

EDITED BY
PAYAL KUMAR

**EXPLORING DYNAMIC
MENTORING MODELS
IN INDIA**



Exploring Dynamic Mentoring Models in India

Payal Kumar

Editor

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palgrave
macmillan

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New Delhi, India

ISBN 978-3-319-56404-3

ISBN 978-3-319-56405-0 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-56405-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017939326

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature

The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Foreword

A quick snapshot of the workforce today suggests that it is truly a diverse body of individuals coming from a variety of socio-economic, cultural, professional, and educational backgrounds. It is almost a cliché to say that globalization has forced upon us a multicultural physical and virtual environment that many might still be grappling with. Given the political climate of 2017—with Brexit, Trump, elections in major countries in Europe—that threatens to build more literal and metaphorical walls, it behoves us to continue to use new lenses, frameworks, and build bridges to develop a better understanding of the people who live and work around us. Indeed, a recent report by the OECD¹ in 2015 projects India (23%) and China (27%) to be the leading suppliers of the global talent pool of 25–34 year olds with a tertiary degree across OECD and G20 countries. This book, therefore, makes a very timely contribution to understanding the developmental needs and dynamics of our current and future Indian employees, colleagues, and bosses.

There is abundant research that shows that meaningful mentoring relationships have many positive career and personal well-being outcomes for mentees, mentors, and organizations. It goes without saying that for any organization—whether a school, an NGO, a start-up, or a multinational

enterprise—to get the most out of its talent one must invest in them. And the most important investment organizations can make is in creating the necessary conditions for fostering positive relationships among members across different age, cultural, and functional groups, breaking silos so as to cross-pollinate ideas, innovate, and ultimately create enjoyable environments to learn and thrive in. It not only makes moral sense for organizations to engender a mentoring developmental culture, it also makes business sense to do so given the implications for cultural cohesion, productivity, and retention.

This book treats mentoring in India from a holistic and an applied perspective. For example, the various chapters provide platforms for both academic and practitioner voices allowing you to see the interrelationships. My interest in understanding mentoring models in India came from the reflection of how and why my own experiences of mentoring and being mentored in India worked in some situations and not in some others. Having lived in the USA and being mentored by expert professors and professionals from very different backgrounds I realized first-hand the commonalities and differences in such mentoring relationships across cultures. This intuition motivated a systematic study on the differences between mentoring dynamics in India and the USA. I found that the Indians among my sample reported parents and friends as being part of their developmental network, had a strong preference for informal mentoring, were very likely to involve protégés or mentors in non-work family-related activities, and most interestingly that the younger sample members preferred more egalitarian, and less hierarchical or paternalistic mentoring relationships. These initial findings deepened an interest in a broader understanding of mentoring in the Asian context.

While research on mentoring in the USA has evolved considerably over the past four decades, with numerous books, articles, reviews, and meta-analyses, few books have summarized the views and experiences of the mentoring phenomenon in India. This book fills that gap by covering many important and relevant bases. One of the challenges for the future of work is to deal with generational differences. Indeed organizations are already grappling with the differences between generations in motivations, career needs, incentive structures, and communication styles. Part I on ‘Mentoring the Next Generation’ provides new

perspectives on how some of these challenges may be tackled in various contexts, including a start-up, a business school, and organizations helping youth with socio-economic challenges. Part II on 'Exploring Formal and Informal Mentoring Models' shifts gears to focus on contextual variables that influence mentoring relationships in organizations, such as organizational culture, the interrelationships between venture capital firms and entrepreneurs, and the societal cultural factors that play a role in the perceptions, desires, and aspirations that mentees have about mentor characteristics across different BRIC countries. Part III on 'Case Studies and Perspectives' gives a rich insight, based on first-hand experiences, into the actual trials, tribulations, and triumphs in establishing successful mentoring and coaching for organizations and individuals alike, across multiple geographies.

The book is written simply and clearly, with rich perspectives, anecdotes, and case studies from researchers and practitioners alike that academics, management and human resource professionals, and organizations can relate to, delve deeper into important questions, and gain the insights to foster a developmental culture within their organization and society at large.

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Note

1. OECD (2015). *Education Indicators in Focus*, No. 31.

Preface

The spark for this edited volume was ignited during an intriguing conversation I had with a friend, the CEO of a multinational company. I was discussing with him the classical four stages of informal mentoring (initiation, cultivation, separation and then redefinition), and how in the last stage of the relationship the dynamics between the mentor and protégé are said to undergo a transformation, with both of them evolving into peers (Kram 1983).

My friend laughed and said, “Do you honestly believe that even if a protégé outshines the mentor, that they will develop a peer relationship as equals? In India—once a boss, always a boss.” This refrain was from someone who had outshone more than one mentor.

He had a point. Given the high power–distance equation in India, coupled with a more paternalistic culture in which the mentor is often revered as a parental figure, the mentoring relationship possibly evolves differently when compared to existing Western models.

I studied formal mentoring programmes for my doctorate, programmes which are growing in leaps and bounds in India (Ramaswami and Dreher 2010). It became increasingly evident to me that while organizations in India were often drawing from existing Western models, these models

were based on assumptions that were more befitting Western countries. Mentoring is said to be a development process marked by critical feedback in which the protégé is expected to be adequately socialized into the given culture of an organization/institution (McDowall-Long 2004). As such, this process assumes the importance of individuality, which characterizes many low power–distance countries in the West.

However, India is known to be a country with one of the highest power–distance equations, as per Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory (1983). It is a country where there is a greater acceptance of an unequal power distribution, and in which hierarchy is expected and respected. Within this framework the mentor is seen through a more paternalistic lens by the protégé. As such, the protégé respects the authority and wisdom the mentor epitomizes, and is often in awe of him as a father figure.

The backdrop to this is the centuries-old mentoring tradition in India, known as the *guru–shishya* (teacher–disciple) tradition, which also involved a teaching–learning process. Here a protégé was not prized for his questioning approach to an authority figure, but rather for an implicit and unswerving faith that what he was being taught on the path of self-discovery was the truth, based on a relationship of absolute trust and obedience to the guru.

This paternalistic trend was also apparent in the ancient Greek tradition of mentoring, in which King Odysseus entrusted the nurturing and learning of his son to the goddess Athena. Athena, disguised as a man, and known as Mentor, thus took on the role of a surrogate parent in the king’s absence (Hayes 2005).

In modern Western models the mentor is not so much perceived as a father figure, but rather as someone whom the protégé can emulate and hopes to equal one day. Even so, there are a few odd references in the literature to the mentor as a parent; Clutterbuck says, “Good mentors have empathy, experience and excellence. They must act as surrogate parents, combining authority and friendship, counsel and commitment,” (2014, p. 47).

It is both interesting and imperative to explore how mentoring models are emerging in a country that oscillates between rich, ancient spiritual traditions and the force of westernization. In this land of paradoxes—of *mandirs* (temples) and McDonald’s—while some

contradictions do apparently seamlessly coexist, does it necessarily mean that all can? Are Western models of mentoring being superimposed, adapted or do they coexist within a framework of juxtaposed values?

* * *

This edited volume is divided into three themes, namely: mentoring the next generation; exploring formal and informal mentoring models; and case studies and perspectives. Many questions are explored, including whether there is a tussle between a traditional society, which is also high on uncertainty avoidance, and one in which millennials are trying to exert greater independence within the mentoring relationship? In terms of mentoring models, does a top-down approach work or does a more collaborative, bottom-up approach lead to better mentoring outcomes?

Apart from these questions, this edited volume also explores perceptions. Who is the ideal mentor for the protégé, and ideal protégé for the mentor? What is the most viable type of mentoring for the older and younger generations?

In Part I Dr. Archana Kumar and Dr. Mridula Seth explore how peer mentoring can be effective in developing life skills for marginalized youth. They focus their research on three institutions in Delhi that practice youth peer mentor programmes, and draw conclusions about what factors contribute to the success of the programmes.

Dr. Shaji Kurian and Sanjay Padode assess how mentorship is perceived by corporate mentors and student protégés at an upcoming business school in Bangalore (a school that has received awards for its programme in which MBA students are mentored by senior corporate personnel). They find both similarities and significant differences in perceptions of mentorship between two generations.

The perceptions of Gen Y protégés in a start-up company consisting largely of millennials, has been investigated by Priya Kumar and Sachin Kumar. The company in which the interviews took place is more lateral than hierarchical, full of young employees and is in fast-growth mode. They found that protégés had a high expectation of the mentoring process, and also a desire to move away from classical mentoring models to new models with multiple mentors.

In Part II Annu Mathew conducts a qualitative study on the protégé's perspective, and raises the interesting question of whether firms that

encourage informal mentoring relationships positively impact the formation of mentoring networks. The author suggests that it is informal mentoring that may serve to mitigate the effect of the high power–distance equation in India.

Dr. Anirudh Agrawal explores venture capitalist and investee enterprise mentoring within the Indian start-up ecosystem, using interviews and secondary data from three venture capital firms. Apart from suggesting variables that lead to greater success, this study proposes an antecedent, action and outcome model of venture capital enabled entrepreneurial mentoring in India. This is an important study given that mentoring of start-up companies is a fairly new phenomenon in India.

Dr. Lorianne D. Mitchell makes an interesting cross-cultural comparison of India with Brazil, Russia and China (BRIC countries), examining differing perceptions of what makes an effective mentor.

In Part III Nalini Srinivasan delves deeply into the case study of a social venture in the northeast of India, which began as a mode of curtailing human trafficking, and transformed into a movement to ensure that hundreds of woman artisans became financially secure. Mentoring became the natural mode of development for these women in the process of maximizing financial returns for them and the shareholders.

Sujeev Shakya and Dr Anne Randerson recount how Sujeev's organization has been successfully practising a collaborative form of mentoring (rather than a top-down approach) in Nepal, which, like India, is known to be a high power–distance society. In fact, this has proved so successful that he has replicated this model to his other global offices in Bhutan, Cambodia and Rwanda.

Supplementing the academic chapters are narratives from two seasoned mentoring experts about peculiar challenges they face. Rajiv Gupta writes about dealing with possible mentor over-involvement and protégé dependency; while Ajay Goyal provides examples of the stigma associated with working proactively with a coach.

* * *

Global leadership research has so far been driven by Western scholars, and scholarship in the realm of mentorship is no exception. In the last 15 years papers on mentorship in some of the top management

journals have been from the West, and largely North American centric (Chandler et al. 2011). Only recently have some studies on mentoring begun to emerge from countries such as China (Wang et al. 2009) and India (Haynes and Ghosh 2012).

India provides a particularly rich landscape for studying mentoring as it is an important country in South Asia, which in turn is a fast-growing region that is attracting considerable interest among academics and among business leaders as an emerging strategic growth market (Khilji and Rowley 2013). It is hoped that a contextual interpretation can contribute both to a greater insight into the mentoring models in India, and to our understanding of the mentoring phenomenon as a whole.

In an attempt to heed the call for more research on mentoring relationships across cultures (Chandler et al. 2011), this volume possibly raises more questions than it answers. But raising questions, questioning answers and negotiating paradoxes is a fundamental part of creative thinking, which De Bono describes as parallel thinking:

“The static judgement/box habits of traditional thinking can deal only with the past and with stable situations. For dealing with changing situations the methods, attitudes and processes of parallel thinking are possibly more appropriate. There is a need to work forwards from a field of parallel possibilities in order to ‘design’ action,” (1994, p. 220).

New Delhi, India

Dr. Payal Kumar

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Part I

Mentoring the Next Generation

1

Life Skills Development of Marginalized Youth Through the Peer Mentoring Model

Archna Kumar and Mridula Seth

Life skills have been recognized as core skills that can help young people navigate the challenges of everyday life and are considered an essential prerequisite for their healthy, positive and productive development (Seth 2000; Jacobs Foundation 2011). Life skills affect the self-esteem and self-confidence of individuals, consequently influencing their interpersonal relationships and productivity (Tinnari 1998). Life skills have been defined by the WHO (1994) as ‘the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life’ (p. 1). From this perspective, life skills are essentially those abilities that help to promote mental well-being and competency in young people as they face the realities of life. At times also referred to as living skills, they denote the personal

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P. Kumar (ed.), *Exploring Dynamic Mentoring Models in India*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-56405-0_1

competencies that enable persons to confront and deal effectively with life's everyday challenges and demands (Yarham et al. 1999; Mangrulkar et al. 2001).

Core set of life skill areas identified by WHO (1994) for promotion of health and well-being of youth are:

- Decision-making and problem-solving;
- Creative thinking and critical thinking;
- Communication and interpersonal skills;
- Self-awareness and empathy; and
- Coping with emotions and stress.

Life skills promotion has been recognized as a vital resource for enhancing positive and productive development in youth (Jacobs Foundation 2011). Developing adolescents' life skills equips them to face daily problems and challenges that mainly relate to their educational choices, health, sexuality and relationships (UNESCO 2000). Life skills education (LSE) is an effective tool for empowering adolescents to make informed decisions and to plan and set realistic goals. LSE helps boost adolescents' self-confidence, improves their self-esteem and influences the way individuals feel about themselves and others and the way they think others perceive them. LSE enhances adolescents' social sensitivity, making them aware of social problems and realities (UNFPA 2000a) and can result in individuals making informed choices to serve the interests of self and others, becoming 'proactive' and change agents. Life skills thus enable youth to develop into healthy, responsible and productive adults.

India has the largest youth population in the world, with more than 66% of the total population (more than 808 million) below the age of 35 (ILO n.d.). India's population cohort is considered to be in the midst of a youth bulge and by 2020 India will be the youngest country in the world, with a median age of 29 (UNFPA 2000b). The youth bulge represents both a challenge and an opportunity, as young people either can be an impetus or a deterrent in economic and social development processes of society (Urdal 2007) by the skill sets they

possess. Youth development is hence considered a crucial precursor for improving people's quality of life and ensuring sustainable development. However, the burgeoning youth population of India faces multiple challenges that hamper their development and their productive contribution to the economy. If India is to leverage the advantages of the demographic dividend, it is critically important to invest in a holistic development by building their skills, capacities and agency (UNFPA 2014) in a manner that removes inequities, augments inclusiveness and equal opportunities to all the youth (IIPS and Population Council 2010; UNFPA 2014). Life skills education is an important vehicle to equip young people to negotiate and mediate challenges and risks in their lives, and to enable productive participation in society (UNICEF 2012).

Positive Youth Development

Youth development is conceptualized in three different ways: as a natural process through which youth grow into adults; as a set of principles underlying youth programmes that encourage thriving among youth; or as a set of practices that foster the development of young people (Hamilton et al. 2004). Positive youth development (PYD) generally refers to a focus on the developmental characteristics that lead to positive outcomes and behaviours among young people and emphasizes the interplay of internal and external factors that help young people to lead successful lives into young adulthood. The PYD concept moves ahead of earlier approaches focusing on problems and deficits among young people and advocates a holistic conceptualization for evolving robust youth development strategies. Operationalized in a variety of ways, PYD is an all-inclusive framework that provides guidance in the organization of services, opportunities and supports to young people so that they can develop to their full potential (Lerner et al. 2005b). Positive youth development includes intentional efforts of other youth, adults, communities, schools, NGOs and other stakeholders to provide opportunities for youth to enhance their interests, skills and abilities (Hamilton et al. 2004). It emphasizes the importance of using a

youth-centered approach to youth development and building positive meaningful relationships by working with and engaging young people in a youth-friendly way that respects youth and promotes their dignity (Iwasaki 2015; Ersing 2009; Yohalem and Martin 2007). Being rounded in its approach, PYD focuses not only on enhancing positive outcomes and a decrease of dysfunctional outcomes at the individual level but also improving the settings and contexts of youths' daily lives in which these outcomes occur (Iwasaki 2015). Small and Memmo (2004) highlight key assumptions on which the PYD approach is based: (a) youth are less likely to experience problems in achieving their full potential; (b) supports and opportunities are important to success for young people; (c) communities are critical shapers of youth development and can improve their capacity to build successful young people; and (d) youth need to be viewed as resources and in a positive light.

Positive youth development encompasses psychological, behavioural and social characteristics that are reflected in the Five Cs: competence, confidence, connection, character and caring/compassion (Zarrett and Lerner 2008). A young person who develops each of these Five Cs is considered to be thriving or holistically developed. Also, these youth develop a sixth 'C': contribution (to self, family, community and civil society) (Lerner et al. 2005a). These competencies, also referred to as life skills, form the core abilities that can help youth meet challenges and function well in the environments in which they live. Thus, a core outcome of youth development is concerned with helping youth become competent in the life skills that will prepare them for transition to adulthood.

Relevance of Life Skills Education

Life skills are effectively developed by good quality formal or non-formal education. However, due to a rapid erosion of the influence of traditional mechanisms—the family and other cultural factors that extended support to individuals in managing the challenges of everyday life—huge shortcomings have emerged. Even where that support exists, it is becoming increasingly irrelevant in today's fast-changing cultures

and lifestyles and the barrage of other more dazzling influences. The combined forces of modernization, urbanization, globalization and the media boom have made young people's expectations, values and outlook substantially different from those of older generations. Consequently, young people are facing newer and more exacerbated vulnerabilities and marginalization that vary in different contexts and cultures. Thus, evolution of new/alternative mechanisms for developing life skills among adolescents has gained momentum, focusing on both formal and non-formal life skills education programmes.

Evolving a life skills education programme requires innovative approaches and strategies to enable youth to develop appropriate skills to cope with the multiple challenges they face. Seth (2000) points out that providing information and knowledge alone does not ensure that individuals will be able to make rational decisions, solve problems, establish relationships with others and negotiate challenges rationally and effectively. According to Nayyar (2008), an effective LSE programme must have a three-pronged approach amalgamating appropriate content or information with relevant themes within an experiential learning framework. Lions Quest (1988) on the other hand reiterates that effective life skills development programmes must focus upon both an individual's internal and external environments. The environment must provide opportunities, be caring, predictable, consistent and safe, as well as sensitive to the needs and interests of youth and their socio-cultural context.

Peer Mentors and Life Skills Development

Research has consistently demonstrated that mentoring benefits both the mentor and their mentees (Allen et al. 1997; Kram 1985). Due to the beneficial effects of mentoring, it has been used in various settings and is considered an effective mechanism for building skills and capacities as well as creating a conducive environment where people work together to enhance their skills and knowledge. Formal workplace environments, schools and universities (Johnson 1989), health care services and professional development of clinicians (WHO 2006) and a range of

development sector interventions have benefitted by the use of mentoring as a core programme strategy.

Peer education is a popular approach for enhancing the life skills of youth. Built on the foundation of youth mentoring, it entails making use of the strong influence of peers on an individual's ideas and behaviours. A strong personal relationship forms the core of a mentoring programme, in which a caring individual provides constant companionship, support and guidance with a view to developing the competence and character of their peer (MENTOR 2015). The peer mentor approach builds on the high credibility accorded to peers and channels peer influence in a positive and constructive manner. The benefits of a strong peer mentor relationship are suggested by research indicating that adolescents engage in fewer health-risk behaviours (DuBois and Silverthorn 2005); significant improvement in youth competencies and reductions in problem behaviours (Tierney et al. 1995). Life skills education not only equips them to face and cope with pressure, but is also considered the most effective way of promoting adolescents' creative thinking powers and their social and negotiation skills, empowering them to challenge several existing norms and practices to participate in the planning of programmes and policies targeted at them and to behave in a responsible manner, fully aware of the consequences of any decisions they take.

According to UNFPA (2005), peer education is defined as 'the process whereby well-trained and motivated young people undertake informal or organized educational activities with their peers (those similar to themselves in age, background, or interests). These activities, over an extended period of time, are aimed at developing young people's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and skills and enabling them to be responsible for and to protect their own health' (p. 13). Peer education has been proved to be an effective way to empower young people and provide them with the opportunity to participate in activities of their interest and get access to information on specific issues. The formation of peer mentor mentee relationships formed in peer education programmes offer a unique tool for youth development.

The rationale behind peer mentors is that peers share similar experiences and social norms and are therefore better placed to provide

relevant, meaningful, explicit and honest information. Peer mentors are trained to offer information and services on select issues based on the premise that most young people feel more comfortable receiving information from people in the same age group rather than from adults. Peer mentors increase young people's access to information about subjects which are often not fully addressed by parents and schools, especially for vulnerable/marginalized young people who may not be part of a formal education system. By means of appropriate training and support, the young people become active players in the educational process rather than passive recipients or messengers (IPPF 2007).

Peer Education—Theoretical Perspectives

Emanating from several theoretical models, the peer education model for life skills development offers the formation of a unique mentor–mentee relationship between individuals. Kerry and Mayes (2014) contour key aspects of a mentor's role to include: (a) nurturing; (b) role modelling; (c) functioning (as teacher, sponsor, encourager, counsellor and friend); (d) focusing on the personal development of the mentee; and (e) sustaining a caring relationship over time. The various theories help comprehend and define the different roles of a mentor and the criticalities affecting a strong relationship, key to the development of life skills among youth.

The theory of reasoned action states that the intention of a person to adopt a recommended behaviour is determined by: (a) a person's subjective beliefs, that is, his or her own attitudes towards this behaviour and his or her beliefs about the consequences of the behaviour; (b) a person's normative beliefs, that is, how a person's view is shaped by the norms and standards of his or her society and by whether people important to him or her approve or disapprove of the behaviour. In the context of peer education, this concept is relevant because young people's attitudes are highly influenced by their perception of what their peers do and think. Also, young people may be motivated by the expectations of respected peer educators.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory positions that people learn: (a) through direct experience; (b) indirectly, by observing and modelling the behaviour of others with whom the person identifies (for example, how young people see their peers behaving); and (c) through training that leads to confidence or enhanced self-efficacy, in being able to carry out behaviour and the ability to overcome barriers to performing the behaviour.

Rogers's (2010) diffusion of innovations theory contends that social influence plays an important role in behaviour change. The theory emphasizes the role of opinion leaders in a community acting as agents for behaviour change. Their influence on group norms or customs is predominantly seen as a result of person-to-person exchanges and discussions.

The theory of participatory education states that empowerment and full participation of the people affected by a given problem is key to behaviour change. This has special relevance for structuring peer education programmes and the importance of including interactive experimental learning activities, and peer educators can be influential teachers and role models. In the context of peer education, this means that the selected peer educators should be trustworthy and credible opinion leaders within the target group. Advocates of peer education believe that the process of peers talking among themselves and determining a course of action is key to the success of a peer education project.

Peer Education Programmes for Marginalized Youth

Different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been experimenting with evolving programmes for life skills development of youth. Varying in approach, these initiatives have commonly used the peer mentor strategy for building the life skills of different youth groups. For this chapter, three programmes from different organizations have been analyzed to gain holistic insights.

Arpana Trust is a charitable organization working to provide opportunities for the holistic development of adolescents. Arpana's programmes include: tuition support for adolescents who are first generation learners from impoverished families; cultural and extracurricular activities in performing arts; and vocational training courses in collaboration with various technical organizations. The LSE programme was launched in 2011 for building the skills of adolescents belonging to low socio-economic families. Prone to indulging in high-risk behaviours, immoral and anti-social activities, the LSE programme concentrated on developing skills to help them negotiate their adverse external environment. The programme focused on developing skills such as communication, decision-making, managing emotions, assertiveness, self-esteem building, resisting peer pressure, relationship skills and so on, and, more importantly, inculcating a new value system. Using older students as peer mentors, the programme created new mechanisms for youth to share and learn from each other.

The NAZ Foundation (India) Trust is a Delhi-based NGO working towards preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS by engaging in advocacy, training, care and support activities. Raising awareness to prevent the spread of HIV and providing sensitive and confidential support to those infected with the virus and those affected by it remain the key goals of the organization. In 2006 NAZ, in partnership with Standard Chartered Bank, piloted the Goal programme, which is a women's empowerment programme that works in urban communities, offering weekly sessions to adolescent girls who may or may not attend school and who are from low-income families. Goal uses the sport of netball as a vehicle for LSE to transform the lives of young underprivileged girls. The curriculum focuses on educating the adolescent girls on four broad areas: communication, health and hygiene, rights and financial literacy. The programme builds their overall self-confidence and team spirit. Experienced older girls are selected as Goal Champions for mentoring newer students about the game and sportsmanship spirit, as well as conducting sessions on various issues.

The Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM) is a national organization working in the areas of drugs and HIV/AIDS among juveniles and marginalized groups. The organization strives for their

socio-economic development and provides treatment and rehabilitation services to drug-dependent youth. The SPYM programmes include: running de-addiction centres; vocational training; and a homeless assistance programme. An innovative rehabilitation project for drug-dependent adolescent boys in conflict with the law was launched in 2011 in partnership with the judiciary and the Department of Women and Child Development in Delhi (India). The 90-day programme for juveniles, called *PadhaiKaMaza* (PKM) meaning ‘learning is fun’, incorporates the 3Ls—literacy, library and life skills—as essential components for building the life skills of adolescent boys who belong to poor and dysfunctional families, are school dropouts and are into anti-social activities because of drug dependency. Through the programme, adolescents are motivated and counselled to learn to treat their 90-day confinement as an opportunity to give themselves a second chance in life—building anchors of literacy and vocational skills. Life skills for them is perceived as learning to say ‘No’ to drugs and ‘Yes’ to participation in a lawful, honest and hard-working life. This requires building up their thinking, social and self-management skills. This forms the life skills curriculum for which the participants have developed very meaningful and interesting communication materials. The model is being upscaled and adapted for similar groups.

Activities Organized Under the Projects

Though differing in their target groups and focus, all three projects were working with adolescents belonging to poor families. Peer mentoring was being used as a strategy for building leadership qualities in youth. By providing opportunities to peer mentors, they were enhancing their own life skills while improving the life skills of their peers through organizing various activities. With the programmes involving marginalized youth, the peer mentors’ selection and capacity building was an aspect all three organizations invested in. The mentors showed exceptional characteristics and traits, yet they remained vulnerable in many aspects and needed to be constantly supported to better comprehend their role as mentors. The projects required the peer mentors to organize

and conduct activities and sessions for their peers in groups as well as in individual interactions. The former were structured formal activities that were routinely scheduled and required preparation and planning on the part of peer mentors, while the latter remained unstructured and informal as and when they found time, in between sessions, during breaks and especially during trips and excursions.

