THE DARK SIDE OF MENTORING

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Introduction

A common theme that emerges from the literature is that mentoring is a beneficial and desirable process that abounds with rewards not only for participants but for the organisation as well. The proliferation of formal mentoring programs in both business and educational settings attests to a widespread belief in their effectiveness. An image is generally presented of a glowing picture of the wonders of mentoring particularly for professional development of staff, but at least some researchers and practitioners Jacobi (1991) argues, are sceptical given the commitment involved. In fact, under various conditions the mentoring relationship can actually be detrimental to the mentor, mentee or both. This paper seeks to illuminate the other side of the mentoring experience by examining some of the literature in educational contexts that explore formally established mentoring programs which may provide new insights for staff developers and policy formation, particularly in the area of expert/novice relationships.

Definition of formal mentoring

Mentoring in a formal program is a planned and intentional process which usually occurs between two people. It is considered to be developmental in that it enhances participants both personally and professionally. The key characteristics of mentoring identify that significant assistance is offered to the mentee in a warm and nurturing environment and that this assistance is offered by a skilled and experienced mentor. It is focussed on sharing of experiences and realities where participants sit, listen and reflect on areas of mutual interest or concern. It recognises that reflective practice takes patience and guidance, but advocates that this has tremendous power because it helps the individual to grow through self-discovery. It is a reciprocal process—both the mentor and mentee gain from the relationship by exploring and sharing their own thinking through co-operation and community connectedness. All members collaborate, which implies that each

individual brings an expertise and experience to the activity where neither party dominates.

The functions of mentoring should therefore reflect the following components of a mentoring relationship:

1) emotional and psychological support

2) direct assistance with career and professional development

3) role modelling which is focussed on achievement of skills and knowledge within the organisational context which will ultimately lead to enhanced practice and a broadening of values for the participants.

To begin the review, a brief summary of the benefits of mentoring is provided because there is a commonly held belief by many organisations Frey and Noller (1986) reports, that mentoring increases the personal and professional development of individuals as well as strengthening organisational structures. Calabrese and Tucker-Ladd (1991) further claim that mentoring is a strong synergistic activity which may be attractive to many participants. Therefore the benefits derived from a mentoring relationship for the mentor, mentee and the organisation are examined below.

Benefits of mentoring

For the mentor, benefits from involvement in the mentoring process have included personal and professional satisfaction in assisting mentee development (Fleming 1991), the enhancement of the mentor's professional reputation (Newby & Heide, 1992), the extension of collegial networks and influence (Wright & Wright, 1987) and the opportunity for the mentor to rethink and redefine personal and professional skills and knowledge (Walker & Stott 1994). Mentors, Matters (1994) argues, have also reported that they feel rewarded as they have contributed to the fostering of the profession and therefore they are professionally gratified. Levinson *et al.* (1978) believe that serving as a mentor provides a creative and rejuvenating life challenge to an adult where as Willis and Dodgson (1986) have reported on the excitement for the mentor of discovering hidden talent and helping to develop it within the organisation to provide future leadership.

The benefits of mentoring for the mentee, as determined from the literature in the field, appear to be more substantial than those of the mentor, as perhaps the mentee stands to gain much more personally and professionally from the relationship. Gains for the mentee include increased professional opportunities (McCormick 1991), career advancement (Wunsch 1993), higher levels of self awareness, self esteem and confidence (Walker & Stott 1994), provision of

access to information and power bases which could lead to empowerment (Newby & Heide 1992), increased collegial networks (Matters 1994) and professional growth of knowledge and skill development (Fleming 1991). Positive work relationships have been found by Fleming (1991) and McCormick (1991) to be critically important in developing mentees as it helps lead to success within the organisation. Individuals who were mentored reported having more advantageous career outcomes than those who were not mentored, and that being involved in a mentoring relationship was found to be related to individuals' feelings of being more satisfied and recognised in their work situations.

   The benefits of a mentoring relationship flow on to the organisation in many ways because the organisation is made up of the people within it. How people function and interact with each other within daily work practices affects the overall efficiency and outcomes of the organisation. Therefore a mentoring program may be considered successful if, as Walker and Stott (1994) advise, participants claim real gains from their time together. By engaging in a successful mentoring program reciprocal benefits for the organisation can also occur which include training people within the organisation (Fleming 1991), building organisational culture and commitment (Fagenson 1989) and helping the organisation meet affirmative action mandates by the involvement and promotion of women and other under represented groups (Wunsch 1993). These professional development issues are more fully examined below.

