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THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF MENTORING FOR EDUCATORS IN A TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN AFRICA: A SELF-STUDY ENQUIRY

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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DECLARATION

This declaration serves to state that the work contained in the thesis entitled:

The principles and practices of mentoring for educators in a technical college in Africa: A self-study enquiry

is my own original work, and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference. The dissertation has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university. I further declare that I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of presenting it as his or her own work.

Signature: Julia Akumu Nyanjom
April 2009

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS STUDY

Abbreviation	Full term
BTEP	Botswana Technical Education Programme
GROW	Mnemonic for a model used for guiding mentoring conversations that stands for Goal phase, Reality phase, Option phase, Wrap-up phase
GTC	Gaborone Technical College
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PDP	Personal Development Plan
SAID	Mnemonic for a model used for guiding reflection that stands for Situation, Affective domain, Interpretation of events, Decision
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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The principles and practices of mentoring for educators in a technical college in Africa:
A self-study enquiry

ABSTRACT

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Educators in higher education are expected by their institutions to enhance their learning and development in order to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to keep up with the changes being presented by the external environment. Within this environment of change, educators are faced with challenges of professional development. Under certain circumstances, there are educators who will take the initiative to intervene in the learning and development of other educators in the absence of sufficient organisational support. A developmental mentoring approach is presented as a powerful intervention to enhance the learning and development of educators.

Action research, utilising a self study approach to enquiry, is used to explore how mentoring practice can, from a developmental perspective, assist in enhancing the individual learning and development of educators in one Vocational Education and Training (VET) educational institution in Botswana. In this study, one mentor and two mentees undertake an innovative mentoring journey to build personal and professional capacity. Action research cycles are used in the collection of data from face-to-face conversations, personal reflective journals and focus group interviews.

The findings indicate that the mentoring process contributed effectively to learning and development and enhanced the participants' capacity to cope with the challenges facing the organisation. The intervention assisted the mentor to improve her mentoring capacities. Overall, the behavioural change that the participants gained through the mentoring process resulted in improved practices that contributed to the learning of the organisation.

The value of this study lies in the fact that it provides insight into the learning and development of educators in VET educational institutions through an innovative mentoring experience and highlights how both the mentees and the mentor grew and were empowered by this experience. The individual learning of educators can influence the organisational behaviour of the VET educational institutions using mentoring.

The implication of these findings points to the fact that educators need to be proactive and pursue their own professional development by making use of mentoring as an avenue to individual learning and personal and professional development. Educators who engage with more experienced colleagues in mentoring relationships contribute to organisational learning. A recommendation to VET educational institutions in Africa is to embrace mentoring as an organisational development intervention for the continuous learning and development of educators in their institutions.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The field of Education continues to change as new curriculum systems are implemented to meet objectives for which educational institutions exist. Many educational institutions today are being challenged to become more competitive and efficient (Day, 1997:194; Franklin, Hogkinson and Stewart, 1998:236; Leach, 1996:102; Page, Loots and duToit, 2005:5; Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2002:215). Vocational Education and Training (VET) educational institutions in particular are experiencing a time of great change (Fibkins, 2002:5). These educational institutions are open systems (Cummings and Worley, 2005:86) which means that they are influenced by the external environment in which they operate. The institutions have little choice but to change in response to these external forces. In order to meet the challenges being brought in by the external environment, the educational institutions require transformational processes that will equip them to meet these changes.

As changes in curriculum systems and other educational initiatives occur, educational institutions turn to their educators for knowledge and skills to facilitate the implementation of these changes. Educators are expected by their institutions to acquire, continuously and independently, the requisite knowledge and skills to keep up with these changes in curriculum systems (Day, 1997:194; Garvey and Alred, 2000a:216; Harrison, Lawson and Wortley, 2005:419). Consequently, a way of supporting and guiding educators to develop themselves becomes a concern. The more experienced educators in these institutions may contribute positively to this issue. As educators are faced with challenges of professional development, mentoring is one approach that can be given strong consideration as a developmental intervention. How individual educators can utilise mentoring to learn and develop within this environment of change is explored in the context of a VET educational institution in Botswana.

1.1 Background

In today's educational institutions greater responsibility is placed on educators to manage their own careers, and thus their own learning and development (Franklin et al., 1998:229;

Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:447; Stuart, 2002:367). Within the context of this study, educators are defined as those in the educational institutions concerned with management and delivery of training. This group may include, but is not limited to, lecturers, assessors, demonstrators, and administrators.

Educators are expected by educational institutions continuously to acquire new knowledge and skills to keep up with the changes that are occurring within their educational institutions (Day, 1997:194; Garvey and Alred, 2000a:216; Harrison et al., 2005:419). The responsibility for professional development is viewed as an inherent part of the role of the educator. The onus is placed on educators to facilitate the implementation of strategies that ensure that the educational institution meets its objectives of training the workforce of the future. It is from this context that the learning and development of individual educators in an educational institution can be viewed as a fundamental factor in contributing to the objectives the educational institution aspires to achieve. In effect, and as advanced by Bush and Middlewood (2005:189), the learning and development of educators, and the objectives that the educational institutions as organisations aspire to achieve, are closely linked.

Educators are being challenged to change from what is viewed as traditional teaching techniques, and embrace new initiatives in curriculum systems (Hine, 2008:9). They are expected, for example, to be more of a facilitator and a guide in the classroom, rather than encourage one way communication through lecture methods. The ability of the educators to meet the organisational objectives of the educational institution depends on the professional knowledge and skills that each individual educator possesses.

Not all educators will readily have the knowledge and skills demanded by new curriculum systems implemented by the institution. There will be educators who lack the experience necessary to perform to the standard required. It becomes a challenge for many educators who have been in the system for several years to change the ways they do things in their practice. To survive within the education system, and meet the organisational objectives expected of them, educators must acquire the knowledge and skills required by their educational institutions. In addition, educators must continue to keep abreast of curriculum changes and ensure they continue to gather the requisite knowledge and skills as expected by their institutions. Meeting the challenges that face educators today means

utilising processes that encourage the educator's individual development and leads to improved practice.

Educators have the option to use the resources that are readily available to them, such as the more experienced colleagues who are already in the system. It is quite possible that these more experienced educators can share the knowledge they have with their less experienced colleagues. Mentoring can be utilised as an organisational development intervention to enhance the learning and development of these educators.

Mentoring is 'a powerful individual development intervention' (Cummings and Worley, 2005:407) that can be used as a means of assisting, supporting and guiding educators to acquire the professional development they need (Megginson, Clutterbuck, Garvey, Stokes, and Garret-Harrison, 2006:21). It has the ability to transfer knowledge and skills, and may result in outcomes that can enable educators to meet the challenges facing their institutions. In its most basic state, mentoring is about teaching and learning, about transferring skills and knowledge, and about encouraging others to stretch their boundaries of understanding and perspective. Mentoring brings together a less experienced educator and a more experienced one in a relationship that endeavours to achieve the developmental objectives of both parties (Fibkins, 2002:6; Nicholls, 2002:139). This concept can offer a positive solution for the changing face of education.

Mentoring is not a new concept to education in general, or to VET educational institutions in particular. It has been used extensively in education to support and guide novice educators during their first year of teaching (Austin, 2002:94; Geber, 2003b:108; Harrison et al., 2005:419). However, in VET institutions in Botswana, mentoring is an untried concept from the perspective of professional development. A search in literature databases did not reveal any evidence of mentoring initiatives in the VET educational institutions in Botswana. In addition, as an educator employed within the VET system in Botswana, I am aware that at the time of this study, this concept had not been implemented in any of the VET educational institutions. This study therefore initiates a means by which the mentoring process can be utilised in a VET educational institution to result in the individual learning and development of educators and bring about change in their practice.

1.2 Mentoring as a developmental intervention for educators

Educators gather a lot of experience in the classroom while teaching. The work of the teacher is lonely and often carried out directly with students and not with colleagues (Nicholls, 2002:139). It is no wonder that what the educators learn over years in the classroom and through other means such as workshops, private readings, and conferences, is tacit (Polanyi, 1958:373) and rarely made explicit to themselves or to their colleagues (McCann and Radford, 1993:25). Educators may need a route through which they can make this tacit knowledge more explicit. Teaching requires higher physical, emotional and intellectual energy than most educators expect when they enter the profession (Fibkins, 2002:5). Maintaining levels of professionalism and keeping abreast of change requires personal and professional discipline. It requires self awareness so that one can remain flexible and open to new directions and approaches when needed. It also requires taking advantage of ongoing opportunities for professional development.

In educational institutions today, educators have to contend not only with the demands of teaching, but also increasingly with the administration and management of new curriculum systems. With new structures and processes of governance and management such as quality assurance processes and outcomes based education (OBE), there is an increased burden that educators have to bear in respect to management and administrative responsibilities (Fourie and Alt, 2000:120). Since educators are expected to adapt to these realities, it implies that they will need to acquire additional knowledge and skills that will enable them to meet the expectations of the organisation in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Regardless of the length of time they have been in the teaching profession, educators need a mentor who can listen to their needs, concerns and fears, a mentor who can help keep them up to date with the knowledge and skills they need to keep up with changes occurring in their profession. Mentoring in one form or another is a means by which educators can break down their isolation and support professional development in ways that focus on their daily work in teaching and learning situations (Nicholls, 2002:139). Educators who enter into mentoring relationships may effectively enhance their learning and development. Mentoring is a relationship which can provide educators the opportunity to share their professional and personal skills and experiences, and to grow and develop

in the process. It is a relationship which necessitates a one-on-one collaboration between a mentor and a mentee. Mentoring has the capacity to afford educators the chance to work collaboratively with their colleagues and develop in their teaching profession.

In educational institutions, it is often the case that teaching is viewed as a routine function and is often not the focus of professional development (Fibkins, 2002:6). In educational institutions that embrace mentoring, it is common for experienced educators to work closely with new educators, guiding them through their first year in the profession (Austin, 2002:94; Geber, 2003b:108; Harrison et al., 2005:419). For educators new to the profession, the need for mentoring is clear. A successful and experienced educator acting as a mentor can help the novice educator avert the frustrations and stress that often come with entering the teaching profession. However, the responsibility of growing a nation's natural human resource rests with all educators. Educators have a great responsibility to be prepared for the many challenges that arise each day. The changes brought about by the external environment will impact on all the educators. Therefore, every educator in the system may need assistance to learn new things and change for the better.

Professional development about teaching is not simply a matter of knowing about a range of teaching strategies. Information about new approaches to teaching may come from several sources. In an increasingly diverse and ever changing educational setting, organisations look to see how change can be sustained from within. Casey (2005:131) contends that learning at all levels is essential for organisations to adapt to both internal and external changes. Nicholls, (2002:140) explains that mentoring is a practice that can facilitate professional development and create change. Because knowledge is personal and dynamic in an ever changing educational arena, it can never be complete. It cannot be said that there will ever be one best way of teaching. All educators with varied levels of experience can continue to learn and acquire new knowledge as they adapt to new curriculum systems. Therefore, there is a responsibility to continue the dialogue between colleagues throughout our professional lives as educators. It is therefore important that mentoring opportunities are made available to all educators within the system, whether new, mid-career or veteran.

1.3 Mentoring and organisational learning

Organisational learning is part of organisational behaviour. Huber (1991:89) asserts that an organisation can be said to be learning if 'the range of its potential behaviours is changed' by processing information through interpersonal or social interactions. Leroy and Ramanantsoa (1997:872) add that this learning needs to not only be behavioural but cognitive as well. This means that the knowledge and skills acquired through learning can either result in change that can be observed by others, or this new learning may simply be understood by the educator but not openly displayed.

The acquisition of new knowledge contributes to the professional development of educators (Stuart, 2002:367). The learning of educators in the institution has a direct influence on the learning of the people around them (Bush and Middlewood, 2005:196; Lyles, Dhanaraj and Steensma, 2005:78). This is because learning is a dynamic and participatory process. Research conducted by Carnell (2001) in Bush and Middlewood (2005:200) suggests that in educational institutions, the more people discovered about their own learning and the complex nature of learning itself, the more they needed to share this with others and move from the intuitive to the explicit in terms of normal practice. Because organisations operate within open and social systems (Casey, 2005:136; Cummings and Worley, 2005:86) and as interactions occur between members of the organisation, knowledge sharing is seen as part of the nature of organisational behaviour.

The integration of mentoring practice with organisational development is important in relation to organisational behaviour, specifically in terms of ensuring strategic alignment to organisational processes and practice. Mentoring practice by nature is a social and interpersonal process (Kram, 1988:24; Allen, Day and Lentz, 2005:156). This practice can be a conduit through which learning can take place within the organisation. Through mentoring, educators can be encouraged to share their knowledge and skills with their colleagues. The potential for mentoring to result in either cognitive or behavioural change in an individual makes it possible for this process to influence organisational behaviour. The deliberate utilisation of mentoring as a developmental intervention can encourage and enhance the sharing of knowledge and skills in the organisation.

An organisation that promotes continuous learning opportunities through encouraging enquiry, dialogue and collaboration attempts to create a learning organisation (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross and Smith, 1997:42). It is envisaged that as more educators in the educational institution learn, the institution also learns. This effort towards collective learning then moves the educational institution closer to the concept of the learning organisation. Senge et al., 1997:41 describe the learning organisation as a place 'where people continuously expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continuously learning how to learn together'. It is possible that the learning of one person in an educational institution can positively influence the attitudes and behaviour of those around them towards learning and encourage others to learn at the individual, group and the organisational level. This learning at the individual level contributes to the general knowledge bank of the organisation (Casey, 2005:131; Huber, 1991:89).

The discussion above alludes to the fact that the learning of one individual can result in the learning of a group of individuals and these groups can result in the learning of the organisation to which they belong (Casey, 2005:131; Huber, 1991:89; Kram and Hall, 1989:494; Leroy and Ramanantsoa, 1997:872; Schon, 1992:136). It follows that the learning of individual educators has the ability to result in changes in attitude and behaviour which can then pass to other educators in the educational institution. These processes are inherent aspects of organisational behaviour. The effect of individual learning can therefore assist the institution to adapt to changes being brought about by the external environment (Bush and Middlewood, 2005:5). It can be argued that mentoring may be an effective way of encouraging knowledge sharing between individual members of the organisation. It can also be argued that the organisation will learn as individuals within this organisation learn.

1.4 Context of the research

My study takes place in Gaborone Technical College (GTC), which is situated in the Republic of Botswana. Botswana is a centrally located Southern African country on the northern border of the Republic of South Africa. Formerly a British protectorate, Botswana

gained self governance and became independent in 1966. Botswana has been identified as one of the fastest growing economies in Africa (African Economic Outlook, 2008:154).

Gaborone Technical College is one of the eight educational institutions in Botswana providing vocational education and training. It is the largest, with 96 educators and 1100 students spread across eight departments (Ministry of Education, 2004:17). These eight departments deliver vocational training in the areas of Hospitality; Clothing, Design and Textiles; Business; Construction; Electrical and Mechanical Engineering; Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy; Multimedia; Information Communication and Technology; and Travel and Tourism. The responsibility of VET in Botswana lies with the Ministry of Education, with the Department of Vocational Education and Training being the main provider.

In the context of Botswana, VET is seen as a key contributor to the development of a competent national human resource. Botswana's vision is to increase the skills level of its workforce for effective participation in the global economy and knowledge society. As a result, Botswana created a vision for itself at its 50th year of independence, which stated that 'By the year 2016, the education system will empower citizens to become the best producers of goods and services' (Presidential task group for a long term vision for Botswana, 1997:2). The Vision 2016 document guides the policy direction and creates a vision of VET in terms of purpose and practice. The core responsibility of VET is outlined by the Ministry of Education as '…life-long education and training that is relevant and responsive to the rapid technological development and the changing socio-economic environment' (Ministry of Education, 2001:3).

In 2000, the Department of Vocational Education and Training introduced a new national qualification, the Botswana Technical Education Programme (BTEP) in response to the 'challenges of practical skills training for the needs of the national economy' (Ministry of Education, 2004:16). The BTEP is a student centred vocational training programme that follows the guidelines of outcomes based education (OBE). The purpose of the new qualification is to improve the provision of post-school pre-service and in-service vocational education and training to alleviate skills shortage in a diversifying economy. The BTEP is based on the British general vocational qualification. Efforts have been made to contextualise this curriculum to make it relevant to Botswana. In order to achieve the level of quality and currency required for the BTEP, the quality assurance and assessment unit

was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. The role of the quality assurance and assessment unit is to oversee the quality assurance systems and procedures developed to support the delivery of the BTEP.

The national policy on education regarding the teaching profession emphasises the importance of the role of teachers in curriculum implementation. This policy mentions that educators 'as agents of curriculum implementation are central to the education system and can make or break the system' (Ministry of Education, 2004:22). The educators have the challenge of producing 'an increased pool of flexible and adaptive workers with a body of knowledge and skills, assessed and quality assured to international standards…' (Ministry of Education, 2004:17). Guided by this policy and prior to the implementation of BTEP, the Ministry of Education carried out a recruitment drive that saw them employ expatriate educators from other countries in Africa such as Kenya. These educators were recruited on three year contract terms to assist with the implementation of the BTEP. I was one of those educators who were recruited to manage the implementation of Hospitality and Tourism BTEPs.

Gaborone Technical College was the first educational institution in Botswana to pilot the BTEP in 2000. This new curriculum was progressively implemented in the vocational areas delivered by GTC. The development and implementation of this new curriculum has been fraught with numerous challenges (Ministry of Education, 2004:9). A major concern is that the efforts being exerted by educators to implement the OBE are insufficient to meet industry needs (Mmegi Newspaper August 8, 2003:16-17). This experience is not unique to Botswana. Stuart (2002:373) acknowledges that many educational institutions in Africa are grappling with the challenges of adopting the paradigm shift from traditional modes of teaching to outcomes based education. OBE in Botswana is in itself still unclear, since a curriculum policy document has not been formulated by either the Ministry of Education or the Department of Vocational Education and Training. There are no guidelines available that indicate to the educator a clear direction of the approach to be taken in the implementation of the BTEP. This omission in effect means that the educators have no strategic map to which to refer during implementation. Educators in general perceive the quality assurance processes being implemented as additional tasks outside of their core duties, and are resistant to it. In practice, the implementation of BTEP has been a challenge for educators at GTC.

As the BTEPs were implemented at different times in the various departments, the experience gathered in running the programme varies from department to department. There are indications that a knowledge and skills gap exists in curriculum delivery and the administrative procedures that are attached to the running of BTEP. Although the policy mentions government support in terms of the general formal training of teachers, it falls short of highlighting how the professional development of educators in the VET system can be enhanced to support the implementation of the BTEP. Bennet (2005:10) in her study of curriculum alignment in BTEP established that the commitment of educators in VET educational institutions in Botswana in respect of educational accountability was questionable. She recommends that avenues be identified through which educators can gather knowledge and skills, thereby improving BTEP implementation (Bennet, 2005:18). Utilising mentoring at GTC could begin to address this gap in the requisite knowledge and skills required to implement the BTEP successfully.

1.5 The self study approach to the enquiry

My study adopts a self study research approach. This is a research approach that incorporates the learning of the researcher within the study (Dick, 1993:15). Self study has been acknowledged as an equally valuable form of research as traditional empirical investigation (McNiff, 2002:20; Northfield, 1996:3; Taylor and Settelmaier, 2003:233, Whitehead, 1988:43). In this study, I explore mentoring practice in collaboration with others by becoming a mentor to two of my colleagues at Gaborone Technical College (GTC).

At the time of this study, I was employed in GTC as an educational administrator in charge of the Hospitality and Tourism Department. In this position, I experienced firsthand the challenges facing educators in my institution. When the BTEP was introduced, the educators grappled with coming to terms with the new curriculum changes. The expectations from the institution for the educators to shift from traditional modes of teaching to OBE and student centred learning was unprecedented. It was left to the educators to embrace these changes and to continue teaching and going about their daily duties without breaking a stride. As Head of Hospitality and Tourism, it was my responsibility to manage the implementation of BTEP in my department. The Hospitality

Programme was one of the first to be implemented. I therefore began to gather knowledge, skills and experience in this area. I had the opportunity to work with the educators in my department to acquire knowledge and skills that assisted us to meet the challenges brought about by the implementation of BTEP. It was clear to me that educators implementing other BTEPs needed guidance and support in assimilating and internalising the new knowledge and skills required of them.

My experience of the challenges that the educators were going through as a result of the implementation of BTEP motivated me to ask myself how support could be provided to these educators. I specifically asked myself how at my individual level, I could contribute in providing the assistance the educators needed. A professional developmental intervention could result in change in behaviour and equip the educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to face the challenges from the external environment. If the educators could cope with these challenges effectively, this would be of benefit to the organisation. I identified that mentoring could be a viable option for educators in my institution to learn and develop professionally.

As a result of my assessment, I presented a proposal to GTC management of an institution wide formal mentoring programme. This proposal was rejected as GTC was not ready to commit to such an endeavour. The management was, however, agreeable to a smaller scale intervention that could possibly show them the benefits of mentoring. After due consideration, I decided that a mentoring project involving three educators could fulfil the desired learning and development objectives. The three people would be myself as mentor, and two of my colleagues as mentees. I approached two of my colleagues from two different departments, and they agreed to participate in the mentoring project as mentees.

Having decided on the developmental intervention, I wondered whether I possessed the necessary mentoring capacities to adequately support the educators. As an educator mentoring my colleagues, would I have the requisite mentoring skills to result in outcomes that could contribute effectively to their learning and development? My learning and development as a mentor became my focus. I desired to recognise my abilities as a mentor, and build my mentoring capacity for my benefit and the benefit of my mentees. Learning for me became a matter of attempting to close the gap between what I perceived

as my shortcoming in mentoring skills and the kind of mentor I desired to be. In order to improve in my practice I needed to grow to close this gap. After reflecting on my capacities, I realised that my many years of experience gave me the pedagogic and administrative knowledge that could be adequate to support an educator, and urge them in the right direction to explore their own learning. In my assessment, what I needed to strengthen to make me an effective mentor was the necessary behavioural attributes (Cohen, 1995: 3; Daloz, 1999:22; Galbraith, 2003:12). I realised that as a mentor I would not be telling educators what to do. Rather, I would be supporting, guiding and encouraging them in accomplishing what *they* wanted to achieve. My research and reading in this area led me to identify the attributes of listening, questioning and providing feedback (Cohen, 1995:28; Fibkins, 2002:48; Galbraith, 2003:12; Harrison et al., 2005:437; Scwiebert, 2000:103; Ramaswani and Dreher, 2007:225) as skills within me that needed to be enhanced to facilitate an environment where learning and development could take place within a mentoring relationship.

The aim of this self study is to initiate an individual mentoring intervention that will support and guide educators and equip them with capacities to cope with the challenges facing them from the external environment. In the process, I will utilise this intervention to improve my mentoring practice. Because this intervention will be targeted towards solving an organisational concern, it is expected that our learning and development will result in benefits for the organisation.

1.6 Motivation for the study

My study focuses on the question of how to support and guide educators in the VET educational institution in their learning and development at an individual level. It is about creating mentoring opportunities for educators at every career stage, regardless of how long they have been in the teaching profession. Ongoing mentoring of educators at all career stages is the best way to help them to learn and develop individually in their practice and effectively meet the challenges facing educational institutions today.

As educational institutions face the challenges that are brought about by the changes taking place in their environments, it is possible that these organisations may not move to

confront the implications of these changes at the pace expected by the educators in the institution. The educational institution often has no control over the changes from the external environment impacting on their internal processes (Cummings and Worley, 2005:85). The organisation may not readily intervene to provide the necessary support for the educators to meet the challenges facing them in a timely manner. My argument is that there will be educators with more experience and seniority in the VET educational institution who will find solutions to the organisation's demand for change rather than wait for a system wide initiative from the organisation. Those educators will take up the professional challenge to initiate mentoring relationships and provide an opportunity for growth and development for all involved. Such an intervention will assist other educators acquire the requisite capacities to meet the challenges brought by the external environment. As one such educator, I identified that mentoring could be a viable option for educators in my institution to learn and develop professionally.

The above argument is consistent with the issue already highlighted where educators often take charge of their own development to keep themselves abreast of the changes occurring in their environments. Initiating mentoring as a developmental intervention may accrue benefits for the educators participating in the relationship, as well as the organisation. Educators within the institutions can take advantage of this available opportunity for knowledge sharing. Mentoring can be utilised as an individual organisational development approach with learning and development outcomes. There are three pertinent issues that arise from this argument.

Firstly, the learning and development of an individual educator may result in benefits for the organisation. Cummings and Worley (2005:407) suggest that by developing one member of the organisation, the whole organisation stands to benefit. Mentoring is an individual organisational development approach that attempts to improve the performance of those who participate in it. This approach can be used for moving knowledge through the organisation from the people who have the most experience to those who require the knowledge. Once acquired, this knowledge and skills can assist educators meet the challenges facing them from external forces. At their individual level, without the direct involvement of the management, the educator may initiate interventions that may provide the transformational changes required by the educators to meet the challenges they face.

Secondly, through mentoring, educators can be assisted to acquire knowledge and skills at their individual level. The acquisition of such capacities would result in change in the behaviour of the educators. The learning and development of the educators can provide them with the capacity to handle the challenges they face in their practice. The change in behaviour brought about by mentoring could result in the educators improving their practice.

Thirdly, the mentoring relationship can be a vehicle through which the mentor builds their mentoring capacities. Mentors need to be capable and confident of their abilities to share and transfer knowledge to their mentees (Barnett, 1995:55). Taking advantage of the mentoring relationship to improve mentoring capacities can ensure the learning and development of the mentor from this perspective.

The discussion above highlights the three major research objectives in this study. Firstly, I used mentoring practice as an organisational development intervention to initiate change to the organisation and enhance its ability to cope with the changes taking place in its environment. Secondly, I used mentoring practice as the vehicle through which individual educators could acquire knowledge and skills and improve their practice. Thirdly, I endeavoured to improve my mentoring capacity and become more effective in my role to assist educators in their learning and development. The holistic view of this study is that mentoring did not only have a positive impact on us as a group of educators, but also had a positive impact on GTC as the organisation we worked in.

The following three research questions guide this research:

1. How can the principles and practices of mentoring be explored to assist in individual learning in a VET educational institution as a ‘learning organisation’?

2. How can mentees use their learning and development to contribute to the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution?

3. How can mentors use their learning and development to contribute to the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution?

1.7 Relevance of mentoring

From the proceeding discussion, mentoring appears to be a viable option as an organisational development intervention for the learning and development of educators. This assertion is underscored by researchers in mentoring literature. Researchers have begun paying increasing attention to mentoring in organisations and have acclaimed mentoring as a conduit to human resource development (Allen and Eby, 2003:469; Cummings and Worley, 2005:408; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:447; Kammeyer-Mueller and Judge, 2008:277; McCauley, 2005:443). Special attention has been afforded to mentoring as it relates to professional development of educators (Bennetts, 1995:38; Cunningham, 1999:441; Healy and Welchert, 1990:17; Page et al., 2005:5; Palepu, 2001:776; Sands, Parson and Duane, 1991:174; Semeniuk and Worrall, 2003:408). There are several assertions in literature that mentoring results in individual development (Allen and Poteet, 1999:59; Blunt, 1995:38; Cunningham, 1999:441; Eby, 1997:126; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng and DuBois, 2008:254; Farmer, 2005:138; Healy and Welchert, 1990:19; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:446; Kram, 1988:66; Lankau and Scandura, 2002:779; Singh, Bains and Vinnicombe, 2002:398) and is an intervention that is used by educational institutions to improve knowledge sharing (Baker, 2002:35; Bernier, Larose and Soucy, 2005:40; Ferman, 2002:147; Jacobi, 1991:506).

Mentoring has been used successfully in educational institutions and resulted in improved accomplishments, enhanced teaching effectiveness, increased job satisfaction, heightened productivity and retention of educators (Cunningham, 1999:442; Goodwin, Stevens and Bellamy, 1998:334). These are critical reasons why mentoring should be considered a viable organisational development intervention for the personal and professional development of educators. Mentoring may provide educators with the confidence and capacity that they require to handle challenges at their individual levels. As a result of individual learning, the mentoring relationship the educators engage in may result in group dynamics that impact positively on the organisation. Consequently, this study resonates with the field of Organisational Behaviour, and therefore it is important that the link between mentoring and this field of study is articulated.

Wood, Chapman, Fromholtz, Morison, Wallace and Zeffane (2004:4) define organisational behaviour as the ‘systematic study of individuals and groups in organisations’.

Appelbaum, Ritchie and Shapiro (1994:3) assert that the practice of mentoring fits within the domain of organisational behaviour. This is because mentoring is observable behaviour between two people within the organisation which results in learning and development (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:446; Kram, 1988:66; Lankau and Scandura, 2002:779). The learning that is an outcome of mentoring can result in positive change in individual and organisational behaviour (Huber, 1991:89; Leroy and Ramanantsoa, 1997:873). Mentoring influences individual, group and organisational processes in different ways as the practice introduces change in attitude and behaviour of those involved (Kram, 1988:6). Because mentoring is an interpersonal relationship between two people, it is social in nature. The learning that takes place within a social context achieves its aims through the reciprocal interactions among people, behaviour and environment (Wood et al., 2004:181). Thus, the social, dynamic and evolving nature of mentoring makes it a relationship that impacts on the entire organisation (Garvey and Alred, 2000b:124). Therefore, mentoring as an individual development approach resonates directly with the field of Organisational Behaviour.

1.8 Purpose of the study

Mentoring is a popular and effective means of transferring knowledge and skills from an experienced educator to a less experienced one (Fibkins, 2002:6; Nicholls, 2002:139). Despite the growing body of knowledge on mentoring, literature on this subject is still fairly young and many questions remain poorly answered or have yet to be investigated (Allen, Eby, O'Brien and Lentz, 2008:348; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:447). Much of what we know is based on limited definitions of mentoring and questionable assumptions about causal links (Willcoxson, 2006:13). Relatively little research has focused on mentoring as it relates to learning within the workplace (Allen and Eby, 2003:469; Hale, 2000:227; Hezlett, 2005:524; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:458; Lankau and Scandura, 2002:779). Little attention has been given to the process of how educators at all levels in the educational institution can develop in order to keep abreast with new developments in curriculum systems and processes.

The purpose of this study is therefore to explore how the principles and practices of mentoring can be utilised to assist in enhancing the individual learning and development

of educators in one VET educational institution. This study explores the experiences of three educators undergoing mentoring, with an attempt to explore how their learning, through experiencing mentoring relationships, contributes to their personal and professional development. The three individuals in this study are myself and my two mentees. To enhance our exploration and understanding of mentoring and provide a holistic view of the mentoring relationship, I have approached this investigation from the perspective of the mentor and that of the mentees.

The intent and focus of this enquiry is to add to the organisational behaviour knowledge base through an exploratory study by investigating how mentoring can be utilised as an organisational development intervention to facilitate individual learning by educators in one VET educational institution. This research study contributes to the understanding of how mentoring capacities and the principles and practices that inform the mentoring process present themselves in a VET educational institution.

1.9 Research methodology

This study occurs within a qualitative research paradigm. In qualitative research numerous forms of data are collected and examined from various angles to construct a meaningful picture of a multifaceted situation. Qualitative research is 'subjective in nature and involves examining and reflecting on perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities' (Collins and Hussey, 2003:13). This research methodology seeks to answer research questions through the exploration of meaning of a social phenomenon. It is a subjective method that explores abstract situations in social settings where deductions are made through observed behaviour.

Action research is the methodological procedure that is applied in this enquiry. This is a research approach that has a cyclical analytical process, alternating between action and reflection (Dick, 1993:12; Dickens and Watkins, 1999:127; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981:8). Action research is commonly used in the field of Organisational Development (Huber, 1991:92) and in education research by both educators and managers (Feldman, 2003:26; McNiff, 2002:5) in attempts to bring about change in the organisation. In this study, action research cycles are effectively utilised in the various data collection techniques to enhance rich and informative data. Face-to-face mentoring conversations,

personal reflective journals, and focus group interviews are used as the data sources. These sources provide the insights which inform the conclusions that are drawn at the end of the study.

Within the action research method, a self study research approach (McNiff, 2002:20; Northfield, 1996:3; Taylor and Settelmaier, 2003:233; Whitehead, 1988:43) is utilised to investigate the issues being explored. Effective self study is enhanced by collaboration with participants, as the problems under investigation are also viewed through the eyes of these participants (Freebody, 2003:87; McNiff, 2002:6; Northfield, 1996:5). Self study, therefore, is a collaborative activity. The personal development of the individual researcher is highlighted as an important outcome of self study and through this learning comes the generation of new knowledge (McNiff, 2002:22; Northfield, 1996:9; Taylor and Settelmaier, 2003:233; Whitehead, 1988:43).

This study presents an innovative action research design incorporating the principles of self study (McNiff, 2002:20; Northfield, 1996:3; Taylor and Settelmaier, 2003:233; Whitehead, 1988:43). The research targets the learning experiences of three individuals, in an attempt to explore how their learning, through experiencing mentoring relationships, could influence the eventual learning and change of the organisation. Through the formation of mentoring relationships our mentoring 'journey of awareness' (Jousse, 2000:25) takes us through an exploration of mentoring practice that results in reflective insights from all participants about the mentoring process. Through reflective practice, interaction and dialogue with my mentees, I evaluate the outcomes of these mentoring relationships and contribute to a deeper understanding of the mentoring process.

1.10 Structure of the thesis

This chapter introduces the problem under investigation, the context in which the problem exists, and the significance of my research study to mentoring and its relevance to the field of Organisational Behaviour. The issue of how mentoring can be utilised as an individual organisational development intervention to assist in the learning and development of educators in a VET educational institution in Botswana, and equipping these educators with the necessary capacity to cope with challenges brought about by the external

environment is explained. The notion that educators in the institution can initiate the intervention that results in this professional development is introduced.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on principles and practices of mentoring. Pertinent issues underlying the definition of mentoring are explored, and a working definition for the study advanced. Developmental models of mentoring are reviewed, with a view to establishing their suitability in mentoring practice with professional development objectives. The subject of mentor development is reviewed as a pertinent aspect of building mentoring capacities. The chapter also reviews the impacts of mentoring on the mentee, the mentor and the organisation.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on the concept of learning with the view of contextualising learning within mentoring practice. An exploration is made of how individual learning can contribute to the learning of the organisation. Approaches to individual learning that encourage learning in a mentoring relationship are presented. The link between learning and the mentoring process is also established. How individual learning in mentoring practice relates to the field of Organisational Behaviour is articulated.

Chapter 4 presents the research methods used in this study. The use of qualitative research is discussed and the rationale for adopting an action research approach is presented. A justification of the adoption of a self study approach is also presented. The chapter outlines a comprehensive design in line with the action research approach. Action research cycles that clarify how data will be gathered to evidence the learning and development of the participants are presented. The chapter outlines the background of the participants in the study, data collection methods used and the data analysis procedures applied.

Chapter 5 provides the findings drawn from the perspective of the mentees. Evidence of the learning and development of the mentees through the mentoring process is presented. How the mentees have grown and changed on this mentoring journey is exemplified. Detailed illustrative descriptions are included to portray the voices of the mentees in significant detail as an attempt to share the ‘lived experiences’ (Whitehead, 1988:43) of the educators with others.

Chapter 6 provides the findings presented from my perspective as the mentor. Evidence of my learning and development in the mentoring process is presented. I include detailed illustrative descriptions of my 'lived experiences' (Whitehead, 1988:43) to clarify how I improved my mentoring capacity.

Chapter 7 presents the discussion on the findings and concludes the study. In this final chapter, I present my personal reflections on my experience as a mentor. The outcomes of the mentoring project intervention from the perspectives of the educators, and the organisation are discussed. An analysis of how individual learning and development, through mentoring, impacted on the ability of the educators to face the challenges in their environment is offered. Implications for practice and recommendations related to the findings are suggested, reflections on the research method presented, and suggestions for future research made. Conclusions are also drawn from the study.

1.11 Conclusion

This study took place in GTC, a VET educational institution in Botswana, and explores mentoring practice within this context. An action research approach, incorporating self study principles was utilised. The study presents an exploration of the principles and practices of mentoring through the 'lived experiences' (Whitehead, 1988:43) of three educators involved in mentoring relationships. This exploration was designed to investigate the learning and development of these educators through mentoring and how their learning and development contributed to the learning of their organisation. This mentoring journey presents the unique learning experiences of educators in a VET educational institution, through the mentoring process, from the perspectives of both the mentees and the mentor. Overall, this study results in an increased understanding of mentoring practice and adds to the organisational behaviour knowledge base.

In the next chapter, a literature review pertaining to mentoring practice is presented.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW: MENTORING

The objective of this chapter is to review literature on the concept of mentoring. The chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first section provides a historic perspective of the mentoring process. The second section reviews pertinent issues on the definition of mentoring. The third section presents the types of mentoring. Informal mentoring and formal mentoring are discussed. The fourth section looks at developmental models of mentoring, and reviews role modelling, career and psychosocial functions. The fifth section examines the stages of the mentoring process. The sixth section discusses the theory surrounding the development of the mentor. Finally, the impact of mentoring on mentees, mentors and the organisation is explored in the seventh section.

2.1 The mentoring process

In general terms, mentoring has rich historical roots. Daloz (1999:17) observes that mentors have been around for a long time, acting as guides, leading us through the journey of life. In this light, mentors are seen as people willing to give their time to teach and nurture others. To gain an understanding of mentoring, it is important to look at its origins and evolution. A historical perspective of mentoring is thus offered.

The historical roots of the term mentoring can be traced back to Homer's mythological tale, The Odyssey (Baker, 2002:35; Carruthers, 1993:9; Chao, Walz and Gardner, 1992:619; Healy and Welchert, 1990:17; Russell and Adams, 1997:1). In this story, when Odysseus, the leader of Ithaca, went off to fight the Trojan War, he entrusted his friend, Mentor, with the care, guidance and education of his son, Telemachus. The story describes how Athena, a spiritual goddess, often impersonated Mentor and offered direction, guidance and inspiration to the young man. The role given to Mentor meant that he, or in actual fact the goddess Athena, had to be a teacher, a role model, a trusted advisor, among other things to the young Telemachus, in order to bring him up to become a good and wise leader. As time passed, the concept embodied in this mythology evolved into the term 'Mentor' that is used today.

The generic meaning of a mentor, as presented in this Greek story, is an older, wiser and experienced person (mentor) who protects, sponsors, guides and instructs a younger individual (mentee) in many aspects of life (Ehrich and Hansford, 1999:92; Healy and Welchert, 1990:18; Woodd, 1997:334). Mentoring is seen as one of the oldest forms of human development where one person invests time, energy and personal knowhow in assisting in the growth and skill of another person (Shea, 1992:5). Although the Greek mythical tale is one of the most referenced as the origin of mentoring, it is important to note that its reference is generally to the term 'mentor' rather than the mentoring process. It has been established that the actual relationship of mentoring goes back much further than this tale. Carruthers (1993:10) mentions that the mentoring relationship has been traced as far back as biblical times, where it is recorded in the book of Exodus that Moses and Joshua were in a mentoring relationship. Such observation asserts the presence of mentoring in our midst from time immemorial.

Clutterbuck (2004:171) explores the origin of mentoring from the apprenticeship viewpoint. Mentoring has played a significant role in the transference of knowledge and skill from generation to generation. He considers mentoring as having its roots in the apprenticeship system and describes how the old master passed down knowledge of how a task was done. Apprenticeship is defined as learning a trade under the guidance of an expert (Monaghan and Lunt, 1992:249). The experienced master works to mould his apprentice and watches with pride as the apprentice picks up the master's knowledge and skills. This apprenticeship notion places mentoring firmly within an organisational development framework and changes the perception on the developmental objectives of mentoring. This view establishes that the foundations of mentoring take into account not only the personal development of individuals, but their professional development as well. This view also takes us away from the views of mentoring that focus on the mentee as the main beneficiary of such a relationship, to one that is more of a mutual relationship where both the mentee and the mentor stand to gain from the relationship.

Though we may acknowledge the diversity of mentoring as a developmental intervention, and the possibilities open to its use, many papers presented by authors and researchers alike make reference to the Greek mythological tale. The mythological origin of the term 'mentoring' has continued to influence and dominate the perception of researchers in the

field of mentoring in their attempts towards deriving a definition of mentoring that can advance mentoring research on a common ground effectively.

2.2 Defining mentoring

Mentoring has attracted a lot of academic interest in the past two decades. However, though the subject of mentoring has been widely researched, and despite the wealth of published material on the subject, there is minimal agreement on many aspects of mentoring (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007:721; Galbraith, 2003:10; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:447; Jacobi, 1991:505). There is an absence of a single widely accepted operational definition of mentoring. In different contexts, doubts have been raised whether what is being practiced as mentoring is actually mentoring at all (Chao, 1998:333; Goodwin et al., 1998:334). This brings to the fore the importance of examining the issues surrounding the lack of a universally accepted definition of mentoring.

The theoretical definitions of mentoring generally converge in describing mentoring as an intense, professional relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is mainly used to develop the mentee (Chao, 1998:333; Raabe and Beehr, 2003:271). Empirical studies that have examined mentoring often fall short of going further than this general view (Chao, 1998:333). The reason for this is that researchers approach mentoring from different perspectives and schools of thought. Arising from this diversity, researchers are in agreement that there is a lack of consensus on the definition of mentoring (Baker, 2002:35; Chao, 1998:333; Clutterbuck, 2004:11; Ehrich and Hansford, 1999:92; Healy and Welchert 1990:17; Jacobi, 1991:505; Kartje, 1996:115; Sands et al., 1991:176; Woodd, 1997:336). Highlighting an African perspective, Mohamed (1996:58) advances the notion that mentoring is a shared experience among individuals bound by community to one another. Mohamed alludes that mentoring is akin to the experience of being part of a community, part of a village. This becomes more relevant in an educational institution situated in Africa where cultural values are apparent even in organisational circles. This view focuses on mentoring as a relationship where learning takes place within a social context.

Another contentious issue involves reference to one's line manager as a mentor. Researchers have questioned whether or not a supervisor can be a mentor (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007:725; Burke, McKenna and McKeen, 1991:459; Eby, 1997:126; Scandura and Schriesheim, 1994:1588). Bozeman and Feeney (2007:725), in their critique of the mentoring concept, contend that a line manager can also act as an effective mentor. The authors reiterate that 'saying that one's boss cannot be a mentor results in an unrealistic delimitation' (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007:726). However, even with this assertion, the authors do recognise that there is a grey area in distinguishing between good supervisors and supervisors who mentor their subordinates.

