Learning from Mentors: Perspectives of South African Entrepreneurs

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ABSTRACT

Low levels of entrepreneurial activity and success have led to calls for mentorship as a support mechanism to increase the success rate of entrepreneurial ventures in the economic landscape of South Africa.

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of entrepreneurs regarding mentorship and to ascertain whether the entrepreneurs perceived mentoring to be a valuable support mechanism in growing their business. The impact of gender on the perception formation was analysed as well as the necessary attributes that ensures an effective relationship.

A two phased qualitative case study approach was utilised with unstructured mentor interviews and in depth entrepreneur interviews.

The research established that mentorship was mutually beneficial to both the mentors and entrepreneurs. The latter experienced immense personal benefits on a business and emotional level whereas the impact on business growth was identified as being an increase in revenue. Women were found to be more positive about mentoring than their male counterparts. Previous entrepreneurial experience, trust and empathy were stipulated as vital factors in the establishment of a successful relationship.
KEYWORDS

Mentorship

Entrepreneurship

Business growth

Gender
DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

__________________________
Nirvashnee Ayer
10 November 2010
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I would like to thank my friends and family and the full time MBA Class whose support and patience allowed me to make this degree my priority.

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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBBEE</td>
<td>Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAIN</td>
<td>Business Referral and Information Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTI</td>
<td>Department of Trade and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEM</td>
<td>Global Entrepreneurship Monitor</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDC</td>
<td>Industrial Development Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEF</td>
<td>National Empowerment Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAMAF</td>
<td>South African Micro Apex Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAWEN</td>
<td>South African Women Entrepreneurial Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAWIC</td>
<td>South African Women in Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small Medium Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMME</td>
<td>Small Medium Micro Enterprise Sector</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Surround yourself with mentors and experts in various fields you know nothing about. I am never too proud to say I don’t know something and because of that I am privy to many amazing people who and organisations that assist me with my business. A successful entrepreneur is not afraid to say so when they don’t know something and is humble enough to ask for help. It’s the only way to learn.

Nkensani Nkosi (Makura, 2010, p. 208)

This chapter serves as an overall introduction to the research report and will allow the reader to gain an understanding of the background of the problem, the motivation for and the purpose of this research. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the structure of the report.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM AND BACKGROUND

Entrepreneurship has been lauded as the answer to unemployment and a mechanism of redistribution of wealth within South Africa. However, in practice this proves to be difficult to achieve due to the low levels of entrepreneurial activity and a concerning number of entrepreneurial ventures failing. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report, also referred to as the GEM Report (2008), South Africa has a very low level of entrepreneurial behaviour
even when compared to other developing economies. The GEM Report suggests that the meagre entrepreneurial activity becomes even more concerning when the high start-up failure rates and few businesses progressing beyond the nascent level are taken into account.

The relatively small number of female entrepreneurs within the South African economy further adds to the dire situation. The GEM Report (2008) reveals that male entrepreneurs are twice (1.6:1) as active as their female counterparts and that the South African women entrepreneurial ratio is far lower than developing countries in Latin America (three times lower than Argentina) and lags behind countries like Cape Verde, Angola and Botswana in an African context.

The low entrepreneurial behaviour has largely been attributed to poor education levels and the GEM Report (2008) emphasises that South Africa’s education system does not adequately prepare entrepreneurs to cope with the challenges of entrepreneurship. Apart from education, a number of reasons have been proposed for start-up failures. These range from a lack of management skills, poor access to finance, a lack of mentoring and coaching as well as an inadequate knowledge of marketing and business development.

The GEM Report (2006) shows that entrepreneurs frequently needed more assistance with the management of their businesses. The researchers suggested the lack of available management assistance as a contributing factor to the high failure rate of start-up businesses and proposed that emphasis be placed on the training and support of entrepreneurs.
Government took heed of the feedback from the researchers and placed renewed emphasis on entrepreneurship with even a mention in Pravin Gordhan’s 2010 budget speech:

Our approach to employment creation includes measures to encourage industries and services that have significant jobs potential, stepped up implementation of the expanded public works programme, investment in further education and skills development, encouragement of small business development and entrepreneurship and a new focus on promoting youth employment.

To date, our government has created many organisations to support, promote and assist the Small Medium Micro Enterprise (SMME) sector. The more prominent organisations are briefly discussed below.

**Industrial Development Corporation (IDC)** - allocates 75% of new business loans to SMMEs. Funding ranges from R1 million to R250 million. The IDC recently started a mentorship programme that focuses on the training of entrepreneurs in business skills.

**South African Micro Apex Fund (SAMAF)** - is an initiative of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and they provide micro-finance funding to disadvantaged individuals enabling start-up businesses in the survivalist arena.
Ntsika - provides non-financial support services to the SMME sector, tackling issues such as management development, marketing and business development.

Khula - provides the SMME sector with access to loans and equity by offering a full range of financial services and information. Mentorship services are offered as well.

National Empowerment Fund - is regarded as the catalyst of Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment in South Africa. Their mandate is to enable, develop, promote and implement investment and transformation solutions to advance sustainable Black economic participation in the economy.

BRAIN - the DTI launched a comprehensive online initiative known as BRAIN (Business Referral and Information Network), offering basic information and essential service links to entrepreneurs.

Business Partners Limited - in 1998, the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) was transformed into Business Partners Limited. The organisation shifted its focus to small and medium enterprises increasing its funding involvement to a minimum of R150 000 and a maximum of R15 million.

A number of initiatives, largely networking organisations that focus mainly on women entrepreneurs, have been formed. SAWEN (South African Women Entrepreneurial Network) is an IDC initiative that promotes networking on a
national basis. SAWIC (South African Women in Construction) focuses on growing and supporting women entrepreneurs in the construction industry.

When considering the above mentioned structures it is evident that numerous organisations exist that are mandated to assist the facilitation of entrepreneurial success. It is also evident that since the GEM Report in 2006 a number of structures have been made available to support entrepreneurs. The concern however remains that despite the existence of these structures and the financial investment in entrepreneurial support it has not yet translated into widespread entrepreneurial success.

It is therefore suggested that the existing and available support structures are better utilised and communicated. This is evident in one of the recommendations proposed by the GEM Report (2008, p. 49). This study advocates the improvement of South Africa’s entrepreneurial capacity and therefore the suggestion to “set up a national mentorship fund, managed by competent and experienced people with a proven track record in small business support and development. Provision of finance for start-up businesses must be coupled with on-going mentorship, training and access to support services”.

It is evident that the focus of the available support structures falls either exclusively on funding or exclusively on business support which involves training and technical business advice. An integrated approach may be worth considering and it is with this background that the role of mentoring becomes a mandatory and fundamental support mechanism to bridge this divide and assist
in the development of entrepreneurs and the growth of their business ventures. As access to formal education is limited as well, especially by those in start-up entrepreneurial roles, it is important to consider mentorship as a possible non-training related initiative that increases entrepreneurial learning.

It needs to be considered whether evidence exists to constitute the assertion that mentorship is able to assist in the development and sustainability of entrepreneurial ventures. Initial research into mentorship showed extensive benefits to individuals on a personal level; as well as to organisational growth, but this has largely been in workplace mentoring (Clutterbuck, 1998a; 2004b). Recent studies by Cull (2006) and Petridou (2009) demonstrated cases where entrepreneurs found mentorship to be beneficial as a tool to increase entrepreneurial success. This is therefore an area that this study wishes to explore further.

1.3 RELEVANCE AND MOTIVATION

Most of the studies on mentorship have focused largely on workplace mentoring where the issue of career development was critical (Kram 1985; Clutterbuck, 2004). Even South African publications have focused on workplace mentoring (Steinmann, 2006). The models and theories developed in the workplace mentorship subject area will be used as the foundation for this study. This study is thus aimed at contributing to the earlier work on workplace mentoring by elaborating on existing theories, exploring new issues in the mentorship arena and also providing insight into the similarities and differences between workplace and entrepreneurial mentoring.
Research on the role of mentoring in entrepreneurship has been sparse, both locally and abroad. Global studies such as Sullivan (2000) and Cull (2006) emphasise the value of mentoring as a continuous learning tool for entrepreneurial growth. South African research has focused largely on the characteristics required of the mentor. Watson (2004) focused on mentor profiling and Martin (2008) focused on the knowledge requirements for entrepreneurs and small business practitioners. Both these authors express the need for more research on this subject within South Africa. There thus exists a shortfall in the literature on South African entrepreneurs’ experiences and perceptions of mentorship and its effects on venture growth, which this study aims to address. Further, global literature is very scant on the perceptions of the entrepreneurs regarding the value of mentorship and it is envisaged that this research could help to fill the existing void.

The dearth of research on women entrepreneurs both locally and globally is concerning. The statement of Blair (2007, p. 1) that, “in order to develop appropriate interventions to promote women entrepreneurs in South Africa and therefore create a sustaining and entrepreneurial environment in the country, it is necessary to understand more about them”, is a view that is mostly concurred with. By focusing on women’s perceptions of mentorship, this study will contribute to the available information regarding both mentorship and entrepreneurial women and will assist in creating a greater understanding of the latter, which in turn would assist relevant stakeholders in designing appropriate interventions that suit their needs.
This will be the first study to focus on South African entrepreneurs’ perceptions of mentorship. As it is an exploratory study that will be qualitative in its design and whilst it may not be applicable to other countries (qualitative studies can usually not be generalised), the issues unearthed can be used as a base to construct theories in different countries and in different contexts.

1.4 PRACTICAL PURPOSE

Over and above the academic objectives, the fact that there is still a discrepancy in the resources invested in support programmes and the poor entrepreneurial activity and rates of success, is concerning. Mentorship has been proposed as a means to increase entrepreneurial growth however, no published studies within the South African context have explored the use or viability of mentorship as an effective support structure. There are many formal mentorship and incubator programmes in existence but research on their effectiveness has not been published. This study can thus be regarded as exploratory as it looks at the unchartered world of mentorship and attempts to understand the usage thereof and unearths the perceptions of entrepreneurs with regard to this support tool.

Based on the issues uncovered recommendations will be made to both practitioners and government pertaining to the incorporation of necessary elements in the design of future mentoring programmes. This will be of practical value in assisting in the development of future entrepreneurs.
1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

The research report will comprise of seven chapters. This chapter introduces the research problem, contextualises the background and outlines the motivation and purpose of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant theory based on entrepreneurship and learning, benefits of mentorship, the nature of the relationship and gender differences in mentoring. The research questions that underpin this study will be detailed in chapter 3 and the research methodology will be explained in chapter 4. The results of the investigation will be presented in chapter 5 and the findings discussed in chapter 6. The final chapter will summarise the study, draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

A great deal of emphasis had been placed on the continual development of entrepreneurs. In South Africa the poor education levels, the difficulty to access entrepreneurial training and the high levels of failure in entrepreneurial start-ups exacerbated the need for entrepreneurial support structures. This study focused on whether a relationship existed between mentorship and entrepreneurial growth by looking at organisational growth measures, the entrepreneurial experiences and the perceptions of both genders regarding mentorship.

This chapter was divided into four sections. The first section elucidated the definition of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning. The concept of mentoring and the new debates in this area were reviewed. The second section explored the benefits of mentoring focusing on both workplace mentorship as well as entrepreneurs’ perceptions of mentoring. Thirdly, the nature of the mentoring relationship stipulating the stages, types of assistance and framework of this relationship was reviewed. Lastly, gender issues in mentoring were addressed.
2.2 DEFINITION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING

2.2.1 DEFINITION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

No set definition of entrepreneurship was identified in literature. The definition of entrepreneurship by Kuratko (2009, p. 5) was broadly inclusive, stating that:

Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion toward the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks in terms of time, equity or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal needed resources; the fundamental skill of building a solid business plan; and, finally, the vision to recognise opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion.

The key characteristics of entrepreneurship that emerged from the literature were:

- opportunity identification
- creating a product
- growing the venture
- risk taking
- realising the rewards for the entrepreneur as well as for the relevant stakeholders.
2.2.2 DEFINITION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING

Learning was identified as a critical component in the mentoring process. Deakins (1996) asserted that for SMEs to grow, entrepreneurs had to be able to learn from decisions, mistakes, past experiences and networks. He maintained that it was the ability of entrepreneurs to optimise knowledge as a result of experiencing these learning events that determined how successful their ventures became.

The notion of learning was difficult to define as this was a complex area, however Beach (1980, p. 22) provided a fairly comprehensive definition namely that learning “is the human process by which skills, knowledge, habit and attitudes are acquired and altered in such a way that behaviour is modified”. Kolb (1984) added the notion of experiential and continuous learning. In Kolb’s (1984) four stage learning cycle model the initial stages were more concrete experiences that became the basis for observation and reflection in stage two. Observations were generalised to create abstract concepts in stage three, which were then tested in practical situations in stage four. From the literature it was evident that learning, experiential learning and continuous learning were seen as critical in the growth of an individual and hence enterprise growth.

2.2.3 LEARNING AND THE ENTREPRENEUR

The definition of the term “learning” contributed to the consideration of the concept entrepreneurial learning. Whilst many different theories on the role,
influence and nature of learning on entrepreneurship existed, the underlying message was that the ability to learn was critical in the development of an entrepreneur. The research of Cox and Jennings (1995, p. 9) reiterated that “it is the entrepreneurs’ ability to learn from their life experiences that significantly contributes to their success”.

Cope and Watts (2000, p. 113) suggested that “entrepreneurs learn through critical incidents and these critical incidents can have a positive or negative impact on the entrepreneur and/or the business”. As the entrepreneurs, and the businesses, passed through the various stages of the entrepreneurial process, the entrepreneurs reflected on critical incidents. As they reflected and learnt from prior experience, this facilitated changes for future action. The cyclical concept of learning from experience and adjusting behaviour was important to the entrepreneurship process. Sullivan (2000, p. 161) emphasised the “double loop” learning cycle whereby entrepreneurs learnt by experience, especially when the new venture passed through the phases of the entrepreneurial process. Sullivan (2000, p. 168) stated “As entrepreneurs reflect and learn from prior experience, this facilitates changes to future action”.

Watson (2004) summarised that entrepreneurs learnt from experience, actions, critical incidences and themes and that the ability to learn contributed to their success. Watson (2004) added that this learning process could be assisted and enhanced with the aid of someone (a mentor) who was able to assist entrepreneurs to reflect upon and understand their experiences. Sullivan (2000, p. 163), Cope and Watts (2000, p. 117) and Deakins and Freel (1998, p. 153)
believed that “because mentoring is a good reflective learning tool, it will provide effective support for entrepreneurs by allowing them to reflect on their experiences and to understand the actions related to their position in the entrepreneurial process”.

