

Full Length Research Paper

Participation in formal mentoring programme in South African construction industry: A perspective of new knowledge workers

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This study examined mentoring relationships within organizations, important characteristics of mentors, important mentoring functions, effectively achieved mentoring functions, potential negative outcomes or problems in mentoring relationships as reported by new knowledge workers and the implications of cultural divide in relation to gender and race. A descriptive survey was used to conduct this research, using a structured questionnaire. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and the Number Cruncher Statistical System version 6.0. Reliability for internal consistency for the objectives, were determined using Cronbach's alpha test. A list wise deletion analysis was conducted to verify the valid cases to be analyzed. Results indicated that male mentors still dominate in the South African construction industry. Important characteristics that mentors should possess were identified, including important and adequately achieved mentoring functions which were ranked using their mean values. Potential negative outcomes or problems did not often occur, while race disparity was not a hindrance in the formal mentoring relationship. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on mentoring as mentoring relationships of new knowledge workers' perspective has not been thoroughly researched in the construction industry in South Africa. The need for future research is also discussed.

Key words: Construction industry, mentoring program, new knowledge workers.

INTRODUCTION

How do companies compete, build and maintain viable businesses in a rapidly changing global, marketplace and business environment? A major part of the answer is high quality human capital according to Aron (2001). Aron (2001) further indicates that companies with high quality human capital perform better in the marketplace, and deliver higher and more consistent returns to shareholders than companies with mediocre workers. Competitive organizations worldwide in the information

age rely on their employees to provide innovative, advantageous and original solutions to problems the companies may have. However, Aron (2001) points out that the shift to the new economy has brought with it free agent market for skilled people.

Although, implementing the right technology is critical to a company's success, sustaining a skilled, highly educated and motivated new knowledge work force is an equally valuable asset. Drucker (1994) indicates that knowledge workers are high level employees who apply theoretical and analytical knowledge, acquired through formal education, to develop new products or services (new knowledge worker can therefore, be defined as a person who is being mentored and developed to be a

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knowledge worker).

Mentoring is receiving much attention from contemporary business, organizational, behavioural and psychological researchers. Mentoring has been linked to better career development opportunities, higher levels of career maturity and greater overall job satisfaction by protégés, that is, contributes to adult and personal growth (Peluchette and Jeanquart, 2000; Flouri and Buchanan, 2002; Parnell, 1998). Mentoring refers to an interactive and dyadic relationship, (Paice et al., 2002). The South African government has not been left behind in trying to promote mentoring programmes to various organizations to cater for new employed skilled workers and also for construction organizations especially emerging contractors [Department of Public Works (DPW, 1999)].

The nature of mentoring relationship

Wanberg et al. (2006) and Philips-Jones (1983) indicates that majority of mentoring relationships are informal. That is, the relationship develops because of shared interests, admiration, or job demands that require the skills of two or more persons. In informal mentoring relationships, discussion between the mentor and protégé usually go beyond career-related issues to more in-depth personal sharing of interests, needs and values.

Many organizations have tried to formalize mentoring relationships in order to capitalize on the potential development aspects of such relationships (Noe, 1988). Although, the focus of formalized mentoring programs may be on completion of designated tasks, activities, or protégé skill learning, mentors may also provide valuable counselling, coaching, and role-modelling functions for the protégé as noted by (McDowall-Long, 2004).

There is a marked difference between formal and informal mentor-protégé relationships. Many organizations have established formal mentoring programs that attempt to meet the organizations employee development needs. The relationships that are cultivated through formal mentoring programs have characteristics that set them apart from informal mentoring relationships, and may result in different functions and outcomes (Ragins and Cotton, 1999; Ragins et al., 2000). Formal mentor-protégé relationships tend to focus on short-term goals, and protégés participating in formal mentoring programs may not perceive a commitment to them as individuals on the part of the mentor, but rather, to the program. Another consequence is that mentors in formal programs may perceive that their protégés are low performers who have been assigned to a mentor in order to improve their work performance. Consequently, the degree of mutual disclosure, authenticity and empowerment in formal relationships may be markedly reduced from that inspired by informal relationships (McDowall-Long, 2004).

