) was also an asset as it allowed me to give the participants my undivided attention and fully engage with them. The device further helped me to keep eye contact while taking short notes during the data collection process.

3.5.2.2 Demographic Questionnaire

“Questionnaires typically consists of a number of different subparts or scales each consisting of a number of items” (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 488). I designed a questionnaire that aimed at gathering demographic information (see, Appendix A). In designing the questionnaire I heeded Blanche et al., (2006, p. 488) who recommend that “a pilot study be conducted to check the questionnaire before it is administered to the final sample”. As a result, I administered the questionnaire to two of my former colleagues in the mentorship programme, who were not participants of the primary study. They advised on amendments and approved the questionnaire, which was then given to the supervisor for final approval.

Although the questionnaire was primarily intended to collect demographic data, I added a checklist of the factors most often cited by literature to have an effect on mentorship experiences (Riley, 2009). This checklist acted as an extra data collection tool, this aligned to the principle of multi-methods of data collection supported by case study (Refer to 3.4).

3.5.2.3 Reflections

Enrich et al., (2004, p. 532) reports that the “mentoring process has been identified as a vehicle in facilitating reflection because it provides opportunities for mentors and mentees together and alone to reflect”. In addition, Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) also attest to the value of reflection as a process of recalling one’s personal experiences and providing the opportunity for closure. Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) described an Epoch process in which as the research, I begin the study by

setting aside views I have about the research phenomenon and focus on the views reported by participants.

It is against this backdrop that I used reflection technique, as both a data strategy and a process to help me as the researcher to reflect and clear my mind of the views which might hinder the trustworthiness of my findings. Therefore, prior the data collection process, I engaged in an Epoch process. That is, as I have been involved in the mentorship programme for five years, I acknowledge that such experience has a potential to interfere with my current study. Therefore, in order to clear my mind to prevent any interference with the results of this study, I recalled my personal mentorship experiences (see, Appendix D). In engaged in this reflection process, I hoped that this addresses any limitation with regard to the influence I might have due to my previous involvement with the mentorship program

Reflections also afforded the participants of this study the opportunity to recall, reflect and report on their experiences in their own private spaces, and engage in deep reflection in order to provide thick descriptions of their experiences. Each participant therefore, had to write a reflection on mentorship experiences at his own time prior to the interview and bring the reflection to the interview (see, Appendix C).

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

“Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It is a qualitative method in which the researcher is actively involved in analysing data through identifying patterns or themes within the data, and then analysing and reporting on such patterns. This process can even be extended to include the interpretation of the significant issues which arise from these patterns, but initially it aims to organise and describe the collected data.

“Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 76). A theme can be described as important aspect within the data which holds significant relation to the research topic. Such a

theme emerges from the data with significant frequency, and represents patterned responses within the entire range of data. In other words, for the most part, this process involves examining data looking for patterns within it (Babbie, 2005). I had to consider the prevalence of a particular issue within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This reading through process is just the first part, and thematic analysis has not started yet. At this stage, “the researcher just wants to get a global impression of the content” (Henning, 2004, p. 105).

Thematic analysis generally starts when the researcher engages in coding. The coding process “involves taking text data or pictures, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labelling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of the participants” (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). In practice, this involves reading and re-reading transcripts, trying to make sense of the patterns and themes that emerge from your data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). At this level, the themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data, and I was not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said, or written. Ideally, the processes involves a progression from description, were the data have simply been organised to show patterns in semantic content, and summarised, to interpretation, were there is an attempt to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications (Patton, 2002), often in relation to previous literature.

Thematic analysis has the potential not only to organise, but also to richly describe the data collected, making it a suitable method for this particular research project. However, the caution with thematic analysis is that it is a way of seeing, and often what is seen through thematic analysis does not appear to others, even if they are observing the same information, events, or situation (Boyatzis, 1998). “The researchers are ‘the primary instruments’ of data collection and data analysis, therefore, they make an interpretation” (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). These interpretations represent one view of reality out of many possible realities making the interpretations highly subjective.

In order to guard against biases on my part, I continuously engaged in analytic discussions with my supervisor to limit personal bias, thereby trying to improve the

credibility and trustworthiness of the study. I do, however, recommend that future studies could extend the analysis to follow-up interviews and gain clarity and consensus on identified themes and interpretations. Therefore, in this study, semantic thematic analysis was facilitated by a data analysis process called 'horizontalization' (Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004)). I have selected this process based on its comprehensiveness and the guidelines it provides for conducting thematic analysis. This analysis was undertaken concurrently with transcription process as discussed below (Refer to 3.6.1.1).

My first step for analysis was to make use of a transcription rich in data. Therefore, I considered that a transcription with the highest number of pages would potentially yield rich data relevant for the study (see, Appendix B). As there were two transcriptions with the same number of pages (8 pages each), the one on Man-aero was selected (further based on my trust as the researcher that it might yield the most themes) to serve as the bench mark for other themes. The aim was to identify as many subthemes as possible from this transcription, then increase dependability by continuing with the other transcriptions, picking out some themes that might not be included in the initial categories. A potential theme which could not be identified as occurring in at least two transcriptions was omitted and not considered as a theme. Thus, as there were four participants, a theme needed to be present in three of them to qualify as significant.

I, summarise this data analysis process in the following steps, as described by Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004):

The first phase is to glean significant statements. This required me to identify significant verbatim statements as shared by the participants. The focus was mainly on the perspectives of mentors about their experiences of mentorship, which were instrumental in constructing an overall perspective about the mentorship.

Phase two requires putting the statements in a table. During this phase, I tabulated all the significant statements identified in the previous phase. All such statements were assumed to have equal value, and brought to the fore the distinct characteristics of the mentorship programme.

The third phase entails deletion. I focused on narrowing down the gleaned statements to only the most relevant ones. This necessitated deleting all statements that were construed as not contextually relevant to the topic. Following the deletion phase, I embarked on the fourth phase, of clustering, whereby I grouped relevant statements into themes or units. Through this process, pronounced themes were uncovered and served as the focus of analysis.

The final phase of analysis was to elucidate on terminologies. This phase required me to draw on literature, expand on and make sense of the terminologies used by the participants. As this research adopts an interpretive approach, acknowledging the subjective views of participants, I decided that conducting member checking with participants would be the most appropriate procedure in this regard.

3.6.1 REFERENCE FOR ANALYSED DATA

3.6.1.1 Transcriptions

In order to help with the identification of quotation, the transcriptions were labelled as indicated below, and lines were also numbered:

- Man-aero = A
- Black-haven = B
- Mapat = C
- Ayobanation = D

Having used semi-structured interviews, the transcriptions consisted of answers to the following major guiding questions:

- How do you define, or what do you understand by, the word experiences? = **a**
- The implementation stage of the programme is associated with various factors, what are some of your positive experiences, looking specifically at the implementation process of the programme? = **b**

- What are some of the negative experiences you had on the programme? = **c**
- What do the above experiences mean to you? = **d**

This simply means that wherever the reader observes a quotation with a reference, such as Aa3 in brackets, it is possible to track the question so as to help understanding it in context. In the case of this example, it would be the transcription of Man-aero (depicted by capital letter A), first main question (as depicted by small letter a), line 3 (as depicted by number 3).

