MENTORING: A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING ADULT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The exploration of the effects of a mentoring program on adult learning and career development provides a basis for developing a framework of mentoring. The study examines the outcomes of a planned mentorship program with respect to same-gender participants from the same and / or different organizations who enrolled in a Management Development for Women Certificate Program. It also presents the dynamics of the relationships and the positive and negative outcomes of the intervention; develops strategies that may be used by other educators to develop mentor-mentee programs; and outlines a model for using planned mentorship programs as an intervention strategy to facilitate adult learning and career development.

Résumé

L'exploration des effets d'un programme de mentorat sur l'apprentissage et le perfectionnement professionnel chez les adultes fournit le fondement requis pour établir un cadre de mentorat. L'étude examine les résultats d'un programme officiel de mentorat auquel participaient des personnes du meme sexe issues de diverses organisations et inscrites à un programme de Certificat en perfectionnement en gestion pour femmes. L'étude présente également la dynamique des relations entre les résultats positifs et négatifs de l'intervention; établit des stratégies que d'autres éducateurs peuvent utiliser pour monter des programmes mentor-apprenant; et propose un modèle qui permet d'utiliser des programmes officiels de mentorat en tant que stratégies d'intervention pour faciliter l'apprentissage et le perfectionnement professionnel chez les adultes.

Mentoring: a Strategy for Improving Adult Learning and Development

Mentoring is being studied in the business field, in the adult growth and development literature, and in academic settings. Research suggests that "success" in life is related to having a mentor or being a mentor (Kram, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978; Merriam, 1983; Murray & Owen, 1991). In The Odyssey, Mentor is a disguise for Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who becomes guide, adviser, role model, teacher, confidante, and inspirer for young Prince Telemachus's rite of passage into manhood. Today, mentoring is a wise process for imparting knowledge, mining the accumulated wisdom of tradition, and using experienced colleagues on behalf of those trying to gain passage into the echelons of management (Wunsch and Johnsrud, 1992).

This research study examines the mentoring relationships and the outcomes of a planned mentorship program involving same-gender participants from the same or different organizations who enrolled in a Management Development for Women

Certificate Program (MDW). The purposes, method, and findings—including the dynamics of the mentorship relationship, the positive and negative effects of mentoring, strategies for developing a mentorship program, and a tentative framework for an effective mentorship program—are described and the findings are discussed in relation to current research on adult learning and development and on mentoring. The author's conclusions indicate that mentoring may be of significant value to practising adult educators, and this research adds insight to the growing body of knowledge on mentoring and its impact on the learning process of adult learners. Suggestions for further research are also provided.

From a management point of view, mentoring has been studied within organizations, and the efficacy of the mentoring relationship is well documented. Nevertheless, there are gaps in the research. First, the effects of a mentorship program on same-gender participants from the same or different organizations have not been examined. Second, the way in which the mentoring strategy facilitates and/or inhibits adult learning and development has not been analyzed. Finally, how the mentoring strategy leads to material success (Merriam, 1983), that is, how it is used as a strategy to overcome barriers and increase participation of women junior- and middle-managers in upper management levels, needs to be explored. As more women move at a faster pace into upper management levels, their numbers will eventually increase at senior levels; a mentorship program has enormous potential as a strategy to facilitate women's adult learning and development and to move them beyond the "glass ceiling."

Mentoring is normally perceived as a naturally occurring phenomenon whereby mentor and mentee voluntarily seek out each other. Since, the relationship normally forms within single organizations or similar sectors, the experience of the senior individual is then available to the junior individual. It also exists for an indefinite period of time, ceasing naturally at some point when one of the parties concludes that the relationship is no longer satisfying. Thus, from a naturalistic perspective, the very idea of an "assigned" mentor program is an oxymoron, and so, to be successful, such a program may have to be managed with care and sensitivity.

Despite explicit policies and procedures for career advancement, the norms that define successful performance and hence promotion are often implicit in the traditions and values of the organization, but are not easily articulated and accessible to women who are often not linked into the informal network of their organization (Taylor, 1994). Mentoring offers a way to facilitate women's personal and professional development and advancement within organizations. A successful mentoring relationship is often characterized by a mentor who knows the ropes and takes an active role in the career development of the mentee, by providing advice, support, or guidance that meets the mentee's needs. Mentors can also offer "inside knowledge" of the norms, values, and often tacit knowledge of the organization based on their experience (Murray & Owen, 1991; Taylor, 1994).

