Behavioral Criteria of Mentoring Effectiveness: An Empirical Study of Formal Mentoring Relationships Within a Major UK Public Sector Organization

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This paper describes an empirical study of mentor and mentee behaviors deemed critical for developing healthy mentoring relationships and effective mentoring during the 'start up' and 'on going' stages of a formal mentoring scheme within a major UK public sector organization. Several identified behavioral categories (criteria) of mentoring effectiveness provide significant support for Kram's (1985) two-function model of mentoring relationships and for various 'best practice' models of effective mentor and good mentee behavior.

Keywords: Mentoring Effectiveness; Mentoring Relationships; Behavioral Criteria

This paper presents the findings of a recent qualitative empirical study of mentoring relationships and mentoring effectiveness carried out by one of us (Sage, 2007) within a well known UK public sector organization, and also the results of our subsequent comparative study in search of empirical evidence to support various conceptualizations of 'best practice' mentoring reported in the contemporary literature. Because the collaborating organization wished to keep its identity anonymous it will be referred to by the pseudonym 'PSO'. The research was undertaken with the active sponsorship and support of The Work Foundation (TWF) which is 'a not-for-profit organisation' that works in partnership with private and public/corporate sector organizations to help them 'find best ways of improving both economic performance and quality of working life'. TWF had had a long standing relationship with 'PSO' supplying expertise, advice and skills for policy development, delivering training on many aspects of leadership and management, and providing one-to-one coaching. Part way through the first course of a newly designed intensive leadership development (ILD) program introduced in 2005 in which mentoring was a key component with 'PSO' managers acting as the internal mentors, an evaluation was undertaken which revealed that this aspect of the program was one of its weaker features. Consequently, for the second cohort of employees who joined the ILD program in 2006, the TWF offered to resource the planned mentoring relationships with external mentors who had strong success in organizational leadership and/or as mentors. The 'PSO' accepted this offer and agreed with TWF that the proposed external mentoring service should be evaluated in some depth to explore the qualitative differences (if any) in the relative effectiveness of the two types of provision-internal and external. It was hoped this might lead to the identification of the critical success factors/characteristics of 'best practice' mentoring which could then be used to inform the PSO's ongoing debate about the value of deploying internal or external mentors. This provided the impetus for the present study, the primary aim of which was to reveal those particular external mentor and internal mentee behaviors that had either supported or impeded the formation, development and working of the various dyadic mentoring relationships during the 'start up' and 'on-going' stages of the mentoring process within the 2006 'PSO' mentoring scheme

The study has been located in both the 'coaching and mentoring' and 'human resource development (HRD)' literatures for two main reasons. Firstly, although various writers claim 'mentoring' is different from 'coaching' (Cranwell-Ward, Bossons & Glover, 2004; Grant, 2001) the terms 'mentoring' and 'coaching' are often used interchangeably in many organizations (Parsloe & Wray, 2000). Many people do not distinguish between the relationships and processes of mentoring and other forms of one-to-one developmental learning such as coaching (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002), and it is the case that questions remain as to the distinction (D'Abate, Eddy & Tannenbaum, 2003). The second reason is that for several decades coaching, mentoring and other forms of workplace learning have been core roles of HRD professionals (see Davis, Naughton & Rothwell, 2004; Hezlett & Gibson, 2005; McLagan, 1989; Plunkett & Egan, 2004). Drawing on the writings of Cummings and Worley (1997) and Kram and Hall (1989), Hegstad and Wentling (2005) claim mentoring is increasingly being recognized as a powerful HRD intervention that assists employers in career advancement, serves as a form of on-the-job-training,

and helps create learning organizations.