3.6.1.2 Participant Reflections

The reflections from participants were also used as a form of data collection to increase the dependability of the identified themes. Therefore, the reference from the reflections will be similar to that of transcription, except that the reflection reference will have capital letter 'R' to indicate that it is from the reflections and would not have a subsection as it was indicated by a lower caps alphabet. For example, a reference from Man-aero's reflection will be (ARx), where 'x' is the line number and 'A' represent Man-aero's reflection.

3.7 VALIDATION OF RESEARCH

3.7.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research, the researcher is the data gathering instrument, therefore when qualitative researchers speak of research validity and reliability, they are usually referring to research that is credible and trustworthy (Maree, 2005, p. 80). In this study I also strove to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of findings.

Babbie and Mouton, (2001, p. 276) submit that trustworthiness in qualitative research considers how the researcher tries to convince and persuade the audience that the findings of the study are worth paying attention to, or talking about. I therefore attempted to establish trustworthiness by using different techniques of data collection to ensure the data is not generated from only one process. In addition, all

conclusions about the identified themes were reached on consensus with my supervisor.

3.7.2 CREDIBILITY

Credibility may be understood to deal with the question of “How congruent are the findings with reality?” (Merriam, 1998 as cited in Shenton, 2004, p. 64). In this study I attempted to ensure credibility by way of using multiple sources, member checking for factual errors in the transcripts, as well as within the interpretation of data, and finally peer reviewing (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Thus, credibility is however, mostly viewed by others as synonymous with trustworthiness, and also as one of the factors that ensures trustworthiness (Rolfe, 2004; Shenton, 2004).

3.7.3 DEPENDABILITY

Dependability is another term associated with trustworthiness, and used in qualitative research to address the validity and reliability of a study (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). Dependability is viewed parallel to reliability, a concept common in quantitative research (Punch, 2005). However, it does not focus on the repeatability of study as reliability might be defined (Merriam, 2002), but rather, to the degree to which the researcher has accurately reported on the study’s findings. Therefore, in this study I ensured dependability by providing extracts from the participant’s interviews to support the findings provided.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.8.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Babbie (2005, pp. 63-64) submits that the principles of voluntary participation and no harm to participants has been formalised into the concept of informed consent. Informed consent requires that adequate and comprehensive information is provided with regards to the goal of the inquiry, the procedures to be followed during the investigation as well as the possible advantages and disadvantages to which participants in the investigation may be exposed to (Strydom, Fouche & Delpont,

2005). This required that I made explicit the purposes of the research and its potential benefits and losses to the participants prior to commencing the study. This was done by way of a written consent form coupled with verbal explanation of the contents of the consent form. The participants were then given the opportunity to make an informed decision on whether or not they wished to participate in the study. Participants who agreed to participate in the present study signed a consent form to indicate their informed and voluntary decision to participate. Participants were also made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

3.8.2 CONFIDENTIALITY

Due to the sensitive nature of sharing personal experiences, and the fact that the interviews were being recorded, the issue of confidentiality was very important in this research. The cardinality of maintaining confidentiality is highlighted by Burns and Grove (2005) who state that all participants have the right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Polit and Beck (2006 cited by Whiting 2008, p. 39), describe confidentiality as: “Protection of study participants such that individual identities are not linked to information provided and never publicly divulged”. In a bid to maintain confidentiality all the participants chose pseudo-names, and all written documentation related to the clients referred to them by their pseudonyms.

3.8.3 ETHICAL CLEARANCE

I received approval from the selected HEI’s Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee, for the recent study, certifying it as ethically sound.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I documented the methodological process in which I engaged to collect and analyse data for the purpose of answering the research questions guiding this study. In the following chapter, I offer detailed descriptions of the data collected by way of the processes mentioned in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION, DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I documented the methodological processes that I followed in this study in order to answer the research questions. In this chapter I offer in-depth descriptions of the data collected, and go further by attempting to make sense of the data by categorising it into themes and subthemes. I therefore, apply the Ecological Model as a framework to make meaning of the data. This further serves to enhance the clarity of my findings and to provide a theoretically based structure and systemic presentation of the findings.

Although the Model encourages an analysis of all systems, in this chapter, I will only elucidate on themes and system; specifically looking at the Exo-, Micro- and Meso-systems. Therefore, I will start by describing and analysing data which emerged as experiences at the level of the micro-system, followed by those within the meso-system, and finally the exo-system. In addition to this, I provide a diagrammatical representation (Diagram 4.1) to provide an overview of the subsequent subsections. The diagram helps to provide a holistic glance of the presented findings.

4.2 PRESENTATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THEMES

I have identified four themes from the data, namely: Constructing meaning of mentorship experiences, Positive experiences, Negative experiences, and Programme implementation. I present the themes identified from the mentors' transcriptions and provide a brief description of each. A critical analysis of literature is also provided and a discussion on how these results contribute to scholarship on mentorship. Within each theme, I present the various subthemes, which were also identified from transcriptions, providing a description of each in relationship to how it was viewed by the mentors. Each subtheme falls within either one of the four main themes. Although each theme is placed within a relevant systemic level of the

ecological model in which it belongs, in some instances it is noted that a theme might fall within two systems. This indicates that similar mentorship experiences might be shared at different systemic levels by the mentors.