Professional development of staff

Mentoring provides opportunities for personal and professional training for both the mentor and mentee. The process of managerial succession is facilitated as it fosters the development of individuals with high potential (Gerstein 1985, Zey 1988). Through mentoring programs the organisation develops managerial talent that is confident, knowledgeable and more active (Hunt & Michael 1983, Fleming 1991). The value for the organisation in adopting mentoring programs, according to Newby and Heide (1992, p. 5), 'can help resolve organisational problems such as premature departure, stagnation, boredom, and lack of qualified people in the organisation'. It may foster the growth of relationships between junior and senior staff (Zey 1985) where mentors help mentees feel closer to the organisation thus creating a better 'organisational fit' (Farren et al. 1984, Fagenson 1989). As mentees learn the ropes of the organisation and are promoted up its ladder, they may be less likely to leave it. The organisation retains the people they have put time and effort into training and those who are highly valued. All in all, it may reduce staff turnover where, Krupp (1987) claims, organisations gain because mentees feel special, better work is accomplished,

involvement in the organisation increases, people are better able to deal with stress and absenteeism decreases. There may be improved job production and satisfaction for all involved (Hunt & Michael 1983, Gerstein 1985, Fleming 1991, Newby & Heide 1992) where with increased job satisfaction, the mentee may be a better asset to the organisation. Fleming (1991) maintains that, because mentees enjoy greater happiness on the job, they are more productive and more likely to experience greater success. Mentees may become more effective and quality performers (Bova & Phillips 1984, Burke 1984, Szacsvacy 1992) as they become better educated, better paid, less mobile and more satisfied with their work and career progress (Gerstein 1985).

Formalised mentoring programs provide access to increased professional opportunities for both mentors and mentees. They help the mentee to establish a strong, informal and formal network, where Fleming (1991, p. 3) claims:

> It is through these networks that the protege becomes privy to essential information about organisational politics, job openings etc. But what is more important the network will make sure that the protege becomes known to the top administrative officials. This network more than anything will help the protege move up the career ladder.

Mentors help integrate the individual into the organisation and build a sense of belonging for the mentee (Zey 1988). As mentees identify with the organisation, they may learn to adopt the organisation's frame of reference and to define problems and issues through that frame which builds organisational culture and commitment. According to Bullis and Bach (1989), the mentees' ranges of vision are focussed and narrowed where they use organisational premises in their decision making. As a result, the organisation then does not need to control members' decisions through direct supervision. This in turn may instil additional loyalty and commitment to the organisation (Phillips-Jones 1983, Zey 1988, Epps 1989) which brings added power to the organisational drive (Gerstein 1985) through promotion of accepted organisational norms. This may enhance communication between all levels and sectors of the organisation (Zey 1988) as the experiences of the mentor and mentee can be disseminated and spread to others (Miller *et al* 1989). Newby and Heide (1992) further found that participants in their study of mentored academic staff, incorporated new ideas and materials into their daily practice and actively attempted to transmit what they had learnt to their colleagues and students. Established staff may be revitalised (Frey & Noller 1986, Fleming 1991, Szacsvay 1992) as mentorship helps produce active members within the organisation who are self confident and knowledgeable. As a result, there is optimal organisational and individual

development and outcomes with relatively low monetary investment compared to other staff development initiatives. Research by Hunt and Michael (1983) has also shown that professionals who are mentored themselves are likely to become mentors of succeeding generations of professionals; thus a cycle of mentoring relationships is begun.

Finally, mentoring helps organisations meet their affirmative action mandate by training a range of people for greater responsibility in terms of their professional development. In the United States formal mentoring programs in the public sector Carden (1990, p. 285) argues, have met:

> the affirmative action mandates of the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Civil Rights Act ....and enhanced societal awareness of the advisory/support needs of special populations (eg., racial minorities, the disabled, and women engaged in occupations traditionally dominated by men).

Mentoring is not a 'cure-all' or panacea for staff development, but it may be viewed as another point of intervention in the organisation's attempt to develop individuals. Mentoring may help to increase the diversity amongst staff as it has been found to be an effective strategy to increase minority groups' career opportunities and advancement (Blackwell 1989, Epps 1989). Results of Fagenson's (1989, p. 316) study 'support the view that an individual's reported job/career experiences and their protege status are related. Mentored individuals reported having more career mobility/opportunity recognition, satisfaction and promotion than non-mentored individuals'.