It is intriguing that a subject so widely researched and published still lacks a universally accepted definition. There continue to be research contributions that offer differing views, based on arguments advanced on the perspective of mentoring most apparent to the researcher. Healy and Welchert (1990:17) observe that a number of definitions of mentoring presented in literature are contradictory, because many of these definitions 'frequently lack grounding in theory'. Sands et al. (1991:176) and Darwin (2000:199) place the lack of a definitive definition on the fact that researchers will have different definitions of the term depending on the context of their study. Clutterbuck (2004:11) concurs with this view and suggests that each mentoring definition seems to depend on the purpose, context or expectations of the specific mentoring relationship. Baker (2002:35) attributes the lack of a universal definition to the fact that the concept and practice of mentoring is dynamic and not static. This assertion shifts the argument back to the contextual factors surrounding the mentoring process. Kartje (1996:115) suggests the differences become apparent because of the subjective way we each draw meaning from our different mentoring experiences. Higgins and Kram (2001:266) add to this debate by stating that the confusion currently surrounding the lack of a common definition of mentoring arises because researchers are studying different types of mentoring.

It is apparent from the views outlined above that mentoring is not a neat and precise activity. It means different things to different people. It is also apparent that different definitions of mentoring will reflect the context in which the research is being conducted. It can be inferred that a mentoring relationship will present itself in many different ways, and be influenced by differing perspectives, depending on the aim of the mentoring relationship. For example, the mentoring relationship may be influenced by the context of

the study, the personalities of the participants, and the histories of these participants. Mentoring may also be influenced by the point of view the organisation holds about the process. The challenge in articulating a definition that is universally acceptable is constructing one that goes beyond the contextual or social nature of the mentoring relationship.

As previously mentioned, research conducted in mentoring has been evident in several fields of study. These fields include areas such as psychology, business and education. These disciplines all have different objectives they would like to attain through mentoring. As articulated above, the view the discipline holds of mentoring, and the environment in which the mentoring is practiced, will influence the definition of the mentoring relationship. It is therefore considered prudent to review some of these definitions from different disciplines with the aim of gaining further understanding and clarity of the mentoring practice. This review is also carried out with the aim of establishing a working definition to guide my study.

2.2.1 A definition from psychology

From the perspective of psychology, the pioneering work of Levinson, Carrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978) is considered the basis upon which the foundations of mentoring research lie (Healy and Welchert, 1990:17; Jacobi, 1991:506).

Levinson et al. (1978:23) who carried out an all male study, define a mentor as ‘a transitional figure who invites and welcomes a young man into the adult world. He serves as a teacher, guide, or sponsor. He represents skill, knowledge, virtue and accomplishment – the superior qualities a young man hopes to someday acquire. The mentor relationship is one of the most complex, and developmentally important a man can have in early adulthood.’

The above definition draws its essence from the original Greek mythology. The emphasis appears to be on the personal development of the mentee, rather than on professional development. The mentor is viewed as an older, well rounded and experienced individual, nurturing a much younger individual who has just commenced their chosen career. It is

apparent that the fundamental objective of the mentee is aspiring to be like the mentor. Although the significant contribution of Levinson et al.'s (1978) study to mentoring research cannot be understated, the methodology used to arrive at their definition of mentoring can be challenged. Their definition of mentoring and the all male sample used for the study does not appear to support the multi-faceted conceptualisation of mentoring apparent in today's contemporary organisations.

2.2.2 A definition from management

Researchers regard Kram's (1988) work as the first systematic exploration of mentoring. This work has been influential in directing early mentoring research and practice, providing a solid foundation on which mentoring research has been advanced (Fowler and O'Gorman, 2005:51; Raabe and Beehr, 2003:272). My study reviews Kram's (1988) work as a means of exploring mentoring from an organisational development perspective.

Kram (1988:2) defines mentoring as 'a relationship between a young adult and an older, more experienced adult that helps the younger individual learn to navigate in the adult world and the world of work. A mentor supports guides and counsels the young adult as he or she accomplishes this important task.'

Similar to Levinson's et al.'s (1978:23) definition, Kram's (1988) definition is also influenced by the original definition of 'mentor' as presented in the Greek mythology described above. The perspective of the mentor being an older more powerful individual is apparent. The definition does, however, introduce the important aspect of the developmental nature of mentoring in work situations. It highlights the personal and professional development that is critical in a mentoring relationship.

2.2.3 A definition from higher education

Anderson (1987) presents a definition in an academic setting, stating that mentoring is 'a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal

development. Mentoring functions are carried out in the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and the protégé'. (Anderson, 1987 in Anderson and Shannon, 1995:29).

The definition from higher education seems to have more inferences than those from the field of Psychology and the field of Management. Anderson's (1987) definition accentuates both the personal and professional developmental functions. The mentoring relationship has the objective of helping the mentee to achieve their developmental goals. This definition suggests the important aspect of mentees achieving self direction in their learning within the mentoring relationship. Anderson's (1987) definition also posits the skill and experience level of the mentor as being an essential ingredient in a mentoring relationship, and diminishes the emphasis of the age differences inherent in the definitions from the other disciplines.

2.2.4 Synthesis of the definitions presented

Empirical studies claiming to examine the mentoring construct have often not offered a definition of mentoring. The definitions highlighted above indicate a general agreement that mentoring is a caring relationship where individual growth and advancement occurs. Other than this agreement it is apparent that no uniform definition of mentor or mentoring exists. The review of literature points to the fact that defining mentoring is problematic because the nature and number of activities linked to the concept and practice of mentoring seem to be growing every day. It is clear that researchers have diverse definitions of mentoring alluding to different forms of mentoring practice. The fragmentation of the literature on mentoring however, continue to direct researchers back to the pioneering work of Levinson et al. (1978) and Kram (1988). Although it can be argued that the core meaning of mentoring remains the same, the lack of conceptual clarity brought about by multiple meanings add complexity and probably ambiguity to the concept of mentoring.

The spectrum of definitions available in the literature supports Merriam's (1983:169) observation that 'the phenomenon of mentoring is not clearly conceptualised, leading to confusion as to just what is being measured or offered as an ingredient in success.

Mentoring appears to mean one thing to a developmental psychologist, another thing to business people, and a third thing to those in academic settings'. These different definitions, however, do not imply that any one of them is incorrect, but rather, that the researchers do not share the same perception of mentoring.

It may be noted that opinions are varied around references to the positional relationship of the mentor to the mentee and age differences, which suggest that the mentor is somewhat older than the mentee. However, with the dramatic changes that have occurred in organisations in recent years with respect to who holds the knowledge and expertise, these characterisations no longer fit the modern mentor/mentee profile. It is not impossible that a younger more experienced educator would mentor an older less experienced educator in specific teaching methodologies. Such shifts in organisational demographics, and the turbulent changes that today's organisations experience will influence the way that mentoring is perceived.

The foregoing review clarify that there is a lack of consensus of a definitive definition of mentoring. These definitions do not recognise the essence of a mutual mentoring relationship, such as the necessity of a reciprocal and developmental process for both the mentor and the mentee. Despite this position, this study should have a working definition to guide the research. Anderson's (1987) definition appears to encompass the necessary attributes of this study. However, in my opinion, the definition could be strengthened in three ways. Firstly, the definition of mentoring requires accentuation of the fact that as the mentoring progresses, *learning* takes place simultaneously to development. Indeed, learning and development are synonymous. As one learns, development takes place, and vice versa. Secondly, the addition of a reference to the learning of the mentor would augment the definition. Through the mentor adopting a critical reflective position in the mentoring relationship, the mentor becomes a learner too. This addition would highlight my view of mentoring as a relationship that results in the learning and development of *both the mentee and the mentor*. Thirdly, the definition would be strengthened by a clear indication of the players who benefit from such a relationship. In a learning and developmental process in the workplace benefits from mentoring would not only accrue to the mentee, but also to the mentor and to the organisation where the mentoring relationship is situated.

Therefore, for the purpose of my study, I have adapted the definition that is advanced by Anderson (1987) to describe mentoring as:

> A nurturing process, in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the professional and/or personal *learning and* development of *both the participants, to the benefit of the mentee, the mentor and the organisation*. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and the mentee.

This definition is used in my study as a means to explore the components that make up the principles and practices of mentoring as presented in literature. This definition is also appropriate for an exploration of mentoring in the context of an educational institution, which forms my study environment. It is a definition that suggests that educators both as mentors and mentees can learn and develop through the mentoring process. Mentoring as a developmental intervention can be presented in different ways to achieve developmental objectives in the educational institution. The following section will present the types of mentoring that may exist to achieve developmental aims.

2.3 Types of mentoring

There are basically two types of mentoring, informal mentoring and formal mentoring. There are differences between formal and informal mentoring relationships that may impact the mentor's roles in educational institutions. These differences involve the way the relationship is initiated, the structure of the relationship, and the processes involved in the relationship (Chao, Walz, and Gardner, 1992:620; Healy and Welchert, 1990:18). This section reviews literature on informal and formal mentoring.

2.3.1 Informal mentoring

Informal mentoring is usually a simple arrangement where a more experienced member of an organisation takes a less experienced member under their wing and provides guidance, advice and support with no intervention or formal recognition by the organisation (Chao et al., 1992: 620; Mathews, 2003:317; Russell and Adams, 1997:4). This type of mentoring

relies on relationships arising spontaneously and naturally (Baker, 2002:36; Chao et al., 1992:620).

By nature informal relationships evolve unconsciously and progressively over a period of time as the result of a series of interactions. During this period the mentor and mentee establish trust, mutual respect, honesty, and openness. The strength of informal mentoring is that it addresses people's needs and thoughts as they evolve, in a free flowing manner with no set agenda or plan (Kaye and Jacobson, 1996:46). In educational institutions, informal mentoring appears to develop on the basis of shared interests and admiration, or mutual identification. Noe (1988:458) observes that such mentoring relationships involve discussions beyond career-related issues to more personal sharing of interests, needs and values. This means that the social aspects in such relationships are more noticeable.

There is no doubt that informal mentoring would exist in any VET educational institution. Mentoring is a human activity that is bound to be present in a community that works together towards common goals. In such a case, the natural and spontaneous characteristic of informal mentoring becomes its strength. However, in a relationship where specific developmental objectives are desired within a specific timeframe, this strength may well be a liability. Informal mentoring has been viewed as a relationship that leaves too much to chance, having no timeframes, with the mentoring participants being unaware of the developmental impact of the relationship (Singh et al., 2002:390; Raabe and Beehr, 2003:271). Informal mentoring has been accused of not having a framework in which to operate effectively (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:189; Hale, 2000:224). This is one of the major reasons why formal mentoring has been embraced by organisations in practically every field of work.

Researchers generally agree that adding a certain degree of formality to informal mentoring relationships may result in positive dynamics and outcomes emanating from the relationship (Darwin, 2000:207; Goodwin et al., 1998:334; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:253; Singh et al., 2002:391; Woodd, 1997:336). Learning objectives that are clearly articulated and monitored can bring focus and structure to a mentoring relationship, and increase the chances of attaining desired developmental goals (Hale, 2000:224; Singh et al., 2002:402). Rather than focusing on informal mentoring in organisational settings, many organisations have taken the option of introducing formal mentoring programmes.

2.3.2 Formal mentoring

Formal mentoring, as opposed to informal mentoring, is usually carefully planned, structured and monitored by the organisation (Baker, 2002:36; Chao et al., 1992:620; 4; Raabe and Beehr, 2003:271; Russell and Adams, 1997; Singh et al., 2002:390). The mentoring process is initiated through mentoring programmes, which are planned interventions or programmes designed to construct mentor relationships. Formal mentoring arrangements are created as a developmental intervention by the organisation. The mentoring relationships involve a clear goal and stated objectives, a timeframe for learning, and an exit strategy. This means that a clear map is drawn of where the relationship is expected to go, and both the mentor and the mentee are made aware of this roadmap. The benefits of formal mentoring programmes have led to many educational institutions implementing such programmes, hoping to reap maximum organisational benefits.

There are formal mentoring programmes in educational institutions in South Africa that have resulted in positive outcomes (Geber, 2006:100). Speedy (2003:8) recounts a successful action research mentoring experience in a South African educational institution where formal mentoring resulted in the learning and development of young African educators. In this action research project, mentors were gratified with the transformational change in the behaviour of their mentees that resulted in highly satisfactory developmental outcomes. Although I was not able to access much literature on mentoring in Africa, such evidence indicates that educational institutions in Africa are attempting to utilise mentoring as a developmental intervention for educators, to achieve specific developmental goals such as improved teaching and retention of educators. Such evidence also highlights the need to have mentors who possess adequate mentoring capacities and understand better the contextual factors inherent in African educational institutions.

There are few models of mentoring which focus specifically on transformation within the African context. Geber (2004) presents an indigenous transformational mentoring model that may easily be integrated into the mentoring agenda of educational institutions in Africa. Using a model originating from Africa increases the chances of educational institutions in Africa internalising the changes resulting from mentoring, and ensuring the

long term impact of organisational change. Transformational mentoring acknowledges that both mentee and mentor can gain from the mentoring relationship (Gehrkes, 1998:192). Geber (2004) contends that the transformational process within the mentoring relationship can result in effective change and contribute positively to organisational learning. The mentor can support and guide the mentee to create a vision for their future, internalise their learning and participate in collaboration in the educational institution. Ricks and van Gyn's (1997:42) research on factors that contribute to a successful mentoring relationship demonstrated that all mentees need to be developed as individuals having unique needs and backgrounds. Ricks and van Gyn (1997:42) assert that a mentor who facilitates in a manner which allows the mentee to explore choices and make decisions encourages transformation. Achieving this level of development means the mentee's ability to engage in personal and social change is enhanced.

Unlike the behavioural or psychosocial aspect, which forms the basis for initiation of informal relationships, formal arrangements are based on the assumption that 'learning the ropes' (Kram, 1988:25) facilitates the professional development of the mentee. From this perspective, a mentor would be viewed as the equivalent of a coach or advisor and typically 'would not exert the more intense, persuasive influence characteristics of classic mentoring' (Merriam, 1983:167). The mentors and the mentees are matched, often without consultation of either party (Allen and Eby, 2003:471) and it is expected by the organisation that the relationship will work to the benefit of the participants. The matching of mentoring pairs in formal mentoring programmes may result in mismatches, where the pair find difficulty in working together, thus putting the mentoring relationship at risk (Singh et al., 2002:390). Formal mentoring programmes come at a cost, and the organisation expects to accrue benefits from the relationship to justify the investment outlay. This means that the organisation that implements a formal mentoring programme has to install the relevant reporting systems that would provide adequate feedback on the impact of mentoring. The stringent framework in which formal mentoring operates has been cited as one of its weaknesses (Alred and Garvey, 2000:270; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:450; Singh et al., 2002:390). The formality inherent in formal programmes can stifle the evolution of a creative, safe and personal relationship which might otherwise provide desired benefits. Even those educators who volunteer to be mentors in formal programmes may feel as though they are just doing their job. Such an attitude may result in less enjoyment from the relationship.

There are those researchers who maintain that informal mentoring will result in more benefits than formal mentoring (Chao, 1998:337; Chao et al., 1992:633; Ferman, 2002:153; Healy and Welchert, 1990:18; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:450; Singh et al., 2002:391;), while others advance that formal mentoring also has much to offer (Baker, 2002:36; Egan and Song, 2008:359; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:189; Orpen, 1997:53; Raabe and Beehr, 2003:271). Researchers advocating formal mentoring highlight the fact that this type of mentoring is more structured and therefore can be directed towards desired outcomes. It is said that when occurring in a structured environment, there is a higher chance of the desired outcomes being achieved by the mentees, the mentor and the organisation. Informal mentoring on the other hand is difficult to control (Hale, 2000:224). Those researchers advocating for informal mentoring highlight its benefits as the freedom of choice to be in the mentoring relationship. When the mentee and the mentor choose one another, they build deeper trust in the relationship. Such trust enhances communication between the parties. The other benefit is the lack of stringent organisational controls. There is no administrative structure in the relationship and it falls on the two people to drive the relationship in the direction they desire. As communication is the essence of an effective mentoring relationship, chances of achieving desired goals become quite high. In informal mentoring relationships, there are long term benefits that accrue to those involved in the mentoring process as well as society as a whole (Kram, 1988:2; Levinson et al., 1978:23).

Educational institutions that implement formal mentoring programmes obviously have identified and embraced the benefits that such a programme can bring to the organisation and the parties involved in it. However, due to the challenges that are faced by those who participate in formal mentoring programmes, the desire of many institutions has been to capture the potential benefits of mentoring that is apparent in informal mentoring, while retaining the benefits offered by formal programmes. Attempts have been made to carry out the mentoring process along a continuum ranging from informal mentoring to full fledged formal mentoring programmes. Flett (2002:12) refers to a hybrid type of mentoring that has some aspects of informality as well as some structural aspects as facilitated partnerships, and positions this type of mentoring at the centre of the continuum. Regardless of the type of mentoring that is adopted, the most import issue is the quality of

the mentoring relationship (Kram, 1988:32; Clutterbuck, 2005:2; Eby et al., 2006:437). Ensuring high quality in a mentoring relationship is part of the role of mentor.

2.4 Developmental models of mentoring

Within the mentoring process a mentor often assumes multiple roles to bring about the enhancement of the mentee's professional and personal development (Cohen, 1995:33; Galbraith, 2003:12). Megginson et al. (2006:17) clarify that there are basically two contrasting models of mentoring: the sponsorship model and the developmental model. The sponsorship model emphasises the growth of the mentee. In this model, 'the mentor gives, the protégé receives and the organisation benefits' (Scandura et al., 1996 cited in Megginson et al., 2006:17). The developmental model promotes a process of mutual growth, where the objective is the learning and development of all parties involved in the mentoring process. In the developmental models of mentoring, mentors are generally facilitators, assisting the mentees to achieve their learning goals (Megginson et al., 2006:17). The primary objective is personal development, from which career outcomes may also be achieved. Clutterbuck (2004:20) cautions that in practice sponsorship and developmental models of mentoring tend to blend, and have no clear boundaries. The two contrasting models of mentoring can be found in the works of Kram (1988) who supports the sponsorship model, and Cohen (1995) supporting the developmental model.

Kram's (1988) mentoring functions have been a prominent platform used by many researchers to define and assess mentoring (Allen and Eby, 2003:470; Chao, 1997:15; Fowler and O'Gorman, 2005:51; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:44). Kram (1988:22) defines mentoring functions as 'those aspects of a developmental relationship that enhance both individuals' growth and advancement'. In her highly acclaimed ground breaking research conducted on informal mentoring, Kram (1988:23) studied the evolution and progression of workplace mentor/mentee relationships over time and classified the functions that emerged from mentoring relationships into two broad categories: Career development functions and psychosocial functions. Current research supports the idea that role modelling, initially conceptualised as a function under psychosocial mentoring, should be viewed as a third major mentoring function and not as a component of psychosocial functions (Geber, 2003a:5; Jacobi, 1991:510; Raabe and Beehr, 2003:272; Scandura and

Pellegrini, 2007:72). Given the prominence that role modelling can play in a mentoring relationship, this study will reflect a similar view.

Cohen (1995) presents a developmental model that provides guidance to educators who wish to improve their mentoring capacities. Cohen's (1995:189) model is placed particularly within the context of education and highlights six behavioural functions that, if keenly observed, can result in mentor effectiveness. Each of these functions is a role that the mentor can play at various points in the mentoring relationship. These six behavioural functions are relationship emphasis - to establish trust; information emphasis - to offer specific advice; facilitative focus - to introduce alternatives; confrontation focus - to challenge; mentor model - to motivate; and mentee vision - to encourage initiative (Cohen, 1995:3). This model can assist the mentor to identify the desirable behavioural characteristics that may be required in a developmental mentoring relationship.

While Kram's (1988) model is sponsorship-oriented, Cohen's (1995) model is development-oriented. Geber's (2003a:5) model presents a fusion of these two models, emphasising the developmental nature of mentoring desired by my study, while taking into account the sponsorship assumptions as articulated by Kram's (1988) study. Although there are authors who advocate that developmental mentoring is quite distinct from sponsorship mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2005:8), it is often the case that mentoring practice transcends functions in the two approaches. In this exploratory study of the principles and practices of mentoring, it is evident that a blend of these two models would be ideal. For this reason, Geber's (2003a:5) model is found to be suitable for this purpose. The mentoring roles depicted by Geber's (2003a:5) model are presented in Table 2.1. Guided by Geber's (2003a:5) model, this section goes on to elaborate on role modelling, career and psychosocial functions to gain a better understanding of mentoring roles that guide mentoring practice.

Table 2.1: Mentoring roles and functions

Career development	**Psychosocial**
•Sponsor/advocate	•Counsel
•Coach	•Acceptance and confirmation
•Protect	•Develop trust
•Provide challenging work assignments	•Encourage
•Expose to opportunities	•Guide
•Give information	•Engage in constructive confrontation
•Give political information	•Provide friendship
•Teach/explore facilitative dimension	
Role model	

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2.4.1 Role modelling

Role modelling occurs when a mentor's attitudes, values and behaviour provide a model for the mentee to learn from and emulate (Kram, 1988:33). The mentee identifies with the example set by the mentor as the mentee aspires to achieve in the organisation. Role modelling succeeds because of the successful emotional attachment that is formed between the mentor and the mentee (Kram, 1988:34).

Hezlett and Gibson (2005:459) contend that role modelling is one of the main mentoring functions through which learning takes place in a mentoring relationship. They suggest that learning through observation may be a key part of mentoring relationships. This view has been supported by Lankau and Scandura (2002:787) who contend that observing and imitating a mentor's behaviour enhances the personal learning of the mentee. A mentee, observing the mentor's behaviour, learns faster without having to experience the challenges that come with the accumulation of experience. The mentee is also encouraged to ask questions and seek information about issues that they observe.

Role modelling may be a more effective and influential function if the mentor is instrumental in displaying it at a more conscious level. Cohen (1995:93) concurs with this view and asserts that role modelling should be a functional and active role. The mentee needs to observe and relate to the mentor consciously as a role model. On the part of the mentor, there should be clear actions that portray the mentor as a role model. Displaying approaches that show the mentor as a role model will assist in ensuring that the mentee has a realistic perception of the mentor. To portray the role modelling function, the mentor shares real life experiences and offers personal and positive thoughts about their success and failures.

The role modelling function is one that can effectively be utilised in an educational setting. Mentees can benefit immensely from collaboration with mentors in the educational institution. Mentors have the opportunity to share their experiences with the mentees, and allow the mentees to observe them in action, either teaching, or carrying out other administrative duties that are part of the teaching profession. These experienced educators can act as role models to others in the organisation observing their actions. Such observation can contribute significantly to the learning and development of educators who are less skilled in certain areas in their profession.

2.4.2 Career development functions

Career development functions enhance advancement in the organisation (Kram, 1988:24). These career development functions are usually possible due to the mentor's 'position, experience and organisational influence' (Kram, 1988:25). These functions also aid the mentee to 'learn the ropes of organisational life, gain exposure, and obtain promotions' (Kram, 1988:25). The career development functions play a critical role in the achievement of the professional development objectives desired in the mentoring relationship. To serve the developmental function, a mentor promotes professional growth by coaching, providing needed information and exercising organisational leverage. I expand on the mentoring roles that make up the career development function as presented in Table 2.1.

2.4.2.1 Sponsorship/Advocacy

According to Kram (1988:25), advocacy is the most frequently observed career development function. It involves 'actively nominating an individual for desirable lateral moves and promotions' (Kram, 1988:25). Through the advocacy role, the mentor helps the mentee to build a reputation, become known and obtain certain job opportunities that would prepare him or her for higher level positions (Kram, 1988:25). Through this function, the mentor recommends the mentee wherever possible for opportunities that will assist the mentee to achieve their desired developmental goals. The mentor is able to communicate with others about the mentee's abilities to take up challenges, and move into different positions.

2.4.2.2 Coaching

Coaching enhances the mentee's knowledge and understanding. Through this function, the mentor inspires self confidence and encouragement, providing frank but confidential feedback, sharing ideas and suggesting strategies for accomplishing work objectives (Kram, 1988:28). The mentor can enhance the coaching process by challenging the mentee's assumptions, being a critical friend, and demonstrating difficult or complicated tasks (Clutterbuck, 2004:17). The mentor provides vital information to the mentee that can assist in handling assignments effectively. The coaching function is enhanced when the mentor has valuable experience and knowledge of what the mentee aspires to achieve.

Hale (2000:227), in his study of the dynamics of mentoring as a route to personal and organisational learning, highlights the importance of coaching as a significant factor in the learning of mentees in a mentoring relationship. He presents a model that indicates that the knowledge and experiences of both the mentor and the mentee, when exhibited in an effective mentoring relationship, will yield insights that result in skill development on the part of the mentee. Hale (2000:228) defines insight as the capacity of the mentors and the mentees to reflect upon their abilities, and learn from these reflections. Cox (2003:20) concurs with Hale (2000:227) that coaching will be enhanced depending on the existing knowledge and experiences the mentor and the mentees bring into the relationship. Therefore, through coaching, a mentor can guide a mentee to acquire new skills or enhance skills they already possess, and at the same time, instil insight that can take the

mentee beyond the task at hand. Using coaching from the mentoring perspective creates a more rounded and richer acquisition of skill which serves to draw out the mentees' inner potential and shows mentees the capacity they have to learn and develop in their own wisdom. Once the mentees have a belief in what they can achieve, coaching becomes a role through which educators are guided to become self confident and self directed in their ability to realise their goals.

2.4.2.3 Protection

Protection occurs when the mentor shields the mentee from untimely or potentially damaging contact with senior members of the organisation (Kram, 1988:29). This occurs when the mentor believes that visibility is not in the best interest of the mentee. The mentor can shield the mentee from being included in time consuming or demanding committees in the organisation so that the mentee's time is better spent on activities that will enhance their professional goals.

Protection may also involve taking credit or blame in situations where the mentor feels the mentee is not ready to handle this. Fowler and O'Gorman (2005:55), in a study investigating the functions of mentoring, noticed an absence of the protection function. They attribute this absence to today's contemporary organisational context where protection is no longer beneficial for mentees. In today's organisations, being protected as described by Kram (1988) could be negatively related to salary, promotion and generally perceived career success (Fowler and O'Gorman, 2005:55). However, protection of mentees in today's educational institutions may still be relevant. This is especially so where the mentor is more senior in the echelons of the organisation than the mentee. The mentor may influence decisions in situations where the mentor assessed that the mentee was not ready for certain academic assignments, guiding mentees to take up assignments that they could execute successfully. The mentor can also be protective towards the mentee by guiding them on activities that would enhance their chosen personal and professional objectives.

2.4.2.4 Providing challenging work assignments

Setting challenging assignments relates to the immediate work of the department and imitates boss-subordinate relationships (Kram, 1988:31). These assignments enable the mentee to develop specific competencies and skills and experience a sense of accomplishment in a professional role. This function may be limited in its direct impact on career advancement but it is essential in enabling mentees to perform well on difficult tasks so that they can advance in the organisation. The mentor places the mentee in challenging situations to develop the mentee's mind and instincts, shares and provides experiences that challenge the mentee's knowledge and skills. The mentee learns essential technical and managerial skills through work that encourages learning. It is critical however that the mentor provides ongoing feedback and support otherwise the mentee might feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the tasks (Kram, 1988:13). Through this function, the mentor provides learning opportunities that direct the mentee towards achieving their desired developmental goals.

2.4.2.5 Exposure to opportunities

Exposure to opportunity involves the mentor assigning responsibilities that allow the mentee to develop relationships with other key figures in the organisation who may judge his or her potential for future advancement. This allows the mentee to learn more about parts of the organisation that are of interest. This function not only 'makes an individual *visible* to others who may influence his organisational fate, but it also *exposes* the individual to future opportunities' (Kram, 1988:27).This function calls for the mentor to assess the readiness of the mentee to be exposed to others. This function can be beneficial to the mentoring process when the exposure results in tasks that are highly visible and effectively completed by the mentee. A mentor is more fully involved in the educational institution, or some part of the institution, than the mentee in terms of experience, maturity, competence and knowledge. As a consequence the mentor is able, both at personal and professional levels, to assist the mentee to participate more fully in the legitimate activities of the institution.

2.4.2.6 Giving information

In the mentoring relationship the mentor and the mentee share information. For the mentor to facilitate the role of giving information, it is important that clarification is sought concerning the mentee's plans and progress in achieving personal, educational and career goals (Cohen, 1995:60). Information needs to be channelled towards the mentee's developmental objectives. Once the mentor is clear about the intentions and aspirations of the mentees, they will be in a position to offer advice based on accurate and sufficient knowledge. Often the mentor may have information that the mentees are not privy to, which may assist the mentees in making decisions that would influence their personal or professional development positively. The onus, however, lies with the mentor to use this role to the benefit of the mentees. Giving the mentees more information than they require may not be to their benefit.

2.4.2.7 Giving political information

Through this function, the mentor makes the mentee aware of political factors in the workplace, the group dynamics of a work group or division, and unwritten rules and barriers that may exist (Geber, 2003a:6). The experience that a mentor holds will give them sound and seasoned knowledge of the company and its political structure (Clutterbuck, 2004:38). Sharing such information with the mentees provides a view and understanding of the activities in the organisation that the mentees would otherwise not be privy to. Having a mentor who may have more information about unwritten rules that form part of the culture of the institution can provide the mentee with confidence.

2.4.2.8 Teaching/exploring the facilitative dimension

Teaching and exploring the facilitation dimension is a combination of two roles that the mentor may hold. The first involves the practice of teaching in the classroom. The second is the exploration of the mentee's interest in terms of the teaching vocation. Exploring the facilitative dimension guides the mentees through a reasonably in depth review and exploration of their interests, abilities and ideas. Cohen (1995:74) asserts that the purpose of having a facilitative focus within the mentoring relationship is 'to assist mentees in considering alternative views and options while reaching their own decisions about attainable personal, academic and career objectives'. In this role, the mentor probes the

mentee's assumptions to make clear the commitment to goals, presents to the mentee different viewpoints that generate in depth analysis of options, and reviews the vocational preferences that the mentee has (Cohen, 1995:69). This is an important role from the perspective of the work of educators. It is through this role the mentor works with mentees to enhance their views on teaching and provide support and direction on the choices the mentees make in terms of teaching styles.

2.4.3 Psychosocial functions

Psychosocial functions affect the mentor and the mentee on a more personal level. These functions enhance the sense of competence, identity, and self worth for both the mentor and the mentee (Kram, 1988:32). The intensity of the functions depends on the quality of the interpersonal relationship. The benefits that accrue through psychosocial functions go beyond the professional life and influence the personal life as well. To serve the psychosocial functions, the mentor promotes personal growth through providing emotional support and guidance. Psychosocial functions play an important role in the achievement of personal developmental objectives. They include acceptance and confirmation, counselling, and friendship. I expand below on the psychosocial mentoring roles presented in Table 2.1.

2.4.3.1 Counselling

When counselling, the mentor discusses the mentee's internal conflicts that pose challenges to learning and development (Kram, 1988:36). This is a context where the mentee can discuss any anxieties or fears that are detrimental to being productive at work. The mentor acts as a sounding board and offers advice from personal experience while resolving problems through feedback and active listening (Clutterbuck, 2004:17). This function enables the mentee to cope with personal concerns more effectively and makes the mentor feel helpful and productive. Mentors generally make themselves available to support mentees in taking responsibility for their personal and professional development. The mentor's role becomes invaluable to a mentoring relationship especially during times when mentees find themselves in stressful personal or work situations. The mentor is there to help the mentee cope and offers support during such situations.

2.4.3.2 Showing acceptance and confirmation

Acceptance and confirmation provide support and encouragement to mentees as they develop competence in the world of work (Kram, 1988:35). Through this function the mentor conveys to the mentee positive regard that provides the mentee the confidence to forge ahead with their developmental objectives. It enables the mentee to experiment with new behaviour by taking risks in the knowledge that mistakes while learning will not result in rejection.

The confidence that the mentee has to take risks emanates from the trust that develops in the relationship. Acceptance and confirmation are also strengthened by the presence of mutual liking and respect, and a culture where positive feedback on performance is appreciated. This function can contribute to the development of the mentees' critical reflective skills. This is due to the fact that the mentees have the confidence to explore different ways of accomplishing tasks, with the knowledge that they have a safety net in the form of the mentor.

2.4.3.3 Developing trust

The mentor develops trust in the mentoring relationship by encouraging and creating an open and candid atmosphere (Clutterbuck, 2004:41; Daloz, 1999:209). Garvey and Alred (2000b:124) assert that trust is the most important component of the mentoring relationship. When the relationship is based on trust, the mentor can draw out the mentees and help them to discover their inner selves. An honest assessment of where their interests, skills and aspirations lie will assist the mentees to identify the gaps that the mentor can help bridge. It is essential for the mentor to culture an environment of trust because such an environment enhances growth within the relationship. With trust as the foundation of the relationship, mentors provide mentees with a safe place to try out ideas, skills and roles with minimal risk (Kaye and Jacobson, 1996:45). The mentees are able to open up to the mentor on issues that are close to their heart without the fear of ridicule, and with the belief that they will be listened to and their issues will receive the required attention.

2.4.3.4 Encouragement

The ability to encourage and motivate the mentee is an important interpersonal skill that the mentor should have (Clutterbuck, 2004:38). Encouragement from the mentor gives the mentees confidence that they can achieve their planned objectives. The mentor needs to use this role, more specifically at the beginning stages of the relationship, to support the mentee at the time when their dependency on the relationship is still high. It is also through encouragement that the mentor eventually assists the mentee to achieve independence. Through encouragement, the mentee seeks to consolidate in the mentee a sense of confidence and interest in learning. The mentor fosters self esteem by encouraging honest self assessment by the mentees, and by showing concern for all aspects of the mentees' experiences.

2.4.3.5 Guidance

Providing guidance is a major role the mentor is required to perform within the mentoring relationship. As guides, mentors provide support to their mentees because they have the experience and have a good idea of what the mentees need to do to attain their set goals (Daloz, 1999:213). There are many opportunities for the mentor to give the mentee direct answers to questions. Clutterbuck (2004:18) suggests that the mentor should take advantage of such instances to provide the guidance the mentee is looking for. The challenge however, is for the mentor to be aware of when to provide direct answers, and when to encourage an element of discovery in the mentee. Although mentors may be tempted to answer the questions the mentees pose or give advice on the path the mentees should take, assisting someone to learn and develop also means that they have to find opportunity to work out their own issues and arrive at their own answers.

2.4.3.6 Engaging in constructive confrontation

Challenging the mentee is an essential component of mentoring (Daloz, 1999:212). In this role, the mentor can highlight inconsistencies on the part of the mentee in terms of meeting deadlines, or submitting assignments as per agreement. A mentor needs to have the ability to confront the mentee in areas where improvement would enhance learning. In this role the mentor tries to help the mentee be aware of unproductive strategies and behaviour and encourage the mentee to reflect on corrective actions (Cohen, 1995:75).

The mentor utilises this role by challenging the mentees' explanations for or avoidance of decisions and actions relevant to their development as learners. This helps the mentees attain insight into unproductive behaviour and they are able to evaluate their need and capacity to change. Although engaging in constructive confrontation is beneficial to the mentoring relationship, as the mentees are guided towards behaviour that enhances goal achievement, the mentor needs to be aware of the potential risk of a confrontational intervention. A confrontation may result in a negative reaction from the mentee that may be detrimental to the relationship. To avoid harming the relationship, the mentor needs to be careful and skilful in engaging in construction confrontation.

2.4.3.7 Providing friendship

The friendship function includes the social interaction that results in mutual liking and understanding (Kram, 1988:38). This role allows the mentee to feel like a peer with the mentor so that the relationship is not as distant as with a relationship of authority. The mentor interacts informally with the mentee and discusses issues that are not work related. The possibility of participating in activities that are not work related contributes to the positive development of the mentoring relationship.

Friendship is a role that can assist the mentor to build deep and long lasting trust, which in turn can enhance effective communication. It encourages an open and frank relationship where the educators can interact at the same level as colleagues. Commonly held values and feelings of mutual respect create a bond between mentor and mentee. This kind of environment allows for deep conversations that can enhance individual learning. Friendship can also result in effective reciprocal learning as the mentor and the mentee are able to discuss issues of mutual interest in an environment where there is a healthy two way exchange of knowledge.

2.4.4 The presentation of mentoring functions within the mentoring relationship

The role modelling, career and psychosocial functions as reviewed in the section above will present themselves in different ways within the mentoring relationship (Kram, 1988:43). The way that these functions present themselves can provide indications about

the learning and development process taking place between the mentor and the mentee. The career, psychosocial and role modelling categories are not necessarily separate in a relationship. They may appear singly as a function, but they may also present themselves in combination. The mentor has to assume a number of varied roles to facilitate the learning and development of the mentee (Cohen, 1995, 3; Daloz, 1999:22; Galbraith, 2003:12).

The mentor's role is that of a trusted adviser and supportive guide, encouraging the mentee in effective strategies for accomplishing personal and professional goals. A mentor may also act as a teacher, helping the mentee learn organisational and professional skills and providing insight into decoding corporate culture. At times, the mentor may also perform the role of supporter, providing insights from experience to help the mentee manage difficult situations. An effective mentor keeps in touch with the mentee, suggests appropriate resources and encourages the mentee to establish or seek out professional or supportive networks. A mentor can be a vital source of support for educators, helping them to find solutions, avoid pitfalls and learn to manage stress (Chandler and Kram, 2005:551). All these roles come into play at different times in the ongoing relationship so that often neither the mentor nor the mentee can pre-empt which role will exhibit itself.

It is important to note that the roles described above are not synonymous with mentoring. Cohen (1995:5) clarifies that a mentor may adopt many or only a few of these roles. Conversely, simply adopting a few of the roles does not necessarily make one a mentor. For example, while a coach may seem similar to a mentor, it is only a limited role because mentoring goes beyond the training involved in coaching and extends to sharing experience and wisdom (Clutterbuck, 2004:23). Indeed, the overlap between mentoring and many other similar relationships is extensive and the boundaries often unclear. Mentoring is a more personal and nurturing relationship which has a magic that may not be captured by single roles. This makes every mentoring relationship unique.

Kram (1988:43) suggests that each mentoring relationship will be different when one considers which functions are dominant in the relationship. Researchers observe that where elements of all the three categories combine, the power and benefit of mentoring is increased (Baker, 2002:36; Chao, 1997:17). This seems to suggest that the more elements present in a relationship the more dynamic and interactive the mentoring

relationship becomes. Chao (1998:334) emphasises this notion by insisting that to claim to practise mentoring, one would have to include career and psychosocial functions, as well as role modelling. Therefore, the dynamics of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee, and the context in which the relationship takes place may be influencing factors of how mentoring functions affect the mentor and the mentee. These dynamics may also affect the developmental process taking place within the mentoring relationship. Whatever dynamics are inherent in the relationship, it needs to mature to the extent that there is a synthesis of the mentoring functions being fused together to enhance the learning and development of the mentee.

2.5 Stages of the mentoring process

Other than Kram's (1988:49) study on informal mentoring, few studies have examined how mentoring relationships develop over time (Allen et al., 2008:350; Ramaswani and Dreher, 2007: 225). Despite the lack of empirical studies on this issue, a general agreement is found in literature that the mentoring relationship tends to pass through stages that are distinguishable from one another (Clutterbuck, 2004:19; Chao, 1998:335; Healy and Welchert, 1990:18; Kram, 1988:49; Megginson et al., 2006:19). There is little in literature about how mentoring relationships progress through each stage. It is however important to investigate this issue because the way that each of these stages is managed may influence the quality of the mentoring relationship.

Kram (1988:49), in her ground breaking research conducted on informal mentoring, has detailed four stages through which the mentoring relationship will advance. These are initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. The mentorship forms during the initiation stage, and this is the time when roles are clarified for both the mentor and the mentee. During the cultivation stage, the mentor and the mentee learn more about each other's capabilities and begin to maximise on the functions of mentoring. Optimal learning occurs and developmental needs are met. But this intensity slowly wanes off as the mentee gains confidence and new knowledge, and eventually leads to the next stage of the relationship, which is separation. At the separation stage, the functions provided by the mentor decrease and the mentee becomes more independent. At this time, either the two participants redefine their relationship, or they separate negatively. At the redefinition stage a lasting friendship is often formed and the relationship evolves to one of informal

contact and mutual support. At this stage, mentorship becomes a more peer like friendship, but the mentor may still continue to offer support. Kram's (1988:49) model supports the sponsorship model of mentoring where the emphasis of growth is on the mentee. Although the significance and impact of Kram's model must be acknowledged, for the purposes of this study, I lean towards Megginson et al.'s (2006:20) five-stage model which seems to support the developmental model of mentoring, where the emphasis of growth is not only on the mentees, but on the mentor as well.

Megginson et al. (2006:20) present a five stage model that supports developmental mentoring. Modelled around formal mentoring programmes, Megginson et al.'s (2006:20) model typically takes about six to twelve months.

The first stage is rapport building. During this stage the mentor and the mentee explore whether they can work together and establish their working relationship. They communicate their needs, expectations and concerns and begin to develop a rapport. The pair gain valuable experience through interaction with each other and begin to build trust in the relationship. At this stage, there may be apprehension and unwillingness to commit to the developmental project (Clutterbuck, 2005:3). This phase is characterised by a certain amount of testing out and challenging (Megginson et al., 2006:19). Typically, this stage overlaps with the next stage of the mentoring process, which is direction setting.

At the direction setting stage, the mentor and the mentee clarify what the relationship is expected to achieve for both parties. During this goal setting stage, the rapport building continues as the mentoring pair continues to discuss and explore ways of achieving the desired goals. The mentee requires a certain amount of acceptance and confirmation, and the mentor begins to provide the necessary support, counselling and guidance to facilitate an enabling environment for learning to take place.

The third stage is progression. This is the core period of the relationship where the mentor and the mentee work together and experience mutual learning. During this stage the mentee becomes progressively independent in leading and directing the mentoring process (Megginson et al., 2006:20). The mentor and the mentee establish a means for reviewing progress, and for adapting the process as a result of the review. The mentee derives a sense of accomplishment as developmental goals are achieved, and the mentor

becomes satisfied by seeing the mentee realise their potential. This is a period when the mentor also realises growth and satisfaction from the mentoring process.

The fourth stage is the winding up stage. This stage occurs when the mentee has achieved most of the goals or is sufficiently confident to continue the journey on their own. It typically overlaps with the progression stage of the mentoring process. Winding up is necessary for the mentee to positively disengage from the relationship and achieve full independence. Megginson et al. (2006:21) suggest that it is important to plan for a good separation rather than attempt to hang on to the relationship. This will ensure that the winding up is amicable and the mentoring relationship ends on a positive note. This moves on to the fifth and last stage which is moving on. During this stage the mentor and the mentee reformulate their relationship into possibly a lasting friendship.

Megginson et al.'s (2006) five-stage model support the inference that a mentoring relationship is mutually reciprocal, with both the mentor and the mentee going into the relationship with goals to achieve. The stages of a mentoring relationship indicate that the mentoring relationship is one where both the participants have to put in the required effort for the relationship to be mutually beneficial. Megginson et al. (2006:21) observe that moving from one stage of the mentoring relationship to another is not necessarily clearly defined and the stages often overlap.