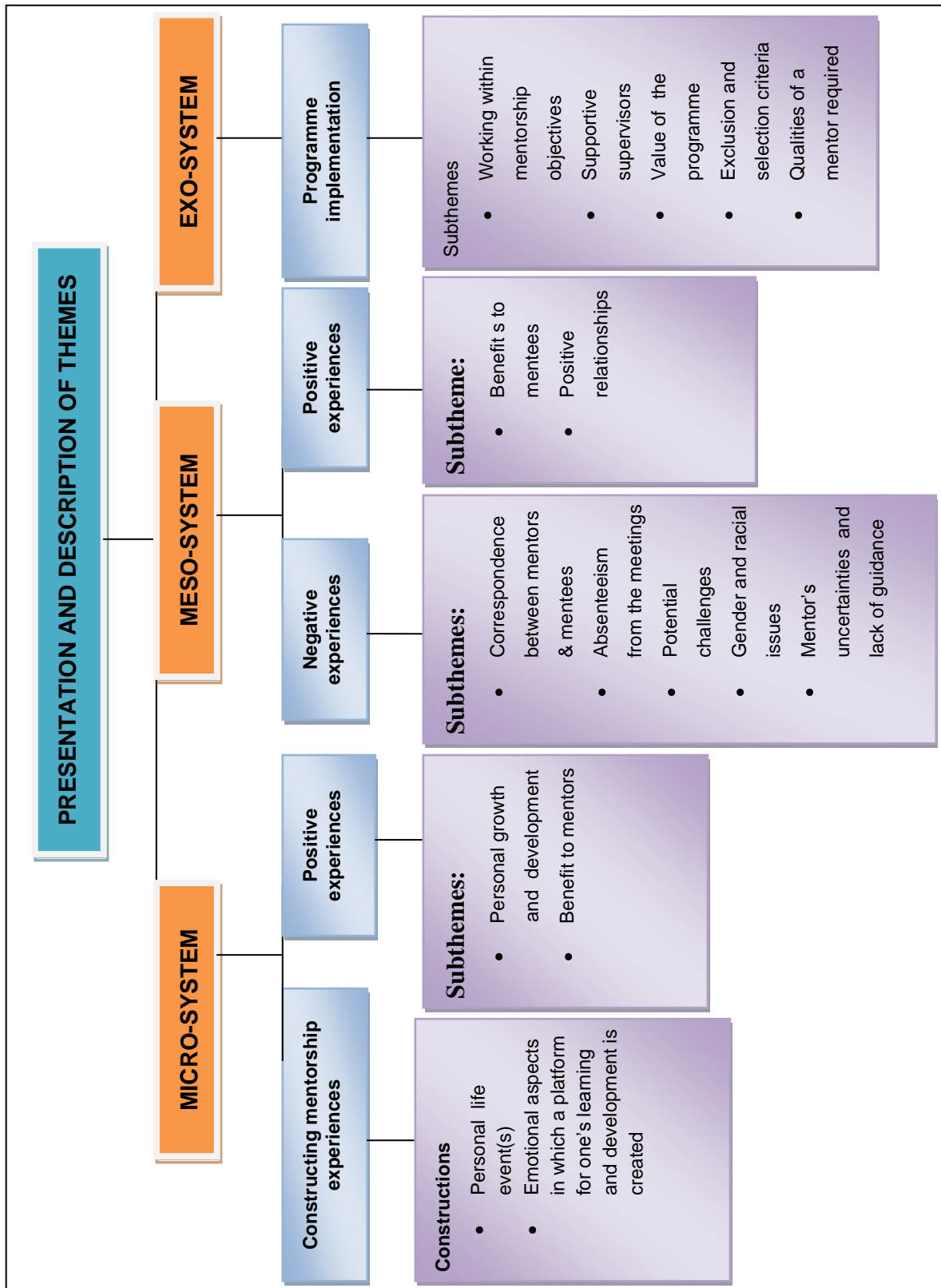


DIAGRAM 4.1: OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTED RESULTS

4.3 MICRO-SYSTEM

The micro-system entails focusing on the individual. Therefore, it's important to first gain an understanding of how the participants in this study constructed the meaning of their mentorship experiences. The interpretivist approach, which informs my study, creates a platform for multiple realities and subjectivity (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006; Cohen, Manion & Morris, 2000). As such, even though literature readings helped me in constructing the definition of mentorship experiences, I was cautious not to take for granted the possibility of multiple of meanings which could be attached to the mentorship experiences. Therefore, to avoid imposing my own definition, I made it my aim to first start by understanding how each participant constructed his/her own meaning.

4.3.1 CONSTRUCTING MEANING OF MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES

Coward (1997) submits that the construction of meaning is at the centre of the nature of human beings, and that such construction takes place in the process of conversation. As I engaged in a process of guided conversation with the participants, in the form of semi-structured interviews, it emerged that mentors attached various descriptions to how they experienced the mentorship.

According to the data, it appears that the participants constructed the meaning of mentorship as personal life events characterised by either good or bad emotional feelings, whereby a platform for one's learning and development is created. Mentors also viewed the success of mentorship experiences based on their mentee's change of attitudes and academic performance. Even though such a definition of mentorship success receives literature support (Johnson, 2007; Liu & Tein, 2005), the overall construction of mentorship experiences is not exactly the same as how mentorship experiences are constructed from literature review (Scott, 1998). Below, therefore, is how mentors in this study constructed their mentorship experiences, followed by a discussion to elucidate on this suggested disparity.

Mentorship experiences are viewed as a personal life event(s):

“...it’s an event of something which happened to you and you experienced it...”

(Da1-2)

“...things that you experience in your life, like the events that take place in your life...” (Ca1-2)

“...is the event that one comes across...” (Ba1)

“...it’s something that you have done...” (Aa1)

“...something which happened to you...” (Ba1)

“...things that you experience in your life...” (Ca1)

These events have emotional aspects in which a platform for one’s learning and development is created:

“...it has to do with involvement and feelings.” (Ba2-3)

“...it can be emotional...” (Da2)

“...they might learn bad things or good things...” (Aa4)

“I can define it as well as something that helps you to develop yourself...”

(Da2-3)

“...things that you learn through certain situation or events which you are placed in.”

(Ba5)

The above and below extracts mainly present academic achievement, emotional aspects and personal growth from life events as the major components in understanding mentorship experiences. This perspective is consistent with literature that contends that mentorship has a strong effect on an individual's academic achievement, emotional and behavioural functioning (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002). Mentors in this study further suggested that they measure the success of mentorship experiences based on changes in mentees' attitudes, as well as their improved academic performance. Wherever mentorship is viewed positively in literature, improved academic performance seemed to be one of the main accompanying factors (Allen, Day & Lentz, 2005; Benson, Morahan, Sachdeva, & Richman, 2002; Johnson, 2007). Therefore, this relationship between mentorship success and improved academic performance is complimented by the extracts below in participants' constructions of mentorship experiences.

“... I can say that my success is based on their results as well...” (Ab58)

“It was related to the success of my mentees at the end of the year... Basically what I wanted as well, most importantly is to pass because they came here to study...”

(Db18 & 26-27)

Furthermore, a critical look at the constructed meanings of mentorship experiences seems to indicate some similarities with what is already reported in literature. Firstly, it is the view of mentorship experiences as events that occur at the conscious level of our minds (Scott, 1998). Such a view relates with the construction of mentorship experiences as personal events. Thus, the existence of these events at the conscious level is demonstrated by the mentors' ability to remember them, and that they still regard them as significant in understanding mentorship experiences (Scott, 1998).

Secondly, the view of mentorship experiences having benefits to mentees, by achieving their academic aspiration, as described in literature (Benson, Morahan,

Sachdeva, & Richman, 2002; Johnson, 2007; Liu & Tein, 2005) is in line with how mentors in this study defined mentorship success. Thus, mentorship success was one of the terms mentioned by mentors when constructing their mentorship success. These results are also consistent with findings that report on the critical role of mentors in a mentee's career success (Wallace, 2001). Thus, career can be generally viewed to refer to success on any work related task, mentorship included (Bozionelos, 2004).

4.3.2 POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

I have indicated previously that it is possible for a theme to exist in more than one level of the system. Therefore, Positive experiences also appear at the meso-systemic level. According to data it emerged that participants experienced their role of being a mentor as a positive experience. These experiences ranged from the perceived personal development of both the mentors and the mentees, as well as how mentors believed they benefited from the programme. These positive experiences seemed to come, mainly, as a result of the mentor-mentee relationship, rather than how mentors related to other co-participants in the programme, such as mentor-mentor and mentor-supervisor, relationships.

Some studies, therefore, also support the importance of the mentor-mentee relationship in determining the quality of mentorship experiences (Eby, Butts, Durley, & Ragins, 2010; Webb & Shakespeare, 2008). Some studies on mentorship experiences have suggested a general positive view of mentorship experiences (Brittian, Sy & Stokes, 2009; Enrich, Hansford & Tennets, 2004). In their article, Webb and Shakespeare (2008, p. 563) further state that "Good mentoring", which is associated to positive experiences, "depended on students building a relationship with their mentors..."