Taylor, Marais and Kaplan (1997) posited that the learning process can be further enhanced by means of colleagues, advisors, mentors or facilitators who guided the individual through the process. Beaty, Lawson, Bourner and O’Hara (1997, p. 185), agreed that:

Action learning is a supportive activity that uses active listening and questioning as a means of providing insight, ideas and an action plan to assist the learner with a holistic learning experience. This person can be described as a mentor who uses the mentoring process to assist the mentee.

2.2.4 DEFINITION OF MENTORSHIP

There were many definitions of mentoring but the definition of Niehoff (2006, p. 322) indicated mentoring “as an activity in which an individual with advanced knowledge or experience actively provides assistance and support to enhance the career development of an individual with less knowledge and experience”. Kram (1985) found that mentors served two key functions in their relationships with protégés. Firstly, they offered career development functions which involved sponsorship, advice, coaching, protection, visibility, exposure and challenging
assignments. Secondly, they offered psychosocial support which included role modelling, acceptance, confirmation, counselling and friendship.

Clutterbuck (1998) expanded on this model and proposed an integrated approach to mentoring where the mentor assumed four different developmental support roles: coach, guardian, networker/facilitator and counsellor. The role of the mentor was a complex one and needed to be adaptive and flexible. According to Clutterbuck (1998) the mentor’s role was to respond to the mentees needs and to be flexible, alternating between the different supportive roles.

Watson (2004, p. 74) summarised Clutterbuck’s (1998) Behavioural Matrix to illustrate the four basic roles and the implicated activities of a mentor:

- The role of coach is an active role that includes activities such as goal setting, challenger, collaborator and critical friend.
- The role of guardian is an active role that includes activities such as protector, guide and role model.
- The role of network contact is a passive role that includes activities such as building bridges and being a catalyst.
- The role of counsellor is a passive role that includes activities such as listener and sounding board.
Clutterbuck (1998) illustrated these roles by using the model in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 The Behavioural Matrix**

All of the roles mentioned above assisted mentees with learning. Watson (2004) confirmed Clutterbuck’s (1998) views and concurred that the mentor’s role was to facilitate the learning process. Instead of providing solutions, the mentor’s role was to allow mentees to reach their own conclusions so that they could understand and take responsibility for their next course of action (Watson, 2004).
2.2.5 DISTINCTION BETWEEN COACHING AND MENTORING

It can be deduced from the above definitions that coaching is perceived to be an essential part of mentoring. In The Harvard Business Essentials, Luecke (2004) detailed this view and represented the differences as reflected below in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Differences between Coaching and Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COACHING</th>
<th>MENTORING</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key goals</td>
<td>To correct inappropriate behaviour, improve performance and impart skills that the employee needs to accept new responsibilities</td>
<td>To support and guide personal growth of the protégé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>The coach directs the learning and instruction</td>
<td>The protégé is in charge of his or her learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteeris</td>
<td>Although the subordinate’s agreement to accept coaching is essential, it is not necessarily voluntary</td>
<td>Both mentor and protégé participate as volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Immediate problems and learning opportunities</td>
<td>Long term personal career development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>Strong on prescribing with appropriate feedback</td>
<td>Strong on listening, providing a role model and making suggestions and connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Usually concentrates on short term needs. Administered intermittently on an “as-needed” basis</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>The coach is the coachee’s boss</td>
<td>The mentor is seldom the protégé’s boss. It is advised that the mentor is not in the protégé’s chain of command</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Luecke (2004, p. 107)

However, there had been recent developments and a growing eminence in the field of coaching and Edwards (2003, p. 298) proposed that the “difference between coaching and mentoring was that mentoring gives advice and teaches, whereas coaching facilitates learning”. Following that view, coaching therefore
focused more on possibilities and potential; was about facilitating learning rather than teaching; enabled the coachee to unlock their potential and optimise their performance and thus gave the coachee full responsibility and ownership of the outcomes.

It was through language and the asking of high impact questions and negotiated feedback that the coachee was allowed to discover the answers within themselves. The core skill of a coach was to know which questions to ask and when to ask these questions (Edwards, 2003).

It was evident that this new outlook on coaching was very different to the traditional way in which it was regarded, with “life coaches” and “business coaches” becoming a profession.

The deterioration of well-defined, independent fields of expertise of coaching and developmental mentoring was evident in the literature. The confusion and frustration created by this was commented on by Garvey (2004, p. 6): “The tragedy of mentoring is that it has been hijacked and mugged by the so-called coaching profession who are in it only for financial gain”. The literature indicated an ever increasing conflict of interest in the specialisation fields of mentorship and coaching. Entrepreneurs’ perception of this issue could provide further interesting insights as to the way this debate is perceived by clients of the helping professions.
2.3 BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Irrespective of the confusing terminology extensive research had been conducted on mentorship and career growth in organisations. Benefits on a personal mentee and mentor level were recorded as well as on a wider organisational level.

On a personal mentee level Steinmann (2006, p. 4) indicated that the benefits included an “enhanced rate of promotion, accelerated employability and career mobility, greater professional competence, better acceptance within the organisation, a greater alliance to the workplace and higher salaries”. This was echoed by Clutterbuck (2006, p. 6) who depicted the mentee benefits in four outcome-based categories:

- **developmental outcomes** - knowledge, technical competence and behavioural competence
- **career outcomes** - which included the achievement in part or whole of career goals
- **enabling outcomes** - such as having a career plan, a self-development plan, a wider network of influencers or learning resources
- **emotional outcomes** - less tangible but more powerful changes in emotional state, including increased confidence, altruistic satisfaction, reflective space, status and the pleasure of a different kind of intellectual challenge.
The self-learning obtained through the process of listening to different perspectives, intuitive reasoning and reflection, the satisfaction procured from positively impacting on clients, the intellectual challenge of working on issues and the increased skills base and reputation (Clutterbuck, 2006) are all aspects listed as beneficial for mentors.

Clutterbuck (2006, p. 43) believed that the organisational rewards received can be divided into primary and secondary benefits. The primary benefits are:

- easier recruitment and induction
- improved employee motivation
- the management of corporate culture
- succession planning
- improved communications and staff morale.

Secondary benefits are:

- increased efficiency and productivity
- improved staff morale
- greater career satisfaction
- mentored managers showed an improved and faster integration when introduced into a new professional environment.
2.3.1 THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF MENTORING FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Whilst most literature indicated that entrepreneurs believed they benefited from a mentoring relationship, research was inconclusive due to a number of entrepreneurs that failed to acknowledge benefits.

Sullivan (2000) commented that effective learning was well served through a mentoring relationship where clients were encouraged to engage in reflective learning and where “just-in-time” support was available. This assisted the consolidation of earlier knowledge and learning. He proposed that mentorship could be more cost-effective than up-front prescribed training in the long run for entrepreneurs. His work was supported by Cull (2006) whose case study research on young entrepreneurs portrayed the qualitative benefits of mentors working with young entrepreneurs. These efforts resulted in increased levels of confidence amongst the youth and the achieving of personal and professional success.

According to Cox (1995) different responses were obtained from three groups of entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs when questioned on the support they received. The elite independent entrepreneurs (who founded their own companies and built it into large organisations) were rarely able to identify a mentor, usually perceiving themselves as self-made. Whilst help and advice from others were acknowledged or individuals who aided with the launching of their business were named, no predominant guide or helper was indicated.
Entrepreneurs involved in family businesses regarded the family as a support structure while intrapreneurs who advanced within an organisation did acknowledge the support of mentors or senior colleagues.

Thus, whilst the findings regarding self-made entrepreneurs’ were slightly contradictory, the Cox study (1995) did identify the need for some support. It also supports the view that experiential learning is critical and that some form of “mentoring” appears to have a positive impact on performance in most, if not all, entrepreneurs. This study attempts to ascertain whether South African entrepreneurs differ from the Cox (1995) study and does acknowledge assistance from others.

2.3.2 BUSINESS GROWTH

The personal benefits of business advice and emotional development for the individual mentee were plentiful. Not only does the entrepreneur benefit from the mentoring process, but venture growth is also positively impacted upon.

Martin (2008) emphasised that literature viewed growth as an important requirement of the success of a business and identified five growth stages, namely pre-start-up, start-up or infancy, breakthrough or growth stage, maturity and decline or rejuvenation. This view was echoed by Hmieleski and Baron (2009) who stated that growth was the most important indicator of a new venture success. In their study two objective measures of growth were used as suggested by literature: that of revenue growth and that of employment growth.
As the entrepreneur progresses through the growth stages new opportunities and challenges are experienced. Table 2.2 summarises the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours encountered within each venture stage as stipulated by Martin (2008, p. 53).

Table 2.2 Dominant knowledge, attitudes and behaviours within each Venture Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre start-up</th>
<th>Start-up</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Maturity</th>
<th>Decline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– Innovation</td>
<td>– Resource accumulation</td>
<td>– Delegation</td>
<td>– Marketing</td>
<td>– Assessment and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Creativity</td>
<td>– Marketing</td>
<td>– Control</td>
<td>– Distribution</td>
<td>– Cash flow management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Opportunity development</td>
<td>– Production</td>
<td>– Marketing</td>
<td>– Expansion of markets</td>
<td>– Strategic management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Motivation</td>
<td>– Financial planning</td>
<td>– Financial planning</td>
<td>– Financial planning</td>
<td>– Change management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Achievement orientation</td>
<td>– Strategic planning</td>
<td>– Cash control</td>
<td>– Cost control</td>
<td>– Strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Determination to succeed</td>
<td>– Cash flow management</td>
<td>– Production</td>
<td>– Strategic planning</td>
<td>– Change management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Business planning</td>
<td></td>
<td>– Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td>– Change management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Martin (2008, p. 53)

Martin (2008) stated furthermore that support practitioners should realise that the challenges encountered by entrepreneurs at the start-up stages are different from those faced at later stages. Table 2.3 portrays the various challenges that could be met during the venture lifecycle.
Table 2.3 Challenges within the Venture during the Venture Lifecycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Start-up</th>
<th>Early growth</th>
<th>Later growth (Expansion)</th>
<th>Maturity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic objectives</td>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>Maintenance of profitability and acquiring resources</td>
<td>Growth via expansion</td>
<td>Return on investment and market value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>Decentralised</td>
<td>Matrix or product groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control systems</td>
<td>Direct market feedback</td>
<td>Standards and cost centres</td>
<td>Profit centres and formal reporting</td>
<td>Planning and investment centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management style</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Leading</td>
<td>Delegating</td>
<td>Coordinating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the entrepreneur</td>
<td>Owner-worker</td>
<td>Owner-worker</td>
<td>General manager</td>
<td>Controller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function of the entrepreneur</td>
<td>Direct supervision</td>
<td>Overall supervision</td>
<td>Indirect control</td>
<td>Controlling interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of the entrepreneur</td>
<td>Make and sell</td>
<td>Efficient operations</td>
<td>Market expansion</td>
<td>Consolidation and innovation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Martin (2008; p. 55)

This detailed knowledge would ensure that the support practitioner provided relevant advice as and when required, depending on the circumstances of a particular venture lifecycle stage.

Cull (2006) focussed on the three stages in the business lifecycle; start-up, midpoint and the end-point or “letting go” phase. His research indicated that the challenges faced by the young entrepreneur varied between the different stages. Because of the entrepreneur’s lack of experience during the start-up stage, the mentor could be very involved and helpful. The mentee was looking for encouragement, positive support, helpful advice and useful ideas during this stage. The entrepreneur is also suffering from a lack of confidence due to little experience and also meeting the demands of making big decisions whilst still having to run the daily business operations. Mentors viewed this stage as essential in the preparation of the client to manage a
steep learning curve. Start-up required basic advice from mentors on issues such as securing sales and creating an infrastructure for the business.

At the mid-point stage, entrepreneurs needed less theoretical and more hands on support. That was also the period marked by business growth and mentors could assist mentees in maintaining momentum and energy especially as the nine to eighteen month period could prove to be the most challenging time for start-up businesses. In this stage entrepreneurs usually have a better understanding of the business and should be able to be more objective when considering financials. Comparisons can be drawn and problem areas identified. Mentors at the mid-point considered the entrepreneurs’ ability to work according to their business plan, the ability to evaluate progress as well as the prospects of project growth. The mentor focused primarily on assisting the entrepreneur to manage the expectations of the business.

At the end-point the mentee focused on new markets and included the mentor in generating ideas on expanding the business. Some mentors were concerned that their paired entrepreneurs would have problems ‘letting go’ and found it difficult to break the dependency. Whilst this was a formal programme, many entrepreneurs who were paired with a “good” mentor did not see the relationship ending but as a continuing friendship.
The work of Cull (2006) and Martin (2008) therefore indicated that the needs and expectations regarding mentor support differed depending on the life cycle of the venture.

2.4 THE NATURE OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

2.4.1 PHASES OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

The traditional model of the phases of mentoring was produced by Kram (1983) which portrayed the mentoring relationship as being progressive over the course of four years and lasting on average five years. Clutterbuck’s (1998) subsequent research distinguished variations in the European mentorship model which he described as “developmental mentoring” when compared to Kram’s (1983) American version which he regarded as “sponsored mentorship”. In the European model, the interactions in the phases were different. The phases were shorter and the mentoring relationship stretched over a period of approximately three years. Steinmann (2006) commented that mentoring in South Africa was a developmental relationship that lasted three years on average. His model was similar to the European model. Table 2.4 below depicts the three different models.
### Table 2.4 Phases in the Mentoring Process in Companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIMELINES</th>
<th>AMERICAN (Kram)</th>
<th>EUROPEAN (Clutterbuck)</th>
<th>SOUTH AFRICAN (Steinmann)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 months – 6 months</td>
<td>Starting: suspicion evolves into trust and mutual respect</td>
<td>Rapport building, getting to know each other</td>
<td>Intimate dependence - excitement and new relationship, mentee dependent on mentor. Mentor needs to cultivate trust and be sensitive to relationship complexities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months - 12 months</td>
<td>Middle Period: mentor uses influence to help mentee advance</td>
<td>Progress making - high mutual learning</td>
<td>Familiarisation - deepening the relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Winding down, celebrating success, moving on to new sources of learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence building - feedback and positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 months</td>
<td>Working towards setting personal and career goals</td>
<td>Continuing informally, infrequently as a sounding board</td>
<td>Weaning - protégé is independent, exhibits competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 months</td>
<td>Dissolving the relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeterminate</td>
<td>Restarting the relationship. Coming to terms with a different status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Clutterbuck (2006, p. 109)

### 2.4.2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP MENTORING SKILLS

Watson (2004) stated that mentors should use their education, mentoring skills and experience as skilled business people or entrepreneurs to assist their mentees in achieving specific goals.
The formula applied to determine entrepreneurial performance is the multiplicative entrepreneurial performance model (Antonites & Van Vuuren, 2001, p. 2). The formula is constituted as follows:

\[ E/P = M (E/S \times B/S) \]

- \( E/P \) = Entrepreneurial Performance
- \( M \) = Performance Motivation
- \( E/S \) = Entrepreneurial Skills
- \( B/S \) = Business Skills

In order to be relevant in the field of mentoring, this model was adapted by Watson (2004, p. 80). This adaptation is presented in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5 Entrepreneurial Performance Model as adapted for Mentoring**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneurial Performance (E/P)</th>
<th>Performance Motivation (M)</th>
<th>Entrepreneurial Skills (E/S)</th>
<th>Business Skills (B/S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of own business</td>
<td>Providing constructive criticism</td>
<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
<td>Business plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of first transaction</td>
<td>Providing guidance</td>
<td>Risk propensity</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in net value of business</td>
<td>Providing encouragement</td>
<td>Opportunity identification</td>
<td>General management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of employees</td>
<td>Being a sounding board</td>
<td>Role models</td>
<td>Financial management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased productivity levels</td>
<td>Helping to manage change</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased profitability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Operational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HR management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Legal skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This view was supported by Cull (2006) who indicated that young entrepreneurs found mentors with relevant knowledge, experience and an honest and
empowering style to be very valuable. The lack of industrial knowledge of South African business mentors was considered by Martin (2008) to be the cause of the advisory roles assumed by them in contrast to the more specific mentorship roles required. This study attempted to explore this matter in more detail.