Mentoring relationships are strongly correlated to career success. As stated initially protégés tend to

advance more quickly in their careers, feel more satisfied in their careers and express positive psychological coping skills. Human resource development practitioners must be aware of the established beneficial outcomes of mentoring in order to assess the success of their own mentoring programs (McDowall-Long, 2004). It has been recommended that organizations encourage managers to become mentors, set up formal (assigned) mentoring programs, and link mentoring to other human resource management systems such as compensation and performance appraisal to increase mentoring in organizational settings (Burke and McKeen, 1989; Kram, 1985).

Most mentoring relationships develop naturally through unstructured social interaction, and are known as informal mentoring relationships. In recent years, however, many organizations have established formal mentoring programs, involving assigned pairing of mentors with protégés. Despite this trend, there is a dearth of research available about the outcomes of formal mentoring and the factors that make formalized relationship successful (Feldman et al., 1999) especially in South Africa. While mentoring programs are used extensively as a career development tool, most of the empirical research is either based on informal or spontaneously developed mentoring relationships or has failed to ask protégés whether or not they are involved in formal or informal relationships (Wanberg et al., 2003).

This represents a gap in the literature since formal and informal mentorships differ in terms of how the relationship is initiated for example, spontaneous attraction versus third party matching and other relational characteristics for example, formality of interaction (Ragins and Cotton, 1999).

Obtaining a mentor is an important career development experience for individuals. Research indicates that mentored individuals perform better on the job, advance more rapidly within the organization (that is, get promoted more quickly and earn higher salaries), report more job and career satisfaction, and express lower turnover than their non-mentored counterparts (Chao, 1997; Dreher and Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Scandura, 1992; Whitely et al., 1992).

Therefore, a mentor is viewed as 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 (Allen et al., 2004; Wanberg et al., 2003). Thus, it is important to determine the important characteristics of a mentor in the South African construction industry.

A number of testimonials, case studies, and descriptive research studies suggest that mentors can facilitate personal development and advancement of their protégés in the organization by providing challenging

assignments, guidance and counselling and increased exposure and visibility to top management and by serving as role model (Burke, 1984; Phillips-Jones, 1983). According to the Council for Scientific Institute of Research (CSIR, 2008) research report in South Africa, indicated that the absence of mentors and mentoring is an impediment to progress.

Situations associated with negative mentoring outcome or problems

Notwithstanding the benefits of mentoring stated in the literature, this does not preclude the possibility that mentoring relationships experience problems or negative outcomes (Scandura, 1998; Eby et al., 2000). Initial research on social-psychological and interpersonal relationships notes that unpleasant incidents are common and often a neglected aspect of all relationships, these ranges from minor episodes, such as arguing, to serious incidents, such as physical or psychological abuse (Marshall, 1994).

According to Noe (1988) additional research is needed to identify the influence of protégés' personal characteristics and job and career attitudes on both the extent of interaction with mentors and benefits gained from the relationship. Given this large body of social psychological research, it is interesting that very little research has focused on the problems or negative outcomes of mentoring. Eby et al. (2000) in their study on negative mentoring experience revealed that protégés experience: Dissimilar personality and habits, mismatch within the dyad, self absorption, work style, distancing behaviour, manipulative behaviour, inappropriate delegation of duty, intentional exclusion, credit taking, politicking, that is, self promotion, technical incompetence, lack of mentor expertise, that is, interpersonal incompetency, sabotage of any efforts, general dysfunctional, that is, bad attitude, personal problems and deception. The authors advocated the need for further research in the area of negative mentoring in individual disciplines which might be different from one industry to another.

Unfortunately, no empirical studies have attempted to identify problems encountered by new knowledge workers participating in a mentoring relationship in the South African construction industry. This study therefore explored the problems encountered by new knowledge workers' in South African construction industry.

A review of South African transformation

Managing diversity, multiculturalism, affirmative action and equal employment opportunities are words in common currency in new democratic South Africa, as they are in most democratic countries of the world. However,

although, these concepts are now being articulated by government, business and trade unions alike, for many years they were the sole preserve of those organizations subscribing to the various codes of conduct (such as the Sullivan Principles) as well as enlightened employers resisting apartheid oppression. Thus, although, the debate about these concepts is just beginning in earnest, academic research and practical experience was gained during the time of the apartheid regime which, in turn, is informing the implementation of affirmative action and managing diversity programmes in a new era (Human, 1996).