However, whilst the author advocates mentoring as a form of staff development, there is an absence of critique to guide it. Rather the literature on mentoring predominantly describes the benefits of the process without attempting to develop a critical position from which it can be developed. The purpose of this paper is to correct this void and to present a position which focuses on the concerns and limitations of the mentoring process as delineated from a review of some of the literature in the field. These have been tabled below thereby exposing the risks involved for staff developers and potential candidates who may seek proposals or involvement in this type of relationship.

Table 1: Concerns about mentoring

Concerns about mentoring	Studies which support this view
• Mentoring is time consuming for all concerned	Holt 1982, Farren *et al.* 1984, Burke 1984, Busch 1985, Howey 1988, Noe 1988, Blackwell 1989, Ragins 1989, Manson 1990, Redmond 1990, Littleton *et al.* 1992
• Poor planning of the mentoring process	Holt 1982, Howey 1988, Daresh & Playko 1990, Cameron & Jesser 1992, Newby & Heide 1992, Tellez 1992, Wildman *et al.* 1992
• Unsuccessful matching	Hunt & Michael 1983, Gerstein 1985, Frey & Noller 1986, Cameron & Jesser, 1992, Newby & Heide 1992, Beattie & Sutton, 1993
• Lack of understanding of the mentoring process	Frey & Noller 1986, Wright & Wright 1987, Garratt 1990, Playko 1991, Cameron & Jesser 1992, Matters 1994
• May create work tensions	Farren *et al.* 1984, McCormick 1991, Lawson 1992
• Few available mentors-especially women	Burke 1984, Busch 1985, Wright & Wright 1987, Hill *et al.* 1989a, McCormick 1991, Matczynski & Comer 1991, Wunsch 1993, Poole 1994
• Overuse of the available mentors	Burke 1984, Frey & Noller 1986, Redmond 1990, Poole 1994
• Lack of access for women and minority groups	Levinson *et al.* 1978, Hunt & Michael 1983, Merriam 1983, Willis & Dodgson, 1986, Wright & Wright 1987, Eberspacher & Sisler 1989, Ragins 1989, Jacobi 1991, Johnsrud 1991, Matczynski & Comer 1991, McCormick 1991, Sands *et al.* 1991, Cameron & Jesser 1992, Poole 1994
• Reproduction of the mentor's work style	Blackwell 1989, Coombe 1989, 1994, McCormick 1991, Cameron & Jesser 1992, Lawson 1992, Madison *et al.* 1993, Matters 1994
• Poor relationships between mentor/mentee	Holt 1982, Merriam 1983, Busch 1985, Frey & Noller 1986, Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986, Wright & Wright 1987, Hill *et al.* 1989a, Ragins 1989, Garratt 1990, Lyons *et al.* 1990, Fleming 1991, Playko 1991, Madison *et al.* 1993

Table 1: Concerns about mentoring (cont.)

Concerns about mentoring	Studies which support this view
• High visibility of program	Farren *et al.* 1984, Hunt & Michael 1984, Garratt 1990, Krueger *et al.* 1992, Lawson 1992
• Career advancement	Hunt & Michael 1983, Wright & Wright 1987, Knox & McGovern 1988, Hill *et al.* 1989b, Ragins 1989, Garratt 1990, Johnsrud 1991, Lawson 1992, Martinez 1992, Tellez 1992, Walker & Stott 1994
• Insufficient or termination of resources	Holt 1982, Teitel 1994

The following discussion focuses upon the organisational ramifications that have been identified from the concerns about mentoring which may provide insights for professional development of staff. Table 1 shows one of the most heavily reported concerns found within the literature reviewed was that mentoring is time consuming for all concerned and this factor alone may become overwhelming for the participants and the organisation. Mentoring requires energy to establish and maintain a profitable relationship which, Holt (1982) and Blackwell (1989) argue, is often not adequately rewarded or appreciated by some of the stakeholders in the process. Mentoring often fails to fully reach its objectives or even completely dissolves with disastrous consequences because, Cameron and Jesser (1992) believe there has been insufficient time allowed for the development of the mentoring relationship.