Problem Statement

Although the benefits resulting from formal mentoring programs within organizational settings have received much attention little empirical research has been done to describe and illustrate what is required to ensure a mentoring relationship is optimally effective and successful. Allen and Poteet (1999) argue research is 'desperately needed to assess the specific design features of formal programs that result in effective mentoring'. Although Hezlett and Gibson (2005) claim recent reviews of research on mentoring such as those conducted for example by Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, and Lima (2004) and Wanberg, Welsh, and Hezlett (2003) have indicated there has been some maturing of the mentoring knowledge base, there are many questions that remain poorly answered or have yet to be thoroughly investigated. In general, relatively few studies have been directed specifically toward understanding formal mentoring relationships or have evaluated how different program characteristics affect program effectiveness. For example, Wanberg et al (2003) report little research has been done to explore the dynamics of mentoring particularly those concerning the nature of the interpersonal processes involved within the dyadic relationship, whilst Hezlett and Gibson (2005) argue more research is required to gain a better understanding of the interpersonal processes that create the conditions under which mentoring relationships are maximally supporting, satisfying and optimally effective. Beattie (2006: p100) suggests that "although there is an extensive literature on the development roles that managers may play, such as mentor or coach, much of this literature is prescriptive and rhetorical and there appears to be relatively few examples of substantive research and empirical studies focusing on managerial [mentoring and coaching] behaviours". Although numerous journal articles offer guidelines and suggestions for developing formal mentoring programs (see Coley, 1996; Phillips-Jones, 1983) these are often based on one or a few organizations only and generally are not empirical (Hegstad & Wentling, 2004). Furthermore, the many books on mentoring schemes and mentoring practice (see Cranwell-Ward, Bossons & Glover, 2004; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002; Pegg, 1999) tend to be highly anecdotal, opinion-based and predominantly informed by 'best practice' as opposed to 'best evidence' derived from empirical research.

Theoretical Framework

An increasing volume of 'best practice' literature suggests that for effective mentoring to occur mentors need to offer/create a safe place and environment where mentees are able to share their thinking and feelings, and to build rapport and maintain a healthy relationship in which there is trust, focus, empathy congruence and empowerment. To achieve this they need to offer support by focusing on listening but doing so without being judgmental; by actively listening and asking the right questions; by helping to clarify goals and objectives; by offering stimulation, creative ideas, conceptual models, challenge and expertise; and by helping mentees to arrive at their own answers to problems (see Cull, 2006; Dejovine & Harris, 2001; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002; Pegg, 1999). The potential for effective mentoring relationships to bring benefits are determined by the behaviors of mentees as well as of mentors. For example, mentees need to proactively take charge of the relationship, make time to attend meetings and be fully prepared for each mentoring session, and follow up on any agreed actions. Furthermore, they need to understand the roles, expectations and boundaries within mentoring relationships, and to have the confidence to share difficult issues and areas of concern with their mentors though with clear and realistic expectations as to what mentors can do (Cranwell-Ward et al, 2004; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). Of the limited number of empirical studies on mentoring relationships the majority appear to relate to student mentoring in educational settings (see Gray & Smith, 2000; Liang, Tracy, Taylor & Williams, 2002). These studies suggest the characteristics that students identify with good mentors are 'friendliness', 'approachability', 'understanding' and 'patience', and for mentors to be most effective they need to be perceived as acting with 'integrity', being 'honest', 'respectful', 'dedicated' and 'compassionate', and being willing and skilled to provide 'honest feedback' (McDowall-Long, 2004). The study by Cull (2006) on the mentoring of young entrepreneurs in Canada and Scotland produced several similar findings. For example, in the 'context of relationships that work' the young entrepreneurs and mentors agreed that 'honesty' and 'respect' were important factors in the relationship in order to create a 'bond' and 'good chemistry' between the parties. In exploring the role of mentees within mentoring relationships, Starcevich and Friend (1999) found that successful mentees took responsibility for keeping the relationship alive, and good mentees would 'listen', 'act on advice', 'show a willingness, desire and commitment to learn and grow', 'check ego at the door-ask for and be open to feedback and criticism' and 'be open-minded and willing to change'.

Most theories proposed for describing effective mentoring relationships within organizational contexts focus on behavioral, perceptual, power and/or demographic patterns and the implications of these for mentors and mentees.