This experience is made more important by the fact that affirmative action and the management of diversity in South Africa do not constitute tools to facilitate the entry of minorities into the mainstream of organizational life. In South Africa, for many years, the majority of the population has been denied access to education, jobs and opportunities through a process of rigorous discrimination (Human, 1996). Some observers argue that black and female advancement and empowerment will now take place naturally and that an inexorable drift towards equality of opportunity is inevitable (Bruce, 1994). Given both the experience of other African countries, such as Zimbabwe and Namibia, as well as statistics relating to social mobility from other countries of the world (Bennell and Strachan, 1992), this scenario is highly unlikely. It is, nevertheless, crucial to the stability of the country that a committed effort towards non-racism, non-sexism and increased democracy and participation is made and is seen, by the majority of the population (Human, 1996).

The expectations that the majority of South Africa's population have of the government are such that the effective management of diversity and the redistribution of power, wealth and opportunity have to take place. South Africa, unlike some other countries of the world, has no choice but to manage workforce diversity and to manage it effectively; the future prosperity and stability of the country, and possibly the region, depend on it (Human, 1996).

Given this urgency, it is surprising how few committed efforts to managing diversity and affirmative action have been made. Many organizations pay lip-service to the need for affirmative action and managing diversity, yet few appear to have incorporated these kinds of objectives into either their strategic planning process or reward systems (Human, 1993).

Many organizations, to this day, look for quick fix solutions to the challenge of managing diversity in organizations; such solutions frequently take the form of workshops or interventions which are not incorporated into overall strategic and human resource management processes (Human, 1993). Other organizations are playing the numbers game and are underestimating the extent to which effective affirmative action requires fundamental changes to organizational culture and the

way in which people are managed (Human, 1991). Due to socio-political changes in 1991, South Africa moved from a paternalistic to democratic society, which has had an impact on employee-manager relations in organizations. South African organizations are in an era of rapid and spasmodic transformation as the current ambiguities result in the disillusionment of the workforce (Visser, 2003). The construction industry delivers its products in a uniquely project-specific environment that continuously involves different combinations of:

1. Investors, clients, contractual arrangements and consulting professions;
2. Site conditions, design, materials and technologies; and
3. Contractors, specialist subcontractors, skills and the workforce assembled for each project [Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), 2004].

The construction industry is affected by the ongoing and necessary overhaul of the public service. The South African governments' 10-year review process recognized that this process has been uneven, resulting in unintended dislocation and delivery constraints that have affected a wide range of services. It has been cited that public sector capacity is a key constraint to delivery and sustainable industry growth (CIDB, 2004). Lack of capacity is attributed to the following factors:

1. Loss of knowledgeable personnel during the transition that has led to a reduction in management and technical skills;
2. The mobility of personnel has interrupted the knowledge transfer and mentoring process;
4. Appointment of non-built environment professionals to key project managerial positions;
5. Lack of staff with appropriate training and experience; and
6. Shortage of resources (CIDB, 2004).

The rise of a highly competitive, technologically based information society has caused a great need for skilled workers. The CIDB (2004) report indicates that many of the professional consultancy sectors are rapidly losing capacity to the international market and to other economic sectors, including finance and information technology.

The CSIR (2008) research report indicates that there has been a net loss of built environment profession skills in South Africa, the impact is a loss of experience and potential mentors, thus the reasons for this net loss has to do with better career opportunities, better remuneration prospects, prospects of a better quality of life and better security and personal safety. The relevant statutory councils indicated that:

1. About 10% of registered construction and project managers are outside of South Africa

2. About 30% of registered quantity surveyors have left South Africa and not available to be mentors; and
3. About 80 registered engineers de-register per year because they are emigrating.

These trends may result in a shortfall of professional skills in the next decade and a discontinuity in the mentoring and knowledge transfer process (CIDB, 2004). Further, the CSIR (2008) research report notes that this trend is likely to continue despite the growth of construction activities since South Africa faces similar 'brain drain' challenges as other developing countries

Although, South Africa shows great potential in some areas, the country is plagued by major deficiencies in other areas. For example South Africa is placed 46th in the "people" area and 40th for "management" out of a total of 46 countries. From the aforementioned it is clear that South Africa's attempts to create human capital needed for growth needs serious attention (Hinzelman and Smallwood, 2004). Due to the aforementioned findings this research study also investigated if there are negative outcomes due to cultural divide based on race and gender.

In order to cover the gaps identified in the literature, the overriding research problem to be investigated is the perspective of new knowledge workers participating in formal mentoring relationship in relation to their mentors in the South African construction industry. The study focused more on the feedback of new knowledge workers and not the mentors. To achieve the results of this investigation the research objectives were formulated.