Table 1 further identifies that poor planning of the mentoring process can be a concern, where Wildman *et al.* (1992, p. 205) reported mentoring, 'to be a less than ideal reform tactic, especially when programs have been implemented with too little conceptual understanding of mentoring, unrealistic expectations and poorly thought out implementation strategies.' Howey (1988) proposes that a more sustained sequence of instructional activity and follow up support is needed than has been traditionally provided by formal mentoring endeavours. Lack of commitment from either the mentor, mentee or both has also been found by Garratt (1990) and Cameron and Jesser (1992) to erode the success of a mentoring program. In addition, resources can become a concern especially in relation to commitment to funding, which Teitel (1994) argues can create problems particularly if funds for programs suddenly terminate. Thoughtful assessment of costs, Holt (1982) claims, rarely occurs prior to program implementation which may also lead to a collapse of successful mentoring relationships.

Table 1 further shows there is often a lack of understanding of mentoring process where participants fail to apprehend the nature of shared responsibilities and expectations needed to create and sustain a positive working relationship. Coupled with this, the literature reports that many mentoring programs are not well planned, with little consideration given to the selection and matching of mentors and mentees. McCormick (1991) and Johnsrud (1991) have found in their research that cross-race and cross-gender mentor-mentee relationships have often not met with success due to personal and organisational barriers. Other researchers (Blackwell 1989, Hill *et al.* 1989a, Ragins 1989, Fleming 1991, Johnsrud 1991, McCormick 1991) have identified that mentors tend to select mentees who are the same gender, have the same social and cultural attributes or background characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion and social class. Therefore, many of these researchers conclude that mentoring is homogenous in nature. Whilst this may or not be so, some of the literature is quite forthright in reporting on matching and gender issues that may cause disruption to the mentoring process (Merriam 1983, Frey & Noller 1986, Hill *et al.* 1989a, Fleming 1991, Jacobi 1991). As unsuccessful matching and the issue of gender preferences and conflict appear to be an area of concern, the following discussion which encompasses some of the concerns identified in Table 1 may serve to alert staff developers and practitioners involved in expert/novice relationships to some of the potential limitations of the mentoring process.

Matching concerns

Table 1 has identified that poor relationships between the mentor and mentee has often led to a breakdown in mentoring relationships (Gerstein 1985, Cameron & Jesser 1992). Madison *et al.* (1993) have argued this may occur because the personality 'chemistry' between the mentor and mentee is not good, especially when precipitated by practices where participants have not been free to chose each other in the matching process. Where mentor programs are forced, the mentoring relations often formed may lead to kind of contrived collegiality. This model is not inherently beneficial because Lawson (1992) believes it can undermine trust and openness which is essential to the establishment and maintenance of a collaborative culture.

Yet even when participants have been successfully matched, often incompatible work schedules or the tyranny of distance serves to disrupt the mentoring process (Noe 1988, Tinker *et al.* 1993). For many, the opportunity to participate in the mentoring process is beyond their reach, as with both formal and informal mentoring many talented people are not chosen or lucky enough to find a mentor (Fleming 1991). Furthermore, when mentoring has been successful,

McCormick (1991) has found that it has led to a negative result as it has promoted competition in the work setting through the emphasis on the personal ambition of the individual. This has then created an environment which promotes elitism for the mentee and exclusion for the non-mentored where Farren *et al* (1984) and Lawson (1992) report that those without a mentor may become jealous. The trauma of unsuccessful matches or the breaking of successful matches has also been reported as a major concern by Frey and Noller (1986). Relationships that are not complementary or are prematurely ended, Hunt and Michael (1983) conclude, may result in a loss of self-esteem, frustration, blocked opportunity and a sense of betrayal. These are just some of the concerns identified from the literature which explore the mentoring process. In order to examine the identified concerns from Table 1 more succinctly, the following discussion has summarised and clustered the issues under three subheadings of gender, mentor and mentee concerns each of which are examined in turn.

Gender concerns

Hill *et al.* (1989a) have reported that mentoring has been dominated by men, as both the mentor and mentee in the majority of cases are male and therefore, Eberspacher and Sisler (1989) and Fagenson (1989) claim, it has often been viewed as the exclusive domain of the male. This might be due to the practice that it has been more available to men than women (Burke 1984, Hill *et al.* 1989a) as mentoring in a variety of educational contexts has historically been part of the male informal network system where, Willis and Dodgson (1986) and Ragins (1989) argue, few women can access this 'old boy network' system. Hill *et al.* (1989a) further propose that women restrict themselves from the use of this powerful informal communication channel because they rely almost exclusively on formal organisational systems of communication. Therefore, women Jacobi (1991) and Matczynski and Comer (1991) conclude are often denied access to the career ladder of advancement regardless of the organisational setting.