Most of the time the peer mentors could be delineated from their mentees only by a very thin line, hence their capacity building was key to the success of the programmes. Regular sessions were organized for the peer leaders to equip them for the role envisaged by the organizations. These sessions helped build the skills, attitudes and capacities of the peer mentors to carry out programme tasks and activities, to share their confusions and apprehensions and give them greater preparedness in dealing with the myriad situations they may have to face to play a sustained positive role as a mentor.

Within a time-bound, systematically organized but varied curriculum, the focus of the programmes was on imparting relevant information for increasing knowledge about the subject areas in accordance to their circumstances and context (see Table 1.1). Content focus was decided on the basis of a need assessment of specific groups, expert guidance and the organizational priorities. Flexibilities in execution and focus were inbuilt in all the programmes. However, the execution of the programme activities required maximum monitoring as it involved shifts in the mindsets of all stakeholders involved. Involving participants in an experiential learning process based on an activity approach was recognized as crucial for the development of life skills sessions (UNICEF 2005) were planned by all these organizations accordingly.

Methodological Concerns for Measuring Programme Impact

In all the projects a key concern was demonstrating project outcomes along with the value of the approach and process adopted. With their varying conceptualizations of life skills, programme thrusts being defined by contextual factors, gradualness of change due to

Table 1.1 Aspects of the Peer Mentor-based Life Skills Programmes

Aspects of the Peer Mentor-based Life Skills Programmes	Arpana Trust—Tuition and Life Skills Programme	NAZ—Goal Programme	SPYM—PadhaikaMaza Project
Programme (content and methods) linked with other programmes to form a comprehensive strategy	Linked to remedial classes being conducted to strengthen formal education and prevention of school drop out	Netball coaching and sports activities formed the core activity around the peer mentor life skills programme	The centres have a set nationwide curriculum that was supplemented by the peer mentor programme in Delhi as an innovative initiative
Training and regular follow-up of peer mentors	Post-training follow-up done periodically	Training and post-training sessions scheduled regularly	Informal training with regular follow-up sessions
Incentives provided to the peer mentors	Public recognition in organization events; certificates; programme memorabilia/T-shirts; at times scholarships	Recognition by Standard Chartered Bank and local leaders; certificates; programme memorabilia/T-shirts; scholarships to achievers; job opportunities	Public recognition; certificates; programme memorabilia/T-shirts; job opportunities
Role expectations for the peer educators	Roles of mentors broadly defined	Clear-cut jobs, roles and schedule of sessions	Jobs and roles evolved with programme
Flexibility in scheduling training and feedback sessions	Scheduled in accordance with external environment and the needs and contexts of adolescents	Broad scheduling done with respect to external and internal aspects	Schedules had broad time frames and implementation flexibility

(continued)

Table 1.1 (continued)

Aspects of the Peer Mentor-based Life Skills Programmes	Arpana Trust—Tuition and Life Skills Programme	NAZ—Goal Programme	SPYM—PadhaikaMaza Project
Participation in project planning, implementation and assessment	Participation in implementation and involved in assessment	Active participation in routine planning and programme implementation; active voice in programme evaluation	Active participation in project planning, implementation and assessment activities
Support to encourage involvement of peer mentors	Regular support provided by programme team	Peer mentors and other adults influencing their participation regularly counselled to boost morale and address challenges	Trained specialists counsel and support the peer mentors and their families
Replacement strategy of peer mentors	Based on academic level and achievement	Mechanisms are in place to replenish the supply of peer educators	Informal system

interventions and the difficulty of measuring not only knowledge, but skills, attitudes and, most challengingly, behaviours (UNICEF 2012) they offered several evaluation challenges. Further, robust monitoring and evaluation for measuring the effectiveness of LSE necessitates the identification of measurable outcomes (skills, attitudes, values and behaviour), with appropriate process indicators, within the overall context and outcomes (Singh 2003; UNESCO 2004; UNICEF 2005) and activities adopted by projects. Additionally, LSE programme indicators, apart from measuring individual behaviour, need to be holistic and take into account values such as: living together; respect for and tolerance of differences and diversity; active participation in community, group, work and social life; living and working with dignity; and making informed decisions (UNESCO 2012).

Adopting methodological variance and a mixed method approach enabled the triangulation of data, a holistic and richer understanding of the programmes and those aspects that contributed to the development of life skills among youth. While the quantitative tool gave a precise measurement and change in levels of life skills, the qualitative tools provided a nuanced understanding about the value of a peer mentor-based life skills education programme and aspects influencing peer mentor relationships and the development of life skills.

The quantitative tool enabled a longitudinal understanding of change in life skills among a group of adolescents and of within-group comparisons to include differentials based on: sex; age; years of formal schooling; and other socio-economic indicators. Mapping differentials provided insights about programme reach and target groups, as well as weaker groups requiring continued programme support. The qualitative/participatory tools provided perspectives of stakeholder groups about the value of programmes; their content and thrusts, activities and transactions and other key influencers. Assessing life skills programmes in multifarious ways enabled the understanding of programme outcomes and impacts and contributing processes.

Processes Impacting Life Skills Development

Aspects of Programmes: Several aspects of the Peer Mentor programme were found to impact life skills development in youth.

Similarity of Mentor–Mentee Context

The strategic programme decision of involving peer mentors from similar contexts proved advantageous in multiple ways. Semblance of context and circumstances created a natural connectivity and empathy between the peers and their mentors. The mentors, though having similar contexts, differed from their peer mentees in being able to successfully negotiate the challenges and adverse circumstances they all faced. Accepted, recognized and acknowledged by others for their achievements gave new status to the peer mentors. The sustained interaction helped build a strong identity and bonding and the peer mentors became role models and motivators for their peer mentees. As persons with whom peers could easily relate and consult, the peer mentors had a persuasive influence and acted as navigators in steering the peer mentees through various aspects of the programmes and helping them to better comprehend the new knowledge within their sociocultural realities. Acting as catalysts, the mentors helped peer mentees to energize their cognitive thinking processes by helping them organize, build and construct knowledge through the varied interaction opportunities on offer. For the development of cognitive thinking as a key life skill through LSE programmes, UNFPA (2000a) reiterates the importance of learners actively constructing knowledge based upon their interactions with their physical and social environments.

Mentor–Mentee Relationship

The bond between mentor and mentee influenced their interactions and the development of life skills among them. Despite the nomenclature—mentor–mentee usually signifying a hierarchy—the bonds they shared

also had elements of mutuality and reciprocity. Unlike most conceptualizations of mentor–mentee relationships, where the bonds are of giver–receiver, teacher–learner, supporter–supported, projects that facilitated a more organic exchange impacted their life skills development. Sharing and learning together, mentors and mentees were simultaneously a support and resource for each other. A symbiotic organic relationship led to peers and their mentors learning to listen and be more accepting and supportive of each other. Working as teams, they tackled and resolved conflicts constructively, becoming each other’s confidante. The mentor–mentee relationship laid the foundation for building social and thinking skills between them while necessitating control of their emotions to sustain the relationships.

Participatory Engagement

The organization of activities created opportunities to share, learn and interact with others and develop prosocial behaviours central to development of life skills. According to ERIC (1988), prosocial behaviour includes working with partners and in teams, encouraging positive relationships, showing interest and care, and so on. Knowing how to interact effectively with others, getting to know and trust each other, communicating accurately and unambiguously, accepting and supporting each other and resolving conflicts constructively are aspects of social skills. People with poor social skills have low self-esteem. Facing multiple vulnerabilities, the youth participating in the programmes mostly had low levels of self-esteem and social skills to begin with. The organization of activities needed to be seen both from the perspective of structure and opportunities for engagement. Participation, reflection, generalization and application of learning were key aspects around which activities were built. Key to the development of life skills was that activities were structured to allow youth to actively engage and learn from each other, with equal opportunities to participate and that the environment was non-judgemental and open. The participatory activities organized in the programmes provided mechanisms for reinforcing

prosocial behaviours, helped build self-confidence and self-esteem and significantly impacted the social skills of both peer mentors and their mentees.

External Influencers' Support

Common to all the programmes was the role of significant influencers. With the difference between the peer mentors and their mentees at times being very marginal and the definition of success and achievement of the mentors not always clear and recognized, the influencers had a delicate role. Acting largely as moderators, they played a crucial role in mentoring the peer mentors and yet maintaining the gentle balance between the youth by not being intrusive or overly suggestive. Creating a parallel support system by playing a regulatory and counselling role, they helped maintain the alternative cultures and values the programmes were built upon. Moderating sessions and activities helped to retain their participatory nature in the real sense, supported the democratic sharing and organization of events and enabled meaning and learning to emerge from activities that, at times, were complex and seemed vague as they contained major elements of fun.

Reflective Practices

Lastly, organizations implementing the LSE programmes need to be introspective about their larger organizational environments and the value culture they advocate. The larger environment inadvertently permeated and influenced programmes and the mentor–mentee dynamics. A disconnect between organizational values and programme culture and values created open disconnects and had an adverse impact on the programme activities. Regular reflective practices and organizational learning were key to developing sustainable programmes, strong peer mentor–mentee relationships and life skills in accordance with the circumstances and needs of the youth.

Resonating Change—Impact of LSE Programmes

Mapping the dimensions of change influenced by the LSE programmes qualitatively provided holistic perspectives. Making multidimensional progress, the programmes helped youth to inch themselves towards more positive outcomes. The strength of the processes discussed above significantly factored the direction and rapidity of progress the youth made through the programmes.

At the individual level, both peer leaders and their mentees experienced change. Engaging in a shared process, the more the mentor's and mentee's roles remained dynamic and fluid, the greater was the reciprocity and exchange. The bond between mentor and mentee formed the essential element to funnelling the other levels of change. Individually, youth articulated a range of learning, to include enhanced information and awareness about a variety of issues: instrumental learning and the development of skills and capacities to effectively do tasks and activities crucial for their well-being and development; communicative learning and the confidence and ability to voice their ideas and perspectives; introspection and the development of capacity to reflect and better comprehend situations and shape perceptions about them; social learning about interpersonal interactions, social etiquettes and building strong and positive relationships with peers, family members and others; and emotional learning and a better understanding of the feelings of self and others, coping with stressful situations and accompanying emotions.

A participant in the GOAL programme narrated,

'...girls participating in sports was unthinkable for my parents. They were very reluctant to send me for the GOAL programme and initially refused ... but on insistence of the programme officer, they sent me for a session.... I liked it there very much and begged my parents ... they agreed only if my household work did not suffer ... when I was selected as a Goal Champion (Peer Mentor), my parents were very happy ... they have more confidence in me and believe I will be able to do something in life. I think that is most important for me...'

An adolescent girl from Ali Gaon in her Most Significant Change story shared her personal journey.

'...Before I joined the Goal programme I did not feel like coming out of my home. I had a kind of hesitation and fear of stepping out of my home and going alone. ... I used to feel scared of boys that they will try to molest me or maybe pass some degrading remarks ... learning self-defence techniques have given me confidence ... my *didi* (peer mentor) told me her experiences and how she tricks boys if they try to be funny with her...'

Youths' perceptions about the impact of LSE programmes extended beyond themselves and included their organizational and family contexts. More aware and confident youth were better disposed to negotiating family and organizational norms, adapting to changing situations and working towards mutually acceptable alternatives. Using their enhanced knowledge and understandings, they analyzed the pros and cons of situations and negotiated the internal and external webs of conflicts and challenges better and accepted responsibility for the consequences of the decision with greater confidence.

Discussion

Thus, although the three projects were unique and varied in their context and focus, yet key commonalities in the projects emerged that were seen to have a significant impact on the peer mentor approach to LSE and the development of life skills among youth. These were: (a) opportunities; (b) support network; and (c) youth-centric programming. The projects opened up a whole new world for the peers and their mentors, providing them with new opportunities to experience and learn and offered choices they had not encountered before. Coupled with the network of support youth found in the project-mediated environments, who accepted them for all their limitations and treated them with respect and dignity, led to the creation of a deep sense of belongingness and pride among them. Confidence, trust and responsibility defined their interactions with peers, adults and the activities they were involved in. Lastly, the centrality of youth issues and concerns defined the programmes and their activities. Having a flexible approach, the

projects renewed their strategies, negotiated various challenges and remained focused on the larger programme goals and outcomes. Patton (2004) observes that innovative projects do not follow a linear pathway of change; they follow a highly iterative process, as interventions are continuously adapted and created as new realities emerge. The flexible approach of the projects and their openness to new ideas and methodologies, was a key aspect, making the programmes innovative in their approach and characterization and consequently determining the conduciveness of their external and internal environments.

The Johari's window quadrants (see Fig. 1.1) provide a useful framework (Luft 1984) for analysing the processes of LSE programmes and their consequent impacts that contribute to life skills development among the youth. The four quadrants explain an individual's

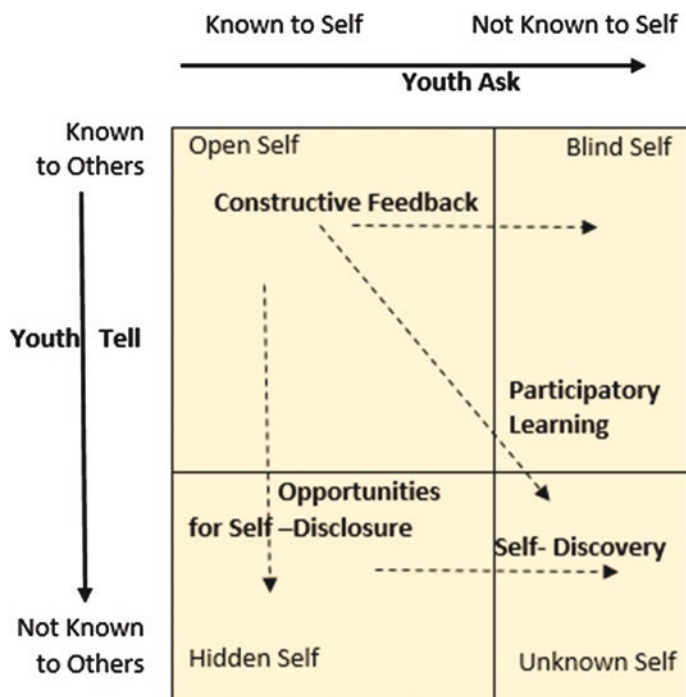


Fig. 1.1 Johari's model: Individual's perceptions about the self and others (adapted from Luft, J. 1989). *Of human interaction*. Palo Alto, CA: National Press Books)

perceptions about the self and others. The more the area is unknown by self and others, the greater the mistrust and the poorer the communication.

The organization of activities that engaged mentors and mentees in a process of shared learning, that were built upon continuous constructive exchange and feedback in environments that were egalitarian and provided equal opportunities, helped to build bonds of trust and reciprocity between the mentors and their mentees. Understanding themselves and their circumstances better, the youth felt confident in sharing and negotiating their turmoils and challenges. Impacting both mentors and mentees, the LSE processes of dialogue and exchange benefitted both. From the Johari's model perspective, these activities led to an increase in open areas and a common understanding of knowledge, behaviours, skills, ideas and attitudes. A reduction in unknown, hidden and blind areas, consequently led to enhanced confidence, trust and faith among peers. The ability to communicate effectively directly impacts youth self-esteem and confidence, as well as their willingness to seek the help needed. The LSE programme, by strengthening the communication skills of youth, created the primary pedestal for building their life skills, their self-negotiation and self-development, as well as their negotiation of challenges in their external environment. The PYD framework of youth development reiterates the impact of the larger context on processes of youth development. At a micro level, organizational values and structures deeply impacted the processes of LSE activities and the opportunities and resources peer mentors and their mentees could avail themselves of. These directly impacted the process of life skills development and the indirect learning of youth, their validation and endorsement of the values and learning from the programme to larger contexts and real world situations, and consequently the sustainability of their learning.

Conclusion

Mentoring is recognized as a key strategy for learning and development. Mentoring is distinct from other learning approaches in its attribute of role modelling, nurturing and sustaining caring relationships (Billay and

Yonge 2004; Kerry and Mayes 2014). Mentoring in its core attributes is fundamentally suited to attaining the outcomes of life skills development programmes and helping youth develop a broad array of strengths and capacities. The Jacobs Foundation's (2011) working definition of life skills states: 'Life skills are the abilities that enable young people to deal with the challenges of their lives in a manner that is adequate for their age and experience. They facilitate healthy, positive and productive personal development and enable meaningful contributions to society. Involving both intra- and interpersonal abilities that are interrelated, they collectively form the core skills youth need for their holistic development. Young people need to take responsibility for their actions and their social and emotional development; life skills transcend the knowledge and abilities taught by others' (p. 11). Peer mentors as a strategy for life skills development of marginalized youth is a valuable tool that can contribute to the development of peers and their mentors (D'Souza 2012). In facing multiple vulnerabilities, marginalized youth need organizational and programmatic support to enable them to develop core life skills.

Based on the programmes reviewed, the key aspects influencing the peer mentor strategy and positive youth outcomes is the recruitment of mentors from the community, training and support for the mentoring relationship and the structuring of a range of activities around broad programme guidelines. Also significant is the larger organizational culture and other activities that needed to reiterate a culture of learning based on principles of mutuality and respect. Hierarchic inflexible structures can be detrimental and affect the sustainability of peer mentor interventions and their positive impact.

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2

How Mentorship Is Perceived by Corporate Mentors and Student Protégés

Shaji Kurian and Sanjay Padode

Introduction

Mentoring is being recognized across the globe as a powerful tool for human resource development (Liu et al. 2009). The accepted definition of mentoring is that it is an intense reciprocal interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced individual (mentor) and a less experienced individual (mentee/protégé). Allen and Eby (2007) have defined that mentoring relationships are characterized by feedback, advice, guidance, counsel and support provided by the mentor for the protégé's personal and professional development.

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However, there still exists a striking dearth of knowledge about types of mentoring in different cultural contexts, given that most of the available literature stems from America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand (Evans et al. 2005). Literature on mentoring programmes in the context of local values and cultural traditions is also rare (Pryce et al. 2011), especially in the Indian context.

Researchers have argued that mentoring in different contexts serves different purposes. However, the general definition of mentoring is that it is an intense reciprocal interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced individual (mentor) and the less experienced individual (mentee/protégé). Allen and Eby (2007) have defined that mentoring relationships are characterized by feedback, advice, guidance, counsel and support provided by the mentor for the protégé's personal and professional development.

The cultural differences between India and the West may have different implications on the very foundation of mentoring (Baruch and Budhwar 2006). The characteristics that help to establish and sustain mentoring relationships in Asian countries suggest major differences in mentoring between Indians and low power distant or low collectivistic cultures (House et al. 2004). It is in this context that this chapter is showcasing a mentoring scheme as practised in an Indian business school, possibly the first of its kind.

In the context of fast-changing industries in the post-liberalization period in India, management education institutions are expected to keep pace with changes over time to produce more readily deployable, more industry-ready professionals. However, an ASSOCHAM (2016) study has highlighted that in India, the majority of 5000-plus management institutions do not produce readily deployable management graduates. Furthermore, the study has also brought out the fact that there is a clear disparity between student aspirations and their level of preparation to meet those aspirations as most of these management graduates are often unwilling to 'get their hands dirty'.

A recent study by Ernst & Young and NHRDN (2014) has identified that vision and perseverance along with adaptability and team work were essential skills for succeeding in the emerging competitive world.

The ability to take risks was rated as an equally important business skill for a future manager.

The Indian management education system faces several challenges. Students are not readily employable since many of them come from tier-2 and tier-3 colleges. They have been inculcated with a traditional system of learning and can only reproduce the concepts on paper without an adequate understanding and appreciation of concepts. There is a big gap between what graduates know and what industry requires of them.

Industry experts feel that many students lack certain important skills, like problem solving, decision making, leadership and team management. Therefore, industries waste their capital in training fresh recruits to make them industry ready. Lenin Kumar Kantasamy, SKF GTC, has observed that, 'You ask potential recruits about the technology involved in the making of an automobile, and they'll be ready with the details. If you ask them to design an automobile on their own, only a handful will be able to attempt it with success. Students who don't take up internship roles during their course, often struggle with placements after completion of the course. There is less value addition.'

Hence, in India there has been an attempt in recent years to pay more attention to bridging the gap between industry and campus and improving the quality of education, rather than increasing the number of institutions. The IFIM Business School, a new-age management institution established in India's post-liberalization period, has established a mentoring programme to ensure that its students are more industry ready and more attuned to facing the challenges of leadership.

Corporate Mentoring of Business School Students

The IFIM Business School, located in Bangalore city, was founded in 1995 and is now placed among the top 30 business schools in India. The IFIM is promoted by the Dalal Street Investment Journal Group and is an AICTE-approved institution with an ISO 9001:2008

certification. Currently pursuing accreditation from AACSB, IFIM is also a South Asian Quality Assurance System (SAQS) accredited management institution.

Most recently, researchers are focusing on institutional 'mission' as a key factor in a student learning experience (Pike et al. 2003). The recent interest in institutional mission and its relationship with learning experience was established in few studies (Kuh and Hu 2001). To achieve IFIM Business School's mission, which is to 'nurture, holistic, socially responsible and continuously employable professionals', the business school feels that they have adopted a non-traditional approach along with a regular curriculum to achieve the stated mission. With the changing global market, growing competition and the challenges of managing change over a period of time, the strategy of educational institutions had to change from just imparting technical and theoretical training to the next-generation leaders to inculcating the habit of responsibility and initiative, as well as more clarity on career paths.

The benefits of mentoring on both psychological and career development issues are well established (Kram and Isabella 1985). Mentoring is increasingly recognized as an essential tool for human resource development (Hegstad and Wentling 2005; Liu et al. 2009). The most important benefits to students through mentoring is that it helps give a constructive and relentlessly honest feedback on one's perceptions and actions and provides more clarity to the career (Legum and Hoare 2004). The positive sides of mentoring result in high satisfaction in what they do and greater involvement in activities which they consider important to their career (Green and Bauer 1995).

As an entrepreneur and one of the founding members of the IFIM Business School, author Sanjay Padode has observed that "targeting the real career should be a perfect blend of the aspirations of an individual in terms of what s/he wants **to do** along with what s/he wants **to be**. Generally, preference is given to what somebody wants 'to do' in life, like become a stock broker or an entrepreneur and so on. However, the real career target should also be to dream about what somebody wants 'to be' in life. These choices can be influenced by factors like financial security, social status, fulfilment, power, family, happiness, peace and so on. Therefore, to achieve a more holistic career fulfilment and to

prepare management graduates for the same, a new systematic mentoring approach has been introduced at IFIM.”

The aim of IFIM’s mentoring programme is to enable future managers to answer what one wants to do and what one wants to be—which is the secret to success—and to help students discover their answers to these questions.

The Mentoring Process at IFIM Business School

The IFIM Business School introduced student mentoring as a proof of concept in 2015. Each year students of IFIM Business School are matched with experienced professionals from the industry during their management course. Mentoring is a relationship between two people with the goal of professional and personal development (Kram 1988). Remarkable things happen when people pursue their passions. But passion alone is not enough to produce success. It must be combined with knowledge, guidance and encouragement to bring possibilities to life. Therefore, a more structured approach to mentoring has been introduced at IFIM in addition to the academic curriculum.

Figure 2.1 highlights the flow of various activities in addition to classroom teaching at IFIM to develop employability skills, career direction and focus. As highlighted in Fig. 2.1, objectives of mentoring have to be met in two terms as follows:

Term 1 (SOP Finalization)

- Help in building their statement of purpose (SOPs).
- Understanding and guiding them in choosing their career options.
- Identify the gap between their aspirations and the reality.
- Guiding them to bridge the gap.
- Finalize the students’ SOPs career choice.

Term 2 (Building the Career Path)

- Mentor the student to research careers to build a career path for achieving the outlined purpose.



Fig. 2.1 A diagrammatic representation of career progression support across terms at IFIM. Source Reprinted with permission from ©IFIM Business School, Bangalore, Career Progression Path

- Align the career path with choice of specialization.
- Assist in identifying weaknesses and strengths of the student vis-à-vis their career choice.
- Finalizing the career path, specializations, choice of industry projects, readings and certifications, if any.

The detailed step-by-step approach to the mentoring is undertaken in the following stages.

Step 1: Allocation of Faculty Mentors

The first stage of mentoring is the allocation of approximately ten students under IFIM senior faculty mentors prior to allocation with industry mentors. These faculty mentors are to act as the internal mentors for these students throughout their academic tenure. This allocation happens before the commencement of the first term and during the Foundation course.

Step 2: Workshop on SOP

During the Foundation course (within the first month of a graduate joining the programme) experts are invited to conduct a half-day

Table 2.1 SOP template (to be prepared by students at the end of a SOP workshop)

SOP Template	
INSPIRATIONAL DREAM	
<i>What's your life's theme? A passionate, aspiring goal. The big picture.</i>	
BELIEFS	SPIRIT
<i>What you stand for?</i>	<i>What's your energizing principle?</i>
<i>Core beliefs that drive you</i>	<i>Your life force that defines you</i>
GIC (Greatest Imaginable Challenge)	FOCUS
<i>Where do you see yourself in the next 3 years?</i>	<i>What's the single most important thing that will drive your actions?</i>
<i>Stimulating, measurable stretch target/achievement</i>	<i>Towards fulfilling your inspirational</i>
	<i>Dream and achieving your GIC</i>
Name:	
Course:	

Template developed partially using peak performance organization (PPO) approach. Source Adapted from Gilson et al. (2000)

workshop on purposing in life. The purposing workshop aims to highlight the importance of 'to do' and 'to be' aspects in the career progression of the management graduates. The workshop ends with the creation of a one-page document called the SOP (statement of purpose) prepared by every student (see Table 2.1).