Objectives of the research

The objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the sample characteristics that is, nature of mentoring programme that exist, gender and race composition of mentors in South African construction organizations;
2. To determine the important characteristics of mentors as viewed by the new knowledge workers in the South African construction industry;
3. To determine the important functions of formal mentoring programme;
4. To determine the degree to which mentors achieved these functions in the South African construction industry;
5. To determine the problems encountered by new knowledge workers during mentoring in the South African construction industry; and
6. To determine the implications of the culture divide in mentoring relationship in terms of race and gender.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A review of the literature led to the identification of the available mentoring programs, identification of 13 antecedent variables

Table 1. Sample characteristics, that is, type of mentoring programme, gender, race and qualification of mentors.

Type of mentoring programme	Valid percentage
Formal	60.6
Informal	39.4
Gender	
Male	91.2
Female	8.8
Race of mentors	
Blacks	44.1
Coloured	8.8
Indians	5.9
Whites	41.2
Qualification of mentors	
Certificate	2.9
Diploma	17.6
Bachelor's degree	38.2
Post-graduate degree or diploma	23.5
Don't know	5.9
Other	11.8

relative to the characteristics of mentors and 9 mentoring functions that should be fulfilled in a mentoring program. As stated in the literature few empirical studies have investigated negative or problems encountered by new knowledge workers during mentoring. This accentuates the need for this study. The literature review led to the identification of 16 antecedents variables related to mentoring problems. A descriptive survey method was adopted, which involved the use of structured questionnaire in an in-depth exploration of the constructs underlying the subject matter of the research. Creswell (1994) describes a survey as a quantitative or numeric description of some fraction of the population – the sample, which enables researchers to generalize their findings from a sample of respondents to a population within the limitations of the sampling method.

Purposive sampling was used where the researcher selected sample members to conform to some or other criterion in this case new knowledge workers. As no sampling frame exists and no parameters are known, probability sampling could not be used. The respondents were attending either bachelor of technology civil engineering, construction management or quantity surveying for (one year full time or two years part-time, twice a week for part-time and four times a week for full time students). 80 usable completed questionnaires were gathered of which 30 were for civil engineering and 50 construction management and quantity surveying students at the University of Johannesburg.

27.5% were female and 72.5% male of which 86.3% were Blacks, 6.3% Whites, 5.0% Indians and 2.5% Coloureds. This sample size was sufficient to meet the statistical test requirements for group statistical testing. As part of the delimitation process of this research, new graduates who had finished the national diploma in either, civil or building, currently employed in an organization that has a mentoring program completed the entire questionnaire. This limits generalising the sample as it excludes new knowledge workers who are not working and do not have formal mentoring program.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability method of sampling, it is impossible to evaluate the extent to which such samples are representative of the relevant population (Welman and Kruger, 2001). In some respect, purposive sampling gives the research qualities of a case study (Creswell, 1994). These problems generalised from the sample to the whole population of new knowledge workers are limitations of the research design and fully acknowledged in this research. The structured questions were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and the Number Cruncher Statistical System version 6.0. This determined the frequency (descriptive statistics) of respondents who answered various questions, a mean score was determined and a standard deviation was also calculated to determine the dispersion of the respondents.

The questionnaires of the research were administered under controlled lecture room conditions to ensure the standardization of data gathering, to decrease non-response errors and to increase response rates (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). The data was gathered by the intercept method (Cooper and Schindler, 1998) using self administered questionnaires (Leedy, 1997). The need for content validity was not established as there was no pilot study and pre-testing administered on the questionnaire. The reliability for internal consistency of the factors was determined using Cronbach's alpha test (Cooper and Schindler, 1998), Nkado and Mbachu (2002), validated a scale on client satisfaction and job satisfaction, and achieved a coefficient of between 0.73 and 0.78, this is a well accepted measure for the purpose of the present study.

As the questionnaires were completed anonymously, the collection of the data and the presentation of this report cannot harm the respondents or their employing organizations in any way.

RESULTS

The result in Table 1 indicates that 60.6% of the new knowledge workers were involved in a formal mentoring programme, whereas, 39.4% were involved in an informal mentoring programme, a total of 35 cases valid for processing majority of the new knowledge workers were Blacks (86.3%), Whites (6.3%), Indians (5%) and Coloureds (2.5%). The organizations, which the new knowledge workers were working for included: Local authorities (9.0%), consultants (35.9%), national government departments (21.8%) and contractors (21.8%). The area of employment of the new knowledge workers in these organizations was related to construction industry discipline.