The role of mentor takes a great deal of dedication and produces many demands on the mentor. The role also requires people who are well regarded within their profession and this may be one reason, Fleming (1991) argues, why there is not an abundance of mentors. Not only is there is a scarcity of mentors, but a scarcity of women serving in senior positions who could be identified as appropriate mentors (Matczynski & Comer 1991). This situation creates strong competition for good mentors who are usually white males (Hill *et al.* 1989b, McCormick 1991) where Wright and Wright (1987) identified that there are few references about female mentors in the literature. Burke (1984) and Busch (1985) both report that there are also significantly fewer female mentees than their male

counterparts, regardless of whether they have a male or female mentor. Sands *et al*. (1991), therefore, conclude that both men and women mentees are thus more likely to be mentored by men.

Within the higher education sector even though women more than ever are entering the academic profession, Moses (1993) determines the proportion of women at least at senior lecturing level has hardly increased. Poole (1994) also supports this position by acknowledging that of those women who could perform the role of mentor, few are available because of high demand placed upon them. Wunsch (1993, p. 354) further argues 'males have more natural access to these kinds of mentors (senior colleagues and heads of departments) than females. Males still hold the majority of senior faculty positions and have a stronger inclination to mentor other men.' Ragins (1989), Jacobi (1991) and Sands *et al.* (1991) propose that many mentors and mentees may feel more comfortable developing a professional and personal relationship with the same gender. Hence women may be less likely than men to obtain a mentor because of gender preferences expressed by both mentor and mentee. This could then ultimately exclude women from entering a mentoring relationship thereby creating imbalance and disadvantage of access. This situation has been reported upon extensively in the literature as identified from Table 1.

Other reasons that may account for poor access for women to a mentoring relationship might be that women do not actually seek a mentor because they do not recognise its importance in career advancement (Ragins 1989), or that traditional male paradigms of mentoring may be incompatible with female paradigms of knowledge and their world (Hunt & Michael 1983, McCormick 1991). Even if women recognise the importance of mentors, Ragins (1989, p. 7) suggests, that 'they may not have the knowledge, skills or strategies necessary to obtain a mentor'.

Hunt and Michael (1983) also report that there may be a general discomfort felt by women in a male-mentored relationship due to sexual tensions, fears and public scrutiny of the relationship. While male mentees may develop friendships and socialise with their mentors both inside and outside the work setting, female counterparts may be restrained from developing comparable friendships which constrains the mentoring relationship. In some of the literature (Matczynski & Comer 1991, Galvez-Hjornevik 1986, Wright & Wright 1987), it has been noted that when a male mentor and female mentee match has been formed, the mentee has often experienced being overprotected by the mentor, or being held at a greater social distance than their male counterparts, which has led to a general discomfort in male-female mentored relationships. Since mentoring may be an intense relationship, Hill *et al.* (1989a), Ragins (1989) and Fleming (1991) have found some people do not feel that opposite genders can engage in this type of

activity without love or sexual relationships forming, therefore they avoid this kind of mentoring experience. In some cases, researchers (Hill *et al.* 1989b, Ragins 1989, Fleming 1991) claim that women tend to be perceived as having a poor 'fit' with the organisation because, where a mentor and mentee are engaged in a cross-gender relationship, they may receive direct pressure from office gossip, unfounded rumours, jealous co-workers and even spouses to end the relationship, particularly when the work involves frequent and lengthy meetings often of a deep and involved nature, or may involve travel. It is a sad indictment of modern times, Matters (1994, p. 2) reflects, 'that increasingly this closeness has unsavoury labels attached to it when in reality it is the most obvious sign of a lasting and true partnership which sustains and energises both parties'.

Women may also be disadvantaged because many lack access to informal settings frequented by males (Ragins 1989), or become 'spoilers' because certain decisions can no longer be made on the golf course and other places (Hill *et al.* 1989b). Both Hunt and Michael (1983) and Hill *et al.* (1989b) found that stereotypes still exist which cast the female as a greater risk due to the many life demands women must balance in addition to their careers. Nevertheless, abuses of the mentoring relationship such as over-extended relationships and male-female relationships have been reported upon in the literature (Merriam 1983, Frey & Noller 1986, Fleming 1991). The interaction between mentor and mentee Lyons *et al.* (1990) recognises is a complex one, imbedded in a pattern of formal and informal constraints imposed by the organisational environment and society. As so dramatically captured by Madison *et al.* (1993, p. 78) who wrote 'Across the centuries, a warning is clear from the poet...beware. So with any intense relationship, it is not always a risk-free situation.' However, empirical research regarding gender issues Jacobi (1991) has found, is in short supply. Other concerns for the mentor and mentee which have been derived from Table 1, some of which are traumatic whilst others appear lesser in impact, are further reported and discussed below.