Although the exact stages of mentoring relationships remain poorly documented, it appears clear that mentoring functions change as such relationships unfold through different stages (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:450; Chao, 1997:16). The stages in a mentoring relationship have implications for the development of the relationship, as different learning interventions may be used by the mentor to encourage effective mentorship (Clutterbuck, 2005:3; Kram, 1988:66; Megginson et al., 2006:21). The mentor requires to modify their behaviour and apply competencies that suit the stage the mentoring relationship is at. It is therefore important for the mentor to recognise and adapt appropriately to each stage of the mentoring relationship. However, as the mentor take the mentoring stages into consideration, the different dynamics of each mentoring relationship must also be considered. On the one hand, it is important as an individual to be aware that mentoring relationships will be at different stages depending on the learning and development taking place. On the other hand, it is important to note that a mentoring

relationship may not adhere to these guidelines. Within the dynamics of the mentoring process, the mentoring functions probably dominant in the relationship will come into play. These stages in the mentoring process also indicate that the mentor and the mentee will experience the mentoring process as a reciprocal venture, as both parties experience increasing mutuality and trust as the relationship builds.

Directing the mentoring relationship is an important task for the mentor. The mentor has to have the ability to make use of the varied roles to enhance optimum learning and development within the relationship. Therefore, before engaging in a mentoring relationship, it is important to ask yourself whether you are suited to the mentoring role. Educators who desire to act as mentors need to consider their skill and the level of commitment they can provide mentees. Such a self assessment can assist mentors to assess their role in the relationship and target areas of improvement.

2.6 Mentor development

It is often the case that mentors are assessed by the professional knowledge and skills they have gathered through experience. However, being an experienced educator does not necessarily make one a good mentor (Barnett, 1995:49; Galbraith, 2003:9). Garvey and Alred (2000b:124) contend that the skills of mentoring are similar to good management skills. Barnett (1995:55) argues that mentors do not automatically have the requisite capacities to effectively support and guide mentees in developing the knowledge and skills they desire. He contends that mentors must make attempts at developing the relevant capacities to effectively develop others. This view is supported by Cox (2003:20) who emphasises that mentors must ensure that they develop the skills they need to provide mentees maximum support in attaining their learning and development goals. Geber (2003b:123) reiterates that mentors need to continue building capacities to deal with the complex issues they may encounter in mentoring relationships. It stands to reason that those who desire to promote the learning and development of others must focus on developing their own capacities.

One way of providing requisite skills to mentors is through formal mentor training (Chandler and Kram, 2005:561, Cummings and Worley, 2005:408; Garvey and Alred, 2000b:113). However, this kind of training may not be the most adequate for the

challenging roles that mentors encounter. Cox (2003:14) concurs that mentor training is not adequate to prepare mentors to gain comprehensive mentoring skills. Training may offer a guide which mentors may use, but cannot adequately prepare a mentor for each mentoring encounter. This is because, as has already been suggested, each mentoring relationship is different, with its own dynamics. For a chance at conducting a successful mentoring relationship, mentors have to fall back on their repertoire of life experiences, and both tacit and explicit knowledge to meet the challenges that each mentoring encounter brings.

Due to the uniqueness of every mentoring encounter, mentors will modify their existing knowledge throughout their practice (Cox, 2003:15). This in effect implies that mentors learn continuously, adding to their repertoire of knowledge and experience with each mentee with whom they interact. It also implies that each mentoring experience is unique and assisted by the contextual factors present within the mentoring relationship. These mentoring relationships offer the most appropriate training grounds for mentors to improve their mentoring skills. Being a mentor is in itself a provocation to learn and a reminder to oneself of the strategies and qualities of being a learner. Mentors are part of and in the learning environment, acting as participants within the relationship. Each experience that the mentor encounters can go towards improving the skills that the mentor possesses.

Senge (1999:131) states that the true reward of mentoring is intrinsic and by assisting in the development of another you are developing yourself and your own capacities. Megginson et al. (2006:18) agree that mentors should aim to improve their skills whilst experiencing the mentoring process. Self knowledge is also an important aspect of the knowledge a mentor should have (Clutterbuck, 2004:48; Smith and Alred, 1994:111). In order to assist others to achieve growth and development, mentors need high self awareness to recognise and manage their own behaviour. Such self knowledge contributes greatly to the way mentors communicate with their mentees. In addition, having multiple mentees can enhance the learning of the mentor as the reactions and complexities that arise from each mentoring relationship will be different. How the mentor deals with each situation will promote reflection and become learning episodes for the mentor. It becomes even more developmentally beneficial if mentees are from different departments in the educational institutions. Mentors can develop themselves by acquiring insight into how the institution runs from the perspective of these departments.

Embarking on a journey to improve mentoring practice requires that the mentor understands what good mentoring entails. It is through clarifying what is entailed in effective mentoring skills that the mentor can begin to identify the perceived gap between the type of mentor they are and the type they aspire to be. Mentoring is far more than giving advice (Galbraith, 2003:9). Becoming a good mentor is a process that involves the enhancement of independent and critical reflective thinking (Ramaswani and Dreher, 2007:224). It is a time consuming and labour intensive undertaking for both the mentor and the mentee (Jonson, 2008:12).

From the perspective of the mentee, the mentor is viewed as someone whose experiences are deemed highly valuable in understanding the relationship between teaching and learning, and helping others see it as well. The mentor is looked upon to provide general knowledge about teaching and knowledge about the logistics of teaching. This is the basic requirement that the mentee would expect of the mentor. However, to discharge the transfer of knowledge and skills from the mentor to the mentee, the importance and significance of interpersonal skills cannot be overemphasised (Galbraith, 2003:12; Kram, 1988:155).

Researchers have identified mentor behaviours that contribute effectively to positive and evolving mentoring relationships. Predominantly in literature, listening skills, questioning techniques and the ability to provide constructive feedback are highlighted as essential interpersonal attributes that form the basis of mentor skills (Cohen, 1995:28; Fibkins, 2002:48; Galbraith, 2003:12; Harrison et al., 2005:437; Scwiebert, 2000:103; Ramaswani and Dreher, 2007:225). These behaviours will increase the probability of establishing and maintaining a successful mentoring relationship. These are also behaviours that have the most potential for generating mentee learning.

2.6.1 Listening skills

The ability to be a good listener has been cited as one of the most desirable characteristic a mentee would like in a mentor (Jonson, 2008:23). Good listening skills are a significant way of communicating the accurate perception that the mentor is genuinely concerned

about the mentee (Cohen, 1995:29; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:287). They assist the mentor to build a climate of trust which allows mentees to share honestly and reflect upon personal experiences in their practice. The mentee will respond to cues from the mentor and be influenced by it. Active listening involves concentrating on what the mentee is saying, displaying nonverbal cues such as nodding, smiling and eye contact, and verbal cues such as paraphrasing, asking clarifying questions and acknowledging that one is listening (Jonson, 2008:23; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:287). Listening goes beyond hearing. It is about attempting to feel like the mentee, to empathise with their situation, and to understand what they are attempting to communicate. Listening is a vital ingredient in a relationship where learning is to take place.

2.6.2 Questioning techniques

An important role of the mentor is to engage the mentee in dialogue that draws out the maximum available information (Cohen, 1995:35) pertaining to mentee's developmental concerns. This is best done through carefully phrased questions during mentoring conversations. Questioning enables both the mentor and the mentee to clarify issues and to ascertain mutual understanding (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:287). Skilful mentors facilitate the conversation in such a way that it opens up potential for facts to emerge and meaningful dialogue to occur. Techniques that will encourage mentees to reveal relevant information essential for individual learning include asking questions in nonthreatening ways, showing interest and concern, and giving the mentees ample time to explain situations.

2.6.3 Providing feedback

Feedback is essential for effective learning (Taylor and Furnham, 2005:77). Change in behaviour comes about when one knows what they a re doing right and what needs to be improved. The purpose of feedback is to gain cooperation and to stimulate sincere interest by the mentee in pursuing opportunities for learning and development. Providing feedback to the mentee should be based on observation rather than inferences of motives (Cohen, 1995:36). Generally, it encourages a more conducive environment for dialogue if the

mentor uses the minimum of critical feedback (Cohen, 1995:86). However, the mentor must be direct and factual where the situation warrants it. Such constructive feedback, when delivered in a supportive and nonjudgmental atmosphere should be maturely considered by the mentee.

The mentoring relationship is enhanced when the mentor is able to communicate a concerned attempt to comprehend the ideas, feelings, and experiences as presented from the mentee's point of view (Cohen, 1995:46). The role of the mentor is to create an environment where mentees are free to examine their situations analytically, rather than defend decisions about issues. The mentor should not appear to be judgemental about the mentee's ideas, beliefs or actions. The role of the mentor in this case is that of an objective sounding board (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:272) rather than a judge. The perception of mentees that they are being heard, rather than being judged, puts them in a frame of mind to share relevant reflective information about their concerns. Sharing the information in this way enhances individual learning. This individual learning is what may result in benefits for the mentee and the mentor that can be said to come from mentoring practice.

2.7 Impact of mentoring

As an organisational development intervention, mentoring is an interpersonal practice that takes place in the organisation. This social nature of mentoring makes it a process that impacts on individual, group and organisational levels. Research has indicated that mentoring is beneficial to the mentor, the mentee and the organisation as well (Carruthers, 1993:18; Egan and Song, 2008:358; Geber, 2003a:6; Hezlett, 2005:512). The following section will explore the impact of mentoring from these three perspectives.

2.7.1 The impact of mentoring on the mentee

Mentoring has the potential to have a huge impact on the mentee, more so than either the mentor or the organisation. The mentee has a lot to gain in a mentoring relationship, and goes into the relationship with high expectations. Mentees expect the process to be a learning experience that impacts positively on their practice. A positive mentoring experience can have a significant effect on a mentee's personal and professional life.

Mentors support mentees in managing their own learning, providing guidance and advice and being good role models (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:289). These functions all benefit the mentee by providing much needed emotional support and confidence.
The mentee gains access to the mentor's accumulated knowledge and expertise. With critical reflective practice, they are able to gain insight into their own behaviour and practices. This insight enables them to compare their practices with those of the mentor and make that a learning opportunity. With the guidance of the mentor, mentees are able to realise their potential and recognise opportunities for acquiring or enhancing their skills and knowledge. Studies also indicate that mentoring assists mentees in gaining such skills as technical, interpersonal, time management, and self organisational skills (Hezlett, 2005:512). These skills provide the mentee greater independence in terms of increased decision making, planning and problem solving skills.

Some of the personal benefits that can accrue to mentees from mentoring are increase in self esteem, self respect, and self confidence (Geber, 2003a:6; Hezlett, 2005:512). These impacts can assist the mentee to develop greater determination and motivation to succeed. The mentee can gain confidence to attempt new ideas, and to share the outcomes of these trials with the mentor. The overall outcome of such benefits on the mentee is an educator who has developed personally and professionally and can be more efficient both in life and at work.

2.7.2 The impact of mentoring on the mentor

Although studies have identified relatively fewer benefits for mentors (Allen, Poteet and Burroughs, 1997:71; Eby et al., 2006:441; Lentz and Allen, 2007:161; Mullen and Noe, 1999:233), mentors can also benefit from the mentoring relationship. This is possible because mentoring can be a mutually beneficial relationship (Baker, 2002:35; Eby, Durley, Evans and Ragins, 2006:426; Johnson, 2007:12; Kram and Isabella, 1985:111).

Mentoring provides an opportunity for the mentor to share their professional knowledge and skill with the mentees. This provides mentors the satisfaction that they have been able to pass their wisdom and acquired expertise to others. Mentors also improve on their

communication skills and develop patience and tolerance through this relationship (Megginson et al., 2006:36). Mentoring enables mentors to enhance communication skills such as listening, questioning and providing feedback (Cohen, 1995:29; Fibkins, 2002:48; Galbraith, 2003:12; Geber, 2003a:6; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:287). Mentors have a special responsibility for effective communication because they are a primary source of information, support and challenge to mentees. The impact of effective communication can be experienced on individual, group and organisational levels of the institution (Eby et al., 2006:427). Thus, the effectiveness of verbal and nonverbal communication becomes very important in a mentoring relationship. Critical thinking skills are also sharpened through engaging in problem solving and project management activities with mentees. Mentors also get an opportunity to re-examine their own practices, attitudes and values (Megginson et al., 2006:37). They get opportunities to discuss professional issues, and also to extend professional experience and hear alternative views about professional issues.

Mentors achieve a sense of fulfilment, receive an opportunity to influence thinking in the organisation and have the opportunity to clarify their own thinking (Mullen and Noe, 1999:235). Kram (1988:29) notes that mentors are recognised by their peers and superiors for developing talent in the organisation. The mentor gains a sense of self worth and enhanced self esteem. This rejuvenates their interest in their work, and makes them better professionals. Being responsible for directing the learning of another also gives one a sense of purpose and this awards the mentor feelings of satisfaction and contentment in seeing mentees grow. Such professional and personal impacts on the mentor contribute to their individual learning and development. The mentors are able to plough this learning back into their practice, and build their capacities both as professional educators and as mentors. The mentoring process may therefore result in the personal growth and development of the mentor.

2.7.3 The impact of mentoring on the organisation

Today's educational institutions are undergoing rapid changes where employees are under pressure to find new ways to achieve desired results and find new methods that enhance quality and professionalism (Caldwell and Carter, 1993:2; Eby, 1997:125). Literature

indicates that mentoring has the ability to impact the educational institution positively in these turbulent times.

Mentoring can create a better work environment, reduce staff turnover and maintain motivation of seasoned educators (Caldwell and Carter, 1993:2). It can help build morale through recognition of the knowledge and expertise of mentors and the potential of mentees (Eby, 1997:125). It can create a prevailing sense of humaneness since the mentoring relationship involves great intimacy, a sharing of value systems and feelings (Carruthers, 1993:18). Mentoring can also result in increased productivity by the mentor and the mentee, improved management and organisational skills, discovery of latent talent, refinement of leadership qualities, and improved performance (Carruthers, 1993:17).

Allen et al. (1997:71) assert that those who have participated in mentoring activities are usually more willing to mentor others. This provides a significant positive impact for the organisation. Having a network of educators who are willing to become mentors and contribute to the learning and development of less experienced educators would promote the developmental environment of the institution.

Singh et al. (2002:389) reiterate that mentoring assists in the transfer of knowledge, organisational learning, and cross-departmental communication. Mentoring relationships between educators from different departments or disciplines provide insight into each other's functioning and assumptions (Hale, 2000:228). This information may then be passed on to others in the mentor's or mentee's immediate working environment. Through this path, knowledge can permeate through the organisation progressively.

The impact of mentoring on the organisation stems from the fact that the individuals that participate in the mentoring are part of the organisational structure (Kram, 1988:2). Organisational learning is triggered by individual learning (Leroy and Ramanantsoa, 1997:872), and if this is fostered, it would contribute to improved performance and add to the overall competence of the entire organisation (Hezlett, 2005:522). This perspective presents an important notion in terms of organisational development and posits mentoring directly within the field of Organisational Behaviour.

2.8 Conclusion

The chapter reviews the historical background of the mentoring process. The issues surrounding the lack of a universal definition of mentoring are explored, concluding with the presentation of a working definition to guide my study. The review of literature identifies both developmental and sponsorship oriented models of mentoring that can be utilised to guide the learning and development of educators. The adoption of Geber's (2003a:5) model culminates in a mixed developmental/sponsorship approach to the exploration of mentoring practice. Role modelling, career and psychosocial functions are reviewed with the aim of understanding their role in providing guidance and support through the mentor. The way mentoring relationships progress is reviewed through a discussion of the stages of the mentoring process. How mentors can improve their capacities is also reviewed. The interpersonal skills of listening, questioning and providing feedback are identified as crucial for this purpose. The impact of mentoring on the mentee, the mentor and the organisation is explored. From this perspective, the link between mentoring practice, organisational learning and the field of Organisational Behaviour is clarified.

An exploration of how learning and development can take place in a mentoring relationship will shed more light on how mentors and mentees enhance their learning and development through mentoring practice, and how they can use their learning and development effectively for their benefit and the benefit of the organisation. Learning within the context of a mentoring relationship is therefore reviewed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW: LEARNING IN A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Whereas Chapter 2 presented a literature review on the concept of mentoring, this chapter contextualises learning within mentoring practice. The chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section defines learning. The second section reviews literature on organisational learning and links this concept to mentoring practice and to the field of Organisational Behaviour. The third section explores the notion of the learning organisation and its relevance to educators. The fourth section reviews literature on approaches to individual learning. Reflective practice, guided reflection, goal setting and mentoring conversations are discussed. The final section establishes the link between the learning process and mentoring practice.

3.1 Learning

The long standing tradition of mentoring is to pass the torch to the next generation of leaders, which means taking the accumulation of wisdom and knowledge that has evolved through the history of the organisation, mixing it with the best thinking of current times, and being open to the ideas and trends of the future. Hunt and Michael (1983:483) advance that it is this approach towards the practice of mentoring that results in the learning and development that makes up the practice of mentoring.

Kolb (1984:38) defines learning as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience'. Learning is a natural human behaviour and is a continuous and interactive process (Cassidy, 2004:430; Kolb, 1984:27) that begins at birth and continues through adulthood. It provides individuals with a powerful influence over their own lives and the lives of those they interact with (Franklin, et al., 1998:229). Kolb (1984:28) illustrates that in a learning process 'the learner is directly in touch with the reality being studied, rather than purely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something with it'. Learning occurs when as adults we make sense of our life experiences (Merriam and Clark, 2006:30). This means that for learning to occur we have to attend to the experience we have encountered and engage it in some way. Without this engagement, learning will not have taken place. Attempting to make sense of

our experiences transforms these episodes into a learning experience that fosters our personal and professional development. The essence of learning can therefore be deduced as the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which in turn results in the personal and professional development of the educator.

Learning and development leads to change. Huber (1991:89) contends that this change need not be observable behaviour. Learning will have taken place as long as new knowledge has been absorbed. In contrast to this view, Leroy and Ramanantsoa (1997:872) assert that effective learning will have occurred only when there is both cognitive as well as behavioural change. In their opinion, learning becomes ingrained in the learners when they can display observable behaviour of the new knowledge. Leroy and Ramanantsoa's (1997:872) view augurs well with the learning that takes place within a mentoring relationship. The interactive and observable nature of mentoring (Appelbaum et al., 1994:4) leads to change in behaviour that can quickly be assimilated into the daily processes of the organisation (Megginson et al., 2006:21).

The powerful influence of an individual's expectation on another's behaviour has been recognised by researchers. The idea that the expectation of an occurrence is instrumental in it becoming true is generally referred to as the Pygmalion effect (Murphy, Campbell and Garavan, 1999:249). Research on the Pygmalion effect demonstrates that when a trainer has a fundamental belief in the ability of the learner, these positive expectations impact strongly on the learner so that a high level of learning and development is attained (Murphy et al., 1999:249; Livingstone, 1988:4). The Pygmalion effect is an analogy for what is otherwise known as the self fulfilling prophesy (Murphy et al., 1999:249; Livingston, 1988:4) and is generally accepted in the education and training field as a method of exploring the self fulfilling nature of trainer expectations on learner behaviour. The concept demonstrates the impact and the mechanisms behind high or low belief in the learner's potential to achieve. This phenomenon resonates well with the learning that takes place within a mentoring relationship. It can be argued that mentors who believe their mentees can achieve desired goals, and frequently convey that belief to the mentees will culture in the mentees a high belief in their potential to achieve. Consequently, the mentees' self confidence will increase and they will demonstrate an achievement of their set goals.

As educators interact with one another in the organisation they acquire additional knowledge and skills, which influences their behaviour and changes the way they do things in their practice (Leroy and Ramanantsoa, 1997:872). Dixon (1997:24) suggests that learning takes place at three levels: individual level, collectively as a group, and organisationally. She also contends that 'hallway' conversations are essential for the transmission and assimilation of new tacit knowledge. A strategic intent of enhancing the individual knowledge of educators may encourage knowledge sharing and the transfer of knowledge between members of the organisation. A system of mentoring offers support for the learning process by providing educators with someone who can give feedback, question, share, discuss, challenge, confront and guide one through the learning cycle (Fibkins, 202:48) . The more educators attempt to improve personally and professionally, the more knowledge and skills are accrued by the organisation.

3.2 Organisational learning

Organisational learning is a process which culminates in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills or techniques for increased learning (Marks and Louis, 1999:711). An organisation learns when it adapts to deal competently with challenges through internal discoveries and knowledge obtained from external sources. This means that an organisation makes its employees capable of dealing with routine work, new challenges, procedures and organisational arrangements to incorporate both internal and external changes.

Marks and Louis (1999:711) define organisational learning as 'the *social process of knowledge* or the sharing of individually held knowledge or information in ways that construct a clear commonly held set of ideas'. Organisational learning goes beyond the learning of individual members of the organisation, by combining the collective learning of all members of the organisation (Dixon, 1999:59). Therefore, when educators collaborate in activities focused on personal or professional development, a culture forms reflecting the values, beliefs and norms of the group. Learning occurs as these educators mutually confront problems and develop solutions. This learning results in change in the behaviour of the educators. In response to these changes in behaviour, change comes to the organisation and organisational performances improve (Wood et al., 2004:200).

Organisational learning is intended as a top down and bottom up organisation wide phenomenon and, to be successful, it must be woven into the fabric of everyday organisational practices (Senge et al., 1997:48). How this weaving gets accomplished, however, is crucial. Literature suggests that to be successful in attaining a position where one can say that the organisation is learning, learning has to become such an integral part of the organisation that it is practiced at an unconscious level (Huber, 1991:94; Marks and Louis, 1999:711). This means that in an educational institution that embraces organisational learning, learning becomes a natural process and part of the normal behaviour of educators at work.

Research studies have established that knowledge and skills acquired from mentoring relationships do contribute to the learning of the organisation (Cunningham, 1999:445; Dymock, 1999:316; Lankau and Scandura, 2002:787; Sands et al., 1991:176; Singh et al., 2002:389). The fact that educators within mentoring relationships have developed implies that they have contributed to the learning of the organisation. Ortenbald (2004:130) claims that the terms ‘learning organisation’ and the term ‘organisational learning’ mean the same thing and should be used interchangeably. She insists that once an individual has stored ‘knowledge in the mind of the organisation’ while using this knowledge in practice, a learning organisation has been created. If mentoring becomes ingrained in the culture of the organisation it will continue to perpetuate itself. Leaders who were mentored, in turn mentor the next generation of leaders, and so on. This is the generative nature of mentoring, and the best catalyst for the organisation to become the environment of a learning organisation and to sustain such an environment.

3.3 The learning organisation

Gilley and Maycunich (2000:106) define a learning organisation as one that learns collectively, continuously empowering itself to manage knowledge more effectively and empowering its people to learn in their work environment. This is an organisation which facilitates the learning of all of its members and continuously transforms itself. Change becomes a routine process rather than an outcome or end state. Such organisations have a climate in which individual members are encouraged to learn and to develop to their full potential and have an ongoing process of organisational transformation through

encouraging and utilising the individual learning of its members (Hoyrup, 2004:443). As observed by Argyris and Schon (1996:16), a learning organisation expects its members to act as learning agents for the organisation, by responding effectively to changes in the internal and external environment of the organisation.

The educational institution needs to be socialised to turn towards continuous learning as a way of doing things (Elkjaer, 2001:439; Nyhan, Cressey, Tomassini, Kelleher, and Poell, 2004:73). It takes much collective learning from individuals in the organisation to develop a climate in which it can be said that organisational members learn (Franklin et al., 1998:228). Organisational learning will move towards a learning organisation if learning mechanisms are embedded in an environment where there are shared values and beliefs that shape how organisational members think, feel and behave (Garvin, 1993:80; Popper and Lipshitz, 2000:186). Therefore, the learning organisation leans on the fact that it is important to create continuous learning opportunities, to promote enquiry, dialogue and encourage diverse ways of learning.

Sharing and transfer of knowledge and skills is evidence of a learning organisation.
Learning on an organisational level means that a learning organisation makes use of each individual employee to facilitate collective learning. In this case, the organisation strives to create a work environment that supports learning. Bush and Middleton (2005:196) observe that educators as learners gain growth in confidence and self esteem that ultimately influence those around them. This individual learning can therefore be viewed as a social activity where we learn from the environment we are part of, and from the individuals we interact with (Antonacopoulou, 2006:456; Dixon, 1999:59; Huber, 1991:89; Leach, 1996:101).

Literature suggests that mentoring is a valuable resource for learning organisations (Kram and Hall, 1989:494; Lankau and Scandura, 2002:787; Senge, 1999:132). Mentoring has the ability to contribute to the development of a learning organisation by facilitating the sharing of organisational knowledge as well as encouraging the personal and professional development of employees. Educators engaging in mentoring relationships may promote an environment that encourages individual learning. This implies that mentoring may provide an opportunity where both the mentor and the mentee work together to contribute to the learning of the organisation.

The link between individual learning and organisational learning lies in the ability of the individual to synthesise the experiences that present themselves as learning opportunities, questioning them and using the ensuing capacity to change processes as different situations in the institution demand. To say that the organisation has changed due to learning, the organisation must put into use what has been learned. This may not be necessarily through observable change in behaviour (Huber, 1991:89) but through acquisition of new insight and awareness. The action of reflection then becomes the bridge between individual and organisational learning (Hoyrup, 2004:445). Although there is criticism in literature on the concept of the learning organisation indicating that it is extremely difficult to achieve such a notion (Nyhan et al., 2004:69; Ortenbald, 2002:213), it is clear that the journey towards creating such an environment begins with individual learning.

3.4 Approaches to individual learning

The learning approaches that are appropriate for individual learning should act as interventions that assist the learner to acquire knowledge and skills gathered through experiences. Transfer of knowledge is more likely to occur if the educator receives personal assistance with the application of learned knowledge and skills. Through the mentoring relationship, the mentor can support the mentees apply suitable learning approaches.

The learning approaches relevant to this study are those appropriate for a mentoring relationship, which tend to be close and personal one on one relationship. In the following section, I discuss reflective practice, guided reflection, goal setting, and mentoring conversations as learning approaches deemed most appropriate for learning within the context of a mentoring relationship. The aim of this exploration is to gain an understanding of the role of these learning styles in the learning process and their applicability and relevance to the mentoring process.

3.4.1 Reflective practice

Researchers have assigned the notion of reflection a wide array of meanings. It is a concept that is notorious for making intuitive sense, yet very difficult to define in specific terms (Hoyrup, 2004:446). However, most treatments of reflection in the existing literature trace their origins back to the work of two theorists: John Dewey (1933) and Donald Schon (1983). Thus, an examination of their framework for understanding reflection will clarify this individual learning approach better.

The work of Dewey (1933) who was essentially concerned with the cognitive processes involved in learning provides insight into the concept of reflective practice. Dewey writes:

> Reflective thinking, in distinction to other operations to which we apply the name of thought, involves (1) a state of doubt, hesitation, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates, and (2) an act of searching, hunting, enquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the complexity (Dewey, 1933:12).

Dewey (1933:15) views reflection as having two dimensions as both an attribute and a skill. As an attribute, reflection implies that an individual is open minded, open to new ideas and thoughts; wholehearted, able to engage fully with new ideas and actively seek them out; and responsible, being aware of the meaning and consequences of one's actions. Reflection also requires the skills of keen observation and reasoned analysis (Dewey, 1933:18). These two dimensions play an important role in Dewey's understanding of reflective action. The process of reflection as presented by Dewey (1933) is initiated by a feeling of uncertainty that leads an individual to stop and analyse experiences. Once a problem is perceived, it is located and defined. Next, a potential solution is suggested, followed by a reasoned analysis of the implications and possible outcomes of the suggestion. After continued observation and experiment, the solution is either accepted or rejected.

Building on Dewey's work, Donald Schon (1983) based his model of reflective practice on a concept he terms knowing-in-action. Knowing-in-action involves the 'spontaneous, skilful execution' of an action 'which we are characteristically unable to make…verbally explicit' (Schon, 1987:25). Schon argues that practitioners gather their experiences through day to day practice. As they gather experience, educators come to know and

understand much more than they can articulate in words. Polanyi (1958:373) refers to this inability to describe thought processes clearly as tacit knowledge. Experienced educators' knowledge is often seen in their actions as they perform their daily tasks. Over time, accumulated experience forms a repertoire from which professionals draw during practice. In turn, reflection is the means by which tacit professional knowledge is surfaced (Schon, 1987:54). Schon speaks of two kinds of reflection: 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action'.

3.4.1.1 Reflection-in-action

Reflection-in-action involves thinking about action while actually executing it. The practitioners 'think on their feet'. As issues arise during practice, the practitioner reflects for a moment and applies what she knows from experience to her decision making (Schon, 1983:55). This is learning which occurs spontaneously and in the heat of the situation. Such reflection is a powerful learning medium, as it condenses several learning strategies into a matter of seconds or minutes which may end up affecting the outcome of the situation in hand. Through reflecting-in-action, educators can reshape what they are doing while performing the task.

3.4.1.2 Reflection-on-action

Reflection-on-action involves thinking back and talking about action. A practitioner looks back on a past project or situation to 'explore the understandings they have brought to the handling of the case' (Schon, 1983:54). This process allows them to use the knowledge they have accumulated through experience to 'reframe' their perception of the issue or problem (Schon, 1987:51). This type of reflection can provide a different perspective and significant supplementary information not available to the educator at the time the experience occurred. More importantly, reflection-on-action provides an opportunity for dialogue and a continuous reworking of ideas between the mentor and the mentee.

Cressy, Boud and Docherty (2006:18) introduce the notion of productive reflection. They see reflection as being not just an end in itself but a means to action, and mention that reflection occurs in the context of producing a learning outcome that can be applied to a real situation. This view of reflection is not different from that of Dewey (1933) or Schon

(1987). However, Cressy et al.'s (2006:18) view highlights the perspective of reflection resulting in knowledge generation and active learning in a congenial workplace. The authors see productive reflection as having an impact on work processes of the reflective individual as well as among other colleagues, and aims to produce a context that fosters learning which include those beyond the vicinity of one reflective practitioner. This means that individual reflection can result in the learning of others in the organisation. As educators become reflective practitioners, they influence their work processes and their work behaviour. Mentoring is one way through which educators can make the transition from reflection to learning.

3.4.1.3 Reflective practice and mentoring

Reflective practice has been linked to effective mentoring practice and found to be an effective way of transforming experience into learning (Cox, 2005:460). Mentoring stimulates individuals to self assess and reflect, thus becoming more conscious learners who are able to apply knowledge of their learning needs and styles to their own development (Hine, 2008:1). Reflection encourages more open minded and creative thinkers and effective educators, while developing an awareness of the self as a learner. Reflective practice enhances the educator's ability to monitor, assess and improve performance and thinking, and hence promote deeper learning (Hine, 2008:6). Mentoring encourages systematic reflection and can greatly enhance the process of making tacit knowledge explicit (Nicholls, 2002:139). Through the mentoring process, educators are able to interrogate their practice, reflect and then reappraise values and behaviours. Meaningful learning and development does not occur simply because one is in a mentoring relationship. It is what the educator can make of the experiences being gathered that will result in such learning and development. For information to become understanding in a conscious way the mentee needs to interpret and transform that knowledge into practice. This can effectively be done through critical reflective practice.

The value of reflection comes about when it provides rich material for later reflection-on-action when through journaling or dialogue, educators can re-run and mentally rehearses new ways of doing things. Cox (2005:460) argues that reflection-on-action promotes reflection-in-action. This leads to critical reflections that allow the educator to reach increased self awareness. As the educator becomes competent in the action of critical

reflection and gets used to reflecting on actions already experienced, it becomes easier and more natural for the educator to reflect as they perform the task. This self awareness results in the educator making better use of experiences encountered and thus learning more effectively at this individual level.

Mentoring is an experience where elements of information are gathered by the participants in different ways. Some aspects of the new knowledge being assimilated might be quite explicit and clear, while others may simply be inferred or not at all apparent at the time (Huber, 1991:89; Schon, 1983:54). A continuous cycle of action and reflection upon the action is appropriate for the internalisation of the knowledge and skills gathered. Kolb's (1984:28) well known concept of experiential learning aptly describes this cyclical pattern in which experience leads to reflection and then to conceptualisation and action. This action then results in further experience. To become a reflective educator, one has to question the status quo, and examine assumptions underlying practice. The action of reflection becomes a powerful learning approach that can be utilised by both mentors and mentees to assimilate learning experiences. As observed by Gough and Scott (2007:111), the combination of reflection and experience leads to 'deep learning'. Reflection is therefore a channel through which educators can acquire personal and professional development (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Day, 1999:223; Loughran, 2002:41; Merriam and Clark, 2006:39; Schon 1983: 54).

3.4.2 Guided reflection

In her study of adult learners learning for experience Cox (2005:471) found that guided reflection resulted in effective workplace learning. Within an effective mentoring relationship, the mentor guides the mentee through the process of reflection on the experiences that the mentee is undergoing (Barnett, 1995:54). Mezirow (1997:10) contends that for mentees to understand the experience fully, they require assistance to transform their frame of reference into meaningful learning. Guided reflection, when used within the context of a mentoring relationship, can help the participants channel their critical reflection in such a way that the experience under scrutiny is systematically and critically reflected upon. This approach towards reflection can result in structured learning that assists in individual learning.

Hogan (1995:7) presents the four-stage SAID model that she recommends for the process of guided reflective practice. The first stage is **S**ituation, where the individual reflects on the actual experience. The second stage is the **A**ffective domain. In this stage one reflects on the feelings evoked by the experience. The third stage is the **I**nterpretation of events. The individual probes within themselves to learn from the event. The fourth stage is the **D**ecision. In this last stage of the process, the individual draws up an action plan that results from the learning. Hogan (1995:7) clarifies that one should not reflect on only what they consider significant events. It is effective to reflect upon small incidences of everyday life, both positive and negative. Answering a number of questions as the experience is explored assists deeper reflection.

Maintaining a personal reflective journal during a mentoring relationship is an approach that assists guided reflection. Writing down one's reflections has the ability to result in a deep learning about oneself (Boud and Keogh, 1985:63; Coghlan and Brannick, 2001:33; Hogan, 1995:5). Maintaining a reflective journal is therefore recommended during reflective practice because it provides objectivity in relation to the initial learning experience. It could clarify the initial experience by removing it from the clouds of subjective feeling that may obscure it.

3.4.3 Goal setting

The exercise of setting measurable and realistic goals that can be achieved within a specified timeframe is an approach that may aid individual learning (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:278). Such an activity prevents future misunderstandings and assists in time management. Scwiebert (2000:103) emphasises the importance of clarifying expectations and establishing goals for the mentoring relationship. It is important for the mentor to help mentees articulate what they want to achieve and how the relationship may help them do so. Setting goals is even more important where both the mentor and the mentee are learners in the relationship.

Mentoring has evolved beyond the traditional one-on-one relationship where the mentor is perceived as the all knowing senior, older, and powerful person, while the mentee is

perceived as being on the receiving end of what the mentor has to provide. This type of mentoring relationship is regarded as traditional mentoring (Geber, 2003a:4). In current educational institutions mentoring can be regarded as a relationship where the mentor and the mentees form a partnership, each going into the relationship with learning and developmental goals that they desire to achieve (Geber, 2003a:4). In this type of relationship mentors acknowledge that mentees possess some knowledge and expertise, but have some specific developmental needs that they would like assistance in enhancing. The mentees are also aware that they are not the only learners in the relationship and that the mentors have something to gain too. These two players commence the mentoring relationship within their work context and in the process of their interaction, make the organisation a beneficiary of their learning and development.

Success in mentoring is enhanced by viewing this phenomenon as a joint venture between the mentor and the mentee. The responsibility of learning needs to be shared. Kaye and Jacobson (1996:44) suggest that a contractual agreement between the mentor and the mentee assists in this case. This can take the form of a personal development plan (PDP). Helping the mentee construct a PDP is a critical task for the mentor (Megginson et al., 2006:17). Training in this area would typically involve explaining what a PDP consists of; filling out a self assessment to aid in the identification of developmental needs; and reflecting on work and/or personal life (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:278). The role of the mentor in the exercise of constructing a PDP is to be passive and reactive to the aspirations of the mentee. The mentor needs to be careful not to impose his/her objectives on the mentee. Instances where the mentee is proactive in constructing the PDP will be the most likely to result in effective learning and goal achievement.

3.4.4 Mentoring conversations

A critical activity between mentors and mentees that guides the achievement of set goals is mentoring sessions. These sessions result in mentoring conversations that facilitate learning. During these conversations, the mentor guides mentees towards their goals and objectives. Cox (2003:11) acknowledges that mentoring conversations are an opportune time for mentors to share the knowledge they have with mentees. The time allocated for mentoring conversations provides the opportunity for mentors to share true life scenarios

with mentees. Huber (1991:91) contends that feedback is critical within the learning cycle and will result in positive learning outcomes. The real benefit from mentoring conversations will happen when mentors and mentees discuss issues of real significance that result in deep and meaningful dialogue and create room for effective feedback.

Researchers suggest that mentoring conversations that follow a structured format have more likelihood of obtaining positive learning outcomes (Mumford, 1995:4; Clutterbuck, 2004:85; Whitmore, 2002:53). Mumford (1995:4) presents a structured sequence that can be applied effectively when mentors conduct learning sessions with mentees. In this sequence learning is presented as an integrated process that begins with experiences followed by collection of data and observations about the experience. The process within the cycle assists the mentor to plan the learning sessions to make maximum use of the learning opportunity. Whitmore (2002:53) presents the four-step GROW model as a structure that may be used by mentors to guide a mentoring session. Whitmore (2002:53) developed the GROW model specifically for coaching in the sporting field. This model has however been adapted by mentors to guide mentoring sessions in varied fields (Taylor and Furnham, 2005:100).

Whitmore (2002:53) urges that the GROW model is most effective when mentors build awareness and responsibility in their mentees. The **G**oal phase first establishes what the mentee would like to achieve during the session. Second is the **R**eality phase during which the mentor ensures that the information and/or experiences that the mentee relates are realistic and current to the situation. During the **O**ption phase, the mentor guides the mentee through several options for consideration. In the **W**rap-up phase, the mentor concludes the session with a clear action plan and clarification of the support the mentee requires. At each phase, this model provides useful questions that the mentor can utilise to guide, probe or encourage the mentee to achieve the desired outcomes of the mentoring session. Obtaining optimum results from mentoring conversations will result in a mentoring relationship that makes full use of the inherent connection between mentoring practice and learning.

3.5 Linking mentoring and learning

In the field of Education, interest in the concept of organisational learning parallels the trend and subsequent growth of mentoring in educational institutions and the emphasis on the promotion and fostering of mentoring principles (Cohen and Galbraith, 1995:9). The learning organisation is based on the premise that it is important to create continuous learning opportunities, to promote enquiry, dialogue and encourage collaboration and team learning. This is the same concept that underlies the notion of organisational learning - the belief that organisations can be transformed by improving communication processes and techniques so as to enrich relationships among its members (Wood et al., 2004:200). This is an approach that fosters positive behavioural change in the organisation. The benefits of mentoring are enhanced growth and development of both educators who are mentored and those who serve as mentors. It follows that educational institutions that embrace the concept of mentoring and encourage the mentoring process in the workplace maximise the potential of their educators to learn and improve in their practice.

The mentoring process is best understood if viewed from the perspective of being a 'highly significant and productive interpersonal process of learning' (Cohen, 1995:1).
Cohen (1995:39) argues that mentoring and learning are synonymous with each other. In support of this relationship between mentoring and learning, researchers draw many comparisons between the two concepts by presenting learning as a function within the practice of mentoring (Alred and Garvey, 2000:267; Baker 2002:35; Cox, 2003:20; Hale, 2000:227; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:459). Kerka, (1999:3) argues that mentoring is a practice that supports much of what is currently known about how individuals learn, including the socially constructed nature of learning and the importance of experiential, situated learning experiences. These comparisons assist in the conceptualisation of how learning and development within a mentoring relationship occurs. The link between learning and mentoring has long been a subject of research by those attempting to understand this relationship better. Consequently, it is recognised that there is much to be gained from a review of what researchers have advanced about the learning that takes place within a mentoring relationship.

Many positive outcomes have been accredited to mentoring relationships (Lankau and Scandura, 2002:787; Singh et al., 2002:389; Hale, 2000:223). Mentors and mentees go

into a relationship expecting beneficial gains. The educational institution that supports mentoring also expects it to result in learning outcomes that enhance the competency levels of the educators.

It has been established that the mentoring relationship results in the learning and development of mentees (Alred and Garvey, 2000:268; Baker, 2002:42, Cox, 2003:20; Eby and Lockwood, 2005:447; Hale, 2000:227; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:458; Hezlett, 2005:520; Singh et al., 2002:389). Support and guidance offered within the mentoring relationship will result in the mentee improving not only professional, but also personal skills that they can use effectively in their day to day activities. Hezlett and Gibson (2005:458) assert that as mentees develop technical, interpersonal, time management, and self organisation skills, they also gain self confidence in their attitude towards the tasks that they perform, and generally adopt a positive attitude towards work. Such personal and profession development works positively for the educational institution that the educators are a part of. Mentees, however, are not the only learners with the mentoring relationship.

Although less attention has been devoted to understanding mentor's learning experience than that of mentees (Allen et al., 1997:70; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:458), there are studies that suggest that learning is part of the experience of being a mentor. There is research that examines the learning of mentors through the mentoring process (Allen and Eby, 2003:481; Alred and Garvey, 2000:268; Hale, 2000:229; Healy and Welchert, 1990:19; Singh et al., 2002:389; Waxman, 1996:97).

Mullen and Noe (1999:240) obtained support for the idea that mentors seek information from their mentees. Mentoring is an opportunity for mentors to obtain different perspectives about varied issues. The action of obtaining information from the mentee presumes that the mentor will put this information to use. Being in the same field of Education may be an advantage in terms of the reciprocal learning that can take place within the relationship. In a study conducted by Allen and Eby (2003:480), mentors who perceived themselves as similar to their mentees reported learning more from their mentoring relationships. A developmental mentoring relationship with professional objectives that include improving teaching capacities will benefit not only the mentee, but the mentor as well. Mentoring becomes an opportunity where mentors can revisit their own

competencies and discuss refreshing ways of enhancing these competencies. This may result in mentors gaining perspectives on issues that they would not otherwise have been exposed to. Mentors participating in Hale's (2000:229) study reported that mentoring helped them gain insight into their developmental needs, refresh their skills, understand how others perceived their work, and develop their management style. Such learning can only come about in the process of sharing ideas between colleagues. It is clear that mentors, in the act of guiding and promoting others to develop different capacities, themselves learn and develop their own capacities.