Successful mentoring relationships within single organizations seem to be based on a natural fit between the mentee's needs and the mentor's resources that permits the mentee to receive career development support and advancement. Despite the value of these informal relationships, mentoring support for women is an infrequent occurrence (Sands et al., 1991), and thus, a mentorship program may enhance the career advancement of women within organizations. If successful mentoring relationships are characterized by natural fit, flexibility, and negotiated needs, then what degree of structure will be productive? What factors will facilitate or inhibit successful mentoring relationships of pairs that are formed by the arbitrary assignment of mentees to mentors?

Purposes

Exploring the effects of a mentoring program on adult learning and career development may provide a basis for developing a comprehensive framework of mentoring. Thus, the purposes of the study were to: 1) understand the dynamics of an assigned female mentor-mentee relationship; 2) identify the positive and negative outcomes of the intervention; and 3) develop strategies that may be used by other educators to develop mentor-mentee programs. A model for an assigned mentorship program for use as an intervention strategy to facilitate adult learning and career development is explored.

Method

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (1988) indicate that when asking how and why questions, the focus is on process rather than outcome or product that stresses the interdependence and interrelatedness of all phenomena. Consistent with the epistemological foundations of this perspective, this study used an interpretive perspective and qualitative method to focus on the specific contextual factors of the mentoring program, to examine the nature of the relationships, and to clarify reasons participants gave for the success or failure of their relationship.

The study was conducted in three phases. Phase One included a questionnaire to match and assign mentors and mentees on the basis of education, age, philosophy, career goals, and organizational sector. An information session provided details of the mentorship program and the Management Development for Women Certificate Program (MDW), and discussed the goals and expectations of the mentor program. All mentors and mentees participated in Phase One. In Phase Two, held midway through the program, focus group meetings—conducted separately with mentors and mentees—explored the nature of the mentor-mentee relationship, and the positive and negative outcomes of the relationship. The meeting protocol consisted of a preamble, a statement of purposes for the focus group, and guided questions and probes about the relationship (Kops & Percival, 1990). Each focus group was conducted by the researcher and a facilitator, and each was divided into two groups, one facilitated by the researcher, the other by the facilitator. The researcher and facilitator independently reviewed and analyzed all data, and then met to discuss the data analysis. This process created some degree of objectivity and distancing from the data. Based on this phase, a questionnaire was developed, mod-

ified, and used in Phase Three. This questionnaire, which was sent to all mentors and mentees, further corroborated data from the focus group meetings; it also examined the dynamics of the relationships and strategies for improving the assigned mentorship program.

In all, 25 mentees and 19 mentors participated in the focus group meetings, and 17 mentors and 17 mentees returned their questionnaire. The four-hour focus group meetings were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed; all data from the question-naires and the meetings were collated and analyzed. Content analysis was achieved through the horizontal and vertical review of data to identify the emerging themes and patterns (Patton, 1980; Strauss, 1987). For instance, the responses from each participant and from each pair were examined, then similar and different respons-es were matched and grouped together. Finally, the data were reported at the aggre-gate level, and organized into categories that were derived from the data. These data were filtered through relevant concepts. Codes were developed for various components of the data and categories were developed for the same content. Similar categories were compared and contrasted, grouped together to get the data into manageable parts, and searched for patterns. Each category was analyzed for important concepts. Finally, the categories were reviewed to determine their impor-tance (Firestone, 1993; Patton, 1980).

Strauss's (1987) coding paradigm was used to analyze the data. It included the conditions mentors and mentees used to describe their relationship, their interac-tions during the relationship, the strategies/tactics they used to manage the rela-tionship, and the consequences they identified as a result of their actions and deci-sions. The coding paradigm was useful for shaping the findings into the major sec-tions. The study emphasized participants' accounts which were reported in literary prose style. A set of major categories that emerged from the data appeared to be generalizable and were supported by the data, consistent with participants' accounts, recognizable and acceptable to participants, and comprised participants' methods of rendering their statements as rational actions. Since the mentorship program was designed around the MDW program, it was important to understand its impact on the mentorship program.