Mentor concerns

Mentoring, Coombe (1989, 1994) and McCormick (1991) claim, promotes and maintains the status quo by socialising the mentees into 'the rules of the game'. However, this could be counter productive as it could result in the mentee being moulded into what the mentor sees as being the acceptable way of doing things. Blackwell (1989), Lawson (1992) and Madison *et al.* (1993) further argue, mentoring can often reproduce the work style of the mentor and the work orientation of the organisation which sanctions an elitist patron system which may clone managers and administrators and exclude the socially different. This

may leave little opportunity for the development of innovation or the encouragement of change and revitalisation within an organisation. Thus the mentoring program may become a system for organisational socialisation, which may or may not be a desirable outcome.

Mentorship is a unique role where not everyone who volunteers may be suitable (Daresh & Playko 1990, Newby & Heide 1992). Holt (1982) has reported that chosen mentors may possess many of the skills and aptitudes required to perform their functions, but even after training may not possess the qualities essential to the efficient performance of a mentorship role. In addition, Wright and Wright (1987) suggest, that mentors may be exploitive and use mentees to only further their career. Garratt (1990) likewise has found that mentors can become patronising if not committed to the process or have their own agenda for mentoring an individual. Mentoring partnerships Matters (1994, p. 6) concludes, 'tend to break down immediately if the mentor or the mentee exhibit overtly self serving behaviours.' Therefore, the professional and personal qualities of a mentor is bound to affect the character of the mentor-mentee relationship (Galvez-Hjornevik 1986) and the overall planning of the mentoring process.

However, it is also fair to point out that if mentors are matched with poor mentees, then their performance could negatively reflect on the mentor. According to Hunt and Michael (1983), Ragins (1984), Wright and Wright (1987) and Newby and Heide (1992), often a mentee cannot take criticism or won't listen to the counsel of the mentor, or may not perform up to expectations which can lead to a breakup of the relationship. Once the relationship experiences major difficulties, the relationship itself can become quite destructive for all concerned.

As previously reported there is a scarcity of suitably qualified mentors but as Burke (1984), Frey and Noller (1986) and Redmond (1990) argue, of those that do qualify, most are already overburdened with organisational matters and professional responsibilities. To become engaged in another or possibly two or three time-consuming mentor-mentee relationships is very demanding, both personally and professionally and there is a strong risk of overloading the few available mentors. Besides the concerns that the literature has provided regarding the mentor, issues focussing on the mentee have also been reported.

Mentee concerns

A significant issue reported upon in the literature for many mentees is concerned with career advancement within the organisation. Ragins (1989) and Hill *et al.* (1989b) have reasoned that for many mentees career advancement may not be

possible as their mentor may not have the necessary power to promote the mentee within the organisational political and career structures. Farren *et al.* (1984) in their earlier research also suggested that a female mentor may not be as influential as a male mentor or be as powerful because of social and organisational barriers. This could ultimately minimalise the effects of a mentoring relationship as it can hinder the upward mobility of the mentee, regardless of whether they are male or female.

However, when mentees are matched with powerful mentors, often the formal program has high visibility which according to Farren *et al.* (1984) may produce high expectations for success. This puts a lot of pressure upon mentees to constantly perform due to the careful scrutiny of their professional behaviour (Krueger *et al.* 1992). Coupled with this, mentors may be subject to the usual political rise and fall of any organisation and if mentees are seen to be closely associated with them, then they too may unwittingly have to ride that reflected switchback (Garratt 1990). Relationships with the wrong mentor Hunt and Michael (1983) report may cost mentees valuable career time and bring them negative feedback by association.