The dual nature of the learning that takes place between the mentor and mentee as advanced in the preceding paragraphs suggests the existence of a strong bond between learning and the process of mentoring. Learning within mentoring practice appears inevitable. The mentoring relationship infers a dynamic learning and development process where the personal and professional capacity of both the mentor and mentee is enhanced. Functioning as guides, mentors provide authentic, experiential learning opportunities as well as an intense interpersonal relationship through which social learning takes place. Sharing of information is an effective way of ensuring the learning of the organisation (Huber, 1991:91). The changes that result from this learning can impact on the entire organisation (Huber, 1991:89; Leroy and Ramanantsoa, 1997:872; Megginson et al., 2006:14). The learning of individual educators accumulates to the learning of the organisation (Casey, 2005:131). As the organisation adds to its knowledge bank, positive changes in the way processes are carried out in the institution may result. The impact felt on improved organisational processes implies positive changes in the behaviour of members of the educational institution. Cleary, the mentoring process, organisational learning and organisational behaviour are intricately linked.

In educational institutions, where learning is the main purpose and product of the existence of the organisation, mentoring should be a concept that is easily assimilated into the very fabric of the organisation. Through the continued learning of their educators, the educational institutions can expect not only to improve the competency levels of their educators, but also improve the quality of education that they provide to society.

3.6 Conclusion

The literature review indicates that the learning process and mentoring practice are intertwined. It is suggested that the guidance and support that mentors provide mentees in the mentoring process results in learning and development. The literature reviewed suggests that those organisations that embrace practices that encourage learning can propel their organisations towards achieving the notion of the learning organisation, where knowledge sharing is encouraged through interpersonal interactions. Mentoring practice is an avenue that can be used effectively to encourage the individual learning of educators.

When the approaches to individual learning such as reflective practice, guided reflection, goal setting, and mentoring conversations are practiced in the mentoring process, learning is enhanced. These approaches can provide a structured framework in which the mentoring process can take place. Cumulative effects of such learning and development contributes to organisational learning. The change in behaviour that results as an outcome of learning may influence the way the organisation conducts certain processes or systems. This implies that mentoring practice and the behavioural changes that result in the educators who participate in this process will influence organisational behaviour.

In the next chapter, I outline the research methodology I have used in this exploratory study.

CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

This study is a mentoring journey that leads me through an exploration of the principles and practices of mentoring and how mentoring is used as a developmental intervention to assist in individual learning of educators in one Vocational Education and Training (VET) educational institution. The preceding chapters presented an overview of the study and a review of related literature. In this chapter the research methods and processes used to collect data are described.

The chapter looks at the research design, and begins by reviewing qualitative research methodology. Within this methodology, the action research approach that is used in this study is discussed. I also justify the self study approach I have utilised as an integral part of my study. This is followed by a comprehensive presentation of the study design in line with the action research approach and self study. The data sampling and data collection methods utilised is then presented and explained. This is followed by the description of the data analysis process and associated validity issues. The final section of the chapter presents background information on the mentees and myself as the participants in this mentoring journey. In this final section I outline the limitations of the study.

4.1 Research design

Mouton (2001:55) defines a research design as a ‘blueprint of how you intend conducting the research’. Cooper and Schindler (2003:146) add that the research design outlines the strategies used for the collection, measurement and analysis of the data. In this exploration of the principles and practices of mentoring and how mentoring assists in learning and development of educators in a VET educational institution, action research was utilised as the orientation to enquiry. Action research falls into the orientation of qualitative research. Before embarking on an exploration of how action research was used as the orientation to enquiry, a brief overview of the qualitative research methodology is offered.

4.1.1 Qualitative research methodology

Qualitative research is 'any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:10). This includes many methods and approaches to enquiry such as case studies, participatory enquiry, participant observation and interpretive analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:2). Van Maanen (1983:9) describes qualitative analysis as an 'array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world'. Qualitative methods are often used for examining and developing theories that deal with the role of meanings and interpretations in naturally occurring situations (Collins and Hussey, 2003:13).

A qualitative research approach is used for this study. This is because description is an integral feature of qualitative research, and such description will provide depth and meaning to the outcomes of the study. The objective of this study aims to develop a deep and rich understanding of the principles and practices that impact on the mentoring process, and also to explore the journeys of the participants in the study living through their experiences. Therefore, to explore the principles and practices of mentoring effectively and achieve the objective of learning through mentoring, the qualitative, rather than quantitative approach to research was deemed most appropriate.

The methodological procedure that is applied in this study is action research. This action research approach incorporates self study as a method of enquiry. As the researcher, it is prudent for me to outline why I deemed action research to be the most appropriate research approach that could effectively be utilised in this study. Below, I will expand on action research as the research orientation and justify my choice of this approach.

4.1.2 Action research

Introduced by Kurt Lewin about fifty years ago, action research explores identified issues within practice through recurring cycles of action and reflection (Dickens and Watkins, 1999:127). Lewin's original formulation of the idea of action research was based on the

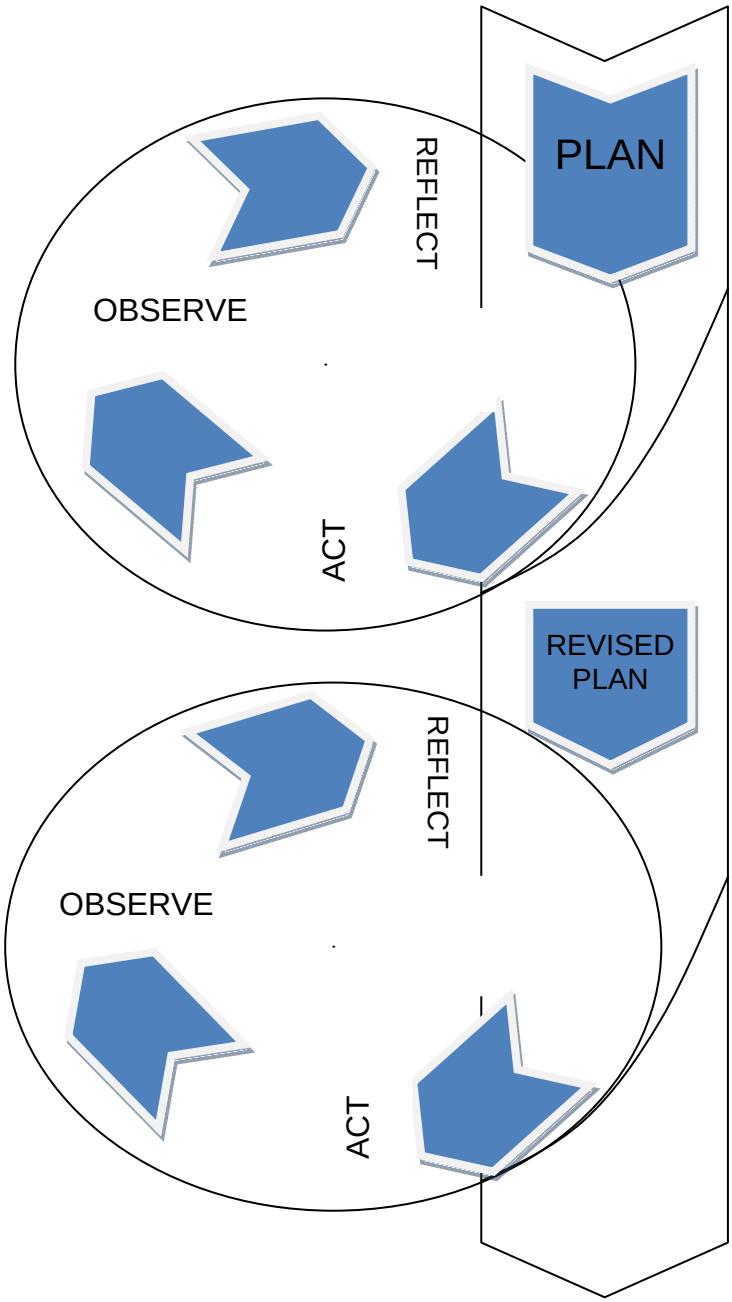
belief that in attempting to understand an organisation the best thing to do is to try and change the way things are done. Through employee participation organisations would improve their processes and learn to do new things. Reason and Bradbury (2001:1) define action research as:

> 'A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally to the flourishing of individual persons and their communities' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001:1).

Action research is usually characterised as having a cyclical process, being participative, being reflective, contributing to the development of the organisation and developing theory that contributes to new knowledge (Dick, 1993:12; Holly, Arhar and Kasten, 2005:5, Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981:8; Reason, 2006:188; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2000:95). It is a research approach that aims to link theory and practice and can be utilised in solving practical problems for educators in their educational institution. This research method uses systematic enquiry 'carried out in order to understand, evaluate and change' the workplace for the better (Bassey, 1999:41). O'Hanlon (2003:23) observes that action research can help educators as individuals or groups, to understand better the nature of their assumptions about their practice. Action research that focuses on pedagogical issues encourages educators to become reflective practitioners (Holly et al., 2005:42). Therefore, through the process of action research, organisations can continuously learn to improve themselves.

Action research is cyclical, rather than linear, alternating between action and reflection, which recognises the need for action plans to be flexible and responsive to the environment in which the research is taking place. Dick (1993:31) asserts that action research provides the flexibility and responsiveness that are necessary for effective change, and at the same time provides a leeway through which adequate and reliable data can be collected and valid and reliable conclusions drawn. Kemmis and McTaggart (1981:8) outline the spiral nature of action research as plan, act and observe, reflect, then in the light of this reflection, plan for the next cycle (Figure 4.1). Action research works through this cyclical four step process of consciously and deliberately planning, taking action, observing the action and evaluating the action, leading to further action.

Figure 4.1:The action research spiral



Source: Kemmis and McTaggart 1981. *The Action Research Planner*. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press p 8.

4.1.3 Self study

A major objective of this enquiry is a self study designed to enhance my mentoring capacity and improve my mentoring practice. The action research design presented

incorporates the principles of self study (McNiff, 2002:20; Northfield, 1996:3; Taylor and Settelmaier, 2003:233; Whitehead, 1988:43). As the researcher I have the aim of improving my mentoring practice, by becoming a learner, and through the newly acquired knowledge, influencing others around me to learn as well, and change their practice (McNiff, 2002:6). My emphasis is professional self improvement by strategically and systematically collaborating with others (Freebody, 2003:87).

Dick (1993:15) observes that increasingly in qualitative research, it is being regarded as appropriate to discuss oneself and one's own learning as part of the study. In support of this view, Patton (1990:25) encourages the contextual engagement of the researcher in the issue being explored by stating that 'To understand fully the complexities of many situations, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method'. Self study is a way to develop practical theories that can be tested in practice (Whitehead, 1988:42). Perry and Zuber-Skerritt (1992:202) suggest that a self study cycle to enhance the reflections and learning of the researcher is critical for collaborative research approaches such as action research. The personal critical reflections inherent in self study result in professional development (Northfield, 1996:4).

The objectives of this enquiry will be met through the exploration of experiences emanating from mentoring practice in real time. Our experiences are anticipated to assist in effective change and realise the outcomes of learning and development. This requires a research approach that will need to be responsive to our experiences. Because of the emphasis on action, change, and critical analysis, the action research approach and self study is congruent with the subject of my enquiry.

4.2 Sampling design

The selection of the sample was based on a purposive sampling strategy. Merriam (1988:47) clarifies that sampling in natural settings involves the selection of research participants, a research site, time and events. These components of the sampling design will be explained below.

Purposive sampling is the selection of a sample based on the researcher's judgment regarding appropriate characteristics required of sample members (Ezzy, 2002:74; Patton, 1990:169). The selection of the research participants was not intended to be representative of the larger population. Rather, they were selected to allow for the generation of information rich data while exploring the principles and practices of mentoring within the context of the research. It was the experiences that the participants would undergo in the mentoring relationship and the themes that would emanate from these experiences which were deemed critical to the research.

Patton (1990:184) contends that the size of the sample depends on the objectives and purpose of the enquiry. Because the study was exploratory, and the outcome of the enquiry depended on the rich experiences the mentees and I would live through, a small sample was desired. This study had a sample size of three, comprising myself and two mentees.

This study was conducted in Gaborone Technical College (GTC) as the study environment. This educational institution was a natural choice due to the fact that both my mentees and I were employed as educators in this institution during the study period. The participants were expected to be an integral part of the action due to their ability to influence the desired change in the institution. It is from this context that the sample was drawn.

4.2.1 Background information on the participants

Providing the reader of a qualitative study a brief descriptive background of participants is important. This allows the reader to become more familiar with the participants in the study thereby helping to establish an identity and content from which to view the participants' comments. Below I present brief background information on the three participants in this study.

4.2.1.1 Information on the mentees

The first mentee is Wakwanza, a 40 year old educator working as a senior educator in the Hospitality and Tourism Department at GTC. Being a senior member of the institution,

Wakwanza has sole responsibility for, and is the programme team leader of, the Tourism programme. At this point in his career Wakwanza balances teaching with a growing load of administrative tasks. Wakwanza has fifteen years experience in teaching.

The second mentee is Mchana, a 29 year old female educator working as a lecturer in the Hairdressing Department at GTC. She has been associated with the mentor as a colleague working in the same educational institution, but in a different vocational area and department. Mchana has worked as an educator at GTC for five years. In comparison to Wakwanza, Mchana is young in industry and has only seven years of experience in her teaching career.

4.2.1.2 My role as mentor and researcher

In this study I am the mentor to Wakwanza and Mchana. During the period of the study, I was an educator administrator in GTC, employed as Head of the Hospitality and Tourism department. I have over twenty years experience in the teaching profession, ten of these years being directly involved in education administration and management.

In this study, I am a participant of the action research project, as well as a researcher. My aim is to learn and develop within the mentoring relationships that we will form, and improve my mentoring practice. As a researcher, my intention is to collect rigorous data by using action research cycles that will enable me address my research questions adequately.

4.3 Designing the action research mentoring project at GTC

This research was designed as an action research study (Dick, 1993:12; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981:8; Reason, 2006:188). The linking of ‘action’ and ‘research’ highlights the essential feature of this approach, which involves the testing out of ideas in practice as a means of bringing about change on the one hand and increasing knowledge and understanding on the other (Dick, 1993:12; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:6). The design of this study was planned to take into account these two dimensions of action research.

I selected Benton's (2005:51) nine-step model to guide me through the 'action' component of the project. Utilising the Benton model ensured that the action research project was approached from a holistic view from the planning stages through to the evaluation and refection of the actual events. I then adapted Kemmis and McTaggart's (1981:8) model of action research cycles (Figure 4.1), comprising of the four elements of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to guide me through the 'research' and data collection processes. The Kemmis and McTaggart model assisted in the articulation of the action research cycles involved in the mentoring process. These two action research dimensions are outlined in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 respectively.

4.3.1 The action research process for the research project

The action research cycle for the research project is adopted from Benton's (2005:51) nine-step model. I used this model to organise the research in a systematic way while still remaining an integral part of the process. Step 1 to 5 of Benton's (2005:51) model concerns the planning stages of the action research project. These stages are therefore explained in this section as part of the planning process. Steps 6 to 9 address the evaluation and reflection on the actual events of the action research. In this section, I explain what these four steps entail. I will however, evaluate and reflect on the actual events in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Step 1: Identify the concern

My research journey began in July 2006 when I identified there was a need in GTC for a formal mentoring programme. This need was apparent to me because of the fundamental changes that were taking place in the institution as outlined in Chapter 1. My thoughts were that while resulting in positive developmental outcomes for educators at GTC, this project would also be an interesting doctoral research project for myself.

In July 2006, I carried out four preliminary interviews with educators from four different departments across the institution with varied years of teaching experience. The aim of the interviews was to identify pertinent issues of concern to the educators at GTC and provide me with baseline information about these concerns. Following these interviews, I

approached the GTC management with a proposal to implement a pilot mentoring programme. In this proposal, I targeted 10 mentoring pairs from different departments across the institution. My proposal however was rejected because GTC management was not ready to sponsor an institution wide formal mentoring programme at that time. The management however was willing to support a smaller scale mentoring project run by myself as a doctoral project.

I gave thought and consideration to the option of a smaller scale intervention. I considered that a smaller scale approach to mentoring at GTC would possibly also result in individual and organisational learning. The alternative plan I came up with involved participation in a mentoring project where I would be a mentor to two colleagues from two different departments in the institution.

I also investigated the stages of the mentoring process and how my design could incorporate these stages into the action research process. The stages of the mentoring process are explored in greater detail in Chapter 2. Basing her model on informal mentoring, Kram (1988:49) refers to these stages of mentoring as initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. Basing their model on formal mentoring Megginson et al. (2006:18) refer to these stages as building rapport, direction setting, progression stage, winding up and moving on. In my design I chose to use Megginson et al.'s (2006) references to the stages of the mentoring process as they fit with the structured nature of the GTC mentoring project.

Step 2: Collect information about the concern

I began to read research papers and textbooks on the subject of mentoring and gathering background information about my concern. I also constructed research questions that would guide me through my research. The research questions were as follows:

1. How can the principles and practices of mentoring be explored to assist in individual learning in a VET educational institution as a 'learning organisation'?
2. How can mentees use their learning and development to contribute to the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution?

3. How can mentors use their learning and development to contribute to the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution?

I gained my understanding of action research by reading the works of Bob Dick (1993), Jack Whitehead (1988), Reason and Bradbury (2001), and Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) among others. In November 2006, I took advantage of an opportunity to attend a workshop at the University of Pretoria, delivered by Ortun Zuber-Skerritt, on her action learning model. This workshop and my readings contributed significantly to my understanding of action research and clarified the activities that I was planning to undertake in my action research project.

Step 3: Design the intervention

Designing the mentoring project involved developing a complete plan of action. For mentoring to be effective, the goals and objectives of mentoring need to be articulated and clarified (Kram, 1988:155; Megginson et al., 2006:25). The awareness and articulation of these guidelines become more critical when the objectives of the mentoring relationship are clearly identified personal and professional goals. The recognition of this aspect of mentoring motivated me to initiate a structured approach to the mentoring project at GTC. The design process is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Duration of the mentoring project intervention

The mentoring project was designed for implementation over a period of six months. I was careful to select the six months to coincide with two complete terms in the academic calendar of GTC, the October-December term and the January-March term. The schedule in Table 4.1 below outlines the activities planned over this six month period, and includes activities that were planned prior to the commencement of the project. The timeline took into consideration the stages of mentoring so as to provide a guide when developmental objectives would be achieved through the mentoring process. It was planned that the stages of building rapport, direction setting, progression stage, winding up and moving on would each present an action research cycle in the mentoring process. These cycles are depicted in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: GTC mentoring project timeline

Stages of the mentoring process	Proposed date	Action
	July 2006	Preliminary interviews
Building rapport	Early September 2006	Selection of participants and signing of consent forms
	Mid September 2006	Training in developmental mentoring, reflective writing and other techniques
Direction setting	Late September 2006	Construction of PDPs; Practice in reflective writing
Progression stage	October 2006 to December 2006	Conduct weekly mentoring conversations with mentees
	October 2006 to December 2006	Collect personal reflective journal entries from mentees at end of every month for three months
	Mid December 2006	Conduct focus group interview
Progression stage	January 2007 to March 2007	Continue to conduct weekly mentoring conversations with mentees for a further three months
	January 2007 to March 2007	Continue to collect personal reflective journal entries from mentees at end of every month for further three months
Winding up and moving on	Late March 2007	Conduct final focus group interview
	Late March 2007	Closure meeting with the mentees

Key: Action research cycles in the GTC mentoring project

First action research cycle - Building rapport and Direction setting

Second action research cycle – Progression stage

Third action research cycle – Progression, Winding up and moving on

Selection of participants

I identified the two colleagues in GTC who would be willing to become participants in the project. In my selection, I chose two colleagues who worked in different departments in GTC. In September 2006 I approached the two colleagues in regard to their participation and outlined the objectives of the research. They both agreed to participate in the project and signed consent forms. This paved the way for the mentoring process to begin.

Training in the concept of developmental mentoring

In September 2006, I organised for my two colleagues and me to attend a workshop conducted by a mentoring specialist in South Africa. The workshop was designed to provide a comprehensive background to the concept of mentoring as a professional developmental intervention. The training included aspects such as definitions of mentoring, roles and functions in the mentoring process, and benefits of mentoring to mentees, mentors and the organisation. This training was instrumental in clarifying the concept of developmental mentoring and achieved the objective of providing us with some of the techniques used in the process. During the workshop participants learned how to construct personal developmental plans (PDPs), and were also taught several techniques in writing reflectively.

Following the workshop I offered the participants support and guidance in developing their PDPs and reflective journals. This support was necessary because reflective practice was an activity not normally engaged in by educators in GTC and was therefore a new practice for them. In addition, maintaining personal reflective journals was considered a significant source of data collection for the study.

Setting up structure

The mentoring project required a structure that would provide support to the achievement of learning and developmental goals. I planned that mentoring conversations, reflective journaling and focus group interviews, as detailed in section 4.5 of this chapter, would be part of the mentoring process.

We held a meeting in September 2006 where we discussed the structure of the project. We agreed to schedule face-to-face meetings between each mentee and the mentor once a week for the six month duration of the project. We also discussed and agreed that the mentees would submit their personal reflective journals, electronically via emails to me at the end of each month. We agreed on two focus group interviews: one at the end of the first three months to track our progress and the second at end of the six month period to conclude the study. The focus group interviews would be conducted by an independent third party in my absence and would be video taped. Information from these interviews would be used as a data collection source for the study.

Equipment and facilities

To complete the project, I required a digital recorder, a video camera and a private room where mentoring conversations could take place. The private room and the video camera would be requisitioned from GTC when necessary. I purchased a digital recorder to record the mentoring sessions for later transcription.

Planning for the action research cycles

I planned that the face-to-face mentoring conversations, notes and observations from the mentoring conversations, personal reflective journals, and the focus group interviews would provide data that would assist me to keep track of the activities during the mentoring process. These activities would provide pertinent information on the learning and development occurring in the mentoring process to feed back into the action research cycles.

Planning the closure of the project

The closing of the project was planned to coincide with the end of the second academic term in March 2007. Planned activities were the final focus group interview, and a final meeting between myself and the participants to wind up the mentoring project.

Step 4: Implement the intervention

The mentoring project as an organisational development intervention was planned to integrate with the flow of the usual duties of the educators such as teaching duties and classroom management activities, so that the mentoring process would be a normal and natural part of the educator's everyday activities. Planning took into account activities that would encourage learning at individual, group and organisational level. We planned lesson observations, and activities to enhance teaching techniques and classroom management. The mentees would get involved in these activities as a result of pursuing their developmental objectives and as outcomes of interactions in the mentoring process. Attempts were made to maintain a clear line between the mentoring process and the research activities. As the researcher, I would be the only one to monitor, evaluate and reflect upon the research component of the action research process. I made this decision in my endeavour to retain the normality of the mentoring relationships so that the research activities would not overly influence the mentoring process.

Step 5: Collect data from the results of the intervention

The main data collection methods planned were the face-to-face mentoring sessions, note taking and observations from the mentoring conversations, personal reflective journals to be maintained by the three participants, and the focus group interviews. As the researcher, I would also maintain a project diary where I would record daily incidences as the project progressed. These data collection strategies are explained in details in section 4.5 of this chapter.

Step 6: Evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the intervention

The periodic and continuous nature of the planned activities would provide opportunity for the beginning of reflection on the intervention and its effect on goal achievement. Comparisons of how the different data collection activities worked would result in the emergence of new issues that would inform more effective ways of gathering data, or different ways of enhancing achievement of developmental goals.

Step 7: Reflect on the implications of the intervention

This phase of the action research process was planned to allow me to focus on how educators are influenced by the intervention. At this point I would reflect critically on whether the intervention has brought about change, and the implications of this change.

Step 8: Reflect on the overall process

This phase of the action research process would allow me to critically reflect on the overall changes the action research project has brought in the educators, in myself and in the institution as a whole.

Step 9: Begin the cycle again by identifying a new or continuing area of concern

Depending on what issues emerge from the critical reflections, I would identify new issues that require feeding back into the study to result in achieving the desired learning and developmental goals.

4.3.2 The action research cycles for the mentoring process

The model I use for the mentees and mentor cycles is adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:11). I selected this model because it clarifies the action research cycle of plan, act, observe and reflect which are important steps for the mentees and mentor to experience to achieve the learning and developmental goals desired in the mentoring process. This model also allows for the mentoring project cycles to be integrated into and run concurrently with the Benton (2005:51) nine-step action research cycle presented in the previous section. In line with Kemmis and McTaggart's (1981:8) four element action research model, the design took into account the aspects of planning, acting, observing and reflecting in each action research cycle. In general, the action research cycles were grouped into three broad categories: The mentees' action research cycle, the mentor's action research cycle and my self study action research cycle.

4.3.2.1 The mentees' action research cycles

The mentees' action research cycle would be one week in duration as presented in Table 4.2. This was the typical cycle planned for the mentees during the six month period of the mentoring process. This cycle would be in line with the mentee driven nature of developmental mentoring, with the cycle beginning with the mentee's identified developmental objective and ending with the mentee's new learning, and what they would like to feed back into the next cycle.

Table 4.2: Mentees' action research cycle

Cycle	Action research step	Activity
1 week cycles over the six month period	Plan	Mentees identify developmental goal for the week
	Act	Mentees participate in the weekly session of mentoring conversation and discussion of the identified developmental goal
	Observe	Mentees take notes on outcomes and thoughts, execute any activities that came from the mentoring conversations such as a new teaching technique
	Reflect	Mentees reflect upon the week's learning in their personal reflective journals and identify issues to discuss with the mentor in the next mentoring session. Mentees use the SAID model (see appendix 2) as an aid to reflective writing.

Planning for the mentees would begin with the construction of PDPs. The initial cycles would involve planning how to achieve their developmental goals. The reviewed planning activities that the mentees would engage in subsequent cycles would emanate from the outcomes of their reflections. Planning would be an important activity for the mentees as

they would be setting the direction of the mentoring process depending on what they wanted to achieve.

Acting would involve participation in the mentoring conversations once a week for the duration of the six month mentoring period. In these face-to-face mentoring sessions the focus would be on the identified mentee developmental goal. During this time, the mentor's role would be to offer direction, provide guidance and support on the activities that would propel the mentees towards their desired goal. Because the action would be taking place in real time this part of the cycle was planned to be flexible and open to any changes in the light of circumstances at any particular time during the project.

Observing would involve the mentees taking into account issues and experiences gained from the action part of the cycle and putting them into a perspective that prepares them for reflection. From the mentoring sessions, activities in line with the mentees' duties as educators would result and form part of observation. For example, as they attempt new teaching techniques the mentees would observe the resulting student behaviour.

Reflecting was also designed to be a significant part of the cycle for the mentees. The mentees would reflect upon their experiences as they went through their weekly mentoring sessions and other activities to enhance their practice. The reflections would also assist the mentees in their learning as they would review their plan before their next action, taking into account new learning. Their reflections would include insight about student behaviour, mentor's feedback, and their own insights of their learning. The SAID model of reflective writing (see appendix 2) would assist the mentees to critically reflect on their progress.

4.3.2.2 The mentor's action research cycles

The design identified that there would be at least three action research cycles in my role as mentor as presented in Table 4.3. First would be one-week cycles to coincide with similar cycles of the mentees as described in the preceding section. Second would be four- week cycles beginning with the review of the mentees' personal reflective journals. Third would be a three-month cycle beginning with the planning for the focus group

interviews. I recognised that these were going to be cycles within cycles occurring at the same time for the six month duration of the mentoring project.

Table 4.3: Mentor's action research cycles

Cycle	Action research step	Activity
I week cycles over the six month period	Plan	Planning to offer direction, guidance and support to the mentees, guided by the GROW model (see appendix 4) Review of my own observations, notes and reflective journals
	Act	Conduct face-to-face mentoring conversations
	Observe	Note taking, observation of mentee behaviour and participation in other activities undertaken by mentees such as lesson observations
	Reflect	Reflections in my personal reflective journal on the progress of the mentees and identification of issues to incorporate in the revised plan.
4 week cycles	Plan	Review of personal reflective journals from the mentees Review of my own observations, notes and reflective journals Detail revised plan of action
	Act	Conduct face-to-face mentoring conversations
	Observe	Note taking, observation of mentee behaviour and participation in other activities undertaken by mentees
	Reflect	Reflections in my personal reflective journal Identification of items to feed back into revised planning
3 month cycles	Plan	Plan to conduct focus group interviews Review of personal reflective journals from the mentees Review of my own observations, notes and reflective journals Detail revised plan of action
	Act	Conduct focus group interviews Conduct face-to-face mentoring conversations
	Observe	Review focus group interviews, note taking, observation of mentee behaviour and participation in other activities undertaken by mentees
	Reflect	Reflections in my personal reflective journals on the outcomes of the focus group interviews Identification of items to feed back into revised planning

My **planning** as a mentor began with my arrangements of how I would conduct the mentoring conversations. This planning took into account the stages in the mentoring relationship (Megginson et al., 2006:18) as outlined in Table 4.1. The interactions with the mentees early in the mentoring project would focus on building rapport. Subsequent mentoring sessions would address the stages of direction setting, progress making stages, and finally the winding up stage. My planning as the mentoring process progressed, would be influenced and informed by the developmental goals identified by the mentees. I also planned to use different data sources to enhance my reviewed planning. This would include outcomes from the face-to-face mentoring conversations, reviewing my notes, my personal reflective journals, the reflective journals of the mentees and the outcomes of the focus group interviews.

Acting was designed to be captured by the scheduled weekly mentoring conversations. These mentoring sessions would be mentee driven, depending on what the mentee wanted to talk about. My role would be in guiding and supporting the process. I would also act out the stages of the mentoring process depending on which stage I observed the relationship to be. As depicted in Table 4.1, the earlier cycles in the mentoring process would concentrate on building rapport, followed by direction setting sessions. Cycles in the centre of the process would emphasise and encourage progress making. Towards the end of the project, the cycles would concentrate on winding up activities.

Observing would involve my taking notes during the mentoring sessions of what is going on and observing the behaviour of the mentees. My observation would concentrate on the learning of the mentees and what support and guidance they require to achieve their set objectives. Observation would also involve my participation in other activities that the mentees undertake as a consequence of our mentoring conversations such as lesson observations and classroom management activities. My observation would be keen so as to later provide constructive feedback to the mentees that would enhance further learning and development.

Reflecting would be a significant part of the action research design for me as a mentor. I planned that each mentoring activity would be followed by critical reflection on the experience. This would be deliberate and conscious reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart,

1988:11) to unravel what learning was taking place. My reflections would critically review the development of the mentees and the changes occurring within the mentoring relationship. Because my reflections would be a culmination of the planning, acting and observation stages of the cycle, this stage would feed back systematically into the next action research cycle with a revised plan.

4.3.2.3 My self study action research cycle

The self study component of the project features the action research cycle designed to increase my mentoring capacity and improve my practice. I had my own PDP detailing the mentoring capacities I desired to improve. These involved improving my listening technique, my questioning technique and my feedback technique. The cycles that I planned to experience took into account how I would improve these capacities in the mentoring process. My self study action research cycles would be shorter, spanning over two to three days. This is because the building of my mentoring abilities would take into account that I had two mentoring sessions per week, one with each mentee where I could put into practice any new learning.

Table 4.4: Self study action research cycle

Cycle	Action Research step	Activity
2-3 day cycles over the six month period	Plan	Identify my personal developmental goal
	Act	Participate in mentoring conversation
	Observe	Take notes, observe real time reactions and behaviour
	Reflect	Reflect in my personal reflective journal on the mentoring session Consider the mentees' journals and reflect on impact of our interactions Identification of new learning and issues to feed back into revised planning

My **planning** would involve identifying a developmental goal and target this goal for better understanding and improvement.

Acting would involve participating in the mentoring conversations with the specific personal developmental goal in mind. While offering guidance and support to the mentee during the mentoring conversation, I would attempt to practice and improve my identified mentoring technique.

Observing would involve my observation of the effect of my mentoring technique on the mentees when I listen to them, ask questions or provide feedback. During this time, I would also observe my own behaviour and gain insight from this observation.

Reflecting would involve critical reflection upon my experience to identify new learning, and new issues that require further planning and action. These identified issues would go into my reviewed panning for the next mentoring session.

In summary, I emphasise in my design the dynamic nature of action research to allow for responsiveness and continuous learning in our practice. The different cycles presented in the mentoring process are designed to fit into the larger nine-step action research project cycle. This approach would assist in bringing about improvements in our practice as educators systematically, responsively and reflectively in terms of improving teaching techniques and classroom management activities. The above design therefore targeted not only change at our individual level, but also at group and organisation level.

4.4 Ethical considerations

This study was designed to meet the ethical standards of the University of Pretoria. A consent form clearly articulated the processes relevant to participating in the study. This consent form was provided to the participants and adequate time was given for them to study the contents. The form served to assure the participants of their anonymity and to reinforce the agreement that any information obtained from the instruments used to gather data during the mentoring relationship would be used solely for the purposes of the research. A sample of the letter of informed consent is presented in Appendix 1.

In the consent form, issues of confidentiality were highlighted. In line with this consideration, pseudonyms have been used in the study to protect the privacy of the participants. The participants were also informed both verbally and in writing that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and signed the required consent forms.

4.5 Data collection

Merriam (1988:67) defines data as 'nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment'. In this study, the three main data collection strategies were face-to-face mentoring conversations, personal reflective journals, and focus group interviews. These multiple sources of information were used to gather a detailed description that enabled a rich understanding of the complexity of the issues involved, and also to enable triangulation of different views that could create a deeper understanding of the mentoring relationship.

4.5.1 Mentoring sessions

Mentoring sessions were one of the main data collection strategies for the study. These were regular face-to-face conversations between myself and each of the mentees. During these sessions we related experiences we were going through, and discussed other issues where the mentees required support and guidance. Schedules of mentoring support and monitoring were drawn between the mentees and myself to reflect the frequency of meetings. Each participant was given a copy of the schedule. Alternative dates were organised wherever a scheduled session did not take place.

An activity we undertook as part of the mentoring project was constructing PDPs that would assist us to focus our developmental efforts in a specific way. Our mentoring conversations and sessions were then organised around these PDPs. Training was carried out on how to construct PDPs. A guide was also provided to the participants to facilitate this activity. A copy of this guide is included in Appendix 3.

To gain the most out of the mentoring sessions, I constructed a framework adapted from the GROW model (Whitmore, 2002:53). I have discussed the GROW model in greater detail in Chapter 3. The GROW model assists in structuring the mentoring session so that it is focused on the specific objectives planned for the particular session. A copy of the framework is included in Appendix 4. After utilising the GROW framework during our mentoring sessions a few times, my critical reflections on the meeting outcomes indicated to me that the framework needed reinforcement for two reasons. Firstly, informed by the cyclical process of action research, I realised that it was important for me to be clear about the learning I was obtaining from each mentoring session and what I was taking with me to the following session. The feeding back into sessions could be enhanced if I had an instrument to assist me in recording this critical information. Secondly, I realised that I needed an instrument that would assist me to reflect critically upon each mentoring session and focus on me as a learner rather than only on the mentee. Out of these reflections I constructed a pre-planning action sheet that followed the action research cycle of Reflect, Plan, Act and Observe, then Reflect again (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981:8). I called this the Action Research mentoring conversation guide. A copy of this guide is included in Appendix 5. Through this form I documented the analytical outcomes of my reflections on the previous mentoring session, and how I would run the next session. This data collection instrument ascertained that whatever was learned in the previous action research cycle was being fed back into the study. The instrument became integral to my synthesis of the mentoring sessions, and also provided a record of our learning. It provided a clear view of each session, and assisted me to critically reflect on our learning and development progress as participants, and articulate the next course of action. This instrument also assisted me to combine the outcomes of different action research cycles that were taking place concurrently into one document, and focus on a major course of action to feed back into the next action research cycle. Because of this action and reflection process, my learning and the learning of the participants in the study became continuous and systematic.

I made brief notes during the mentoring sessions, as I learned that attempts to make more detailed notes distracted both myself and the mentee. Immediately after each session I made detailed notes on the session, and reflected upon it. Where possible the sessions were taped (with the permission of the participants) and later transcribed. This proved to be a tremendous aid because it provided an opportunity to listen keenly to the

conversations and fully appreciate the sharing of experiences, without being distracted by note taking. Note taking was however a good strategy as it facilitated the development of early insights and interpretations, aided in immediate reflections upon the conversations, and captured the immediate essence and feelings of the conversation. Note taking also assisted in highlighting any significant body language that would not have been picked up by audio taping.

The PDPs, GROW frame work and the Action Research mentoring conversation guide assisted in maintaining structure and systematic control over the collection of data and the learning in the mentoring process. We were able to remain focused as well as collect adequate data to achieve the objectives of the research.

4.5.2 Personal reflective journals

Personal reflective journals were the second main data collection method. These journals were intended to provide data specifically focused on our experiences as participants as we went through the mentoring process. Each participant in the study kept a personal reflective journal outlining well remembered events concerning their mentoring experiences. These journals were maintained electronically. On a personal level, I also augmented the electronic journal with many pages of personal hand written notes. The participants were encouraged to do the same. However, neither of the other two participants submitted any reflective notes, other than the electronic versions of their reflective journals.

To make maximum use of journaling to reveal insight, great effort was made to guide the participants on reflection as a learning intervention. Hole and McEntree (1999:34) contend that when a guide or protocol is provided to aid the process of reflection, the reflection becomes more focused and meaning is identified in the experience being reflected upon. Support was provided to the participants in the form of a workshop on how to write reflectively. We then had one week of pre-study reflective writing exercises where we reflected upon everyday incidents and discussed our reflective notes. In addition, I prepared guiding notes detailing a format to aid reflection and gave this to the participants. This guide detailed a brief background on reflective journals, how to encourage reflective

writing and examples of the appropriate questions to ask oneself when reflecting upon an experience. The reflective process was adapted from the SAID model of reflective journaling (Hogan, 1995:7) discussed in Chapter 3. The SAID model of reflective writing has four main stages that guide one to explore experiences critically and turn them into learning episodes. A copy of the reflective journal writing guide is included in Appendix 2.

Holding the dual role of mentor and researcher, reflective journaling was something I systematically engaged in on a daily basis. I also made sure I reflected upon any strategic points throughout the mentoring period. I was particularly careful to be sure to reflect on those moments that I considered critical incidents. My reflections took into account not only the critical event, but also my feelings associated with that event. I did my journaling as soon as possible after the occurrence of the event, before the passage of time changed my perception of the event, to attempt to capture my reflection-in-action. In addition to this immediate reflection, I went back over my notes periodically, and reflected on my mentoring episodes some time after the event. The different perceptions that sometimes became apparent between these two different reflection times added to my learning and to the analysis of the events.

After the guidance and support on reflective writing, the participants were requested to start maintaining a reflective journal as a part of their ongoing development, and to use this to analyse their feelings and record learning points as they experienced the mentoring process. Participants were not required to adhere strictly to the SAID model. They were encouraged to write in ways that most encouraged reflection on an individual basis.

To assist memory retention, participants were requested to maintain diaries, write down their reflections as soon as possible after the event, and to use a model of reflection. These electronic reflective journals were submitted to me via email on a monthly basis for the duration of the study.

At the end of the study, participants were requested to review their reflective journals, and demarcate what would be placed in the public domain, and what would remain confidential. None of the participants identified any data they did not wish to be in the public domain.

4.5.3 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were the third source of data collection. During the course of the study two focus group interviews were carried out. The focus group interviews were scheduled at appropriate times to enable the mentees to recount their experiences during the preceding term. These interviews were carried out by my peers in my absence. The interviewer was provided with both a verbal and written brief of the study. The rationale behind bringing in those outside of the study to conduct these interviews was to provide the mentees with another perspective to their story. I also felt I was too close to the data to perform this task. These focus group interviews, where they would verbalise their experiences to a neutral person, were intended to explore the experiences of the mentees, and to make the experiences of the participants more public and believable.

The questions that were used as a framework for the interviews were open-ended and allowed both the interviewer and the participants to talk openly about what they wanted to say. Prior to its use, the interview instrument was shared with several colleagues in GTC and adjusted as a result of their feedback. A copy of the interview instrument is included in Appendix 6.

The focus group interviews were video-taped. I decided to use video because this method of capturing data conveys to the viewer perceptions beyond simple words. Other than capturing the opinions and reflections of the mentees, I also wanted to gain insight into a session where I was absent. This aspect of capturing data was important to me, both as the mentor and as the researcher. The video captured verbal information as well as nonverbal behaviour and cues. This enabled me to reflect critically upon the learning experiences of the mentees, while not influencing the feedback they provided to the interviewer.

4.5.4 Data arrangement and management

The data from the reflective journals, meeting sessions and focus group interviews served as a descriptive analytical framework. Taped sessions and reviews were transcribed so that each bit of data was analysed and categorised. Managing the data in a systematic

fashion enhanced my ability to base conclusions, interpretations and recommendations on the data obtained from each participant (Miles and Huberman, 1994:74).

Sorting the reflective journals and the transcribed data was the beginning of the interpretive process. The data was read to determine the emerging themes and patterns and then sorted accordingly. It was then coded and analysed with regard to identified themes and patterns. This was done electronically using the Microsoft Office Excel programme. The data was stored in two forms: hard copy and electronically on the computer.

4.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data that has been collected (Merriam, 1988:127). Merriam (1988:123) emphasises the importance of data analysis being undertaken simultaneously with the gathering of data. Miles and Huberman (1994:43) concur with this view, suggesting that qualitative data analysis is a continuous process. The process, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation resulting in the drawing of conclusions, is both interactive and cyclical in nature. This view is in line with the continuous analysis of data in action research (Dick, 1993:12; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981:8). Below I describe the procedures I employed to ensure credibility, transferability and rigour in the data analysis process.

4.6.1 Credibility

Credibility relates to the value of truth. When seeking credibility the researcher endeavours to convince the reader that what is being said is trustworthy. In order to gain credibility in the analysis of the data I employed a comparative method of data analysis.

Through the comparative method, a process of sorting out the descriptive data collected was used in arranging journal entries submitted and transcribed mentoring sessions and focus group interviews. This was broken further into manageable units of data to increase my understanding of the data.

The justification for choosing a comparative method of data analysis is that it provides a set of procedures for coding and analysing data which suits the interpretive approach since it would keep the analysis close to the data and provide for inductive discoveries about the phenomena being studied. The procedures and process of this comparative method introduces rigour and traceability in the theory development component of the action research study. This method provided a systematic and structured basis for developing and verifying the theory in a research process that was subjective in nature.

During my analysis, while comparing two or more sources of data, my attention was drawn to topics that are mentioned more than once. There are several episodes in our reflective journals that describe the same event, each from their own perspective and in their own words. These representations from each person's point of view provided a striking example of the significance and relativity of different modes of representing events.