However, even though the mentor-mentee relationship seems to be the main determinant of positive mentorship experiences, such a relationship does not seem to have much impact on negative mentorship experiences. That is, in a study reporting on 15 types of negative experiences, poor mentor-mentee relationship is not one of the factors indicated (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). This raises

the question that, beside mentor-mentee relationship, what other factors play a role on positive mentorship experiences? Subsequently, also the question is that, within this mentor-mentee relationship, what are the specific aspects which lead to these positive experiences? Therefore, although the transcripts below might not directly provide answers to these questions, they are however helpful in understanding these issues better. .

4.3.2.1 Personal Growth and Development (AR1)

It was interesting that all participating mentors made comments supporting this subtheme, which serves as a strong indicator supporting the trustworthiness of this issue. The mentors all expressed that they have experienced personal growth, as marked by the following extracts:

“...for my personal growth, I have learnt a lot ...” (Ab1)

“...my life has changed that I saw so much transformation to the point where I felt I was ready to be a leader ...” (Bb2-3)

“...this mentorship programme taught me to be patient and to really cope with people who have come with different emotions every day, people who are moody and stuff.”
(Cd2-3)

“...the experience that I had was that I can really relate to other people coming from different backgrounds...it also taught me not to judge people.” (Cd5-7)

“...myself I have learnt a lot, and I think that next time when I like, mentor someone, I will know exactly what to do, when to draw a line, you shouldn't do 1-2-3, because it is very much important especially when you are a mentor...” (Ad1-3)

“...and it pushed me to excel, and, and that is when started excelling and I started giving as much as possible to my mentees” (Bb22-23)

“...I have learnt a lot, especially when it comes to handling other people’s problems...” (Ab1-2)

According to Strouse and Sieverdes (2005), personal growth and development emerge as one of the opportunities during an individual’s mentorship journey. It seems that mentors in this mentorship programme seized their opportunity and made the best of it through personal growth and development. I concur with Eby et al., (2010), that the expectations of the mentor and mentee are important areas of focus because when these expectations are unmet, the mentor-mentee relationship may be experienced as negative. Further, according to them the mentoring outcomes are dependent on the quality of mentoring relationship, which is also depended on both the mentee and the mentor playing their role in the mentorship process (Eby et al., 2010).

4.3.2.2 Benefits to Mentors

In addition to the personal growth and development that mentors have experienced, they also referred to various other benefits gained from the programme. Literature strong supports the theme of mentorship benefits (Benson, Morahan, Sachdeva, & Richman, 2002; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). Thus, while in the process of personal growth and development, new friendships were also formed and mentors stated that they also developed a greater sense of self awareness. This subtheme is supported by the following extracts:

One of the positive benefits of the mentors is the fact that they were able to form new friendships (AR17-18):

“Making friends, ya, and some of my mentees are still my friends. But then, what I achieved from this mentorship is friends, I gained friendship.” (Cd24-25)

“...having to meet the people that I was working with, the mentees that I was mentoring, and having to make friends with,” (Bb7-8)

“...one of my mentees were very close friends of mine, she will always talk about how motivated she was about how I am...” (Dc54-56)

It also appeared that the experience of being a mentor provided the mentors with the opportunity to develop a greater sense of self awareness of their own capabilities and this is seen in the extracts below:

“...so I guess I was inspired to be the best... I was inspired to know that I can do more” (Bb19-20)

“The sense I make out of them is that I work good with people. I enjoy working with people, and I think they respond well to me” (Cd1-2)

Positive experiences, as identified by the participants of this study, seemed typical of those experienced by human support programmes. They are consistent with other positive experiences that the literature search has produced (Ragins & Scandura, 1999; Wallace, 2001). Therefore, these positive experiences are what one may expect from any good mentoring relationship. As such, due to the fact that positive experiences depend on a good mentoring relationship (Webb & Shakespeare, 2008), this theme can be viewed as consistent with current literature.

In summation of this theme, both the two identified subthemes elucidated on some critical skills: working with diverse people, developing strategies to handle people’s problems, and leadership abilities. Thus, mentors suggested that the mentorship experience enhanced their helping and leadership skills.

Other benefits mentioned were communication skills, forming new friendships, and developing self awareness. Even though these soft skills seem typical of helping relationships, there seemed to be a limitation in literature showing the link between mentorship and these skills (Connelly, Gilbert, Threlfall, Marks, & Mumford, 2000; Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro, & Reiter-Palmon, 2000). However, in a study exploring the relationships between leader-subordinate communication and subordinate satisfaction, Oh, Kim and Lee (1991) found a relationship between a considerate, supportive and a friendly leader, non-official communication in facilitating interpersonal relationships and conveying information.

4.4 MESO-SYSTEM

The meso-system focuses on the interaction of all the systems in the micro-system. It is acknowledged that what takes place on the ground level practice of mentorship (the micro-system) might have a reciprocal influence on the literature on mentorship experiences at the macro-systemic level and vice-versa. Therefore, the main subsystems at the meso-systemic level particularly relevant to this study are, mentors- and mentees- subsystems. Thus, the main focus on this level is on the interaction between the mentors and the mentees. As stated previously, it is possible for a system to contain more than one theme, one of which also featured in the previous system level:

4.4.1 POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

4.4.1.1 Benefit to Mentees

It also appeared that the mentors experienced the mentorship to have been of benefit to the mentees in various ways. This is a significant positive experience because it suggests that the mentors may have experienced their contributions as meaningful to the programme. It must also be noted that these reflect the subjective experience of the mentors, therefore their perceived benefits to the mentees, and this may not necessarily be the mentees' experiences of the mentorship. Goodwin (1995) has indicated the importance of co-participation in making meaning, stating that in the case when only one party is present, that although meaning might not be

what was intended, it might still be close to the desired one. Therefore, below are some of perceived benefits to mentees that emerged, namely: sense of direction, adaptation to tertiary lifestyle and access to resources. This subtheme has various categories within it.

- *Sense of direction*

“...some of them they came here without any direction as to how things work...”

(Ab5).

“...so I wanted them to really, really focus on their academic performances rather than the other social life.” (Cb50)

“...I was trying to give them guidance on how to go about with their studies” (Db22)

The environment at a tertiary institution is different from that of high school, and as such, for a first year student might present as difficult to manoeuvre through. That might be one of the reasons why gaining a sense of direction through the guidance of mentorship was perceived as a significant benefit to mentees in the programme. Also evident in the responses was the importance of guidance in the helping relationship, which did not differ between the genders (Ross, 2005).

- *Adaptation to tertiary lifestyle* (AR1214, CR4-6, DR10-13)

“With me being there and helping them, it made them to adapt I think and much quicker to the whole university lifestyle...” (Ab5-6)

“I was able to help them through to adapt to a new situation... And they did adapt quite well and they were able to balance their academic as well as their social life.”(Cb1-4)

“...I wanted them to settle to varsity life and environment, and as well as to make a balance between studies and also as well as social life.” (Db25-26)

Mentors seem to implicate the high academic demands and challenges of tertiary education as the two main contributors to students’ poor academic achievement. It was poor student performance that prompted the current mentorship programme to set the objective of helping students to adapt well to tertiary life (Mentorship Policy Documents, 2008). The above extracts, therefore, support the importance of mentorship in helping mentees with regard to this concern of adaptation to tertiary life.