Tellez (1992) has found that a plaguing question often for mentees is concerned with whether they have the right mentor. The mentee, Wright and Wright (1987) conclude, could become attached to a poor mentor. In some cases Coombe (1989) has found that the mentee has been pressured to comply with the mentor's view on what constitutes good practice rather than to apply an autonomous professional assessment of a given situation. Playko (1991) has established similar findings, where some mentees have found their mentors to be close minded about alternative solutions to complex problems. If mentees do not fit in with the mentor's plan, they may experience difficulty and will need to rely on others and the appraisal system to see them through (Garratt 1990). Mentees are not only inexperienced, Martinez (1992) argues, but are often new to the organisation which subsequently creates a great power differential. Therefore it is unlikely under such conditions that mentors will be 'mates' which Johnsrud (1991) and Coombe (1994) determine creates a disproportionate allocation and imbalance of power. However, perhaps the most contentious issue in formalised mentoring programs is the proposal of assessment measures of participants. When imposed mentoring loses its spontaneity and its intrinsically non-judgemental value, it runs the risk of being at variance with the benefits and principles on which mentoring is built. If mentees feel they are being formally judged, Walker and Stott (1994, p. 76) have found that 'they are unlikely to be completely open, and this may seriously obstruct learning' especially if it reflects upon those aspects of performance connected with their career paths.

Other concerns reported upon in the literature include situations where the mentor could feel threatened by the mentee's professional growth (Wright & Wright 1987), opposition from the mentee's supervisors who may feel that the mentor is undermining their authority with the mentee (Cameron & Jesser 1992) and the situation where the mentee becomes overly dependent on the mentor (Busch 1985, Wright & Wright 1987, Playko 1991). In fact, Madison *et al.* (1993) suggest that a mentoring relationship that lasts beyond five years indicates that the relationship may not be healthy due to the elements of co-dependency. In an informal mentoring relationship a mentor or mentee can always choose to 'escape' quietly from the experience, especially when the relationship has failed to reach or address the needs of those concerned. Subsequently Krueger *et al.* (1992) and Lawson (1992) caution, that in a formal mentor program any retreat from the program takes place with full official awareness and acknowledgment; a situation which mentees may not wish to place upon themselves. In short the message is plain; the status and consequences of a formal mentoring program should not be considered lightly.

Future directions for professional development

The concerns regarding the mentoring process suggest there needs to be a reassessment of the mentoring relationship. One way forward for staff developers, policy makers and participants in the relationship in addressing many of the concerns identified is to restructure the mentoring process from a one to one partnership to a larger group situation where there is one mentor for several mentees. This would encourage a more collaborative and open process where the opportunity of a team approach could be utilised. Many of the issues regarding gender concerns and lack of available mentors may be resolved as the larger group numbers may negate the constraints previously discussed.

The professional and personal relationships that develop from a group mentoring process may have a broader influence as the opportunity for mentees to extend collegial networks could be greater in a small group context rather than a one to one partnership. Mentees may also find the support that they can gain from a group situation is greater than if working in isolation with one mentor. The ability to reflect with peers and to gain different perspectives on organisational and professional issues may be further enhanced as the mentoring context is enriched through a greater diversity of perceptions, skills and knowledge.

For the organisation, group mentoring allows for more efficient use of resources as for example, the mentor's time and expertise has the opportunity for greater influence and allows the development of more individuals. Organisational

culture may also be fostered as the mentor can help integrate several mentees in to the morés of the organisation which has the potential for building a sense of belonging and commitment for individuals. These are just a few suggestions for practitioners charged with the development of participants which may assist rethinking about the mentoring process so that effective and desirable outcomes are produced for all concerned.

Conclusion

Overall a review of the literature reveals that there is a lack of awareness about the concerns of mentoring and the ambivalence connected with institutionalised or formal mentoring programs. Instead much of the writing and research on the mentoring experience supports the benefits and potential of this phenomenon. However, there is a lack of a theoretical or conceptual base Jacobi (1991) argues to explain the proposed links between mentoring success. This review of the literature has endorsed this concern by revealing that there are many doubts about the mentoring process which need further examination, research and reflection before the 'bonus bandwagon' of mentoring is embraced. This paper has sought to illuminate the dark side of the mentoring experience, exposing the risks involved which may assist reflection for present, past and potential candidates who seek to embrace this type of relationship. The difficulties identified may or may not be solved, but it is only through careful monitoring and discussion which focuses on these difficulties that progress can be made towards proclaiming mentoring as an effective means of staff development. The challenge that lays ahead for staff developers and policy makers is to develop strategies such as group mentoring, which may overcome the implications raised by this examination of the dark side of mentoring.

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