Step 3: SOP Presentation

After preparing SOP statements based on purposing workshops, students make a presentation to a faculty team on his/her SOP, which will be recorded for tracking corrections and to capture differing points of view.

Step 4: Prospecting for Corporate Mentors

Calling for application of interest for mentoring is notified well in advance through various online platforms, including LinkedIn, emails, networks like the National Human Resource Development Networks,

and other sources. A large pool of industry mentors from across the country has always evinced an interest in being mentors by filling in the interest form.

Step 5: Orientation to Corporate Mentors and Empanelment

Being a mentor comes with lots of responsibilities in terms of emotional commitment, similar to parental commitment, and in terms of spending quality time with the mentees. The situation is more complex when the mentee does not appreciate the value or necessity of mentoring. An orientation of the potential industry mentors is arranged before the commencement of the mentoring to map the mentors. After the half-day workshop on the expectations and challenges of mentoring, a select team with IFIM deans and Head CCE interact one-to-one with potential mentors and the final list is arrived upon.

The final empanelment of mentors based on the discussions considers the following:

- Fifteen plus years of experience in corporate/profession/entrepreneurship.
- Graduate with an MBA is preferred.
- Successful person with a 360-degree exposure to cross-functional activities during his/her tenure.
- With a passion for mentoring.
- With an inclination for a continuous approach in teaching.
- Able to dedicate and spare time.
- Preference is given to members in the IT city of Bangalore, where IFIM is located.

Final empanelment process is completed once the industry mentors sign the empanelment form or write the consent for being a mentor and agree to fulfil the requirements.

Step 6: Allocation of Industry Mentors

- Each industry mentor is given ten mentees under his/her guidance.
- Mentor and mentee are scheduled to meet/interact a minimum of once a month.
- Each mentor is also supported by a support mentor (faculty from the institution in order to facilitate and effectively coordinate and add value).
- Each one-to-one mentoring session is supposed to last 20–30 min in the presence of supporting faculty.
- The session between student, faculty and mentor could be held at IFIM, mentor's workplace or any other public location (library, coffee shop, etc.).
- In addition to monthly sessions, the mentor may have interactions with the student through emails/Skype/etc., as deemed fit.
- Mentors are given a report on the student in a specific format on a monthly basis or at the end of the term.
- Honorarium to mentors is monthly, offered as a token of appreciation for their contribution.

Defined Goals of IFIM Industry Mentoring

The mentors are expected to guide the mentees in the following areas:

- Help in building their SOPs, which are prepared after the purposing workshop.
- Career research around the mentee's SOP.
- Understanding and guiding them in choosing their career options.
- Identify the gap between their aspirations and the reality.
- Guiding them to bridge the gap.
- Help in choosing their specialization.
- Help in internship/final placements/profession.
- Mentors review the students' academic progress along with the faculty and advice the mentees on the corrective actions to be taken for improvisation.

Final Mentoring Report and Further Action Points

Data captured from the final mentor report (as indicated in Appendix 1) is utilized for various purposes and by different departments. The 'I will statement' of the mentees, which they prepare during the first phase of mentoring, is validated/modified, which in turn helps the student to provide clarity to both their career path and their learning path.

Data from Q1 has enabled the institution to target the right companies and profiles for career placements. Further, the Q2 data has helped in planning specific training interventions to be industry ready (for example: mock GDPI, mock interview, etc.).

Q3 and Q4 are meant to help students to select a specialization to choose industry internships, the area of their project and in final placement support. Since most of the students opting for management education in India are fresh from campus with little or no previous industry experience, it gives students more clarity on learning pathways. Further, Q5 works as a need assessment tool for effectively planning additional workshops and training.

Mentoring Outcomes

The real impact of mentoring programmes can be measured only a few years down the line when mentees really experience the challenges and complexities of corporate/professional life (Aryee and Chay 1994). Therefore, the entire impact of the programmes is yet to unravel as IFIM only introduced the mentoring activity in 2015. However, the outcome of such mentoring programmes can be evaluated at various levels such as:

Outcomes for Programme Process—Some measures of programme quality should be the reflection of a process outcome. These immediate measures can be: a pattern of regular contact; adherence to programme structure; level of satisfaction of various processes by both mentors and

mentees; and, most important, the level of mentors' and mentees' commitment towards the programme.

Outcomes for Participant Experiences and Perceptions—The perceptions of participants are also important measures of quality outcome (Parasuraman et al. 1985). Impact of perceived mentoring relationships on career outcomes, career satisfaction and career commitment has been established in previous research (Arora and Santosh 2016). Therefore, perceptions of mentors and mentees of the entire process and the outcome, of the value of the programme, career opportunities and so on, are also a few important indicators of the programme's effectiveness.

Insights into Participant Perceptions

To gauge student opinion of a new mentoring programme at IFIM Business School, open-ended, unstructured interviews were taken with five PGDM student protégés at IFIM. Based on Miles and Huberman (1994), interviews were conducted, followed by a within case analysis, leading to codes and thereafter relevant categories (see Table 2.2).

To capture the corporate mentor's views on mentoring, from the experience of the first cycle of mentoring, a questionnaire was administered among mentors (11 corporate members participated in this study) and the survey results were helpful in gaining more insights and learning, as reported in Table 2.3.

Conclusion

There are limited studies on mentoring in the Indian context, especially in the light of a different cultural context to the Western context. Ramaswami et al. (2010) found that there is no significant difference in mentoring based on cultural specifications. Both mentees' perceptions of the roles and the positive aspects of mentoring were similar to the views expressed in the Western context. Responses to 'an ideal mentor'

Table 2.2 Insights from a mentee's point of view

Benefits of mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real insight into company work • Solving real-life problems • Good networking opportunity • Got connected with mentor's boss who provided valuable insights into starting up e-commerce • Practical insight into theoretical problems (taught to us at college) • Given projects to get us thinking • Taught how to make a robust LinkedIn profile • We received psychosocial support, for example, advice on how to make new friends and expand our network • Possibility of future internship and jobs in mentor's company • Advice on different career opportunities in finance • Greater career clarity • Did practical work: project on balance sheet, coming up with a business plan • Were taught how to present ourselves in a meeting
Problem areas in the mentoring process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am unsure how to fully utilize the mentoring programme • We need more networking opportunities • My mentor is in Hyderabad. There is a disconnect ... he is not able to give that much time • As mentees, we fell behind in some assignments given to us by our mentors • Some mentors gave very little time • Busy schedules of both mentor and mentee is a sore point • The programme should be more systematic ... there is a bias towards protégés who are good at communicating • The mentor should also arrange for some field trips for us • For some protégés the mentor is boring, and advice is not relevant

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Ideal mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good guide • We had a young mentor, friendly and understanding who could empathize with us • An ideal mentor spends time with each student, does not have a rushed attitude • Our mentor is ideal as he doesn't spoon feed but rather directs us to come up with ideas and only then advises
Ideal protégé	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have a questioning mind • A good protégé should be a good learner and a good follower • Unsatisfactory protégés are in fact inexperienced
Mentoring relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissatisfactory relationships should be given more time • As mentor and protégé we shared life experiences • Pairing process: Perhaps protégés could choose their own mentor, so that pairing could be based on emotional connect rather than technical competency • I realize that mentoring is a very special, personal relationship • It is a life-long relationship. My mentor says he will be our life-long mentor; this is an important support system for us

in the Indian context were more or less similar to previous studies in the Western context (see Table 2.2). Eby et al. (2007) portrays the role of an ideal mentor as a developer, guide and coach, as well a good counsellor.

However, in the Indian context, mentees also felt that an ideal mentor should be someone who spends quality time with the mentees. In other words, the personal attention to each of the mentees is considered a valuable component of mentor–mentee relationships in India.

There seems to be a difference in the expected outcome of the mentoring process based on the interaction with mentors and mentees. Both mentors and protégés have differing views on the major benefits of mentoring. Mentors have expressed the view that learning professionalism followed by motivation and positive attitude are the most

Table 2.3 Insights from a mentor's point of view

Aspects to be focused on/covered in the business school student mentoring activity, which is not normally covered in curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How study/curricula are related to and help in career path • Build life skills that benefit the student in life and correspondingly in his career (for example, all round communication, confidence, corporate behaviour) • Experiential learning should be woven into the mentoring programme • Students can do projects under the active guidance of industry mentors • Specific agenda/goal (soft or functional) can be identified for mentee to drive this programme more effectively • Prioritization in life • Students' interests and strengths in line with their career aspirations • Soft skills • Helping one to understand their potential/strengths • Expose mentees to practical situations • A tiered approach based on capability (mentoring, coaching, training)
Suggestions to make the mentoring process more robust and systematic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal interaction • No structured feedback, such as 'I will' statement • Informality in mentoring, for example, mentoring outside the campus is better • Reduce mentor–mentee ratio • Leave mentors to pull rather than push • Stick to the fundamentals—rigour and discipline • Number of mentor–mentee ratio matters • Segmenting students based on their current skills • Customized approach based on the student's outlook

(continued)

Table 2.3 (continued)

Benefits to students through mentoring (rank-wise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning professionalism 1 • Motivation and positive attitude 2 • Solving real-life problems 3 • Psychosocial support 4 • Insights into company/department work 5 • Greater career clarity 6 • Networking opportunity 7^a
Mentoring should focus on—according to industry mentors (rank-wise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposing in life 1 • Behavioural modifications 2 • Knowledge sharing 3 • Career clarifications 4 • Enhancing social commitment 5 • Self-awareness 6^a
Qualities mentors expect from mentees/protégé (rank-wise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is willing to be mentored 1 • Listens, watches, learns and grows 2 • Asks questions 3 • Strives to give his/her best at all times 4 • Is open and honest 4 • Accepts criticism graciously 5 • Accepts responsibilities 6 • Has courage to try new things 7 • Learns from mistakes 8 • Is respectful and grateful 8^a

^aThese numbers indicate the ranking order of the responses

important aspects of such mentoring activities. This view on mentoring was also validated in Western contexts (Lasley 1996). However, networking opportunities as well as practical insights into solving real-life problems were expected priorities of protégés, whereas career clarity and networking opportunities, according to mentors, were the last priorities of an expected mentoring outcome.

Mentors in the current case felt that psychosocial support was one of the important aspects of mentoring. This may be explained from the specific cultural fabric of Indian society. In high power distant and high collectivistic cultures like Asia, psychosocial support is considered an essential part of the development of an individual. This is also supported by Baruch and Budhwar (2006) who found fundamental

differences in mentoring between Indian and low power distant or low collectivistic cultures in the West.

An attempt was also made to explore what the characteristics of ideal mentoring in a business school are. The mentors in the present case felt that ideal mentoring should focus on helping mentees to identify their purpose in life, followed by support in behavioural modification and knowledge sharing. Mentors also felt that creating self-awareness was the last priority in this context. Findings were not entirely different from the Western context. Lasley (1996) also found that the crucial characteristic of mentors is the ability to communicate their belief that a person is capable of transcending present challenges and of accomplishing great things in the future, which was also validated from the point of view of mentors.

It is interesting to note that in this mentoring programme, although there were some initial differences in approaches of mentors and mentees to the mentoring process, over time a personal relationship was established which grew beyond the boundaries of formal interactions. Said one protégé, 'My mentor says I will be your life-long mentor, as if he's setting our expectations. He said he will take a keen interest in what we are doing in life. I know can fall back on him as a support system. It's been a great experience.'

Appendix 1

Final Mentor Report Format

Name of the student:

• I Will statement. (A statement of what I will do/become in the future.)	
S. No.	Questions
Q1	Where do you rate the student on job winning skills, on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 stand the least)
Q2	Any suggested areas of improvement to be more employable?

• I Will statement. (A statement of what I will do/become in the future.)	
S. No.	Questions
Q3	Which sector will be more appropriate for the student?
Q4	Which specialization will be best suited for the student? Mkt/Fin/Ops/HR
Q5	Does he/she require any special training to succeed in area of specialization? (Kindly mention the specifications.)
Q6	Any other suggestion?

Area of interest	Sector	Special coaching

Name of Support Faculty:Signature:

Name of the Industry Mentor:Signature:

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Authors' Biography

Shaji Kurian is Associate Paulyrofessor and Head of Department of HR and OB in IFIM Business School, Bangalore, and has more than 20 years of both academic and corporate experience. His Ph.D. is in the area of Strategic Human Resource Management. He has published and presented many papers in India and abroad. He has also conducted many functional-based training programmes for executives in both corporate and government sectors. His research interests include behavioural modification, change management and managerial psychology.

Sanjay Padode is Secretary of the Center for Developmental Education, a not-for-profit society which runs the Institute of Finance and International Management (IFIM). A 1989 graduate from Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, with Honors in M.Sc. (Math) and B.E. (Electrical and Electronics Engineering), he has been a successful entrepreneur from the day he completed his graduation. Passionate about blending technology and innovation in management education, Sanjay is also a member of the Academic Advisory Committee of NIELIT (a scientific society associated with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India).

3

Mentoring in a Start-up Company with Millennial Recruits

Priya Kumar and Sachin Kumar

Introduction

According to one estimate, by 2025, 75% of the global workforce, that is, three out of every four workers will be millennials (2013) (Gimme, Gimme, Gimme—Millennials in the Workplace 2012). “The makeup of the global workforce is undergoing a seismic shift,” according to the Harvard Business Review (Jeanne and Karie 2010).

The size of this generation in the worldwide workforce is enormous and at present is estimated at around 1.7 billion; with 77 million in the USA and roughly 550 million in India (Kumar 2014). It is also estimated that, by 2020, India will have the world’s youngest and largest working population, with one-third of the workforce aged 30 or below (The rise of the Gen Y workforce in India 2014).

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Given that the baton of future organizations is going to be in the hands of millennials, and that corporates are beginning to woo Gen Y (Generations in the workplace. Winning the generation game 2013), it is important to study millennials as they are expected to dominate the workforce in the coming years (Moon 2014).

To plan for the future we need to understand what tomorrow's leaders will look like; what their expectations are, for example from their managers or leaders; what type of organizational structure motivates them; and how they prefer to be groomed for the future. This qualitative study exploring the mentoring aspirations of employees in a Gen Y company, hopes to answer some of these conceptual and practical questions. It is important to understand their mentoring aspirations so that managers and firms can have a better platform on which to build in terms of motivating and training this generation of workers, who exhibit differences in attitudes to and expectations of work (Anderson et al. 2016).

Gen Y/Millennials

Although "Millennials" is how the future workforce and leaders born between, approximately, 1980 and 2000 are described (Moon 2014), the label associated with this generation is yet to be finalized. Other labels include Nexters, Net Generation, Gen Y, and New-Gen (Anderson et al. 2016). This generation is said to be comfortable with technology and value training (Anderson et al. 2016).

New-Gen workers in India and China are no exception. They have many commonalities with their counterparts in the USA, most notably, that they are all participants in a convergence of technology that has flattened the globe (Tolbize 2008).

India's Gen Y mixes Indian values with a Western outlook and strives to differentiate itself through education, reputation, brands and technology, and money. It seems that their personal ambitions do not compromise teamwork in the workplace and they look to their employers and coworkers to help them learn (Tolbize 2008).

This mix of traditional and Western outlook is also noticeable in China. Nicknamed “Little Emperors,” the Gen Y Chinese are often raised by grandparents and have deep-rooted traditional values, even while they embrace modernity (Tolbize 2008).

While young people in India and China are passionate about many aspects of Western culture, part of their energy and confidence is a belief in their own country’s ability to be a world leader and their own ability to be active participants in that rapid evolution (Tolbize 2008).

Leadership Preferences

It is suggested that Millennials prefer a leader who listens well (Anderson et al. 2016), is caring, inspiring, competent, and guides them with a friendly and firm hand, while acknowledging and accepting the individual’s unique traits and abilities (White Papers. New-Gen workers in India and China 2010).

An autocratic leadership style, where leaders give instructions without detailed communication, is strictly a no for millennials. Gen Y is drawn to leaders who incite and inspire (White Papers. New-Gen workers in India and China 2010). Interactive leadership and relationships with supervisors are preferred and leaders are usually treated as mentors with whom they can easily interact (Anderson et al. 2016).

Millennials are strongly against hierarchical relationships with a command and control management style and look for transparency and a flat organization type (2014, Gimme, Gimme, Gimme—Millennials in the Workplace 2012). They treat the boss as a friend, and managers who mentor and share knowledge are valued most (Wongsoredjo and Preston 2015).

With Generation Y coming into the business, hierarchies have to disappear. Generation Y expects to work in communities of mutual interest and passion—not structured hierarchies. Consequently, people management strategies will have to change so that they look more like Facebook and less like the pyramid structures we are used to,

Vineet Nayar (Vice Chairman and CEO, HCL Technologies, India)

Millennials feel constrained by traditional working practices and that rigid hierarchies and outdated management styles fail to motivate and get the best out of younger recruits. Even in a country like Japan with its hierarchical culture, more than one-third of Gen Y want their leader to give them autonomy in the workplace (Millennials at work. Reshaping the workplace and © 2011). Managers of Gen Y employees should embrace a more mentoring or coaching style of leadership that allows Gen Y to feel empowered (The rise of the Gen Y workforce in India 2014).

With today's increasingly flat organizational hierarchies, Gen Y seeks mentors from among their leaders. The ideal boss according to Gen Y is a manager who fulfills the role of a coach or mentor. An overwhelming 60% of Gen Y professionals aspire to have a boss that is more a mentor than a manager, in the traditional sense. Young professionals in the UK, Middle East and India have similar views. This implies that coaching and mentoring are important competencies for managers (Gen Y and the World of Work. 2013).

Mentoring for Millennials

Mentors are a must for everyone, as they help in a smooth career progression through the sharing of experiences and learnings (Gen Y in the Workplace: An International Comparison. © 2014).

Mentoring is usually defined as a formal or informal relationship between two people—a senior mentor (usually outside the protégé's chain of supervision) and a junior mentee or protégé. Formal mentoring programs are structured, have oversight, and have clear and specific organizational goals; whereas informal mentoring has minimal to no structure and oversight and may or may not have a clear and specific goal (2011).

The various benefits to an organization that actively supports mentoring are: mentoring helps new recruits settle into the organization; skills enhancement; professional identity (defining professional behavior

for new employees); development of leadership competencies; bridging the gap between theory and practice; understanding the organizational culture; development of competencies; influencing employee retention; and, above all, cultivating the right attitudes (2011).

Studies show that 70–90% of workplace learning occurs through mentoring and informal on-the-job training. Mentoring is positively correlated with promotions, expectations for advancement, and intentions to stay, and a majority of the companies (77 percent) with well-established mentoring programs reported enhanced employee satisfaction, which translated into increased employee retention (2008).

The three main areas where mentors have the most profound influence on protégés' professional development are leadership, conflict management, and change management (2008).

Mentorship is a development tool that particularly fulfills the millennials' desire for receiving frequent feedback (80% of millennials said they want regular feedback) and 75% yearn for mentors. Millennials put a lot of stock into organizations that offer continuous learning opportunities and 35% of millennials are said to be attracted to employers offering excellent training and development programs. With working with strong coaches and mentors being the highest ranked development opportunity it can enhance engagement, improve retention and have a positive impact on leadership development for millennials (Gimme, Gimme, Gimme—Millennials in the Workplace 2012).

It can be concluded that mentoring is extremely popular with millennials and they will even leave an organization if they do not find appropriate mentoring practices. They place a high value on being able to learn, grow, and advance.

The question that arises is, what styles of mentoring would Gen Y prefer? A traditional one-to-one mentoring model, where a senior member of the organization is paired with the 'mentee' over several months, does not seem to go down well with millennials.

It seems that old mentoring approaches will not do (Munro 2009), rather, employees prefer to choose the mentoring that is best for them (2011). Around 44 % of employers think Gen Y prefers a collaborative mentor who offers greater freedom at work (Mentoring Millennials and 2016).

Mentoring Models

Millennials prefer to work in groups and like to be evaluated on team performance and deliverables, and this preference also extends to mentoring. Millennials prefer to have several people for guidance, choosing the person based on the scenario they are facing at the time. A few models found to be effective or being tried among millennial mentees are **group mentoring** (one mentor for a group of mentees—say from three to eight); **peer mentoring** (learning from one another); **situational mentoring** (could drive short-term, hyper-specific advice, similar to coaching); **reverse mentoring** (young employees mentor older generations on technological advances) (Munro 2009).

While planning mentoring for millennials, emphasis should be placed on imparting transferrable skills and a clear career path. If mentoring is planned and executed well, it may prove to be the most important factor in increasing the engagement of millennial workers. Essentially, businesses of the future will have to innovate and remain competitive and millennials will play a vital role in this. The best and brightest of the millennial workforce will be attracted to those companies offering a clear career path and the mentors and managers that can help them progress (Munro 2009).

Qualitative Study

The Sample

This study explores how mentoring takes place in an organization, with a largely flat structure, consisting of Gen Y employees. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted with four employees at a start-up company (two mentors from the senior management group, and two protégés).

The company under study aims to create a sustainable impact, largely by enhancing community engagement in governance. The company deals with projects such as skill development from the National Skills

Development Corporation (NSDC) and also with government political campaigns, for example during the Bihar state elections.

This company had been set up two years previously and consisted of about 300 employees, it was still hiring as an aggressive growth-mode continued. The workforce largely consisted of university graduates and postgraduates in a first-time job. Even the directors in the senior management group were quite young, with a mean average age of 35.

In-depth interviews were recorded, transcribed and then coded using two coders. Miles and Huberman 1994 Five protégés and one mentor were interviewed and several categories emerged.

Categories that Emerged from Interviews

1. **How Mentoring Evolves in a Horizontal Organization with Young Staff**
 - 1a. **Evolves from Within in an Informal Manner**

One protégé said, “In a horizontal organization mentoring takes part in teams. It depends on how your positioning is within each team. The mentorship will be lacking until and unless someone within the team takes the leadership and mentoring role.”

Another said, “Suppose people are working on project and there are many interns compared to the rest of the organization and if the group feels that they are lacking a few skills or they are not up to the mark then they will approach someone in order to be mentored, to learn those skills. That is how mentorship works, there is no official setup. Normally in such organizations, in start-ups, in organizations where the directors are aged 27 or 28 so the mentorship pattern is very informal.”

One more protégé added: “It is informal mentoring but some teams have a good structure so it works out.”

The themes that emerged from the interviews were:

- Leadership and mentoring emerges from within the team.

- In a horizontal organization, someone assumes the mentorship role. Mentorship in such organizations is important for growth.
- The company directors are very young, and maybe that's why we have an informal mentoring program.
- We have no official setup for mentorship.
- Mentoring only taken up if there is a skills deficiency in a team.
- Some well-structured teams have good mentors, others don't.

1b. Mentoring takes on Different Hues, more Situational in Nature

Some protégés said that demographic variables were important. "Prior to working in the current organization we have been and worked with people who are much older to us. If you have encountered such people then your approach to mentorship will be different."

Another added: "One's socialization, gender and demography matters. Due to the varied background and one's upbringing, the ease of interaction with other employees or senior management will vary."

The themes that emerged from the interviews were:

- Mentorship differs according to the experience of mentees at both grassroots level and center.
- Mentoring is less challenging in a new firm as protégés are inexperienced and more adjustable.
- Socialization and upbringing of mentors and mentees matters, and colors the mentoring process.
- One's socialization, gender, and demography will have an impact on ease of interaction with others.
- Yes, upbringing matters as it impacts your openness towards learning and ethical values.
- Gender and demography are not important variables any more, as everyone wants to learn and get on in life.
- Mentoring is difficult to manage at this time in the company, and restructuring at this stage is not advisable.

- Nature of mentoring here in our company is engaging and also situational where you interact and understand each other.

2. What are the Mentoring Objectives?

- Through mentoring the directors hope for better performance and a lower attrition rate.
- So far mentorship has not been an area of focus. We haven't been using words like mentorship till now. We are not focussed about whether mentorship is really necessary or not. I think only now people have started thinking about it.
- In flat organizations priorities are different, as employees are more job than mentor focussed.
- One year ahead: rather than the protégé reaching out, the mentor should reach out.
- We aim to have third-party workshops and also to map older employees with newer ones.
- As the company matures there are plans for more domain-specific mentors.
- We hope that mentoring should lead to better soft skills.
- Our vision as the senior management team is also for every employee who leaves to be our brand ambassador. They should have gained more competency and more confidence.
- Mentoring should give you a clearer career path.

3 Problem Areas

3a. Problems Faced by Mentors

It is very difficult to mentor someone who you are directly working with due to the building of unnecessary notions. If one day you are telling your employees to adhere to the deadline and the next day you are telling them to work at ease and to give you best. Ideally in the buddy system mentorship you should have a mentor from another department.

The themes that emerged from the interviews were:

- We need a buddy system with a different domain leader.
- Protégés may have low attention spans.

3b. **Problems Faced by Protégés**

- We need a feedback mechanism for the mentor too.
- Senior management roles yet undefined.
- No mentoring due to lack of system, no HR committee and lack of time.
- Senior manager, not directors, should be made mentors.
- External advisors required.
- We see that structured organizations have well-defined mentoring programs.
- Mentoring is more challenging in a flat structure.
- Protégés seek inspiration from the more experienced, which does not always actualize.
- Lack of mentorship at grassroots level, leads to demotivation among junior employees.
- Mentors need to give direction to the protégés' energy.
- Poor resource allocation.
- Sparse mentoring.
- Mentor at times not domain specific.
- Anonymous feedback mechanism is required for the mentor.

3c. **Other Problems**

- Pairing formally is restrictive for the protégé: If you pair two people then you are restricting them to interact only among their pair. If you allow them to be informal then there can be that if X approach A and if A is not giving the guidance as X needs then X can approach B. That wouldn't make A feel bad about the fact that X doesn't respect him as you have not paired them.
- Upper caste and lower caste divide hinders mentoring.
- Redressal required in case mentor faces stereotypes.

