

Mentoring in Construction Engineering Firms

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Abstract. Mentoring is a relationship between a senior, experienced mentor and a young, less experienced protégé for the purpose of providing high amounts of both career and psychosocial assistance. Traditionally, during the history this kind of relationship was usual in construction industry. This article investigates an in-progress study which is about the relationship between personality of the protégé and his/her expectations from role's of mentor.

Keywords: Mentoring, Mentoring Roles, Human resource Development (HRD)

1. Introduction

Mentoring relationships are defined as relationships between a senior, more experienced person as mentor and a young, less experienced person as protégé for the purpose of providing high amounts of both career and psychosocial assistance [1]. Mentoring is an important developmental activity for protégés and mentors [2]. Mentoring has recently been claimed to be recognized as a relatively powerful HRD (Human Resource Development) intervention with the capability of assisting employees in career development, serving as a form of on-the-job training and helping to create learning organizations [3]. The understanding of work-based mentoring relationships has substantially increased during the past two decades [4]. Mentoring is associated with a wide range of favourable behavioural, attitudinal, health-related, relational, motivational, and career outcomes, although sometimes the effect size is generally small.

There are some specialties related to construction engineering firms. Traditionally and historically, apprenticeship relations in construction industry have been a method of transferring knowledge and experience. On the other hand, since these firms are project-based, they gain new experience and knowledge during the process of completing any new project; thus, mentoring would act as a means of transferring tacit knowledge of senior members to junior employees. Also, the project-orientation nature of these firms sometimes ends in high turnover of employees. For new employees, mentoring can act as a significant networking development opportunity.

2. Roles of mentor

The mentor is usually a senior, experienced employee who serves as a role model, provides support, direction, and feedback to the younger employee regarding career plans and interpersonal development, and increases the visibility of the protégé to decision-makers in the organization who may influence career opportunities [5]. The literature expands further on the functions that effective mentors serve. Kram (1980, 1988) identified two categories of functions for mentors: (1) providing career development support through coaching, sponsoring advancement, providing challenging assignments, protecting protégés from adverse forces, and fostering positive visibility, and (2) providing psychosocial support, which includes such functions as personal support, friendship, acceptance, counselling, and role modelling. This categorization was reaffirmed by Hegstad (1999). In addition to the five career development functions listed above, Missirian (1982), Zey (1984) and Lindbo and Shultz (1998) all identify a sixth function—providing access to resources—which should be added to Kram's construct for career development functions.

2.1. Career Development Mentoring

For this study, the characteristic activities have been organized under the appropriate career development function headings to create a block diagram of the career development mentoring functions (see Exhibit 1). Exhibit 1 shows career developmental roles of mentor. By analyzing dyad activities in these functions, information may be obtained on each of the six basic career development roles. Furthermore, analysis of the

six roles can lead to an understanding of the overall career development activity in the mentor-protégé relationship.

2.2. Psychosocial Mentoring

In addition to the career development functions already described (those which are directly related to the job or organization), the mentor is often involved in more personal activities with the protégé. Kram (1988) defined the mentoring functions under this psychosocial category to include personal support, friendship, acceptance, counselling, and role modelling. Kram (1988), Zey (1984), and numerous other researchers have identified activities that may be associated with the five basic psychosocial roles. These activities may be arranged into a psychosocial mentoring taxonomy similar to that constructed for career development mentoring. The resulting diagram is shown in Exhibit 2. As with Exhibit 1, a variety of functions are possible.