4.6.2 Transferability

Transferability can be enhanced by presenting the collected data as rich description. The elaborate description of the collected data must contain as much relevant information as is gathered so that others may, given their context and time, make a decision about its usefulness to their purposes. The description in this study includes information relevant to the stated problem. The results of the study yield findings that similar educational institutions might apply to their particular situation.

4.6.3 Rigour

Rigour in the research process was maximised via the data collection and analysis procedures outlined above and adherence to the processes recommended for action research and self study (Dick, 1993:34; Holly et al., 2005:214; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981:8). Multiple sources of data and methods of data collection were utilised to maximise rigour. Data was collected from face-to-face mentoring conversations, personal reflective journals maintained by the participants of the study, and focus group interviews. The focus

group interviews afforded the participants an opportunity to openly reveal their points of view about the mentoring relationships.

A second aspect of rigour in action research came into play with the cyclical or recurring stages of this enquiry. The research rigour is emphasised when there is planning before action followed by reflection, and then planning again emanating from the reflection which leads to action again (Dick, 1993:34). During the planning, the researcher needs to be critical of the actions. This is akin to standing away from the action and observing it from an outsider point of view. The result of the critical reflection informs the next action in the next cycle. In this study, I was careful to instil this kind of rigour in the research process. Each new cycle of research was informed by the one that preceded it. This was greatly enhanced by the Action Research mentoring conversation guide that I constructed to assist in the reflection and analysis of our learning. What was learned was reflected upon critically before the next cycle. This process of critical reflection was an essential part of each cycle.

Rigour in research is also facilitated by the presence of an audit trail. My audit trail primarily consisted of my personal reflective journal and the reflective journals of the mentees. In addition, I also maintained a hand written project diary where I documented the research process, such as the tasks I was undertaking, and the ongoing development of the study. Other documents that provided an audit trial for this research included the personal development plans of the participants, the schedules that were made and used for the mentoring sessions, and the video-recordings of the focus group interviews.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter describes the methodology used to explore the principles and practices of mentoring in one VET educational institution in Botswana, and how these mentoring practices assist in the learning of individual educators. The chapter describes a set of guidelines followed in conducting the study. A qualitative research design chosen for this study, and more specifically action research incorporating a self study approach, is explained. Data was generated using face-to-face mentoring conversations, personal reflective journals, and focus group interviews. The data was analysed qualitatively for

emerging themes. The background of the participants in this study is presented. The chapter concludes by outlining the limitations of the study.

In the next two chapters, I present the findings of this study. Since this is a qualitative study utilising an action research and self study approach, I use the representation of the voices of the participants extensively to elucidate and share our experiences.

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS: THE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF MENTEES

The purpose of the study was to explore and gain an understanding of the mentoring practices within the context of one Vocational Education and Training (VET) educational institution. My study attempts to explore two issues. Firstly, it examines how mentoring practice assisted three educators in their learning and development. Secondly, it explores how the learning and development contributed to the mentoring practice within the context of this VET educational institution.

This study explored the learning and development of educators in the mentoring process from two perspectives: from the perspective of the mentees, and from the perspective of the mentor. This chapter presents the findings from the perspective of the mentees, while the following chapter (Chapter 6) presents the findings from the perspective of the mentor.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section presents the descriptions of mentoring functions and roles that guided the data analysis. The second section connects the exploration of the findings with the action research design described in Chapter 4. The third section explores the learning and development of educators as mentees while undergoing the mentoring process. The fourth section explores how the mentees contributed to the mentoring process from their point of view, utilising their learning and development. The illustrative descriptions included provide significant detail, allowing readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings to their particular context.

5.1 Description of mentoring functions and roles

To explore the mentoring practice and the learning and development of educators, my study leaned towards developmental models of mentoring. In particular, the study drew themes from Geber's (2003a:5) developmental model which was adopted because it presented mentoring roles resonating with the field of Education, while taking into account the significantly important mentoring roles highlighted by Kram (1988). The table below provides a summary of the description of mentoring roles, and acts as a guide to the indications of how mentoring functions presented themselves in the data.

Table 5.1: Descriptions of mentoring functions and roles

Theme	Description
1. Role modelling	The mentor's attitude, values and behaviour provide a model for the mentee to learn from and emulate (Kram, 1988:33) Mentees learning through observation (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:459) Providing good examples to follow (Daloz, 1999:213)
2. Career development functions	
Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension	Exploring teaching Discussing own decisions about teaching (Cohen, 1995:74)
Exposure to opportunities	Providing the mentees with opportunities that prepare them for greater responsibility and authority (Kram, 1988:27)
Giving information	Providing tailored knowledge Learning facts about plans and progress (Cohen, 1995:75) Commenting on use of information (Cohen, 1995:75)
Coaching	Demonstrating difficult tasks (Clutterbuck, 2004:17)
Providing challenging work assignments	Providing mentees assignments Providing opportunities to work on activities that promote learning (Kram, 1988:31)
Advocacy	Nominating mentees for activities (Kram , 1988:25) Communicating to others the mentee's positive attributes (Kram, 1988:25)
Protection	Shielding the mentee from potentially damaging contact with others (Kram, 1988:29)
Giving political information	Providing information emanating from unwritten rules (Geber, 2003a:6)
3. Psychosocial functions	

Developing trust	Listening empathetically (Clutterbuck, 2004:41) Showing understanding and acceptance (Daloz, 1999:209)
Providing encouragement	Building confidence and hope (Clutterbuck, 2004:38)
Providing guidance	Offering advice Offering direction Sharing real life experiences (Daloz, 1999:213)
Showing acceptance and confirmation	Providing support (Kram, 1988:35) Instilling self confidence
Counselling	Discussing the mentee's internal conflicts (anxieties and fears) (Kram, 1988:36) Being a sounding board (Kram, 1988:36)
Providing friendship	Social interaction with mentee Discussion of issues that are not work related (Kram, 1988:38)
Engaging in constructive confrontation	Providing insight into unproductive strategies and behaviours (Cohen, 1995:75) Evaluating need and the capacity to change (Cohen, 1995:75)

The clarification of how the mentoring roles and functions could present themselves in the data provided the required guidance for proceeding with the exploration of the findings. The section below explores the roles and functions in the mentoring process as they occurred in the action research cycles.

5.2 The mentoring process and action research cycles

To create a platform for the exploration of my findings I first obtained a view of the mentoring process guided by my action research design. In Chapter 4 (Table 4.1) the action research cycles inherent in the GTC mentoring project were presented. There were three cycles. The first cycle included the building rapport and direction setting stage, the second cycle included the progression stage and the third cycle included the progression, winding up and moving on stages. These three cycles encompass Megginson et al.'s (2006:19) five-stage model of the stages in the mentoring process, which were discussed in Chapter 2.

The three cycles which form part of the action research process contains the entire mentoring process. As the mentoring process occurs, there are progressive and continuous feed back into the action research process. This concurs with Megginson et al.'s (2006:21) assertion that the stages of the mentoring process often do not have clearly defined phases, but rather has grey areas between them and tend to overlap. This tendency blends well with the cyclical nature of action research where it is apparent that the early cycles during the mentoring process feed progressively into the later ones.

Table 5.2 below provides a presentation of the roles and functions that emerged as the participants progressed through the mentoring process. The information in this table provides a distinct link between the action research cycles and the mentoring roles and functions which emerged during the mentoring process.

Table 5.2 Findings of the mentoring roles/functions in the GTC mentoring project

Stages of the mentoring process	Duration	Mentoring roles/functions that emerged at each stage
Building rapport Direction setting	September 2006	**Career development** Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension Coaching **Psychosocial functions** Develop trust Provide encouragement Provide guidance Counselling
Progression stage	October 2006 to December 2006	**Role modelling** **Career development** Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension Exposure to opportunities Give information Give political information Coaching Provide challenging work assignment **Psychosocial functions** Develop trust Provide encouragement Provide guidance Acceptance and confirmation Counselling Engage in constructive confrontation Provide friendship
Progression stage Winding up and moving on	January 2007 to March 2007	**Role modelling** **Career development** Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension Coaching Advocacy **Psychosocial functions** Develop trust Provide encouragement Provide guidance Counselling Provide friendship

Key
First action research cycle - Building rapport and Direction setting

Second action research cycle – Progression stage
Third action research cycle - Progression, Winding up and moving on

The clarity provided by the presentation in Table 5.2 of the mentoring roles and functions in the action research cycles provides a view of our progress on the mentoring journey. The stages of mentoring integrate well with the learning and development that the mentees experienced during the mentoring process. In the section below, I have used the themes and corresponding descriptions highlighted in Table 5.1 to explore how the mentoring functions and roles presented themselves as the mentees and I journeyed through the mentoring process.

5.3 Learning and development through the mentoring process

In this section, I chose to explore the principles and practices of mentoring through the guidance of established mentoring functions and roles highlighted in mentoring literature (Clutterbuck, 2004; Cohen, 1995; Geber, 2003a; Kram, 1988). Basing my themes on established mentoring functions and roles assisted my understanding of how mentoring practices presented themselves in the context of one VET educational institution. How the educators employed the mentoring process for their learning and development was therefore explored through the role modelling, career and psychosocial functions.

5.3.1 Role modelling function

Role modelling occurs when a mentor's attitudes, values and behaviour provide a model for the mentee to learn from and emulate (Kram, 1988:33). Many researchers contend that role modelling is one of the main mentoring functions through which individual learning takes place in a mentoring relationship (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005:459; Kram, 1988:34; Lankau and Scandura, 2002:787). These researchers suggest that learning through observation may be a key part of mentoring relationships. My findings supported this view by suggesting that role modelling was important in the learning and development of educators at Gaborone Technical College (GTC).

The role modelling function was evidenced in the mentoring relationship from the mentees' point of view. The data from the mentees' reflective journals indicated that there were a

number of occasions where the mentees learned and achieved their desired developmental goals through the role modelling function. They learned through observation and through emulating me. The mentees often pondered how I could have acted or reacted in certain situations.

Observation of my actions took place at anytime while I carried out my daily tasks. As the mentor, I was not aware of many instances that the mentees highlight in their reflective journals. It is apparent that the mentees took any opportunity they could to observe my actions and use them for their individual learning. There were clearly situations where role modelling on my part as the mentor was unconsciously portrayed. Wakwanza illustrated the role modelling function by reflecting on his observation of me carrying out my daily duties. He commented on a situation where he observed me handling a dispute between colleagues in my department. Wakwanza writes:

> *I was impressed with the way in which my mentor handled the situation. She was calm and worked to isolate the facts from all parties of the matter before making any decision…*

Wakwanza confirmed his learning through the role modelling function, by indicating that he had improved professionally by observing how his mentor did things. He writes this in his reflective journal:

> *I have picked this up from my mentor through observation and my personal dealing with her…I am able to deal with people more effectively and I am also seeing that I can also be a leader, from what I am learning and through the experiences and watching…*

There are occasions where as a mentor I was not conscious of the mentee's observation and learning. This finding suggests that in the workplace mentees took any opportunity to observe me in action. The mentees used these observations to benefit their individual learning.

Emulating the mentor was another route through which the mentees used role modelling to learn. Through interaction with me, the mentees observed values and behaviour they deemed desirable, and attempted to imitate this behaviour. As they practiced this behaviour, learning and development took place. This was one indication that what was

perceived as good practice in me passed on to the mentees, and influenced the mentees' performance in their practice. The influence of the role modelling function featured in Wakwanza's actions when he carried out his daily tasks. He recounted how he carried out a performance appraisal of one of his subordinates. While performing the task he attempted to emulate his mentor. Wakwanza states:

> *I start the appraisal by putting him at ease, talking of general things before we start on what he has written in the documents earlier forwarded to me. This is a technique I have seen my mentor use...*

The role modelling function significantly assisted Mchana to achieve her desired goals. In Mchana's opinion, I set a positive example. Mchana admired, respected and looked up to me for positive values. Learning took place through observing my actions and reflection on how I would act in specific situations. Mchana was also influenced by the same gender relationship she had with me. Her learning was enhanced by the fact that she could relate to the roles she perceived me holding. Mchana expresses it like this in the following statement:

> *Apart from her being my mentor she's my role model because I look at her from my gender side and say, "This is a woman, she's a mother, a wife and a leader" and looking at her responsibility at work, she has so much to handle, yet outside here she still has to be able to handle what the family needs…*

The role modelling function worked to encourage the mentees in a way that they could aspire to achieve their own set goals. This highlights the benefit of having role models in the educational institution, who can pass on to other educators that essential feeling that one can achieve desired goals. Educators who strive to achieve something new in their practice will have the added benefit of continuous growth. At the winding up stage of the mentoring project, Mchana illustrated this point by articulating that she was aiming to equal her mentor's achievements. The role modelling influenced Mchana to strive to be better personally and professionally. Mchana explains it like this:

> *She's my role model, I'm learning from her and that's what encourages me and I keep on saying, "OK if she can do it I can also do it".*

The role modelling function appeared to contribute to the mentees' individual learning and development. The fact that the mentees could observe their mentor both at a professional

and personal level enabled them to learn by observation and more easily emulate her values and behaviour.

Role modelling proved to be a function that assisted the educators in their learning, by giving them the drive to reach professional levels they would not strive for without the aid of a mentoring process. The presence of somebody to look up to who was accessible for guidance and support in the work environment assisted in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for the educators.

5.3.2 Career development functions

Career development functions are those aspects of a relationship that enhance professional development (Kram, 1988:24). They are usually possible to execute due to the mentor's 'position, experience and organisational influence' (Kram, 1988:25). These functions include teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension, exposure to opportunities, giving information, coaching, and advocacy.

Career development functions are significantly important in a VET educational institution and more specifically in the context of GTC where educators need to acquire additional professional knowledge to support the changes taking place in the institution. Career development functions were instrumental in instilling the desired professional development that assisted the educators to improve their teaching, classroom management, and administrative skills. In the section below I explore how the career development functions emerged in the process of exploring the mentoring practice.

5.3.2.1 Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension

The function of teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension emerged from the findings of the data from the mentees. It presented itself in basically three dimensions, exploration of the mentees teaching style, the action of teaching in the classroom and support with classroom management activities.

The support that the mentees required to change their perspective of teaching styles was critical in the relationship. In GTC, the need for change in teaching style was fuelled by the move towards outcomes based approaches. Changes in the curriculum dictated that the teaching styles changed, without the requisite developmental support from the institution as a whole. This lack of support had made educators in the institution resentful and unwilling to modify their teaching styles. With this background, the behavioural change that I was requesting of the mentees did not come easily, since the mentees were used to a certain way of teaching. The change required effort and enthusiasm for learning to take place. This is a function that we emphasised from the direction setting stage through the progression stage of the mentoring process.

At the direction setting stage of the mentoring process, the mentees struggled to find the will to consider a different teaching style from the one they were used to. Mchana's insertion in her journal reflected the lack of enthusiasm that was apparent at the beginning of the mentoring relationship with regard to exploring her facilitative dimension. She states:

> *Worked on my next term units…thought that I should try and make the class different from my usual after I discussed with my mentor who advised that I should consider looking for different approaches to teaching…*

Mentoring conversations revealed that the mentees were interested in learning more about student centred approaches to teaching. Student centred learning had become a mantra that was used loosely around the institution, without the educators being clear about what it meant. Believing that the knowledge of student centred learning was vital to embracing new teaching methodologies, I decided to strengthen this area with the mentees. During our mentoring conversations we discussed various delivery approaches that supported student centred learning and how they could be deployed in the classroom. Gradually, as we went through the progressions stage of the mentoring process, the mentees began to see the difference between how they were currently teaching and how they could change their approach to styles that focused more on the student.

Through mentoring conversations and activities, I assigned Mchana tasks that started her thinking about different teaching approaches. During these discussions and activities, with encouragement, Mchana became more interested in changing her teaching approach and started to show improvement in her attitude towards her teaching strategies. She became

willing to attempt teaching techniques she had not tried before. Mchana identified alternative strategies that she could apply in her teaching to achieve her developmental goals. Progressively through the mentoring relationship, the mentees' teaching dimension was strengthened. The relationship created an enabling environment for the mentees to focus on achieving the teaching goals they had set for themselves.

The gradual change in thinking brought in another dimension to teaching. The mentees started to strengthen their classroom management skills to be more in line with the teaching styles. As Mchana became more enthusiastic, she showed improvement in classroom management activities such as lesson planning. As we continued to plan the initial lessons together, she improved her skills in organising her expectations of her classroom delivery. She illustrates this through the following statement:

> *I see that I have learned a lot and I've been able to achieve much in my teaching area… There has been some improvement, not only with class [room] management but also with the type of activities I am taking with my students…*

The mentees began to show a change in their way of thinking pertaining to teaching. Their teaching became more student centred, moving away from the 'talk and chalk' approach they were used to and going towards interactive and participative teaching. Wakwanza articulated these thoughts during the first focus group interview by recognising that the mentoring experience had contributed to his having a positive, holistic view of his teaching profession and feeling good about being an educator.

> *I think my most rewarding experience has been the fact that I'm able to look upon my working situation… I have been able to look at my experiences as a teacher more positively and therefore this has helped me to make adjustments in the way I approach my teaching.*

The mentees' learning is evidenced by the change in the way they used to do things before the mentoring relationship. This aspect of change influenced their learning, and made the achievement of their developmental goals much easier. Wakwanza highlighted this in his feedback, when he talked about the outcome of the changes he made his teaching. He states:

> *I have seen quite a number of changes, for example, the way I teach. I have been able to change it as a result of my relationship with my mentor… I was impressed to see the students working with confidence so well with minimal supervision as confirmation that learning had taken place.*

The learning and development went beyond the classroom, and into the staff room. The administrative requirements by the Botswana Technical Educational Programme (BTEP) such as the quality assurance system of internal validation became more efficient. Evidence from the mentees' journals suggests that what they were learning was also rubbing off on their colleagues who were not directly involved in the mentoring process. Wakwanza reflects on these changes in his reflective journal:

> *I complete the file and I feel quite good as I present it to my assessor who is visibly quite impressed with the speed with which I have carried out the task. This event helps that particular assessor to beat her own previous speed of carrying out the same exercise that I was doing. It's also a turning point for me in the sense that I realise I can accomplish quite a lot once I put my mind to it.*

As the mentor, seeing the change in behaviour and attitude that was coming through was gratifying and exciting. My enthusiasm became heightened and this naturally passed on to the mentees. I carried out direct observation of the mentees delivering their classes, and provided appropriate feedback of these lessons. The feedback provided the support and guidance needed by the mentees to continue to improve in their teaching. The activities we undertook such as discussions on lesson planning, classroom observation and constructive feedback on these activities was well received by the mentees and kept the enthusiastic momentum going.

5.3.2.2 Exposure to opportunities

Exposure to opportunity involves me assigning responsibilities that allow the mentee to develop relationships with other key figures in the organisation who may judge his or her potential for future advancement (Kram, 1988:27). The effect of exposure to opportunities was visible in the findings. There were occasions where the mentees were exposed to situations where they could display their skills and attributes to others. Taking advantage of opportunities to show the positive attributes of the mentee was easier in my relationship with Wakwanza. The indirect reporting lines that existed between us made it possible for him to represent me in certain activities in the department and the institution as a whole.

For example, I requested Wakwanza to attend a management meeting that he normally would not attend. Wakwanza reflects on the experience in his journal thus:

> *Feeling a little out of place but got used to it when the meeting got going. I am afraid that some may wonder why I am there but I realise that there are others like me also and that sort of makes me feel better…*

Although such exposure evoked feelings of unease and uncertainty in the mentees, the learning that such opportunities presented was significant to the mentees' professional development. In the department, I had occasion to expose Wakwanza to others, by delegating to him roles that gave him opportunities to practice what he was learning. One such activity was the handling of meetings. Wakwanza was deliberate in his endeavour to learn and observed how I conducted meetings. He reflects on this experience like this:

> *My observation today is more purposeful and has a hidden agenda in that I need to learn as much as I can seeing that in the next meeting I would be the one chairing the departmental meeting.*

Wakwanza's reflections on the experience of chairing a meeting indicated that exposure to such learning opportunities, while challenging, was effective for professional development. He recounts that experience in his journal:

> *I directed the meeting quite efficiently and effectively…From this meeting I see that it is important to be prepared for a meeting…In future meetings I resolve once prepared, to be more relaxed because in this particular meeting I tended to be somewhat uneasy…*

My role as a mentor became significant in the occasions where I could observe how the mentees were taking up the challenges that the mentoring relationship was bringing to fore. Such direct observation made it possible for me to provide constructive feedback to the mentees on their performance.

5.3.2.3 Giving information

The findings indicate that as the mentor I had occasion to give the mentees information that assisted them synthesise their thoughts about specific tasks. The various pieces of information also gave the mentees leads to follow in their own research that assisted in

their daily planning or execution of activities. The information provided facilitated thoughts and reflections that were positive in developing deeper analysis of how tasks could have been carried out in a more efficient way.

Wakwanza reflected on information that he obtained from me on who would best be contacted to contribute to the development and conclusion of a certain task. He confirmed that information obtained from me assisted him think about better ways of doing things. Wakwanza states:

> *I got very valuable information that assisted me to review the way I should have handled [the task] and I discovered I could have done it in a more professional manner.*

During discussions with Mchana about future career options, I provided links to websites for her to search for course information about professional development. Mchana states the following:

> *I got a lot of advice from my mentor [that] helped me sort out a few questions I had about my plans for going back to school…I searched more about the qualifications…it was a very exciting moment to find that I can actually continue teaching here and still do a course…*

Often this giving of information was as a follow up on a task that had been assigned to the mentee. The role of giving information became a supportive role to other functions in the mentoring process such as in the execution of challenging assignments.

I found that giving information to the mentees was more spontaneous than planned. The occurrences emerged from the mentoring conversations that we held. I found that while we were having our mentoring meetings, occasions arose where I could provide information to assist in the positive progress of an activity. I was glad to provide information that could help the mentees in different ways.

5.3.2.4 Coaching

Coaching enhances the mentee's knowledge and understanding. The mentor can enhance the coaching process by challenging the mentee's assumptions, being a critical friend, and

demonstrating difficult or complicated tasks (Clutterbuck, 2004:17). Coaching was a visible function for the mentees. The coaching role was made more focused by the fact that each mentee had a PDP which we used as a guide. It proved helpful for the direction setting part of the mentoring process that the mentees had already identified their areas of weakness. My role as the mentor was to work with the mentees on strengthening areas they identified as requiring further personal and professional development. It is apparent from the findings that the mentees were quite deliberate in their quest to take advantage of the developmental mentoring relationship and quickly improve on the developmental areas they had identified in their PDPs.

One coaching activity involved the preparation of effective lesson plans. This was an activity undertaken with Mchana, who was an educator with less teaching experience than Wakwanza. It is worth noting that coaching activities depend on the level of experience each educator has in the profession. Mchana seemed to appreciate this activity, and it helped her to become more enthusiastic and confident in attempting new teaching approaches. In her reflective journal, Mchana reflects on this task achievement:

> *I took with me the drafts of the lesson plan I had done for my hair relaxing class. I was going to try out a new teaching approach, where I will involve more students to do more activities in class, and give them the opportunity to research on different topics before I discuss them…if I get my lesson plan right, I know the class will go according to plan…*

We discussed the lesson plan, and visualised how the lesson would be delivered. After these discussions, Mchana felt confident that she would deliver the lesson successfully.

An activity that we undertook with Wakwanza was the organisation of tasks with the aid of the computer software Microsoft Outlook. In his journal, Wakwanza highlights how the learning process took place in this particular activity:

> *I have learned from my mentor to keep an up to date appointment schedule and a to-do list that I follow throughout the day. I keep on crossing out my accomplished tasks as well as appointments that I have kept and those that need to be done again. Another useful technique learned from my mentor is to consolidate my tasks list at the end of the day and prepare tasks for the following day.*

The mastering of the task list appeared to enhance Wakwanza's organisational abilities in his practice. As we progressed in the relationship, Wakwanza continued to provide evidence in his reflective journal that he was benefiting from the coaching function. His reflections emphasised the strength he attributed to the coaching function in terms of professional growth. Wakwanza reflected on how he improved in managing his time through the application of the task organisation he learned. He writes:

> *My key insight here is that with direction, one can be able to achieve a lot. I certainly believe my discussions with my mentor have assisted me with structure which will be quite useful in helping me attain my departmental planning as well as long term time management.*

An interesting emergence is the manner in which the mentees consolidated role modelling and coaching to their learning benefit. Wakwanza referred to the coaching exercise we undertook of handling the processes and procedures of selecting candidates for a programme in the institution. He states the following in his reflective journal:

> *I have an admiration for the way my mentor handles the whole process [of candidate selection] and specifically how she ensures that each member is performing their allocated tasks to ensure smooth flow of the procedure. I am now confident that if I am to carry out this process in future I will be able to do it effectively. I also feel that because of the way my mentor was involving me in every step of the procedure, I will be able to coach someone. … some processes which seem daunting at first just are easily understood if one is instructed by those who have carried them out before.*

The coaching aspect of mentoring gave the required mechanism to the mentees to perform tasks more effectively. As a mentor, I felt that having opportunity to become one-on-one involved with the mentees created the required momentum to move to higher levels in the mentoring relationship. I was also grateful for the opportunity to share my knowledge with the mentees to a level where I could see results, where the knowledge the mentees acquired was being put into practice.

5.3.2.5 Providing challenging work assignments

The role of providing challenging work assignments allows the mentor to provide learning opportunities that direct the mentee towards achieving their desired developmental goals. Giving the mentees assignments that lead them to practice what has been discussed in mentoring conversations enhances the learning of the mentees.

The findings indicate that I assigned tasks to the mentees that led to growth and development. I directed the mentees to undertake assignments that encouraged their learning and propelled them towards their desired developmental goals. These assignments provided important learning opportunities for the mentees to accentuate the knowledge and skills they were acquiring through the mentoring relationship.

Some of the tasks Wakwanza undertook were challenging, exposing him to working with other people in the institution to get the job done. Through his reflections, Wakwanza displayed evidence of how he went through milestones of learning, and improvement on his previous performance, but at the same time, grappling with obstacles that came his way in attempting to achieve his tasks. He reflected on a task of compiling departmental timetables, which required him to learn how to use timetabling software, and collaborate with other departments to finalise the task. This was a task that had challenged Wakwanza before in the past and he felt he needed support. Wakwanza was able to handle the use of the software quite well, but became frustrated with his inability to depend on others to finalise the task of concluding and distributing the final timetable. He writes:

> *I feel frustrated in the sense that I have no control of the completion of this task even though I did my planning quite early as compared to previous terms. There are no good feelings here at all and my dilemma is that I am not even sure what to do if it happens in future.*

Depending on others to complete a task was unsettling for Wakwanza. He became frustrated and experienced feelings of helplessness and lack of control. We worked on these feelings, and the approaches he could take to ensure that he rolled out his timetables despite these obstacles. This was an assignment that resulted in his learning to deal with others when he completed it successfully.

Wakwanza's reflections provided evidence that he desired to change and grow to be a better professional. He reflected on a task where he was required to facilitate and direct the activities surrounding a student project for students in his section. As the programme team leader for Tourism, one of his responsibilities was to ensure the execution of projects carried out by students. The task required him to delegate this activity and work with the colleagues that come under his direct supervision. The challenges came about when his

colleagues did not perform the tasks to Wakwanza's standards. This challenge brought to the fore the need to strengthen the skill of working through others to fulfil obligations at work. It also brought in the component of conflicts that arise with delegation. I had occasion to work with the mentee on conflict resolution strategies, and how these conflicts could be diminished in the workplace to achieve set objectives. In executing the task successfully, Wakwanza reflected upon the challenges that he experienced and how the mentoring relationship contributed to his learning through this experience. His reflections highlight the link between learning through challenging work assignments and role modelling. He writes:

> *I realise that perhaps I could have coached the person who took the pictures in a better manner. This experience helps me conclude that even though people may not ask questions about the allocated tasks, it is always better to find out from them if they understand what is to be done. I have picked this from my mentor through observation and my personal dealings with her.*

The assignments arose from challenges that the mentees were facing in their departments and how they could handle them. For example, Mchana was experiencing challenges from the restructuring of her colleagues' positions. During mentoring conversations suggested ways were discussed to help Mchana overcome these challenges. The outcome of these discussions was that Mchana would analyse her job tasks and present her analysis to her line supervisor for discussion. Mchana found this task challenging and required help finalising it. Her journal entry reflected how she grappled with the issue, wondering how to execute it. Mchana writes in her journal:

> *So how do I go about it…I have to come up with an internal or departmental list…to make it clear to everyone of what other tasks they can do apart from the norm…*

During mentoring conversations, I often probed deeper to find out why the mentee was taking certain options and not others. I attempted to evaluate the thought process that went into finalising the task. An example of this is a task that Mchana carried out. Invariably, she had allocated lower level tasks to her colleagues and kept the higher level supervisory tasks for herself. Yet it was highly possible that her colleagues would be promoted to higher positions than the one Mchana was currently holding. This meant that these colleagues would soon be in a position to delegate to Mchana. In my journal entry, I recorded how I persuaded her to revise the task list in a more balanced way.

> *I commended her for a good job. I probed for the reasons why she distributed the tasks the way she did. She said, she would not mind doing any of the tasks, but she had selected for herself those she liked doing best…As we talked, I could see her thoughts drifting to what I was talking about, and her eyes opening up to new possibilities of the way she does things. I thought it was great. She decided that she would think about [the issue] more deeply.*

The final task list that Mchana came up with was more impartial. After discussing the issue with her supervisor, she resolved to coach her colleagues on how to perform some of the tasks. This indicated that the benefits of the mentoring relationship were going beyond the two of us, and into the department. I was encouraged by this observation that indicated the power of mentoring in the workplace.

5.3.2.6 Advocacy

Advocacy is a role where the mentor can recommend the mentee wherever possible for opportunities that will assist the mentee achieve their desired developmental goals. The advocacy function was presented to the mentees when one of them requested support in applying for a professional development course. Mchana requested me to support her application for further professional development, by submission of a blind reference. It is apparent that the action of communicating positive attributes of the mentee to a third party made an impact on the mentee and was appreciated. Such an action contributed to the strengthening and positive development of the mentoring relationship. Mchana illustrates understanding of this function when she says:

> *I was confident to apply for the Post graduate course in Advanced Professional Studies because I knew my mentor would support me … I requested her to be my referee and she submitted the letter to the college…*

Mchana was successful in getting into the desired programme and started in 2007. The positive outcome of achieving one of her professional development goals contributed significantly to the strengthening of the mentoring relationship. In contrast to Kram's (1988:25) assertion that advocacy is the most frequently observed career development function, it was not highly visible in our mentoring relationships at GTC.

5.3.3 Psychosocial functions

Psychosocial functions enhance the sense of competence, identity, and self worth for both the mentor and the mentee (Kram, 1988:32). The intensity of the functions depends on the quality of the interpersonal relationship. The benefits that accrue through psychosocial functions go beyond the professional life and influence the personal life as well. Psychosocial functions play an important role in the achievement of personal development objectives in the mentoring relationship.

The data from the mentees also evidenced psychosocial functions. These included developing trust, providing encouragement and guidance, acceptance and confirmation, counselling, and friendship. The way these functions presented themselves in the data is described below.

5.3.3.1 Developing trust

Developing trust was apparent in the mentoring relationships with the mentees. As the relationships progressed, it became clearer that trust was developing. It became easier to talk and exchange ideas with the mentees. In the case of Wakwanza, his reflections about the relationship, and contributions to the mentoring conversations became deeper and more meaningful. Wakwanza illustrated this function by exploring in his reflective journal his perception of mentoring:

> *To me, for one to become an effective educator they must have a mentor who should take them through the important aspects of the profession. I believe that mentoring helps in ensuring that the mentee is given the realistic perspective of the field that they are venturing into. It provides the opportunity for them to 'test-drive' what will become their future vehicle without risk to penalties…*

In the above description, Wakwanza found comfort and confidence in the ability of mentoring to provide a safe environment for the mentee to attempt new things without the fear of penalty. This was an important factor that contributed significantly to the building of trust in the mentoring relationship, which was also displayed by the deliberate way that Wakwanza set off to use the relationship to seek guidance and advice. He planned issues that affected his practice for discussion with me. Wakwanza states:

> *I also plan to ask my mentor how she handles such tasks, which she has not planned for but does have to be done…*

Wakwanza also displayed evidence that he had trust in the mentoring relationship and used his mentor as a benchmark of what he wanted to achieve. The role modelling function was displayed within this psychosocial function as Wakwanza attempts to emulate his mentor. He states:

> *To ensure success I am trying to put myself in the shoes of my mentor…*

The mentees gained sufficient confidence and trust in the mentoring process to confide in me about different issues affecting their personal and professional lives. It was apparent that I became the first person in their minds when they needed to consult about issues at both personal and professional levels.

5.3.3.2 Providing encouragement

The function of providing encouragement to the mentees was visible in the findings. The encouragement and support gave the mentees the self confidence and drive to push towards achieving their developmental goals. Mchana demonstrated how encouragement influenced her in her pursuit to gain entry into a professional development programme she wanted and how the mentoring relationship played a part in this. She writes:

> *My number one priority for this year is to get myself into school and get a qualification that can boost me further in my career. I talked to my mentor about it and she encouraged me…I got a lot of advice from her and it really helped me sort out a few questions that I had…*

The mentees also required encouragement to gain the confidence to perform tasks in their practice. One incident that illustrated this function was where Wakwanza was apprehensive about conducting appraisals in his section and required encouragement. Wakwanza confirmed the he obtained encouragement from his mentor to perform this exercise. He writes:

> *I recall discussing [the task] with [my mentor] and her advice that once I get started I may find it easier than it looks so far.*

After carrying out the task successfully, Wakwanza reflected thus:

> *My mentor was certainly right. The appraisals went well… My learning is that I should always prepare for these appraisals and carry them out without thinking too much about the encounter…*

I found that with encouragement from me as the mentor, the mentees grew more confident of the positive outcome of the achievement of their goals. This encouragement also became a way of drawing the mentee out and ascertaining that they owned the task which they were pursuing.

5.3.3.3 Providing guidance

The findings indicate that the guidance function emerged in the mentoring relationship. The mentees gained confidence in my ability to provide direction, support and advice on issues affecting them both personally and professionally. I became available to them as and when they needed my assistance, even outside of the scheduled mentoring meetings. Mchana often took advantage of these circumstances to seek me out for this guidance. She states:

> *Every time I needed to I went to the mentor for advice, support and encouragement…*

During the mentoring conversations, I had an opportunity to share true life scenarios that the mentees could relate to in the process of carrying out their daily duties with the hope of giving the mentees direction. Wakwanza took this function further by displaying that he was using this guidance to achieve set tasks. He says:

> *We have been exchanging in a very positive manner and the suggestions [my mentor] has given me, when I implement them, I see them working …*

As the mentor, I was encouraged with the feedback from the mentees that the guidance I was giving them was effective. I enjoyed sharing my stories of both successful and unsuccessful experiences with them, and was gratified that they found these guidance sessions useful in the fulfilment of their goals. The mentees' most important and rewarding impact from the mentoring relationship was the fact that I was available to encourage and

support them in their endeavours. They felt that they could depend on me for assistance or direction whenever the need arose.

5.3.3.4 Acceptance and confirmation

Acceptance and confirmation provides support and encouragement to mentees as they develop competence in the world of work (Kram, 1988:35). Through this function the mentor conveys to the mentee positive regard that gives the mentee the confidence to forge ahead with their developmental objectives. It enables the mentee to experiment with new behaviour by taking risks in the knowledge that mistakes while learning will not result in rejection.

Acceptance and confirmation was quite prevalent in the relationship with the mentees. At the beginning of the relationship, the mentees needed more support and encouragement to build their confidence. They were eager to confirm that their actions had my support. They seemed uncertain of the gains that could result from a mentoring relationship, assessing what benefits could accrue from their roles as mentees. Early in the relationship Wakwanza reflects in his journal:

> *I am beginning to realise that every meeting I have with my mentor is an opportunity for me to learn something that is beneficial to my PDPs.*

As the relationship progressed, the mentees began to display greater confidence in their own abilities, and the ability of the mentoring relationship to result in positive outcomes. Wakwanza started to display confirmation that he was attaining his projected goals. He began displaying feelings of self confidence which he attributed to the mentoring relationship. He provides the following feedback in the first focus group interview about his mentoring experiences:

> *I am seeing that I have the ability to do the job, so this has been something that has been coming out and I realise that I am capable of doing what is supposed to be done in the job environment. I also feel that the relationship is providing a lot of growth. I feel like most of the issues that I have been dealing with, most of them that we have been discussing have been growing better.*

Mchana's self confidence also continued to grow. My support and encouragement gave her the assurance to strive to achieve her professional and personal goals. As the mentoring relationship progressed, her dependence on me lessened. In her reflective journal, Mchana described the confidence she had in achieving her set goals. She writes:

> *I feel like I am becoming more independent. I used to run to [my mentor] to ask her how to do many things…but now…I keep telling myself, if [my mentor] notices that I can make it, then I know that from deep down in my heart I can do it and achieve it. I can achieve anything that I want to do in life.*

Towards the end of the project, during the winding up stage, Wakwanza confirmed that he had become totally comfortable and confident in his role as a mentee, and had taken advantage of the mentoring relationship to fulfil his developmental goals. The mentoring relationship had provided the required support, and he had gained the confidence that he could achieve his set goals. During the concluding focus group interview, Wakwanza states:

> *Personally I feel that my expectations have been met because when we started the relationship, I didn't have a lot of expectations, I didn't know what to expect with it, so as we went along I began to see this is a good thing. I began to feel it's more rewarding to me and therefore, I set some expectations which I think have already been met…I feel confident…*

Providing support and building the mentees' self confidence seemed to come naturally to me as our mentoring conversations became deeper and more meaningful. As the mentees opened up and we discussed issues that mattered most to them, it became easy to affirm the learning and development that was taking place. The affirmation directly to the mentees of the positive changes that were taking place in their behaviour contributed significantly to the achievement of my confidence as a mentor.

5.3.3.5 Counselling

When counselling, the mentor discusses internal conflicts that pose challenges to the mentee's learning and development (Kram, 1988:36). This is a context where the mentee can discuss any anxieties or fears that are detrimental to their productivity at work.

Counselling was a prevalent psychosocial function in the mentoring relationship. Through this function, I discussed with the mentees their anxieties and fears. These anxieties often came from the job environment as the mentees performed their day-to-day duties in their practice.

During the mentoring project, Mchana's department was going through structural changes that provided challenges to her. As an expatriate educator, she had been placed in a position to supervise her colleagues, a role that was in line with her abilities, but went beyond the scope of her administrative level. The department was going through the process of assigning higher responsibilities to educators who were nationals of Botswana, and Mchana found herself in a lower position than those she used to delegate tasks to. Mchana's reflections indicate that these structural issues were foremost in her mind and she needed my assistance to clarify them. Mchana reflects upon these anxieties in her reflective journal when she writes:

> *When I woke this morning, I tried to look for all reasons not to go to work...I didn't know that this appointment thing would really get into me like that. … Should I fight back and demand that I get the same position or just let it be…*

Mchana and I discussed these issues and Mchana's anxiety about these structural changes occurring in her department was relieved. She began to look at the situation more positively and started to find ways of working together with her colleagues. Mchana provides feedback on how the mentoring relationship helped her to deal with this challenge:

> *When the job I loved doing for the past four years was given to somebody else, I was glad that I was able to talk to [my mentor] and open up to her…she advised me of what I should do….by myself I couldn't have handled the situation…*

This counselling function was also apparent in the relationship with Wakwanza. During the direction setting stage of the mentoring relationship, Wakwanza required counselling support for fears and anxieties that he needed to talk about. The mentoring relationship was an avenue for the discussion of these anxieties. Wakwanza was at a stage in his career as an educator where he had been given the additional responsibility of heading the Tourism programme. He needed encouragement and somebody who could listen to his

experiences as he settled into his role. He reflects on these anxieties that he discussed with me as his mentor in his journal:

> *I feel my not carrying some of [my tasks] on time may impact negatively on others. I am also feeling disappointed by the fact that some staff members are not pulling their weight when it comes to set deadlines.*

Issues that were taking place outside of the job environment were also highlighted as generating disturbance in the work environment. Issues that generated internal conflict or resulted in negative behaviour in the workplace were also discussed during the mentoring sessions. Wakwanza expounds on issues where he needed counselling. He states:

> *I have realised that my experiences… and the work is also affected by what I encounter outside. You know there are things that I didn't know that actually affect the way I work and the way I am handling situations. You know, you come across something at home that upsets you, you come to work and it's still there.*

Wakwanza confirmed that counselling built his confidence, and he found his focus in carrying out his tasks. He states:

> *I felt a great sense of relief to discuss [these issues] with my mentor. It looked so easy after discussion that I feel quite confident if I ever come across the same situations in future, I will not be so anxious.*

The counselling function was an avenue for me to empathise with the mentees and help them to build their confidence. I was a sounding board for their ideas and helped them to work out the best options for tackling different situations. I felt that their ability to bring these issues forward confirmed their belief that the mentoring relationship was one that could be of assistance in clarifying their thoughts so that it would be easier to handle situations in the work environment and outside it.

5.3.3.6 Providing friendship

The friendship function includes the social interaction that results in mutual liking and understanding (Kram, 1988:38). This role allows the mentee to feel like a peer with the mentor so that the relationship is not as distant as with an authority figure. The mentor interacts informally with the mentee and discusses issues that are not work related.

The findings indicate that friendship is a function that developed in the mentoring relationship. There were occasions where mentoring conversations between the mentees and I were on issues not connected to work. The friendship function was an element that contributed to the strengthening of the mentoring relationship, and paved a way for the achievement of personal and professional developmental goals. Wakwanza demonstrates his perception of the friendship function when he says:

> *She is a friend now because we discuss many things, not only to do with the mentoring experience but also with family issues you know, how we are dealing with situations outside work and such…*

The friendship function was also very apparent with Mchana. The closeness that developed between us seemed to come as a surprise to her. She expresses her appreciation of this function like this:

> *What I didn't expect is becoming a good friend to her. This is an extra reward that has come out of this mentoring relationship.*

These findings indicate that at the onset of the relationship friendship was not an outcome that was expected by the mentees. The function came as a result of the depth of the ensuing mentoring relationship and the activities that we undertook. As a mentor, I found that being considered a friend by the mentees assisted in positive outcomes from the developmental activities that we carried out.

5.3.4 Summary

In summary, the findings revealed from the data of the mentees suggest that educators in a VET educational institution could effectively utilise mentoring as an intervention for learning and development. Specifically, there is evidence that the mentees worked towards achieving what they highlighted in their PDPs. The areas where learning took place covered teaching methodologies, classroom management and administrative tasks that facilitate the organisation and coordination of teaching. The mentoring process assisted the mentees to improve their practice in terms of these learning areas. There are

also indications that the mentees shared their newly acquired knowledge and skills with others in their departments.