Considered most relevant to this study is Kram's (1985) behavioral 'two-function' model of mentoring which has been supported and expanded by several other researchers (Noe, 1988; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Scandura, 1992). According to Kram (1985), mentors provide two broad functions to mentees over the phases of mentoring relationships: career development and psychosocial support. Career Development (CD) functions (role behaviors) include 'sponsorship', 'exposure', 'coaching', 'protection', and providing 'challenging assignments' with the aim of helping the mentees progress in their careers. In contrast, Psychosocial (PS) functions (role behaviors) include 'counselling', 'friendship', 'role-modelling', and 'acceptance/confirmation' with the aim of enhancing the mentees' self efficacy, personal development, identity, and work-role effectiveness.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to enhance understanding of those specific behaviors that are critical in enabling or inhibiting the development of healthy mentoring relationships and effective mentoring within a case study organization, and to search for empirical evidence that might support both 'best-practice' and 'Kram's model of mentoring' for the development of good mentoring relationships and mentoring effectiveness. Consequently, within the context of the 'start up' and 'on-going' stages of the 2006 'PSO' mentoring scheme the following research questions were addressed:

    i) How have the behaviors of the external mentors been manifested within the respective mentoring relationships, and which of these have been perceived and judged by the respective mentees to be either effective or least effective/ineffective?

    ii) How have the behaviors of the mentees been manifested within the respective mentoring relationships, and which of these have been perceived and judged by the external mentors to be either effective or least effective/ineffective?

    iii) To what extent do the findings from Questions 1 & 2 lend empirical support for Kram's (1985) 'two-function' model and the 'best-practice' conceptualizations of various writers regarding the mentor and mentee behaviors required to develop healthy dyadic relationships and effective mentoring.

Research Methodology and Design

In addressing the research questions the researchers worked from a neo-empiricist perspective (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000) by assuming a critical realist ontology and an epistemology falling between post-positivism and constructivism-interpretivism (Fleetwood, 2005; Flick, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). The study was comprised of four stages as follows-

    Stage 1. Concrete examples of specific positive (effective) and negative (least effective/ineffective) behaviors as exhibited and observed respectively by mentors and mentees in various dyadic mentoring relationships of the 2006 'PSO' mentoring scheme were obtained using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) of Flanagan (1954) as applied by Hamlin (2004) for his replica studies of managerial and leadership effectiveness within various UK public sector organizations. Critical incidents (CIs) were collected from a purposeful sample of ten (10) TWF affiliated external mentors, and ten (10) 'PSO' internal mentees of whom six were in a dyadic relationship with one of the TWF mentors. The other four mentees were 'PSO' managers who had been mentored by non-TWF external mentors. Eighteen were interviewed face-to face and the other two by telephone. Each CIT interview lasted between 1 to 1.5 hours. Strict codes of anonymity were applied to prevent any possible link to a particular person.

    Stage 2. The critical incidents resulting from Stage 1 were subjected to a variant of content analysis involving first-level open coding (Flick, 2002; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to 'disentangle' the key words and phrases comprising each CI. This led to the identification of a larger number of 'units of meaning' which the researchers called 'items of behavior' (IBs).

    Stage 3. The IBs resulting from the Stage 2 analysis were subjected to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using second-level open coding (Flick, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994) in search of themes and patterns of behavior. All of the IBs were examined for evidence of sameness, similarity and congruence of meaning, and accordingly collated into analytic categories comprised of IBs that appeared to cohere together meaningfully to form discrete coherent patterns (themes). Each category was explored to identify both the 'essence' of what the category was about and its overarching meaning. Labels were created to 'capture' and fully describe the overarching meanings. These labels were attached to the respective analytic categories which could then be used as behavioral criteria of mentor and mentee effectiveness

    Stage 4. The behavioral criteria resulting from Stage 3 were compared and contrasted against Kram's (1985) 'two-function' model and several 'best practice' models of effective mentor and mentee behaviour, in order to

identify any commonalities.   The method used for this comparative analysis was a variant of open coding (Flick, 2002) as applied by Hamlin (2004) for similar comparative research. Whereas the first three stages of the study were conducted by one of the two authors (Sage, 2007), the *Stage 4* research was carried out jointly.