- I've had difference of opinions with my mentors, as mentoring is a two-way learning process.
- The employees have started to look for mentorship outside the organization and that should never happen.

4. **Who is the Perfect Mentor/Perfect Protégé?**

4a. **Mentor**

One protégé said, "There is nothing like a perfect mentor but a good mentor is someone who will not hold any biases or form impressions very quickly, who bases performance review on competence as well as yearning to learn and who knows how to map interests and competency, who looks at company's goals as well as employee's goals."

Another spoke of an imperfect mentor: "My senior management was very harsh without any substantial reason. He didn't understand the work we were doing and yet he used to put it down as he wanted the last say and he used to send us threatening emails also saying 'please work'. It was a very bad climate as at one level we were looking for mentorship and all he wanted to do was to become a leader. We did express our opinions in a way not to put him down, and eventually he left. In such a case there should be anonymous feedback for the mentor and a system of mentorship review."

The themes that emerged from the interviews were:

- The mentor style should be in between consultative and authoritarian.
- Constant feedback by the mentor enhances technical development; mentor will have to personally sit and judge soft skills.
- Leaders need training in mentoring.
- Employees evolve more with a thoughtful leader who is collaborative, rather than an authoritative leader.
- A good mentor will not have any biases or form impressions.
- He will map interests and competency, and match company's goals with employee goals.
- Perfect mentor imparts knowledge and wants to share experiences.

- Mentor should be interactive and makes people feel comfortable.

4b. **Protégé**

- Protégé should imbibe what the mentor has to offer.
- Protégé should also look for personal growth.
- A perfect protégé doesn't give up.
- Mentee should not have predetermined set of notions, which narrows the thought process.

4c. **Mentoring Process**

A mentor said that the mentoring process in such a new organization, and in others like them, needs to evolve: "We should have a formal mentoring program where we map the employees who have been in the organization for 6 months with a buddy who has been there for two to three years."

One protégé said a feedback mechanism was important: "In the research project that I am currently working on there is a mentor for each module and your review of your work is done by another mentor. What I want to see is that feedback mechanism for the mentor as well."

The themes that emerged from the interviews were:

- Mentoring should have a lot of interaction and sharing of ideas, and also there should be rotation of protégés.
- Mentoring should not be directive.
- Mentoring should be such, that freshers should look up to experienced individuals with respect and curiosity.
- Multiple informal mentors would be the ideal.
- Mentorship should be cultivated in such a way that even the most junior person should have a say in whatever they are doing.
- A feedback mechanism for the mentors is required.

Discussion: Interesting Themes to Emerge from Case Study

The importance of mentoring is recognized by both the directors and the employees. So much so that one of the protégés said, “I think that it is very important to discuss about mentoring in an informal organization also. Please continue doing research on this as it is very much needed by people like us!” Another said, “Mentoring is needed in a young organization as they are full of energy and enthusiasm and just have to be directed in a specific way.”

However, there is a strong sense that immediate work pressure dominates, and thus it seems that any mentoring initiatives are likely to be taken up a year from now.

In the meantime, mentoring is evolving informally and taking on the form of situational mentoring, changing hues depending on the nature of the teams, and also the individual and team competencies.

Overall, four main challenges to the mentoring process were highlighted:

1. The fluid nature of the organization.
2. Having so many staff from different demographic and cultural backgrounds: “There should be a redressal system where the mentor can also go and talk to an independent body about the stereotypes he is facing.”
3. Supervisory mentorship relationships were seen to be a problem area for both the mentor and the protégé.
4. While the mentees expressed that they would want a collaborative mentorship process, whereby they also take part in the process, there was a noticeable wariness of the supervisory mentor, with strong requests for anonymous feedback about the mentor as a feedback mechanism.

This study is likely to be useful for other start-ups, whose founders may consider planning a mentoring program from the outset, rather than leaving it on the backburner.

Some of the themes of this qualitative research having support from extant literature are: informal evolution of mentoring (Transitioning to workforce 2020 Howarth 2015); situational mentoring (Munro 2009, Got Millennials? Two Approaches to Mentoring Generation 2014, Thorpe 2013); mentoring dependency on the nature of teams, individual and even team competencies (White Papers. New-Gen workers in India and China 2010, Emelo 2011); problems of supervisory mentorship (Anderson et al. 2016); desire for collaborative mentorship (Mentoring Millennials and 2016, Transitioning to workforce 2020); and desire for a process of anonymous feedback about the mentor (Moon 2014).

Some of the important themes we had expected after reading the existing literature, but which did not emerge were: bottom-up or reverse mentoring (Jeanne and Karie 2010, 2013, Moon 2014, Got Millennials? Two Approaches to Mentoring Generation 2014); peer mentors (Moon 2014); and gender preference while choosing mentors (2008).

A few India-specific themes—demographic differences, cultural backgrounds and caste groups—also appeared to be hindering factors in mentoring. So much so that a need for a redressal system was expressed in case a mentor delayed or used different mentoring initiatives for a protégé due to certain stereotypes. As with any exploratory case analysis, this case has limited generalizability, although thematic generalizability is certainly a possibility. The fact that our information was self-reported and that we were unable to interview all employees who had been in mentor–mentee relationship also poses a problem.

Despite these limitations, our research provides a detailed account of how mentoring evolves in a start-up company with a flat structure and millennial recruits, and has the potential to make a contribution to the literature. Future studies could treat the following as “critical themes”: demographic difference, cultural background, and caste (social order) as hindering factors in mentoring; the need for a redressal system in case a mentor faces stereotypes; delayed or different mentoring initiatives because of work pressure dominance; the need for external mentors; and a strict no to directors as mentors.

With the scarcity of literature on the evolution of millennial mentoring in a flat-structured start-up organization on the Indian sub-continent, this study breaks new ground by identifying themes and conceptual frameworks that could be examined in future cases. This study can practically benefit entrepreneurs and human resource personnel in start-ups who are looking to plan mentoring programs for millennial recruits.

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Part II

Exploring Formal and Informal Mentoring Models

4

Workplace Climate as a Facilitator of Informal Mentoring Relationships: A Protégé's Perspective

Annu Mathew

Introduction

Informal mentoring is a form of mentoring that arises out of a spontaneous relationship between two individuals who discover that they have common interests, wherein the more experienced person assumes the role of mentor, and serves as a coach, guide and teacher (Lumpkin 2011). Such relationships are formed not only in the workplace but also in the realm of social, professional and family activities (Inzer and Crawford 2005). In the organizational environment, the basic difference between formal and informal mentoring is in the nature of the relationship between mentor and protégé. While formal mentoring in organizations is driven by their processes and guidelines, informal mentoring is not managed, structured nor formally approved of by organizations. The formation of the informal mentoring relationship is driven

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P. Kumar (ed.), *Exploring Dynamic Mentoring Models in India*,

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-56405-0_4

by the protégé's inclination for getting mentoring support. Studies have found that informal organizational mentoring is more beneficial in terms of mentoring outcomes than formal mentoring (Ragins and Cotton 1999; Singh et al. 2002).

Through the lens of protégé-initiated mentoring, this chapter analyzes whether the organizational ecosystem develops informal mentoring as a channel for people development. It also examines the need for protégé-initiated mentoring and highlights some practices followed by protégés for initiating successful mentoring relationships.

Informal Mentoring: Functions, Forms and Antecedents

According to Kram's (1985) mentor role theory, there are two functions of mentoring: career-related and psychosocial. The five sub-constructs of career-related mentoring are: opportunities for open career discussions; building confidence in challenging assignments through coaching and guidance; gaining the right visibility and exposure; opportunities for new assignments; and learning from the mentor's areas of expertise (ibid.).

The psychosocial functions include counselling and guidance, friendship, moral and emotional support and role modelling. The mentor's power and position in the organization drive career development, whereas the quality of the informal relationship and the emotional bonds underlying the relationship drive the psychosocial functions (Ragins and Cotton 1999).

Positive outcome variables prompt protégés to reach out for informal mentoring. For example, studies suggest that informal mentoring leads to promotion (Dreher and Ash 1990; Scandura 1992), reduced turnover (Viator and Scandura 1991), job satisfaction (Koberg et al. 1994) and better career prospects (Chao et al. 1992; Dreher and Ash 1990; Whitley et al. 1991).

Informal mentoring relationships can be formed both within and outside the organization. When the protégé chooses a mentor within his/her current organization, it is known as internal informal mentoring

(Ragins 1989), for example, a middle manager reaching out to a senior manager within the same organization for mentoring support. When the protégé chooses a mentor outside their organization for career and professional development purposes, it is known as external informal mentoring, for example, a middle manager reaching out to a senior manager in another organization for mentoring support.

Protégé Career Levels and Informal Mentoring

According to Kram (1980), research on mentorship involving individuals at various ages and career stages is needed to provide insights into the quality and importance of mentorship relationships during these periods. The timing of a mentoring relationship must suit the career stages of mentor and protégé. We will review the various stages and the role of informal mentoring.

Early career/entry level: Entry level resources (0–2 years) are new to corporate environments and the primary goal for employees at the early stage is to learn the job, gain mastery and build relationships with others, and thus become aligned to the organization more quickly. During this initial phase of career, the resources spend time getting to know practices, policies, processes and other socialization techniques, in addition to job-related expertise. There are formal organizational attempts to help a newcomer be a productive insider (Feldman 1981; Katz 1985), and formal mentoring could be one method.

However, in the absence of formal programmes, the default socialization mechanism is the informal social organization (Katz 1985), and thus informal mentoring may be one of the processes by which newcomers seek out social support and help from others (Feldman and Brett 1983). Such informal mentoring can be both within and outside the organization. For example, in spite of formal mentors being available in organizations, it is common for newcomers to reach out to external informal mentors, like their teachers or alumni outside the organization, or alumni within the organization for mentoring support.

Mid career/middle level: Those in middle-level careers have spent some time in organizations (approximately six years and more) and know

about the general organizational structure, processes, leadership, culture and so on, and are aware of the goals pertaining to their career. Aspirations at this stage in the career are very different and the aim is often to take on additional responsibilities and roles. It is during this phase that there are several challenges employees face with regard to dealing with challenging assignments, compelling personal priorities, professional predicaments, role uncertainty and so on (Levinson et al. 1978). While these are issues that do come up at all career stages, such aspects are more generally seen during the growth stage of a career. There is a need for continuous guidance and support to balance multiple priorities (Hall 1976), and hence the need for mentoring. Informal mentoring is one of the best ways to tackle issues at this career stage and it opens avenues for an individual to analyze responsibilities, unlearn and learn new dimensions related to the role and thus prepare for the next stage. The resources may reach out to external mentors for support but the internal mentors are in a better position to support the protégés and hence informal mentoring within the organization is best suited for middle-level resources.

Late career/leadership level: Late career or leadership roles are those pertaining to the higher echelons of the organization. These resources have a certainty about their careers (Gibson 2003) and a higher job satisfaction (Kacmar and Ferris 1989). There are several avenues for internal informal mentoring at this level; however, resources at this level try to opt for either internal informal mentoring or external informal mentoring or both. Again, the choice of informal mentoring depends on the individual and the need for mentoring. The requirements of these individuals are very specific and their goals are proximal, say, retaining current role, preparing for retirement or advancing their reputation (Gibson 2003). Thus, during the late career stage protégés often choose mentors pertaining to those specific career goals or skills to be learnt.

Antecedents of Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring requires the right ecosystem for ensuring success. This would mean that the protégés should have access to all the resources available for mentoring and be able to reach out to mentors

seeking support. Below is an elaboration of two firm-level antecedents, namely, organizational culture and nature of relationship within the organization, and also one individual-level antecedent, namely, the mentor's personality.

1. Organizational Attributes as an Antecedent to Informal Mentoring

Organizational culture and attributes pertaining to the culture facilitate informal mentoring. 'Organizational culture refers to the collective values, assumptions, expectations, and beliefs of members of an organization or group' (Johnson 2009, p. 9). According to Cameron and Quinn (1999) Clan, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy are four organizational culture types as per the Common Value Framework and each culture has a different focus (Cameron and Quinn 2006). The underlying attributes in clan culture include an atmosphere of collectivity and mutual help, flexibility, discretion, teamwork, partnership and shared values, and common goals. Considering the characteristics of the informal mentoring process, one can safely assume that the context conducive to informal mentoring is similar to that of clan culture. Some important attributes of such a culture are:

Openness—Transparency and openness in organizations provide the right ecosystem to build informal mentoring relationships for protégés. 'Informal mentoring relationships are developed spontaneously, without organizational assistance' (Ragins 1989) and hence organizations that practice openness and collaboration as part of the core culture facilitate informal mentoring. For example, as part of early career academies, organizations assign mentors to individuals; however, protégés could reach out to anyone for mentoring support, as and when required, based on their skill needs or areas of expertise if there is openness and transparency in the organization.

Empowerment of employees—Organizations that advocate employees' empowerment promote informal mentoring. Empowerment of employees in the work environment can be conceptualized as a motivational construct and the basic idea behind this is that employees feel energized (Thomas and Velthouse 1990) when they perceive themselves to have power, control and autonomy. Motivational empowerment leads to increased self-efficacy (Bandura 1997) and choices (Thomas

and Velthouse 1990) that people make about their careers and enables individuals to reach out to mentors of their choice. Another aspect of empowerment is the ability to network in the organization and have multiple mentors.

Organizational role expectation—When there are prescribed expectations for promotion the protégé expects to locate mentors pertaining to specific areas and gain the required expertise. According to Kram (1980), hierarchical structures and promotional systems affect mentorship within the organization. For example, in the case of progressing in a technical career track, individuals are expected to fulfil certain criteria pertaining to future technical roles such as filing patents, publishing papers, presenting at conferences, skills development in multiple technologies, and so on. Such diverse role expectations, normally outside the scope of the current role forces employees to look out for specific mentors who can guide them and achieve the goals in those specific areas.

2. Relationships as Antecedents to Informal Mentoring

Mentoring is all about the relationship between a mentor and protégé. According to Santamaria (2003), mentoring is a one-to-one relationship in which an expert or a senior person voluntarily gives time to teach, support and encourage another. Informal mentoring therefore emerges from different types of relationship between two individuals and mentors act as a friend, career guide, information source and intellectual guide. According to Bell (2000, p. 2), ‘All mentors are not supervisors or managers. But all effective supervisors and managers should be mentors. Mentoring must become that part of every leader’s role that has growth as its primary component.’ Further, most research on mentoring in the past has not identified the origins of mentoring relationships (Wanberg et al. 2003). We review some relationships that act as antecedents to protégé-initiated mentoring.

Extension of friendship—Informal mentoring develops as an extension of friendship between two employees, generally a senior and a junior. There are instances where employees can connect with seniors at a personal level in organizations that promote open communication and opportunities to network through town halls, networking socials, team dinners, conferences, and so on. Employees make use of this environment to develop personal connections and eventually progress to

informal mentoring. One of the reasons for these types of relationships may be attributed to the similarity–attraction paradigm (Byrne and Griffitt 1973) where individuals with similar attitudes, personality and behaviours tend to get attracted and there is a perceived reward for sharing the similarities.

Extension of manager–subordinate relationship—Mentoring becomes an expectation in any manager–subordinate relationship, and this is formal in nature as this is a managerial responsibility (Bell 2000). However, there are managers who take an extra interest in their employees' welfare and development and tend to spend more time in coaching and developing them and these efforts are more informal and need based. Further, there are instances where the manager or subordinate tend to continue the informal mentoring after having moved to other teams or roles. These relationships are based on protégé preferences for continuity in the mentoring process as the benefits of mentoring extend beyond the duration of the relationship (Kram 1985) and advantages of being mentored continue over time (Chao 1997).

Extensions of membership of special task force—Organizations have 'stretch projects' with opportunities for collaboration of resources from different teams. This is an opportunity for protégés to interact with experts in specific areas and when the project is completed these professional relationships evolve into informal mentoring. However, such informal mentoring relationships evolve over a period of time where the relationships begin with an initiation phase during which few mentoring functions are provided, progress to more active phases where more mentoring functions are given, and end in a redefinition phase where fewer mentoring functions are offered (Wanberg et al. 2003).

3. Mentor Attributes as Antecedents

Prior researches on mentors' attributes have examined the characteristics protégés look for in mentors (ibid.). Not all managers or leaders can be mentors and there are several discussions both backing and critiquing the relevance of personality traits as mentor attributes. However, in a broader context, some scholars suggest that individuals who are confident about themselves and care about others tend to venture to become mentors, and it is in this context that the mentors' personality remains an important variable (Allen 2003; Mullen 1998).

Personality attributes: The five-factor model of personality is used in most studies to describe human personality (Digman 1990; Goldberg 1990). These five factors are neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Out of these five, neuroticism displays characteristics such as anxiety, focusing on self, hostility and self-confidence that make the individuals less attractive as mentors. Whereas, the other four personality attributes are more positive in nature and individuals possessing these attributes tend to stand out as mentors for an organization's protégés. Bozionelos (2004) and Wanberg et al. (2003) posit that individuals with less negative affectivity, greater extraversion, higher self-monitoring, Type-A personality and greater self-esteem were more likely to report performing behaviours that lead to mentoring relationships.

Extraversion—Some of the qualities in extraversion that are considered in the context of informal mentoring are spontaneity, sociability, energy and assertiveness. The real core of extraversion is the tendency to behave in ways that attract social attention (Ashton et al. 2002). Extravert leaders stand out as mentors because of their social skills and organizations that are favourable for collaboration bring about the best in such leaders, which makes them easily accessible for protégés.

Openness—According to Costa and McCrae (1992), the five dimensions of openness are active imagination (fantasy), aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety and intellectual curiosity. Leaders who possess these qualities are interested in the ideas and views of subordinates, thus making them attractive as potential mentors in organizations.

Agreeableness—Care, concern, kindness, dependability or being cooperative are some of the characteristics encompassed in agreeableness. Agreeable leaders are interested in the development of people who are less experienced. Further, they are confident of their capabilities and strengths and less worried about any consequences that may arrive out of sharing their expertise with others and hence are more likely to become mentors.

Conscientiousness—Conscientiousness encompasses behaviours like carefulness, thoroughness and deliberation (Thompson 2008). Conscientious individuals who are sincere and trustworthy are prone to advising and developing those with less experience. These qualities make conscientious individuals easily approachable by protégés for mentoring.

Qualitative Study

Based on the literature review, a qualitative study was conducted among individuals from organizations in India to assess the factors that lead to choosing mentors and the outcomes of such informal mentoring relationships. The two companies chosen were information technology multinational corporations operating in India with an employee strength of over 3000, where the workforce divided into three categories: early careers, middle management and late careers. These companies encouraged employees to collaborate and to choose their own mentors. For the purpose of this study, the sample selected was from the leadership population, where these individuals had grown up the career ranks within the same organization and had different informal mentors at different stages in their career. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted among six employees from these organizations. The interviews taken were transcribed and then coded for further analysis.

The various themes that emerged from the study were:

1. Formation/Evolution of Informal Mentoring Relationships

- 'Never looked out for one'
- 'It happened naturally with leaders or peers you work with'
- 'Someone I trust and have respect for'
- 'I feel I have something to learn from them based on what they are doing today, their experience'
- 'Referred by a trusted source'
- 'Someone who has similar background but has accomplished a lot in career'
- 'Observed people I knew who had followed a similar path'
- 'Initially there is no big agenda'

Informal mentoring takes place in a variety of ways. Some of the protégés who had informal mentors did not really look out for one but mentoring relationships happened naturally based on interactions, advice, insights, guidance or specific experiences with mentors. This finding can be connected with the theoretical foundation of social learning theory (Zagumny, 1993) and Western literature on informal mentoring, in

which a relationship occurs between two people and one gains ‘insight, knowledge, wisdom, friendship, and support from the other’ (Inzer and Crawford 2005, p. 35). Sometimes, if there are specific career goals in mind, protégés observed people who had followed a similar path and reached out to individuals based on their style of response or personal experience. Further, as much as it happens naturally, there could also be instances where informal mentors are formed instantaneously. For example, you have a challenging meeting or working on large projects where there is less familiarity and you may ask someone who is also engaged in it in some format for their feedback after the meeting or the whole session because you like their style and approach and feel that there is lot of value you can personally gain from the feedback. The evolution of such mentoring relationships thus starts with observing people, setting up personal time with them and getting to know them on a personal level and then build on the relationship. Initially there is no big agenda, though there is a time commitment expected from the mentor, the relationships and agendas evolve over time. For an informal mentoring relationship to be effective, it requires both parties to have an honest and open dialogue, which works best when there is genuine interest, investment and a strong personal relationship between two people.

2. Reasons for Protégé Initiated Informal Mentoring

- ‘There was peer pressure to do exceedingly well in the job’
- ‘Set up a very lofty goal for self’
- ‘Needed opinions for choices made and be doubly sure that they were the right choices’
- ‘Was at a career juncture where certain decisions had to be taken and hence needed guidance’
- ‘Felt there were gaps in leadership skills, technical skills and overall grooming for career progression’
- ‘Specific need for career progression that prompted to search for one’
- ‘To get an external perspective of career’
- ‘No one is perfect, everyone needs mentoring’
- ‘When you are required to initiate ideas from scratch’

Everyone needs mentoring of some kind at different stages, in both personal and professional roles (Chao et al. 1992). Allowing others to share their experiences and finding guidance and inspiration is important in every area of life, and careers are no different. Some of the situations are generic and related to overall career and professional development, whereas others are specific to certain personal or career situations. In generic situations, protégés benefit from mentorship as it provides an external perspective on the career and learning from others can help remove barriers and allow protégés to navigate challenging situations faster and more effectively (Hunt and Michael 1983; Kram 1985). At specific career junctures or in situations that arise out of day-to-day business or dealing with specific career issues, there are benefits that protégés derive from informal mentoring and hence there is a reason for initiating such relationships. Further, from an organizational perspective, when the role expectations of employees is to ‘create versus replicate’ and there is a need to generate new ideas and sell it to others, protégés reach out to certain individuals who are considered as mentors for validation and assess if they are on the right track. However, irrespective of the time one allocates to informal mentoring or the reason for initiating mentoring relationships, it is the openness to learn and ability to take in and ‘digest’ inputs that make the difference to the protégé.

3. Why Protégés Choose Specific Mentors

- ‘Different perspective shared during discussions made me respect the individual a lot’
- ‘The influence the individual had on me while working together’
- ‘Their super dedication to the job’
- ‘The depth of subject matter expertise’
- ‘Admiration for certain qualities’
- ‘Proactive and overly eager to offer mentoring support’
- ‘Needed more validation on topics that were unfamiliar or had no expertise’

From a protégé’s perspective there are specific individuals who are valued, trusted, respected and admired for their accomplishments or for their ability to use certain skills. These mentors may be observed in the

workplace for the way they interact and to ensure that they are well respected among peers and leaders. It is also important to make sure that the mentors enjoy mentoring and can provide time, feedback and have the ability to invest in the protégé's growth and development. Choosing mentors outside the direct team is another consideration, so that there are no concerns that their personal needs would override their career feedback and advice to the protégé. The number of informal mentors a protégé may have may range from one to a handful, each one with a different strength that one has to learn from; for example, there may be some who can multitask amazingly well and so you might try to learn from them, or someone else who is an excellent negotiator with a calm approach who offers the outcome they feel they need. Protégés look for mentors who provide valuable feedback, encourage questioning the obvious and impart knowledge in terms of business perspectives. The value derived from conversation and interaction with mentors makes protégés realize the influence of mentors and align to career outcomes faster, for example, you might be waiting for that silver bullet and might be questioning the first principles for building your own models, powerful mentors capitalize on these opportunities by challenging the protégés and making them rethink their model.

4. Outcomes of Protégé Initiated Informal Mentoring

- 'Able to push harder to achieve career goals'
- 'Convictions on decisions and choices that were made'
- 'There was a higher focus on self-development compared to the organization prescribed outcomes'
- 'Building self-confidence'
- 'Managing teams well'
- 'Developing interpersonal skills'
- 'It is always a work in process'
- 'Risk-taking abilities are increased'

Informal mentoring is highly effective as it brings about a lot of transformation in the individual. The learning from mentoring relationships provides inputs to protégés and helps in dealing with day-to-day

business operations or driving strategic outcomes. Most of the time it is a continuous process, where some of the inputs received from mentors are adopted and implemented immediately, some may be tough to accept immediately but the protégé can consciously remember to use the same during specific situations that demand those skills, some may be so different that they do not align with the protégé completely or are not authentic, or some inputs may still be in the processing phase and the protégé is yet to determine what is the right one to integrate in their practices or skills. From an organization's perspective, such mentoring relationships help individuals to operate businesses effectively, negotiate conversations, collaborate well and complete work faster. On the whole, when someone makes such a significant investment in another, it creates relationships and networks that survive time, roles and life changes.

Discussion

Informal mentoring is preferred by protégés as it is more natural and less structured (Chao et al. 1992). The feedback and connections with the mentors in this model is in real time, providing timely emotional and psychosocial support to protégés in addition to career-related guidance. While organizations benefit because of the overall improvement in the population, the highest impact is on the individual and it is a self-designed process, such that you choose who you want to get support from, then reach out and engage in relationships to suit your individual career needs, aspirations and personal development. In return to the benefits that protégés receive from the mentor, the protégés are also willing to offer help to mentors, such as reverse mentoring, supporting special initiatives that are driven by the mentor, providing information about the protégé's business and work, thus enriching the mentor's business literacy. An interesting theme that emerged from this study is that tenured employees, that is, those who were experienced in their career and had spent more than ten years in their job had a higher interest in informal mentoring. These employees grew up the career ranks within the same organization and for them access to career/business information, guidance and awareness of external perspectives became a necessity

and hence association with mentors proved to be helpful in navigating their various career junctures and business challenges. The organizational commitment of such protégés appeared to be high and they seemed to appreciate leadership depth in organizations. They also preferred informal to formal mentoring and these findings are in line with those in Ragins et al. (2000) and Raabe and Beeher (2003).