The Context of the Mentorship Program

The MDW program is comprehensive, intensive, and demanding. Over three days once a month for 10 months, participants cover 12 different courses and are evaluated on the basis of workplace-based projects and assignments. Participants are required to complete 256 hours of classroom instruction in 10 months, pass all courses, and maintain a "C" grade point average to graduate. Normally, students would take three years of part-time study (one evening every week) to complete such a program. As well, a residential component is required for building group norms, climate setting, and peer group development and learning. Learning and lifestyle inventories are used to facilitate the learning process. All participants are normally identified and sponsored by their employer, a selection process that not only ensures women with management potential are selected but also requires

management to identify individuals most likely to be promoted into upper management levels in their organization. This process puts enormous pressure on the women to perform at a high level. In addition to full-time employment in junior and middle management levels, they perform adult social roles related to family responsibilities. Their participation in the program is one more activity for them to manage among competing roles and responsibilities.

The Participants

The 28 participants are drawn from a wide cross-section of organizations and industries, including Crown corporations, three levels of government, financial institutions, and profit and non-profit institutions. Students had the option to participate in the assigned mentorship program; 25 out of 28 students agreed to participate.

Mentors are recruited informally from a wide range of organizations. A total of 25 mentors and 25 mentees participated in the all-female study. Mentors ranged in age from 25 to 55, mentees from 25 to 50. Based on a questionnaire completed in the first phase of the study, participants were matched on the basis of age, education, business sector, philosophy, and career goals. For instance, mentees and mentors were asked to indicate if age is important, and if so, what is the ideal age of the selected mentor-mentee pair.

Findings

The findings are discussed in four sections. Section one deals with the dynamics of the relationship, section two describes the positive and negative outcomes of the intervention, section three presents the strategies for developing a mentorship program, and section four develops a conceptual framework that combines the major components of the findings.

The Dynamics of the Relationship

Since mentoring by its very nature is a personal and idiosyncratic process, the assigned mentoring program was loosely structured. Students who agreed to participate in the mentoring program were assigned a mentor; mentors and mentees were invited to attend a general information session about the mentoring program and the Management Development for Women program (MDW); and mentees and mentors were encouraged to define the nature of their relationship. In short, mentees and mentors were responsible for establishing their own working structure.

Given the contextual factors (intensiveness, competitiveness, and sponsorship), this fairly loose structure may have been inappropriate. A delicate balance between a tight and loose structure may lend itself more successfully to the fluidity of a process that has been institutionalized and to the unique features of the MDW program. For instance, specific guidelines for the relationship would have provided the parameters wherein the pairs negotiated their individual structure. Indeed, the

flexible and loosely structured nature of the mentorship program may have contributed to the overall perception of a poor success rate of the intervention. Even so, the majority of the pairs reported a positive attitude toward the mentorship program. One-third of the pairs felt that their relationship worked well because of the synergy and the instrumental and psychosocial benefits of the relationship. In contrast, two-thirds of the pairs indicated it was not successful because of a lack of formal guidelines and procedures, a lack of focus in the relationship, a lack of time, some inappropriate matching of pairs, and mentees' lack of input into their mentors' selection that resulted in a feeling of disempowerment.

Unsuccessful Mentoring Factors: Mentees' Perspectives

On the whole, the infrequency of person-to-person and telephone contacts, as well as the lack of clear role definitions and guidelines for both groups, resulted in the perception that the mentor-mentee relationships were not successful. Although mentors tended to view the relationships as successful, on average, mentees felt they were unsuccessful. For example, 10 of 17 mentees (59%) indicated the relationship did not work due to lack of time, focus, and compatibility on the part of mentors and mentees. Specifically, four mentees (23%) indicated that the pressure of time did not allow them to get together very often; another three (18%) stated that a lack of contact and focus by their mentors resulted in no relationship being developed; and three others (18%) suggested that mismatched pairing due to dissimilar organizational context resulted in a lack of emotional, philosophical, and professional fit.

Unsuccessful Mentoring Factors: Mentors' Perspectives

Mentors who perceived their relationships to be unsuccessful offered comments similar to their mentees, including a lack of time, insufficient role definition, and poor organizational fit. For instance, four mentors (23%) concurred that there was a lack of contact with their mentees because they did not have the time to make the initial contact with their mentees until it was too late in the process to develop a relationship. Two others (12%) believed that a lack of clearly defined roles contributed to the failure of the relationship because they did not know what they were going to do. Finally, one mentor (6%) felt that the interorganizational mismatch was the reason why a close relationship with ongoing feedback was not developed. She believed this to be an essential ingredient for developing a successful, assigned mentor-mentee relationship.