   Ensuring internal consistency and external validity. Due to certain limits of time that could be allocated by Sage to her study of mentoring relationships within the 'PSO' (*Stages 1, 2 & 3*) the TWF provided her with two auxiliary researchers who had had considerable experience as practicing managers at a high level, as well as having gained a Masters degree within their own field. This enabled robust 'triangulation' strategies to be built into the research design as recommended by Flick (2002). To ensure the chosen research methods were applied in the same way by all three researchers, guidance notes were produced that set out in detail a protocol for the individual collection and analysis of CIT data. The content of the guidance 'manual' was strongly informed by the CIT protocols adopted by Hamlin (2004) for a range of replica studies of managerial effectiveness. To ensure and enhance the external validity of the 'PSO' research outcomes in terms of their plausibility, trustworthiness and credibility a form of 'investigator triangulation' (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991) was adopted for the Stage 2 and Stage 3 analyses. This involved Sage and her two co-researchers initially working independently of each other and then jointly through face-to-face and digital meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss their individual first- and second-level coding, reconcile differences of perception, agree upon their identified behavioral categories/criteria, and jointly create descriptive labels that could be attached to them. Overall there was general agreement between their respective judgments and interpretations of the data at each stage, Stage 4 included, with minor differences being resolved through critical examination and discussion to reach a consensus. A similar procedure was adopted by the present authors for conducting the Stage 4 research

Results and Findings

At Stage 1 of the study a total of 173 CIs were obtained from the 20 informants but six had to be discarded for various reasons. Of the remaining 167 CIs 68 were positive examples and 22 negative examples of mentor behavior as perceived by the mentees. The other 77 CIs were comprised of 61 positive and 16 negative examples of mentee behavior as perceived by the mentors. At Stage 2 the first-level open coding of the 167 CIs resulted in a total of 182 units of meaning (items of behavior-IBs) being identified of which 76 and 22 related respectively to effective and least effective/ineffective mentor behavior, and 68 and 16 to effective and least effective/ineffective mentee behavior. From the Stage 3 analysis 11 effective (positive) and 4 least effective/ineffective (negative) mentor behavioral categories (criteria) were identified plus 9 effective and 3 least effective/ineffective mentee behavioral categories (criteria). These were deemed to be the behavioral indications and contra-indications of mentoring relationship effectiveness as judged from the perspective of mentors and mentees respectively. Because of limitations of space only the positive criteria are presented in this paper (see Table 1). To illustrate how the labels chosen to describe them reflect the common threads of meaning that link all of the items of behavior underpinning each respective criterion, the details of four of the criteria are presented in Table 2.

   A comparative analysis of the construct of all eleven effective (positive) mentor behavioral criteria against the type of behaviors associated with Kram's (1985) 'two-function' model revealed a high degree of overlap. As can be seen from Table 1, only one (1) of the eleven (11) mentor behavioral criteria resulting from the present study had no overlap with any of the mentoring roles specified within the model. Similarly, a comparison between the identified behavioral criteria of mentor effectiveness and the 'pulling' and 'pushing' style of behaviors required to develop healthy mentoring relationships as claimed by some writers (Cull 2006; Pegg, 1999) has revealed a significant degree of overlap and commonality. As can be seen in Table 3, five (5) of the eleven (11) criteria are very similar in meaning (see underlined criteria), and three other criteria contain certain key words or phrases (set in *italics*) that are congruent in meaning. Overall eight (8) of these criteria appear to hold something in common with one or more aspects of meaning comprising most of the 'best-practice' mentor behaviors. The three (3) criteria that do not are as follows: 'Uses own networks and contacts to help the mentee', 'Proactively ensures meetings are arranged at times and places which are mutually acceptable' and 'Ensures expectations of the mentoring relationship and agendas for meetings are clearly established'. A comparative analysis of the behavioral criteria of mentee effectiveness identified by the present study and the 'good mentee behaviors ' advocated by Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) and Cranwell-Ward et al (2004) respectively has also revealed a significant degree of overlap and commonality. As can be seen by the extent of the underlined key words and phrases in Table 4, six (6) of the nine (9) criteria are either the same as or very similar to all of Cranwell-Ward et al's (2004) behaviors and are also the same or similar to 50% of the behaviors advocated by Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002). Those behaviors with no explicit commonality have been listed separately at the bottom of the table.