The findings also indicate that psychosocial functions played a significant role in strengthening the mentoring relationship on the interpersonal level. The mentoring roles of encouragement, guidance, trust and friendship assisted in instilling a sense of confidence in the mentees on the benefits that can accrue from the mentoring process. Because of the strong and healthy interpersonal relationship between the mentees and me, individual learning was enhanced. Positive feelings about mentoring led to the achievement of personal and professional goals in a relatively short period of time.

5.4 Contribution of learning to mentoring practice

In this section I look at how the mentees used their learning to contribute to the mentoring practice in the VET educational institution. The mentoring process afforded the mentees opportunities for individual learning and development. While undergoing the mentoring process, the mentees embraced specific learning techniques which they invariably used to enhance their development. These techniques became part of the way we carried out mentoring practice at GTC.

Three themes emerged from this exploration that could be viewed as techniques that the mentees used to enhance their learning and gave back into mentoring practice. These are learning through reflective practice, reciprocal learning and learning through goal setting. I discuss these three learning techniques below.

5.4.1 Learning through reflective practice

The findings suggest that the educators participating in the mentoring process learned through reflective practice. This finding is not exceptional in terms of general mentoring research. It has long been suggested that reflective practice is a beneficial technique in mentoring (Barnett, 1995:46; Clutterbuck, 2004:23). However, this finding is significant in terms of its contribution to mentoring practices at GTC.

The mentees highlight the benefits that accrued to them from reflective journal writing. They believed that the act of writing down their thoughts in the journal helped them to learn from the experiences they were living through. Reflective practice made the mentees focus on mentoring experiences and how they could learn from these experiences, assisting their learning and development. Given that the activity of maintaining a reflective journal was prescribed as part of data collection for the study, this finding becomes significant, indicating that reflection became an integral part of the mentoring process within our context. Mchana reflected on how reflective practice aided her learning. She states:

> *You came across an issue during the day and at the end of the day you reflect on [this issue]… makes you think of how you're able to tackle that particular situation in the future. So, for me it has changed me in that I am able to learn from my actions... the reflective journal has really changed the way I deal with issues.*

The evidence indicates that reflective practice was an activity the mentees had to learn. It was not a process that they readily accepted at the beginning. As observed by Cox (2005:461) there is often resistance to the process of reflection and initial difficulty in developing the reflective practice. The process of becoming effective in reflection and using the outcome of the reflection for personal and professional benefit was gradual. It was an area that the mentees needed encouragement, support and guidance to adopt. As a mentor I developed the skills of reflective practice with the mentees in two ways. Firstly, I developed reflective practice skills by employing the SAID framework presented in Chapter 3. To achieve this, I held several sessions with each mentee to discuss and explore effective and individualised ways of reflection. Each mentee gradually found his or her own way to make use of reflection to enhance their learning. Secondly, I developed reflective practice by using questioning techniques that encouraged reflection when discussing specific situations during our mentoring conversations. As we explored the learning of the mentees from their varied experiences this exploration resulted in my own self esteem and created a sense of growth and satisfaction in my endeavours as a mentor. More importantly, I felt that assisting the mentees to develop reflective practice improved my own critical reflection abilities.

As the mentoring relationship progressed, the mentees began to see the benefits of reflection in their practice. Wakwanza highlights how he used reflection for his own learning:

> *As I began to reflect and think about these things, I began to see that there is something in [reflection]. It's important as a way of learning. You begin to see where you went wrong, where you could have done better, how you could have done things differently…When you begin to reflect on yourself you see that there are some changes happening…you become better at tackling issues…*

Writing the reflective journal challenged the mentees to examine their feelings and to question their assumptions. The mentees were able to reflect upon their experiences and learn from these reflections. Although it was a challenging task for them to learn how to reflect, it paid off as it became easier to turn mentoring experiences to learning episodes. It became easier for them to ask the right questions during mentoring conversations. Reflective practice became more powerful when we talked aloud about our learning experiences. As we became better at reflection, our conversations became deeper and more meaningful. We were able to discuss issues in depth, until I observed the satisfaction on the mentee's face indicating an awareness of where this journey was leading us.

Reflective practice also contributed to my own learning as a mentor. Helping the mentees to reflect on their practice made me question my own practice. In attempting to diagnose and analyse the issues presented by the mentees, I tended to relate their actions to my own experiences as I had to attempt to make sense of them before discussing alternatives with the mentees. Questioning my own practice led me to improve it. Reflective practice from the perspective of the mentees provided insight into my own developmental needs prompting me to become better at what I did.

5.4.2 Learning through goal setting

In this study the mentees enhanced their learning through setting clear goals for themselves before commencing on the mentoring process. The preparation of PDPs prepared the foundation for learning and development. The emphasis was on short term goals that could be achieved within a six month duration. Time was taken to articulate and clarify what the mentees expected from mentoring. However, it is clear that although these activities were carried out, it took time for the mentees to assimilate and internalise them. Shortly into the mentoring process, issues started to become clearer to the mentees. As the mentees participated in mentoring conversations, reflected upon their experiences,

and started participating in mentoring driven activities, they began to be clear about what to expect from the mentoring process. The positive feelings that they obtained from mentoring enabled them to accept the support and encouragement I provided. This made the attainment of the mentees developmental goals easier to achieve. The clarification within themselves of what to expect from mentoring assisted the mentees to focus on the goal of achieving their PDPs. Mchana expresses her thoughts on this during the first focus group interview:

> *I didn't have any [expectations at the beginning], I was just putting one foot after the other, because at first I didn't know what this was all about, but now I think my values, and attitude have been changed…. I have learned a lot, it's been a learning process where everything has just come together…for me.*

Goal setting made it easier for the mentees to make the transition from being dependant on me for their learning, to being self directed. The PDP became a contractual agreement which was used as a guide for the achievement of learning objectives. It was much easier for me to direct the mentees towards being proactive in achieving their goals. Wakwanza comments on this issue thus:

> *I thought it would be more of the mentor driven type of relationship, and to me I was looking for her to do a lot of things you know, like call me, tell me what to do…Then I realised its me to say what it is that I want from the relationship. So I think it is really a dynamic experience, you find that it changes with time and I think that what is most important is how finally it changes you and how you see yourself developing and what you see yourself gaining from it… it is really a good experience to go through.*

The achievement of goals was enhanced when the benefits of mentoring became clear to the mentees. Mchana expresses it like this:

> *I found somebody who could be there for me…when you have somebody who you are dealing with and who knows the type of job that you are doing or the tasks that you have been given, then they are able to support and advise you on those tasks…*

Goal setting positively influenced the mentees to assimilate what was being offered for learning that much faster. Their view of mentoring went beyond the mentoring relationship, and they started to realise that mentoring was a process that could work in other areas in the organisation. They began to see themselves as mentors and as change agents who could provide mentoring in the organisation. Mchana had this to say:

For me I think it was a really good experience. I would like to do it, either to someone or… even get a chance to tell somebody about it, just explain to them what mentoring is all about because people think when you are mentoring somebody you are like on their back to look if they are doing things the right way or not, but this [experience] has changed that perspective.

It appears that goal setting was an activity that assisted the mentees to achieve their learning objectives. The mentoring process was more focused and directed towards the achievement of set goals. It was easier for me as the mentor to offer my support and guidance to the mentee in a situation where both of us were aware of what we wanted to attain.

5.4.3 Awareness of reciprocal learning

Reciprocal learning accentuates the dual nature of learning. Mentors and mentees learn from one another as they participate in the mentoring process. The findings suggest that the mentees were aware of the reciprocal learning nature of mentoring. The knowledge that they were not the only learners in the mentoring process appeared to strengthen their trust in the relationship, and this appeared to enhance their learning. I explore this issue from the perspective of how the mentees viewed my learning within the relationship. In my opinion, this is one way of gauging what techniques the mentees would be taking back into the mentoring practice in the area of reciprocal learning.

Mentoring conversations, the main medium through which we exchanged information, offered opportunities for reciprocal learning. As the mentoring relationship progressed, and expectations were clarified, our conversations became more meaningful. We shared stories detailing true life scenarios, which led to learning. As the mentor, I benefited from these exchanges as much as the mentees. Wakwanza highlights his understanding of this dual learning in one of the feedback sessions:

I think, to me I think [the mentor] has also learned something out of this whole experience because of the way we deal with her and the way we interact.
I believe we are not the only ones learning…she will also benefit from [the mentoring process]. I believe even for her to be able to reflect on her mentoring role as a mentor is learning... If you don't have students then you can't really gauge how good you are, but when you have people that you are mentoring, then I believe you begin to see how you are developing, how they are gaining from the experience and that way

> *you can judge also how good you are as a mentor and what you have been able to impart to your mentees…*

The mentees also appeared to realise and appreciate the fact that they were two people being mentored by one person. These were two educators from two different departments in the same institution. Their PDPs and related issues were different. The mentees' observation indicated to me that they were comfortable in their individual roles, and focused in the achievement of their individual goals. But they were also cognisant of the fact that as a mentor I may have found the situation challenging. I believe their view of me appreciating them as unique individuals enhanced their trust in the relationship. Mchana provides her feedback on this issue:

> *[The mentor] is able to analytically look at the both of us and see us as different individuals who have different personal goals to meet, even the way we just handle different situations or conflict within our working areas, I'm sure she is able to analyse and critically think that these two individuals, that both mentees are quite different and I think that's been a great benefit for her.*

Reciprocal learning is strengthened when the participants view each other with respect and trust. Learning is enhanced when the mentor and the mentee view each other as peers, going into a developmental relationship for the benefit of both parties. This is the view that the mentees held of this relationship. It is a view that must have enhanced their learning and development. Wakwanza comments on the dual nature of mentoring:

> *I have seen a lot of changes in myself in terms of this experience and therefore as a result, I would be happy to say that she must also be feeling good that I'm changing, and I believe that she has also experienced some of the changes that I am making in my career or profession because of our relationship….*

In this study, the mentees held strong views of the opportunity for reciprocal learning in the mentoring process. This view impacted positively on the relationship, and enhanced learning. It is a view that can be said to have contributed to the mentoring practice in the educational institution.

5.4.4 Summary

The findings indicate that the learning and development of the mentees through the mentoring process used different avenues. These avenues became the ways that the

mentees used their learning to contribute to mentoring practices in their context. Specific practices became second nature to the way we as participants approached and perceived mentoring practice. The mentees benefited from guided reflection and learned through reflective practice. The PDPs proved to be instruments that guided goal achievement. The fact that the mentees were aware that they were not the only learners in the relationship appears to have also encouraged learning and development on the part of the mentees. The practices and ways of thinking became part of the way educators at GTC practiced the mentoring process.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from the perspective of the mentees. Geber's (2003a:5) developmental model is used as a guide to explore the emerging themes from the data. The findings presented in this chapter indicate that the mentoring project at GTC resulted in the learning and development of the mentees. The guidance and support that I provided through role modelling, career and psychosocial functions had a positive impact and resulted in goal achievement. The findings also indicate that the mentees contributed to the mentoring practice within their context by utilising reflective practice, goal setting and awareness of reciprocal learning. These findings indicate that change did take place on the part of the mentees, and they improved their practice. The changes brought about by the learning and development of the mentees appear to have provided them with the ability to cope with the challenges being exerted by the internal and external environments of the VET educational institution. There are also indications that the mentees shared their newly acquired knowledge with others in their departments thus contributing to the learning of the organisation. This participatory nature of learning points to the group dynamics that influence organisational behaviour as it pertains to individual learning. It is apparent the learning of individual educators at GTC was contributing to the learning of other educators in the institution.

CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS: MY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AS A MENTOR

The purpose of this study was to explore how educators in a vocational education and training (VET) educational institution can use the mentoring process to achieve learning and development. The participants in this study were my two mentees and myself as the mentor. I presented the findings extracted from the mentees' experiences in the previous chapter (Chapter 5). In this chapter, I present the findings from my self study perspective as the mentor.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section connects the exploration of the findings with the action research design described in Chapter 4. The second section presents the learning and development of the mentees from my perspective as a mentor. I explore how my mentoring role presented itself through the aspects of role modelling, career, and psychosocial functions as reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The themes described in Table 5.1 guide my presentation. The third section explores how I improved my mentoring practice, thus contributing to the mentoring process in our VET educational institution. My exploration is guided by the mentoring skills of listening, questioning and providing feedback highlighted in mentoring literature (Cohen, 1995:28; Fibkins, 2002:48; Galbraith, 2003:12; Harrison et al., 2005:437; Scwiebert , 2000:103; Ramaswani and Dreher, 2007:225). In addition, I also highlight two significant issues which emerged from the data that contributed to the improvement of my mentoring capacity and consequently to the mentoring practices in the VET educational institution.

6.1 The mentoring process and action research cycles

The findings in this chapter are derived from data gathered from face-to-face interactions with the mentees, the personal reflective journals of the mentees, my personal reflections on the mentoring process, the focus group interviews, and notes from my project diary.

To guide the exploration of the learning of the mentees and my own learning I made reference to the three action research cycles presented in Table 4.2 (Chapter 4) which

highlight the stages of the mentoring process. These three cycles included the Megginson et al.'s (2006:19) five-stage model of building rapport, direction setting, progression, winding up and moving on.

Table 6.1 below is adapted from table 5.2 in the previous chapter. This table clarifies that my learning and the improvement of my mentoring practice was moving in tandem with the learning and development of the mentees as we journeyed through the mentoring process. During the rapport building and direction setting stage my listening, questioning and providing feedback technique were underdeveloped. As we progressed further with the mentoring project my mentoring techniques improved considerably to a stage where I could confirm that learning had taken place and I had improved my mentoring practice.

Table 6.1 presents a snapshot of how the mentoring roles and functions emerged during the mentoring process, and how the building of my mentoring capacity progressed at the same time. In the section below, I explore in detail the learning of the mentees from my perspective as a mentor, using these roles and functions.

Table 6.1 Findings of my learning from the GTC mentoring project

Stages of the mentoring process	Duration	Mentoring roles/functions that emerged at each stage	Progress in my learning
Building rapport Direction setting	September 2006	**Career development** Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension Coaching **Psychosocial functions** Develop trust Provide encouragement Provide guidance Counselling	Underdeveloped listening skills Underdeveloped questioning skills Underdeveloped providing feedback skills
Progression stage	October 2006 to December 2006	**Role modelling** **Career development** Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension Exposure to opportunities Give information Give political information Coaching Provide challenging work assignment **Psychosocial functions** Develop trust Provide encouragement Provide guidance Acceptance and confirmation Counselling Engage in constructive confrontation Provide friendship	Improving in listening skills Improving in questing skills Improving in providing feedback skills
Progression stage Winding up and moving on	January 2007 to March 2007	**Role modelling** **Career development** Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension Coaching Advocacy **Psychosocial functions** Develop trust Provide encouragement Provide guidance Counselling Provide friendship	Improved listening skills Improved questioning skills Improved providing feedback skills

Key

First action research cycle - Building rapport and Direction setting

Second action research cycle - Progression

Third action research cycle - Progression, Winding up and moving on

6.2 Learning and development through the mentoring process

In this section, I follow the same format as in Chapter 5, where I explore our experiences in the mentoring process, and my learning and development from these 'lived experiences' (Whitehead, 1988:43). I therefore present the findings guided by the role modelling, career and psychosocial functions.

I provide excerpts of descriptions from my journal to provide significant detail and portray the richness of the data. In my exploration, I make reference to occurrences in my personal reflective journal that are similar to those highlighted by the mentees in Chapter 5. This is in line with Lincoln and Guba's (1985:288) assertion that cross referencing the occurrences within data for the same observations increases the validity and reliability of the findings across the different sets of data.

6.2.1 Role modelling function

The role modelling function presented itself as a key role in our learning and development as participants. As a mentor I was conscious that I needed to be a good role model. I enjoyed living my values and was happy that the mentees appeared willing to subscribe to the same values that I upheld.

My data reveals that being a positive role model to the mentees is something that I reflected upon, wishing to set them a good example. The fact that I reflected upon the notion of being a good role model during the mentoring period indicates that I was concerned about what the mentees thought of me and how they viewed me. In my journal I reflect on this issue like this:

> *I think the mentees have no idea what to expect from me as their mentor. I can only try to live up to their expectations by acting out my values….I want to be a good role model to my mentees*.

It is apparent that I was concerned about the values I uphold and whether I was exhibiting these values to the mentees. I struggled with my values and whether I was truly living them out (Whitehead, 1988:41) in my mentoring practice, and in particular whether I was

providing to the mentees the kind of support they needed to enable them develop and improve their practice to fulfil their developmental goals. While adjusting in my role as a mentor, I wondered how I could pass on what I considered my positive values to the mentees. This is something that I reflect about in my journal:

> *My values pass on to them through my mentoring sessions, and I can lead by example. The mentees hear about as well as see what it is that I do, and how I do it. Sometimes I think consciously about what is the right thing to do…*

From the mentees' reflective journals, data suggests that role modelling was a significant function that assisted them in their learning and development. The mentees could observe my values, and behaviour, and learn from these observations. As the more senior educator, I was regarded by the mentees as having the experience they aspired to. Observing me carrying out daily tasks gave the mentees the confidence that they could also perform these tasks.

The challenge of learning new ways of teaching diminished when we talked about them and shared experiences. Our conversations highlighted issues about teaching and problem solving. During our mentoring conversations I shared with the mentees stories from my past experiences, both successful and unsuccessful, to bring alive reactions to events in my practice. The mentees were able to relate these stories of my 'lived experiences' (Whitehead, 1988:43) to their current situations. Their learning was influenced by their perception of me as their role model. The data provides evidence that the role modelling function was intricately connected to the career and psychosocial functions.

Role modelling comes across as a strong and significant component through which learning took place in the mentoring relationship. Having a visible and approachable mentor in the educational institution gave the mentees the confidence that what they aspired to learn was achievable. The story sharing, and encouragement during mentoring conversations gave the mentees confidence to perform tasks that resulted in learning. Role modelling is a characteristic of mentoring that influenced and enhanced the intensity of learning through the other mentoring functions discussed earlier. It is interesting to note that the role modelling function is not one that I consciously focused on as a mentor, and that I was not consciously aware of the impact or influence of my attitude, values and

behaviour on the mentees. I was mainly not aware of the role modelling behaviour that I was displaying to the mentees. These findings support Kram's (1988:33) observation that role modelling in a mentoring relationship is both a conscious and an unconscious process.

6.2.2 Career development functions

The career development functions are visible where, as the mentor, I focused on providing to the mentees support on how to develop professionally.

6.2.2.1 Teaching and exploring the facilitative dimension

The findings reveal that the mentoring conversations we held on teaching prompted the mentees to explore how they could improve their teaching skills and become more effective for their own benefit and for the benefit of their students. To this end we explored how the mentees could improve their teaching methodologies and classroom management. These discussions were driven by the changes taking place in the institution due to the introduction of the new outcomes based programme, the Botswana Technical Education Programme (BTEP). This programme required that educators perform their teaching role, and also carry out administrative activities such as the quality assurance component of BTEP. A major part of BTEP was the Internal Verification process that involved the collection of student evidence as proof of the effectiveness of assessment decisions made by the educator.

It is important that there is a smooth and systematic internal verification system in the institution to ensure that the programme passes any quality assurance scrutiny. The internal verification system is one where each educator collects student evidence into a portfolio and submits this portfolio to peers for critical quality assurance review. Evidence is submitted in the form of a file, referred to as the student evidence file which contains all the evidence gathered by the educator, and when perused, should show clearly how the educator made judgements on the competency level of the student. A major issue in the institution is the planning, co-ordination and management skills of the educator in compiling these evidence files in such a way that they can withstand scrutiny by both

internal and external verifiers. Another major bottleneck is situations where educators delay handing their files to their peers. This internal verification process is a critical aspect of the educator's classroom management. Given the varied technical and administrative efficiency levels of the educators across the institution, the difficulties experienced with the internal verification system poses a major challenge to the successful implementation of BTEP. This was therefore an important aspect to tackle with the mentees.

Wakwanza, being the programme team leader for the Tourism programme, wished to improve his capacity to implement an effective and efficient internal verification process. This was an issue that we worked on together, which paid off. In one of my journal entries, I reflect on how we progressed on this issue.

> *The handing in of student evidence files [by Wakwanza] was on schedule, and he could see the response from his colleagues coming out positive. Previously he had been expecting them to hand in their files, yet he would be one of the last ones to hand in his. He was not being a good role model. Now, he felt that he was being a good role model, and he was encouraged to see that they were immediately reciprocating by also handing files back and forth amongst themselves in a timely manner.*

Delivery of lessons to students was another developmental area that I worked on with the mentees. Both mentees concentrated on how they could make their delivery to students more effective in their individual technical areas. The aim was to ensure that the planning and preparation of the mentees was in line with the ethos of outcomes based delivery strategies. I wanted to achieve this goal because I had in view what the institution had prescribed to in terms of the change in teaching methodology. The process of equipping the mentees with skills to approach their delivery with fresh and enthusiastic eyes went on for the duration of the mentorship. This approach dealt with another important challenge that has been introduced in BTEP and that is student centred learning. In this approach teaching is expected to be outcomes based, making the teacher more of a facilitator in the classroom. Assessment of students becomes focused on what the student can do, rather than what the student knows.

As a mentor, my focus was on changing the mindset of the mentees and pushing them towards attempting methods of teaching that were more interactive and supportive of student centred learning. The methods we tried out included presentations by students,

group activities, practical demonstrations, and class trips with follow up presentations and discussions on outcomes. An entry in my reflective journal indicates how I attempted to encourage Mchana to view her delivery methods differently.

> *Mchana wanted to do the same old lecture method for her class. She blamed the students for not understanding. She could not understand why the students found the theoretical aspect of the class difficult. I requested her to consider a more interactive method, and we explored them together, then I led her to consider reflecting on our session, and deciding what she would like to do. I am eager to talk about it with her next week to see what she has come up with…*

As the mentor, my aim was for the mentees to gain a level of insight which could enable them to apply any teaching skills they acquired regardless of what lesson they were delivering. Their ability to do this would ensure they could deploy these skills to meet new situations.

Mchana and tried out different approaches to delivery in one of her Hairdressing units. Where she used to be the only one to demonstrate techniques, she tried out student group activities that led the students on the path to learning by discovery (Boyer, 1997:103). She was gratified and encouraged by the positive response from the students and from myself. She found that when she made the class more interactive, the students achieved the desired outcomes more easily. Mchana makes the following comment that confirmed this improvement:

> *I have used new methods of approaching my teaching which has focussed more on the learner. The learners are becoming more interested in what I am doing and they have also gained a lot and I've seen the improvement through their performance in their assessments. ..*

Feedback from the mentees, coupled with the lesson observations I made of the mentees' classes, highlighted the positive changes that were resulting from our mentoring discussions. As we entered deeper into the progression stage of the mentoring process, the mentees could see that there were positive changes coming from the student centred interactive approaches to teaching. The more changes became apparent, the more the mentees became excited about their profession as educators. This achievement emphasised the importance of my role as a mentor to the educators.

6.2.2.2 Exposure to opportunities

The findings reveal that assignments the mentees carried out exposed them to people in the institution whose influence could further their career aspirations. Wakwanza's challenging tasks exposed him to others beyond the department he was in. He had the opportunity to attend meetings which he ordinarily would not have attended. These meetings exposed him to the more senior members of the organisation who had the ability to influence employment decisions, such as the renewal of employment contracts.

Mchana, on the other hand, performed tasks and submitted them to her immediate supervisor and discussed how to handle such tasks in her department. In one of my journal entries, I recount an incident where Mchana talks about a challenging situation in her department, and how she would go about tackling it. Mchana felt that her immediate supervisor was overloading her with tasks resulting in her colleagues having a much lighter workload. She was also being put in a situation where she had to delegate tasks to colleagues on the same level as her. She was being put in this situation without her supervisor explaining to others in the department about Mchana's changed role. I reflect in my journal thus:

> *I asked her what she thinks she would like to do about the situation. She said she had been thinking about writing out a task schedule, which she would then discuss with her supervisor, detailing what she handles at the moment that can be handled by her other colleagues. The schedule would indicate precisely who will handle what.*

The mentoring relationship highlighted to Mchana an avenue of dealing with this situation in her department. The exposure that was afforded to Mchana in this case was the opportunity to discuss her ideas with her line supervisor and initiate a way of working with her colleagues that was more transparent. All concerned would know her contribution to departmental tasks. Such knowledge could have an impact on positive performance reviews, which in turn could provide a positive career move in terms of promotion or renewal of contract.

An important theme highlighted here is the manner in which the mentoring process propelled Mchana to share her knowledge and experience with other educators in her

department. It is common in the VET educational institutions in Botswana that contract educators from countries other than Botswana are often positioned on the same structural level with indigenous educators who have less experience and knowledge. It is worthy to note that Mchana as a more knowledgeable and experienced educator in her department created an opportunity to share her knowledge with other educators in the department.

6.2.2.3 Giving information

There are findings that indicate that as the mentor, I shared information with the mentees on different issues we discussed. This information gave the mentees wider perspectives of their personal and professional environments. The information concerned their core duties of teaching as well as wider professional development plans. During our mentoring conversations, I provided information about specific issues to do with the professional advancement of the mentees. I provided guidance on how the mentees could go about obtaining more information on issues they wanted to pursue further. One topic where we spent a considerable amount of discussion time on was ideas of what the mentees were planning to do after the expiry of their current contracts. This was driven by the fact that the mentees were educators employed on three year contracts with GTC and therefore aware that at the end of contract they had to find other employment. They had to be ready in case their contract was not renewed. This was always a traumatic time especially for those educators who would have preferred to continue in their posts at GTC.

I realised that over time, especially on issues that negatively affected the mentees, I was becoming rather protective. I was concerned about whether the mentees had alternative plans for the end of their contracts. I felt a social responsibility to assist in this area and provided to them information that I thought could help them make progress with this concern. Mchana, for example, discussed with me as her mentor, her plans after leaving the institution. I wrote the following in my reflective journal:

> *Mchana also talked about a proposal that she had been grappling to write, on a dream she has about pioneering Hairdressing in technical schools in Kenya. I listened to what she had to say. I then suggested how she could start it off, by searching the net for leads…But I also cautioned her about how ministries in Kenya work, so that she could sharpen her focus on what exactly she wanted to do with such a proposal. I thought she was not being realistic with her dream, and suggested that she needed to think some more after doing some research on what she wants*.

Sharing information with the mentees on varied issues that were of interest to them gave me an opportunity to provide the mentees with direction. I felt that such conversations enhanced the mentoring relationship. This is because the mentees could take the opportunities to talk about their aspirations, and ways of improving their practice. And as the mentor, I assisted them in their research efforts to find information that could help them make informed decisions. It was a good opportunity to assist the mentees acquire strategies of seeking the information needed for decision making. I felt, however, that I had to be careful to give room to the mentees to discover their own answers for themselves and build their own personal maps of where they wanted to go, rather than imposing my own ideas and thoughts. This was a learning time for me as the mentor, as I had to know instinctively where to draw the line when sharing information with the mentees.

6.2.2.4 Giving political information

Giving political information is a function that emerged from my data as the mentor. There are instances when I gave the mentees information that would normally not form part of the policies and procedures of the institution, but awareness of such information could assist the mentees in their everyday dealings with their colleagues. One major reason for this finding was that the educational institution has different groups of educators comprising local educators as well as expatriate educators. Although the majority of the educators are Batswana (citizens of Botswana), there is a significant number of educators who are from outside Botswana. Both of the mentees were expatriates, and were viewed as outsiders and expected to be there for only a short time. Interpersonal relationships between themselves and their Batswana counterparts necessitated that they be made aware of information that caused conflict in the workplace. Educators from outside the country need to be aware of the culture of the people they work with. Providing the mentees with political inside information resulted in discussions on how to deal with potential conflict situations constructively.

One situation we discussed with Mchana was how to deal with discipline, what options would work better than others. She had a habit of writing memos to her colleagues concerning tasks not done, and this method had not been effective. It had resulted in interpersonal conflicts that usually ended up at the desk of her supervisor. She needed to understand why her method was not working. I wrote this in my reflective journal:

> *I shared with her my experience of how Batswana usually reacted to written memos. Their reaction to discipline through letters or memos is usually quite negative and needs to be selected as an option of last resort….*

My experience as an administrator in Gaborone Technical College (GTC) had shown me that understanding the people that we work with helped a great deal in creating a harmonious working environment. I was happy to share these thoughts with the mentees so that they could benefit from my experiences.

6.2.2.5 Coaching

The findings show that coaching was a prevalent career development function from my perspective as a mentor. This finding is consistent with that of the mentees, where it was revealed that the mentees benefited greatly from this function. The coaching centred around strengthening capacities on how to perform administrative tasks that support classroom management as well as daily administrative activities that formed part of the educator's duties. These activities involved tasks such as timetabling, lesson planning, and the general administration of lesson delivery. My technical expertise, experience and knowledge provided support to the mentees in the areas where they required developmental assistance. The coaching proved useful especially for incidental tasks that the mentees, in the roles as educators, would find beneficial. This function is highlighted in the following journal entry when Wakwanza and I explored how to go about creating an interactive task list:

> *I teased out of him what he could do to get a clearer picture, and so be confident that while he is doing a task well, he is aware of what else needs to be done. He suggested he could make a weekly list…or perhaps an annual task schedule. He mentioned that he had started to do an annual task list that would indicate to him what tasks need to be done at what time of the year but it proved to be complicated and so he never finished it…. so I asked him how he would continue with it, now that he had already started it. We tried out a few structures that could provide required information yet maintain some simplicity…*

My coaching style was hands on, depending on the assistance and support the mentee required. While coaching Wakwanza on his task list was collaborative and I spent time drawing him out, my coaching exercise with Mchana on the construction of an interactive lesson plan was more direct.

> *We talked about the procedure of how she was going to do it….I took her through a step-by-step procedure of what I perceived as a logical sequence…*

Data from my reflections, however, indicated that my coaching style changed depending on the stage of the mentoring relationship. While earlier in the relationship, in the rapport building and direction setting stages, I would be more directive as to what was to be done, later, during the progression stage, I started to attempt to tease out more options from the mentees and pass the ownership of the solutions to them. I express this coaching style in the following statement:

> *When we talk, I do not give her step-by-step procedure of how to perform the task. We talk it out, and through discussion suggestions flow on how to do things. She goes and tries it out, and she comes back with feedback of how the task went and how much of an understanding she now has of it…*

As the mentees advanced progressively in their personal and professional goals, I started to feel that we talked increasingly as peers discussing ideas of mutual interest, and we could deliberate on processes or procedures on equal footing.

For Wakwanza, task organisation was an issue that he desired to improve. Wakwanza explained to me that the lack of effective planning on his part affected his time management abilities. The task of preparing an annual task schedule was an assignment he carried out that he believed would help him to improve his planning and his time management. In my reflective journal, I reflect on how this assignment had a desirable effect on Wakwanza.

> *He indicated to me what he had done [on the schedule] and why he felt he had progressed. He presented to me the schedule he had done, the annual schedule he had promised to work on. He showed me where he had come from, what he used to do, and told me why it was inadequate for him, compared to this new schedule he had now prepared. He was sure that the schedule would make him more organised…We discussed how the schedule would improve his time management skills…*

This activity was the beginning of Wakwanza's working on an interactive task list with the aid of Microsoft outlook. The findings indicate that Wakwanza managed to improve his planning abilities. This shows how such challenging assignments from the mentoring relationship contributed to the mentees achieving their developmental goals.

6.2.2.6 Providing challenging work assignments

As the mentor, I challenged the capabilities of the mentees by suggesting tasks that they could perform to best enhance their learning. The findings indicate that the mentees welcomed these tasks and executed them willingly. These assignments emanated from mentoring conversations with the mentees, where suggested options made sense and the outcomes for the execution of the tasks had the potential to develop the mentee personally and professionally. As the mentor, I had the opportunity to discuss these assignments with the mentees, and provided support and guidance where it was needed.

For Wakwanza, conflict resolution was an area he wanted to improve. Wakwanza explained to me that he had difficulty resolving conflict that came up while he was dealing with his colleagues. Many times these disagreements came up when he attempted to complete tasks that were required of him within his daily duties. He wanted to resolve issues that come up when he was dealing with his colleagues amicably. Wakwanza put it this way in one of his reviews:

> *I deal with quite a number of staff, and there is an element of discipline which comes up more than once…you find that some of the people you deal with are just difficult…stubborn…so I have this problem of not knowing how to deal with these people, and how to handle the whole conflict issue….*

We handled this issue together with Wakwanza through conversations and follow up tasks. As the mentor, I shared my experiences with Wakwanza of how I have handled different conflict situations, and also where possible, included him in situations where I was handling such issues. From Wakwanza's point of view, role modelling played a big role in assisting him to deal with this challenging situation. He says:

> *I am beginning to get very good ideas on how to handle [conflict] situations…some of these ideas is from what [my mentor] is doing and watching her dealing with situations which are similar…and also I am reflecting on situations that I know I have handled before and have not done so well…the discussions with my mentor are helping me to learn how to deal with these situations…one thing I have learned is not to handle issues when I am upset rather wait until such a time that I can deal with it objectively…*

Wakwanza set himself a goal to improve his practice in this area. During our mentoring conversations, we discussed his progress, and I provided support and encouragement where necessary. Wakwanza began to change his approach to these situations, and with this change in approach came self improvement. Wakwanza put it like this:

> *I deal with people more effectively now…my attitude towards people is changing…Before I would assume they are against me… but now I tend to be more objective. If something needs to be resolved we talk about it and agree on the best way forward. My attitude is changing in this respect…*

The assignments that the mentees undertook assisted them in their learning, and improved the way they executed tasks they were handling in their practice. As a mentor, I gained insight into how I handled issues similar to those discussed with the mentees which provided me with different viewpoints for the improvement of aspects of my practice.

6.2.2.7 Advocacy

Advocacy presented as a function that was not highly visible in the mentoring relationships but emerged later in the mentoring relationship. There was occasion to describe Mchana's attributes to others when she requested a reference letter to be sent off for an opportunity for further professional training. This was a task easily accomplished as she was familiar to me on both a personal and professional level. I was happy and willing to assist her in such an endeavour. I recorded the following in my journal:

> *Mchana came to me excited about her success in identifying a school for her further studies. She requested that I support her application by submitting a reference letter to the school. This was easy for me to do…*

The efforts to get Mchana into this programme were successful. The function of being an advocate for my mentees was an action I took for granted as part of my role as a mentor. I realised that I found it natural that the mentee would come to me for such support, which revealed to me that I was comfortable with my role as a mentor.

6.2.3 Psychosocial functions

The psychosocial functions come through as those that assisted me as the mentor to instil self confidence and drive in the mentees to achieve their developmental goals. The challenge of improving the mentees' practice as educators required that I use my interpersonal skills effectively. Kram (1988) comments that for a mentoring relationship to have a higher chance of success, it is important for the mentor to have good interpersonal skills. My interpersonal skills become more critical in a situation where assisted informal mentoring was a new concept not previously tried in the context of GTC. I saw my role as being to provide the mentees with the overall objective of the mentoring process. It was important for the mentees to accept and internalise the benefits that can accrue from the mentoring process. I expand below how these functions were visible from my perspective as the mentor.

6.2.3.1 Developing trust

It is apparent from the findings that we developed deep trust in our mentoring relationship. This occurred progressively through all the stages of the mentoring process. As a mentor, I realised that trust is a component of the mentoring relationship that is very important for communication. I deliberately set out to be a better listener than I thought I was. Listening empathetically to the views of the mentees contributed to the development of trust between us. As the mentoring relationship progressed, I strengthened this function for the mutual benefit of the mentees and myself. Our conversations became deeper and more meaningful as the trust grew. An example is when the mentees opened up to me on issues that were not part of their personal development plans (PDPs). For example, Wakwanza started to open up to me about his plans for the future. This was surprising to me because he had not done this before, yet we had worked together in this institution for four years. Because of the mentoring relationship, as Wakwanza and I became closer, he trusted me with such information. He came to realise that I had his best interest at heart, and would provide him with guidance and direction where I could. My journal entry reveals such an incident.

> *Wakwanza talked to me for a long time about his future… he has been feeling acutely that he really does not want to be here [at the educational institution]. We spoke for some time about his thoughts on this.*

At the same time, Mchana was opening up to me as well. Similar to Wakwanza, I had worked with Mchana for some time but she had not talked to me about her private issues. It was clear that she accepted me as her mentor, and trusted that I would listen to her and provide the support she required. She derived comfort from this knowledge and it enhanced her trust in me. In my journal I reflect on this development of trust in our relationship:

> *Mchana was opening up to me more… and telling me more private things. I took this as a very positive development… I also saw it as an opportunity to continue to develop trust and commitment between us as mentor and mentee.*

On such occasions, as the mentor, I showed my understanding of their aspirations and passed no judgment on their ideas. These type of conversations usually happened outside of structured mentoring meetings, where the mentee had actually chosen to come to talk to me as the mentor. My reflections on these types of occurrences indicate that I felt useful, needed and closer to my mentees.

6.2.3.2 Providing encouragement

The role of providing encouragement was also quite visible in the findings. Especially early in the mentoring relationship, during the rapport building and direction setting stages, I encouraged the mentees to continue to pursue their developmental goals. These were stages where the mentees lacked the self confidence required to propel them to achieve their set goals. At times this encouragement went beyond what had previously been stipulated in the PDPs. The mentees required encouragement in others issues as well that affected their work life. This indicated to me as the mentor that my role was real and valued. It was not only focused on the agreed goals, but seemed to extend beyond the planned face-to-face formal meetings. This highlighted the developmental aspect of mentoring within the environment in which it was taking place. In my journal entry I highlight an incident where Mchana seeks me out to discuss a task she was handling, and how I encouraged her to continue to perform the way she was doing.

> *I encouraged her about pursuing this goal that she had set. From my perspective, the fact that she sees the problem is a good thing. The fact that she is doing something about it is even better. I could see she was proud of her achievement.*

From my data, it is quite visible that the confidence of the mentees increased as more encouragement and positive feedback came from me as their mentor. The learning of the mentees was visible as they took up the tasks that the mentoring relationship presented. They did this more readily because of the encouragement I gave them to pursue these tasks. A direction I took was to try and avoid situations where the mentees would look at me as the person with all the answers. The mentoring role I preferred was to encourage the mentees to arrive at the solutions by themselves. I wanted the mentees to focus on the process of learning and on the progress they were making rather than on their ability to accomplish the specific task. I reflect on this situation in my reflective journal:

> *[The mentees] seem to lean on me to provide the answers and tell them what to do. I would like to avoid this because I feel it will not enhance their learning within this mentoring relationship. I have to encourage the mentees to think for themselves about the options open to them in problem solving.*

Over time, the mentees relied less on me to provide answers and began to voluntarily offer solutions and use me as a sounding board. Evidence indicates that they became more self confident and began to consider alternative approaches to different situations. This was good for me as it indicated that my goal to make the mentees more self sufficient in decision making was working.

6.2.3.3 Providing guidance

The findings from my data as the mentor indicate that providing guidance to the mentees was a mentoring role that was clearly exhibited. In the mentoring relationship, I offered direction and provided advice on issues that were of interest to the mentees. In guiding the mentees, I encouraged them to look at a variety of different options when confronted with issues that needed to be resolved. As highlighted by the journal entry below, there were occasions where I shared my experiences with the mentees in an effort to provide different scenarios and examples of how to approach varied issues.

> *To clarify the issues I gave some scenarios, some experiences that I thought would bring home some learning, and how I had handled the situations. ..I liked sharing my experiences with the mentees, and discussing with them about what they could have done in the same situation…*

During these discussions I learned from the mentees as much as they learned from me. I probed for different ways in which the particular scenario could have been handled. I listened to them as we had healthy debates to enhance our learning. This was appreciated by the mentees, as reflected by Wakwanza in his feedback review:

> *In the mentoring meetings I learn a lot because we normally exchange experiences… we go over the whole experience and as we discuss I begin to see some things I could have done in a better way…sometimes I try to figure out how she could have [handled the issue], and then I find out [from her] whether it's true if she did handle it that way…*

The guidance I gave to the mentees was at times very specific to a problem that the mentee was encountering at work. The findings indicate that this guidance was influenced by my values as an educator. I was at times quite firm in my approach, especially where I felt that the mentee could benefit from exposure to values that I held. An example of such a situation is where Wakwanza and I discussed an issue where he wanted to exclude a student from progressing to a higher level programme because his team members considered the student to be a 'trouble maker'. I recorded the following in my journal about that incident.

> *I cautioned him about forming precedence in the way he is excluding the candidate. I made it clear to him that it still must be his decision, but he must be aware that this will be something that will be referred to next time such a situation arises. I also drew his attention to the fact that such students [who are perceived to be a handful] have passed through before. I felt that the candidate should not be discriminated against based on such perceptions.*

I enjoyed my role of providing guidance to the mentees. Given that I wanted them to take ownership of their learning I felt that providing guidance was a significant role for me as a mentor. I enjoyed the exchanges we had, how we talked openly about our successes and failures, and our learning from these exchanges.

6.2.3.4 Acceptance and confirmation

From the findings it is clear that one of my roles was to provide support to the endeavours of the mentees to the extent that they become comfortable with their learning process. The presence of a mentor in their work environment gave the mentees a feeling of contentment and they undertook their tasks without the fear of failure or ridicule. The mentoring relationship gave the mentees a safety net in which to operate. This built their self confidence which in turn promoted effective learning. In one of my journal entries, I reflect on how I provided support to Mchana on the attainment of her personal and professional development goals.

> *I was gratified that there had been some thought process on the goals, and that efforts were being put to improve and reach the set goals. I felt satisfied that at this early stage [of the mentoring relationship] I was already playing a role in assisting her to attain her set goals.*

I provided the mentees with the support they required through the mentoring process, and saw how they became confident in the benefits of the mentoring relationship. As they became more self confident, so my own confidence in my ability as a mentor grew. I wrote this in my journal:

> *Today I have a nice feeling inside about mentoring…I am proud of what I do and how I do it….*

These feelings of joy came to me especially when I could see that learning had taken place and this learning had resulted in change in the way the mentees or I myself performed our work in our practice. When the mentees achieved something we were working on together, they would be excited and I would be the first one they would call. The mentees realised that I would be happy for them, and more than anybody else, I would know how much they had achieved. I reflect upon one of these calls from Mchana in my journal:

> *When she called me all excited [about achieving her task] I was happy for her. I felt my heart swell with pride, that she felt that way about what she had done…*

These feelings confirmed to me that I had ability to handle the role of a mentor, and that the mentees could depend on me to provide them the support they required.