Successful Mentoring Factors: Mentees' Views

Mentees who perceived their relationship as successful provided extremely positive comments about the relationship, indicating that compatibility, inspiration, and development led to its success. Specifically, three mentees (18%) stated that a professional, personal, and emotional fit created a synergistic and successful relationship. First, they perceived that their mentor was interested in them as an individual. Second, mentees were in the same field as their mentor and therefore viewed their mentor as a valuable resource. Third, they felt their mentor was a

"true friend" first and foremost, and that they had "fun" together. Finally, they supported, guided, and advised each other.

As well, two mentees (12%) felt the inspirational quality of their relationship contributed to its success because women who have successful and responsible positions in the business community can be role models for other women. Another two mentees (12%) spoke of the professional and academic development that led to a successful relationship because of the valuable input that their mentor provided on how they could continue their academic and professional careers.

Successful Mentoring Factors: Mentors' Views

Mentors reporting successful relationships mentioned similar factors to those reported by mentees, including compatibility, reciprocity, and personal satisfaction. Specifically, five mentors (29%) perceived the relationship as successful because of their compatibility with their mentee. These mentors indicated that they developed a personal relationship because they felt that they were well matched. Also, they decided to define their relationship through a process of exchanging information. In their view, their relationship was positive and friendly because of the common ground that they established.

Three mentors (18%) felt that reciprocity created a dynamic and successful relationship. The mutual benefits that both gained from the relationship, in particular, the two-way flow of information, provided an added value to their lives. They felt that they were getting back as much as they were contributing. Another three mentors (18%) indicated that the personal satisfaction they experienced in helping others created a good mentoring relationship because of the ultimate reward of helping younger women clear barriers and avoid pitfalls.

In sum, mentors viewed their relationship in a positive manner; more than two-thirds of the assigned mentor-mentee relationships were perceived as successful by mentors. An inverse relationship was perceived by mentees; more than two-thirds of the mentees viewed the relationship as unsuccessful. The higher success rate seen by mentors may be attributed to a mismatch in expectations of mentees and mentors, a lack of readiness and maturity of some mentees, and mentors' need to provide socially acceptable responses.

Mentees' negative views of their relationship may be seen within the context of their lack of ownership and responsibility for the relationship because of its assigned nature. Further, since mentees did not have input into the selection and assignment processes, they tended to have a more negative view of their relationship.

The positive perception by mentors and mentees of their relationship appears to be due to the appropriate matching of the pairs, which then built on the naturalness of the mentoring process itself. Based on the research in the field, attempts were made in this study to match the pairs on the basis of similarities, including education, age, philosophy, and organization. Although some mentees indicated, in

the initial questionnaire, that the age of the mentor was not important, this factor was considered when matching the pairs. In addition, where there may have been a mismatch in educational and/or organizational background, the experience and expertise of the mentor played a major role in matching the pairs, regardless of age.

Interestingly, there appeared to be a correlation between some of the mentors' past experience in mentoring, which was limited and negative, and their present experience in this assigned program, which they also perceived as negative. At least two mentors had reported in the focus group meeting that not only did they have limited experience in mentoring but also had unsuccessful past mentoring experiences.

Positive and Negative Outcomes of the Intervention

In general, mentors and mentees indicated that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. For mentors some of the positive outcomes related to the career counseling and/or business support they provided, the psychosocial support they felt their mentee received from them, the advice they gave their mentee on further educational opportunities, and the role modeling they provided.

Positive Outcomes: Mentors' Views

Specifically, seven mentors (41%) indicated that they provided career advancement or business support to their mentee by involving her in business-related lunches and dinners where she could network with other business associates. As well, they helped with professional aspirations because their mentee became aware of their gains on the career ladder and subsequently believed it was also possible for her to advance. Five mentors (29%) spoke of the psychosocial support they offered their mentee because a "great relationship" was developed, based on openness and trust. The basic elements of this rapport included being open with each other from the beginning, forming clear expectations of each other, allowing the mentee to set the agenda, and, most of all, a "chemistry" in the relationship because they liked each other and there was a personality fit. Again, this synergy may be directly related to the naturalness of the mentoring process, which was captured in the appropriate matching of these pairs.