- *Access to resources* (AR14-16, BR27-29)

“I had a case whereby this other mentee of mine she stayed like for past three month on the first mentorship. She did not know how to use click-up, you know, until I came in and showed her the basics of how to access” (Ab6-8)

“Each and every test or semester test that they had and we would discuss so that I could basically; go with them through past papers.” (Cb7-8)

“So, I wanted to push them so that they can keep their position at res.” (Cb43)

“...I tried all my best to help them because I knew it is really difficult for a first year, and I try to do all my best to help them, like, for instance, other will have a problem with CIL, try to make tutors, text book and those kind of things, to help them in the library and borrow the once which I had...” (Db11-13)

The presence of the above benefits is consistent with Allen et al., (2004, p. 132) who state that the “most consistent claim made in the mentoring literature is that those who are mentored accrue substantial benefits”. Sense of direction, adaptation to a tertiary education environment and access to resources appear to be perceived by

the mentors as substantial benefits for a first year student at a HEI. It is believed that such benefits are really helpful in smoothing the transition from a high school environment to the demands of a tertiary education and can really be advantageous to mentees as compared to other students without mentors. Coddington and Satin (2008) also attest to the vital and effective impact that mentors might have on their mentees through a mentorship programme. Such an impact could be understood to refer to an influential role that a mentor plays in the life of a mentee.

In contrary, Eby, Lockwood and Butts (2006) suggest that benefits to mentees are likely to be experienced where there is support from the mentorship managers or supervisors. However, the 'Little support from supervisors' subtheme (discussed further down in this report) indicates that mentors in this study experienced their supervisors as less supportive in the programme. This implies that even in the midst of less support, it was perceived that both mentees and mentors experienced the programme to be beneficial. This could be a new perspective providing a different view from former findings.

4.4.1.2 Positive Relationships

Under this subtheme, the mentors felt that they had experienced positive relationships as marked by the good quality relationships they had developed with their mentees:

“I think I created a very good relationship with them and then they could relate much easier with me without being afraid” (Ab20-21)

“...we had a sisterly relationship. I had a good a relationship...” (Cc43)

“...because I was interested in their life, as to what they are doing, and I think that is one of the things that made them to be much closer to me.” (Ab26-27)

“I got really along with them and I become more of their friend than their mentor, so I didn’t really mind them calling me at twelve O’ clock at night asking me questions, because now, I was no longer their mentor. I was someone more like their friend; we established a friendship, other than a relationship that is between mentor and a mentee.” (Cc39-41)

The above extracts not only further validate forming friendships as a benefit to mentors, but also raise important questions with regard to boundaries in a mentorship relationship. Specifically questions pertaining to the appropriateness of mentees calling their mentors after hours or at any time of the night, and developing strong personal friendships with them.

- *Immediate assistance*

Mentors in this study indicated that their positive relationships were also marked by their ability to assist mentees in meeting their immediate needs:

“...helping them with what they needed at that time.” (Ab28-29)

“And she had an advantage because I am ECD and she was ECD, so she was supposed to stick by me so that I can help her through but she didn’t see that as an advantage, so she didn’t really make it,” (Cb31-32)

“It was a good experience and having people to help when they experience difficulty, when they don’t understand other things ...” (Db6)

- *Positive attitudes*

Mentors also indicated that they aimed to instil positive attitudes in their mentees.

“I was mainly orientated upon their attitude... what I was conveying was the positive factor to me,... was the fact that my mentees could say this is possible, I can do it, and I could stand up and get it...” (Bb42&44-45)

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“...if they had positive attitude, that’s what also led to them passing their module, being able to go through their June examination and be able to pass...” (Cb24-25)

“I was able to encourage them the way I used my thing and how I study.” (Dc59)

This Positive Relationship theme is supported by the benefits that mentees received. Ragins and Scandura (1999, p. 505) states that “the worth of the relationship is therefore judged not just by the outcomes received by the mentor, but by the benefits received by the protégé”. It appears that the relationship between the mentors and their mentees has been a worthwhile experience.

4.4.2 NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

Although research indicates that both the mentee and mentor can experience mentorship in a negative way (Eby et al., 2010), some mentors in the current study seemed to have had difficulty in providing information expressing negative experiences. Despite this initial resistance in discussing negative experiences, the mentors were eventually able to share some such experiences. This might have been attributed to my previous relationship with the participants as their coordinator, viewing me as their senior and feeling concerned about what the implications of their

negative account might be. I believe that reassuring them about confidentiality of their information might have helped to put them at ease.

Choo (1996) highlights the importance of information in an organisation, and how people make use of such information to make sense of events within the organisation. Therefore, the information that was provided by mentors gave much value in this regard by helping me to make sense of the negative experiences they shared. Below are the subthemes identified from transcriptions:

4.4.2.1 Correspondence between the Mentors and Mentees

The mentors were in unison explaining that contacting the mentees was often a negative experience. These experiences were expressed with regards to mentors trying to contact their mentees, or as mentees contacting their mentors at awkward times. It is noted, however, that one of the mentors had previously indicated not to mind being contacted any time, but this was the exception.

“...contacting the mentees it was a very hard part...” (Ac1)

“...you are sending an email to discuss certain something or perhaps to request and nobody follows that or checks the email, no matter how hard you try to tell them.”

(Bc7)

“...the only negative experience was, they would call me at six o'clock...” (Cc1)

“...it was not easy, I called and smsed (texted) them, I made a meeting and only few came.” (Dc2)

Even though mentors indicated friendship as one of the benefit that came with the mentorship programmes, when it came to the issue of correspondence between mentors and mentees, the above extracts indicate that more negatives were experienced than positives. Mainly, it seems the negative experiences emanated

from mentees' lack of cooperation when mentors requested meetings with them. It appeared that those mentees who were comfortable with the formed friendship also had the advantage of calling their mentors any time they wanted to. An accentuation of this concern could be described best by the question of whether individuals can “engage in successful mentoring and career development without liking one another?” (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007, p. 128). This question highlights the importance of understanding the boundary crossing between socialisation and mentorship. Bozeman and Feeney (2007) further add to this issue by quoting other authors who have concluded that friendship formation is one of the outcomes of mentorship programmes.

4.4.2.2 Absenteeism from Meetings

The mentor-mentee relationship seemed to have also been challenged by the poor attendance of mentees at mentorship meetings. Mentors indicated that only a smaller number of mentees would show up, compared to what was expected for the meetings. Such incidents caused discouragement to the mentors who were preparing for a bigger audience.