2.4.3 FORMAL VERSUS INFORMAL MENTORSHIP

Another aspect of entrepreneurial mentoring which necessitated qualification was whether mentoring is regarded as a formal and structured programme or an informal, unstructured pairing. Niehoff (2006, p. 323) analysed various views on formal and informal mentoring and observed that “informal mentoring is volitional, with no structured guidelines for directing the relationship. In contrast, in formal mentoring, protégés and mentors are assigned and the goals of the relationship are specified at the start”.

During informal mentoring, protégés and mentors were involved in mutual selection and mutual adjustment throughout the relationship, with the goals and expectations evolving over time to adapt to the specific needs of the protégé. Formal mentoring programmes specified the requirements for scheduled meetings or time allotted to the protégé, whereas informal mentoring relationships referred to current needs and desires when considering these variables. Whilst benefits accrued in the informal relationship, it generally held no explicit rewards for, or sanctions against, the mentor for participation as opposed to the formal relationship where mentors were rewarded for their efforts (Niehoff, 2006).
Formal mentoring programmes that were implemented in organisations required participation of managers that were assigned to lower level employees. This differed from entrepreneurial mentoring where many of the mentoring relationships were informal in that mentees chose their own mentors. The entrepreneurial mentoring is more spontaneous in nature and did not arise from formally constructed developmental schemes where mentor and learner were deliberately paired (Niehoff, 2006).

It is unclear whether a formal mentoring process is regarded as more advantageous than an informal one. Cox (1995) suggested that the rapport between mentors and mentees in informal mentoring relationships frequently challenged the organisers of many formal mentoring schemes. Cull (2006, p. 10) reported that Clutterbuck (2004, p. 1) observed that in most cases when entrepreneurs and mentors engaged without guidance and without clarity about the mentoring role it became “a hit or miss affair”. It was Clutterbuck’s (2006, p. 28) view that the mentoring “package”, that consisted of an integration of formal and informal mentoring, rendered the best results.

There are formal mentoring programmes available for entrepreneurs in South Africa, as detailed by Martin (2008), such as SEDA Business Mentors and Business Partners. Recent years had seen the emergence of incubator projects that included a formal mentoring element. This research also attempted to understand whether entrepreneurs knew of and used these formal avenues or preferred more informal methods of mentoring. Entrepreneurs’ preferences regarding these two frameworks were also probed.
2.4.4 e-MENTORING

The technological age is changing the dynamics of many relationships and e-mentoring uses technology and creates relationships that cross spatial, geographical and cultural boundaries.

Bierema and Merriam (2002, p. 214) defined e-mentoring as “A computer mediated mutually beneficial relationship between a mentor and a protégé which provides learning, advising, encouraging, promoting and modelling that is often boundary-less, egalitarian and qualitatively different than traditional face-to–face mentoring”.

One of the benefits of e-mentoring listed by Petridou (2009) is that it provided networking opportunities to a larger extent than participants expected which was particularly important to self-employed individuals. Bierema and Merriam (2002) stated that e-mentoring was a process with egalitarian characteristics as it subjects the participant to less stress if taken into account that they can decide when to initiate a discussion or provide an answer to the mentor. This attributed a more active role to the participant.

Studies quoted by Petridou (2009) indicated that e-mentoring was a valuable tool in the mentoring of female entrepreneurs as it alleviates the stress these women are subjected to when balancing their professional and domestic environment due to time constraints. The Petridou (2009) study also found that women were able to overcome feelings of isolation and were able to extend
their networks as well. South Africa’s utilisation of e-mentoring was explored in this study.

2.5 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MENTORING

Research with regard to gender differences and mentorships is scant. The most recent studies focused on women in the corporate environment and there is little supplementary research that explored the phenomenon of gender differences in the entrepreneurial discipline.

Due to the fact that these females were not adequately represented in the more senior roles in organisations, earlier studies concluded that mentor roles were predominantly filled by males (Linehan & Walsh, 1999). Whilst the majority of the studies were inconclusive, three themes in terms of gender differences were observed. These are discussed below.

2.5.1 SEXUAL TENSION

Linehan and Walsh (1999) found in their study that none of the women mentored regarded cross-gender mentoring as problematic and were convinced that the mentors regarded the mentoring roles as contributing towards their careers irrespective of their gender. This was inconsistent with earlier studies conducted by Arnold and Davidson (1990) and Fitt and Newton (1981) who suggested that sexual tension was an issue in cross-gender mentoring.
2.5.2 ROLE MODELS

Linehan and Walsh (1999) found that the women mentees who had female mentors perceived their female mentors as role models who assisted them in maintaining a female managerial style. This concurs with earlier studies which indicated that female mentors escalated the aspirational level of women (Barclay, 1982; Hackett & Betz, 1981). A later study by Singh, Vinnicombe and James (2006) noted that young women, who recognised the need to develop certain personal aspects in order to promote their careers, chose both senior women and men as role models. The study further revealed that women regarded leadership qualities and characteristics as more important than the difference in gender of the mentors. Studies found that this viewpoint was not shared by the male counterparts as male mentees with female mentors did not regard them as role models (Javidan, Bemmels, Devine & Dastmalchian, 1995).

2.5.3 PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Some studies stipulated that female, rather than male mentees were more likely to report on experiencing psychosocial support from their mentors. McGuire (1999) found that men received significantly more instrumental assistance, whilst women received significantly more socio-emotional assistance from their mentors. That is in accordance to the earlier work of Stonewater, Eveslage and Dingerson (1990, p. 75) who noted that women described the nature of their “helping relationships” in terms of personal connections and support, whereas men described an objective sense of encouragement related to their work.
Similarly, in a later study conducted by Allen and Eby (2004) mentors reported to provide more psychosocial mentoring to females but found no relationship between career-related mentoring and mentee gender. The influence of gender on psychosocial support was inconclusive and Fowler, Gudmundsson and O’Gorman (2007) quoted a number of studies that reported no differences in mentoring based on gender.

A more recent quantitative study by Fowler et al. (2007) found that mentees perceived gender as an influencing factor in only three of the eight mentoring functions proposed (namely personal and emotional guidance, career development facilitation and role modelling) and that mentors did not perceive gender (neither that of the mentee nor the mentor) as a factor which influenced the extent to which mentoring support was provided.

Thus, although inconclusive, research on gender differences in workplace mentoring suggested issues of sexual tension, greater focus on psychosocial factors and role modelling as areas in which difference in the perceptions of the genders had been noted. Studies focusing on gender differences in entrepreneurial samples could not be identified and therefore this study could be considered a forerunner in this subject field.

2.6 LITERATURE SUMMARY

Although literal sources on entrepreneurial mentorship are limited, it is commonly suggested that mentorship adds value to growing ventures. It should however be noted that, from a South African perspective, extensive research in
this field is lacking. The work of Antonites and Van Vuuren (2001) and Watson (2004) focused on the mentoring skills that ensured an effective mentoring process. Furthermore, the nature of the mentoring relationship (Niehoff, 2006; Martin, 2008), as well as the kind of support needed at the different stages of venture growth (Cull, 2006; Martin, 2008) also impacted on the mentorship relationship. Research by Linehan and Walsh (1997), Singh (2006) and Fowler et al. (2007) indicated gender differences in mentoring but this was in the realm of workplace mentoring. Regarded in both a global and South African context, prevalent gaps exist in entrepreneurial mentoring and gender based research. These gaps justified the research ascertained in this paper which should have future academic and practical implications.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Chapter 2 provided an insight into the complexities surrounding mentorship by exploring many of the significant studies conducted in this field. The purpose of this research was to analyse this complex mentoring relationship. The overarching research question is, therefore:

**Is mentorship perceived to affect the growth of male and female entrepreneurial ventures within a South African context?**

Three sub questions can be derived from the predominate question:

1. How is mentorship perceived to affect the growth of entrepreneurial ventures?

2. Why is the relationship perceived to affect the growth of entrepreneurial ventures?

3. Is mentorship perceived differently by male and female entrepreneurs?

Once an understanding was gained of the manner in which this mentoring relationship was perceived and the nature of the relationship was better understood, the relevant knowledge could be shared with key stakeholders. That should enable the role players to make better informed decisions regarding the entrepreneurial support area of mentorship.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to ascertain whether South African entrepreneurs perceived mentorship to have assisted in the growth of their businesses and whether that perception differed in terms of gender. The purpose of this chapter is to circumscribe the research methodology used by the researcher to gather and analyse data. The qualitative approach used is justified and the two-phased research process followed is explained. The specific sampling parameters, for example unit of analysis, population and nature of the sample are defined. The data collection process and analytic approach are then discussed. The chapter concludes with a description of the limitations of the research.

4.2 METHOD

This research followed a qualitative approach that focused on case studies and adhered to the process proposed by Eisenhardt (1989) whose work was regarded as “exemplary” (Lee, Mitchell & Sablynski, 1999).

Perry (2001) stated that since a context strongly influences its links, few direct causal links (A to B) are encountered within the framework of social science. Perry (2001, p. 305) defined case research as:
• an investigation of a contemporary dynamic phenomenon and its emerging (rather than paradigmatic) body of knowledge,
• within the phenomenon’s real life context where the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are unclear,
• when explanation of causal links are too complex for survey or experimental methods so that single clear outcomes are not possible,
• using interviews, observations and other multiple sources of data.

Therefore, in terms of his definition, this approach was most applicable to this study as the relationship between mentorship and growth is a complex one. The multiple and non-linear causal links within this relationship proved difficult to measure by the sole application of survey techniques.

Apart from the nature of the research, the researcher believed that as this study attempted to perceive the deep underlying nuances inherent to a mentoring relationship, mentees would need to reflect on their experiences. The qualitative approach of this research provided this opportunity. Rather than valuable information being lost as a result of attempting formal documentation such as the completion of questionnaires, the interaction of the mentees was captured as they shared their experiences.

Lee et al. (1999, p. 164) concluded that “qualitative approaches are well suited for purposes of descriptions, interpretation and explanations”. As this study
elaborated on theory in the mentorship arena, the qualitative approach which allows for vivid descriptions and interpretation proved ideal. Dana and Dana (2005, p. 83) also recommended a qualitative approach as it is considered to be instrumental in “understanding the entrepreneurs’ interaction with the environment”.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) stated that the conducting of an interview enabled researchers to increase the level of responses by establishing personal contact, varying the order and logic of questioning and directing open-ended question. For these numerous reasons the qualitative method was chosen.

4.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS

After formally defining the research question, Eisenhardt (1989) asserted that a well-defined research question prevented the researcher from being overwhelmed by the volume of data. The sustained focus of this research project was ensured by the precise formulation of the research question. The research question was formulated as follows:

Is mentorship perceived to affect the growth of male and female entrepreneurial ventures within a South African context?

Yin (1994, p. 33) stated that the research problem in case research was largely a “how and why” question and the above question was able to elicit information to understand “how and why mentorship was perceived to affect growth” which
formed subsets of the study. The unit of analysis was the relationship between the entrepreneur and the mentor.

4.4 POPULATION AND NATURE OF THE SAMPLE

Jankowicz (2000) described sampling as the deliberate selection of a number of individuals to provide the researcher with the necessary data that enabled the reaching of conclusions. As this was the first study in South Africa to focus on the entrepreneurs’ view of their mentors, there was no existing sample frame. To overcome this problem, non-probability sampling was used as it allowed the researcher the opportunity to apply subjective judgement and inference to draw up the sample frame. Non-probability sampling techniques include quota, purposive, snowball, self-selection and convenience techniques (Zikmund, 2003). The techniques used in this study were a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Saunders (2009) suggested that purposive sampling assisted with the selection of cases that enabled the researcher to best answer the research question and meet the research objectives and was ideal when working with small samples.

The sample of this study consisted of 16 South African entrepreneurs who had between three and ten years experience in running their own organisations and had used the services of a mentor. As one of the study objectives was to establish whether discrepancies based on gender existed in the entrepreneurial mentoring process, the sample comprised of eight men and eight female entrepreneurs. The researcher had initially expected to obtain the sample of
entrepreneurs from various South African incubators; however, in practice, this proved an impossible task as most incubators stated that their members had asked not to be involved in studies. Unfortunately the incubators that were prepared to participate had a database of start-up entrepreneurs which was outside the scope of the study. SAWIC and SAICA were very helpful in assisting with the provision of lists of entrepreneurs to contact. Snowball techniques, where an entrepreneur who met the criteria suggested names of suitable entrepreneurs, was then used to contact other entrepreneurs.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

Based on Eisenhardt’s (1989) suggestion that multiple data collection efforts strengthen the grounding of theory by the triangulation of evidence, a two phased approach was selected for this study. Table 4.1 shows a summary of the research sampling and collection methods.