Organization culture and attributes of openness, open-door policies of leaders and collaboration were factors that helped protégés to choose mentors. Organizations which are hierarchical and bureaucratic restrict the access of employees to reach out to those higher up and this becomes a hindrance for informal mentoring. Even though there could be formal mentoring programmes, organizational culture could impact the benefits protégés receive as part of informal mentoring outcomes. This points to the fact that it is the organization's culture that drives informal mentoring and there is little influence on the culture of the region and hence the findings are similar to previous studies on the impact of an organization's culture on mentoring relationships (Bozionelos 2004).

The protégé's perspective of mentoring is another takeaway from the study and it is evident that protégés prefer flexible and less structured relationships for mentoring and informal mentoring becomes the best choice in this context. Had such relationships been structured, the conversations and relationships may be forced and the protégés end up not covering the true topics of value because of worries related to respecting the mentor's time and overthinking the topics. Another dimension to the protégé's perspective is the achievement orientation or developmental needs of protégés that prompt them to choose mentors of different types. Business acumen, crisis management, decision making, career discussions and so on, are all very different and experts in each of these areas make mentoring outcomes successful for protégés, and informal mentoring that offers this choice becomes attractive to protégés with different levels of developmental needs and achievement orientation.

The gender of the mentor and the influence of the same on mentoring is an aspect that is generally covered in mentoring studies. In this specific study, the influence of gender was not significant as choice of mentor was based on the protégé's professional needs and gender similarity or cross-gender impact did not emerge. In previous studies on

gender and mentoring by Young et al. (2006) and Olian et al. (1988), career interests, work habits and communication behaviours played prominent roles in protégé driven mentoring and there was no impact of the gender of the mentor.

Being a protégé-initiated process aimed at self-development of the individual, it is found that the impact of such informal mentoring relationships is higher on individuals than on organizations. However, organizations benefit from such relationships as there is greater efficiency in output and better collaboration and communication between teams and individuals. Building up leadership capability in organizations without any organizational or process interference is another benefit from this approach. In addition to the protégé's development, the mentor also benefits from this relationship as their leadership skills and overall approach to coaching and people development improve.

This chapter makes a contribution to the literature on informal mentoring that is protégé initiated in organizations that allow individuals make their own choice of mentor based on their career requirements. There are different benefits that protégé, mentor and organization derive from these relationships. While all these themes were supported by extant literature, there are other themes like long-term relationships, organizational culture, protégé goal setting and impact of tenure on mentoring and organizational commitment that have emerged.

Being a study conducted in the Indian context, compared to previous ones conducted in different parts of the world, there is an emphasis on the organization's culture as an antecedent to protégé-initiated informal mentoring and the findings are on similar lines to previous studies in other locations. One of the important aspects that require attention here is that the region in which the organization is located did not have an impact, rather it is dominant climate in the organization that led to the formation of informal mentoring relationships.

Thus, this study suggests that organization culture mitigates the effect of the high power distance equation (Hofstede 1983) in India, which in turn provides a ripe environment for informal mentoring relationships to flourish. Organizational culture is the set of complex values, beliefs, assumptions and symbols that define the way in which a firm conducts its business and how it interacts with the key actors, namely, employees,

customers, competitors and suppliers (Louis 1983). It can also be considered as a powerful force that explains how individuals and groups behave within an organization (Berger and Luckman 1967; Goffman 1959; Polanyi 1958) and a source of competitive advantage for the organization (Barney 1986). Organizational culture that has a high level of doing orientation and collectivism and a lower power distance provides greater empowerment (Sigler and Pearson 2000) to employees, which enable them to choose their own mentor and thus build up their career strategies. It would be prudent for more longitudinal studies to be conducted to see if this finding is further supported.

There are some limitations acknowledged in this study. First, the qualitative responses of the small sample size of six might not be a true representation of the topic under consideration. Second, there could be a self-selection bias where the choice of respondents in the study could be the ones who have benefitted from informal mentoring. Thirdly, mentoring being a well-researched topic, the incremental value in the study is only the protégé-initiated perspective in a high power distance region. While this is a limitation, it is one of the most important factors that makes this study relevant.

Future research in this area needs to be conducted on organizations which are possibly more hierarchical than the ones selected for this study.

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5

Venture Capitalist Enabled Entrepreneurial Mentoring: An Exploratory Study

Anirudh Agrawal

Introduction: Role of Mentoring in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Entrepreneurial mentoring is normally driven by a close network of entrepreneurs (Eisenhardt 1989a; Katre and Salipante 2012; Peterson and Behfar 2003). Like individual mentoring, entrepreneurial mentoring is essential as the entrepreneur is alone in the process of entrepreneurship and faces many challenges. Mentoring alleviates these many challenges and improves the firm performance (McCarthy 2014). Entrepreneurial mentoring is an evolving field which is driven largely by the proactive role of investors in startup enterprises. Entrepreneurial mentoring involves many activities such as investing, promoting and consulting the investee firm. This chapter looks at the mentoring relationship between the investor and the investee enterprise. Consequently, it develops a case for academic inquiry into mentorship at the inter-organizational level.

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Entrepreneurs value mentoring because it helps them correct errors and find their way in the lonely journey of entrepreneurship. In order to manage complexities arising from dynamic markets, uncertainties faced while hiring employees, problems with employee motivation and entrepreneurial confidence during formulating and executing strategies, the entrepreneurs in startup organizations need constant mentoring and feedback. Normally they seek advice and mentoring from their close circle of family members, executive coaches, co-founders, employees, community leaders, early consumers, and other entrepreneurs in the same industry (Eisenhardt 1989a; Katre and Salipante 2012; Peterson and Behfar 2003).

This chapter studies three cases of venture capital firms with different investor motivations. Further, by studying the antecedents, the study makes inferences on the drivers of entrepreneurial mentoring. Further, the study explores the venture capitalist (VC) enabled entrepreneurial mentoring and makes inferences. The study engages in cross-case comparisons between the different cases and between the investee enterprise performance and the antecedents and motivations of VCs. The study also looks at some of the factors that influence the degree and quality of mentoring between investor and investee.

Literature Review

At the individual level, traditionally, the relationship between mentor and mentee is complex, where factors such as age difference, experience difference, seniority and the type of tie between the two moderate the relationship (Higgins and Kram 2001). Common skills found among mentors at the individual level are listening, questioning, goal setting and following-up on progress. The outcomes when the mentoring process is at the individual and intra-organizational levels are measured based on the self-awareness created, efficiency in daily output and achievement of career goals (McCarthy 2014). However at the inter-organizational level, particularly within the Within venture capital and investee relationships at the inter-organizational level, the mentoring is required and it has a measurable impact. However, it is complicated by factors like the experience of the investor, the market dynamics, the commitment of the investee team.

This study explores mentorship at the inter-organizational level, extrapolates the idea of mentorship at the individual level into the inter-organizational level and studies for interesting trends within antecedents, mentoring actions, outcomes and moderators.

Context of Mentoring in India

In developed markets, the practice of community driven entrepreneurial mentoring is very common. The Deshpande Center at MIT have dedicated in-house entrepreneurs and investors who work with startup entrepreneurs and mentor them, giving ideas a proper shape, structure and organizational identity. In the process they have helped startups in MIT to engage with potential consumers, investors and employees. However, in emerging markets like India the entrepreneurial ecosystem is very nascent. The successful high valuation and later devaluation of e-commerce firms such as the Makemytrip and the Flipkart in a short span have raised questions on the role of venture capital driven entrepreneurship in India. Building on it, this chapter emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the investor and the investee organizations.

Traditionally in India, the mentor is usually the senior employee with many years of experience within the Indian organization (Piramal 2000). In recent times, there are many different mediums for accessing information and the mentee seeks mentoring from a constellation of individuals, moderating the type of relationship between investor and investee (mentee) (Chandler et al. 2011). In the context of a growing Indian economy, diffusion of newer business models, new markets and large FDI liquidity, the firms and the investors are always on the lookout for entrepreneurs and nascent firms to invest in and grow. In the entrepreneurship context, the supply side of finance is very promising but not all the capital gets converted into promising market value. From pure capital to market value interests, the mentoring relationship between the investor and the investee at the inter-organizational level is as important as that between the mentor and the mentee at the individual level.

Research Gap and Research Question

At the organizational level, the activity of mentoring is limited to organizational change, organizational redesign and culture (Higgins and Kram 2001). In the recently published review on mentoring by Chandler et al. (2011) write about the evolution of mentoring from an individual level within organizational employee motivation to inter-organizational and firm ecological level. The review cites the research gap that is seen between the research on mentoring and the practice of mentoring, particularly at the inter-organizational level. “In order to understand the phenomenon of mentoring, it is not enough just to describe related variables or processes; we must take into account systemic relationships and how processes and variables interact” (Chandler et al. 2011). This study addresses this research gap using three cases of venture capital firms from India and a comparative case study method. The study extends the practice of mentoring from individual and intra-organizational levels to inter-organizational level.

Many studies on venture capital and startups are limited to: (a) the value created through the entrepreneurial process post VC investment; (b) VC performance; (c) VC driven startup performance. But they all offer very little insight into how the relationship between the two moderates the entrepreneurial value production. This chapter **explores** the mentoring between investor and investee by analyzing three cases of investor–investee relations. From the data and based on the broad qualitative study, the chapter develops a venture capital enabled entrepreneurial mentoring model.

Method

The understanding of entrepreneurial mentoring and in particular its practice in emerging economies like India is not understood sufficiently. Given the sudden growth of VC funds investing in the Indian startup ecosystem and the sudden devaluation of many mythical startups, such as Jabong and Flipkart, one needs to scientifically understand the role of

VC based investments in nurturing startups into complete sustainable organizational entities. To answer this question, the study believes that a comparative case study approach is ideal to address this research gap.

The study uses a comparative multiple case study approach as this method closely links empirical observations with existing theories. Moreover, this approach is useful to reduce researcher bias and to increase the chance of building empirically valid theories (Eisenhardt 1989b; Suddaby 2006). The approach also allows for a systematic analysis of complex causal links in consideration of numerous different factors (Yin 1994). Another advantage of the multiple case study approach is to reveal differences and similarities among the cases and to bring the findings into the broader picture (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Hockerts 2010). Entrepreneurial mentoring is a nascent field, using comparative case studies, the chapter unravels the complexities surrounding this emerging practice of entrepreneurial mentoring.

Data Collection

To develop a framework of entrepreneurial mentoring between the venture capital and investee enterprise, the chapter analyzed three heterogeneous cases of investors (Aavishkaar Fund, Villgro Investment and Able Partners) operating in India for which enough secondary data existed. The study interviewed the partners of these firms to understand their mentoring strategies and broadly classify the antecedents and processes and the possible causal links between them. The study acknowledges that there is threat of a selection bias and followed the principle that the cases were chosen for theoretical and not for statistical reasons and to increase the diversity of the data studied while replicating selected elements as closely as possible. The cases represent different investment contexts and solutions (pure venture capital focused on disruptive market innovation, pure impact investment focused on scalable social innovation and pure social and technological incubator focused on scalable social innovations) within India. The case data is based on publicly available data sources, such as websites, interviews, newspaper

publications, academic articles, annual reports and interviews with their top management partners.

Data Analysis

The data analysis used methods common to qualitative method, inductive multiple case research studies (Eisenhardt 1989b; Eisenhardt 2013; Yin 1994). First, conduct a within-case analysis by contextualizing the cases from the mentoring perspective. Second, use the data generated by the within-case analysis to conduct cross-case studies. Using both the data from within-case studies and from the cross-case analysis, develop a model of mentoring at the inter-organizational level.

Within-Case Data Analysis

The following section presents the different cases used for exploring mentoring at the inter-organizational level. The chapter uses three cases of different venture capital firms, Aavishkaar Fund, Villgro Innovations and Able Partners.

Aavishkaar Fund

Vineet Rai founded Aavishkaar Fund in 2001 after completing his studies at XLRI India. The primary motivation of the fund was to invest in social enterprises and give them direction, business networks and business mentoring to make them competitive in traditional markets. The philosophy was further inspired by the vision to help create disruptive social change in distressed and poor geographies of India. Aavishkaar gained social and public legitimacy after successful exits. Aavishkaar Fund was one of the first social funds to achieve investment exits of the order of 10X. At the time, earning 10X from social investment was rare and the success of Aavishkaar validated the theory that the poor and distressed markets may also yield high returns on investment in

addition to creating disruptive social change if due diligence and mentoring are conducted properly.

- **Investing Philosophy:** Aavishkaar Fund investment philosophy is primarily driven by three objectives. First, to invest in enterprises that operate in difficult, remote and poor markets where the risks of market and organizational breakdowns are very high. Second, to give social and political legitimacy to their investors, hence their investments. And finally, develop investee social enterprises to the level where they can operate and compete with established firms in the given segment and product lines.
- **Mentoring Style:** Aavishkaar Fund is a fairly large investment fund with multiple funds investing in multiple sectors, from micro-finance to water and renewable energy. The most common mentoring strategies are business skills and sharing of standard business managerial templates, legal and corporate mentoring and exercising control using position of power obtained from board position and share-holdings. In addition, the legitimacy of both Aavishkaar Fund and investee organization is integrated with the social impact created. To observe and measure the real social impact, Aavishkaar Fund engages with its investees in developing standardized impact measures that can be replicated and measured by third-party observers. This further creates a unique mentoring relationship between investor and investees.

Villgro Innovations

Paul Basil co-founded Villgro Innovations in 2001 within the campus of IIT Madras. The mission of Villgro Innovations is to incubate, mentor and scale innovation intensive social enterprises. IIT Madras is India's premier technical institute which inspires engineers to develop innovations that serve the country. Villgro Innovations apply the same spirit by finding and nurturing social entrepreneurial innovations.

- **Investing Philosophy:** Villgro Innovations was founded on the core principle of promoting, scaling and sustaining innovation intensive social enterprises in order to create large-scale replicable social impact. The selection and investing philosophies are guided by the founding principles. They invest in enterprises that have a clear and unique innovation addressing social problems in society. Secondly, they invest in organizations with a clear sales strategy and income earning potential and, finally, the potential to create long-lasting social impact.
- **Mentoring Style:** Villgro Innovations are truly entrepreneurial ecosystem builders in India. Their mentors are not traditional investors but professionals with significant years of experience in the industry. They are motivated by a sense of giving back and community building. Their mentorship programs are some of the best in the world. The mentors engage very closely with the investee and incubate enterprises, share their networks and act as promoters.

Able Partners

Sangram Singh is a serial entrepreneur who founded Able Partners in 2012 in Chandigarh. Able Partners, at the time of its founding, was inspired by the e-commerce startup growth market and democratization of the Internet in India. The founder investment style is based on investing in ideas founded by friends and close networks.

- **Investing Philosophy:** The philosophy of the firm was to invest in niche ideas that would disrupt existing business models and create new business models within traditional industries like law firms, real-estate, consulting and manufacturing. The investment is driven not by the existing earning capacity but by the ability to disrupt the business models of traditional industries.
- **Mentoring Style:** The mentoring is based on multiple goals (i.e., organizational and financial). The focus of their organizational level mentoring is developing the IT structures, sales structures, client acquisition methods and hiring. Another mentoring is access to

equity financing and debt financing, based on the availability of the capital and ability of the firm to manage and create value from the capital invested. The investee mentoring by the firm is moderated by both the degree of friendship and equity in the investee enterprise. The mentor firm seeks specific equity in return for process development, organizational development, installing a sales force and further series of investments. Able Partners is very agile at leveraging social networks developed during the university years of the founder. The founder is also active in developing the startup ecosystem in the Chandigarh area of India.

Cross-Case Analysis

Using data from **within-case analysis** and conducting comparative studies of the cases, Table 5.1 summarizes the findings of the cross-case studies.

(See Table 5.1 Cross-case summary of the within-case data)

In the comparative studies, the analysis primarily relies on the premise that antecedents influence mentoring style, while mentoring and mentoring outcomes are moderated by certain contingent factors.

Antecedents

At the inter-organizational level the ownership, experience, investor motivations, and mission and values of the investor firms primarily drive the mentoring processes.

- **Mission and Value:** From the analysis one can infer that investing funds' mission and values greatly influence the mentoring style. In the case of Villgro Innovations, the philosophy is to create large-scale impact using unique innovation. While, in the case of Able Partners, the mission is the create large-scale economic value by investing in unique business models.

Table 5.1 Cross-case summary of the within-case data

Antecedents	Aavishkaar fund	Villgro innovations	Able partners
Mission and value	To support and fund enterprises that have the potential to create large-scale social impact and which operate in difficult market conditions	To mentor, incubate social enterprises which use unique innovations to create large-scale social impact	To mentor and fund enterprises that use unique innovation to disrupt market transactions and create value
Investors	Foundations and developmental banks	Foundations and developmental banks, GOI agencies	Traditional venture capital
Experience	Market leader in social entrepreneurial investing	Market leader in incubating disrupting organizations	Market disruptor in finding and nurturing organizations with unique business models
Mentoring methods			
Business networks	Strong use of the network to source and support investee organizations	Strong use of the network to mentor and scale investee organizations	Strong use of network to fund investee organizations
Sector-specific mentoring	In-house sector-specific experts	Professionals with many years of experience as mentors, mostly volunteers	Individual mentoring using specific business skills
Entrepreneurs as investors	Group of in-house employees, experts select and invest	Group of experts, mentors and entrepreneurs select and invest	Serial entrepreneur as investor
Frequency of engagement	Low to medium	Very high	High
Sales strategy	Not much expertise on sales and marketing	Emphasis on sales and marketing	Very high focus on sales and marketing

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Outcomes	Aavishkaar fund	Villgro innovations	Able partners
Profitable exits	Emphasis on exits	Emphasis on scaling, disrupting and creating large-scale impact	Emphasis on growing and exits
Further funding and better valuations	Yes	Yes	Yes
Scaling	Yes	Yes	Yes
Moderators			
Entrepreneurial motivation	Complete fund take-over in case the entrepreneur loses motivation	Enterprises lose out in cases where the entrepreneur loses motivation	Enterprises lose out in cases where the entrepreneur loses motivation
Institutional and market contingencies	Highly dependent and professional planning for contingency	Highly dependent	Highly dependent
Investor investee personal relationship	Not related	High	Very High

- **Investor Motivation:** The investor motivations and the mission-value statements are aligned. In cases such as Able Partners, where investor motivations are driven by the market logic, their mentoring is driven by the motivation of creating economic value for themselves. Consequently, this type of mentoring engagement only focus on investee exits and/or investee valuations. While, in the case of Villgro, the mentoring is actually focused on delivering unique socially relevant solutions and medium-scale sustainable enterprises. These different motivations directly impact the kind of mentoring one gets and the overall investee outcomes.
- **Ownership:** The higher the investee firm ownership, the higher the mentoring engagement, sharing of business networks and higher engagement. On the other hand, higher investor ownership results in the demotivation of the investee entrepreneur. So, the investor mentoring motivation is highly influenced by the ownership of the firm, while entrepreneur motivation to drive the firm reduces considerably as he loses his ownership to investors.
- **Experience:** In the case of Villgro Innovations, the mentors are experienced professionals who are motivated by the commitment to serve the community of startups to advise incubatee and investee firms. While, in the case of Aavishkaar Fund, the mentors are investors who are top school MBA graduates with very little risk-taking experience. In the case of Able Partners, the **entrepreneurial experience of the investor** influences the quality of the mentoring.

Mentoring Methods

Mentoring methods primarily involve the sharing of business networks, sector-specific mentoring and knowledge sharing, engagement at board level and decision level, and mentoring for improving operational strategies.

- **Business Networks:** All the investors introduce their investees to their business networks. From the data one can infer that promoting investee firms within and outside their business networks is an

integral part of the investor firm. Typically, investor firm's source investees through their business networks and also sell their shares to potential investors using their business networks. In addition, business networks provide information for potential markets and platforms for promotion of the goods and services. A great network also ensures great valuations and higher multiple exits. In case the investor network is poor, the probability of good exits or higher valuation is diminished. In the study, all the three VC firms had good networks; however Able Partners was limited in size and scope by its focus on the founder's personal network.

- **Sector-specific Mentoring:** The Aavishkaar Fund has created verticals like micro-finance and micro-insurance, renewable energy and food and agriculture. The professionals manage these verticals, who invest time and energy in developing the sector-specific business knowledge and networks. They use the same mentoring as their investee firms. On the other hand, Able Partners invests only in online business models and firms that use online media to disrupt local markets.
- **Frequency of Mentor Engagement:** Mentoring time and frequency of mentoring directly impact the outcome of mentoring. While the frequency of mentor engagement may not be the right measure of quality of mentoring, yet, studies have shown that frequency of mentor engagement at the individual level greatly influences the overall expected outcome. In the case of Villgro Innovations, the frequency and quality of mentor engagement is high and consequently the results on the startups are good. On the other hand, within Aavishkaar Fund, the frequency of engagement is good but the quality of impact diminishes as the investor mentor lacks sector and entrepreneurial experience.
- **Operational Aspects (Sales, Hiring and Branding):** Most startup entrepreneurs struggle to get their first sales moving. Thus, typically, mentoring firms invest a large part of their time and engagement in improving the sales of the investee firms. From our discussion with the investee of Able Partners, the study found that the investor focused largely on operational aspects of sales and hiring.

Outcomes

Traditionally, one measures the success of mentorship programs at the individual level by measuring the change in the cognitive and behavioral outcomes pre and post mentorship programs. However, in the case of investor–investee mentorship programs, one measures the success by the ability of the investee firm to grow, sustain and create increased earnings and higher valuation.

- **Profitable Exits:** As VC firms are early stage investors, their process and investing logic calls for early exits or liquidation of shares to a better investor or private equity firm. Aavishkaar Fund received most of its market legitimacy by earning large multiples on their investment. On the other hand, Villgro Innovations focused more towards building organizations and addressing institutional voids, gaining ecosystem legitimacy. Mentoring relationships are highly influenced by the investor's strategy on profitability.
- **Further Funding and Valuation:** Depending on the investor's motivation for exits, the investor mentor firms accordingly prepare for the next round of investments. Able Partners has been successful in raising capital for very nascent firms leveraging his network, while Villgro Innovations has successfully mentored startups into medium size enterprises.
- **Scaling:** Theoretically, the large capital investment influences the size and growth of the firm. However, a good measure of scaling is the sustainability of the scaling (debt vs growth) and public and social perception of the organization over a period of time and scale. In the case of Aavishkaar Fund, the growth strategy is capital intensive investment and control using ownership rights and business level mentoring. While, in the case of Villgro Innovations, the scale strategy is to grow using organic means, entrepreneurial mentoring and organic market capture.

Moderators

The mentoring outcomes are moderated by certain contingent factors like entrepreneurial motivation and institutional and market contingencies.

- **Entrepreneurial Motivation:** The analysis found that the success of mentoring is moderated by the entrepreneurial motivation. In case the investee entrepreneurs lose their motivation to work post investment, than the investee organizations may not survive. Similarly, post investment, it is the work of the investor to create a mentoring ecosystem such that entrepreneurial motivations are very high.
- **Institutional and Market Contingencies:** The outcome of mentoring is largely dependent on institution and market contingencies. All three investors and their investees are strongly impacted by market and institutional contingencies. For example, the sudden change of online market places in India post the Government of India's e-commerce act, and the changed business models of e-commerce ventures impacted both investees and investors. On the other hand, the government prohibition of diesel engines encouraged enterprises in the sustainable market, which has created a unique space for funding and entrepreneurial innovation. Interestingly, institutional voids where both the markets and the government laws are absent are also entrepreneurial opportunities. Uniquely addressing these voids positively influences both investor and investee performance.

Development of Model and Discussion

Analysis of the case study material shows that there are a number of different constructs that influence mentoring processes. The antecedents of the investor directly influence the mentoring process and outcomes. The results of the mentoring processes are moderated by different contingent factors, such as entrepreneurial motivation and institutional and market contingencies.

Based on the analysis, the chapter presents a potential model of mentoring at the inter-organizational level (see Fig. 5.1). The model developed is unidirectional, where antecedents such as mission and value, investor motivation, firm ownership and experience greatly influence mentoring actions. Furthermore, the mentoring actions undertaking by

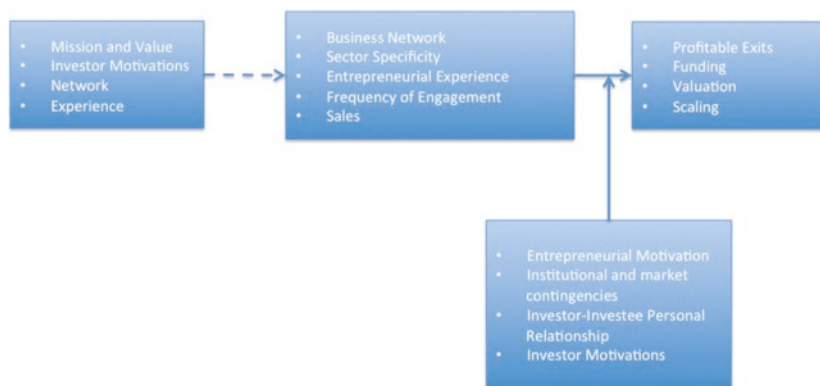


Fig. 5.1 Model of mentoring at the inter-organizational level

investors within the investor–investee relationship are sharing of business network, creating value by leveraging business and sector knowledge, by engagement at different levels of the enterprises (entrepreneur, business decision level and board strategy level) and finally in improving operational strategies.

The outcomes of mentoring are measured for both investors and investees. By successful investment, the investors received market legitimacy and thereby attracted more capital from their investors at better operating conditions. On the other hand, one measures investee performance on growth, scaling, high valuation, growth in revenues and better funding.

Finally, the mentoring actions and outcomes are moderated by institutional and market contingencies and entrepreneurial motivations. In the case of a supporting institutional and market environment, the entrepreneurial activities flourish; both the investor and investee start-ups are better off. The findings support the work on institutional conditions and entrepreneurial activity (Stenholm et al. 2013). However, what is unique to India is that even the lack of market and institutional support also transcends into market opportunities supporting the work on institutional voids (Mair and Marti 2009).