Four mentors (23%) suggested that they provided educational support to their mentee because they used a structured approach (e.g., the learning and life styles inventories) to help their mentee identify her educational gap. At the same time, they acted as a sounding board to discuss and explore ideas and provided advice on specific issues (e.g., information on a Masters program or comments on their workplace projects). These mentors saw the mentoring process as a very important strategy for getting women into management positions. Finally, three mentors (18%) spoke of the role-model support they provided to their mentee because they felt that women are more comfortable talking to other women; as a result, they were pleased to broaden their mentee's experiences and offer examples based on their experiences as opposed to men's experiences only.

Positive Outcomes: Mentees' Views

Mentees reported a similar number of interrelated advantages. For example, role-model or inspirational support, professional development support, instrumental value, new opportunities, and long-term relationships were, in their view, some positive outcomes.

Specifically, six mentees (35%) indicated they found their mentor to be inspiring because of her business successes, which suggested to them that they too could be successful; they also felt that their mentor had the ability to help them identify new options. Two mentees (12%) spoke of the professional development support offered by their mentor, including advice on career and further educational opportunities and valuable input on how they could continue their academic development. Another two (12%) spoke of the instrumental value provided by their mentor because she was in their field and in a position to help them climb the corporate ladder or to become more visible. The opportunity to see other possibilities was an advantage that two other mentees (12%) identified because their mentor made them take another perspective on their career options. Finally, one mentee felt that her mentor's long-term commitment to their relationship was advantageous because there was an understanding that they would continue to meet in future.

Negative Outcomes: Mentors' Views

Mentors and mentees identified a number of negative outcomes. For instance, the majority of mentors felt that the loose structure and assigned nature of the mentorship program and interorganizational match led to negative outcomes.

Seven mentors (41%) suggested that negative outcomes were the result of their failure to establish initial guidelines and clear expectations for the relationship. Three other mentors (18%) felt that interorganizational match led to the negative outcome; because their mentee was not in the same organization, they were unable to develop a close relationship and provide ongoing feedback. Intraorganizational match would have provided a common ground (e.g., insider knowledge of organizational norms, values, beliefs, culture, power, and political issues) from which to work and develop the relationship.

Finally, two mentors (12%) spoke of a drain on their energy due to the assigned nature of the mentorship program. They felt that because mentors usually develop from some prior, usually unplanned relationships, the artificial nature of the assigned mentoring process made it more difficult to work with their mentee. In their view, their mentee was a "black hole" that drained their energy.

Negative Outcomes: Mentees' Views

It is important to note that although the majority of the pairs reported a positive attitude toward the mentorship program, one-third felt that their relationship worked well, whereas two-thirds did not. In the second questionnaire, the 17 mentees reported a number of negative outcomes that were congruent with men-

tors' perspectives. These outcomes included unmet expectations, lack of common interest and commitment, philosophical differences, and disempowerment.

Sixteen mentees (94%) felt that their expectations were not met because their mentor did not provide leadership and guidance. Some stated that they did not want help with the content of the program, but rather needed guidance on developing their leadership skills to become more assertive within their organization. Moreover, they expected their mentor, as a senior executive, to drive the relationship by taking them under their wing and guiding them through some organization-related issues.

Eight mentees (47%) spoke of a lack of common interest and commitment; as their jobs were totally different and they had little in common in terms of professional background and job content with their mentor, the relationship was not pursued or developed. One mentee suggested that philosophical differences (e.g., profit versus nonprofit business orientation) prevented the development of the relationship. Finally, another mentee spoke of the disempowering effects of the assigned nature of the program. She felt she would not only have done better choosing her own mentor, but also would have felt empowered in doing so.

Again, these comments reflected the difficulties that may result when elements of the natural mentoring process are not included in an artificially designed mentoring program. Based on these negative outcomes, mentors and mentees suggested a number of strategies that may improve an assigned mentorship program.

Strategies for Developing a Mentorship Program

In discussing the improvements to the mentoring program, there was agreement and overwhelming support for change to key elements in the program. All mentees and mentors agreed that because of the nature of the MDW program, a same-gender mentorship program should be continued. All policies and procedures of the program should be defined, and clear expectations, roles, and responsibilities of mentors and mentees should be developed. Mentees should also have input into the selection, recruitment, and assignment of mentors, specific suggestions were provided related to the procedures to select mentors, as well as for setting up the program. These recommendations emerged from the findings related to the dynamics of the relationships, and the positive and negative outcomes of the intervention.