An overwhelming majority, 91.2% of mentors in the various construction organizations in which the new knowledge workers were working are male. Of all the mentors involved in formal mentoring programmes 44.1% were Blacks as compared to 41.2% Whites. The rest 14.7% were either Coloureds or Indians. As per the findings 82.2% of the mentors are in possession of a construction industry qualification either: Certificate, diploma, bachelors' degree or post-graduate degree. These results addressed research objective 1.

Result in Table 2 indicates that all mentors characteristics were important as they were all above mid-point of 3. A reliability statistic analysis was undertaken of the mentors' characteristics, using Cronbach's alpha test which was obtained to be 0.90, hence acceptable, as was

Table 2. Important characteristics of mentors.

Characteristics	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank
Approachable	4.82	0.393	1
Self-confident	4.65	0.493	2
Shows a desire to be a mentor	4.59	0.712	3
Provides honest feedback	4.59	0.795	3
Self-knowledge	4.53	0.717	5
Dedicated	4.53	0.717	5
Visionary, that is exposing the protégé to future opportunities	4.47	0.874	7
Understanding	4.47	0.943	7
Respectable	4.35	0.931	9
Patient	4.29	0.849	10
Is a good role model	4.24	0.831	11
Compassionate	4.24	1.091	11
Shows integrity	4.06	1.029	13

Table 3. Important functions of mentoring program.

Functions	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank
Exposure to career advancement	4.67	0.547	1
Challenging assignments	4.53	0.571	2
Confirmation and acceptance	4.40	0.563	3
Role modelling	4.30	0.915	4
Coaching	4.23	0.774	5
Counselling	4.13	0.681	6
Sponsorship	4.00	1.017	7
Friendship	3.90	0.845	8
Protection	3.63	1.189	9

it was above 0.73 as indicated by Nkado and Mbachu (2002). The variables were weighed in a 5-point Likert scale of 1 = totally unimportant; 2 = not important; 3 = neutral; 4 = important; and 5 = extremely important. A listwise deletion analysis based on all the characteristics was undertaken.

This was done in order to verify the valid cases of respondents. A total of 17 of the 35 cases were found to be valid for processing which was 48.6%. The new knowledge workers indicated that mentors being approachable, self confident, show desire to be a mentor, providing honest feedback, self-knowledgeable and being dedicated to mentoring were extremely important as they fell in the mean band of 4.5 - 5.0. The other characteristics, that is, being a visionary, exposing the protégé to future opportunities, understanding, respectable, patient, being a good role model, compassionate and showing integrity were important, hence also vital for the mentor to possess. This result addressed the important characteristics of mentors, that is research objective 2.

Table 3 addressed research objective 3, it indicates that all the functions of the mentoring program are viewed

to be important as they are above the mid-point of 3.00. A reliability statistic analysis was undertaken of the functions of the mentoring program using Cronbach's alpha test which was obtained to be 0.81, hence acceptable as it was above 0.73 as indicated by Nkado and Mbachu (2002). The variables were weighed in a 5-point Likert scale of 1 = totally unimportant; 2 = not important; 3 = neutral; 4 = important; and 5 = extremely important. A listwise deletion analysis based on all the mentoring functions was analyzed to achieve the valid cases of respondents in order to be processed, a total of 30 of the 35 cases were valid for processing which was 85.7% of the total accepted cases. Two (2) of the functions were viewed to be extremely important. These were exposing new knowledge workers to career advancement and giving challenging assignments. These two functions were in the mean band of 4.5 - 5.0, whereas the other 7 mentoring functions were in the mean band of 3.5 - 4.5 thus, indicating the importance of the functions. These were confirmation and acceptance, role modelling, coaching, counselling, offering sponsorship, being friendly and protective. Protection as

Table 4. Adequately achieved mentoring functions.

Functions	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank
Role modelling	3.93	1.193	1
Exposure to career advancement	3.86	1.026	2
Friendship	3.86	1.026	2
Confirmation and acceptance	3.83	1.002	4
Coaching	3.76	0.912	5
Challenging assignments	3.76	0.988	5
Sponsorship	3.66	0.814	7
Protection	3.62	0.862	8
Counselling	3.34	1.078	9

a function was lowly ranked.