Conclusion: Filling the Gap

The most common practice of mentoring is at the individual level and at the intra-organizational level between organizations. The current study addresses the process and impact of mentoring at the inter-organizational level. This chapter contributes to the literature of mentoring by focusing on the practice of mentoring between organizations at the inter-organizational level. The chapter uses a collection of Indian VC-startup dyads as the case studies, thereby bringing the discussion around VC-startup antecedents, mentoring and results into the larger debate and hopefully into mainstream academia.

Most recent studies on venture capital firms and startups looked at the role of capital in growing the firm, population of startups, population of VC and correlating them with the markets, the startup success rates, entrepreneur antecedents and enterprise success. While, this chapter presents a new direction of research by arguing for studying the relationship between investor and investees and its impact on startup performance and VC fund performance. This chapter argues that the unique mentoring relationship between investor and investee is important for higher performance of both investor and investee.

The chapter is based in the Indian context where a high level of hand-holding by venture capital firms is common. The findings suggest that the high level of hand-holding does not really transform into high performance until investing firms actually provide quality networks, support in operations like hiring, sales and organizational development and, finally, provide entrepreneurial experience during advice and decision making. The traditional view of mentoring is that mentors are older with significant years of experience (Higgins and Kram 2001), while in the VC industry, particularly in the young economy of India, the mentors are young professionals with degrees from top US business schools. The mid-2016 news about the devaluation of Flipkart, Snapdeal and Zomato, which were the crown jewels of Indian startup stories during 2014, suggests that the youth of both the venture capitalists and the entrepreneurs may be the reason. Within the Indian context, the investor's social network highly influences the impact on mentoring and subsequent outcomes, agreeing with Chandler et al. (2011).

Future Research

The model developed in this chapter uses qualitative data sourced from both primary and secondary sources. The research calls for quantitative validation of the model using survey data. Further, by using cases from India its generalizability is limited. The study calls for further study using multiple sets of data from different countries and further validating the study. Furthermore, this chapter primarily relies on extant literature on mentoring and qualitative data limiting the development of enriching knowledge. Given the importance of mentoring at the inter-organizational level particularly among startups and investors, the study suggests further empirical studies and theorizing using exiting theories and templates.

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Author Biography

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6

What Makes an Effective Mentor: A Cross-Cultural (BRIC) Comparison

Lorianne D. Mitchell

Introduction

Mentoring is defined as a complex developmental and interpersonal relationship where personal support and career guidance are provided by a senior, more experienced organizational member to a junior, less experienced member (Kram 1985). The mentor may be several years older, a person of greater experience or seniority, and is usually regarded as a teacher, advisor, or sponsor. A proven effective tool in career development (Kram 1983; Kram and Isabella 1985), workplace mentoring offers benefits such as improved attitudes (e.g., organizational commitment) and career success (Allen et al. 2004) even when the mentor–protégé relationship is negative (Black et al. 2004; Kumar and Blake-Beard 2012).

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While most traditional mentoring research examines the process or characteristics of the mentor and the almost tautological conclusion that those who are mentored fare better than those who are not, a growing body of research explores the mentoring experience from the perspective of the protégés (c.f., Eby et al. 2000; Simon and Eby 2003). This is primarily why this chapter focuses on protégé perceptions of mentoring. Additionally, although the literature on mentoring is vast, comparatively little focuses on Southeast Asia and India specifically. Indeed, it would be ethnocentric to generalize findings from mentoring research conducted in vastly dissimilar cultures (mostly from the Western hemisphere) to India.

Lillian Eby, one of the leading scholars in this nascent field, along with several of her colleagues, found interest in the differences among the mentored and focused her research primarily on exploring the differences in the experiences of those mentored to tease apart what factors contribute to positive, successful mentoring relationships for the protégé. In a meta-analysis summarizing mentoring research across youth, academic and workplace settings, Eby and her colleagues (2013) sought to explore antecedents, correlates and consequences of good mentoring relationships as they relate to protégés' perceptions of instrumental support, psychological support and relationship quality.

Results indicated that protégés perceived the mentoring relationship more positively when they had mentors who were similar to them on a deeper level—personality, values, attitudes and beliefs—as opposed to when there were surface level similarities (e.g., race and sex). In addition, protégés reported greater relationship quality (overall satisfaction with their mentoring experience) when protégés had great social capital (i.e., a relatively large social network which a mentor may increase through networking and visibility). Moreover, mentors who interacted frequently with protégés and offered psychological support (e.g., counseling, role modeling, encouragement) gave protégés a greater sense of affiliation with the institution or community to which the mentor belonged (Eby et al. 2013).

Mentoring is not a new concept to India. In fact, references to mentoring and the mentor as a guru may be found in the writings of Indian mythology where the mentor–protégé, or *guru–shishyas*, relationship was

viewed as essential to success in all aspects of life (Nachimuthu 2006). Nevertheless, given the breadth of extant research on mentoring, relatively little exists on mentoring in India and even less on the needs of those being mentored. However, research on mentoring in India does suggest that national as well as organizational culture should be considered when establishing workplace mentoring programs (Awasthy et al. 2012; Lather and Sharma 2010). Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter explores national culture as a means of identifying countries similar to India, extrapolating findings from mentoring in those countries to characteristics protégés would desire in a mentor, and then making suggestions for future areas of research on mentoring in India.

Countries Similar to India

One way to build a foundation for additional, more impactful research on mentoring in India is to consider empirical research conducted in similar countries. Therefore, what follows is a comparison of India with countries of similar economies and national cultures.

India is a member of a group of developing countries known as BRIC—Brazil, Russia, India, and China—which is a group of the world's fastest growing large economies (Burke and Ng 2006). These four countries collectively occupy approximately one quarter of the earth's land area and are projected to eclipse the gross national income of some of the richest countries in the world (the G6—United States, Germany, Japan, Italy, France, United Kingdom) by the year 2050 (Wilson and Purushothaman 2006). Increasing globalization creates a borderless international economy, which allows these developing nations to compete on a global scale. As they become increasingly industrialized, their ability to offer manufacturing capabilities at competitively lower labor costs makes them individually and collectively a threat to more developed nations as outsourcing and income increase (Burke and Ng 2006).

Upon identification as a member of BRIC due to its economy, a valid tool to compare India to its fellow BRICs is Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede's taxonomy of national cultures. Hofstede's classification

system was designed to compare and contrast countries on dimensions of power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence (Geert-Hofstede.com). The accompanying tool to Hofstede's system reveals countries' scores on each of the dimensions ranging from zero to 100 with a median of 50. Knowing a country's scores in isolation, however, does not give as much context regarding the country of interest until said scores are compared with those of another country. Consequently, the ensuing paragraphs compare India's scores on Hofstede's dimensions with those of the other three countries of BRIC.

The power distance index (PDI) reflects the degree to which the least powerful members of the country accept and expect any unequal distribution of power. Low scores (below 50) indicate that members do not accept the unequal distribution of power but believe that one can ascend through the ranks regardless of one's status at birth. In contrast, high scores (above 50) indicate that members accept unequal rights as the status quo and are unlikely to challenge those in authority or aspire to attain power themselves. India's PDI score is 77, Brazil's is 69, Russia's is 93, and China's is 80 (*ibid.*). These scores reflect not only that India is similar to the other BRICs (granted, not as high as Russia) in that they believe that inequalities among people are both acceptable and expected, but it also reflects India's history of high power distance in its caste system, which, in brief, assigns members to a fixed hierarchical class at birth.

Individualism versus collectivism (IDV) indicates whether members of a country value and reward individual effort and taking care of oneself (high scorers) versus group effort and taking care of each other and the community. India's IDV score is 48, Brazil's is 38, Russia's is 39, and China's is 20 (*ibid.*), indicating that while they are all collectivistic cultures, with its score so close to the median, India is considered a collectivistic culture with individualistic proclivities. Group membership and collective efforts for the good of the group are valued, but due to prevailing religious beliefs, individuals in India are believed to be responsible for their own lives as it determines their status in the next life (due to a belief by some in reincarnation after death).

Masculinity versus femininity (MAS) scores reflect the degree to which members of the country value achievement and assertiveness, and are motivated to be the best (high scorers—masculine), versus valuing nurturing and caring for those less fortunate, and liking the work they do versus having to be the best at it. India's MAS score is 56, Brazil's is 49, Russia's is 36, and China's is 66 (*ibid.*), indicating that in India, one's educational and vocational achievements and related symbols of success are important—more so than in Brazil and Russia, but less so than in China.

The uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) reflects whether countries have a preference for risk (low scorers) and are comfortable with letting the unknown occur, or a preference for stability, structure, and trying to control the future (high scorers). India's UAI score is 40, Brazil's is 76, Russia's is 95, and China's is 30 (*ibid.*), indicating variability because India's and China's scores suggest that they are likely to embrace change and view rules as optional rather than compulsory; whereas, Brazil and Russia are considerably more likely to prefer to honor past traditions, are skeptical of changes, and likely to maintain the traditional way of doing things. However, with it being so close to the median, India's score reflects its value for traditions and belief in karma, but also its openness to others' views and the belief that time is nonlinear and one may have a second chance at life. Therefore, while there may be a tendency to accept things as they are (such as one's class at birth), there is also a tendency to hope for change in the future via educational and career achievements (as reflected in India's MAS score).

Long term orientation (LTO) is the extent to which a country values preserving traditions and living in the present (low scorers) versus existing in frugality while preparing for the future. India's LTO score is 51, Brazil's is 44, Russia's is 81, and China's is 87 (*ibid.*). India is clearly more similar to Brazil than to Russia and China—the latter both display patience and perseverance through pragmatism and thrift. However, being close to the median again reflects India's ability to “go either way” in that, in some respects, its members value living for the present but are also likely to save and be practical in preparation for the unknown of the future.

Indulgence versus restraint (IND), the most recently added of Hofstede's dimensions, is the extent to which a country socializes its members to satisfy themselves with pleasurable activities and materials (high scorers), as opposed to exercising restraint and denying themselves gratification. India's IND score is 26, Brazil's is 59, Russia's is 20, and China's is 24 (*ibid.*). This indicates that in India, Russia, and China, restraint is practiced more than in Brazil. Leisure time and instant gratification are looked upon as frivolous and irresponsibly impulsive.

In summary, India scored high on power distance, moderately on masculinity and long term orientation, and low on individuality, uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence. In comparison to the other BRIC countries on Hofstede's dimensions, all the countries were collectivistic; however, India is more similar to Brazil and China on more of the dimensions than it is to Russia, whose scores varied drastically from those of India on key dimensions when implementing a mentoring program. Specifically, MAS (Gokturk and Arslan 2010) and PDI (Yang et al. 2011) are identified as relevant cultural dimensions in mentoring in countries similar to India perhaps due its patriarchal and classist history. India's score on MAS (56) was closest to that of Brazil's (49) as they hovered about the median; whereas, Russia's (36) and China's (66) scores were farther from the median. On PDI, India's score (77) was closest to that of China's (80) than Brazil's (69) or Russia's (93).

Mentoring in the Other BRIC Countries

As in the case of India, research on mentoring in Brazil, Russia, and China is also meager. Nonetheless, the proceeding section attempts to summarize the extant literature on mentoring in these other BRIC countries.

Brazil. The existing research on mentoring in Brazil confirms their collectivistic nature in that protégés prefer a group of mentors rather than just one individual (Barreto et al. 2011). In addition, Brazilian women indicated a preference for mentors within their organization as opposed to mentors working in a different organization (Duffy et al. 2008). Furthermore, formal mentoring programs are recommended

and preferred over informal workplace mentoring (Duffy et al. 2008). In a qualitative study (Zafar et al. 2012), a newly hired Brazilian junior professor in an American university stressed the importance of having a mentor either from one's culture or who understands the protégé's cultural background. Although, he ventured outside of the formally assigned mentors to develop an even broader network and indicated that it was not that difficult to work with mentors from dissimilar cultural backgrounds.

Russia. Most dissimilar to India on Hofstede's dimensions, empirical research on workplace mentoring in the largest country in the world is even more scarce. This is perhaps due to its long history of being a socialist state where its business practices were shuttered from the rest of the world and enterprises were run almost entirely by the state. Nevertheless, the emerging mentoring research indicates that mentoring for business owners, and especially women entrepreneurs, is needed as the increasing privatization of business results in a rapid growth of entrepreneurs (Kickul et al. 2007).

China. China scored second, behind Brazil, in proximity to India on the MAS dimension—found to be relevant in mentoring. While limited by the fact that it is based primarily on the Western concept developed in the United States (Yang et al. 2011), mentoring research in China suggests that protégés hold their mentors in especially high esteem and look to them for personal coaching and help in skill development, but not necessarily protection or job security (Gong et al. 2011). Also, in contrast to Brazil, mentoring in China is less formally structured (c.f., Aryee et al. 1999; Bozionelos and Wang 2006), and protégés tend to seek out their informal mentors mainly to help protégés cope with stressful work events, with results suggesting that mentored employees fare no better psychologically (e.g., emotional exhaustion and depression) than mentored employees in this informal relationship (Yang et al. 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter explored protégé criteria for mentors in India from a cross-cultural perspective. Research indicates that protégé perception of mentoring may be impacted by their degree of Westernization (Tan and Akhtar 1998); therefore, using research conducted on Western countries to generalize to India, an Eastern country, would prove problematic, at best. Therefore, India was compared to similar countries based on their global economic status (BRIC) and on Hofstede's dimensions of national culture. While mentoring research findings were included for all the BRIC countries, India was found to be most similar to Brazil on MAS and China on PDI. Therefore, the following criteria for selecting mentors whom Indian protégés may find most desirable are derived from combining the mentoring research on India with that from Brazil and China.

Firstly, mentors should be selected based on their affiliation/membership in the same organization as the protégé since it is a benefit to have someone who is familiar with the idiosyncrasies and politics of one's organization. Secondly, research from mentoring in India suggests that protégés desire a mentor who they perceive as a member of the extended family—someone they are comfortable approaching with various issues (Awasthy et al. 2012). In fact, when asked directly in a qualitative study, respondents indicated that desirable mentor criteria include the mentor being a few years older than the protégé, acting as a counselor and friend, serving as a source of nurturance and support, and a role model for the protégé (Ramaswami and Dreher 2010). These were similar to the supportive role protégés want mentors to play in China.

Thirdly, in India, a highly patriarchal society (evidenced by its masculinity score) with long-held stereotypes about women and their lack of ability in the workplace, Indian women paradoxically are legally allowed to work outside the home but the laws are not enforced in some areas and frowned upon in areas where enforcement of legislation does occur; therefore, there should be careful consideration of female protégés' needs (c.f., Ghosh and Haynes 2008). Perhaps Indian women would

prefer same-sex mentors who could better relate to them as working women.

Fourthly, while the Westernized view of mentoring, on which the majority of mentoring research is based, is a one-on-one relationship between mentor and protégé, small-group or constellation mentoring (successful in Brazil) may be more appropriate in collectivistic India. This may be especially beneficial for professional Indian women (c.f., Blake-Beard 2015), a growing demographic who are less likely to have same-sex mentors, since a constellation of mentors may serve their varied needs, thus reducing the likelihood of the opposite-sex mentoring relationship being misconstrued as sexually inappropriate, as may be the case if restricted to the westernized one-on-one mentoring model (Haynes and Ghosh 2012). Finally, the mentoring process should be formal rather than informal, as is the case in Brazil, to avoid problems such as those seen in the loosely based, informal mentoring networks found in China, where the protégé fares no better than non-mentored employees.

Future Research Opportunities

While the stated recommendations are based on theory and previously conducted research and not on a primary source of data, these extrapolations should be empirically investigated to expand the research on mentoring in India and, specifically, the qualities protégés seek in their mentors. Specifically, future research could compare protégé feedback and perceptions of formal versus informal mentoring settings with mediating variables to include: (1) mentors external to the organization versus mentors from the protégés' workplace; (2) same-age, or younger, mentors compared to older mentors; (3) same-sex mentors compared to opposite-sex mentors; and (4) group or constellation mentoring versus one-on-one mentoring.

Some other considerations and modifications may be necessary when conducting future research on mentoring in India. For instance, it may be wise to first test the assumptions of cross-cultural generalizability of some mentoring theories, as well as instruments commonly used in

mentoring research. Said theories and assessment tools may be biased towards Western cultures and may necessitate construct validation to ensure their appropriate use and accurate interpretation of research findings. This may begin with examining the application of the widely used definition of mentoring (Kram 1985) originated in the United States.

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Part III

Case Studies and Perspectives

7

Empower – Through Trade, not Aid

Nalini Srinivasan

Introduction

India's North East (NE) has, down the ages, been the meeting point of many communities, faiths and cultures. A frontier region, it has over 4500 km¹ of international borders and is connected to the rest of India by a narrow strip of land with a width of 25–33 km called the Siliguri Corridor² in West Bengal . A place renowned for its beauty and diversity, it is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in Asia, with each state having its distinct cultures and traditions. It is the home to more than 166³ separate tribes speaking a wide range of languages.⁴ Some groups have migrated over the centuries from places as far away as South East Asia and still retain their cultural traditions and values.

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When describing North East India, the Lonely Planet⁵ website says “Thrown across the farthest reaches of India, obscured from the greater world by ageless forests and formidable mountain ranges, the Northeast States are one of Asia’s last great natural and anthropological sanctuaries. Sharing borders with Bhutan, Tibet, Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh, these remote frontiers are a region of rugged beauty, and a collision zone of tribal cultures, climates, landscapes and peoples.”

The NE comprises the “Seven Sisters”, which include the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura and a “Brother” in the state of Sikkim. The lushness of its landscape, the range of communities and geographical and ecological diversity makes the North East quite different from other parts of the subcontinent.

Despite its rich natural resources, the NE has not seen the levels of investment that other parts of the country have and remains perhaps one of the most neglected parts of the nation. This could be attributed to several factors, the geographic location being chief among them. In addition to this, several of the states like Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Tripura have been facing ethnic violence for decades.

Much of the livelihoods of the many tribal groups in this region depended on forest based resources. Unfortunately, a death knell was sounded by the Supreme Court when it announced a blanket national ban on the cutting down of timber in 1996.⁶ Timber is one of the main economic resources in these tribal areas; people did not have much of an income otherwise. Since the government didn’t specify if the ban covered timber or all forest products, soon artisans started running out of raw materials. The NE was hardest hit and this was a huge blow to the tribal people of the region in particular.

Factors such as unemployment, gender based violence, armed conflicts and oppressive social structures are among the most important reasons why people migrate and this was proving to be true in the NE. Poverty and lack of employment opportunities saw the mass migration of people from the NE to the commercial hubs across India. The desperation of the people to find employment opportunities invariably makes them vulnerable to human trafficking. The migration of people in large numbers from all over the NE became apparent—some were

trafficked, some were employed as labourers in exploitative conditions and some just went missing. Women and children, more often than not were targeted and trafficked for various illicit purposes.

Human trafficking, unfortunately, has become a bane in almost all the states of the NE. Thousands of men, women and children have been getting entangled in this poorly understood and recently acknowledged phenomenon. With almost 98% of the NE on the international border with countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar, the geopolitical location has exacerbated this human trafficking problem from being a national scourge into a cross-border international one.

With a sizeable number of people living below the poverty line, the practice of human trafficking is only set to get worse and can no longer be ignored. The need to invigorate the development process in the NE region of India is of utmost priority. Entrepreneurship in the NE may be just the key to unlocking the doors to a just and equitable society, spurring both human and material advancement. While there is need for enterprising initiatives which can create social values while facilitating the financial emancipation of individuals, communities and societies in need, the unfortunate reality is that people are unwilling to invest in the North East because the prospects of commensurate returns are not readily evident. Entrepreneurs are often left waiting for banks to extend loans in order for them to start production and securing such financing is often more challenging and arduous than starting production.⁷ Added to this, are the various tribulations in the realms of operations and marketing. The NE is often looked at as one region when, in reality, it is eight diverse and different states with distinct products and production methods and disparate markets and customer requirements. Apart from being small in size, markets and customer preferences are often dominated by cheaper Chinese goods that flood the market, as opposed to traditionally manufactured products. Small markets, low local demand and marketability of local products in outside markets are all part of a vicious cycle that have stymied entrepreneurship in the region and have left people, even skilled artisans, with no option but to migrate in search of livelihood.

While the contributing factors may vary from state to state, a common consequence across all the states is the brunt of displacement that

women have to bear and the uncertainty that descends on them when the family breadwinner is lost to violence. This is where the Impulse NGO Network was born and their intervention has included providing support structures and effective mechanisms to generate awareness and address the issues of human trafficking.

However, the question on their mind was “along with rescue operations, along with rehabilitation, along with reintegration and repatriation, what will actually stop people from migrating?”

The Birth and Evolution of ISE

Impulse NGO Network, a social development organization working on issues of human rights, especially human trafficking, HIV/AIDS intervention and livelihood support initiatives for the rural NE was founded by Hasina Kharbhih in the early 1990s. During her early days, Hasina was an active volunteer in the Leadership Training Services (LTS) programme and she would volunteer for various weekend charity activities. She supported herself through teaching and writing—for local, regional and national newspapers and other media—on a variety of topics, from lifestyle and fashion pieces to analyses on social issues. This led her to become more and more certain that something needed to be done to address child exploitation and human trafficking issues in the NE. Hasina became involved with the prevention of human trafficking when she started the Impulse NGO Network fresh out of high school. Although she received support from the government for skilling workshops and the like, she decided to focus on issues relating to unsafe migration instead. To stem migration not just in Meghalaya but all over the NE, she knew they had to leverage the region’s rich tribal handicrafts to give local trade a push. Beginning with her nearby ancestral village of Syntein in the east Khasi hills, in the middle of the now-famous Mawsynram district, Hasina started searching for ways to push consumption beyond the weak local demand. She began marketing the prototypical textile, bamboo, cane and silk articles made by her network of artisans through her eldest brother’s fruit and spice export firm,

Sen Kharbhih, dealing with foreign buyers as well as brands such as FabIndia.

The Impulse NGO Network has long worked towards rescuing and rehabilitating human trafficking victims, and in leveraging its credentials for advocacy purposes. The organization has been in the forefront in providing support structures and effective mechanisms to generate awareness and address the issues of human trafficking. This has been extensively carried out in partnership with other local development organizations. As part of the Impulse NGO Network charter, Hasina's team came up with the UN-certified Meghalaya Model⁸ (now called the Impulse Model), which outlines a comprehensive strategy for combating child trafficking in the NE. Successful pilot testing led to its wider adoption in eight northeastern states of India and it is slated for national replication. The Impulse Model, in a nutshell, aims to bring different stakeholders under one roof and to respond effectively to the ominous threat of human trafficking. The idea of partnering with state governments, the legal and the judicial system, civil society organizations and security organizations comes from the realization that human trafficking is deep-rooted and much bigger than any single organization can handle on its own. Therefore, efforts and most importantly resources are best when converged to combat and discourage human trafficking. This is done with the application of the six Ps (Partnership, Prevention, Protection, Policing, Press and Prosecution) and the six Rs (Reporting, Rescue, Rehabilitation, Repatriation and Re-compensation).

The Impulse Model has helped direct efforts towards communities that needed aid the most, while assisting agencies such as the government and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) play very specific roles. Over the 19 years of its operations, the network managed to intervene in several cases. From 2001 to 2015 alone over 350 cases were registered and as many as 72,442 cases of trafficking and violence were tackled. Members of her own staff include some unfortunate victims who were trafficked to and subsequently repatriated from the hell of Delhi's brothels, thanks to the Impulse NGO Network's intervention. Bear testimony to the incredible work being done by Hasina and her team.

Personal relationships and personality development initiatives have fostered the growth and birth of the Impulse NGO Network. Under its watchful eye, creative solutions have been identified and developed to address the unmet needs of the artisans, their communities and the NE as a whole. However, though the Impulse NGO Network had the proven experience to create necessary and effective programmes to address social issues in the NE, the legalities of non-profits getting into economic development in India were complex enough to warrant the setting up of a “hybrid” for-profit entity. They had already been working on economic development for over 19 years, however, as a non-profit it was difficult to scale their economic development activities. While they were successful in creating a market network, in their avatar as a non-profit, they couldn’t take their products to the marketplace on a large scale and in a sustainable way. So while Hasina and her team members at the Impulse NGO Network were directing their efforts to curb human trafficking, which was spreading at an alarming rate in the NE, the idea to create a social enterprise was born.

The Impulse Social Enterprises (ISE) came into existence in the year 2010 with an initial investment of approximately ten lakh rupees. ISE was launched after the need to operate some projects under a for-profit business structure became apparent to the management team at the Impulse NGO Network. ISE may have been the brainchild of Hasina Kharbhih but what moulded it into its present form were the inputs from a panel of advisors, which included family, friends and experts. Their diverse and specialized expertise brought to light the issues pertaining to the formulation of business plans, legal compliances, profit sharing, quality control and the means by which ISE could achieve sustainability for itself and its network of artisans. The exuberance of youth and the overwhelming passion to commit oneself to work for the betterment of society was not readily welcomed in all quarters and consequently Hasina had to face situations where people expressed a lack of confidence and trust in the path she had chosen. Her parents and mentors, however, supported her mission wholeheartedly. Her brother A. G. Kharbhih and college friend Rosanna Lyngdoh, who was already a part of Impulse NGO Network, also assisted her in this crusade against human trafficking and joined her in creating ISE.

Impulse Social Enterprises Private Limited was registered in 2011 as a for-profit business organization that sought to apply practical, innovative and sustainable measures to achieve and maximize social returns in the eight states of NE India. It commenced commercial activities in 2014. The target groups of the enterprise are essentially tribal women and children. The need to invigorate the development process in the NE region was the imperative and, of all available livelihood options, entrepreneurship based on traditional skills in the area seemed the best option for promoting a just and equitable society and enabling individuals to live a life of dignity and respect. Enterprising initiatives, which aimed to create social values while targeting the financial uplift of individuals, communities and societies in need, required to be developed and they additionally needed to be environmentally sound, socially acceptable, technically feasible and economically sustainable. ISE, a social business venture, thus took a for-profit route comprising a variety of brands, products and services to uplift communities and advance the mission for equitable human rights.