6.2.3.5 Counselling

The findings indicate that counselling was a noteworthy aspect of my role as mentor through all the stages of the mentoring process. Within the mentoring relationship, the mentees discussed their personal and professional anxieties with me. These anxieties mostly concerned task achievement, and how they could go about completing these tasks successfully. As the mentor, I was available to listen to their different views, and discuss their ideas openly. I often acted as a sounding board for ideas they wanted to implement. In the process of achieving some of his developmental goals, Wakwanza discussed with me his motivation of wanting to improve in task organisation. I wrote this in my reflective journal:

> *Wakwanza talked to me about the feelings that are evoked in him when he does not meet his deadlines, or when he totally forgets to do things. He also feels terrible when he has to be reminded of what he has to do…*

Mchana also had issues in her practice that she wanted to offload. She was in a situation where her boss was requesting her to delegate tasks to her colleagues, without clarifying her role to them. Some of the responsibilities that her supervisor placed on her made her feel uncomfortable and created negative interpersonal relations with her colleagues. I wrote the following in my journal about this situation:

> *Mchana talked to me about her relationship with one of her colleagues that had been bothering her. Her immediate supervisor was pushing her to discipline this colleague for non-performance. She was not happy about the situation…*

As a mentor, I found that listening to the mentees empathetically about such anxieties alleviated their fears, and made them realise that such feelings were not uncommon. I attempted to create an environment where the mentees were able to face and deal with the stresses that they were encountering at work. The counselling function also afforded me an opportunity to urge and encourage the mentees to work towards sorting out these issues by achieving their developmental goals.

The findings also indicate that on occasion I used the counselling function to expand the mind of the mentee to include the possibilities of exploring different options. One such

example is where Mchana found herself in a situation where colleagues that were previously junior to her were assigned to positions senior to hers without them having obtained the prerequisite qualifications in terms of technical knowhow and administrative experience. This was a situation that was common in the institution where Batswana educators were being promoted to more senior posts within the government structure. As the mentor, I listened to Mchana, but was also candid with her about how she should explore her options in such a situation. One of my journal entries describes my approach to Mchana's anxieties when she discussed these structural changes in her department with me:

> *Given the mixed feelings that Mchana was exhibiting I thought it was worth it to explore these feelings a little more deeply. So I painted for her some 'what-if' scenarios. What if the colleagues get the posts but they want to continue doing exactly what they were doing before, but with more pay? How will you handle that? What if you continue to do all the tasks that you enjoy doing, and they let you? What if they are not getting what it is they are supposed to do even after you walk them through, and the boss falls right back on you to do these tasks?*

From having many mixed feelings about this situation in her department, Mchana finally accepted it, and as we continued to work together, she found ways of working with her colleagues without conflict. She coached her colleagues on tasks they were to take over, rather than cling to these tasks as had been her intention. My role as the mentor was to listen and alleviate the anxieties of the mentees as much as I could. Where possible I offered direction and an opportunity to be a sounding board to ideas they had of handling the different situations.

6.2.3.6 Engaging in constructive confrontation

The findings indicate that the mentees and I engaged in constructive confrontation as we progressed through the mentoring process. My role as the mentor involved providing constructive feedback on the progress of the mentees towards achieving their goals. Our mentoring conversations involved the suggestions of strategies that could assist the mentees in attaining their goals. I often needed to give the mentees a little push where they were reluctant to follow through. During and after mentoring sessions I would seek progress reports or the tasks' deadlines.

An example of constructive confrontation is where I had issues with Mchana for being late for scheduled mentoring appointments. After several reminders, we had to reach an understanding of what procedures to follow when she could not make it for a meeting. I wrote in my reflective journal:

> *Mchana was late again for our planned mentoring session. I called her to remind her about it. I found she had a task with a deadline that she was working on. I requested her to let me know in time if she was not going to make it for a session. ..*

I could understand that Mchana took time to adhere to schedule because there were many times that she came to see me without it being a scheduled meeting. The fact that I encouraged those spontaneous occasions may have given her the impression that it was not necessary to stick to the scheduled time. Despite this reasoning on my part, I had to coach Mchana on how she could better meet her deadlines. Although I viewed confrontation as a necessary part of learning, I made concerted efforts not to let such an intervention negatively affect the foundations that we had formed in the mentoring relationship. I was conscious of my choice of words and my approach towards the mentee when handling the situation. We had conversations where I reiterated the importance of maintaining our scheduled times. Mchana finally settled down and made sure she attended our mentoring sessions on time.

6.2.3.7 Providing friendship

The findings from my perspective as the mentor indicate that in the mentoring relationship the friendship function contributed to the rapport that was built. The mentees became freer and more at ease with me as the mentoring relationship progressed. During our mentoring conversations, we discussed diverse issues beyond the scope of the structured mentoring guidelines. We also had social interactions outside the workplace. Although this function was apparent in both of the mentoring relationships, it appeared stronger in my relationship with Mchana. This can be attributed to the fact that Mchana and I were in a same gender relationship, as opposed to being in a cross gender relationship with Wakwanza. This finding concurs with Allen, Day and Lentz's (2005:165) study of the role of interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships. Allen et al. (2005:165) report that same gender pairs in mentoring relationships find it much easier to relate to one another. I reflect upon the situation in a journal entry:

> *The mentoring relationships that I have been involved in have been presenting themselves in ways I never expected. Mchana has been a regular visitor in my house over the holidays…Our mentoring relationship has bypassed the professional levels and become personal. Wakwanza, being a man, has not become this close to me. But we have met several times and talked about other issues not related to work…So both these relationships have to me evolved to become much closer than I would have imagined in a work environment.*

Over time the mentees became more relaxed with me. They often sought me out and talked to me about varied issues not to do with work. They were not shy or reserved to call me or come to my office. Mchana especially became free in my home, popping in frequently. Once I accepted the direction of our relationships, I found that our mentoring conversations became richer and the mentees more confident of what they achieved from mentoring.

6.2.4 Summary

The findings indicate that as a mentor I provided guidance and support to the mentees through role modelling, career and psychosocial functions. The role modelling function appears to have been influenced by my values as an individual. I encouraged story telling to assist the mentees relate to their current situations. Sharing my experiences was a medium of portraying my values to the mentees. The mentoring roles in the career development functions were influential in imparting the skills and knowledge that assisted the mentees achieve their professional goals and improve their practice. As the mentor I also gained insight into our teaching practices and the operation of the different vocational areas that the mentees belonged to. The findings indicate that I used the mentoring roles in the psychosocial function to develop deep trust in the mentoring relationship. I provided encouragement and guidance to the mentees which resulted in building their self confidence and self direction competencies.

Through mentoring practice I became more aware of my ability to provide the required support and guidance. I watched with an element of surprise, pride and wonder at how the mentees were changing. I became more comfortable with my mentor role and felt a sense of satisfaction because of the part I had played in the educators' learning and

development. This realisation that I was growing and changing along with the mentees reinforced the mutual learning characteristic (Clutterbuck, 2005:4) of the practice of mentoring.

The next section focuses on my learning and development from the GTC Mentoring project, and how I progressed in improving my mentoring capacity.

6.3 Improving my practice as a mentor

As a self study, one main purpose of this exploration was to improve my practice as a mentor. Before embarking on the mentoring process I had to examine my skills and what I could bring into a mentoring relationship. As a senior educator administrator, my belief was that I could make a good mentor. I had the technical pedagogic knowledge and skills that the educators in my educational institution could benefit from, and I had good communication skills acquired dealing with daily administrative tasks that form part of running a department in an educational institution. I had acquired good interpersonal skills from working with different cultures in Botswana. I also had the desire to share my knowledge and experience with other educators in my educational institution, and the willingness to sacrifice the time. But I realised that for me, these qualities were not adequate. There was conflict between my role as an administrator and as a mentor. An administrator has a role that involves quick reactions, decision making and problem solving (Galbraith, 2003:9). Mentoring on the other hand, is a shared role that requires delicate and caring interventions and feedback (Clutterbuck, 2005:2). It is a supportive role carried out in a quiet and comfortable place, rather than the administrator's often crisis centred and chaotic office. Mentoring requires new, tactful approaches and skills (Barnett, 1995:49). To be successful in my role as a mentor, I had to critically reflect upon my mentoring role and my administrative role and find a way to harmonise them.

When I realised that being an administrator did not make me a mentor I reflected upon my abilities and realised what I lacked in my mentoring capacity. My intention was not to attempt to be skilled in every aspect of mentoring. My personal development plan detailed my learning objectives as targeting three areas: Listening, questioning, and providing feedback. These are the three areas that are predominately highlighted in mentoring as

forming the core of mentoring skills (Cohen, 1995:29; Fibkins, 2002:48; Galbraith, 2003:12; Harrison et al., 2005:437; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:287; Scwiebert, 2000:103).

In the following section, I present evidence of my learning as I experienced the mentoring relationship. I offer descriptive analysis of how I improved my practice by improving my listening skills, my questioning skills, and my ability to provide constructive feedback. This evidence is presented as my personal contribution to mentoring practice as we experienced it at GTC.

6.3.1 My listening skills

The journal findings indicate that I perceived listening as my major challenge during the execution of the mentoring relationships. In a mentoring situation, the mentor can only effectively assist the mentees in their learning and development if they assess the mentees' developmental needs accurately. This assessment can only be carried out if the mentor has genuine concerns about the mentees, and shows this concern by listening empathetically to what the mentees have to say. During the earlier mentoring sessions, in the rapport building and direction setting stages, I would talk much more than I would listen. I highlight this issue in my reflective journal:

> *I have been grappling with the amount of talking I do during my mentoring meetings. I have worried that I talk too much and that perhaps I could reduce the amount of talking that I do. I have made a goal for myself to deliberately reduce the amount of talking I do. I need to listen more, and allow the mentee to do the talking.*

As a mentor, my realisation was that good listening skills would enable us to build trust in the mentoring relationship. I needed to encourage the mentees to share their thoughts and experiences with me and to assist them to reflect on their experiences. This necessitated listening to what they had to say. Monopolising the conversation during the mentoring sessions would not lead me to this goal. I deliberately set off to improve my listening skills. But even with this dedicated effort to improve, the findings indicate that it was not easy for me. I often talked more than I listened and made excuses for not rapidly gaining ground on my desired goal. I reflect on this issue in my journal:

> *How do I share it if I do not talk about them? How does the mentee get to learn from me if they do not hear what good or bad experiences I have gone through? Today, I feel that the talking I did was fine.*

It is apparent that I was driven by storytelling. I was too eager to share my experiences with the mentees. I understood that it was important for me to share real life stories with the mentees, as they could relate these stories to their actual current situations. However, these experiences needed to be relevant and appropriate to the mentees' varied situations. Listening to the mentees would make me more aware of the relevance of the stories to the mentees' situation.

Gradually, my reflections after the mentoring sessions revealed that my listening skills were improving. I noticed that I was talking at what I deemed to be appropriate times. This indicated to me that I was listening more. More importantly for me, I was gaining confidence in my ability to assess when to speak and when to listen. I realised that the mentees would not automatically start contributing more to our discussions without encouragement from me. The mentees would only respond to cues from me on how they should behave during the mentoring conversations. I therefore set off to draw the mentees out by providing the appropriate cues. I reflect upon this improvement in my journal:

> *I feel that sharing my experiences with Wakwanza was good. I feel that letting him ask me questions was good. I got to throw some questions back at him, to see how he is synthesising what he is hearing. Today, I did not feel inadequate to talk to the mentee.*

The opportunity of having two mentees also paid off in my development. I found after critical reflections of one mentoring session with one mentee, I would attempt to improve on my listening techniques with the other mentee, thus continuing to develop my capacities. In my journal, I reflect on my session with Wakwanza and how I used this session to improve on my listening technique during my next session with Mchana.

> *Even with the amount of information I got from Mchana today, I still felt I was talking too much and should have encouraged her to talk more…But I feel there was an improvement from the way my conversation with Wakwanza went in our last session. I was able to get more out of her than usual. To me, this is a step in the right direction for me.*

Gradually, I reached a point where I felt confident that I had developed my required listening techniques. I had improved to the point that I could focus on what the mentees had to say and respond appropriately to their questions and provide the required guidance and encouragement. I reflect on this improvement in my journal:

> *This time I had reflected on our previous meeting much more critically than ever before. I had studied my points of how I wanted this meeting to go. I had wanted this time to feel that I gave Wakwanza enough time to talk, and I wanted to listen more. I was able to do this. I feel that I was a much better listener. Although I did some talking, I felt it was in places that were appropriate for me to do this…*

This achievement on my listening technique is confirmed by Wakwanza in his data where he reflects about his perception of the amount of talking he does during our sessions. It is surprising and a confirmation of my improvement, when he observes that he does most of the talking during our sessions. He writes:

> *As I talk to her I seem to talk too much and perhaps give too much information than I need to…but she listens attentively to me, and this encourages me to share more of my plans with her…*

Reading this reflection from my mentee reminded me of how my listening skills were at the beginning of the mentoring relationship. It was however, a confirmation to me that I had reasonably improved in my listening technique to the benefit of the mentee and the mentoring process as a whole.

6.3.2 My questioning skills

My questioning technique was another area that I intended to strengthen as a mentor. At the beginning of the mentoring relationships, my mentees were passive. During the rapport building and direction setting stages, the mentees expected to be told what to do and how to do it. It took me time to realise that it was up to me to change this situation. Often, I took the easy way out by filling the gaps during mentoring conversations with my voice, so that there would be no awkward moments. However, mentoring is a relationship where the mentor acts as facilitator. The mentor is expected to engage the mentee in dialogue that brings out pertinent information from the mentee that would encourage individual learning.

Effective mentors ask questions that encourage critical thinking. By posing thought provoking and probing questions, the mentor challenges their mentee to consider different perspectives and implications. The realisation of this aspect of mentoring practice prompted me to focus on my questioning techniques to achieve this end. I deliberately set out to draw the mentees out, and put the onus on them to contribute to their personal and professional development. My technique was to ask questions and wait for the mentee to respond, rather than attempting to fill the silence. The findings reveal that this process was not easy for me. It was a challenge for me to give the mentees adequate room to realise that the answers must come from them. In my journal, I reflect on a session where I was trying out this technique:

> *In this session, I realised that I was still not totally comfortable with the silence. The silence after I have asked a question, and he is thinking it over, before providing a contribution. Although it was not an uncomfortable silence, I still felt that there was a void that needed to be filled. But I had already seen that in myself in earlier sessions, and set myself a target that I would attempt by all means to draw out the mentee more, for him to hear less of my voice.*

I wanted the mentees to own their learning. By this I mean they should be in a position to identify their concerns about where they wanted to develop and improve, and become more proactive in searching for their own solutions with support and guidance from me as the mentor. Such a position would put me in the role of a facilitator, which is what a mentor is. I practiced asking carefully phrased questions that required extended answers. I also became more comfortable in giving the mentee ample time to respond to questions without feeling an aura of discomfort. I managed to do this by asking follow up questions, or clarifying my question further.

Over time, the findings indicate that I started to see some improvement in my attempts to draw the mentees out, and get them to be participants in their own individual learning. I also started to become more comfortable with this role. It is clear that the developmental aspect of acquiring this value was apparent in both myself as the mentor, and to the mentees. I reflect on this issue thus:

> *I felt that this meeting went well, better than the previous one. I was more conscious of concentrating on Wakwanza. I tried very much to hold back a lot of my own opinions, and tried to get him to give me his view point. I could see that this was not*

> *easy for him…he was expecting me to provide the answers. But I was able to draw him out and listen to what he had to say…*

The findings show that I developed this aspect of mentoring practice as I held more sessions with the mentees. I continued to develop my questioning technique, and involved the mentee in the developmental process more fully. I developed a technique where I would throw back the mentee's requests for assistance if I felt that they should contribute to the solution, or offer an opinion. Gradually I observed the mentees' view of themselves changing, and they started to look at themselves as generators of knowledge rather than merely receivers of it. I recorded this in my journal:

> *I feel that I am improving in involving the mentees in the conversations. I am asking 'what do you think you should do?' more often, rather than offering a solution immediately. I am encouraging the mentee to think for him or herself about the options that are open. I can see that Mchana is getting it…our conversations are becoming richer and deeper. I think this is because she is contributing more of her thoughts to the conversation.*

The findings indicate that my development in this area was not linear and straight forward. There were times when I was quite convinced of my improvement, but upon reflecting on a mentoring session, I would realise that I acted contrary to my expectations. I reflect upon this situation in my journal after a mentoring session with Mchana :

> *Although I felt I was greatly improving on my questioning technique, to draw her out, I thought that maybe I had made a little too many suggestions that could have come from her? This is something I still want to work on, so that I am clear in my mind when to make suggestions, and when to tease them out of the mentee.*

I attempted to justify my reason for talking to my mentees:

> *If it is sharing of experiences, giving advice, telling stories that have happened to me that the mentee can learn from, I need to tell them, I need to talk. And the mentee needs to listen. It is of course important for the mentee to be heard, so that for me as the mentor, I can deduce whether the relationship is going, and what kind of learning is taking place.*

My reflections indicate that my questioning technique is one area in which I struggled to become more comfortable. However, as indicated by one of my mentees during the first

focus group interview, it was clear that I had made some improvements on encouraging the mentees to be active participants in the mentoring relationship. The mentee states:

> *At the beginning [of the mentoring relationship] I must say also, I was a bit vague in my expectations but I thought it would be more of the mentor driven type of relationship, and to me I was looking for her to do a lot of things… like call me, tell me what to do… Then I realised…it's me to talk to her to tell her what it is that I want from the relationship, and that sort of shook me up a bit. I have to do all the work…say what it is that I want from the relationship.*

I reached a point where my questioning technique improved to the extent that I drew out the mentees, and they became active participants in their own personal and professional development.

6.3.3 Providing feedback

The findings indicate that at the beginning of the mentoring relationships, I had issues with providing constructive feedback to the mentees. My approach to providing feedback was hampered by what I perceived as my authoritative approach. I felt that such an approach was not conducive to a good mentoring relationship, and at times contradicted my values. I wanted to come across to the mentees as being supportive, encouraging and nonjudgmental, yet I saw myself as controlling and wanting issues to proceed in a specific way. Megginson et al. (2006:18) mention that mentors tend to adopt this 'managerial, directive style' in the mentoring relationship where basic mentoring skills are lacking. This style tends to reduce benefits to the mentee and also inhibit the learning of the mentor. I can also attribute this approach to my role of being an educator administrator. It is probable that I went through a transition period where my approach to mentoring was influenced by my administrative approach.

Early in the mentoring process, I reflect on this issue in my journal:

> *During my conversation with Mchana, I was impatient at what I saw as her shortcoming. I was forthright and directive…I am beginning to wonder whether these are indications that I am too autocratic, and do not give people a chance to work out their ideas…or that I want them to think like me, or do it the way I want it to be done…rather than encouraging them to come up with their own solutions. As a*

> *mentor, I need to give Mchana more encouragement to come up with her own solutions. I would like to try this next time she comes to me for advice.*

This type of approach influenced the way I gave feedback to the mentees. Rather than having a two way learning dialogue in the session, I observed that my approach was a one way directive. I continued to monitor this type of approach in my style, and continued to make it an issue requiring development in order for me to improve my mentoring practices. My data shows that this process was not quick. I continued to reflect on my mentoring style before I started to feel comfortable. I recorded the following in my journal:

> *I feel that they have been doing this quite well [in participating in the conversations]...but I think it is an area where I am not totally comfortable that I have done my best, and I do need to get better at this...*

As the mentoring relationship progressed, the findings indicate that I became less 'autocratic' and more 'participative' in letting the mentees drive the mentoring relationship, rather than being the driver myself. The mentees participated more frequently in the options they were coming up with to further their development. With this change in my style, feedback to the mentees became more of a learning exchange. It became easier for the mentees to view the feedback positively, appreciate it, and learn from it. Although not overly confident that I had found a mentoring style that I was comfortable with, I felt that I had made some improvement. I recorded this in my reflective journal:

> *I am encouraging the mentees to think for themselves, and participate more actively in the conversations. When Mchana wanted to do the same old lecture method for her class, I gave her my opinion about the issue. I requested her to consider a more interactive teaching method. We explored different options together for her Relaxing class…I encouraged her to reflect on our conversation and decide which way she would like to go. She suggested she would think about it, then draft a lesson plan for our discussion during our next meeting…*

My data shows that I became more comfortable with my mentoring style indicating that I started to view the mentoring relationship as a partnership, where we were working together to achieve desired goals. This participative style was appreciated by the mentees as feedback to them became interactive discussions. I reflected thus in my journal:

> *We focused on the PDP item we were working on. By the end of the meeting we had reached a clear consensus on the status of this PDP. It was clear both to me and to*

the mentee that we were moving forward. … the mentee was confident of her improvement, and I was happy with her contribution to this outcome…

These findings indicate that ultimately I became more participative in my mentoring approach. I worked on the issue of encouraging the mentees to be more proactive and less passive. As a mentor, it became very important for me that my approach to mentoring should fulfil the needs of the mentees. While at the beginning of the mentoring relationship I came across as directive and controlling, I worked on the relationship becoming more participative and mentee driven. I had to bring into play a range of capabilities that were desired in different situations depending on the needs of the mentees. I found that I had to diagnose issues and find solutions, empathise, be ready to offer feedback and confront the mentees where necessary. This required that I draw from my experiences of dealing with similar issues before in my practice. Reflective practice resulted in my ability to change my mentoring practice. I began to recognise the process of enhancing my mentee's thinking. Consequently, I became more facilitative. Unlike at the beginning of the mentoring relationships, it now became apparent that rather than creating conflict, my administrative role complimented my mentoring role.

Giving constructive feedback became easier and second nature. It was gratifying each time the mentees received feedback positively. I enjoyed the turn around as the mentees became owners of the outcomes resulting from the mentoring relationships.

6.3.4 Demands of mentoring

In this section I present my reflections on how much time and effort the mentoring process required from me. I discuss this issue because it emerged from my data as a significant contribution to my learning and development within the mentoring process.

The demands of mentoring progressively dawned on me. Prior to the commencement of the mentoring relationships, I had not envisaged the demands that would be made on my time and on my 'emotional strength'. I had to increase my capacity in this area in order to feel that I was being of benefit to the mentees. The findings from my data indicate that I went through a learning process to come to grips with the demands mentoring made on

me, both in terms of time and emotionally. One example is when Mchana started to get closer to me, quite early in the mentoring relationship. When she started to seek me out, by dropping in at my office without an appointment, I felt uncomfortable and reluctant to spend time with her outside of the time I had already allocated. Although I did not turn her away, I was brief and to the point so that I could get back to the task on my desk. I recorded the following in my journal:

> *Mchana dropped by my office to say hello. I was busy…in the middle of doing something, and I thought it was not an appropriate time for her to come see me. I felt disturbed and wondered whether this would be the norm. I wondered whether I had the time to give to this mentoring outside of what I had already scheduled…*

Critical reflections on my feelings revealed the contradictions in my approach (Whitehead, 1988:42). I wanted to be a 'good' mentor, yet I was reluctant to pay the relationship the time and effort it needed to grow. Leonard and Swap (2005:188) advice that it is important to be aware of the preferences the mentee has in terms of the route they want to take in achieving their goals. Realising the mentoring relationship would strengthen if I took advantage of my mentee's leads to get closer to me, I decided to work on this situation and find a way to improve it. I knew that it was important for me to build a climate of trust as early as possible in our relationship, as this would be beneficial to the learning process. But it took time for me to come to terms with giving the mentoring relationship the time it needed to grow. I reflect on the efforts the mentee made to get close to me;

> *I had not realised the kind of demands this relationship would require of me. I remembered that the weekend before, Mchana had dropped in at my house just for a chat, which she had not done before…. Also she had dropped in at the office just to say hi again…all new …It looks like now the demands on me in this relationship will increase. I have to be ready to be a friend as well…*

Over time, my attitude towards the mentoring relationship started to change, and I began to want to improve the relationship, and give time to it. I also attempted to look at the relationship from the mentee's viewpoint. It is possible that the learning of the mentees increased as I became more comfortable with my role as a mentor. My reflections on mentoring practice changed my attitude towards my mentees. Gradually, my feelings became more welcoming and I felt less resistance to giving the time required to the mentoring process. I recorded my reflections like this:

> *I realised today, that she was probably more comfortable in her role as a mentee, than I was in my role as a mentor. This realisation makes me want to sit down and think about this role, the expectations that the mentees have or expect from me. I need to be ready for them at any time when I am needed…I am on call…*
> *I also want from this experience, to be ready to act as a mentor at a moment's notice. I am wearing the shoes of a mentor… that is how Mchana views me.*

Finally, there are indications that I began to accept the demands of the mentoring role, by admitting that my role is to be available for the personal and professional developmental needs of the mentee. I reflect in my journal about a conversation I carried out with Wakwanza when he came to talk to me about issues of concern to him:

> *I liked this conversation very much. The major reason why I liked it was because it was spontaneous, unplanned. This made me be aware that Wakwanza was seeing me more and more as his mentor, somebody he can turn on at any time, somebody he believes has time for him, and is always willing to talk to him…This conversation clarified for me my role as a mentor, my duty of being on call, being responsive to the needs of my mentees. The conversation brought home to me the responsibility of being a mentor.*

The findings indicate that over time, I came to terms with my role and responsibilities as a mentor in relation to the time mentoring practices require to result in beneficial outcomes. I found that unscheduled sessions are an important aspect of the mentoring relationship where mentees can articulate exactly where they need support and guidance. At these times, the mentees often talked about personal issues closer to their hearts. Although I endeavoured to accommodate these unscheduled sessions, I realised that the structure we had set for carrying out our mentoring conversations helped to keep such sessions at manageable levels.

6.3.5 Structured mentoring conversations

Another significant issue that emerged from my data as having influenced my learning and development in the mentoring process was how I carried out the mentoring sessions using a structured approach.

The structured format I introduced for carrying out the mentoring meetings was adapted from the GROW model presented in Appendix 4 and discussed in Chapter 3. Having

introduced this model, it became a challenge for me to implement it in a way that I was comfortable using it during the mentoring sessions. During meetings, I found myself feeling awkward and uncomfortable with the structure required by the GROW model. I was inclined towards a need for spontaneity and fluidity in exchange between myself and my mentees. I felt restricted when I tried to follow the rigour of a structured line of questioning. I reflect upon these feelings in my journal:

> *I tried to ask relevant questions at points I thought I should. I asked several 'why' questions to probe more deeply what the mentee was saying. Again I felt the restrictions of asking questions I had felt before. It did not feel normal to me…*

It crossed my mind that the reason for my discomfort was because this was a model that had been created for a different audience. Perhaps it would work better if I modified it to suit me as an individual educator in a VET educational institution in Africa. I continued to study this model and tried to find a fit in it that suited me and my unique mentoring style. Over time I introduced a fair amount of spontaneity into the structure and it evolved into a less rigid, more spontaneous arrangement, and the mentoring conversation was more mentee driven. This adjustment in structure allowed me to get the best out of each mentoring session, but also to continue to improve by practicing my targeted mentoring skills. I continued to plan for my mentoring sessions, yet leave room for spontaneity. I reflect on this issue in my journal:

> *What the planning of questions did, was that it prepared me, so that I felt confident that the meeting was going to go well. I was not apprehensive in any way. I think this is because I knew there was no chance I would dry up, as I had my set of questions. That is the advantage of preplanning.*

As time went on and the interactions between the three participants in the study continued, I felt a need to be more structured and focused in my endeavours to gather data. This was in terms of my reflective practice. Rather than attempting to only ask the right questions I found that I needed an instrument to guide my reflections on the meetings with the participants. I found that I needed to guide myself on my action and reflection cyclical process. This led me to construct a self questioning tracking sheet (Appendix 5) that would draw me out and assist me in thinking deeply about the mentoring processes that I was going through and thus aid my reflections. I called the instrument I developed the Action Research Mentoring Conversation Guide. This instrument took me through the whole

action research cycle, helping me and guiding me to focus on the situation at hand. The instrument also guided me on my learning, and what I would do as a result of this new learning. I was able to stand outside the scenario that I was so much a part of, so I could observe what occurred, while at the same time participating. As soon as possible after each mentoring session, I would record my learning and reflections on the action research mentoring conversation guide. I would then review this guide every time just before the next mentoring session. This meant that I was systematically building on my learning and experiences from the previous mentoring sessions and incorporating them into the current session.

The findings indicate that I soon became more comfortable with the structure that I had introduced into the mentoring sessions. Structure soon becomes a way of life and part of the mentoring process. I continued to reflect upon my experiences with it, and it began to be apparent that I could no longer differentiate between when I had structure in the sessions and when I did not. I recorded the following in my reflective journal:

> *This meeting went well. I had prepared for it as usual. I had looked at my instruments, and I knew exactly how I wanted the meeting to run. I was comfortable with the guiding questions. But overall, the meeting did not go any different than when I did not have the set of questions.*

This indicated to me that although the structured questions assisted me to guide our learning as participants, mentoring as a process went beyond this structure. I was keeping the mentoring conversations as spontaneous as possible, with the mentee as the driver. Using structure in the mentoring sessions ensured that I could obtain from the mentee adequate information to help me provide the required guidance and support for all of us to achieve our desired goals. Asking the required probing and leading questions became a natural way for me to run our mentoring sessions. However, the essence of our mentoring relationship went beyond the instruments that I was using as a guide. Structure did not change my approach towards the mentees or their responses to me. It did not change or adversely influence the rapport we had developed in the mentoring relationship. The structure augmented the mentoring conversations and provided essential direction and purpose.

On reflection, I realise that the mentees respected the structure of the mentoring sessions we set up, to guide and help us to achieve our goals. This is deduced from the fact that most of the conversations that had little to do with the mentees' developmental goals as stipulated on their PDPs were held outside of the mentoring meeting schedules, when the mentees would come to talk to me on a casual basis without an appointment. This indicated a healthy development of trust between us, but it also indicated to me that the mentees respected that the formal appointment time was allocated for the achievement of their identified developmental goals. Therefore, while we spent valuable time developing our relationships in terms of trust and friendship, we also recognised that the mentoring relationship was the primary reason for our association so we could develop ourselves personally and professionally as educators.

6.3.6 Summary

The deductions from my data indicate that improving my practice as a mentor was one of the most challenging activities for me in this study. However, there is evidence to suggest that I improved my mentoring capacity significantly. Throughout my mentoring journey, I valued the stimulus to my own reflection. The mentoring conversations afforded me an opportunity to clarify and sharpen my own processes and practices. I learned a lot about myself, my rescuer tendency, my level of questioning. I had the opportunity to practice my skills and get feedback from my mentees. I practiced and improved my active listening, questioning and my skills in giving feedback. Mentoring enhanced my self image, and I saw myself as competent and helpful.

The deliberate efforts I invested in the mentoring process invigorated my interest in mentoring and my reflective practice. This positive attitude passed on to the mentees who could sense my genuine willingness to support and guide them in their learning and development. The focus that I maintained on myself led to my learning and development in the mentoring process.

6.4 Conclusion

The chapter presents the findings that emerged from this study from my perspective as the mentor. The findings outlined above detailing the role modelling, career and the psychosocial functions indicate that I fulfilled the functions expected of a mentor as depicted in literature (Cohen, 1995:3; Geber, 2003a:5; Kram, 1988:23). Our relationships provided a good and healthy number of both career and psychosocial functions. This provided us with greater intimacy and a strong interpersonal bond which contributed to more effective learning on my part as the mentor as well as for the mentees. The mentoring relationships achieved the expectations both of the mentees and my own expectations. The mentees appear to have most valued those aspects which perform psychosocial and role modelling functions.

From my perspective as the mentor, the findings in this study show that I employed the principles and practices of mentoring to improve my mentoring practice in three ways. Firstly, I improved my listening, questioning and feedback skills. Secondly, I examined my values, changed my behaviour and accepted the demands that mentoring exerted on my time and emotions. Thirdly, I enhanced my mentoring practice through devising and making use of new structures which guided our journey through the mentoring process.

The findings indicate that reflective practice prompted both intrapersonal and intrapersonal awareness and understanding of the mentoring process. My ability to reflect on what I was learning on a constant basis made me progressively aware of my own development as a mentor. Reflective practice provided me with a channel for self critique and a useful way of recording my learning. I was able to think before, during and after the process, pondering on how to proceed and how to improve. My access to the mentees' journals also made it possible to draw together our experiences and make connections, thus promoting deeper learning. The benefits for combining reflective practice and mentoring were extensive as it enhanced transfer and application of knowledge and skills and resulted in behavioural change.

These findings indicate that my learning and development benefited not only myself but the mentees as well, as my strengthened mentoring techniques resulted in more effective developmental outcomes. The findings indicate that we were learning both at individual

level and as a group of educators. The changes in my behaviour influenced the way that we carried out the mentoring practice within our context at GTC and contributed to the mentoring process at organisational level.

A discussion of the research findings and conclusions is presented in Chapter 7. Implications of the study are drawn and recommendations suggested.

CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

My research is an exploratory study of mentoring practice and how the mentoring process can contribute to the individual learning of educators. The study took place at Gaborone Technical College (GTC), a Vocational Education and Training (VET) educational institution in Botswana. The participants in the study were three educators working at GTC: myself as the mentor and two mentees. In this study, I argue that under certain circumstances an educator will take the initiative to intervene in the learning and development of other educators in the absence of sufficient organisational support. A developmental intervention utilising mentoring practice would equip all educators involved in the process with the capacity to cope with the changes influencing their internal processes and contribute to organisational learning. Mentoring practice as an organisational development intervention is supported by the fact that literature has acclaimed mentoring as an effective and viable option for personal and professional development.

Utilising action research and self study, this chapter discusses the significance of our exploration of mentoring practice and the implications of our growth and development to educators in VET educational institutions and to organisational learning.

In this final chapter, I summarise the findings and provide an overall discussion of the data and interpretations in view of the emerging themes presented in Chapters 5 and 6 and the literature highlighted in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. In the discussions I draw conclusions and recommendations from the findings. I present personal reflections regarding my learning and the research process. I outline the significance of the study. Finally, I suggest avenues for future research.

7.1 Summary of the findings

It was discussed in Chapter 1 that the arena of education continues to change as systems and processes are put in place to meet the objectives for which educational institutions exist. Educators are expected by their organisations to keep up with these changes. This

means that educators at all levels, whether new or veteran, have continuously to maintain their professional abilities to meet challenges facing them in their institutions. .The purpose of this research was to explore how mentoring could be utilised to support the individual learning and development of educators in the context of a VET educational institution. This study also explored how I could improve my practice as a mentor to increase my capacity to assist educators in their learning and development.

In our attempt to explore the principles and practices of mentoring my two mentees and I formed mentoring relationships that had the objective of learning and development. To provide a holistic view of mentoring and to enhance my understanding of mentoring practice, we embarked on a mentoring journey that explored the mentoring process through my perspective as a mentor as well as the perspective of the mentees. Attention was also given to the impact the mentoring process had on the organisation.

The study concludes that the mentoring process was an effective organisational development intervention that assisted educators at GTC to gain the capacity that helped them cope with the challenges facing them in the organisation. The educators grew in the mentoring relationship and achieved personal and professional development at their individual levels. Through their interaction with their colleagues, the educators shared their knowledge and skills, thus contributing to the learning of the organisation.

The study reveals that mentees benefit from individual learning in a mentoring relationship, and acquire this learning in different ways. The mentees in this study achieved their developmental goals by gaining new knowledge and skills. They were able to perform their jobs as educators more efficiently than before they entered into the mentoring relationship. The mentees reported receiving both support and guidance from their mentor and attributed their development to that support. The learning and development of the educators was enhanced by reflective practice and learning through goal setting. The study also shows that the mentees' awareness of being in a mutually beneficial relationship enhanced their learning.

This study has shown that the mentoring practice was helpful in assisting me improve my mentoring ability. The findings indicate that I improved my listening skills, my questioning techniques, and feedback skills. Findings also show that I became more comfortable with

my role as a mentor, received satisfaction and gained self confidence in supporting and guiding the mentees.

The above section summarises the findings from our exploration of the mentoring practice at GTC. The following section focuses on discussing these findings.

7.2 The learning and development of educators

The findings from this study show that the mentoring practice employed by educators at GTC helped to enhance their learning and development. This confirms what is found in pertinent literature, which maintains that mentoring in general will result in positive outcomes in the learning and development of both the mentor and the mentees. These findings are consistent with previous studies that investigated individual learning in formalised mentoring relationships. Hezlett (2005:521), in her study investigating the learning of entry level employees, confirmed that mentees acquired increased organisational knowledge and skills through the mentoring process. Hale (2000:227) also observed in his study that mentoring led to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which could then be used in the development of insight.

When learning through the mentoring process, mentees and mentors find different routes that enhance their individual learning. As participants in this mentoring journey we adopted learning styles that assisted our growth and contributed to mentoring practices within our context. The discussion below outlines the implications our individual learning on mentoring practice.

7.2.1 Mentoring practice and individual learning and development of mentees

The learning and development of educators is considered an important outcome of a quality mentoring relationship. It is with the objective of the mentees' professional development that mentoring relationships usually commence. The findings from this study confirm that the mentees' learning and development occurred within the mentoring process. Through the aid of reflective practice, the educators grew and changed by building abilities which helped them cope with the changes taking place in the

organisation. The newly acquired knowledge and skills resulted in a change in the behaviour and attitude of the educators, improving the processes in their workplace. They were able to perform their jobs as educators more efficiently than before they entered into the mentoring relationship. This change in behaviour was the most desired outcome for the mentoring relationship. It is through improvement of practice that educators can gain the capacity to keep up with the challenges facing them in their work situations.

The improvement of practice also leads to an appreciation of the learning process and reduces resistance to change. At the beginning of the mentoring process, the educators were reluctant to change their ways of teaching. I suggest that this is a normal reaction especially with educators that have been in the teaching vocation for a few years and are therefore set in their ways. Change requires effort and commitment. The role of the mentor in supporting and guiding mentees appears to be significant in overcoming this resistance to change, and encouraging the mentees to attempt new and challenging ways of doing things. Educators acting as mentors need to be aware of this tendency, and have strategies in place to bring about the desired change in mentees.

It can be concluded from this study that reflective practice enhanced the learning and development of the educators. It emerged from the findings that educators participating in this study used reflective practice as a method through which experiences encountered in the mentoring process were turned into learning episodes. While support offered by the mentoring process was quite important to the mentees, the process of reflecting upon their experiences and challenging their beliefs and values proved to be vital to learning, and to change in their educational thinking, values and practice. This is an important aspect of learning that has been reemphasised by this study. There are advantages to educators embracing the process of reflection and working towards becoming active reflective practitioners. Adopting reflective process is one way that educators can make their tacit knowledge explicit to both themselves and to others. Reflective practice will assist educators to find clarity in issues that pose challenges to their practice. The support and guidance provided by the mentoring process allows reflective practice to occur more meaningfully and systematically thereby facilitating a more directed and deliberate focus to identify goals that result in learning and development.

This study has shown that integrating reflective practice and the mentoring process can be an effective route to individual learning that can enhance the learning of educators in VET educational institutions. The mentoring process has the ability to expose mentees to numerous lived experiences from which mentees can draw their learning. Having undergone the experience mentees need assistance in transforming their frame of reference to understand this experience fully. Helping mentees in a systematic way enables them to develop processes by which they can interrogate their own practice through critical reflection and making explicit their tacit actions.

The study indicates that the mentees gradually achieved independence and self confidence as the mentoring relationship progressed. This is an expected and desirable outcome for a quality mentoring relationship. The feelings of satisfaction and wellbeing enhanced the learning and development of the individual educators. The mentoring relationship is an environment where the mentees gain confidence in their ability to achieve their goals and meet the challenges they face in their practice. The pride and self confidence the educators acquire works to the benefit of the organisation, creating educators who approach their work with confidence, knowing that they have the knowledge and skills to deliver effectively what is expected of them.

It is important for mentors to note that the achievement of this level of independence in mentees is a developmental process in itself. This awareness can assist mentors in working with mentees to get them to a stage where they are able to drive their own learning and development. The stages of the mentoring process inform the mentor when the required support and guidance decreases '…as learners rationalise the process and construct their own knowledge and understanding' (Kerka, 1999:3).

The findings indicate that there was mutual learning within the mentoring relationship. As we progressed through the mentoring project, the mentees became proactive and aggressive in achieving their set goals. They challenged me as their mentor as they stretched their limits pushing me to stretch along with them. This behavioural instinct is a facet of the mentoring relationship that reinforces the mutual learning component of mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2005:4). The mentees reported that they were aware that I was learning as well. This awareness appeared to enhance their learning. The realisation that

they were not only receiving from the mentor, but giving back as well added to their self confidence and pride of being professionals with knowledge to share.

7.2.2 Mentoring practice and individual learning and development of mentors

The learning and development of the mentor is no less important than the learning of the mentees. The ability of the mentor to provide quality support and guidance to the mentee contributes significantly to the learning that takes place within the mentoring relationship. The findings from this study confirm that I learned and developed in tandem with my mentees. The change in my behaviour resulted in an improvement of my mentoring ability.

This study has shown that it is possible for mentors with clear individual developmental goals to achieve learning and developmental objectives. It is quite clear that within a mentoring relationship, the developmental focus should be on the mentee. The mentor's sole purpose is to ensure that the mentee is set on the right path to run their race, and then provide the necessary support and guidance to facilitate the mentee's learning and development, recognising that mentoring is a relationship where both the mentee and the mentor are learners. Therefore, preparation for the role of the mentor is important in facilitating the learning of the mentee. It often happens that mentors are not trained adequately for the mentoring role. Mentors are frequently left to rely on their values and intuition to guide mentees. This study strongly suggests that mentors should have clearly articulated personal development plans that outline the goals they desire to achieve.

Healy and Welchert (1990:19) suggest that 'mentors, in the very act of guiding and promoting others, act to effect their own transformation'. However, from a general perspective, it may be that the learning of the mentor within the mentoring process is involuntary and unplanned. A strategic intent by the mentor to learn within the relationship could be beneficial to the mentor's development. Effective mentors need to acquire the skills of reflective practice and of helping others to reflect. I suggest that this is the critical competence o a mentor that compliments other mentoring functions.

Focusing on the importance and significance of the development of the mentor is an issue that can be of benefit to any educational institution. Capacity building in mentoring practice

will ensure that there is continuous feeding into the mentoring process to make it more effective. Firstly, such a focus can contribute to the creation of a mentoring culture within the organisation. Secondly, it is possible that such a culture of awareness of the benefits of mentoring will encourage willingness in other educators to mentor. Progressively, a pool of mentors with valuable mentoring skills could become part of the organisation. The challenge, however, is not to lose sight of the very essence of a mentoring relationship, which is to support and guide the mentee in their own learning and development.

7.2.3 Implication for practice

The findings relating to the learning and development of educators at an individual level has an important effect on practice. It is suggested that the onus is on educators to be proactive and pursue their professional development, continuously improving their knowledge and skills in their chosen vocation. Educators need to keep up to date with the changes occurring in the external environment. Understanding and acknowledging one's own abilities, strengths and weaknesses within the teaching-learning environment is a powerful form of professional development. Keeping abreast with new knowledge and skills provides opportunity to perform to the standards expected by the institution. Through mentoring, one can begin to identify and set one's own agenda for learning and development.