Table 4.1 Summary of research sampling and collection methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH</th>
<th>AIM OF PHASE</th>
<th>DATA COLLECTION METHOD</th>
<th>SAMPLING TECHNIQUE</th>
<th>SAMPLE SIZE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor interviews</td>
<td>Expert opinion on mentorship</td>
<td>Face-to-face, unstructured</td>
<td>Purposive</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur interviews</td>
<td>Experiential understanding of</td>
<td>Face-to-face, semi-structured</td>
<td>Purposive and snowball</td>
<td>8 male and 8 female entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the relationship</td>
<td>interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase 1: The exploratory first phase consisted of an initial literature review and thereafter unstructured interviews with five expert mentors who had proven and
verifiable experience and expertise in the field of entrepreneurial mentoring. The objective of conducting expert mentor interviews was to gain insight into the participant’s thoughts and ideas regarding the mentor relationship within the context of their personal experiences. The use of unstructured interviews provided the necessary leniency to allow for new ideas to emerge and for new lines of inquiry to be pursued. These expert mentor views assisted in developing more specific propositions to inform and pre-test the interview guidelines to be used with the entrepreneur mentees. A description of the expert mentors can be found in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 A description of expert mentors consulted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERT MENTOR</th>
<th>DESIGNATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor 1</td>
<td>Entrepreneur and consultant mentor within a large incubator. A registered professional coach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor 2</td>
<td>External Training Manager of a large government funding organisation. This role focuses on increasing skills capacity and measuring the success rate of the businesses funded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor 3</td>
<td>Entrepreneur and external mentor within a government funding organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor 4</td>
<td>Entrepreneur and shareholder in businesses focused on mentoring and coaching. External consultant to an industry board regarding entrepreneurial mentorship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor 5</td>
<td>Entrepreneur and CEO of a prominent South African incubator. Consults both nationally and internationally on the subject of entrepreneurial mentorship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase 2: The second phase consisted of in-depth semi-structured interview questions based on information gleaned from the exploratory stage. The one-on-one interviews were conducted at coffee shops or at the offices of the entrepreneurs. This semi-structured interview allowed for concepts, reasons or causal tendencies to be explored. Three female entrepreneurs were interviewed...
telephonically as they were not located within the Gauteng area (two in Western Cape, one in KwaZulu-Natal). The interview schedule incorporated the emergent themes but was open-ended enough to uncover key factors and ascertain the different perceptions of the entrepreneurial mentees. The interview protocol and the research that informed each question are included in Appendix 1.

The duration of the Interviews ranged between 30 and 60 minutes. With the participants’ permission, extensive handwritten notes were taken during the interviews which documented the rich descriptions of the interactions as well as the researchers’ impressions and observations. Changes in the demeanour of the participants, such as visible body language changes, were also noted. The notes were transcribed verbatim by the researcher within 24 hours of the interview which ensured the timeous capturing of impressions. The data was then analysed and categorised according to the themes that emerged and these were collated per research question per respondent.

As this study followed the methodology proposed by Eisenhardt (1989), the iterative nature was evident as the theory was developed as the interviews were being conducted, based on an extended literature review. The interview methodology where views and ideas were shared stimulated and refined the literature review.
4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

During the data analysis, the proposed methodology of Eisenhardt (1989) was adhered to and an overlap was maintained between the collection, coding and analysis of data and the field notes used to inform the research process. This was affirmed by Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) who claimed that by the time data collection had been completed in qualitative research, analysis should be underway and once the researcher started the data analysis phase a preliminary understanding of the data was essential.

As Eisenhardt (1989) suggested, an overlap was maintained and the interview guides were shaped by the information gathered during the interviews conducted with the mentors as well as the initial literature study. Once the entrepreneur interviews were underway, the literature review was extended and refined and the theoretical model was designed. There was thus continuous backwards and forwards movement between conducting the interviews, gathering of literature and theory development.

Clark (2006, p. 23) stated that “data analysis in qualitative research is likened to a metamorphosis where the researcher retreats with the data, applies her analytic powers and finally emerges with the findings”. This was evident in this study where analytical techniques were used to generate findings from a vast amount of data. During this process, extensive qualitative information was reduced and judgements were made about the data contents (Lee et al., 1999).
A three-stage approach was used during the analysis of the data. Firstly, content analysis was done on each interview to uncover and analyse any emerging themes and to understand the emotionality or hidden meanings behind words used. Secondly, groups of words in each interview were coded according to categories aligned to the different themes and these categories were then counted. The resulting amounts indicated the support each category enjoyed with regard to the greater themes. Volkoff, Strong and Elmes (2005) remarked that selective coding shifts the analysis from a large number of codes produced to a few theoretical categories which form the foundation of a new or revised theory. Throughout the coding process the researcher’s focus moved iteratively between the transcripts, analysing the perceptions, the nature of the relationships and gender differences to reading and integrating relevant literature. Table 4.2 shows an example of the process of analysis and coding followed.

Table 4.3 An illustration of the process followed to analyse and code responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Entrepreneurs response</th>
<th>Themes and coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Can you describe the framework of this relationship?</td>
<td>Informal, never paid. Chris just took me under his wing. I’m not the first person he’s done that with and I guess it was his way of developing people or giving back. We meet once a week to brainstorm ideas and I could bounce ideas of him. I could also just pick up the phone and call him for advice. If things came up it’s now a case of “what would Chris do”? It’s almost as if I need to emulate his thinking; he’s a role model. He was a very astute man and I could talk to him about life in general. He wanted to create a business that would accommodate a lifestyle.</td>
<td>Theme: Framework Codes: Informal; Weekly; Availability \nTheme: Mentor benefits Codes: developing people; giving back \nTheme: Gender Code: role-model \nTheme: Mentor behaviour Code: Astute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thirdly, the analysis moved from content analysis to cross-case analysis where the report emphasised the differences between cases in order to understand and establish explanations for their occurrence, as advised by Perry (2001).

Eisenhardt (1989) suggested that comparison with conflicting literature established internal validity, raised theoretical level and sharpened construct definitions, whilst comparison with similar literature sharpened generalizability, improved construct definition and raised the theoretical level of the study. During the analysis phase conflicting and similar literature were used to capitalise on the benefits that Eisenhardt (1989) suggested.

Eisenhardt (1989) advised the use of multiple investigators to aid in triangulation and to reduce biases; however, this was not possible within the timeframe of this research. Researcher bias is therefore inherent in this study, although the preliminary observations and findings were discussed with an industrial psychologist to ensure a level of objectivity.

**4.7 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

A number of limitations were inherent in the research undertaken. By focusing on companies that were between their third and tenth year of existence, the mentorship element at pre start-up, during the first two years of business as well as the post tenth year, were missed.
The data collected, whilst discussed with an expert, was based on the researcher’s interpretations and assumptions and there was therefore an element of bias within this study. Further, as a result of time and cost constraints and the nature of the research, multiple researchers could not be used to reduce this bias.

The qualitative methodology used was not well suited for generalizability, prevalence and calibration (Lee, 1999). This study was therefore unable to answer questions relating to the prevalence of mentoring in South Africa. As this research focused on growth, survivalist entrepreneurs were excluded. As a large number of organisations run by South African entrepreneurs fail to make the transition from survival to growth, the perspectives of the survivalists could have provided valuable insights.

Of the five expert and 16 entrepreneur interviews conducted, only three were located outside Gauteng. This research was therefore not geographically representative.

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter described the methodology used in conducting this research. The use of qualitative case studies was the most appropriate methodology selected to answer the research question within the scope and time limitations of the study. The iterative nature of the methodology allowed for a more rigorous
research process because of the reciprocal interaction between the literature review, analysis and theory elaboration. Chapter 5 presents the data that was collected.
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to detail and analyse the evidence collected which assisted in the answering of the research questions, as detailed in chapter 3. Pratt (2009) maintained that qualitative studies should reflect on both the data as such (so the reader can see the progression of data to the level of interpretation) as well as the interpretation thereof (not neglecting the theoretical aspects). As this is a two-phased study the emergent themes from the mentor interviews are firstly circumscribed. The data obtained from the entrepreneurial interviews is then outlined in the report. Although the data is portrayed, the focus falls more on the interpretation thereof, as suggested by Pratt (2009).

5.2 EMERGENT THEMES FROM MENTOR INTERVIEWS

The unstructured interviews from mentors were transcribed and analysed for emerging themes. The emerging themes are detailed below.

5.2.1 HOW MENTORSHIP WAS PERCEIVED

Whilst the mentors were in agreement that mentorship definitely aided the personal and organisational growth of entrepreneurs, they all alluded to the complexity of the mentoring relationship. The relationship was perceived to be very different to mentoring an employee in a corporate environment.
Entrepreneurs lacked the security that employees experienced in a corporate environment and believed that they had a lot more to lose in terms of the success of their businesses, should the relationship fail. The mentors therefore experienced an increased sense of responsibility due to the entrepreneurs’ high expectations. The initial challenge was that the solicitation of advice was prevented by the entrepreneur’s drive and vision. Mentor 1 stated that “there is a drive to be seen to be up there doing it themselves, and often if asked who they owe their success to it is a case of; ‘I’m the one that did it’”.

This reluctance to accept the extended advice was commented on by Mentor 5: “There’s an attitude of ‘this is my idea, I know best’ and ‘I believe it won’t happen to me I’m different’. That is the entrepreneurial mind-set.” The mentors all stated that the success of entrepreneurial mentorship is directly proportional to the ability of the mentor to be mindful of the entrepreneurial ego and to manage that in the relationship.

It was noted though, that the consultative input was valued by the entrepreneurs once the advice had been accepted. Mentor 1 commented that:

Entrepreneurs believe they can do everything themselves. Once they experience support they start to value that, because it’s lonely. They like to think they can do it but then say maybe it’s ok to admit I don’t have all the answers, it’s ok to take advice. Initially they are very protective, they don’t want to share their ideas or pain, like a new mum who doesn’t want to have anyone else bath her baby for her, but once
you tried the support, you realise because you are so tired it’s nice to hand your baby to someone else.

5.2.2 COMPENSATION

The issue of compensation for mentor services was raised. On the one hand it was debated that the quality of the rendered services could be determined by the willingness of the mentees to compensate the mentor. On the other hand, the intangible nature of mentoring made it difficult for the entrepreneurs to pay for as they would have preferred to have paid for tangible benefits.

5.2.3 MENTORSHIP AFFECTS BUSINESS GROWTH

All the mentors were in accord that mentorship played a substantial role in sustaining and growing entrepreneurial ventures. The examples they provided to support this claim ranged from the reduction and stabilisation of a bank’s defaults to a business incubator that reported a 20% annual growth in 95% of their business ventures. A local mining business community experienced growth in revenue from a zero base to R10 million by implementing mentorship programmes.
5.2.4 ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL MENTORSHIP

Entrepreneurial experience and empathy

A very prominent theme that emerged from the mentor interviews was the perception that a mentor’s previous entrepreneurial experience led to an enhanced and more effective mentoring relationship. Mentors believed that previous entrepreneurial experience increased the ability to relate to and empathise with the entrepreneur as it created a place of ‘authenticity’ and that was a critical factor in gaining trust and empathy with the mentee.

Different interventions required

The complexity of the mentoring relationship was realised when different types of mentoring styles and different interventions were required from the mentees at different times in the relationship. The mentor thus needs to analyse the business, understand where the business is in terms of the growth cycle and make interventions best suited for the appropriate stage. Mentor 1 commented that “Generally at start-up, it’s an understanding of the environment, workplace challenges and products to market. At the growth phase; its questions of leading the team, how to develop individuals and rebrand themselves”.

Not only did the business strategy need to be changed at various stages, but the entrepreneurs themselves had to adapt to the different stages of the business lifecycle. Mentor 5 commented: “Dialogue is different and at start-up
the fear we face is different - who I am at start-up is different from who I am at growth stages where it’s an issue of who I want to be”.

A further complexity was conforming to the style of the intervention to suit the individual needs of the entrepreneurs. Mentor 5 commented that:

The person to shift a young entrepreneur in the township is not Bill Gates. They may have a great meeting and the entrepreneur will be suitably impressed, but they won’t be able to relate - nothing will shift. Someone who comes from the township and has been through the same challenges may have more of an effect. Who they are and what they say - there is a level of understanding.

**Trust and Legitimacy**

Trust emerged as a critical factor in determining the success of the relationship. The issue of legitimacy was addressed and also regarded as a prerequisite for this relationship to work. When a mentor with limited resources enters into a relationship purely to promote his own credibility coupled with a mentee whose only motivation is to gain access to the network of the mentor, the relationship is sure to result in failure. Whilst many of the mentoring relationships in South Africa are considered to be legitimate there is a prevalence of these “illegitimate” and unsuccessful relationships.
**Framework**

The mentors interviewed all formed part of formal mentoring programmes. These programmes all varied in terms of duration, structure and style. The duration of the programmes ranged from a three month period to three years. The structure involved face-to-face meetings but the frequency varied from meeting on a fortnightly basis to meeting only when issues needed to be discussed. Some programmes concentrated mainly on rendering technical assistance and mentees were sent on training programmes such as financial management and corporate governance to improve their skills. Other programmes focused on both the technical and psychosocial aspects with mentees having to work through issues such as cash flow projections and then discussing these at the following meeting. This was combined with exploring individual aspirations and beliefs regarding the management of a business.

5.2.5 GENDER DIFFERENCEES

All the mentors believed that it was easier to mentor women as opposed to men.

I find men are more difficult to mentor than women. They have big ego’s and your credentials have to be really good for them to even listen to you. Women are much better, they are more open to new ideas, and they listen more, tend to implement what you suggest and are upfront with you. They
are keen to improve their business so they are happy to focus and do what it takes. (Mentor 3)

“Women are a lot more willing to accept help, maybe it’s related to ego - men are more fixed in their ideas.” (Mentor 1) Mentor 4 also commented that “Women are ten times better to work with than men. I like the style women bring to the table - there’s humility. Women are more committed to making a difference by creating value, there’s less of a view of entitlement and more a focus on delivery”.

From these accounts it was evident that the gender of the mentee did not influence the mentor’s style and gender differences were not perceived to impact on the type of information needed. The view was expressed that women appeared to have less trouble soliciting and implementing the advice given. There did not appear to be a marked difference in mentoring styles when the gender of the mentor was taken into account, although the female mentor did say that she considered both technical and psychosocial aspects but preferred to focus more on the emotional aspects. The males in the sample were split between a focus on business aspects in the funding organisation and a combination approach by the males working with the incubator and industry board.

5.2.6 DISTINCTION BETWEEN MENTORING AND COACHING

Mentors were mindful to distinguish between mentoring and coaching. Since three of the interviewees worked in both the coaching and mentoring fields, this
distinction was brought to the researcher’s attention. Using these terms interchangeably was regarded as incorrect as the mentors argued that the mentoring relationship was clearly distinguishable from the coaching relationship when their different styles, processes and outcomes were taken into account.

“There’s a distinction between mentoring and coaching, where mentoring provides direction and advice and transference of skills whilst coaching creates awareness and is not as directing.” (Mentor 4)

The mentors were passionate about their roles and believed that they added value to entrepreneurial businesses. They maintained that they benefited from outcomes such as greater self-development and learning, the reciprocal nature of their services and from the financial gains which resulted from the transformation of their mentoring skills into a business.