Program Procedures

Suggestions for improving the program's procedures included providing better contact procedures, having mentors attend the first session of the MDW program, explaining the mentor's role, describing what a mentor can provide, outlining the purpose of the mentor-mentee relationship, establishing definitions of the roles, holding an ice breaker to "kick off" the mentoring program, and using an application for acceptance into the mentorship program. In addition, it was felt that background information on mentors and mentees should be shared with both groups, a tracking or monitoring procedure should be established to see how relationships are

progressing, a longitudinal study should be conducted to see how many pairs have continued their relationship, and there should be a no-fault rule. Mentors and mentees should also be allowed to opt out of the mentorship program. These basic procedures are consistent with research in the field (Taylor, 1994).

Selection Procedures

A number of recommendations were made, including assigning pairs on the basis of age, career goals, and academic, philosophical, and business backgrounds. Mentors should be selected either within or outside the mentee's organization, and mentees should have the opportunity to select their own mentor. Mentees should be able to pair with their sponsor or with someone from their organization. Training and an orientation should be provided on the mentoring process for mentors and mentees. Finally, components of the "natural" mentoring process should be built into the assigned program (Boice, 1992).

Program Expectations

The following suggestions were made: have mentees state their expectations; provide a list of what mentors and mentees should do; ensure that mentors have time to meet with their mentees; suggest mentors familiarize themselves with the MDW program; urge mentors and mentees to discuss a closure date; and identify potential benefits of the relationship. As well, opportunities for mentors to network should be built into the procedures; mentors should attend an early session of the MDW program, be committed to the mentoring process, and be provided with information on assignments and the class schedule; a structured and focused set of guidelines should be developed for the mentorship program, including a statement of objectives, expectations, and responsibilities for mentors and mentees; and mentors and mentees should develop goals and action plans together. These guidelines and expectations were seen as consistent with successful mentoring relationships (Boice, 1992). Based on these strategies, the following tentative framework is suggested.

A Conceptual Framework for a Mentorship Program

Based on the aforementioned recommendations, a successful mentorship program should include a clear statement of objectives, selection procedures, definition and orientation procedures, goals and tracking procedures, and networking and closure procedures. These components are described below.

Statement of Objectives

A mentorship program should be entered into with a statement of objectives. The explicit purpose is to offer the mentee a chance to be paired with a woman who already has attained some of the skills and experience of management that the mentee might be lacking. Another purpose of the mentorship program is to facilitate the process of moving women beyond the "glass ceiling," thus redistributing the

balance of power within organizations. The intent of this pairing is to offer the mentee support in the areas of career development or psychosocial support.

Selection Procedures

It was suggested that all mentees should be offered the opportunity to select their own mentor, either from their own organization or from some other organization. Mentees should be guided to select a mentor who is prepared to make a time commitment to the relationship, who has some skills and abilities that the mentee would like to model or develop, and who is at least two levels above them in their organization.

If the mentee does not want to or cannot find a mentor, then she should have an opportunity to meet some potential mentors at an orientation meeting. Mentees should indicate their criteria for a mentor, including age, academic background, career area, philosophical orientation, and business background.

Potential mentors should complete an application to become a mentor. This application should include questions about previous mentoring experiences, and the success or failure of those experiences, as well as questions about previous experiences as a mentee. To facilitate the selection and matching process, mentors should be asked about time availability, and specific questions about their background.

Orientation Procedures

Orientation procedures should include the following: prior to the orientation meeting, an orientation package should be prepared for all potential mentors and mentees. The package should include a description of the roles and potential benefits of mentoring, as well as a set of guidelines for time commitments, scheduling of meetings, and telephone contacts.

An orientation meeting should be held for all selected and potential mentors, as well as for all mentees. The MDW program should be discussed, and the mentorship program should be introduced. Long-term goals and objectives of the mentoring strategy should be reviewed. Mentors who cannot attend the orientation should be contacted for a one-on-one orientation.

The orientation procedure should include a specific set of expectations of the roles of mentors and mentees. Regarding time commitments, mentors and mentees should be expected to have at least one scheduled meeting and two telephone calls every month. Both mentors and mentees should be encouraged to call each other for contact and to arrange meetings, but the mentee should have the ultimate responsibility for this contact. As for role descriptions, the purpose of a mentor-mentee relationship should be stated clearly, including specific descriptions of the mentor's expected role. Both mentors and mentees should use these role descriptions to guide their relationship.