7.3 Learning and development from the organisational perspective

Viewing the mentoring process from the perspective of the organisation is critical to providing a holistic picture of developmental mentoring. As discussed in Chapter 1, organisations are open systems and are therefore influenced by external forces that demand internal changes in the organisation. Educators, along with their organisations, have little choice but to find avenues to embrace these changes. Where insufficient support is provided by the organisation to enable educators to face these challenges, they may use their own initiative to provide themselves with the capacity to tackle the challenges. The findings in this study show how I took the initiative to implement a developmental intervention that resulted in benefits for the mentees, myself as the mentor, and the organisation. These findings indicate our exploration of mentoring practice to

assist in our individual learning within our context contributed to the learning of the institution. Below I discuss the findings emanating from our exploration of mentoring and the implications on organisational learning.

7.3.1 Mentoring practice in the VET educational institution

The findings in this study indicate that I provided the mentees with the traditionally recognised mentoring functions of career, psychosocial and role modelling. The mentees reported receiving both support and guidance from me and attributed their development to that support. Ideally, a combination of all these functions best serves the benefits of a mentoring relationship (Kram, 1988:24). When mentoring is viewed as a holistic process, it is less important to consider the effects of single roles, but it becomes imperative to assess how the needs of the mentees are served and their satisfaction with the experience.

As been shown by this study, the psychosocial and role modelling dimensions should be viewed as key qualities of an effective developmental mentoring relationship, with the ability to support the career dimension strongly. I have found that the process of learning and development is unique to the context in which the mentoring relationship takes place. The role modelling, career and psychosocial roles presented themselves in different ways to facilitate our learning and development in our situation.

In this study, role modelling appears to have played an important part in influencing the mentees' learning. The study suggests that the presence of a role model to observe and emulate has a positive impact on the individual learning of the educator. Mentees who admire their mentors and view them as role models may be more attentive to their mentors' behaviour and more likely to attempt behaviour that they observe their mentors employing successfully.

This suggests that role modelling is a critical function for mentors to consider. The unconscious and conscious levels of role modelling are issues that mentors need to become aware of as they may influence the way mentors choose to support and guide mentees. Mentors should be aware that mentees can learn from them in a variety of ways.

In their role, mentors should be encouraged to provide opportunities for mentees to observe them, ranging from inviting mentees into their classroom to observe them teach, to giving mentees opportunities to watch them conducting meetings. Mentors may reinforce the conscious level at which they can utilise role modelling and diminish the unconscious and uncontrollable level through which this function is displayed, by devising a variety of opportunities for the mentee to learn. Such a strategy could impact positively on the individual learning of not only the mentee but the mentor as well. The role modelling function encourages mentors to think carefully about their practice before demonstrating it in the company of others. This is a learning opportunity of which mentors should take full advantage.

The career development function comes across as a significant technique that a mentor can use to impart required knowledge and skills to the mentee. The impact of this function is therefore critical for the professional development of educators in a VET educational institution. It is through this role that I worked with the mentees to help them obtain knowledge and skills in student centred learning that support outcomes based education (OBE). It is also through career development functions that we improved classroom management processes, and specific administrative skills.

The career development function becomes an important role, aligning the personal and professional developmental objective of the mentees to those of the organisation. Clutterbuck (2005:3) suggests that mentors can assist mentees perceive their developmental goals from the context of the organisation. Such a focus results in the highest impact for the educational institution. In developmental mentoring it is vital that the mentor has the ability to recognise where there may be conflict between the developmental goal of the mentee and those of the organisation. Where there is wide variance the mentor needs to have the ability to reconcile these differences. The participants in this mentoring project entered the relationship primarily to find mechanisms to assist them meet challenges brought about by the changes that were taking place within the organisation. The mentor envisioned a situation where the transition from the traditional modes of teaching to OBE would be smoother with the help of the mentoring process. However, the findings indicate that the developmental objectives of the mentees were varied and did not necessarily align with what could be considered most beneficial to the organisation. Time and effort was required from me as the mentor to shift the thinking

of the mentees to a developmental perspective that was more holistic in nature. In the mentoring relationship, we had to work on obtaining a balance between personal and professional goals.

The psychosocial function was instrumental in enhancing the relationship building aspect of our experience of the mentoring process. To enhance the quality of the relationship between mentors and mentees it is important to allow considerable time to build rapport and get to know one another, especially in a mentoring process with developmental aims. The mentoring relationship was enhanced by the activities we undertook together such as the face-to-face mentoring conversations and classroom observations. The mentoring conversations played an important role in building trust between us. When a mentor and mentee work in a supportive and trusting environment it is possible to make values and beliefs about teaching and learning explicit, both for the mentor and for their mentees. In this way, learning occurs through critical reflection by both mentor and mentee. In effect, learning is incrementally accrued by the organisation.

In my experience, friendship within the mentoring relationship was significant. I believe this is one of the reasons why we achieved such deep trust, which in turn enhanced our learning and development. At the onset of the relationship, the mentees seemed to equate the mentoring role to friendship. They reached out to me immediately in social ways. This kind of reaction to the commencement of a mentoring relationship may be attributed to our social interactions in the African context. When one reaches out to another, the boundaries between personal and professional relationships become blurred. I found that it was difficult for me to keep my distance from the mentees when they started reaching out. At the beginning my thinking was that the mentees would benefit more if I focused on their personal development plans (PDPs). I soon realised that the relationships would only grow stronger if I allowed them to evolve in their own unique ways. Mentors in educational institutions in Africa should take this fact into consideration. In our experience, a mentoring relationship with clear developmental objectives had social components that augmented our learning and development.

This study has highlighted the advantages of utilising structure in the mentoring process. It is recognised that a way of focusing the learning and development to the desired outcomes assists in achieving the desired goals. Our approach to mentoring practice in

this study has highlighted some interesting observations. While the mentoring project was not a formal mentoring programme, I utilised structure to emphasise and take advantage of the developmental focus of the mentoring process. Our mentoring process was augmented by the use of PDPs, training in reflective practice, and structuring of mentoring conversations. This structure is explained in detail in Chapter 4, section 4.5.

It can be said that our mentoring project at GTC was a hybrid type of mentoring. It may be described as facilitated partnerships (Flett, 2002:12) falling somewhere between formal and informal relationships, where aspects of structure were instilled into the mentoring process to assist in goal achievement, and there was no involvement by the management of the organisation. This study has shown that such facilitated partnerships can offer beneficial developmental options to educators in educational institutions, especially in VET educational institutions in Africa. Badsha (2001:3) asserts that the practice of mentoring in educational institutions in Africa should be channelled towards specific aims and should not be left to chance. Daloz (1999:211) states that structure in a mentoring relationship assists in learning. A facilitated mentoring process can achieve these two objectives, probably at a lower cost than the implementation of a formal mentoring programme. What my study has highlighted however, is that mentoring is a flexible intervention that can be utilised for the benefit of learning and development. As is evidenced by my study, mentoring can be successfully carried out as a personal initiative between educators who intrinsically desire to improve their practice. Educators are encouraged to consider different avenues to make use of mentoring as a developmental intervention, ensuring that a high quality of mentoring practice is maintained. However, the support of the organisation when mentoring is practiced cannot be overlooked. It is acknowledged that the impact of mentoring would be much greater if the educational institution supported such an endeavour.

The demands of mentoring are an aspect of mentoring practice that emerged from the data. It has been highlighted in literature that mentoring requires substantial time and commitment, for observations, follow-up face-to-face conversations, and ongoing support. In this study I had underestimated the amount of time and dedication mentoring would demand of me. My experience is similar to that of Speedy (2003:9), who, in an action research mentoring project in an educational institution in South Africa, found that the demands of time went beyond the expectations of the participating mentors. This

highlights the important fact of being aware of the effort required to culture a quality mentoring relationship. Mentoring is a powerful and beneficial relationship that requires work and commitment from both the mentee and the mentor. The benefits that are reaped from this relationship compensate for the work both have contributed to it.

7.3.2 Mentoring practice and organisational learning

The findings indicate that mentoring practice resulted in positive outcomes for the mentees, the mentor and the organisation. This is a significant finding for the objectives of this study. The mentoring intervention was initiated as a result of an external demand for change without a requisite system wide intervention to support educators to meet the challenges facing the organisation. It is important to note that the individual intervention resulted in changes in the behaviour of the educators to the extent of impacting on the learning of the organisation. This study adds to existing research in this area by finding that the mentoring process contributes to organisational learning. A study carried out by Singh et al. (2002:398) found similar results, where mentoring was perceived as assisting in knowledge sharing and interpersonal communication in the organisation. Cunningham (1999:441), through her study of educators in higher education, found that the personal and professional development emanating from mentoring benefited the mentees, the mentors and the organisation. Hale (2000:228), investigating the dynamics of mentoring as a route to personal and organisational learning, confirmed that the mentoring process resulted in the development of mentee insights which contributed to organisational learning.

The findings indicate that the mentoring process influenced the professional development of educators outside of the mentoring project. It is noted that one of the most important outcomes of mentoring is that it promotes professionalism within the organisation. The mentee becomes a better professional and the mentor, having contributed directly to this development, benefits from it. When mentoring results in improved practice, changes in behaviour and attitude are apparent in the way the educators go about their duties. It is through this observable behaviour, and from interactions with their colleagues that the professionalism that results from mentoring at individual level passes to others within the

organisation. This is a significant outcome of the mentoring process that links directly to organisational behaviour.

Interactions with other colleagues while participating in a mentoring relationship impacts on group dynamics of the organisation, and benefits the organisational knowledge bank. The findings from the study indicate that the mentees shared their learning with others in their departments. This came about because once the mentees obtained new knowledge they put this newly acquired knowledge into use immediately in their practice. The shared knowledge made it possible for those outside of the mentoring project to benefit from our association and acquire information that made it easier for them to face the challenges brought about by the external environment. The sharing of the information is one way of carrying new knowledge and skills into the knowledge bank of the organisation.

The discussion above infers that the mentoring intervention contributed to the learning of the organisation. It is suggested that as the educators learn at their individual level, they contribute to the knowledge bank of the institution through their learning. The interactions that the educators have with their colleagues highlight the group level knowledge sharing. Senge et al. (1997:41) suggest that when people are 'learning how to learn together' they are contributing to the learning of the organisation. The changes in behaviour that result from such collaborative learning influences the processes that makes up the daily activities of the educator's job. These changes in processes can result in the institution learning to perform tasks in a more efficient way.

It is noted that this study was not able to establish the extent of the transfer of the knowledge acquired by the individual educators to the organisation. Analysis of the extent and impact of the transfer of knowledge to others was beyond the scope of this exploration. Therefore, although findings show that mentees did share their knowledge with others in the sphere of their practice, the extent of this knowledge sharing and its overall impact on the organisational process was not established. This is an interesting area that may benefit from future research.

Another implication of the mentoring intervention was the creation of awareness about mentoring. This mentoring project has a sample of three educators. However, the impact of the action research operation influenced those beyond our sphere. Our growth and

development soon resulted in self confidence and wellbeing that immediately passed to those around us. Other educators could see what we were doing to meet the challenges that we were all facing in our common situation. This reaction to mentoring practice serves to create an awareness of the positive outcomes of mentoring in the institution and contributes positively to the attitude of the organisation towards mentoring practice. Demand for mentoring can have a multiplier effect. There will be increased interest in mentoring as the practice becomes more visible in the organisation. Especially as positive outcomes of mentoring become visible, people will seek mentoring as a way of developing themselves.

Our mentoring experience at GTC confirms that successful individual mentoring intervention is a reality that can be achieved by VET educators. As the external environment continues to influence the internal processes of VET educational institutions, educators must be encouraged to take charge of their own learning and development. To keep up with the rapidly changing times, educators must be encouraged to take steps to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. Taking up such an initiative made a difference to the lives of those who participated directly in the intervention at GTC, to those who were closely associated with them, and to the organisation as a whole.

7.3.3 Implication for practice

The findings relating to learning and development within the mentoring process from an organisational perspective highlight a second implication for practice advanced by this study. This is the possibility of creating a pool of mentors within institution. The interaction with others as one experiences the mentoring relationship, and the awareness mentoring may create within the institution, means that other educators may aspire to become mentors. This contributes to the notion that the mentoring practice has the potential of extending to other educators in the institution. The individual intervention that I initiated created awareness in the institution about mentoring. Because we were all educators working towards similar organisational goals, my colleagues began to be aware that they also had knowledge and skills to share with others. The mentees in this study alluded to the fact that they desired to mentor others within the institution. They attributed this feeling to the positive mentoring experienced they had undergone. The experience of participating

in a mentoring relationship impressed upon the participants the full value of such a relationship, and as a result, they would consider taking the role on themselves. This indicates that there is a possibility that educators experiencing or becoming aware of positive outcomes of mentoring would be available and willing to mentor others.

7.4 My personal reflections on my experience as a mentor

This thesis is predominantly a self study of my reflections as a mentor and how I, with the collaboration of others, embraced the mentoring process in my workplace, learned from it and improved my mentoring practice. I find that the uniqueness of my study is the objective with which I went into the mentoring relationships that we formed. My PDP highlighted the fact that I aspired to improve my mentoring practice. This became my focus for the duration of the study. The culmination of my reflections, this study has highlighted that within the mentoring process the immense learning has been from two perspectives. One is my feelings of satisfaction and pride at the depth of learning and development that my mentees went through, and how they changed in this process. The second is the improvement of my mentoring practice.

My mentoring journey was not a straight forward process. My shortcomings became clearer to me through my relationship with my mentees. My attempts to assist them to achieve their goals highlighted the gap in my capacities that needed to be filled in order to help them achieve their objectives. A significant point to highlight is the role of the mentees' reflections of their learning and how I used them in my own learning. The mentees' reflective journals that I had access to contributed to my continuous self assessment. I found myself often asking the question 'why'. This enabled me to reflect on my thoughts, share my knowledge and collaborate with the mentees to improve teaching practice. As a mentor I gained a deeper understanding of my mentoring role through working with the mentees. In this role, it was pleasing to assume the role of teacher and guide. Discussions about teaching stimulated me and revitalised my appreciation of the teaching vocation. Sharing incidents from my past benefited not only the mentee but me as well. I was able to relive these experiences, reflect upon them, taking into consideration the views of the mentees. This became a learning experience for me. Listening to the mentees' voices and critically reflecting on their thoughts helped me to clarify my own

thoughts about my growing self awareness and the mentoring practice, without which I suggest it would not have been possible for me to gain such self awareness.

The mentoring journey that we embarked upon enriched and changed me. The experience surpassed my expectations. I had not envisaged how deep the changes within me would be. I improved the attributes I set out to improve. In the process of doing this, I directly participated in the learning and development of other educators within my institution. I grew in confidence, and became happy and satisfied with the outcomes emanating from the mentoring relationship. During the progression stage of the mentoring process it seemed to me that I watched from the sidelines as the mentees took charge of what they wanted to achieve from the relationship. I was proud of what we accomplished as a group, and the sense of achievement was uplifting.

The changes in me had a significant impact on the workplace. I acquired a sense of achievement at my individual level that changed my perspectives and the way I looked at my practice. I welcomed the opportunities that presented themselves where my mentoring capacity was required. Mentoring other educators gave me a sense of satisfaction and genuine fulfilment. It also re-energized my interest in teaching as we worked together with the mentees on different projects to enhance their pedagogic skills. The mentoring journey connected us to one another and renewed us individually and collectively as a group of educators. We developed a supportive network within the organisation. The growth and development taking place in me at my individual level was positively impacting the group and organisational levels of the institution, thus contributing to organisational learning.

This self study has enabled me to show how I have created knowledge in collaboration with others. I have now developed an understanding of my abilities in relation to mentoring, and how my values and behaviour are influenced by this understanding. What has been important for me is to find my own voice through my experience, as this has contributed significantly to my learning and afforded me an opportunity to share my learning with others.

I believe that in my practice I can now be a better mentor than when I started off on this ‘journey of awareness’ (Jousse, 2000:25). I also know that this does not mean that I have no other challenges or room to grow as a good mentor. My mentoring journey that

commenced at GTC is only the beginning of my continuous learning and development in my exploration of the principles and practices of mentoring. In retrospect, I realise that my 'lived experience' (Whitehead, 1988:43) has been, and continues to be a 'laboratory of awareness' (Jousse, 2000:25) where what I have intrinsically known was drawn out and enhanced by the mentoring engagement.

7.5 Reflections on action research approach used

The action research method used in this study suited the intention and purpose of the study. The three main participants in the study, employed as educators in GTC, entered into complex mentoring relationships over a period of two academic terms. Data was collected through various methods, including face-to-face mentoring conversations, reflective journals, and focus group interviews. Data from these sources was collected, organised and analysed.

By employing action research, the participants and I were able to live through our experience of mentoring and learn as we experienced the process. Action research follows a continuous improvement model, and therefore was an ideal choice for an exploratory study. I improved on the processes that I was employing, and this made it possible to change and implement systems and structures that best worked for our mentoring relationships. Action research is subjective, in that the researcher is a part of the action herself rather than detached from it and merely observing it. This is a strong point in action research. This strength was augmented by my self study approach to the enquiry. I was able to experience things directly and know them immediately. In this research, my bias towards the importance of subjective experience guided the focus of my research as well as challenged my subjective views through the process of reflection.

The cyclical process of action research gave more chances to learn from experience. The research process demanded responsiveness as the research progressed. At the design stage of the research process, I clarified the main action research cycle present in the study. This made the feeding back of information to the next cycle less abstract. At the beginning of the mentoring journey the number of cycles presenting themselves created a fuzzy ground (Dick, 1993:11) to work from. Gradually clarity found its way into the action

research process, especially after I introduced the action research mentoring conversation guide (Appendix 5). I was able to use information gained from each action research cycle to inform the next cycle of the process. This put me in a position to seek more understanding of the mentoring process, to critically reflect on my mentoring capability and to learn more about this phenomenon. Action research enabled me to integrate theory, research and practice, and to generate my own personal theory by living out my experiences and improving my practice (Whitehead, 1988:43). It offered us opportunity and flexibility as group, to break new ground, and do what had not been done before at GTC for the benefit of our learning and development. Action research was congruent with the field of Organisational Behaviour, as we continued to learn and develop at different levels, and contribute effectively to the learning of the organisation.

In our exploration of mentoring, we utilised reflective practice as a learning intervention. Incorporating action research and reflective practice necessitated that all of the participants learn how to reflect and how to keep a journal, a technique we needed to master before moving on to professional and personal development. Although this was a huge challenge, the benefits that accrued as a result of this learning were significant. The writing of the reflective journal challenged me and my mentees to examine our feelings and to question our assumptions helping us gain additional clarity about our learning and development. We generated rich descriptive accounts of our personal experiences. Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis portray our voices in the attempt to share our unique learning experience with others. Without the reflective journals it is probable that experiences and learning episodes may have been overlooked.

To illustrate the role of action research in the mentoring project as an organisational development intervention, I use Benton's (2005:51) nine-step model that was utilised as a framework. In Chapter 4 I explained the planning component of the research using steps 1 to 5 of the Benton model. I explained how steps 6 to 9 would involve evaluation and reflections of the actual events from the action research. The following steps are therefore an evaluation of the actual events.

Step 6: Evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the intervention

The mentoring process as an organisational development intervention was effective. Using reflective practice became a powerful means through which we articulated our learning and development. Reflecting on our everyday activities assisted in providing meaning and direction to our learning. The mentees were able to internalise their new teaching techniques and found it exciting to think through their classroom management and other ways of making their classes interesting. Action research confirmed its fitness for use and validated our practice. We felt empowered and in control of our learning and development. It was clear from our activities that we were making progress, learning new things and doing things differently. At the institutional level, the mentees were becoming confident and sharing their knowledge with others around them. The act of observation and recording may have distorted the 'natural' conduct of the mentoring relationship. As the researcher, I tried to maintain 'normality' by attempting to keep separate the research component of the action research study from the mentees. I found that the component that distorted this approach was the requirement that the mentees had to submit their reflective journals as required. However, the positive developmental outcomes and the friendship levels we attained indicate that the research component of the study did not adversely influence our mentoring relationship.

Step 7: Reflect on the implications of the intervention

The organisational development intervention brought about change to us as individuals. I found the intervention beneficial to both myself and my mentees. I was impressed with the progress of the mentees and how quickly they took charge of their own learning, indicating that people have untapped capacities that require no more than an invitation to demonstrate themselves. Mentees were eager to participate in discussions and contributed significantly to the outcomes.

Action research accelerated the achievement of our learning. It proved to be meaningful, relevant and useful. We became confident and the process enhanced our self esteem. The mentees were proud of their new knowledge and their colleagues commented on how they had changed and become more confident.

Step 8: Reflect on the overall process

The action research process provided a lot of insight. The process made it possible for us as educators to gain insight into what changes we needed to make. The mentees became closer to other colleagues and now looked at issues from a more developmental perspective.

The mentoring project proved successful, and showed me that this was an effective organisational development intervention for the educators. Other educators became interested in the process, and enquired how they could join such an endeavour. This indicated to me that the educators at GTC were ready to embrace mentoring as a way of learning and developing in their profession.

This process has brought a behavioural change in me and in the mentees. Our thought processes and our approach to our practice changed. We became more willing to participate in developmental activities, such as sharing information with other educators. We also became more open minded and willing to attempt new ideas in the classroom. While previously the mentees were reluctant to think out of the box, they were now going out of their way to find innovative ways to reach out to the students, and achieve a student centred approach to learning.

Step 9: Begin the cycle again by identifying a new or continuing area of concern

There were many issues that emerged from the action research process that indicated we had internalised the mentoring process and were effectively using it as an intervention for learning and development, and highlighting what we could carry with us to the next action research cycle.

7.6 Significance of the study

This study contributes three issues to the body of knowledge. Firstly, through an innovative action research learning experience, the mentoring process resulted in the educators at GTC improving their practice by developing personally and professionally. The

empowering and enriching effects of the mentoring experience resulted in the educators contributing to the learning of the organisation. The observable processes that the educators displayed as a result of their learning and the interactions they had with others extends the understanding that mentoring practice links to the field of Organisational Behaviour. Secondly, as a mentor I improved my mentoring capacities through my participation in the mentoring process utilising a self study approach. Thirdly, the study presents an innovative research design that serves as an example of how one can undertake action research in mentoring practice in the context of organisational behaviour.

The findings of this study have provided valuable insights into many aspects of mentoring, and particularly the presentation of mentoring practice in one VET educational institution in Botswana. My study has shown how the mentoring process resulted in the learning and development of educators. Our exploration of the principles and practices of mentoring positively impacted on the practice of the mentees, and helped them to cope with the changes brought about by the external forces. This study has accentuated the importance of mentoring in educational institutions, and for educators. The value of this study lies in the fact that it provides insight into the personal and professional development of educators in VET educational institutions through mentoring.

This study has had an impact on me as an educator and as a mentor because I was able to create my own personal theory through enhancing my mentoring practice. To facilitate our mentoring journey, we formed complex relationships within an action research approach that incorporated mentoring conversations and reflective practice. Going through numerous cycles of action and reflection culminated in our personal and professional development.

7.7 Limitations of the study

The findings and conclusions developed in this qualitative exploratory study are based on descriptive data collected from the research participants in one VET educational institution in Botswana. Consistent with studies focusing on a single case, rich descriptions are used to assist the readers in determining the extent to which the study contains elements that

match their own particular situations and circumstances (Merriam, 1988:20). The following limitations are however acknowledged.

This study concentrates on three people. There were two mentees and myself as the mentor. The data informing my study is based on intensive and subjective interaction between the three participants. The findings are therefore based on a very small sample.

This study was carried out in one VET educational institution situated in Botswana. The findings are therefore based on a single unit. Because the enquiry was concerned with one organisation it is not known what the implications are for other organisations.

This study was conducted over a period of two academic terms. At GTC this was equivalent to a period of six months. The time for such an investigation may therefore be considered relatively short. It is recognised that had the study been carried out over a much longer period of time, the results emanating from the study may have revealed greater impacts on the mentees, the mentor and the organisation.

Because of the small sample of participants in this study, and the fact that it was carried out in a single unit, the findings from this study cannot be generalised to other settings. The intent of this study was not to make generalisations for a large population of educators. Rather, these findings were intended to relate specifically to the context in which they were generated. Nevertheless, those educators working in other educational intuitions of higher learning may find the results of this study interesting and relevant. Ultimately, it will be up to the reader to determine the transferability of the study's findings and conclusions. I have attempted to provide sufficient description of our experiences so that readers can make decisions about the comparability of this setting to other settings.

7.8 Recommendations

Based on the discussions of the findings and the implications for practice, this study presents the following recommendations for consideration.

Vocational Education and Training educational institutions should focus on how mentoring can be encouraged in the educational institution in order to promote mentoring for all educators in the organisation. Encouraging an environment where mentoring can occur may require a cultural shift towards valuing mentoring, more specifically for educational institutions that have not previously been exposed to institutional mentoring. To encourage mentoring openly, it is important for the educational institution to create opportunities for mentoring relationships to flourish. Management would need to give thought to providing a dedicated meeting space in the institution for staff interactions. This may afford the less experienced educators the opportunity to interact frequently with their more experienced colleagues. Such meetings and discussions could identify developmental gaps that educators at different levels would like to fill.

Mentoring should be visibly supported by the educational institution in which it is present. The support of the organisation when mentoring is practiced within the VET educational institution is critical to the success of mentoring practice. Mentoring can be an organisational professional development strategy which management encourage. Overt support of mentoring would provide leverage to the organisation in terms of mentoring outcomes consistently meeting individual objectives aligned to organisational objectives. It is observed that the mentoring relationships in this study could have had greater impact on individual learning if it had the support of the educational institution. Mentoring can be an effective intervention to benefit educators when the relationship is based on mutual trust, mutual respect and open communication. However, it is also important to recognise that the lack of support from the organisation should not be a stumbling block for educators in VET educational institutions in Africa to commence mentoring relationships.

It is recommended that VET educational institutions should enhance individual learning of their educators which has the potential to result in organisational learning. To fulfil this professional development endeavour, the onus is on the educator as the person who is responsible for their own learning to pursue this objective. Educators must realise that their organisations have a bank of knowledge and skills in the form of their more knowledgeable and experienced colleagues within the institution. The advantage then is that mentees who make use of this available and untapped resource can put it to good use within their environment immediately it is transferred. Educators who desire to improve their practice to be in line with the changes occurring within the institution can make use of mentoring

and tap into this available knowledge bank. Mentors provide immense value to their mentees in the roles they undertake.

Vocational Education and Training educational institutions should consider the importance of training a pool of mentors. Training would build mentoring capacities within the institution and provide mentors with the confidence they need to share and transfer knowledge to their mentees. Such training would emphasise reflective practice as an essential competence that mentors should acquire. It is critical that mentors provide the guidance and support required for the mentee to effectively reflect upon their experiences. Mentees also need to embrace reflective practice and learn to make it a part of their daily routine as educators. The implication of incorporating reflective practice as part of mentor training in VET educational institutions is advantageous for educators. Once learnt and adopted, reflective practice is a powerful learning intervention that educators can employ to assist them in improving their practice, especially within a mentoring relationship.

Another recommendation concern VET educational institutions in Africa considering the provision of a framework for a mentoring programme for educators both in academic and administrative departments. As educational institutions are propelled towards a more systematic approach to learning and development, the power of mentoring can become an avenue through which mentees can gain knowledge, skills and abilities quickly. Whether the institutions decide to implement formally managed mentoring programmes, or institutionally encouraged informal mentoring, mentoring initiatives should include clearly stated purposes and goals with a focus on the professional growth and development of the educators. It is clear that mentoring can be effectively used as an alternative to professional development of educators within these institutions.

Finally, it is recommended that this enquiry be extended to other VET educational institutions in Africa and possibly compare the findings from such explorations.
This recommendation is valid when viewed from the perspective of the challenges facing VET educational institutions generally in Africa, and within GTC and other technical colleges in Botswana in particular. One such challenge is the implementation of OBE within these educational institutions. Comparative findings from similar studies will contribute to the strengthening and creation of awareness of the principles and practices of mentoring within educational institutions situated in Africa.

7.9 Suggestions for future research

This study examined mentoring as an intervention that could be utilised to enhance the individual learning and development of educators in one VET educational institution in Africa. This empirical investigation of mentoring and individual learning should result in some new and interesting directions in research on learning and development within the mentoring process. Based on the experiences from this study, the following suggestions for future research are presented for further debate and exploration.

Firstly, this study focused on the participants' involvement in mentoring and the way in which mentoring promoted their learning and development in their practice. An interesting study might investigate the extent to which knowledge is shared within the organisation as a result of mentoring practice, and how this relates to organisational behaviour.

Secondly, additional insights into the nature of mentor's learning may prove valuable for organisational development professionals responsible for fostering the development of potential mentors.

Thirdly, mentoring research may benefit from a closer examination of facilitated partnerships or a similar mentoring project as presented in this study, using a wider sample size, and over a longer period of time.

7.10 Conclusion

This fascinating mentoring journey had the broad aim of exploring mentoring practice and how this practice could contribute to the learning and development of educators in a VET educational institution. The mentoring process provided us with the capacity to cope with the changes brought about by the external environment. Our learning and development resulted in change in behaviour which impacted positively on us as educators and on the organisation. We contributed to the learning of the organisation and influenced behaviour within the organisation.

The findings from this study have significant implications for educational institutions in general, and VET educational institutions in Africa in particular, for considering strategies that would enhance individual learning and propel educators towards the achievement of desired developmental goals, through the practice of mentoring.

The learning of individual educators through the mentoring process helps the organisation adapt to changes brought about by the external environment. Educators who do not keep up could be disadvantaged, and not have the capacity to deal with the changes influencing their work life. Educators who find an avenue for professional development would have a better chance at performing to the standards expected by their institutions.

This study has confirmed that mentoring is a powerful intervention that can be strategically implemented in the institution to enhance individual and organisational learning. The mentoring intervention could be implemented and encouraged by management in the institution to foster a culture of continuous learning and development. Creating a mentoring culture can provide opportunity to interact with one another and share knowledge that will renew us individually and collectively as VET educational institutions. This has the potential to impact positively on the organisation, assist in the management of change, and encourage new and effective ways of doing things.

Mentoring is a dynamic professional development activity that requires systematic and careful thought to result in the benefits to mentees, mentors and educational institutions. This study was an exploratory examination of the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution in Botswana. Because mentoring does not occur as a systematic process in these institutions, this is an important study with practical implications. Although our mentoring experiences are specific to the context of Gaborone Technical College, the outcomes of this study are relevant to other VET educational institutions in Botswana, and many other institutions of higher learning situated in Africa.

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APPENDIX 1

- LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT -

University of Pretoria
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0002

Letter of Informed Consent

This form confirms the consent of **----------**to participate in the research project titled "The principles and Practices of Mentoring for educators in a Technical College in Africa: A Self study Enquiry" conducted by Julia Akumu Nyanjom under the supervision of Dr. Hilary Geber. The purpose of the study is to investigate how mentoring capacities, and the principles and practices that inform the mentoring process present themselves in a technical college situated in Africa, and how learning from mentorship can be explored to assist in individual learning in the technical college.

I have been informed, to an appropriate level of understanding, about the purpose and methodology of this research project, the nature of my involvement, and any possible risks that I may be exposed by virtue of my participation.

I agree to participate in this project by doing the following:

- Maintaining a mentoring relationship with the researcher, Julia Akumu Nyanjom, as a mentee, for at least six months, beginning immediately
- Keeping a reflective journal and submitting it monthly for analysis
- Accommodating interviews and/or conversations at regular intervals during the relationship

I understand and agree that:

- My participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from this research at any time without penalty
- The researcher has the right to terminate my participation in this research at any time
- All data will be kept in a secure place inaccessible to others
- Confidentiality will be assured in that only the researcher will have access to the data
- Anonymity will be assured, since data will be coded in such a way that I will not be identified
- I will be able to read or obtain the research report once it is finalised
- The benefits of participating in this study include the following:
    - I will have an opportunity to reflect upon teaching practice
    - The mentoring relationship may impact on me personally, professional and academically
    - I may experience a sense of satisfaction for having contributed to educational research
- There are no greater risks for my involvements other than those ordinarily incurred in daily life

I understand that it may be desirable, for comparative purposes, to use the data from this research for comparison with related existing research. I understand that any subsequent use of the data from this research will conform to the above parameters.

I understand that the results of this research will be used for publication.

I have read the consent form and understand the nature of my involvement. I agree to participate within the above stated parameters

Name of participant:
Signature of Participant
Date:
Address:
Phone Numbers:
Email address:

APPENDIX 2

- INTRODUCTION TO REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING (SAID FRAMEWORK) -

INTRODUCTION TO REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING

As a participant in this research project, you are invited to maintain a reflective journal. In the journal you are requested to reflect upon your mentoring relationship through the description of your learning experiences. You may wish to become aware of how to reflect on your learning experiences and focus on some of the descriptions listed below.

What is a reflective journal?

Reflection is the critique of practice - the values, beliefs and attitudes that are implicit in the practice.

A reflective journal is a clear and concise narrative that follows the reflection or critical thinking about one's learning experience or specific learning events. It is not a traditional diary or a daily log. It is a writing tool, a learning mechanism which involves many different writing techniques to enhance reflection and creative thought. It is used to analyse small events happening in everyday life, whether positive or negative.

Encouraging reflective writing

Reflection is a skill that usually needs to be learned. To encourage reflection on daily incidents in your practice during the mentoring relationship the SAID process (Hogan 1995:7) may be used. The SAID model can be employed by thinking about the following questions and writing down your thoughts.

Situation: Reflect on the actual experience

What was the learning situation/event?
What images/scenes do I recall?
Which people/comments/words struck me?
What sounds/smell do I recall?
What else do I remember about the incident?

Affective domain: Reflect on the feelings

How do I feel (good and bad feelings) about what I learned?
What was the high spot/low spot?
Was I surprised/angered/elated/curious/confused/depressed by anything in the experience? Why?

Interpretation of events: What did I learn?

What have I learned and how did I learn it?
What can I conclude from this experience?
What was my key insight/learning?
How could I have learned more effectively/efficiently?

Decision: What will I do as a result?

What do I need to do before this sort of thing happens again?
What action(s) can I take to learn more effectively/efficiently in future?
What would I do differently next time?
What would I say to people who were not there?
What was the significance of this experience to my practice?
In what ways could I change my attitudes, expectations and values to feel better about the situation?

Pre-study project

For the benefits of personal, professional and academic development, and also for the benefits of the research project we are undertaking, we will do a one-week practice of reflective journal entries. This one-week pilot warm up will be done by reflecting on the following questions:

What are my expectations of this mentoring relationship?
What do I hope to achieve from the mentoring relationship?
How will I know if I have attained my outcomes?
What are my theories about the purpose of mentoring in education?
From my perspective the main roles of mentoring are…?
My personal theory on how I will learn in this mentoring relationship is…
In my practice I am most proud of…

These questions are designed to encourage the participants to reflect upon their feelings, emotions, values and beliefs and reasons for participating in the study. They will form the focus questions. These questions will also be used at a later stage (e.g. after three months) to promote reflection about the progress of the mentoring relationship. This will be a critical tool able to provide a 'before' and 'after' picture.

Daily entries

After the one week of learning reflective practice we will start on our reflective journals writing about events occurring during our mentoring relationships.

During the mentoring relationship the mentees and the mentors will revisit the focus questions. The mentees and mentors will also be encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their practice according to their personal development plan (PDP). The mentors will encourage links between action and outcomes. Mentors and mentees will be encouraged to explore their values, beliefs and attitudes that may be influencing their actions. Discussions will be held about the progress and the ongoing personal, professional and academic learning of the participants. Suggested areas for discussion will include:

The setting of specific goals by the mentee and target dates for their achievement
Discussion of what is going well in the mentoring relationship
Discussion of areas that need development and suggestions for how these could be addressed.

Guidelines for reflection

Pick a quiet place and reflective time to do your journal entries

Be self aware, honest, and open in your reflection

Write freely and intuitively without paying attention to grammar/spelling

Focus on reflecting on incidences, rather than on reporting facts

Record experiences as soon as possible after they happen

Be selective in what you choose to describe. Do not try to describe everything

If you get stuck, do something different and come back to the writing later

Daily writing is encouraged

Entries may be written in any format - written, pictorial, graphic - in an electronic format.

The suggested questions may stimulate and encourage reflection on the mentoring relationship, and how you are learning from the relationship, but be free to discuss other questions/topics or incidents that you consider to be important to your development goals.

Once the journal is submitted, a feedback session will be organised where the learning experiences will be discussed.

Submitted journal will be kept in a secure place accessible only to the researcher.

APPENDIX 3

- GUIDE TO PREPARING A PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PDP) -

A guide to developing a personal development plan

This guide should be used to determine your personal development and growth plans during the period of the mentoring relationship

Career

What do you see as your main responsibilities in your career at present?	
How have your career options and your job developed over the past year?	
Which aspects of your career do you most value and what do you least value?	
What would you define as your major achievement?	
What has caused your major problems?	
Have you defined your future learning and development needs?	
Do you have a written career plan for the next five years?	
Are you clear about your long term career aspirations?	

Relationships

Who are your main contacts?	
What support and assistance do you receive from and give to others?	
Do you regularly receive feedback from people around you about your performance?	

Personal

What are your strengths, skills, experience and knowledge attributes?	
What are your values?	
Are you able to negotiate political tensions and power struggles?	
Do you have the skills that are not fully used in your job?	
What are your most significant networks (family, work and social)?	
How have you changed/progressed/developed/ improved over the year/period?	
Are you skilled in problem solving and communications skills?	
What factors do you feel you cannot control?	
How well do you manage your time?	
How do you respond to change?	
How clear is your vision for your personal life?	
What is the balance between your personal and work life?	

APPENDIX 4

- GROW FRAMEWORK -

Structure of mentoring meetings

During the meeting, the emphasis will be on the PDP item we are currently working on.
I will employ the GROW model as the framework to assist in conducting the meeting.
At the end of the meeting, we will confirm where we are with the item, or whether we need to continue working on it. It will also be determined what we are working on next, to be the focus of the next meeting.

I will structure the mentoring meetings in a BEFORE, DURING and AFTER frame:

MENTEES

Before the meeting	**During the meeting**	**After the meeting**
Plan for unstructured interview, but with guiding questions that I may ask. • Goal phase What do you want to tell me about (the PDP item...) • Reality phase How do you feel you have been doing with it? • Options phase What options do you see that you could adopt to help you achieve your goal? • Wrap-up phase How and when will you take the next steps?	Conduct an unstructured interview, taking into account the guiding questions that I had prepared • Tape the session • Take notes especially on facial expressions and body language	Critically reflect on the data collected • What learning has occurred? • What issues are emerging?

APPENDIX 5

- ACTION RESEARCH MENTORING CONVERSATION GUIDE -

Action research mentoring conversation guide

1. Read my account of the last meeting we had
   ……
   ……
   ……..
2. What problems (if any) did I encounter?
   (REFLECT)……
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……..
3. What do I want to improve about that meeting (REVISED
   PLAN)……
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……
4. WHY
   ……
   ……
   ……
5. What do I intend to do in this meeting
   (ACT)……
   ……
   ……
   ……
6. How did the meeting go?
   (OBSERVE)……
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……
7. WHY
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……
8. What is my new understanding of mentoring or of session?
   (REFLECT)……
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

APPENDIX 6

- FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS -

Focus group interview for the Mentees (December 2006)

Interview to be conducted by Dr A Onyango

Research Questions
Q2. How can mentees use their learning and development to contribute to the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution?
Q3. How can mentors use their learning and development to contribute to the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution?

Data from these interviews will contribute to the development of an understanding of the principles and practices that underpin a mentoring process for personal and professional development of educators in a technical college in Africa.

- This will be an unstructured, open ended and natural qualitative discussion, where the participants are allowed to say what it is that they want to say. The session will be videotaped.
- A number of open-ended questions have been highlighted to encourage responses that may answer or address the research question. A list of 'pick-up' statements indicates areas where it is expected that the discussion participants will say something. Where they do not, you, as the interviewer, may formulate a question from the 'pick-up' statements to probe for some information.

However, if it appears that this process is inhibiting the flow of information, then simply allow the participants to speak and remain an interested and attentive listener and observer. Look out and listen for clues that indicate that the speaker may be performing just for the audience, or telling you what he or she wants or expects you to hear. Try to capture the gestures, the body posture and the tension that you notice. Jot down your observations.

- Give each discussion participant the chance to expand on what she/he sees as a priority in her/his own situation.
- The conversation should be kept free flowing. Do not be restricted by the questions. Be prepared to listen for a long period and very patiently.

	Guiding Questions	'Pick-Ups'
1	What are the most rewarding aspects of your experiences as a mentee?	• Values • Beliefs • Attitudes
2	Within the relationship, what are your roles and responsibilities as mentees? Which are your predominant roles?	
3	What do you see as the mentor's roles and responsibilities?	Mentoring functions • Role model • Giving advice • Coach • Provide growth experiences • Provide friendship • Encourage Etc
4	What aspects of the mentoring role do you view as most important to you? Do you have examples of how they presented themselves in your mentor/mentee relationship?	
5	What activities have you undertaken with your mentor, and what are your feelings towards these activities?	
6	Has being mentored changed you in any way? How?	Learning and Change • Learning • Change • Influence

Please do remember to thank the participants for their participation at the end of the interview session.

Focus group interview for the mentees (March 2007)

Interview conducted by Mrs. A. Atieno

Research Questions
Q2 How can mentees use their learning and development to contribute to the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution?
Q3. How can mentors use their learning and development to contribute to the principles and practices of mentoring in a VET educational institution?

Data from these interviews will contribute to the development of an understanding of the principles and practices that underpin a mentoring process for personal and professional development of educators in a technical college in Africa.

- This will be an unstructured, open ended and natural qualitative discussion, where the participants are allowed to say what it is that they want to say. The session will be videotaped.
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- Give each discussion participant the chance to expand on what she/he sees as a priority in her/his own situation.
- The conversation should be kept free flowing. Do not be restricted by the questions. Be prepared to listen for a long period and very patiently.

	Guiding Questions	'Pick-Ups'
1	What have been the most rewarding aspects of your experiences as a mentee?	• Values • Beliefs • Attitudes
2	Do you feel that your goal/expectations have been met? Do you feel that the goal/expectations of the mentor have been met?	• Learning • Growth • Development
3	Have you been successful in attaining or progressing towards your goals?	• Professionally • Personally • Academically
4	What benefits did you receive from being a mentee? What benefits do you think the mentor received in the relationship?	• Learning • Change • Influence

Please do remember to thank the participants for their participation at the end of the interview session.