In determining adequately achieved mentoring functions, research objective 4 was set. Table 4 indicates that 8 of the functions were adequately achieved by the mentors as they were in the mean band of 3.62 - 3.93. A reliability statistic analysis was used to analyze the achievement of the mentoring functions in the mentoring program, using Cronbach's alpha test which was obtained to be 0.92, hence acceptable, as it was above 0.73. The variables were weighed in a 5-point Likert scale of 1 = extremely inadequate; 2 = inadequate; 3 = neither adequate nor inadequate; 4=adequate; and 5=extremely adequate.

A listwise deletion analysis based on all the mentoring functions was analyzed to achieve the valid cases of respondents in order to proceed with the analysis, a total of 30 of the 35 cases were indicated to be valid for processing which was 85.7% of the total respondents. Mentors were seen to have adequately achieved their responsibility of being role models in the work place, exposing new knowledge workers in career advancements, being friendly, confirming and accepting new knowledge workers, coaching, giving challenging assignments, sponsoring new knowledge workers to attend events and in career advancements and not to be exposed to difficult situations which is protection, these functions fell in the mean band between 3.62 - 3.93. Counselling was neither adequately achieved nor inadequately achieved by mentors; it had a mean value of 3.34.

The problems or negative variables in a mentoring relationship were obtained from related literature review. The results are tabulated in Table 5. A listwise deletion method was used to process valid responses. A reliability statistic test was undertaken using Cronbach's alpha and Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items, the result indicates reliability of 0.965 and 0.966, respectively, which is greater than 0.73 as indicated by Nkado and Mbachu (2002), which indicated the variables were reliable for analysis. The variables were weighed in a Likert scale of 1 = never; 2=occasionally; 3 = fairly many times; 4 = very often; and 5 = always. The variables

means are below the midpoint of 3. 12 of the stated problems fell in the mean band of 1.80 - 2.60 which indicates that new knowledge workers occasionally experienced problems during mentoring. Dissimilar personality and habits, was seen as the main problem as it fell in the mean band between 2.60 - 3.40 indicating that it happens fairly many times. General dysfunctional, that is, bad attitudes, personal problems for example, alcohol abuse, family problems etc and deception, that is, not being truthful were never a problem to the new knowledge workers as they fell in the mean band between 1.00 - 1.80.

DISCUSSION

This present study contributes to the current body of knowledge on mentoring, indicating that new knowledge workers in South African construction industry were involved in formal mentoring programme. This is a good indication as the government of South Africa through the Department of Public Works (DPW) is advocating for the implementation of formal mentoring programmes in the work place to develop the careers of its' human resource (DPW, 1999). Majority of the mentors were male this was anticipated since the construction industry is male dominant.

The South African governments' policy on equal opportunities for all genders need to be critically addressed as the finding indicated that female mentors were few compared to their male counterparts. Blacks and Whites mentors were the majority, followed by Coloureds and Indians combined, this finding reflects the multi-racial configuration in South Africa at present in the construction industry. CIDB (2004) report indicated that the construction industry lacks capacity which is evident by: Appointment of non-built environment professionals to key project managerial positions and lack of staff with appropriate training and experience. This current result indicates that the government is on course to address these problems as mentors are in possession of a construction industry qualification, either; certificate,

Table 5. Problems identified during mentoring relationship.

Problems identified	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Dissimilar personality and habits	2.83	1.239	1
Mismatch within the dyad value, that is, objected and prejudged my views	2.42	0.929	2
Self-absorption, that is, on his own career	2.42	1.349	2
Poor Work style, that is, reactive not proactive	2.38	1.096	4
Distancing behaviour and neglect	2.38	1.377	4
Manipulative behaviour, position, power and tyranny	2.29	1.334	6
Inappropriate delegation of duty	2.25	1.189	7
Intentional exclusion	2.21	1.351	8
Credit taking	2.04	1.160	9
Politicking, that is, self promotion	2.00	1.285	10
Technical incompetence	1.92	1.100	11
Lack of mentor expertise	1.83	1.007	12
Sabotage any efforts you made	1.83	1.090	12
General dysfunctional, that is, bad attitudes	1.79	0.977	14
Personal problems e.g. alcohol abuse, family problems etc	1.75	1.260	15
Deception, that is, not truthful	1.71	1.083	16

diploma, bachelors' degree or post-graduate degree. It can be indicated that the new knowledge workers were mentored by qualified mentors in possession of a formal qualification.