“I had 10 but two of them did not pitch, they did not come at all because I even tried contacting them but they did not come” (Ab17-18)

“...the first negative would be the response, the response that you would get, say for instance you have planned a nice meeting and nobody turns up or two turns up and this meeting was meant for ten or five for that matter...” (Bc5-7)

“I was expecting ten people to pitch, but when I get there, I find that only, from my original mentors that were given, only four pitched...” (Cc26-27)

“...I think it is one of the negative as well is the effort that I had to use to motivate them and encourage them and convince, key word, convince them to come to our meetings, you know, that wasn't very pleasant” (Bc12-15)

“...you call them to come to a meeting and they wouldn’t pitch, tell you stories, I am doing one two three. I think it goes with what you have just mentioned there, the preferences.” (Ac82-84)

“some would tell me that I was busy or things like that and I see their time table, I had their time table and see that he was not in class” (Dc21-22)

A regular meeting with one’s mentor is one of most critical aspects of mentorship (Beercroft, Santner, Lacy, Kunzman and Dorey, 2006). Even though the likelihood of attendance at meetings was associated with the mentees’ level of education, other factors also mentioned as contributing to the absenteeism were decreased commitment, time and schedule constraints, and apparent role inadequacy of both mentor and mentee (Beercroft et al., 2006). In some of the above extracts, mentors seemed to suggest that time and schedule constraints, from mentees’ side, were the main reasons for not attending meetings.

Gray and Smith (2000, p. 1546) state that “poor mentors break promises, lack knowledge and expertise, have poor teaching skills, have no structure in their teaching and consequently chop and change their minds about things”. As there are many factors that influence attendance at meetings, the current data does not provide information whether absentia of mentees was associated with a poor mentor or not.

4.4.2.3 Gender and Racial Issues

Gender and racial issues were also identified by mentors as hindering the mentorship relationship:

“...I used to work very good with girls and I had a problem with guys...” (Ac77)

“...I used to work very good with girls and I had a problem with guys...” (Ac77)

“Others they just had the expression, especially the whites, I don’t know whether it was because I was black and they are white, I don’t know.” (Dd18-20)

“Five passed because the one, who is the white girl, she did not come to the meeting so she kind of did not pass all her modules. And she had an advantage because I am ECD and she was ECD, so she was supposed to stick by me so that I can help her through but she didn’t see that as an advantage, so she didn’t really make it...”

(Cb30-32)

The above extracts indicate that male mentors seemed to experience success with the female mentees and had challenge working with male mentees. On the other hand, the female mentors seemed to experience more success with same gender mentees, with ambivalent feelings concerning their relationship to males. Further, all mentors who had mentees of a different race to their own seemed to experience difficulties with such mentees. Again, mentors also seemed to have had success with mentees of crossed gender as compared to the same gendered relationship. However, such results seem to be inconsistent with literature which suggests a benefit for same-gendered and same-race mentorships, as compared to cross-gendered and cross-race mentorship (Allen et al., 2005). Accordingly, such cross-gendered and cross-race differences are associated with interpersonal comfort due to social identity (Allen, et al., 2005).

4.4.2.4 Mentors’ Uncertainties and Lack of Guidance (BR9-12, DR30-34, DR25-29)

Mentors’ perceived lack of expertise or feelings of inadequacy seemed to play an important role in them not knowing what to do in the programme, and feeling lost without guidance:

“...my fear on uncertainties always has had an impact, because I will stand there talking to this attentive people and, and the constant question that is at the back of my heart, or at the back of my mind or my speech processing is, are they really listening, is it getting through, am I saying the right thing, you know?” (Bc44-46)

“...sometimes you go to a meeting, or you have arranged a meeting just to see them and you ask them how they are doing and they say they are stuck, and all of a sudden, you are stuck, you don’t know what to do.” (Dc13-14)

“...you need some guidance somehow of how you should go about doing the mentorship and other things” (Ad10-11)

“...in the programme they never gave us a clear vision of what is expected from us to do...” (Dc9-10)

Although the literature seems to hold a general positive view of mentorship (Brittian, Sy & Stokes, 2009; Enrich, Hansford & Tennets, 2004), mentors in this study indicated that mentorship, like any other programme, does not come without the negatives. At this meso-systemic level, mentors’ correspondence with mentees, mentees’ absenteeism from meetings, gender and racial issues and mentors’ feelings of uncertainty and lack of guidance are identified as subthemes under the main theme of Negative experiences. Although the view of mentorship literature from a systemic perspective is aimed at providing a better understanding of mentorship experiences, Goodwin (1995) indicates that the reported negative experiences in literature seem to be linked to the negative emotions found to be part of a system. Thus, from literature, it does not come as a surprise that mentorship experiences carry such a varied number of negative experiences, but should be viewed as normal to a mentorship relationship (Eby et al., 2000). They further caution against focusing only on the positive side of mentorship without acknowledging that even the negatives are part of the whole scope of looking at mentorship.

What is interesting to note though, is the observed difficulty of mentors to report on negative mentorship experiences, which is important in the identification of potential skill development opportunities. For example, difficulty in dealing with people from different racial groups presents an opportunity to develop a mentor's skill of working with people from diverse backgrounds. Antonio (2001) emphasises the benefits of interracial interaction among students, especially in developing leadership skills. This is significant as it also brings attention to the relationship between effective communication and leadership skills discussed above (Oh, Kim & Lee, 1991).

4.5 EXO-SYSTEM

This section focuses on those themes which the mentors have no decision or control over. However, these decisions have an impact on the programme implementation, and subsequently an impact on the mentor.

4.5.1 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

4.5.1.1 Working within Mentorship Objectives

Even though the mentors agreed that the mentorship objectives were clearly stated, they stated that in some instances they deviated from such objectives and implemented the programme according to their personal preferences, as demonstrated by the following:

“I did not follow the objectives, I think I was doing things my way, compared to what we had to do, and what the stated objectives were, I did not follow those, I did it my own way...they (Objectives) were well conveyed, it's just that I choose not to follow them, them, they were not working for me, it was not the way I thought I would do things, so I just did not go through with them”

(Cb53-54&56-57)

“I did what I was expected to do to help them in order to settle in this environment and achieve...” (Db30-31)

“...the objectives were clear Sir, I think so, and actually I don't even remember the objectives!” (Bb65-66)

4.5.1.2 Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria (AR33-36)

All mentors indicated their concern regarding procedures that needed to be followed in the exclusion and selection of mentees, indicating that careful measures needed to be taken in this regard. Mentors seemed to feel that most mentees on the programme did not really need to be on the programme, and that there were other students who genuinely deserved to be in the programme but for some reason, had been excluded:

“...I think the mentorship programme as a whole should have taken an initiative of making sure that everybody, whether you came late or not, they knew about the mentorship programme.” (Ac25-17)

“...there are people who were supposed to in the mentorship who did not get chance to be part of the mentorship and I think those were the people who were in need...” (Ac21-22)

“...there are some people (mentees) whom they didn't like, I can say they were not supposed to be on the mentorship because they performed well and they excelled in everything...” (Ac16-17)

“Personally, they did not want to be there but, they felt obliged to be there because for what I have offered them.” (Bc26-27)

“One thing I would like to say is that there should be careful in choosing mentors because not everybody is dedicated, there are those mentors who really, really want to assist...” (Ad28-30)

4.5.1.3 Little Support from Supervisors (DR21-24)

Mentors also shared the same sentiments about the lack of support from supervisors. They implied that mentorship supervisors did not come through for them when assistance was needed, and as such, it presented them to their mentees as incompetent.