5.3 RESULTS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INTERVIEWS

5.3.1 THE WAY MENTORSHIP WAS PERCEIVED

Mentorship did appear to be positively perceived as 15 of the 16 respondents believed that the mentor had a positive impact on their business. Respondent 10 remarked that “in fact, I never thought of it before but ‘guardian angel’ is the best way to describe the relationship as he’s just been totally amazing”. The only dissenting view was aired by a male respondent who was assigned a
mentor through a formal mentorship programme. He blamed the failed mentor relationship on mutual work pressures, opposing personality traits, the lack of empathy and the insufficient entrepreneurial experience of the mentor. Another factor that portrayed the positive perception of the mentoring process was the willingness of 12 of the 16 respondents to pay for the service. There were some entrepreneurs who felt that because of financial pressures at start-up they would not have paid at the time, but in hindsight believed that it was something that entrepreneurs should invest in.

I’d say yes, but when I was starting out I’d say no, largely because there’s no money at the beginning and always something more important that needs to be done, that’s the entrepreneurial mind-set. If you asked me ten years ago it would be definitely no. In hindsight yes, I can say it has worked. I obviously won’t pay R10,000 a session but something reasonable. Knowledge is power - when you pay for it you can get value and often if paying for an hour saves you R20,000 then it’s valuable. The difficulty is that it’s not one of those things that are tangible. (Respondent 16)

This opinion was shared by one of the mentors who stated that the intangible nature of mentoring often made it difficult to quantify and measure the benefits immediately and its value was usually only apparent after a couple of years.

The greatest benefit derived from the mentoring process was identified by entrepreneurs as being the technical business advice regarding customer care as well as staff and financial management. In addition to the emotional support
rendered, which included aspects like the enhancement of self-confidence and motivation, business strategy advice regarding future growth and industry expansion was highly rated as well. Access to mentor networks was greatly valued and finally, funding assistance.

In a question on support structures, mentorship was mentioned as a viable structure to implement in order to increase the success rate of the start-up phase. This was a further indication that mentorship was positively perceived.

It was interesting, however, that whilst 15 entrepreneurs responded positively when asked a direct question about their mentor only five subjects of the research sample included their mentor in their entrepreneurial narrative. Since a large number of various benefits was derived from the mentoring relationship and listed by the entrepreneurs, the picture of “I did it myself” as portrayed in their narratives was surprising. This coincided with the observations of mentors that remarked on the attitudes of the entrepreneurs as being those of “I know best” or “it wouldn’t happen to me”.

5.3.2 HOW WAS MENTORSHIP PERCEIVED TO AFFECT THE GROWTH OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURE?

From the entrepreneurs’ perceptions, it was evident that the mentorship had a positive impact on a personal level. Consequently, the impact thereof on the level of enterprise, especially on the growth of revenue and staff, was questioned. As described in their entrepreneurial narrative, all of the 16 entrepreneurs had experienced a growth in revenue. A similar tendency was
noted in staff growth except for two cases; one of which restructured his entrepreneurial business and outsourced functions in order to improve profitability and the other who closed his doors for business.

In response to the direct question “Do you believe this relationship could have assisted with the increase in staff numbers or revenue of the business? If so, how and why?” only 13 entrepreneurs believed that the mentoring relationship was responsible for the increased revenue and only three concurred that it had caused an increase in staff levels.

Three candidates believed that the mentor had not played any part in the growing of their revenues. “We grew the business ourselves and we grew the revenue so he hasn’t really assisted with that.” (Respondent 2)

One of the candidates initially acknowledged the positive effect on revenues but was more hesitant to attribute the new growth to the mentorship.

When we established the business, it helped quite a lot in getting revenue as we also got introduced to some of their networks. Our mentoring now has definitely improved the systems but we haven’t seen the fruits of it in terms of revenue. Business has grown but I don’t know if it is due to the actual mentor or to our abilities and sheer efforts. (Respondent 6)
Once again, the issue of the complexity relative to the mentoring relationship was evident because of its abstract nature and the individualistic entrepreneurial mind-set.

There were 2 entrepreneurs who admitted to ignoring the advice of their mentor. One of the entrepreneurs experienced serious negative repercussions due to not following the valuable advice.

If I had listened to him, I would never have had to close down the business. It was the one time when he told me that he didn’t think I should partner with the lady as he said it looked as though she was just fronting. She kept delaying with the changed shareholder documentation and he said he smelt a rat. I was naïve and was lured by the opportunity to make some money and thought he was being unduly wary. (Respondent 15)

It was noted that, depending on the particular phase of their careers or lives, different mentors were approached by the respondents. “I didn’t have one person throughout the whole process, I used different people at different times because my needs were different as well.” (Respondent 14) Whilst business and emotional support was seen to be an overall benefit of mentoring, access to mentor networks was regarded by 7 of the 13 entrepreneurs as the reason for mentor’s assistance with growing revenues. However, it was only those entrepreneurs in informal relationships that were granted access to their mentor’s networks.
Mentors assisted entrepreneurs to make decisions that prevented fatal mistakes. Assistance rendered in both the financial and technical fields as well as with the making of strategic business decisions was regarded as influential when revenue growth was analysed.

Entrepreneurs were of the opinion that the mentors were not instrumental in the growing of staff numbers as only three entrepreneurs perceived to gain any value at that level. Many entrepreneurs regarded staff management as an operational function and believed that they were able to manage this sufficiently without external assistance.

Thus to answer Question 1, the results indicated that the mentorship was perceived to provide value at an individual level in terms of business and psychosocial support and at a venture level, particularly in revenue growth. Whilst ventures had grown in staff, the mentoring relationship was perceived to not have affected this directly. Even though the entrepreneurs indicated numerous benefits related to the mentoring relationship, the complexity of the relationship was evident in that the entrepreneurs still considered the success of their growing ventures to be as a result of their own individual efforts.

5.3.3 WHY WAS MENTORSHIP PERCEIVED TO AFFECT THE GROWTH OF ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES?

In order to gain insight into the perceptions mentioned in the caption, the nature and framework of the relationships were analysed to define the salient features underpinning the success or failure of this relationship.
5.3.3.1 FRAMEWORK

*Formal and Informal*

The sample used for the research included entrepreneurs that were either in an informal relationship or in a formal relationship which included mentoring programmes or where the services of a professional coach was used. Table 5.1 summarised the mentoring relationships of the sample.

**Table 5.1 Mentoring Relationships of Entrepreneurs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal relationships - Number of Entrepreneurs</th>
<th>Formal relationships - Number of Entrepreneurs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The informal programmes were found to be less structured than the formal programmes. Informal relationships were not paid for and were arranged predominantly with family and business entrepreneurs. The mentor was contacted whenever there was a need to obtain certain information, brainstorm ideas or assistance was required in the addressing of a problem. Contact was established either telephonically, via e-mail or during an informal meeting in a coffee shop.

The formal relationships were supported by meetings conducted largely in person, and supplemented with telephone calls and e-mails. The duration of
such sessions varied between one and two hours at the mentor’s choice of venue. During these weekly or fortnightly meetings the entrepreneur was requested to supply information regarding certain variables (often financial projections) during the meeting. The one formal relationship supported only by meetings conducted on Skype, was regarded as successful as the medium allowed for frequent updates without a travel component which often adds to the stress brought about by time limitations. The particular mentee believed that as he was well acquainted with his mentor, personal interaction was not necessary to build the relationship. He did indicate, however, that personal interaction might have increased his accountability to the mentoring process. “Because we are not meeting face-to-face, I sometimes get off easier for not having gone through the work I should have. It would be harder to get away with stuff if I was sitting across from an ‘accusatory look’.” (Respondent 3)

The structured programmes that had mentors on site worked well as those mentors were easily accessible and could play a monitoring role more easily. Weekly meetings with the mentors were regarded as too frequent by the entrepreneurs. As fortnightly meetings allowed entrepreneurs more time to work through their previous concerns and challenges and to explore new aspects during the following meeting, this timeframe was regarded as ideal. Some mentors on the formal programmes restricted contact to the contracted meeting times. This was regarded as problematic when urgent advice was sought by the mentees. The entrepreneurs in informal relationships found their mentors to be more easily accessible.
In analysing the information there was an indication that whilst formal relationships worked well, informal relationships were perceived as being more successful. This perception was deduced from the following information derived from the transcripts:

- Entrepreneurs in informal relationships were more positive about the relationship. There was only participant who was negative about his informal mentorship. All five candidates who mentioned their mentor in their entrepreneurial narratives were engaged in informal relationships.
- Three of the candidates who were involved in formal relationships also had an informal mentor.
- A reluctance to admit to being on a formal programme was evident. One of the male candidates was sourced from a formal programme but he only discussed his positive experience with his informal mentor and never disclosed or discussed his formal mentor experience. Another female candidate initially spoke only of her informal mentor and only “confessed” her involvement in a formal incubator when she saw their stationery in the researcher’s file. She said that whilst the relationship had been very beneficial initially, she had chosen to terminate it earlier as it was not working for her any longer.
- One of the mentees found that his formal mentor focused too much on the technical segment of the entrepreneurial venture and sometimes neglected the psychosocial side and this prevented them from connecting on a personal basis which led him to believe that he was missing out on personal development.
• It emerged that it was only the informal mentees in this study that were given access to their mentors’ networks.

• Trust levels also appeared to be higher in informal relationships. Trust was mentioned 17 times by entrepreneurs and was regarded as an essential part of the relationship. When asked what advice they could impart to entrepreneurs entering into a mentoring relationship, many felt that trust was critical - “It should be someone you trust and someone you can tap into.” (Respondent 10)

Another interesting theme that emerged from the entrepreneurial interviews was that certain communities had a predisposition to mentoring. Four of the respondents commented on the natural support networks found in the Jewish communities. “I’ve got a lot of Jewish friends and I’m so envious of the relationships they have, it’s really so amazing, they always have someone to reach out to.” (Respondent 6) Two of the respondents commented on the informal, extended support they received from the Jewish community.

**Phases of Mentoring**

The majority of the relationships could be described as following a more developmental mentorship model and the four prominent phases could be described best by using Clutterbuck’s (2006) terminology. Figure 5.1 shows the phases of the mentoring relationship.
In the initial phase it was important that the mentor cultivated an acquaintance with the mentee; rapport was built and trust was established. The mentor needed to be aware of and manage any relationship complexities. In the one instance where the mentor failed to do this, the relationship failed. There was an initial sense of suspicion in some of the formal relationships which was converted into trust as soon as the mentor displayed empathy, listened attentively and established rapport with the mentee.

In the progress making phase, the process of mutual learning enforced the relationship. In some of the informal relationships the mentors used their influence to help the mentees to advance by granting them access to their networks.
The relationship was then celebrated and a winding down process was perceived with mentees either continuing the relationship informally and less frequently or engaging with different mentors. The duration of these mentorship relationships varied and some lasted only six months, hence these stages were either shorter, combined or omitted. In some of the formal programmes, the main focus was on technical expertise and not as much on emotional support. No access to mentor networks was obtained.

**Experience and behaviours valued**

The facet of the mentorship that was valued the most by the entrepreneurs was the entrepreneurial experience of the mentor. The entrepreneurs emphasised the fact that mentors with previous entrepreneurial experience understood the challenges faced by them and empathised better. Respondent 6 said:

> His entrepreneurial experience. He knew what we were going through as he was there himself. As opposed to our other mentor, he was great in marketing but he was always kind of removed. We didn't have the camaraderie of being entrepreneurs together.

They also accepted the advice more readily when it came from an experienced source. “Getting something from someone who has done it before or gone through this carries a lot of weight - it’s not academic.” (Respondent 6)
The relationship between entrepreneurs and mentors with professional experience was more complex. The entrepreneurs valued the in-depth content knowledge of the professional mentor. However, for the relationship to be regarded as functional, the professionals needed to connect on an emotional level as well. As the relationships lacked the empathetic element, the ability to listen, to be patient and understand the challenges the entrepreneur were confronted with, the more evident it became that these elements determined the success of the relationship. Only when the professional financial experience of the mentor coupled with the above mentioned abilities transpired, was the relationship impacted upon. If this connection was not established then the ability to mobilise people was lost and the relationship was deemed a failure. This was clearly evident in the account of the failed relationship where the entrepreneur perceived a lack of empathy.

Sometimes when you need to manage cash flow I use the tax man’s money and then pay it at a later stage. She said she understood that but still insisted I need to stop doing that. I don’t think she understood what it’s like to be an entrepreneur as it’s different in corporate; it’s easy to follow corporate governance there. She said she understood but I don’t think she really did because she had never been in that situation, it’s safe in corporate. Maybe it would have made better sense to have a mentor with entrepreneurial experience. (Respondent 4)
Behaviours Valued

The behaviours that entrepreneurs valued were very diverse, as depicted in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Behaviours valued by Entrepreneurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in me</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>“Their enthusiasm and belief in my abilities made me believe in me. It’s almost as though I didn’t want to disappoint. And when you realise and get over your amazement that someone ten times smarter than you believes you can do it you get inspired and your self-confidence grows.” Respondent 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in me or my business</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>“He took a personal interest and wanted me to succeed.” Respondent 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic thinking</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>“I found his ability for strategic thinking about business and his ability to analyse information valuable.” Respondent 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>“I liked and enjoyed his honesty and trust and he could bring me down to size if I was getting a bit big-headed or carried away, he was my mirror and reality check.” Respondent 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening skills</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“He’s also a very patient man, so would take the time to listen and I could trust him.” Respondent 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“He is so patient and humble. This is second nature to him but he took the time to teach me all that I needed to know.” Respondent 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral thinker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“He is such a lateral thinker, thinks out of the box, he totally expanded my capacity to question. He always thought of different ways of doing things. For one of my ideas he had four or five new ones.” Respondent 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“He was a humble guy and made the effort to take an interest in me.” Respondent 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“She’s a stranger so there are no emotional issues, there’s greater objectivity. She gives us a new way of looking at things and brings a fresh perspective.” Respondent 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.3.2 STAGES OF BUSINESS

All the entrepreneurs interviewed implied that different types of support were needed at the different stages of business development, as summarised in Table 5.3.
Table 5.3 Types of support needed at different stages in the business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL STAGE</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>AFTER 3 YEARS</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Product expansion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence and Emotional support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sustaining and delivery</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information depicted the beliefs of entrepreneurs that the business support needed at start-up should focus more on technical and financial advice and basic business skills. The emotional support needed was largely the enhancing of their confidence and having someone believe in their ability as there were great feelings of uncertainty. “Earlier, I needed more support on the technical side and also growing my confidence. Now it’s about growing the business and expanding and looking at new opportunities - so it’s different.” (Respondent 9)

The entrepreneurs interviewed had all been in business for over three years (and therefore in the growth phase) and believed that assistance regarding growth issues and product or market expansion was needed. They sought more strategic advice to sustain their businesses and deliver to their growing client base.