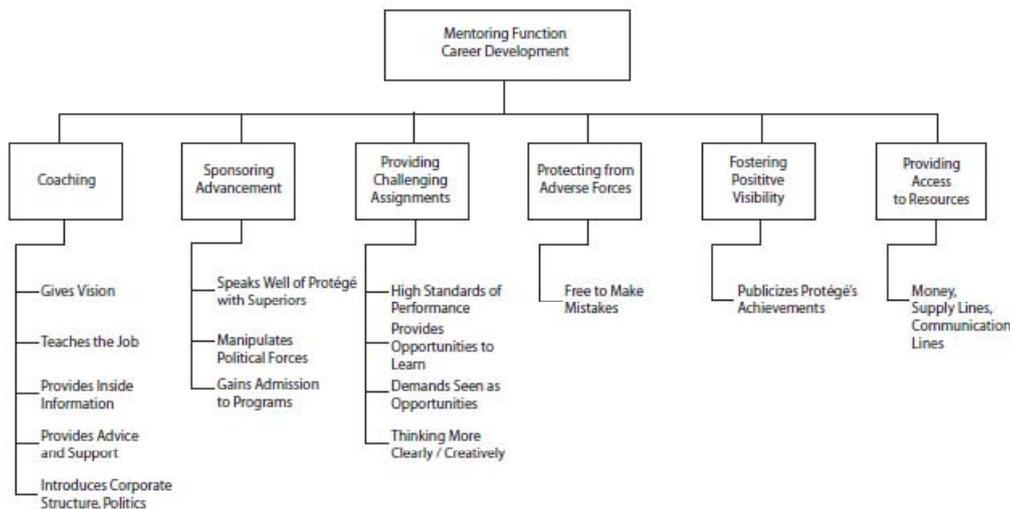


Exhibit 1: Career developmental roles of the mentor.

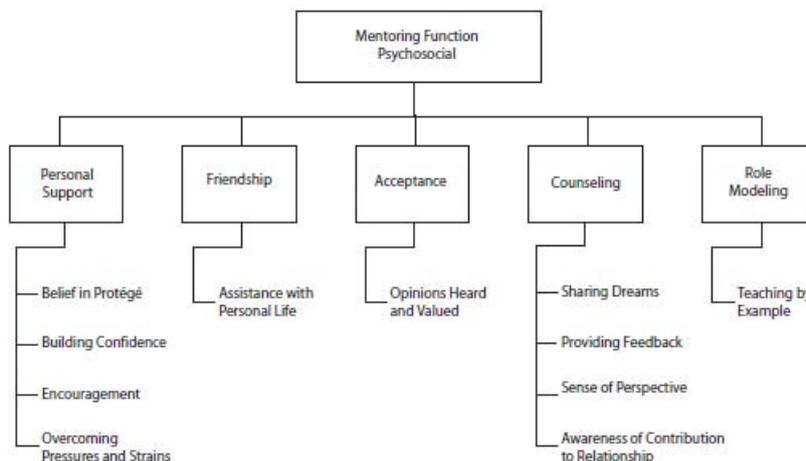


Exhibit 2: Psychological roles of the mentor.

3. Personality of the protégé

The literature of mentoring consists on parameters which affect a mentoring relationship in different dimensions. It asserts that some personality affairs of protégé affect a mentoring relationship among which locus of control, self-monitoring, and emotional stability are more important than the others. These three are introduced more here.

3.1. Locus of control

Individual's idea on the extent to which, rewards and outcomes are being controlled by their own actions or by external forces in their workplace are measured by Locus of control. The former individuals have been labelled "internals," and the latter are referred as, "externals." Evidence indicates that internals are more

likely to attempt to influence their environments, to obtain job-relevant information, and to expect that effort will lead to rewards. In addition, internals are more likely to participate in developmental activities, such as mentoring relationships because they are more likely than externals to believe that they can improve their skills [2].

3.2. Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring measures the extent individuals vary in their sensitivity to social cues and in their capability to adapt their behaviour to the requirements of a situation. highly self-monitoring Individuals are sensitive to social cues, able to modify their using those cues, and are concerned with behaving in a situational appropriate manner, and also they can change their s on the basis of what they believe is appropriate for a situation. Those individuals with low self-monitoring trait lack either the ability or the motivation to change their to fit situations, rely less on social cues to regulate their, and as a result behave more consistently across situations. Due to the fact that "high self-monitors" are more sensitive to interpersonal and social cues than "low self-monitors," they are more likely to be aware of the value of mentoring for success in organizations [2].