“And again, the negative part is that, for example, you might seek for help from the, what we call supervisors, and you find that you can’t get that help ...” (Ac6-7)

“...sometimes I would speak to, let’s say the coordinator, maybe he/she will say....I reported this issue to so and so and she will deal with it but the next thing there is not positive feedback.” (Ac 43)

“My other negative thing is time schedule, like the meetings, they (supervisors) never considered that we are staying at Groenkloof and we have to take a bus from here to main campus and we had classes in between...” (Dc4-6)

“As well as the announcements, they (supervisors) tell us today that we must tell the mentees, and they should see it on time, so the time management was a problem for the organisers (supervisors).” (Dc7-9)

4.5.1.4 Qualities of a Good Mentor

According to the participants, the first quality of good mentor is that of someone with good values (BR41-44)

Mentors seemed to suggest that there are some good values which are needed to be a mentor in the programme. Living an exemplary life, treating everyone equally, practicing what you preach and going beyond the required effort are some examples, as presented in the following extracts:

“...you have to set an example to somebody... So, you should know as a mentor when to draw a line...” (Ad3&6)

“...you should make sure that you treat everybody equally, and you don't like, be gender bias, maybe favouring one gender.” (Ad6-7)

“...you should always be positive...” (Ad11)

“...ok what have I learned from it? That, you should not allow anything to bring you down whether or not it is the unexpected...” (Bd42-43)

“...what you do it should be a reflection of what the mentees see in you. Like, you shouldn't be opposite of what you are saying...” (Ad11-12)

“It's very much important that you stick to what you say, and when you are with your mentees, I think is much important, it's very important that you become honest with them...” (Ad12-14)

“...I am still helping those who are seeking for my help is not something that has just gone with the mentorship.” (Ad24)

Mentors also indicated that a good mentor should possess some particular skills or knowledge

Mentors also seemed to suggest that mentoring requires some skills or certain knowledge that allows them to lead others. This implies that if an individual does not have such skills allowing him/her to function as a mentor, they would, at least, require practical guidelines on how to conduct the mentorship meetings:

“...I think you need some skills, because for example, it was also difficult for some mentors to mentor their mentees without having a guide...” (Ad8-9)

“...and wisdom that you have, or the knowledge you have...” (Bd46)

“Maybe because it was my first time to lead people less experience to lead, especially in the mentorship programme. It was difficult whereby I had to lead different people with different backgrounds and values and lifestyles” (Dd3-5)

A mentorship study from a medical perspective by Coddington and Satin (2008, p. 1571) “identified and described several qualities that a good mentor must have, such as openness, commitment, receptive listening, humility, patience, and confidentiality. Although the study indicated that these qualities could be widely applied (not being limited to only the medical field), they are not in agreement with what the mentors in this study identified as qualities of a good mentor. A possible reason for this is that the medical study presents a different context to the educational one of this study, which might demand different qualities.

Furthermore, Hughes and Fraser (2010), also from a medical perspective, mention the qualities of being approachable, instilling confidence, and advocating for women. However, these qualities are also inconsistent with those identified by the current study. It is, therefore, evident that the qualities of a good mentor are not only limited to a larger context, such as education or medical fields, but rather, to a smaller context in which the mentorship takes place.

Working within the programme objectives, consideration of exclusion and inclusion criteria, lack of support from supervisors and qualities of a good mentor are the subthemes identified within this main theme of programme implementation. It should be noted that these themes also emerged as either themes or significant aspects of mentorship within other studies (Byrne & Keefe, 2002; Hughes & Fraser, 2010; Nettleton & Bray, 2008). However, these studies were not necessarily focused on the implementation aspects of a mentorship programme.

A study conducted by Hughes and Fahy (2009) on implementing a mentorship programme indicates challenges such as, identifying potential mentors, participation of mentees in attending events and the effectiveness of mentors. However, it also states that such programmes can be implemented widely, and that there are benefits for both mentors and mentees. Even though their study did not report on the majority of subthemes under the theme Programme Implementation, it does provide essential support for to the importance of finding a good mentor for the mentorship programme.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the results of the study according to data collected. Most of the identified subthemes correlate to what has been reported in literature. In the case of identified inconsistencies, I have attempted to provide some reasons suggesting that the context could have played a role. Furthermore, the differing views regarding the qualities of a good mentor, as discussed from the perspectives of two medical studies, also seem to point to a contextual role (Coddington & Satin, 2008; Hughes & Fraser, 2010). Therefore, when considering the results highlighted by this study it is important to acknowledge that the current study was conducted within the South African context, and for the most part, the majority of literature emerged from international context.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study by focusing on the limitations, contribution and recommendations. The aim of this study was to gain an insider's perspective on the experiences of mentors, and thereby attempt to answer the study's primary question:

- *How do mentors experience the implementation of a mentorship programme?*

Subsequently, from the findings of the above question, my intention was to address the secondary question of this study:

- *How can the understanding of such experiences inform theory on mentorship programmes in Higher Education Institutions?*

I start by providing evidence for the main findings of this study with regard to the experiences of mentors, and look at how these findings address the above questions. I will then move on to discuss the limitations of this study and conclude by examining the contributions of this study to scholarship of the topic of mentorships in HEIs.

5.2 MAIN FINDINGS

5.2.1 PRIMARY QUESTION

How do mentors experience the implementation of a mentorship programme?

- Mentors had a general definition of their mentorship experiences as personal life event(s).

- When mentorship was viewed as a personal life event, it was found to have an emotional aspect which creates a platform for learning and development.
- Positive experiences, as mentioned by participants in this study, included an opportunity for personal growth and development, how mentors and mentees benefited from being part of the mentorship programme, and positive relationships between mentors and their mentees.
- Negative experiences referred to by participants included difficulties of correspondence between mentors and mentees, lack of mentee attendance at mentorship meetings, gender and racial issues and mentors' uncertainties about what to do in the programme and feeling a lack of guidance.
- Decisions regarding exclusion and inclusion criteria of mentees into the programme, support from mentorship supervisors and finding mentors who demonstrate good qualities were identified as challenges in mentorship implementation.

5.2.2 SECONDARY QUESTION

How can the understanding of such experiences inform theory on mentorship programmes in Higher Education institution?

This study focused on the formal mentorship programme as referred to by McDonald et al., (2007). Mentorship theory highlights some of the difficulties which accompany a formal mentorship approach and at the same time acknowledges the motive of support and resultant good benefits of formal mentorship. Specifically, formal mentorship is viewed as hindering the development of safe, creative and personal relationships (Singh, Bains & Vinnicombe, 2002). From the above it appears as if formal mentorships are less favourable when compared to informal mentorship. However, the findings of this study seemed to suggest the opposite. Mentors indicated how they developed personal relationships with their mentees, and how these relationships seemed to create a safe environment for the mentees. Dubois, Holloway, Valentine and Cooper, (2002) support the connection between strong mentor-mentee relationship and benefits of the mentorship programme in a tertiary education environment.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are consistent with Enrich et al., (2004) who held a generally positive view of a mentorship programme. Although the participants in this study identified some challenges accompanying the mentorship programme, such challenges seemed to be outweighed by the expressed positives experiences. This positive view of this mentorship could be ascribed to mentors' positive attitudes towards the mentorship programme, which appear to play a role in the positive outcomes of the mentorship (Bancroft, 2008). These positive attitudes of mentors were expressed in their desire for mentees to benefit from the programme by helping them to transition smoothly from high school to a tertiary environment.