The psychosocial support differed during this stage with the focus shifting from personal development. Some of the entrepreneurs concurred that mentoring was needed at an earlier stage as it focused on personal development which was needed at a more advanced stage in the lifecycle of the entrepreneur. Only two entrepreneurs could differentiate between mentoring and coaching as they
had experience in this field. The majority of the sample however, either did not refer to a distinction or used the terms interchangeably.

Three of the entrepreneurs stated that they had started coaching and mentoring other entrepreneurs. They believed that they realized the value of mentoring and were able to add value to other businesses based on their own experiences.

In addressing the question of venture growth being affected by mentoring it was determined that the framework of the informal relationships were valued higher than that of the formal relationships. Mentors in informal relationships had a greater focus on psychosocial factors, greater empathy, escalated levels of trust and were often more experienced entrepreneurs. Even though entrepreneurial experience was considered to be vital and whilst professionals were valued the expectation of them being able to listen, understand, empathise and mobilise entrepreneurs, also existed. Different types of business and emotional support was needed during the various stages of business development. During the start-up stage, advice on mainly technical and financial matters is necessary as well as the enhancement of confidence. During the growth stages however, the focus should be on the business strategy and growth as well as on personal development.
5.3.4 WAS MENTORSHIP PERCEIVED DIFFERENTLY BY MALE AND FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS?

The fact that mentoring was more positively perceived by female entrepreneurs than their male counterparts, emerged during the cross-case analysis. This was evident over a number of areas.

All the female respondents believed their mentors assisted in their revenue growth. The female candidates were also more expressive about their mentors assisting in this field and used words like “definitely” and “absolutely”. In comparison, only five of the eight male candidates believed this relationship made a difference to their revenue growth. Furthermore, three of the five entrepreneurs who mentioned their mentor in their narrative were women.

Of the eight male respondents, three used their successful, entrepreneurial fathers as mentors. Of the eight female respondents, three used their entrepreneurial husbands as mentors. One of the respondents proclaimed that it was her husband that encouraged her to open her construction business and guided her through the process. In fact, three of the women were given the idea and opportunity to go into business by their mentor. The male entrepreneurs, however, all reported that their business ideas were formulated by themselves.

Four of the women candidates stated that the businessmen they worked with became their informal mentors. “We just clicked and had a rapport from the start and he said he was really impressed with what I had achieved at such a young age and I just needed to call him if I needed any assistance.” (Respondent 7)
With regard to entrepreneurial behaviours only four males compared to seven of the females stressed the psychosocial benefits. Most of the women valued their mentors’ patience and confidence building skills, whilst men valued their listening skills and ability to remain “calm” which they’ve emulated.

Male entrepreneurs seemed to value mentors with entrepreneurial experience more, as a male paired with a professional believed that his failed relationship may have succeeded if his mentor was an entrepreneur. Another male entrepreneur involved an entrepreneurial mentor in his relationship with a professional. In contrast, the two females who had professionals as mentors were very happy with their relationships and one respondent remained in contact with her mentor even after the relationship had formally ended.

Of the 16 entrepreneurs only two identified female mentors. A female entrepreneur identified her mother as a role model and a male entrepreneur was paired with a woman in a formal relationship but did not acknowledge her as a role model. During the entrepreneurial interviews, two females and one male identified their mentors as role models. The women in the sample did not appear to have any issues with the gender of their mentors and reported no sexual tension. They appeared to be satisfied that they were acknowledged and respected for their business abilities.

Women were more aware of support networks and one entrepreneur believed this helped to reduce the loneliness brought about by being in business. She found it to be an excellent source of motivation to speak to other likeminded
women and listen to stories of successful women. Men did mention the support structures but used it more to access information and finance.

Thus, in answering the question on gender perceptions, the results suggested that women perceived mentorship more positively than their male counterparts.

5.4 SUMMARY

The findings from the mentor and entrepreneurial interviews largely indicated that mentorship was perceived to be beneficial to entrepreneurs, mentors and the entrepreneurial venture. Informal relationships appeared to be highly beneficial with the mentors’ entrepreneurial experience being highly valued. Overall, women entrepreneurs tended to be more positive towards mentorship than their male colleagues. These findings will be analysed according to the relevant literature in chapter 6.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The results reported in the previous chapter provided insights into the entrepreneurs’ perceptions of mentorship. This chapter seeks to synthesise, align and ground the findings within the relevant literature base. The chapter will firstly discuss the findings with regards to entrepreneurial learning and mentoring and will then discuss the questions asked in chapter 3. It will make recommendations to be considered by stakeholders when designing an entrepreneurial mentoring programme and lastly, will propose a model on entrepreneurial mentorship.

6.2 MENTORSHIP AND LEARNING

The entrepreneurial stories divulged by the sample elicited the entrepreneurial characteristics as detailed by Kuratko (2009) namely, opportunity identification, risk taking and creating a product and growing the venture. The entrepreneurs were all passionate about their ventures and displayed tenacity and resilience to overcome obstacles in order to realise their dreams.

With respect to learning, this study complimented earlier theories of Sullivan (2000), Cope and Watts (2000), Deakins and Freel (1998) and Watson (2004) in that those mentors enhanced the learning of entrepreneurs by using mentoring as a reflective tool allowing them to reflect on their experiences and
understand their actions. Entrepreneurs in this study used words such as "mirror" to describe this reflective ability of mentors.

Watson (2004) stated that the mentor's role is to facilitate the learning process. Hence, instead of prescribing solutions, the mentors' role is to allow mentees to reach their own conclusions in order for them to understand and take responsibility for their next course of action. This was echoed by the mentors who stated that if mentors are too prescriptive and poor decisions result, blame could be shifted onto the mentor and the assistance would then be perceived as interference.

It is evident that mentees came to this realisation through the evolution of the relationship. Some mentees entered into the relationship with the expectation that the mentor will be responsible for solving their problems, but discovered that the objective of the relationship was for them to work through their challenges themselves only with guidance from mentors. They realised the value of this as their learnings were more profound and they tended to have a greater sense of ownership and accountability for their decisions.

The "double loop" concept described by Sullivan (2000, p. 165) was well illustrated by entrepreneurs who learned from experience and adjusted behaviour as the venture passed through the different phases. Entrepreneurs believed that their mentors guided them through this process. They also believed that by heeding the advice and avoiding the mistakes their mentors
had made, they fast-tracked in their learning and this ultimately saved them money.

There is also strong evidence to support the findings of Cope and Watts (2000) and Sullivan (2000, p. 164). It was determined that entrepreneurs learnt through “critical incidents” that caused them to reflect on their business while aided by their mentor. These critical incidents could be issues that occurred in their businesses, issues resulting from the venture passing through stages or even successes, failures or “nuggets” that were passed on by the mentor. In the work of Beaty et al. (1997) the action learning activities of listening and questioning of mentors were consistently regarded by mentees to be important as it propelled them towards new ways of thinking by allowing insight into and an understanding of behaviour. This study thus supports earlier studies on learning and entrepreneurial learning, in that experiential and continuous learning were evidenced to be critical in the growth of both the individual and the enterprise.

6.3 MENTOR AND COACHING ROLES

The study found that some confusion existed regarding the terminology which discerns between coaching and mentoring with the distinction either not being recognised or by the terms being used interchangeably. An expert mentor also referenced an incubator which changed the title their mentors bore, to “guides” as this was perceived to be a more appropriate description of the task fulfilled by these professionals. It was agreed that the term “mentor” had become distorted and caused confusion by the manner in which it was used.
The entrepreneurs who recognised the distinction between the terms believed that a mentor is needed at an earlier stage in business and coaches at a later stage. These entrepreneurs did not view coaching in the traditional way as proposed by Luecke (2004) to be specific to behaviour, but in a more holistic light as perceived by Edwards (2003) who proclaimed that coaching focussed on the development of potential and the facilitation of learning. In the growth stage and beyond, entrepreneurs felt that less of the teaching style associated with mentoring was necessary and more of the style that aided facilitation that was associated with coaching. This is similar to the views of expert mentors who perceived mentorship to be the transference of skills and coaching to focus on the creating of awareness.

Whilst some of the mentors used questioning, not all the mentees reported this technique being used by their mentors. Thus, the implications were that when mentors used more of a “sponsorship” style of mentoring and less of a “development” style, it resulted in some entrepreneurs experiencing the need for a coach which is regarded as additional to the services of a mentor.

This study showed that a mentor needs to display all of Clutterbuck’s (1998) mentor roles identified as coach, guardian, network contact and counsellor. A failure to move between these roles, particularly the “coach” role at the more mature stage of the relationship, became problematic for the entrepreneurs as they felt obliged to supplement their existing relationship to fill a void. Whilst the study found that most mentees believed their mentors played a developmental mentor role, there was an indication, as was found in Martin’s (2008) study that
some mentors within the South African context did not have the necessary experience and knowledge to fulfil the more sophisticated mentor role required.

6.4 HOW WAS MENTORSHIP PERCEIVED TO AFFECT THE GROWTH OF ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES?

6.4.1 MENTORSHIP AND PERCEIVED BENEFITS

Mentorship in this study was perceived to be beneficial to entrepreneurs as it impacted positively on both individual and business levels. Entrepreneurs also perceived this relationship to be valuable enough that would have, in hindsight, justified being paid for.

Kram (1985, p. 43) advocated that the role of a mentor is twofold: firstly it provided the mentee with career support and secondly, support on a psychosocial level. This is also evident in this study where the psychosocial support factor is prevalent throughout. The term “career support' was used by Kram (1985) and his work focuses on “careered” employees. This report extends this idea and changes the terminology to “business support” to encompass the needs of entrepreneurs pertaining to business. The more “technical” aspects of business, such as financial management, were found to have benefited the most from the support rendered during this study. Similarities with Cull’s (2006) work was seen, where the effect of emotional support was analysed. The improved levels of self-confidence, particularly amongst the female sample, were attributed to the mentorship relationship.
The study also found similarities with Clutterbuck’s (2006) groupings of mentee benefits derived from his work on workplace mentoring. This study adopted Clutterbuck’s terminology but extended the content to include benefits that were perceived by the entrepreneurial mentees to be valuable. These are:

- **developmental outcomes** - technical business advice and information and competence in financial, staff and client management.

- **emotional outcomes** - less tangible but resulted in an increased self-confidence with a shift to a personal developmental focus in growth stages.

- **career outcomes can be changed to business outcomes** and focus on achievement in whole and in part on business outcomes thus involving advice on industry and business plans in earlier stages and moving to product growth and strategic business decision making in later stages.

- **enabling outcomes** - would include information and assistance with regards to the financial elements and networking opportunities.

### 6.4.2 MENTORSHIP AND PERCEIVED GROWTH BENEFITS

In this research, just as in the work of Clutterbuck (2006), mentorship is perceived to be a mutually beneficial relationship with entrepreneurial mentors being gratified. The benefits of mentoring were perceived to include tangible benefits such as financial rewards and intangible rewards, for example personal fulfilment and self-development. The intangible rewards were more highly valued.
Whilst mentees experienced benefits the complexity of the entrepreneurial mentorship relationship alluded to by the mentors only became evident when these benefits were analysed in order to understand the relationship’s impact on venture growth. From the results discussed in chapter 5, it emerges that whilst this sample had experienced growth in both employee numbers and revenue the study exposed reluctance amongst entrepreneurs to attribute this growth to the mentorship relationship. Two possible reasons are posited for this.

The first refers to the intangible nature of this relationship which complicates the establishing of the causal link between the relationship and its effect on the increase of employee numbers and revenue growth. It can be argued that it may be easier to see the relationship’s impact when referring to revenue growth. This could possibly explain the finding that many entrepreneurs felt that access to mentor networks increased their client base, thus impacting positively on revenue. The link with increased staff numbers can be perceived to be more intangible and this could explain why only three of the entrepreneurs attributed an impact on staff numbers to the mentoring relationship. Mentors also commented on the intangible nature of the relationships and believed that this presented problems in quantifying its value.

The second reason could be attributed to the belief of the entrepreneurs that they were primarily responsible for their own success. This view corresponded with the mentors’ perception of the nature of their interaction with their mentees, particularly their male mentees. This finding is similar to the viewpoint expressed by Cox (1995) who found that the elite independent entrepreneurs
(who started their own companies and transformed it into large organisations), were rarely able to identify a mentor and usually regarded themselves as self-made. The South African sample was found to be different from the British sample in that a mentor was identified. However, upon further enquiry, a discrepancy emerged when the vast majority of entrepreneurs focussed on the “self-made” element and omitted to mention their mentors’ assistance in their narrative.

A further similarity was noted by Cox (1995) as entrepreneurs in this study also reverted to their entrepreneurial parents for support. It was not only the access to the expertise of their entrepreneurial parents that was perceived to be important, but also the entrepreneurial support rendered by the community. This study found certain communities, such as the Jewish community, to favour mentoring within the realms of their value base, which proved to be of great advantage for the entrepreneurs within this community as easy, informal access to excellent entrepreneurial role models and expertise was ensured.

This research unearthed the complexity of the entrepreneurial mentorship relationship. Benefits to both mentees and mentors were clearly evident. Whilst the perception exists that this relationship impacts on growth, only the measure of positive revenue growth was evidenced in this study. Entrepreneurs did not perceive the variability of growth in employee numbers to have been influenced by the mentorship relationship. Further, the complexity of the relationship in terms of the intangible nature thereof and the individual drive and mind-set of
the entrepreneur presented problems in ascertaining how much of this growth could be attributed to the mentoring relationship.

6.5 WHY WAS THE RELATIONSHIP PERCEIVED TO AFFECT THE GROWTH OF ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES?

6.5.1 ENTREPRENEURIAL MENTORING SKILLS

The entrepreneurial performance model as proposed by Antonites and Van Vuuren, (2001, p. 2), \( E/P = M (E/S \times B/S) \) was still found to be valid in this study. The entrepreneurial performance model that Watson (2004) adapted for mentoring was confirmed in this study and all functions proposed were supported by the mentees. This study elaborated on his model by adding mentor behaviours that were found to be useful by the mentees. Performance Motivation was extended to include behaviours such as providing access to networks, being reflective, building self-confidence and personal development. Business strategy was added to Entrepreneurial skills and Client management skills to Business skills, as shown in Table 6.1.
Table 6.1 Additions to Watson’s Entrepreneurial Performance Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneurial Performance (E/P)</th>
<th>Performance Motivation (M)</th>
<th>Entrepreneurial Skills (E/S)</th>
<th>Business Skills (B/S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of own business</td>
<td>Providing constructive criticism</td>
<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
<td>Business plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of first transaction</td>
<td>Providing guidance</td>
<td>Risk propensity</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in net value of business</td>
<td>Providing encouragement</td>
<td>Opportunity identification</td>
<td>General management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of employees</td>
<td>Being a sounding board</td>
<td>Role models</td>
<td>Financial management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased productivity levels</td>
<td>Helping to manage change</td>
<td>Business strategy</td>
<td>Marketing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased revenue and profitability</td>
<td>Providing access to networks</td>
<td>HR management skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being reflective</td>
<td>Operational skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building self confidence</td>
<td>Legal skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Client management skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Watson (2004)

Cull (2006) and Martin (2008) considered the stages that the lifecycle of a business comprise of and found that different needs existed and different behaviours were therefore required to ensure the efficacy of the mentor. As the behaviour portrayed and knowledge required greatly varied in the different stages, the appointment of more than one mentor was justified. This was regarded to be best practice by one of the mentors and confirmed in the study when an entrepreneur proclaimed that he had “outgrown” his initial mentor and had selected a new mentor based on his new “growth” needs.