3.3. Emotional stability

Emotional stability can be measured in terms of self-esteem and negative affectivity. Self-esteem means how favourably individuals evaluate themselves; high-self-esteem individuals compared to low-self-esteem ones evaluate themselves more positively and believe they are more capable and competent. Self-esteem influences in a way that low-self-esteem individuals are more likely to withdraw from esteem-threatening situations as challenging tasks, they have less confidence in their capabilities to accomplish challenging assignments. Also, low-self-esteem individuals are less likely to seek feedback; they see themselves as less appealing partners. Negative affectivity, characterized by a tendency to experience negative emotional states, is a relatively stable dimension of individual differences. High-negative-affectivity individuals tend to focus on negative aspects of other people as well as themselves, they feel nervous, tense, and dissatisfied, and report stress, they are hostile, demanding, and distant. Emotional stability is the indication of by high self-esteem and low negative affectivity. Turban & Dougherty,(1994) indicated that since mentoring relationships involve, in part, a mentor helping a protégé obtain assignments that are highly visible to upper-level managers and then providing feedback to the protégé, it is expected that individuals with low emotional stability would be less likely to initiate mentoring relationships because such individuals, lacking confidence, will not aspire challenging assignments and will not want to increase their level of nervousness and tension by establishing relationships with upper-level managers.

4. Relationship among roles of mentor and protégé's personality

According to above mentioned, roles of mentor and three personality traits of protégé which are important in a mentoring relationship, this study seeks a co-relationship between mentee's personality and his/her expectation from priority of his/her mentor role. The hypotheses are as below:

H1. Self-monitoring of the protégé has a co-relationship with the expected role from the mentor as below:

H1-a. Those protégés who are high in self-monitoring are more interested in providing access to resources and acceptance role of the mentor.

H1-b. Those protégés who are low in self-monitoring are more interested in coaching, protecting from adverse forces, counselling, and role modelling.

H1-c. There is no co-relationship between self-monitoring and expecting the roles of sponsoring advancement, providing challenging assignments, fostering positive visibility, personal support, and friendship.

H2. Emotional stability of the protégé has a co-relationship with the expected role from the mentor as below:

H2-a. Those protégés who are high in emotional stability are more interested in coaching, providing challenging assignments, and providing access to resources.

H2-b. Those protégés who are low in Emotional stability are more interested in Sponsoring advancement, Fostering positive visibility, Personal support, Friendship, Acceptance, and counselling.

H2-c. There is no co-relationship between emotional stability and expecting the roles of protecting from adverse forces and role modelling.

H3. Locus of Control of the protégé has a co-relationship with the expected role from the mentor as below:

H3-a. Those protégés who have internal loci of control are more interested in providing challenging assignments and providing access to resources.

H3-b. Those protégés who have external loci of control are more interested in sponsoring advancement, protecting from adverse forces, fostering positive visibility, personal support, friendship, and acceptance.

H3-c. There is no co-relationship between locus of control and expecting the roles of counselling and role modelling.

5. Method

The research will be a positivist quantitative one. A questionnaire will be distributed among junior experts of three construction engineering firms. All the respondents will be under 32 years old which are according to Career Stage theory in the step one of their jobs. According to this theory which is one of the bases of the mentoring theory, an employee who arrives to job position in the first step tries to develop itself. So, the respondent will be under 32 years old and less than two years of job experience.

The questionnaire consists of two main parts; first it assesses the personality affairs and second, it assesses the expectations of the protégé from the mentor's role in the coming relationship. The first part is based on the famous measures of the related items which are designed by Spector (1988) for Work Locus of Control, Snyder (1974) for Self-monitoring, and Saucier (1997) for emotional stability. The second part is based on a measure which is so famous in the mentoring literature which is designed by Noe (1988) about the mentoring roles. However this questionnaire must be changed according to goal of the research which is expectations from mentoring role by the protégé.

6. Conclusion

This article investigates an in-progress study which is about the relationship among personality of the protégé and his/her expectations from role's of mentor. A limitation of this study is its scope which is in the construction engineering firms. Of course mentoring programs in this industry have some differences with others but the issue of the study can be tested in other industries as well, especially in project-based ones. The measures of the study are based on the literature and commonly cited, by most of the papers in this area, but while the topic of the study is not worked by other researchers previously so hypotheses are new. It is expected that the hypotheses be confirmed by the results of the research.

It seems that the issue of mentoring in project-based firms can generally be considered as a good field of research and vast topics of research can be defined in this regard.

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