Reflection on mentorship theory also highlighted three factors which influence the success of mentorships, namely: a lack of communication, ineffective relationships between mentors, and undesirable mentee behaviour. In this study, mentors viewed success based on mentees achieving their academic aspiration(s). However, a lack of communication, ineffective mentor-mentee relationship and lack of support from mentorship supervisors appeared to be the most challenging factors. Communication problems seemed secondary to ineffective mentor-mentee relationship. The strong emphasis on the mentor-mentor relationship is consistent with the view of Dubois et al., (2002). Mentors in this study indicated that those mentees who demonstrated undesirable behaviours and with whom they did not have an effective relationship often did not do well academically. This could be the reason why mentors still maintained that they experienced success in the programme.

The last review on mentorship theory emphasises how South African data focuses on mentorships, mainly within the educational context. This emphasis is also supported by the mentors in this study who reiterated the importance and need for mentorships, and how they wished they had received mentoring during their time while still at an undergraduate level. Their views were only centred on how mentorship helps within the tertiary institution environment without reference to the workplace or environments outside the HEI context.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.3.1 MY POSITION AS RESEARCHER

As the researcher, I had to be cognisant of my previous role as the coordinator in the mentorship programme under study. In addition, I have also served as a mentor in the same mentorship programme. The advantage of this affiliation is that it provided me the opportunity to research a programme with which I had experiential knowledge in, however, it also presented a potential hindrance for me and the participants. Firstly, my own views and knowledge about the mentorship programme may have had an influence on how I made sense of the data of their experiences regarding the programme.

Secondly, this previous affiliation might have placed me in a compromising position. Thus, regardless of the fact that this study took place a year after the discontinuation of the mentorship programme under study, I still believe that I had dual role. The challenge of this dual role was experienced mainly during the interview sessions, when mentors asked questions which were in reference to me as their mentorship coordinator rather than the researcher. I attempted to counter any such confusion by emphasising my role as the research and clarifying my relationship with them.

Nonetheless, I acknowledged the above limitations by making use of an epoch strategy where I reflected about my experiences as a mentor. This helped me to find expression for my feelings and to understand the role that my emotions might have played in this study. The dual role that I found myself in due to my familiarity with the mentorship programme seemed to indicate the concepts of the 'insider' and 'outsiders' as discussed by Allen (2004), who cautions that the 'insider' and 'outsider' role in the research field should be supported by empirically substantiated and theoretical based approaches on how one treat a social field of study. The point to note with regard to 'insider' and 'outsider' role is that one is not better or more trustworthy than the other, but rather, they are just different and as long as I am aware of the limitations of my role, then trustworthiness is not compromised (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

5.3.2 ANALYSIS OF DATA

During the process of data analysis, I encountered some challenges relating to the sample choice. Firstly, my participants consisted only of mentors. Therefore I could only get their perspective, and at times this included their opinions on the experiences of the mentees. As mentees were not involved at any stage of this study, it should be noted that this view is one sided.

The importance of active participation of all participants in co-constructing meaning is important because holistic meaning of what is being co-constructed can only be reached when all participants are equally involved in the process according to their level of ability (Goodwin, 1995). However, this does not mean that limited participation or representation will necessarily lead to an entirely distorted meaning, but could still be close to the desired one (Goodwin, 1995). Therefore, the report from mentors about the mentees could also be viewed trustworthy and dependable in this study.

5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the experiences of mentors on the mentorship programme in which they participated. This is an area in which I have identified a dearth of literature. Therefore, I believe that the findings of this study pave the way for new research opportunities by providing essential information to serve as a reference point for those aiming to embark on similar study.

In addition, reported literature indicated a lack of a general working definition for mentorship experiences (Jones et al., 2001; Waghid & Van Louw, 2008). Therefore, this study helps to identify core concepts for consideration towards such a working definition, particularly as conceptualised by the mentors. Having a working definition for key words in the study is critical for all stakeholders to gain a common understanding of what is being discussed.

This study further provides a generally positive view of mentorship; this is consistent with the main views reported in current literature. Most of the literature reviewed

emerged from international studies; therefore, as this study is located within South African context, consistencies in findings indicate possible concurrence between South African programmes and international ones. This agreement across contexts could also attest to the infiltration that mentorship has in every part of the globe, and how its positive impact has also spread. This wide impact is also attributed to the long existence of mentorship (Little et al., 2010). It also shows that during its years of advancement, it has been making a mark of positive influence.

Lastly, the identification of both positives and negatives experiences in mentorship is useful for future studies. This study guides HEI who intend to implement a mentorship programme by bringing about awareness of what to anticipate, and therefore, valuable information on planning for the implementation process. To the mentors and mentees, this study has highlighted both the benefits and challenges which can be experienced; I believe that these may be a useful guide when setting expectations prior to engaging in a mentorship, by being fully informed.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Results of this study suggest that the positive aspects of mentorship experiences outweigh the negatives to an extent that mentors regarded their mentorship experiences as a success. It might be useful therefore, for future researchers to engage in a study which focuses on the factors mediating these positive experiences of mentors. Specifically, looking at the factors that contribute to these experiences even in the presence of the indicated challenges.

Due to lack of consensus, the varied views on the working definition of mentorship and the dearth of literature on mentorship experiences, generating more knowledge on the topic might be helpful for future studies. With the literature reporting a legacy of mentorship (Johnson, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008; Schrubbe, 2003; Terblanche, 2007), it appear reasonable that one would expect that basic conceptualisation of such critical concepts should be established by now.

The mentorship programme in this study appears to be a crucial student support structure in that it provides essential help to the mentees in coping with the social

and educational demands of tertiary education. Therefore, further research aimed at investigating the role of mentorship within Higher Education Institutions may be a useful area of study for HEI's. A research study could also focus specifically on profiling the students who would best benefit from this type of programme. This is particularly important as the mentors in this study indicated that there are some mentees whom, they felt did not necessarily need to be part of the mentorship programme. Dubois et al., (2002), indicated that youth at risk and from disadvantaged backgrounds can benefit from participation in the mentorship programme. This could be investigated further.

Mentorship appears to have a positive contribution within the HEI where this study was conducted. It is therefore, the conclusion of this study that mentorship programmes should be given more attention in academic studies. Mentorship programmes could further benefit from a platform within HEI's, to help in addressing the systemic barriers that mentees encounter. Mentorship could possibly help curb academic exclusion and therefore increase the likelihood of mentees' academic success and positive adjustment to the learning and social environment at Higher Education Institutions.

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APPENDICES



**APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT, DEMOGRAPHIC
QUESTIONNAIRES, ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE AND
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

APPENDIX B: EXCERPTS OF TRANSCRIPTS

(INCLUDED IN THE PROVIDED DISC)



APPENDIX C: MENTOR'S REFLECTIONS
(INCLUDED IN THE PROVIDED DISC)

APPENDIX D: EPOCH: RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION

APPENDIX E: MENTORSHIP POLICY DOCUMENT

(INCLUDED IN THE PROVIDED DISC)