Based on the information provided by the mentees in terms of the different support needed at different lifecycle stages, the researcher expanded on the work of Cull (2006), Clutterbuck (2006) and Martin (2008) and proposed a
model of mentoring that can be used for entrepreneurs, detailing the different behaviours required during the three phases, as shown in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2 Behaviours proposed for Lifecycle Stages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEHAVIOURS REQUIRED</th>
<th>START-UP</th>
<th>MID POINT</th>
<th>LETTING GO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>Technical business advice - legislation,</td>
<td>Staff management</td>
<td>Business maintenance and sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial for example, cash flow management</td>
<td>Client retention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff recruitment</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Client management</td>
<td>Control processes in place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Confidence building</td>
<td>Listening and reflection</td>
<td>Holistic personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Plans to continue or let go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patience and positive support</td>
<td>Challenging mindsets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing emotions</td>
<td>Development focused</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business plans</td>
<td>Progress made on business plans</td>
<td>Exit strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting sales</td>
<td>Growth strategy</td>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company profiles and marketing material</td>
<td>Product expansion</td>
<td>Sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to finance</td>
<td>Business Innovation and expansion</td>
<td>Selling business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to finance</td>
<td>Access to networks</td>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Clutterbuck, (1998); Martin (2008)

In his work with professional entrepreneurial mentors Martin (2008) found that they focused largely on providing advice on funding. This study found that whilst entrepreneurs value assistance on funding, access to networks was regarded by many as being critical to business growth. The mentors in this study alluded to providing business and emotional support but omitted to mention introducing entrepreneurs to their networks. Both the Martin study and mentor accounts from this study suggested the existence of a possible disconnect pertaining to the expectations of the mentees to gain access to the mentor’s networks and the professional mentors not providing this function.
It does appear that a number of the expert mentors used within the South African entrepreneurial support environment are professionals. Apart from issues of trust, these professionals may not have access to a network that would be relevant to their mentees and therefore do not provide this access.

This led to a second issue of concern that surfaced in this study. The results indicated that an optimal mentorship relationship could be more difficult to achieve if the mentor was a professional without entrepreneurial experience. This was initially cited by a mentor who claimed that it often was the person with the highest qualification who lacked the empathy and demeanour to shift behaviour and transform thinking styles. Mentors also reported that a possible reason for mentorship failure in South Africa was that many of the professional programmes favoured using mentors with the necessary professional credentials but no entrepreneurial experience. This is in accordance with Martin’s (2008) supposition which stated that many support practitioners lacked the relevant industry experience and therefore failed to provide a comprehensive mentoring experience.

Entrepreneurs in this study found empathy and previous entrepreneurial experience to be critical in the development of trust and the promotion of learning. Furthermore, the view that previous entrepreneurial experience carries greater legitimacy also surfaced in this study. This study thus uncovered a discrepancy in the quality of support currently available to South African entrepreneurs and between what entrepreneurs perceived to be of value in mentors with previous entrepreneurial experience. It is suggested that future
studies with a bigger sample size and greater representivity of formal programmes could expand on these insights and deliver results that will be more generalisable.

6.5.2 e-MENTORING

e-Mentoring with e-mails being used as an additional communication tool was not really prevalent in this study. Only one entrepreneur used Skype as the sole means of communication with his mentor. The egalitarian benefit of e-mentoring as described by Bierema and Merriam (2002) was observed in this relationship at it was less pressured in terms of structure and time constraints. This could potentially be a method that is used to increase communication with mentors, but the mentee believed this relationship may have been problematic if the relationship had not pre-existed as trust and accountability are difficult to establish electronically. This view was supported in the work of Petridou (2009) who found that developing trust, confidence and familiarity could be a time consuming process. A blended approach did appear to be useful with most of the sample preferring face-to-face interactions.

6.5.3 FORMAL AND INFORMAL RELATIONSHIPS

The study underwrites the stance assumed in literature that informal mentoring involves mutual selection with goals evolving over time, whilst formal mentoring is more structured with specific goals and guidelines specified (Niehoff, 2006). Clutterbuck (2004, p. 1) noted that mentoring becomes problematic when the
mentor-mentee role is not clearly defined beforehand and described it as a “hit or miss affair”. This was not perceived by the entrepreneurs engaged in informal relationships to be the case. Whilst these informal mentors were not trained, they allowed for the mentoring process to be guided by the needs of their mentees and encouraged them to determine the structure and take responsibility of the process as well.

Clutterbuck (2004) believed that that the mentoring “package” with the greatest value was one that integrated formal with informal mentoring. This was found to be different in this study as the interpretation of the mentees’ accounts revealed that the informal relationship was more valued. Reasons quoted for formal programmes being held in lesser regard included issues such as trust, inaccessibility of mentor networks, programme duration and insufficient mentor experience. These explanations were further explored.

Trust was cited by both mentors and mentees as being a critical element in determining the success of the relationship. In the informal relationship the mentor was known by the mentee and often initiated the mentoring relationship. They would therefore perceive the mentor as being trustworthy. In the informal mentoring scenario trust had therefore already existed whereas it had to be earned in the formal programme.

The level of trust that existed in the informal relationships could explain the willingness of mentors to make their networks available to their mentees. It could also be argued that the mentor would need to trust in the abilities of their
mentees before offering them access to their networks. Flaherty (1999, p. 67) stressed the importance of “mutual trust” to ensure the success of the mentoring relationship. As access to mentor networks was seen as instrumental in revenue and hence venture growth, the absence of this within formal relationships could also be a possible reason for formal relationships to be perceived as less valued.

As the formal programmes were more structured, mentors were often available only at agreed times. Therefore, as opposed to informal mentors who could be contacted either on their cell phone or via e-mail, the formal mentors could have been perceived as being unavailable.

The duration of the programmes also differed with some formal programs lasting up to six months. This is short in comparison to programmes mentioned in literature by Kram (1985) who noted the average duration of programmes being five years in the US and according to Clutterbuck (2006) an average of three years in Europe. This is also shorter than the research detailed in South African corporate companies by Steinmann (2006). Thus the duration of formal relationships may be inadequate to build significant levels of trust and to convey the necessary knowledge. The duration of the informal relationships was on average three years and longer and considered to be more on-going in nature.

The majority of informal relationships were with entrepreneurs, whilst some formal programmes focused on using professionals as mentors. The latter, although important, was valued less than entrepreneurial experience. Formal
workplace mentoring programmes focused a great deal on matching mentors with mentees in order to enhance relationship success (Clutterbuck, 2006). This issue was not raised in this study by either mentors or mentees and might be an issue that could affect the outcome of formal programmes.

All this does not necessarily imply that the formal programmes with professionals are a failure but rather exposes issues that may jeopardise the success of the relationship.

6.6 SUPPORT STRUCTURES

This study aimed to elicit if mentees were aware of any support structures and if so, which of these support structures were utilised by the mentees. In this study, the sample of entrepreneurs who participated in formal mentoring programmes was obtained from across a number of different programmes available in South Africa. These entrepreneurs stated that they were made aware of these programmes via the media or were referred through their networks and had to follow an application process to partake in the programme. The entrepreneurs were of the opinion that an adequate number of support structures existed. However, it was felt that they were bureaucratic; they operated in silos and were not well known within the market. As opposed to starting new structures, the majority of the entrepreneurs concurred that the existing structures needed to be better integrated and communicated into the wider entrepreneurial audience. Both mentees and mentors felt that funding organisations should incorporate a
mentorship component to increase entrepreneurial skill levels and thereby reducing potential business failures.

In terms of the nature of the relationship, this study therefore elicited information that expanded on literature regarding mentorship as well as extended theories on entrepreneurial mentorship. New information was gleaned on what entrepreneurs perceived to be important in terms of the mentoring relationship and new views emerged in that informal relationships were perceived to be more successful.

6.7 MENTORSHIP AND GENDER

This study elicited information on gender with the emergent themes being the number of women mentors, sexual tension in relationships, role modelling and psychosocial support. Earlier studies found that most mentor roles were filled by males (Linehan & Walsh, 1999) as there were not as many women in senior roles. Although the Linehan and Walsh study focused on workplace mentoring, this was a similar to the finding that emerged in this entrepreneurial study. This could be attributed to the fact that female entrepreneurship in South Africa is still regarded as an emerging field with a limited number of women in lifestyle and growth businesses. This could justify why only two women were used as mentors in a sample of 16 entrepreneurs.

This study is more consistent with recent studies of Linehan and Walsh (1999) who found that women had no issues with cross gender mentoring and that
mentees viewed their mentor’s roles as aiding in their business success. This study was therefore inconsistent with earlier studies of Arnold and Davidson (1990) and Fitt and Newton (1981) which suggested that sexual tension created problems within a mentoring relationship. In this study, whilst some women reported issues of sexual harassment in their dealings with certain clients, none of them reported any problems of sexual tension with their mentors. They were appreciative of the fact that their mentors were able to recognise and respect their entrepreneurial skills and drive.

Literature illustrated that women with female mentors increased the aspirational level of women (Barclay, 1982; Hackett & Betz, 1981) and that women mentors were regarded as role models (Linehan & Walsh, 1999). The only female entrepreneur in this study, who used her mother as a mentor, saw her as a role model, but this needs to be tested in a larger sample to be generalisable. Two of the women as opposed to one of the male entrepreneurs regarded their mentors as role models which did not demonstrate a notable distinction. This can be attributed to the small sample of female mentors represented in this study.

One entrepreneur was exuberant in her praise of her mentor and regarded the mentor as a role model with a style and abilities that the entrepreneur aspired to emulate. This was contrary to one male in the sample who had a female mentor but did not regard her as a role model. Both these examples were similar to the recent study of Singh (2006) that found that women perceived their mentors as
role models irrespective of the gender of the mentor, whilst this view was not shared by the men in this sample.

It was therefore found that, in general, the gender of the mentor was not perceived to be a significant factor. None of the women made specific reference to this and seemed to be more focused on the knowledge and style of their mentors. This bodes well for female mentoring going forward as male entrepreneurs can be successfully utilised as mentors, taking into account the shortage of female entrepreneurs available in the South African context.

The greatest difference noted between male and female entrepreneurs was in the aspect of psychosocial support. It was interesting to note that in this study twice as many women valued the emotional support provided by their mentors as integral, compared to their male counterparts who valued the giving of business advice as vital in the relationship. These findings are similar to the work of Stonewater et al. (1990, p. 77) who found that women described the nature of their “helping relationships” in terms of personal connections and support, whereas men described a more objective sense of encouragement related to their work.

Allen and Eby (2004) found that mentors reported providing more psychosocial mentoring to females but found no relationship between career-related mentoring and mentee gender. Mentor reports of providing greater emotional support to women was not evident in this study. Fowler (2007) found that women mentors provided more personal and emotional guidance to their
mentees but this was not evident in this study mainly as this sample was poorly representative in terms of female mentors.

A further difference noted in this study between male and female entrepreneurs was that three of the women were prompted and encouraged to initiate a business by their mentor, who then continued to play a pivotal role in supporting and growing these businesses. This occurrence was not at all prevalent with regards to any of the male entrepreneurs who reported recognising the opportunity for their business themselves. The study also found that four of the female entrepreneurs were approached by businessmen who offered their mentoring assistance to them in growing their ventures. In terms of the male entrepreneurs it was found that they approached their mentors to initiate the relationship. Thus it appears that identifying an opportunity and the initiation of the mentoring relationships are further behaviours elicited by mentors when mentoring women. These findings have not emerged in past literature and further research is required to investigate and understand the generalisability of these initial findings.

An analysis of perceptions according to gender prompted the researcher to assert that women perceived mentorship more positively than their male counterparts. Reasons stated for this assertion were that all the female entrepreneurs interviewed perceived their mentors to play a significant role in increasing their revenues and expressed the various benefits of being in a mentoring relationship in comparison to the male entrepreneurs. The female entrepreneurs were also able to form very strong bonds with their mentors to
the extent that one of the mentors left twenty five percent of his business to his mentee. Women in formal relationships perceived their mentors to add value as well and one entrepreneur regarded the mentor as a member of the family, whilst another still stayed in touch with her mentor even though the relationship had formally ended.

This was quite different to the views of some of the male entrepreneurs in formal relationships who experienced an element of difficulty in making an emotional connection and establishing trust with their mentor. Other areas that were analysed included feedback from mentors stating that male entrepreneurs were more demanding of their mentors. This was also confirmed to what was experienced by these mentors who believed that the male entrepreneurs expected higher credentials from their mentors before they would take note of their advice and even then, many would still discount or ignore the advice given.

This positive perception of women towards mentoring was also alluded to by the mentors interviewed who expressed a preference for working with female entrepreneurs. They believed that women were more open to soliciting advice and followed through on the advice given. Mentors attributed this difference to women having less of an enhanced sense of self, being more receptive to new ideas, being more flexible with their own views and being prepared to do what is required to make their businesses successful.

A further difference was noted regarding the way females approached and utilised the available support structures. Unlike the male entrepreneurs who
utilised the support structures largely to gain information, women also used them to network. They appreciated the networking events and used these to build friendships that lead to inspirational mentoring relationships with role models. These events were their support systems to mitigate loneliness and an opportunity to share frustrations and motivate each other. This finding has similarities with the work done by Petridou (2009) where women used e-mentoring as a networking tool and overcame feelings of isolation as they were sometimes more sensitive and insecure than their male counterparts.