Table 1.   *Behavioral Criteria of Mentor and Mentee Effectiveness Derived from the Observations, Perceptions and Judgments of Mentors and Mentees, plus Their Comparability with Kram's (1985) 'Two-Function' Model*

Behavioral criteria of mentor effectiveness from the mentee's perspective	*Kram's (1985) Two-Function Model*
1. Uses own networks and contacts to help the mentee [2]	*CD: Exposure and visibility*
2. Creates a 'neutral' and safe environment of acceptance and trust [11]	*PS: Friendship*
3. Shares own knowledge and experience ("Self disclosure") [10]	*CD: Coaching*
4. Challenges the mentee's self perception-takes them outside their comfort zone[3]	*CD: Challenging assignments*
5. Shares practice advice and suggestions [9]	*CD: Challenging assignments*
6. Allows the mentee to think through issues and make their own decisions [4]	*PS: Acceptance and confirmation*
7. Uses own 'tool-kit' of models to facilitate and enhance the mentee's learning [8]	*CD: Coaching*
8. Proactively ensures meetings are arranged at times and places which are mutually acceptable [9]	*PS: Friendship*
9. Ensures expectations of the mentoring relation and agendas for meetings are clearly established [12]	No comparable meaning
10. Encourages and supports the development of the mentee's self awareness [9]	CD:: Coaching/Challenging
11. Encourages and supports the development of the mentee's self esteem[4]	PS: Acceptance and confirmation

Behavioral criteria of mentee effectiveness from the mentor's perspective

1. Takes joint responsibility and acts as an equal with the mentor [10]
2. Takes organizational initiative and shows organizational skills [11]
3. Shares 'inner depths' with the mentor[7]
4. Initiates the content of the mentoring session and takes ownership of what he/she wants to work on and what has been learned [14]
5. Engages openly during the sessions and responds to ideas from the mentor [8]
6. Gives the mentor feedback on both the value of the sessions and what they are achieving [7]
7. Will challenge the mentor[3]
8. Contributes to the establishment of a healthy mentoring environment-is open, honest, friendly, good natured and good-humoured [5]
9. Wants the mentor to understand his/her context and puts the organization into context without being asked [3]

Note: *The numbers in brackets indicate the number of IBs underpinning each identified behavioral criterion*

Table 2. *Examples of the Behavioral Underpinning of Four Behavioral Criteria of Mentor and Mentee Effectiveness*

Identified Behavioral Criteria of Mentor Effectiveness

Challenges mentee's self perception- takes them outside their comfort zone

Challenged mentee's self perception in a directed and non-complimentary way; makes mentee uncomfortable-in a challenging but safe environment-encouraging the mentee to discuss radical scenarios; made mentee talk about her career to date and about current issues and some family aspects and aspirations-this was not something the mentee would normally choose to do.

Creates a "neutral" and safe environment of acceptance and trust

Meets outside the organization and maintains confidentiality; acts as an uncritical sounding board; provides space to allow mentee to let off steam and talk through issues good and bad; provides an open minded perspective; met mentee on neutral territory at the start up of the relationship; provided a space in which the mentee felt protected and safe and able to say what they liked; gives an objective unemotional view; arranged an informal meeting in a restaurant-this broke the ice and started to build up trust; brings to bear an objective and external perspective; puts mentee at ease; comes across as open and friendly

Identified Behavioral Criteria of Mentee Effectiveness

Takes organizational initiative and shows organizational skill

Mentee emailed to initiate the relationship; turns up on time; when snow caused travel delays the mentee phoned to advise of delay and kept the mentor informed-as the situation worsened the mentee asked if it would be OK to postpone; initiated contact using the phone and organized everything; demonstrates flexibility; at the first meeting when setting up parameters the mentee agreed specific timings for the meetings; decided the schedule and agreed three further dates and a new location; takes the arrangements [of meetings] seriously- booked meeting room and [ensured] reception knew I [the mentor] was coming; mentee is prompt [in attending meetings]; is absolutely reliable in initiating contact [with the mentor] as soon as it becomes clear of the need to cancel[a meeting].