The findings on new knowledge workers perspective towards their mentors' characteristics is in consonant with the studies of Gray and Smith (2000) and Elzubeir and Rizk (2001). The findings indicated that mentors should be approachable, self-confident, show desire to be a mentor, provide honest feedback, self-knowledgeable and being dedicated to mentoring, were viewed to be extremely important characteristics. The other characteristics, that are, being a visionary, exposing the protégé to future opportunities, understanding, respectable, patient, being a good role model, compassionate and showing integrity were seen as important characteristics for the mentor to possess.

The important mentoring functions result concurs with the findings of Burke (1984) and Ragins and Cotton (1999) indicating that exposing new knowledge workers to career advancement and giving challenging assignments are viewed to be extremely important functions, whereas, the other 7 mentoring functions were indicated to be important, these were: Confirmation and acceptance, role modelling, coaching, counselling, offering sponsorship, being friendly and protective. Protection as a function was lowly ranked indicating probable maturity of the new knowledge workers to look after themselves.

Mentoring functions were adequately achieved in the mentoring program as per the findings. McDowall-Long (2004) indicates that these functions are aimed at improving the protégés psychosocial and career development. These functions were, mentors being role models in the work place, exposing new knowledge workers in

career advancements, being friendly, confirming and accepting new knowledge workers, coaching, giving challenging assignments, sponsoring new knowledge workers to attend events and in career advancements and not to be exposed to difficult situations which is protection. Counselling was neither adequately achieved nor inadequately achieved probably indicating no sharing of personal life situation and problems between new knowledge workers and their mentors.

Problems or negative outcomes were rare between mentors and new knowledge workers, apart from dissimilar personality and habits which was seen as a problem or negative outcome indicating that this problem occurred fairly many times. General dysfunctional, that is, bad attitudes, personal problems for example, alcohol abuse, family problems etc and deception, that is, not being truthful were never a problem to the new knowledge workers as there tendency was towards occasionally and never occurring. As per the finding it can be noted that if mentoring functions are adequately achieved then problems or negative outcomes are rarely experienced. Studies conducted by Eby et al. (2000) and Ragins et al. (2000) on dysfunctional mentoring relationships are not fully supported by this finding.

Majority of mentors were Blacks and Whites, compared to either, Coloureds and Indians combined. Blacks were dominant as new knowledge workers and they were either mentored by a Black or White mentor. Male mentors were dominant than female mentors, male new knowledge workers were also dominant than their female counterparts, the result indicates no server occurrence of negative mentoring factors were evident between the mentors and new knowledge workers, apart from dissimilar personality and habits. It can therefore, be indicated

that race transformation and empowerment policies developed by the South African government (CIDB, 2004) are being embraced in the South African construction industry, but gender transformation and empowerment needs to be thoroughly addressed as the representation of female mentors and new knowledge workers are quite low.

Conclusion

The perspective of new knowledge workers participation in a formal mentoring program indicates that male mentors are still dominant in the construction industry in South Africa. This is an indication for the government to accelerate gender equality in the construction industry. Extremely important characteristics of mentors are: Being approachable, self confident, show desire to be a mentor, provide honest feedback, self-knowledgeable and be dedicated in mentoring. Exposing new knowledge workers to career advancement and giving challenging assignments were indicated to be extremely important mentoring functions. New knowledge workers might not have experienced any problems or difficulties for them to be counselled. It can therefore, be indicated that mentors supported new knowledge workers in psychosocial and career development as majority of the mentoring functions were adequately achieved.

New knowledge workers do not experience major problems or negative outcome with their mentors, apart from dissimilar personality and habit of a mentor. Cultural divide in terms of race was embraced within the formal mentoring relationship, as Blacks who are male are acting as mentors. Female integration in the construction industry needs to be thoroughly implemented in order for more female mentors to be in the mentoring role.

Further research and limitations

Further research is suggested in order to close the gap that currently exists in the methodology, that is, the research relied heavily on a self-reported method of data collection with the consequent possibility of bias in the final outcome of the study and expanding the sample to cover all the institutions offering built environment courses in South Africa in order to generalize the findings, which at this point is not possible. There is also a need to interview mentors in order to get there perspective of the new knowledge workers and then undertake a comparative study of the mentor and new knowledge workers dyad.

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