Goals and Tracking Procedures

The recommended goals and tracking procedures include questionnaires to determine the progress of the relationship, contacts with mentors to identify problems as well as possible solutions, an opt-out procedure for mentees and mentors, and further research. For example, a longitudinal study should be conducted to determine if relationships continued beyond the official end date of the program, as well as on the impact of the mentoring strategy on career development and on the movement of women into senior management positions.

Networking and Closure Procedures

The recommended networking and closure procedures are: mentors and mentees should be invited to the orientation session; mentors should be brought together to meet other mentors and the instructors and be invited to other scheduled social activities of the program; invitations should be issued to mentors to attend the graduation ceremony. These recommended elements were derived from the questionnaire that mentors and mentees completed about improving the mentorship program.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study suggests that mentoring may be a critical strategy not only for facilitating adult learning and career development, but also for moving women beyond the "glass ceiling" and redistributing the balance of power within organizations. Of particular interest were the dynamics of the mentoring relationship, the positive and negative outcomes of the intervention, and the strategies for developing a mentorship program that delineated a framework for such a program. Although not explored in this study, of further importance were the nature and character of the contextual factors (for instance, the comprehensiveness and intensiveness of the MDW program, as well as the competitiveness among the mentees/students because of the sponsorship element of the MDW program) on the mentoring process itself, and the often negative impact of the assigned nature of the intervention.

A number of areas bear closer examination, such as the nature of the impact of contextual factors on the intervention itself. Although the study identifies contextual factors of the MDW program (that is, competitiveness and intensiveness), it did not look at their impact on the mentorship program nor did it identify the effects of the intra or interorganizational contexts on the mentorship program. Further studies might ask: What is the nature of the organizational context and the contextual factors of the MDW program on the mentorship program? Are pairs within the same organization more successful than pairs from different organizations?

The data also suggest that the synergy of the relationship, the instrumental value, and the psychosocial factors may have had a positive impact on the mentorship relationship. As well, the success of the relationships may have been characterized by reciprocity, commitment of mentors to the mentoring process, and clear role definition and guidelines to focus and justify the relationship.

These factors suggest a view of mentoring that is different from the prevailing one. Presently, mentoring is normally perceived as a naturally occurring phenomenon whereby mentor and mentee from the same organization or sector seek out each other, are highly compatible, and develop a relationship. Further studies are needed to reveal the implications of this shift in perspective of the mentoring process, as well as the impact of the intervention on assigned versus non-assigned same-gender mentoring pairs.

A future study could also assess the effectiveness of the framework on assigned and non-assigned mentor-mentee pairs. Although this study points to the mentoring process as a strategy for adult learning and development, it does not clearly address the nature of the relationship on adult learning and development. Further longitudinal studies might explore how many of these women have moved into upper and senior levels of management as a result of the mentoring process, as well as how many women have continued their learning beyond the official end date of the MDW program.

Conclusions

Since research suggests that mentors may not always be available for women who are in, or moving toward, management positions (Noe, 1988), an assigned mentorship program can provide women with an opportunity to experience the mentoring process, facilitate women's learning, and help achieve equity goals in an organization. This study suggests that mentoring is a strategy to help move women beyond the "glass ceiling."

The data suggest a tentative framework for this assigned mentorship program that includes setting objectives for the program, selection procedures, orientation procedures, goal setting and tracking procedures, and closure procedures. The elements of this framework are consistent with the research and literature in the field (Murray & Owen, 1991). In addition, the data indicate that same-gender, interorganizational, mentor-mentee relationships are subject to the same pitfalls and offer the same benefits as other mentor-mentee relationships (Noe, 1988). Moreover, the data indicate that rigour and care must be spent in developing a program. In this situation, the demands of the MDW program, which are competitive, time and labour intensive, comprehensive, and compressed over a 10-month period, do not appear to enhance the chances of success of a loosely structured and flexible mentorship program. Indeed, these contextual factors may have mitigated against the success of the mentor-mentee relationship. If, as Kram (1985) suggests, the first year of a mentorship relationship is characterized by its task focus, then a delicate balance between a tight and loose framework, that is, structure and spontaneity and natural and artificial, with clearly specified objectives, goals, and action plans are criteria for a program's continued success.

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