Engages openly during sessions and responds to ideas from the mentor

Mentee engaged, grasped and could see the picture-exhibited surprise at its use; related the content of the session to the ILD-NVQ work; is open-minded and keen to make the most of the opportunity a mentor provides; responds well-joins in the discussion-puts forward own solutions (to certain extent) and embraces the diversity of ideas; asks questions, thinks for him/herself and says how he/she might find it useful; receives mentor's perceptions and is open to possibilities; asks questions of the mentor; is open to different thinking and to trying different things (is sponge-like at times)

Conclusions

As can be seen from Table 1 the vast majority of identified positive (effective) mentor and mentee behavioral criteria were comprised of between three to fourteen IBs. This indicates that most of the observed behaviors were not idiosyncratic but widely exhibited by mentors and mentees in many of the PSO mentoring relationships. The only exception was the mentor behaviour "Used own networks and contacts to help the mentee" which was underpinned by only two IBs. From a critical realist perspective these two IBs were considered by the researchers to represent a '*real entity*' because they had been identified from empirically derived critical incidents that clearly have

Table 3. *Behavioral Criteria of Mentor Effectiveness Compared Against Cull's (2006) Mentor Behaviors*

Cull (2006: 'Pulling' and 'Pushing' Mentor Behaviors	Present Study: Behavioral Criteria of Mentor Effectiveness
Offering a sanctuary and a safe place where the mentee feels able to share their agenda, interests and goals'; Offering *support* by listening', Asking the right questions',	Creates a 'neutral' and safe environment of acceptance and trust Encourages and *supports* the development of mentee's self esteem. Encourages and *supports* the development of the mentee's self awareness
Helping the mentee arrive at their own answers to their problems'. : Offering:- -stimulation, challenge and leading-edge thinking - knowledge and wisdom , -mental models, -tools and techniques,- creative ideas	Allows the mentee to think through issues and make own decisions Challenges the mentee's self perception-takes them outside their comfort zone . Shares own knowledge and experience (" Self disclosure") Uses own 'tool-kit' of models to facilitate and enhance the mentee's learning. *Shares practical advice and suggestions*

Table 4. *Comparison of the Behavioral Criteria of Mentee Effectiveness and the Good Mentee Behaviors Advocated by Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) and Cranwell-Ward et al (2004).*

Behavioral Criteria of Mentee Effectiveness The Present Study	Good Mentee Behaviors Klasen & Clutterbuck (2002) and Cranwell-Ward et al (2004)
Takes joint responsibility and acts as an equal with the mentor. Takes organizational initiative and shows organizational skills. Initiates the content of the mentoring sessions and takes ownership of what he/she wants to work on and what has been learned	Takes charge of the relationship (i.e. prepares meetings and sets agenda) *Prepares fully for the meetings* . *Has clear and realistic expectations of the mentor* Clearly expresses needs and helps to identify developmental goals
Engages openly during sessions and responds to ideas from the mentor	Demonstrates commitment through follow-up action-points set in meetings, making time and attending meetings. *Be proactive and follow through on agreed actions*. *Act on feedback given by the mentor*
Shares inner depths with the mentor	*Have the confidence to share difficult issues and areas of concern*
Gives the mentor feedback on both the value of sessions and what they are achieving	*Give the mentor feedback*
Will challenge the mentor Contributes to the establishment of a healthy mentoring environment-is open, honest, friendly, good natured and good humoured Wants the mentor to understand his/her context and puts the organization into context without being asked	Actively seeks the input from the mentor Maintains confidentiality Seeks to understand the mentoring relationship (e.g. roles, expectations and boundaries).