The overarching goal of any business venture is to sustain itself in the market in the long term and such sustainability becomes a far greater imperative and driver when the business is striving to achieve social returns and value. Therefore, ISE was formed as an extension support to Impulse NGO Network with a focus to create, provide and facilitate sustainable livelihoods for tribal women and to develop in them the spirit of entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency by capitalizing on what they know best (i.e. the traditional art of weaving, bamboo and cane making, tailoring and so on).

The Impulse NGO Network over its years of operation has successfully established connections with over 30,000 artisans all over the NE. In the bargain the Impulse NGO Network has built a deep and improved understanding of the broader social fabric of the NE and its communities. This experience has been priceless and has proven to be a boon in terms of building, developing and sustaining new networks of artisans, including those from the Asaamese, Karbi, Mishing, Idu Mishimi, Mizo, Khasi, Garo Nepali and Bhutia tribes in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Sikkim.

Additionally, deep relationships with a very substantial network of rural communities and community partners have been forged, owing to the Impulse NGO Network's extensive and long-term ties across the region. ISE sought to complement the Impulse NGO practice by creating sustainable artisanal livelihoods, primarily for women in these rural communities, thereby substantially augmenting their income levels and reducing their vulnerability to the threat of human trafficking. The economic devaluation of the work women do, fuelled with the complete absence of alternative income-generating activities gave impetus for the creation of an entity which would promote tribal textiles, handicrafts and garments in the NE.

ISE's Vision and Mission reflect its enduring values and commitments. Its Vision says that "Impulse Social Enterprises is a social business venture committed to the promotion of a just and equitable society and to the goal of enabling individuals to live a life of dignity and respect"; and its Mission statement reads "to develop goods, services, and markets to promote sustainable livelihoods for those in need and will invest in other development organizations that advance human rights for all—particularly women and children. Through quality products and services that engage customers in social responsibility, ISE will seek profitability to ensure its long term sustainability and the realization of its Vision." In keeping with its social mandate, ISE has successfully created such livelihood streams and has remunerated collaborating artisans both on a personal level and at a community level.

From a livelihood and skills mapping exercise that was conducted, it was found that the traditional skills were by and large in the area of textiles. ISE realized that these textile weaving skills had been handed down the generations and came naturally to tribal peoples. Every household had a weaving loom and they were already either weaving for themselves or weaving for their communities. Introducing new skill sets would have meant the investment of several years before the local communities could acquire that skill.

So, in the larger interest of economic development of the region, ISE decided to concentrate on these existing skills. It first created livelihood opportunities for local Khasi tribal villages by exporting their artisanal crafts for a fair wage and through ethical business practices. The local

artisans developed their traditional bamboo crafts into quality, modern products for international buyers. Later, to ensure diversification of products, ISE scaled its operations and projects to also cover the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. Artisans and communities also received training (if necessary) on how to adapt their traditional designs and techniques into products for a broader market and also in the areas of quality control and production forecasting.

ISE's socially focused business practices have been able to develop rural livelihoods and the capacities of its artisans through the sale of innovative textiles, both into domestic and international markets. In the short-term, ISE's strategy is to leverage the inherent strengths of the region in creating exciting and acclaimed hand-woven textiles. This they believe will be the easiest livelihood avenue to scale and thereby most effective in deterring human trafficking. Functioning in a hub-and-spoke fashion, the company's Shillong office acts as the nerve centre for a 30,000-strong network of artisans spread across the districts and communities of the eight northeastern states. Local organizations in each state act as facilitators, identifying artisans and ensuring their skill sets are updated and the relevant details held in a database. A master artisan in each cluster travels to the homes of weavers, teaching the women the nuances of each design and ensuring that the length, size and designs being woven remain consistent.

ISE has developed key relationships with a number of design houses that have enabled ISE to create a versatile and exclusive range of co-branded products. ISE has also forged strategic partnerships with several marketing, online retail development and logistics companies that have allowed ISE to drive visibility and provide online retail solutions for their products and collaborators. ISE acknowledges that there are certain production constraints due to the paucity of capital and technological deficiencies. To eliminate these constraints, and for modern fusion designing and adding value to raw materials, ISE, in partnership with the BrewHouse creative agency in Delhi, started the North-East Project (NEP): a socially focused design collective movement, which aims to generate awareness for the fight against human trafficking by creating and selling such bespoke products. Similarly, franchising with hotels, cultural centres, museums and stores in airports have been undertaken

to minimize the cost of opening exclusive ISE stores. This has been beneficial in expanding ISE's outreach to customers in general and tourists and travellers in particular.

The basic prerequisite of sustainable development is the evolution of a development process with a focus on the enhancement of the living conditions of the population as a whole and an emphasis on raising the standard of living of the poor. ISE's aim is to empower the women artisans to take responsibility for their own lives and to encourage them to continue taking control of their own economic fate. ISE has been able to guide this development by facilitating direct cooperation between businesses and local communities and by building a sustainable creative environment in which monitoring and support for economic development is offered by the social business. ISE strongly believes in providing creative space to the artisans so as to ensure the development of an entrepreneurial spirit in them. Larger bulk buyers choose to market the products themselves. This provides them with a source of revenue that incentivizes them to continue to buy from ISE and perpetuate the business. Investors, too, are interested in combining financial and social returns on their investments. Their continued investment allows ISE to search for new ways to remain sustainable. Since the artisans are the ones who bring the products to life with their traditional art and artistry, it is in the best interests of ISE to retain highly productive artisans by practising fair wage policies.

The Executive Board and Advisors of ISE include experienced professionals in the realm of business and social development. That apart, ISEs staff, professional volunteers, and local partners have extensive experience in working with rural communities and artisans in the region and they bring their collective knowledge and experience to ISE's business projects. Other profitable initiatives are also being taken up by ISE thereby ensuring revenue from a variety of sources. This provides a safety net which allows the enterprise to absorb the majority of the risks involved, ensuring the safety of both clients and artisans. ISE also contributes to business development in the region. It conducts research, documentation and consultancy work. With these, ISE aims to act as a multiplier—distributing knowledge, experience and information on social entrepreneurship, as well as that of the specific problems and

characteristics of the NE, to national and international organizations. The areas of expertise include primary data collection through surveys (specifically dealing with child rights, rural livelihoods, community education, business strategies and health), evaluation studies, training manuals, public awareness campaigns and informational guides. ISE also consults for businesses and other organizations vis-à-vis the implementation of social development initiatives.

ISE's products and services now serve local, national, and international customers. As per an agreement with the artisans, ISE pays them 13% of the MRP of finished goods, community coordination partners are paid eight per cent of MRP, and 60% of ISE profits are reinvested back into community initiatives (providing health insurance, etc.). ISE also consults directly with target rural communities and short-lists projects towards which reinvested profits can be directed. Despite challenges, ISE recorded a turnover of Rs 834,357⁹ during the financial year 2014–2015 from the sales of products ranging from scarves, hand-woven cotton table mats, bags, cushion covers and other attractive gift items. The company is also planning to harvest the interest in tribal crafts in countries like the UK and the USA.

ISE's aim is to operate as a profitable and self-sustaining organization. The for-profit model offers ISE the opportunity to take up business projects that fit its mission—ensuring equal rights are provided for all, especially women and children—and to allow profits from these business projects to support ISE financially in the long-term. ISE additionally has the opportunity to use its profits to support the NGO and other developmental organizations in the region. Overall, ISE aims to usher in dynamic transformation in the NE and to advance social and economic rights, particularly for women and children, through its holistic approach towards socially responsible consumerism with a belief in “trade not aid”. The overarching goal of the enterprise remains its commitment to prevent human trafficking and reduce unsafe migration through and for the overall growth and development of the NE region.

ISE zealously believes that the most valuable asset of the enterprise is its artisan EMPOWER brand. It was conceptualized and developed by Mehernosh Shapoorjee of Digital 5 in July of 2013 and was officially launched in the same year. EMPOWER's brand strength lies in its

women artisans. ISE wants its brand value to carry the necessary emotional appeal, to the extent where customers can positively identify and relate the logo with the empowerment of women. More so, the branding strategy of ISE is a testament to the paradigm shift in the socio-economic ethos of a patriarchal household where women and their work are growing in value. This transition is what ISE hopes to uphold in order to tackle the problems of human trafficking.

ISE also fervently believes that customer satisfaction is absolutely vital for long-term success. To ensure this, quality control is given highest priority and those products that fail to meet the quality benchmark of ISE get rejected. This, in turn, works as motivation for the artisans to upgrade their skills. It is clear to them that the better the quality of their products the more the scope for them to sell it and enhance their earnings.

Thanks to EMPOWER, the artisans receive training to refine their skills, the freedom and independence of running their own business from the comfort of their own homes, fair trade and fair wages, access to international markets and, in short, a sustainable livelihood that will allow them to better support their families. This means better education, better homes, more time to spend with their children, and so on. By eliminating the middleman who usually stands between the artisans and the market and who often dictates the price and wields power over them, EMPOWER is changing their lives thanks to the Internet marketplace that makes way for direct access between these producers and their customers.

The EMPOWER brand's real strength lies in its women artisans. Being an artisanal brand focusing on women-centric livelihood options, ISE continues to strive to reach out directly to different tribal women of the North East with the purpose of incorporating their diverse traditional weaving into its products. The objective is to ensure sustainability of livelihood to their artisans by providing markets for these products. Not only do the women artisans not get uprooted, they have the comfort of weaving directly from their own homes. They continue to do the household work, carrying out familial responsibilities and taking care of agricultural duties while continuing their textile weaving. The weaving which was already a part of their daily life has now become

an income-generating activity, bringing in much needed remuneration without any kind of conflict with their community or their families.

The constantly changing market poses new challenges to an enterprise like ISE which produces pertinent goods to cater to a niche market. So it is necessary every now and again to reassess the value of the goods produced and see how this can be enhanced. ISE, therefore, facilitates the coming together of fashion designers and local artisans resulting in a blend of modern-day fashion with traditional tribal patterns. This fusion has appealed to consumers at local, regional, national and international levels. ISE has perceived that the scarves and table mats that it produces acquire exotic appeal when they reach markets outside the NE region, especially in international markets. This results in immense cultural recognition and monetary value. What is significant here is that the stories of the artisans that have woven the products bring home the message of socially responsible consumerism to customers. EMPOWER as a brand offers a sense of safety, and guarantees quality and reliability. It is important that the brand be recognized not only for these facets but also for the social empowerment it brings to the women artisans. This information is vital because this, it is hoped, will translate into recognisability and prestige for EMPOWER in the marketplace.

The Journey and the Challenges

Hasina Kharbhih continues to be the chairperson of the Board at the Impulse NGO Network and lives and works out of Shillong, Meghalaya. A social entrepreneur with a management background, Hasina, along with the Impulse NGO Network team, has implemented numerous beneficial programmes and projects in the NE, ushering in large-scale social change by adopting a holistic approach. These programmes and projects have won support from various national and international bodies, such as the Indian Government, the World Bank, United Nations (UNWOMEN, UNODC, UNICEF, UNGIFT), USAID, and AUSAID. Hasina has worked in various capacities, including as a manager, researcher, coordinator, trainer and editor for these

projects. Hasina has researched and trained on human rights, management, leadership, HIV/AIDS, life skills for adolescent health, gender studies issues and has tutored numerous groups at different levels, such as law enforcement personnel, uniformed personnel, NGOs, government officials, international agencies, youth, children and so on. She started off as a freelance journalist and has authored and co-authored many books, with works appearing in local and international publications.

She has received much recognition, including the 2000 Asia Award for Excellence in Youth Work from the Commonwealth Youth Programme of the London-based Commonwealth Secretariat, Woman of Substance Award from the Ryan Foundation in India. In 2002 she was invited to participate in the International Visitors Program on NGO Management, sponsored by the US State Department, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. In 2002 and 2003, she attended a two-part 'Women in Management' training course held in Sweden and the Philippines through a scholarship from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

In 2006 she travelled to the USA and Thailand to attend the Changing Faces Women's Leadership Program through a scholarship from the East-West Center Grantees on a Fulbright Scholarship from India (Hawaii University) 2004–2006. In 2006, she was selected as an Ashoka Fellow for conceiving of the Impulse Model and also received the Rising Talent award from the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society held in France in 2007. In 2010 she received the Aspen ILI Fellow Award. She has also received the North East Excellence Award of 2011–2012 in the Achievers category from Indian Chambers of Commerce, the 2012 YFLO Women Achievers Awards for Social Entrepreneurship from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and the 2012 Asian Activists Award from Human Right Now, Japan. She also represented India as a Commonwealth Youth Ambassador for Positive Living.

The Impulse Model was selected as the Second Most Innovative Development Model in the world by Global Development Network, under the Japanese Most Innovative Development Project in 2012, which opened the door for wider regional replication of the Model in Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal, starting from December 2013.

In 2013 she received the Gold Star IVLP Award International Visitor Leadership Program from US State Department for her impactful contribution towards institution-building, based on her expertise and experience in NGO management. She was asked to revisit the USA to share her story on Living Our Story.

While today Hasina and ISE are well recognized and much lauded in international and national circles, as evidenced in the numerous accolades and awards, the journey thus far has not been without its many challenges. While family and friends stepped out to support Hasina take on the myriad problems she was grappling with, the task at hand called for a higher level of play. Hasina once said that the Ashoka Innovators for the Public Fellowship recognition came to her at a point when nobody was really trying to understand her ideas at all. Ashoka, however, understood the innovation she was creating and helped her understand the core value of her ideas and to scale her original vision from where it was in 2006 to where it is today, making her journey as an Ashoka Fellow far more meaningful.

The people of the NE have always felt like the region was the most neglected part of the nation—their geographic location being chief among the many contributing factors. There is more than an element of truth in this lament because several decades since independence the region has still not seen the levels of public and private investment received by other parts of the country. Consequently infrastructure and other prerequisites for development are still woefully inadequate in a region that is abundant with untapped natural resources. The lack of development has left people in the region with few employment opportunities. While the NE is often perceived as one contiguous and uniform region, in reality it comprises eight very different states each with a distinct profile of prowess and problems. People engage in different works like crafts, agriculture and handicrafts on different occasions. They do not stick to one mode of occupation, rather they indulge in various things as the seasons change and demand arises. Consequently, production in the North East varies because the cluster of markets is not uniform. Geographically the eight states are separated by distance and the cultural diversity among the customers in the states adds to the “smallness” of the market for goods produced locally. Faced with low market demand, competition from cheap

but durable Chinese goods and the resulting lack of financial assistance in terms of bank loans and investments, people rarely looked at using their traditional skills as a means of earning an income and hence the rampant migration and consequent human trafficking.

Hasina also realized that while her intentions of setting up shop in these picturesque but strife-torn states were strong, the issues confronting her were equally tough and varied from state to state. Assam was perhaps the worst hit. Across the states it was also obvious that women were the ones who always bore the brunt of displacement and suffered the uncertainty of losing the family breadwinner to violence. While there were government projects to fall back on, the apprehension was that these would make them solely dependent on government grants and stipends which rarely motivate them towards entrepreneurship. The ISE Business Model called for kick starting artisanal entrepreneurship so that the generations to come would be empowered to break free from this eternal cycle of poverty.

Starting a social enterprise entailed other constraints and difficulties. The goal was never just to increase profits but to extend the outreach to as many needy people as possible. Such a social agenda brings with it financial limitations. 27% of the money from the sale of each item is reinvested in the business, 11% helps cover operational costs, 22% goes to the facilitators and 40% to the artisans and this leaves little room for manoeuvrability. High operational and coordination costs have meant that ISE has to run a tight ship. At times it has necessitated that Hasina and her directors not draw any salary. Advertising has been limited to social media for the present, with the stories of each pattern and tribe involved being shared on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Although ISE's business model seems straightforward, it comes with inherent risks. "In the social sector, it takes time to survey the market and see what works; unsold inventory is a big pain point,"¹⁰ says Debotosh Purkayastha, director, finance at ISE. Add adherence to international specifications to this and the going gets tougher. While setting up offices in each cluster would be ideal in terms of engagement with the grassroots, it would be operationally draining and geographically impossible. So the idea is to explore information and communication technologies (ICT), like Vodafone's m-pesa for example, as ways to

empower and support the master artisans to handle accounts and cash and ensure against pilferage.

Despite all the challenges, Hasina has been able to take ISE to a whole different level from where it started in 2006. She believes that as a social entrepreneur it has been Ashoka's guidance that has given her the ability to make her innovation a reality today. Her grit and determination show through when she says, "I think it's very natural for a lot of social entrepreneurs to be always looking for solutions, and if solutions are not there readily, we will go beyond what's apparent to see a how solution can be developed. If there is a problem there has to be a solution." ¹⁰

Mentoring at all Levels

"Sixty percent of India's population is in rural areas and at these locations women are limited to their homes. If we can give these women the opportunity to work from the comfort of their homes, they don't need to travel to cities to look for work and land up in exploitative situations. The northeast needs a strong identity to bind it and I believe art and craft could be the answer. It's even better if this helps prevent unsafe migration," says Hasina. ¹¹

It was clear to Hasina that people were migrating because of a lack of job opportunities in the NE. However, she also knew that to stem this problem and create sustainable livelihoods, she would need to go well beyond basic entrepreneurship and job creation. People in the NE excel in several areas and textile weaving was an asset that had the potential to economically uplift these traditional communities. These were inherited skills passed down the generations. The challenge was to make the necessary value additions so that this would make them employable and become a sustainable source of income for them. And this is where Hasina stepped in and spearheaded the creation of ISE to tackle economic development and poverty alleviation.

Social entrepreneurship has a lot to do with human beings and achievement of social outcomes for them is paramount. It is not about selling products or creating something new for the sake of creating

something new. Growth is not measured by the volume of profits, but in the change brought to the system or community values. While this is something that anyone who decides to become a social entrepreneur needs to understand and accept, Hasina had to step up to a role well beyond that of an average social entrepreneur. She needed to become a mentor to the women artisans at many different levels in order to help these women grow socially and financially and to empower them to take action for themselves and take control of their own economic fate.

Cambridge University, on their website, defines mentoring¹² as basically a system of semi-structured guidance whereby one person shares their knowledge, skills and experience to assist others to progress in their own lives and careers. They go on to say that mentoring is rather more than “giving advice”, or passing on what your experience was in a particular area or situation. It is about motivating and empowering the other person to identify their own issues and goals, and helping them to find ways of resolving or reaching them—not by doing it for them, or expecting them to “do it the way I did it”, but by understanding and respecting different ways of working. A mentor may help the mentee to access more specialized avenues of help if it becomes apparent that this would be the best way forward. A mentor thus could help a mentee achieve their goals more quickly and effectively than working alone and also create a network of expertise to draw on that can benefit both mentor and mentee. Mentors, they say, need to be readily accessible and prepared to offer help as the need arises—within agreed bounds, and this could be a short-term arrangement until the original reason for the partnership is fulfilled (or ceases), or it can last many years.

In Hasina’s case, her mentorship is the very core of the whole Impulse movement. It perhaps started when the Impulse NGO Network was started in the early 1990s, evolved to encompass many more facets at the inception of ISE in 2006 and continues to grow to this day. On the one hand ISE has provided systems and marketing linkages to these textile weavers so they do not have to move out of their rural communities. However, the support goes well beyond this business arrangement. The interesting part, and perhaps most difficult task, is to impress upon these women that they are not labourers but

entrepreneurs. These are simple village folk who, thanks to their lack of exposure, were often duped by unscrupulous middle men.

The mentoring happens at many levels. At a purely production level, ISE plays a role in designing inputs, sourcing products based on the requisite skills and imparting training to the women artisans with the help of state partners. In so doing, ISE tries to improve the marketability of the product and works towards increasing the demand for them by making them more acceptable and appealing to a larger market, thus pushing consumption beyond the weak local demand. This facilitation is one facet of the mentorship that Hasina started and continues to provide.

Artisans belonging to different tribes have inherited weaving skills from their ancestors; but over the course of time their weaving skills had ceased to have any market value owing to them not being fashion oriented and the high costs associated with their manufacture. Hasina and ISE decided to capitalize on the connection these weaving traditions have to the core identity of each tribe and to assist the artisans to connect to commercial markets with the products wrapped in stories of their tribes and their particular weaving traditions. This has served to reestablish their pride in their individual tribal identities.

Capacity building and design development workshops have encouraged the artisans to realize their potential. They have discovered skills that could, with help from designers, be leveraged for economic value. Such products produced as per customers needs are then marketed by EMPOWER. Again, through a design development workshop, the artisans get involved in sharing their stories with the media on how they are connected to the EMPOWER brand. This helps them realize the value of the skills they possess and this has proved to be extremely motivating—especially when they see their product featured in a magazine or see themselves on television. For people who have rarely ventured out of their villages, such exposure could be overwhelming, but with help from Hasina and her team, artisans have accepted the showcasing of their talent as a stepping stone to becoming leaders in their areas of expertise. The Impulse team not only helps them identify their skills but also selects them for exposure visits and programmes to enable them to interact and engage with the outside world and in the process realize

their potential and true worth. Such exposures help ISE develop in these artisans the necessary human skills, while mentoring them in creating stable sources of income.

They say strength lies in numbers and with rural women from impoverished backgrounds nothing could hold more truth. Hasina has been able to bring home this fact to the women artisans. ISE has been able to foster interdependence among the women by bringing them together through meetings, helping them build a rapport among themselves thus helping them coordinate better and avoid conflicts. Each group member works independently but requires enormous amounts of coordination to ensure uniformity and consistency as far as the product is concerned. ISE has been able to develop value chains among the artisans. Those with certain skills not only complement the work of others but also teach other women who do not have the skills but are willing to learn. In order to create their collective strengths, ISE works in clusters to mobilize the members of the specific tribal groups to build cohesion among the members and a standardization of their patterns and products.

Similarly, through the EMPOWER brand artisans have been able to forge linkages with markets and their customers. The artisans, with help from designers, have been able to produce textiles developed as per assessed market needs and, thereby, EMPOWER is able to ensure their marketability. Going a step further, Hasina has been able to create a more subtle bond between EMPOWER's customers and the artisans through the stories of various artisans that are showcased on their website. This is an endearing connection that helps to highlight not only the craft of the artisans but also their vulnerability.

Artisans are not business people. So artisans require to be appropriately mentored to develop in them the necessary business awareness and skills for them to actually become independent entrepreneurs. During the design development workshops, ISE organizes PRA (participatory rural appraisal) focus group discussion sessions to identify their deficiencies with regard to business knowledge and then helps to build pertinent skills. ISE realized that there was strong and urgent need to help them differentiate between government grants and business finance. The concept of the more you produce the more you earn was one such

paradigm shift that ISE had to help them make. To support the standardization in production and facilitate the artisans, ISE mandates that all raw material procurement and distribution be centralized. The artisans weave in their own homes without having to make any upfront financial investment. With only their time, energy and skill as investments required for production, participation from family members has seen encouragement. Partner organizations in the local areas have helped to mobilize the artisans and help build awareness in them vis-à-vis market requirements and other business nuances. Designers engaged by ISE have been able to bring in the necessary customization of the traditional weaves to fall in line with market requirements and hence make better market sense. Financial literacy is a prerequisite for financial independence. Unfortunately, at the base of the pyramid the economy is more often than not cash based with a fair amount of discomfort and apprehension with regard to formal banking methods. To assuage these concerns, ISE has gone the extra mile to educate the artisans on money and banking matters. Remittance through bank transfers for their finished textile is now more than acceptable—making it a remarkable achievement for ISE with far-reaching long-term benefits.

Over the past decade the concept of sustainable development has expanded to include the simultaneous consideration of economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity in business planning and decision-making. The concept approaches everything in the world as being connected through space, time and quality of life.

ISE has lent its support to this form of development by linking businesses and local communities for direct cooperation. In this way sustainable creative environments are created where monitoring and support for economic development are offered by the social business. The centralization of raw material procurement and distribution ensures that not only are quality control standards adhered to but that materials are sustainably procured. This fact is impressed upon the artisans so that their awareness levels with regard to the environment are appropriately raised. ISE also gives the artisans design inputs so that the products they create are comparable or better than those found in the market and customers do not look at them as some kind of charity purchase but as a fashionable item of value.

The EMPOWER brand was made to support the local artisans in NE India. The product generates an income for the community, which improves their livelihood and prevents unsafe migration. The profits are reinvested in communities and will benefit at-risk populations. ISE retains the traditional designs because they provide an identity for the artisans and this identity is empowerment in itself because it is reflective of who they are and where they come from. These components together allow for economic development which will act as a long-term deterrent against trafficking. Add their sustainable procurement to this and we have a social enterprise in ISE which has a sustainable business model that ensures a triple bottom line benefitting people, profit and the planet.

Finally, it is a fact that in a globalized world, customers often find themselves wondering about the provenance of the products they are buying. When unethical business practices affecting the economic, social, and cultural well-being of communities are exposed, consumers cannot justify their desire or need for such products at such a price. Therefore, sustainable and fair-trade practices are now frequently a must for consumers. With ISE products, customers are proudly informed of where and how their products are made and marketed. They are assured that the producing communities receive a fair share of the profits. Each product is exclusively woven and sells with a story, the tag line being “every two hands are not the same”.

The income generated from weaving supplements the household income as a welcome surplus and has ensured the active participation of women in socio-economic decision-making processes at home and in the community. This may be a long process of transformation but it is empowerment in its truest sense since both entrepreneurial and leadership abilities are kindled and developed. This was the reason behind naming the brand EMPOWER—under its umbrella women are stepping up to ensure their freedom of choice through Trade, not Aid!