This exploratory study uncovered concerns around gender and mentoring namely that women perceived mentoring in a more positive manner than that of the males. In addition, mentors played a role in identifying opportunities as well as the fact that the mentors often initiated the mentoring role with the women mentees. These findings have not been identified by former research in this area. As this is a qualitative study, prevalence and generalisability of these findings are not possible at this stage and quantitative studies need to be developed and test issues raised.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHolders

The study found mentorship to be perceived as beneficial to entrepreneurs. Based on prevalent literature, experiences of professional mentors and the perceptions of entrepreneurs who have been mentored, the following recommendations are proposed to stakeholders for consideration and incorporation into the design and implementation of future mentoring programmes in the entrepreneurial field.
• It is essential that all four outcomes namely that of development, emotional, business and enabling are incorporated into a mentoring programme. Irrespective of the academic debate around coaching and mentoring, both can be successfully applied in the South African context. The basic tenets of both of these approaches would be complementary as the mentee would benefit from advice coming from a more directive style of mentoring, to the enabling environment for self-development offered by the questioning style of the coach. Programmes that incorporate both these elements would be able to offer a holistic approach to development.

• Access to networks is important to ensure the growth of the venture and therefore mutual trust needs to be inculcated so that mentors feel comfortable enough to be in a position to share their networks with their mentees without fearing a loss of credibility.

• Programmes should attempt, where possible, to make use of the expertise of mentors with entrepreneurial experience. The mentoring relationship, it seems, is developed much easier if it comes from a place of authenticity and if there are increased levels of trust, empathy, camaraderie and a shared perspective increases.

• Where professionals are utilised, they need to be trained in listening skills to ensure that they understand the world and the mind-set of the entrepreneur at that particular stage. This will enable the professional to gain their trust which in turn will enable the shift in both mind-set and behaviour, if and when required. Rapport building and creating an environment of trust is therefore critical.
• All mentors should receive training related to creating an awareness of how the entrepreneurial psyche operates. This will leave the mentor better equipped to analyse and manage the complexities of the mentoring relationship. The training needs to ensure that the mentors comprehend that the relationship is about the needs of the entrepreneur and his or her venture. The training should include components relating to gender differences so that the mentors understand that, for example, male entrepreneurs may be more exacting and demanding, and that they may need to tailor their mentoring styles accordingly. In these instances, a refrain from being too prescriptive to rather allowing the entrepreneur the latitude to realise their dreams and enjoy their moment of glory, may be more successful.

• Face-to-face interaction is critical especially initially when the relationship is being formed. E-mentoring can be used to supplement this relationship as it allows for more frequent communication with lower costs. Indications are that from the second phase onwards of the mentoring relationship, e-mentoring is used very successfully. Thus personal interaction is advised in the rapport building stage with a blended approach using both e-mentoring and personal interaction from stage two onwards.

• The duration of the programmes should be approximately three years to ensure that the relationship effectively follows the different stages and that learning is well received.

• In the case of mentoring females, the mentor needs to be prepared to provide emotional support, particularly confidence building in the initial
stages with personal development opportunities the focus in the latter stages. Greater networking opportunities, including e-learning should be incorporated into the programme. Access to both male and particularly successful female entrepreneurs need to be incorporated into the mentoring programmes so that women can utilise them as role models.

6.9 MENTORSHIP MODEL

The study proposes the model in Figure 6.1 for mentors who are in a mentoring relationship with entrepreneurs and it includes the recommendations made.
Figure 6.1 Proposed Model of Mentorship to be used with Entrepreneurs

**FOCUS ON WOMEN**
- Opportunity
- Identification
- Emphasis on emotional
- Include networking
- Access to role models

**FOCUS ON MEN**
- Entrepreneurial experience
- Less prescription
- Understand conflict

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**BEHAVIOURS REQUIRED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start-up</th>
<th>Mid Point</th>
<th>Letting Go</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>Develop business strategy</td>
<td>Maintain business continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Establish goals and plans</td>
<td>Reinforce personal growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Build networks</td>
<td>Strengthen business model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling</td>
<td>Access to finance</td>
<td>Access to financial markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**On-going**

- Accessibility
- Empathy
- Trust

**DURATION: 3 YEARS**

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6.10 SUMMARY

This study sampled the views of both mentors and mentees in the entrepreneurial field and found that mentorship is perceived to positively affect both entrepreneurs’ personal and venture growth. The study also desired to ascertain the viability of mentoring as a vehicle to aid entrepreneurial growth in South Africa. The findings that have been discussed throughout this report confirm that mentorship is effective in the entrepreneurial field and that the entrepreneurs value and recommend the utilisation of entrepreneurial mentoring in the South African context.

The study also attempted to explore the nature of the entrepreneurial relationship and to ascertain what made this relationship successful. Valuable insights were revealed around issues of trust, entrepreneurial experience, the relationship framework and mentoring styles that proved to be constructive in elaborating on existing theory and disclosing the valuable insights. A model of entrepreneurial mentoring was proposed that incorporated existing literature as well as the new observations that emerged from this study.

Gender differences and similarities were highlighted with female mentors perceiving mentorship in a more positive light than their male counterparts. These findings have a wider implication for entrepreneurial mentorship in the South African context which will be addressed in chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise and draw together the findings of the research. It looks to discuss the contributions of the study and concludes with recommendations and directions for future research.

7.2 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The low levels of entrepreneurial activity and the concerning number of entrepreneurial ventures failing in South Africa have raised concerns and led to an appeal for mentorship programmes to be implemented with the aim to improve the success rates of entrepreneurial ventures. This study aimed to research the viability of mentorship as a suitable vehicle to improve entrepreneurial success by exploring the current perceptions of entrepreneurs partaking in mentorship programmes or similar, less formal experiences.

It was evident from the research that entrepreneurs in a mentoring relationship gained considerable benefits on a personal level in terms of business advice and psychosocial support. Due to the abstract and intangible quality of mentoring and the complex nuances inherent in a mentoring relationship, a clear causal link between mentorship and business growth could not be drawn. However, mentees that gained access to their mentor’s networks considered the mentoring relationship as instrumental in venture growth. The majority of the
mentors were in agreement that the relationship was mutually beneficial in terms of an element of financial gain as well as the self development rewards.

The entrepreneurs concurred that the mentoring relationship was invaluable during the start-up stage. The entrepreneurs stated that the support provided by effectual mentors prevented them from impending failure in terms of advice given about technical aspects such as cash flow management and on a personal level, to enhance a poor self-confidence. During the growth stages, mentorship support was essential to assist with increasing the client base, exploring growth strategies and validating business sustainability.

During this study, it was established that only mentees partaking in informal mentoring relationships gained access to their mentor’s networks. This raises concerns for the success of formal mentoring programmes should this critical element be omitted in the design and implementation of the programme.

Key behaviours such as trust and empathy were highlighted by the entrepreneurs as critical to the success of the mentoring relationship in both business and psychosocial elements. Whilst the majority of the entrepreneurs perceived their mentors to be successful and respected business associates, certain mentoring elements were lacking in some of the relationships. This therefore raises concerns regarding the skills and competence of entrepreneurial mentors. This research thus found that for a successful and beneficial mentoring programme to be introduced, the essential elements
highlighted in this research had to be considered and integrated into the programmes.

Gender differences were evident with female entrepreneurs not only perceiving their mentors as value-adding and placing greater emphasis on emotional support, but as role models as well. Mentors with female mentees also played a role in identifying opportunities and in certain instances initiated the mentoring relationships. Contrary to their female counterparts, male entrepreneurs perceived mentoring slightly less positive and seemed to be more demanding of their mentors, particularly where their mentors had little or no entrepreneurial experience. It is indicated that mentors need to understand the entrepreneurial psyche and tailor their mentoring styles accordingly to ensure credibility and therefore a mutually beneficial relationship.

The positive perception of mentorship by female entrepreneurs bodes well for mentoring as a sustainable practice in increasing the lower levels of entrepreneurial activity, particularly amongst women in South Africa. Women value mentoring relationships and are more willing to elicit and implement advice given by the mentors. Female entrepreneurs are seen to be single-minded in their purpose to make their businesses successful. Formal relationships are perceived to be unproblematic as trust and strong connections can be built with both male and female mentors. From a practical perspective, it can be derived that mentorship can prove to be a very successful support structure in growing female owned businesses.
7.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) stated “What is the purpose of research if not for purposive action”. The researcher was dedicated to make contributions that spanned over both the theoretical as well as the practical realms. The contributions that have been made due to this study being conducted are listed below.

This study builds on the existing body of knowledge in the mentorship field, extends existing theories and uncovers new discussions in mentorship such as the conflict between and confusion of mentorship and coaching.

The majority of the existing research regarding mentorship and mentoring relationships focuses on workplace mentorships or mentorships in larger organisations. This study helps to build theory around mentorships specifically in the entrepreneurial sector. Prior literature that looked at the different stages of mentorship, the styles of behaviour required at each of these lifecycle stages and various other entrepreneurial benefits were elaborated and commented on. This resulted in the design of a performance model of mentorship that can be used as a base to initiate further investigations and grow literature around entrepreneurial mentoring.

From a South African perspective this is the first exploratory study to investigate perceptions of mentorship both from an entrepreneurial mentee perspective as
well as within a gender perspective. This study therefore provides valuable insight into the world of the South African male and female entrepreneur.

Literature on female entrepreneurs is sparse, both nationally and internationally. This study elicits data that is rich in description and contributes to building greater insights on the subject of female entrepreneurs that can help promote substantive assistance as it would be based from a position of knowledge.

This study indicates that mentorship is perceived to be a valuable support structure by both male and female entrepreneurs, with the female entrepreneurs experiencing mentorship more positively. The study therefore recommends that mentorship be promoted in its use by support structures to provide a more holistic learning experience for entrepreneurs.

This study also recommends a model of mentorship for professionals to apply in the design and implementation of future entrepreneurial support programmes. The recommendations of this study can be incorporated into existing programmes as well as aid in the design of new entrepreneurial mentoring programmes.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT AND FUTURE RESEARCH

These findings lead to the development of recommendations for government and suggestions for future research directions for academia.
For government:

- There are sufficient support organisations available to promote and support entrepreneurs. However, these should be less bureaucratic, better integrated and better communicated to entrepreneurs so that advantage can be taken of the support structures.

- Mentorship as recommended by the GEM Reports is a useful support structure that can stem the potential failure of start-up ventures. This, however, calls for improved integration and coordination. To ensure success, mentors should be assigned to each start-up venture and provide assistance with the necessary business information required.

- Entrepreneurship support programmes should have a mentorship element that compliments the business advice that many of them offer. Funding organisations should also look into incorporating a mentorship aspect to the financial assistance offered as this can assist in reducing defaults as seen by the case of a funding organisation that found a stabilisation in their defaults through recently introducing a mentoring training programme.

- Objective assessment and measurement structures should be implemented to measure the success of support structures and networking organisations. This study raised questions around the mentors’ experience, knowledge and capabilities and calls for stricter guidelines and regulations to be implemented to ensure optimal levels of competence of the mentors.

- Support programmes that receive funding should allow external research to test their effectiveness. Many of the incubators refused to participate in
this study citing member disinterest. This however prevents external objectivity on the effectiveness of their programmes.

- Women value the networking programmes and organisations that are focused on the empowerment of female entrepreneurs. It is recommended that enhanced strategies are used for this information to reach the target audience. Usage should be made of increased mobile internet capabilities and a blended e-mentorship approach should be considered to reach entrepreneurs who are not based in the greater metropolitan regions.

- Foster a culture of support for entrepreneurs where successful entrepreneurs can mentor start-up entrepreneurs. Certain communities are predisposed to mentor their entrepreneurs and this has resulted in a very successful entrepreneurial culture within these communities. This should be extended to all South Africans. Experienced entrepreneurs in this study reported mentoring others and this should be encouraged.

- Inculcate an entrepreneurial culture at school level where entrepreneurship is regarded as a lucrative career that both genders should be encouraged to pursue.

- Encourage widespread reporting of successful entrepreneurs thus providing entrepreneurial role models.

The conclusions drawn and the limitations of the study suggest the following areas to be investigated in future:
• An extensive quantitative study that looks at the proportion of South African entrepreneurs that use mentorship on a national level.

• Given that many South African entrepreneurs fail to make the transition from survivalist to growth businesses, it would be interesting to see a study that focuses on survivalist entrepreneurs and their use of support structures.

• Unfortunately this study was not able to access incubators and formalised mentoring programmes but both quantitative and qualitative studies that research their effectiveness would be valuable especially given the funding these structures receive and the expertise that these structures hold.

• New issues in the area of gender differences in entrepreneurial mentoring emerged. Quantitative studies are needed to test these issues for prevalence and generalisability.

### 7.5 SUMMARY

Find a mentor and follow his advice. Professor WH Hutt taught me that the division between caring and making profit doesn’t exist. If profit-making becomes your whole being, you won’t be a very nice person and you won’t make profits.

Raymond Ackerman (Makura, 2010, p. 167)
This view has become the cornerstone of the Pick ‘n Pay philosophy and Raymond Ackerman advocates using the assistance of mentors as he found their guidance invaluable in pursuing his dream.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

Exploratory research informed the questions outlined:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>PROMPTED BY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tell me your entrepreneurial story- how did you start, the support/lack of support you had in the start-up phase, your resources and where you are now?</td>
<td>Perry (2001) states that the starting question in an interview should invite the participant to simply tell their story or experience as it doesn’t ask them to think or make them apprehensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tell me about the person or persons who played a mentor or “guardian angel” role in assisting you in your business? How have they assisted you in your business?</td>
<td>Question taken from the Cox (1995) study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Can you describe the framework of this relationship? How often do you meet, do you meet in person or e-mail and do you pay for this meeting?</td>
<td>Based on the formal/ informal nature of mentoring described in literature, Clutterbuck (2004), Niehoff (2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you believe this relationship could have assisted with the increase in staff or revenue of the firm, if so how and why?</td>
<td>To probe whether there is a disconnect between mentor assertions that mentorship definitely assists in growth. Hmieleski and Baron (2009) justification of revenue and staff growth as indicators for growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What behaviours of your mentor have you found most useful?</td>
<td>Based on the work of Martin (2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What past experience or qualities of your mentor have you found most valuable?</td>
<td>Based on the work of Martin (2008). Themes of previous entrepreneurial success emerging from mentor interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Has the support needed in your business remained the same or have you needed different types of support at different times in your business? Please elaborate.</td>
<td>Based on the work of Cull (2006) and Martin (2008). Mentor interviews also suggested that different types of support were needed at different times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. South Africa has huge levels of entrepreneurial failure? What support structures do you believe can assist in increasing the success of entrepreneurial ventures?</td>
<td>Theme of support structures emerging from mentor interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If you could change something about this relationship, what would you have changed?</td>
<td>Probe to identify issues or factors that may hinder or negate the relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What would be your advice to entrepreneurs looking for a mentor?</td>
<td>Themes of trust that emerged from mentor interview – to ascertain the similarity in mentees views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Would you pay for mentoring?</td>
<td>Theme of payment that emerged during the mentor interviews that tested whether entrepreneurs found the relationship valuable enough to justify paying for it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>