causal efficacy, have *an effect on behaviour* and *make a difference* (Fleetwood, 2005). Furthermore, these two IBs were perceived to be distinctive features associated with external as opposed to internal mentors and consequently were deemed to be significant. All of the negative (least effective/ineffective) mentor and mentee behavioral criteria were comprised of between four (4) and seven (7) IBs and, as with the positive IBs, they cohered together meaningfully into discrete thematic patterns. The results of this study lend some support to parts of Kram's (1985) 'two-function' model, namely to two (2) of the four (4) 'psychosocial' mentoring and three (3) of the five (5) 'career development mentoring roles, as indicated in Table 1. Of these, creating trust through forms of 'friendship', conveying positive regard through 'acceptance/confirmation', 'coaching', and providing 'challenging assignments' were strongly in evidence. The lack of any overlap with the CD mentoring roles of 'sponsor' and 'protector' could be due to the fact that the subjects of the study were 'external' as opposed to 'internal' mentors. Reasons for the lack of overlap with the PS mentoring roles of 'counselling' and 'role-modelling' is unknown, though such overlap might have been revealed if the 'dispersing' phase had also been studied. Additionally, the study provides strong empirical support for some of the 'best practice' claims of authors such as Pegg (1999), Cull (2006), Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) and Cranwell-Ward et al. (2004) regarding the characteristics and behaviors associated with effective mentors and good mentees. The results highlight the critical importance of mentors 'creating a safe and neutral environment' and 'acting as a sounding board', being non-directive by 'allowing/helping mentees to resolve their own problems and make their own decisions' but at the same time 'challenging and stimulating' them through the use and sharing of 'mental models', 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' derived from their own practical experience. They also reveal the importance of mentees taking responsibility for the success of the mentoring relationship by being proactively involved in 'organizing the meetings', 'deciding the agendas and mutual expectations', 'being open and responsive to feedback from the mentor', and 'following through on agreed actions' all of which strongly support the views of Starcevich and Friend (1999). The research revealed only a limited overlap with the empirical findings relating to student mentoring as reported by McDowall-Long (2004). The reported importance of

'openness', 'honesty' and 'friendliness' in the development of healthy mentoring relationships can also be seen in the empirical findings of the present study, as indicated in Table 4.

Limitations of the study. There are three main limitations to this study that need to be addressed. Firstly, although the number of CIT informants (N=20) interviewed falls within the range of sample size for a qualitative study as recommended by Cresswell et al (2003), and the fact that on average each informant offered around seven (7) critical incidents which yielded a total of 167 usable CIs and 182 discrete IBs, it is possible there has been a degree of under-sampling which could mean there are other types of 'critical' mentor and mentee behavior that the present study has not identified. Consequently, replica research should be undertaken with another sample of external mentors and 'PSO' mentees not only to search for additional criteria but also to triangulate and further validate the present findings. Secondly, the data collection phase of the present study could only take place during the 'start-up' and 'on-going' stages of mentoring cycle. This meant no CIT data were obtained relating to the 'dissolving' stage. Consequently, other behavioral criteria of mentor or mentee effectiveness may exist relating specifically to the latter phase of the mentoring cycle which ought also to be explored. Thirdly, because the research design adopted case study methodology (Yin, 1984) and a single case approach, there is a risk the results may be idiosyncratic and context specific to the 'PSO' Hence, other replica studies in different organizational settings are needed to test the generality and generalizability of these findings to other specific contexts, and to search for evidence of the existence of generic behavioral criteria of mentor and mentee effectiveness and mentoring relationship effectiveness within formal mentoring schemes

Contribution to new knowledge in HRD

The present study provides additional empirical insights into the type of mentor and mentee behaviors required for formal mentoring relationships to be successful. As such it adds to what as yet is a small empirical base to an increasingly important component of management development and HRD practice. More research of this kind is now called for to further demonstrate empirically the relevance and validity of Kram's model of mentoring to the development of effective mentoring relationships, and the efficacy of much current 'best practice' guidance.

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