ISE has thought through every facet affecting the transition of these women from artisans to independent entrepreneurs and at every step in this journey Hasina's guidance to her team and her mentorship of the women artisans is readily discernible.

Conclusions

ISE has developed products, services, distribution channels and access to markets for those in need of sustainable livelihoods, while investing in partnerships with other developmental organizations to advance the broader cause of social stability.

Key factors in bringing about environmental and social sustainability include the use of eco-friendly materials for producing the products and the sharing of profits for social growth and development. While profit generation is pursued as a goal by ISE, the aim is not to maximize financial returns for shareholders alone but to grow the social venture and effectively reach more people in need, thus increasing social sustainability.

The EMPOWER line of artisan woven products have been fashioned into unique and stylish designs for the home and include dinning mats, four in one scarves, stoles, sling bags, tote bags, laptops sleeves and even fashion clothes lines that have found appeal among corporate buyers and individuals alike. These products feature different tribal patterns native to the producers and fashioned into products of a quality standard acceptable to five-star hotels and the like. Thus, when buying an EMPOWER product, apart from just acquiring a tangible item, a customer can feel a sense of satisfaction that his or her purchase has lent support to important human-rights causes, namely, preventing unsafe migration which leads to human trafficking, and fair-trade and fair-wage work for at-risk communities in NE India.

ISE has mobilized numerous artisans in rural villages to hone their skills for better incomes. The team has brought in designers and marketing professionals to engage with local partner organizations and artisans to create the EMPOWER brand of textile products. The designs, while respecting the traditions of the artisans, have infused modern elements to make the products suitable for the market. ISE remains committed to buying all the products that meet the necessary quality requirements, paying the artisans by unit manufactured thereby ensuring that the more they produce, the more they earn. Thus, while preserving

the beautiful textile traditions of the NE, ISE has created independent entrepreneurs out of every artisan.

While ISE was designed to create sustainable livelihood options for the people living in the rural areas of eight northeastern states of India, its successes in this area have also made it a role model for organizations in neighbouring countries. In the coming years, ISE is looking forward to expanding its reach into Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar not just to cater to consumers but also to support and mentor artisans in these countries.

Thus, over the years, ISE has remained committed to a triple bottom line bringing social and economic justice and growth to the people of the NE, and to ensure sustainability as far as income generation is concerned for its stakeholders, sustainability as far as livelihoods are concerned for the artisans and sustainability as far as protection and renewability are concerned for the planet.

The home of Rekha Doley, a master artisan, is situated in the Golaghat district of Assam. Doley, who used the loom to stitch her own and her family's clothes for years, now uses it to make multipurpose scarves and other fabrics for, thereby supplementing her husband's schoolteacher income and supporting a family of 11. "It wasn't possible for me to travel for work, so I'm happy I can earn at home thanks to Impulse. I love learning new patterns and travelling with other weavers for training to the city," she smiles.¹³

Artisans like Ms Rekha Doley are proud that their involvement with ISE has brought dynamism and positive growth in their lives, making them feel empowered in the truest sense. This, they believe is due to the fact that they are actively contributing to the household and are generating income by working from home. Being able to preserve and promote the traditional culture and handicrafts brings her gratification. Mondira Das,¹⁴ ISE's master artisan, seems more than happy she stayed put, despite the July heat and inundation in her Mohuramukh village in Numaligarh, a low-lying district of Assam. "In the past, we have had to deal with closure of factories and unemployment. Thanks to ISE, I no longer have to move out of the area to look for a source of income," she says.

In conflict areas, economic development led by women has been known to stabilize situations. ISE is extremely determined to make

the process of development in the NE of India both a state of mind and a physical reality. Hasina believes that more social entrepreneurs should come forward and take the lead to build business enterprises that involve the local communities. This, she believes, would not only employ the masses but would also compel those migrating to rethink before leaving the pristine NE region.

Knowingly or unknowingly, ISE-supported artisans like Rekha and Mondira have helped curb unsafe migration. The need is to provide communities, especially the women, with the necessary incentives so that they can stay where they are yet be financially secure. Through her leadership and her mentoring of the women artisans, Hasina Kharbhih has done not only that but has opened their eyes to a new empowered world and given them enough reasons to dream big.

Notes

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Researchers have used the case study research method for many years and across a variety of disciplines and researches have chosen to define the case study methodology with varying degrees of distinction. Researcher Robert K. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin 1984, p. 23) while Gary Thomas says that case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods (Thomas 2011).

This chapter throws light on the work and efforts of Ms Hasina Kharbhih who I was fortunate to meet and interact with. Using several attributes and nuances of the case study methodology, pertinent information from documents, reports and past interviews of Ms Kharbhih have been studied, collated and presented in the form of this chapter. Zaidah Zainal (2007) says of the case study as a research method that

it enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study. Case studies, in their true essence, explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through a detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships while.

Writing this chapter has given me the opportunity to learn about the efforts of the Impulse NGO Network and Impulse Social Enterprises in tackling the menace of human trafficking in the North East states of India through the creation of sustainable livelihood opportunities for the women in the region based on their traditional artisanal skills. The focus in particular was on Hasina Kharbhih's mentoring of these women artisans. The contents of this chapter have been shared with Ms Kharbhih for her approval and the same was received via email.

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Author Biography

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8

Enhancing Self-Awareness: A Case Study on a Collaborative Mentoring Approach

Sujeev Shakya and Anne Randerson

Introduction

It has been eight years since I started beed¹ management, a management consulting and financial advisory firm based in Nepal, currently working also in Bhutan, Cambodia, and Rwanda. The vision of this firm is to ensure that people “unleash” themselves. A people-centric approach to work was thus created that was contrary to the hierarchical, top-down approach to work that I experienced in my 20-year corporate career with the one of the largest business groups in Nepal. In this company, I started as a trainee and rose to be group CEO. Having worked with more than a hundred people, I developed my own style

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of mentoring where I focused on unleashing the potential of individuals by giving the necessary space and support. The responsibility for the process shifted from what the organization wants them to deliver to what they can deliver for the organization.

My interest in leadership and people management led me to earn a Certification in Coaching from Columbia University, in the USA. Now in my company, mentoring is based largely on a system of individual self-discovery. Another interesting facet to the company is that the employees come from several cultures across the world, which challenges the awareness of cross-cultural issues and workplace behaviour, including the shape the mentoring process takes. In the framework of mentoring, this chapter explores personal journeys, working across geographies with people of diverse backgrounds.

Rules Vs. Self-Regulation

In my 25-year career, I have observed the impact of rules and what they can do to affect performance. Does having volumes of HR Manuals actually deliver better HR? This is a question that I have continued to ask. I worked for a large firm—one of the largest business groups in Nepal—and there I could see the impact of rules. There were people who followed them to a T and there were people who ignored them. There were people who used travel allowances and other resources to the fullest and figured out ways to get around the rules, and there were people who just did not want to bend at all. There were people who could sign in at an office in the morning and then figure out a way not be in the office, and there were people who religiously signed in and signed out.

I kept on wondering what the right approach was. Either continue to be rule-driven or inculcate a sense of practising self-regulation. It is known what time someone needs to get to work. Is it better to build this awareness on the need to be punctual or just show the rulebook? Over eight years a culture has evolved at beed where people are generally on time. There are people who will arrive early, but also people who arrive a bit late. There is a sense of awareness and responsibility. The

objective is to finish a given task. Therefore, if someone turns up late, they use their lunch hour or take work back home to ensure the task is complete. No follow-ups are required. If there is a continual tendency for someone to come late or not finish tasks on time, the other beeds will start to question this behaviour. There is tremendous peer pressure to co-operate and perform (see LePine et al. 2016). When people cannot manage that, they leave.

Questioning Hierarchy

A testimonial from a beedtern, sums up how people perceive beed in the context of Nepal:

beed is one of very few firms in Nepal to truly embody the idea of a progressive workplace. It is an organization that has eliminated bureaucratic processes of hierarchy that often stand in the way of efficiency. For example, at a very fundamental level, by ensuring that everyone from the CEO to the newest intern go (sic) by a first name basis, the firm ensures a feeling of equality among employees who feel like valuable components of a larger family. My time at beed has given me much more optimism and hope for a liberal and forward-thinking Nepal.

Hierarchy is assumed in Kathy Kram's classical definition of mentoring as developmental assistance provided to a protégé by a more experienced organizational member in the form of career and personal guidance (Kram 1983, 1985). I became familiar with hierarchy in the formative days of my career. I was with a company where the Prince of Nepal (now former King) was the chairman of the company and later moved on to become the chair of the investment company. There were members of the royal family involved. There was a strict sense of discipline. In 1990, when Nepal went through its revolution to re-establish a multiparty system, there was a sense of chaos in the workplace. It was like kids from boarding school let loose. Discipline was seen as old school and the breaking of rules was seen as the new order. Workers formed unions; they wanted more pay for less work. However, strong

individuals led the corporation. They knew that the order was changing but the sense of hierarchy was not lost. They adopted global systems of corporate governance and professionalism like elsewhere in the world. People like us, who wanted to remain professional but had liberal views, were given space. There was hierarchy and order, but there was also freedom to suggest change.

Organizations only evolve, however, based on how the rest of the country evolves. Despite the multiparty democracy and sense of questioning the feudal system, the country continued to work under different forms of feudalism. Hierarchy prevailed, not as a facilitator for communication and operations, but to usurp one's power. People wanted to be continuously associated with power and if they did not have good business or positions in their organizations, they looked for external power. Therefore, in Nepal, people started carrying business cards that had more affiliations and designations than days in a month!

During my leadership interventions, I used to ask the big question, "Who Are You?" So fine, you are the chairman of a co-operative that you run with your family and friends. Okay, you are the executive committee member for this alumnus, or some Rotary or Lions Club, or you are a member of umpteen private-sector associations. There could be multiple identities, but then the big question remained, "Who are you?" Communication and transparency were key (Gehrke and Claes 2014). So at beed we started to disrupt this and create no designations and no hierarchies. Everyone is a beed. That is their identity. You are a member of a team that delivers and you may lead a team at times. People found it a bit strange, but this resonated with many of the millennials and new-age workers who had been heavily influenced by new global benchmarks from firms like Google. The mentoring process therefore involves building an identity that is associated with the firm and aligning one's brand personality with that of the firm (Humbard and Rouse 2016). The pinnacle of awareness is to be able to lessen any differentiation and view things in unison (Harung et al. 1995). When the dividing line between the firm and the person vanishes, self-induced productivity and hunger for success rules.

Building Awareness in an Open Office

Let me share an excerpt from a former beed, Chandni Singh, who wrote the following in her article “beed people, the third pillar”:

My first introduction to beed was when I came to the office to drop off a wedding card to a friend of mine who worked here. “What a unique office setting,” I remember thinking. People were sitting not in cubicles, but around a long, L-shaped, shared space amidst tasteful blue and red minimalist furniture. My friend explained that everyone sat around the same room, including the CEO. It was hard to get used to; I expected at least he would have a corner room with an oversized mahogany table, perhaps, and a slew of certificates hanging on the wall. To my amazement, my friend pointed to a section of the room that shared the running table with the rest of the team. I still remember thinking I might have misunderstood and the connecting room (that is actually the pantry) must be the CEO’s room. It was only upon joining beed that I realized that the CEO actually sits with the rest of the team in the beed Lab, in fact, during the first recruitment phase.²

Hierarchy in our part of the world, apart from the designations you carry, is also associated with where you sit in the office. Do you have a desk or an office cubicle? Do you have an executive assistant? Do you meet people directly or are you aided by assistants? When I started to move toward becoming the Group President of the largest organization in Nepal at that time, I was saddled with a sense of suffocation.

Two years into my career I was lucky to have a separate suite of my own—a great privilege then. However, my style was to visit other people’s offices. I did away with someone getting tea for me in my office, but kept a hotpot—something that stirred a lot of discussions in the senior management team. I was accused of giving way to disorder. I enjoyed creating small teams that could deliver. I enjoyed sharing meals and travelling with them. I have always believed that we work with humans and not machines; therefore, the human relationship was the key to making things happen (Griffin et al. 2007). More humble leader behaviour such as this actually leads to positive outcomes in an

organization (Owens and Hekman 2012). To help me realize this, I was given a lot of latitude by my former bosses to shape the way we worked. This was a sea change from the earlier hierarchy that loathed structure, but there was always resentment.

Starting beed, I was very clear: I wanted an open-office environment. I was the one who had to compromise the most, giving up assistants and private suites. People were surprised to find me in the “beed lab” (our working space) with others, including interns. For the business we were in, this made working easy. There was a practice of self-awareness developed in each facet of work. For instance, people devised ways of managing personal calls and later engaging in social media for personal purposes. No one directed anyone on how they should work. Everyone worked for a common goal (Griffin et al. 2007): to complete the assignment on time, to help the other person who needs help, to mentor the new ones who were struggling with steep learning curves on new projects, and so on. While travelling for work, the focus was on getting the work done and being aware of the expenses one was incurring. We did away with travel allowances and everyone had uniform, good-standard board and lodging facilities. While there were no budget limits, people developed limits on what they spent.

The open space produces lots of energy; it motivates people to push themselves outside their comfort zone. Small things become important: the noises you make; your basic hygiene habits, including body odour. Sharing becomes important and you develop an awareness of this, whether it is that snack you get, or the new movie you buy, or the charger for your phone. You are an individual but you are not saddled by the burden of your individuality. The most feedback we got from people who left us was how much they missed this open-office culture. How much they missed herding together (Ford et al. 2006) in the beed OT (Open Thought—Conference Room) and listening to updates on movies, sports, and the latest gossip in town, during breaks. This environment of naming places in a participative manner provides a congenial environment for mentoring and peer-to-peer learning (Sonenshein 2007). One informant summed up his three years at beed as follows:

[What] caught my attention at beed was the relative lack of competition among co-workers. When I chat with my friends who are working for the big four firms in the United States, they often talk about how excessive competition among co-workers creates an unhealthy work environment that leads to workers resenting one another. However, beeds believe in the success of the team rather than personal success, and competition is harnessed to facilitate growth rather than resentment. The seating arrangement and the fact that beeds are always ready to help each other excel and grow has led to a very friendly and lively work environment.

Brand Personality as the Organization's Core

I was introduced to a tool called Brand Vision by my friends Arun Anand and Rahul Sen when I was building my former organization. The tool basically provided ways to understand the brand vision of a company. It helped formulate the brand positioning statement. The core of the vision was its people. Therefore, the brand personality of the company was the heart of the brand. Before starting beed, we engaged in the brand vision exercise to develop our brand personality. The core was to “Unleash Yourself”. There were ten traits that a beed must possess and when they join, they should have at least six, if not seven, of them. We designed recruitment tools, from application forms to interview guidelines, to reflect this.

It was important that we recruited the right people who aligned with the brand. People who joined beed never had money or perks as their priority. There was no hierarchy, no fancy designations to flaunt. We attracted talents who wanted to unleash their potential and together, through mentoring, we unleashed the potential of the firm (Kiran et al. 2012). In fact, research shows that certain characteristics in the personality of protégés may influence the amount of potential they can unleash through mentoring activities in a company (Turban and Dougherty 1994).

The initial orientation includes questioning the status quo, such as watching the famous Apple television commercial of the early 1990s: “Here’s to the crazy ones”. This, along with Rabindranath Tagore’s

“Where the Mind is Without Fear”, dons the walls of the beed *baithak* (reception area). We pushed people to push themselves. The motive is very selfish! It is to further one’s own skills and personality traits, and move ahead (Friedman and Lobel 2003). This is through peer-mentoring techniques, teaching the protégé new skills to perform effectively in the workplace (Trautman 2007). The individual is always at the centre; the benefit to the individual is utmost. This process takes into consideration individual differences in social skills, and the role of the individual in the mentoring relationship (Wu et al. 2012). This is the best for organizations, compared to many places where people’s potential is left to rot or remains untapped due to organizational politics or myopia.

We continue to revisit our brand vision. We have now developed a Vision Mandala that even encompasses strategic management tools. We continue to push ourselves. The key is awareness of the transformation—a transformed person will only seek further transformation. This makes sense because individuals being mentored—who are in some ways transformed—tend to report higher satisfaction with their professional experience and higher commitment to their organization (Sanchez et al. 2006).

The Brand DNA

The brand DNA of beed is something everyone cherishes. It is “Dream, Achieve and Celebrate”. We dream big; everyone dreams big so, collectively, the dreams get bigger. It is not only to dream, but to achieve too. In one of the strategy sessions, we dreamt of working outside Nepal and turning ourselves into a global consulting firm. We embarked on doing assignments in Rwanda, in Africa. It was a great sense of achievement. It is important to set achievable dreams and achieve them. Then we celebrate this like no one else. Friends of beeds envy the way we celebrate. It means being aware of milestones and aware of our achievements too.

The DNA gets translated into each beed as everyone dreams for themselves. It could be travel, or acquiring a new toy, or acquiring a new set of skills. The collective DNA results in continuing the DNA

of the organization. In fact, “fun” has always been the keyword at beed, and when it ceased to be fun it became difficult. The culture of participatory discourse was the centre of everything. Retreats, parties, knowledge series, and town halls promoted the sense of fun and camaraderie. However, when it came to fundamentals of discipline, the no-tolerance policy was continuously in force as a reminder of the accepted norms of human behaviour.

Embracing Global Standards and Widening the Bandwidth

In Nepal, the challenge is that we have developed nationalism as an excuse to avoid meeting global standards. We are surrounded by accountants who do not want to enforce global audit and accounting practices, and legal professionals who continue to propagate why we need to have all documents in Nepali instead of English. This is their way of keeping international firms at bay, by rejoicing in the myopia created by protectionism (Sonenshein 2007). Nevertheless, we at beed decided to build an international firm. My dream was to be a true transnational. It reflected my persona. Our prepared reports meet international standards in content and presentation. The events we host are also of an international standard and we get flattered by comments; for example, people did not know whether they were in Geneva, New York, or Nepal.

The mentoring process needs people to be able to deliver world-class work and be global communicators. The bandwidth, or processing power to take on more work, involves being able to take a discourse into the board rooms of Washington D.C. or London to Nepal and get it implemented in the Nepali government offices over cups of tea, or take the vernacular discourse from Nepal to a global audience. The key success of the firms rested on this bandwidth and the way people were recognizing this tool as being one of the biggest comparative and competitive advantages of both the individual and the firm (Harung et al. 1995; Kiran et al. 2012).

“Unleashing You” Through Awareness

In today's world much of the planning for the future is limited to professional goals and ambitions. There is no personal side of planning. What happens to your personal relationships? What is the relationship you would like to develop with your parents, your spouse, your children, or your significant other? People just get into education and careers based on the pressure of their parents, or their peers, or what the flavour of the month is. Later on they realize their inner calling.

At this point, it is important to differentiate between coaching and mentoring, which is a unique relationship in the workplace, aimed to develop the protégé's professional skills (Humbard and Rouse 2016). Even though the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, mentoring is an aspect of coaching (Ogunyomi 2013). The firm was never developing its resources, it was helping people develop themselves and, many times, it resulted in the person actually leaving the organization. Awareness, in terms of an open mind and willingness to accept certain consequences, is an important part of the process.

At beed, we have seen people leave financial analysis and consulting to pursue careers in music, fashion design, handicrafts, or even becoming a full-time DJ. While there exists no definitive system in helping people understand their inner calling, the work environment pushes people to become aware of their inner calling. This helps deepen their understanding of what they need to focus on to become “engaged professionals and citizens in their organizations and communities” (Salimbene et al. 2005). The big question people start asking is, “What makes you happy?” (Damaske et al. 2016; Omanwa and Musyimi 2016).

Further, because the work objective is completely dependent on team performance and not individual performance, people start to compare with, share, and learn from others. This is helpful because, according to leadership research by Brown and Treviño (2014), “social learning theory posits that individuals learn what to do and how to behave largely by observing and emulating role models” (p. 588). The workers at beed start to think of their ideal work–life balance. They start prioritizing

what is important: issues with family, work, and social circles. The important part of life is that the personal side of issues is as important as the professional side. Ignoring the former, or not being able to plan the former, can impact professional life in a big way.

“Unleashing You” is now a proprietary Leadership Thinkshop also offered to outsiders. This is what an intern at beed, had to say about her experience of observing Thinkshops:

Motivation has always been important for me and I’ve felt the need for it in everything that I do. Whether it is a small gesture shown by a loved one, or someone inspirational, motivation gives meaning to my life and the drive to move forward. The Thinkshop experience was therefore a major eye-opener for me to delve into myself [and] explore the different possibilities that life has in store for me, be aware about the changes that take place around me, and consider its effects on myself and others.

Awareness of Knowledge as Power

Knowledge is power. With the Internet facilitating access to knowledge compared to twenty years ago, the challenge is to know how to use the Internet to the best of your ability for work or leisure. beed has ensured a high-speed Internet that has at times become one of the big attractions for interns wanting to join our company. People use the Internet as a resource tool and during breaks they are free to download movies. There is no control on Internet use and if you want you can be on Facebook and social media sites the whole day; no one is there to tell you what to do and what not to do. Again, the issue of self-discipline becomes important, being able to gauge the time spent online for work or leisure. The building of awareness around every dimension of work is the hallmark of the mentoring process (Dobbin and Kalev 2016; LePine et al. 2016).

There are also regular knowledge series that take place that basically allow people to learn about new things or enforce past learning. They range across a variety of issues. From guest speakers to internal presentations, the learning continues. Once again, these are collective

decisions about gaps in knowledge and which gaps everyone feels need to be filled. We developed our own oral communication-improvement tools based on the Toastmaster model and there is a no-holds-barred approach when it comes to sharing knowledge (Ford et al. 2006; McCollum 1999; Wright et al. 2007). At beed, these regular knowledge series, combined with mentoring relationships, provided important social support to our employees, which potentially helps them cope with workplace stress as their learning is enhanced (Yang et al. 2011).

Contributing Through Volunteerism

beed promoted a not-for-profit Nepal Economic Forum (NEF) that acts as a private-sector interface to economic growth. This not-for-profit produces its flagship product, #nefport, on a quarterly basis, and other publications, in addition to holding quarterly events. The NEF activities are made possible by beeds volunteering their time. The general 80:20 ratio is followed, where 20% of the time is spent on NEF activities. This has been a great model of how a not-for-profit without external funding can continue to create products and conduct events at practically zero overhead. In March 2016 NEF was the secretariat to the Himalayan Consensus Summit, a global initiative on alternative economic paradigms. beeds volunteered to ensure that this world-class event succeeded, which even shocked some visitors on how a quality event could be pulled together with such limited resources.

The awareness of gratitude and giving is also important. Yet it cannot be introduced through organizational rules and regulations. After the big earthquake in April 2015, beeds engaged in voluntary activities, such as going to the affected areas, or building support systems to volunteer groups. There were no instructions; people just did the best they could. While new people at beed followed suit with the same passion.

We continue to believe that financial resources are the least of the constraints in conducting many activities, while knowledge is one of the biggest constraints (McCollum 1999; Schmidt-Wilk 2000). beeds continue to volunteer and contribute across many sectors and fields.

Mentoring

Here is what Chandni Singh had to say on her own reflection on mentoring:

My first mentoring session was nerve wracking and I nearly choked on my sandwich. The expectations were so high I could barely look up, let alone match them. Although I had a tough assignment, what I did not expect was the growth, both personal and professional, that would ensue from living up to these expectations. Every time I let a sigh of relief, having achieved a certain milestone, a new one quickly emerged. It was taxing at first but since has become a way of life and pushed me on the way to reaching my potential and create my identity. I know I am not alone in this experience; many bees and beedterns have similar feedback, that their growth through the beed experience has been tremendous.

Mentoring also happens collectively through the beed Knowledge Series, which not only facilitates bonding, but is a great tool to share knowledge. In some sessions we share our experiences by, say, writing. My very useful take-away was to start my writing with the end in mind, to ensure that my writing is aware of the audience and stays focused. In other sessions, we hear stories from notable personalities such as Tashi Sherpa, from Sherpa Adventure Gear, whose experiences and achievements are truly inspirational. Still other sessions are used to share stories from trips bees have taken. These sessions have given me a glimpse into new places, and possibly even plan a trip to explore them for myself.³

Mentoring relationships are key to an organization's and its employees' success, as illustrated by recent management development studies (Dworkin et al. 2012; Lester et al. 2011). The effectiveness of these mentoring relationships depends in large part on the personal chemistry between two individuals; for example, they should be able to trust each other through emotional bonding (Banerjee-Batist and Reio 2016). When carried out effectively, mentoring relationships create training opportunities for protégés and help engage managers while eliminating their own biases (Dobbin and Kalev 2016).

Human and Cultural Integration

Humans have evolved in different environments. Even two siblings who are raised in the same household, going to the same school, engaging in the same extra-curricular activities and brought up in the same traditions evolve to become different individuals. At birth, there is also the sense of building awareness of oneself as a different human being—different from others but requiring one to integrate (Schmidt-Wilk 2000).

In a country where gender empowerment has become a big business and not something to be internalized, we have worked to provide a platform where there are no differences between men and women (Omanwa and Musyimi 2016). They are given equal opportunities and female workers never feel discriminated against, which is often the case elsewhere, especially with regard to first-time directors and mentoring (Dworkin et al. 2012; McDonald and Westphal 2013). Rather than trying to make big statements on equality that are never followed by action, we have continued to integrate equality in the way we approach people, and the expectation from others also remains the same.

Bonding becomes important, over lunches, breaks, and weekend activities. The awareness to co-exist is vital. Co-existence cannot be achieved in isolation. There has to be a strong sense of compromising one's position. There has to be space provided for others, with constant give-and-take processes. This ensures that there are cultural sensitivities, such as food habits, festivities, or religious activities.

This skill ensures that you can become a global worker. The success of the team working across different geographies in Nepal and outside is how you can co-exist. It may challenge one's culinary habits, the way you live, and the manner in which you go about your day-to-day life. Rwanda was a different world for the team: different language, food, culture, and work habits. It did take a lot of time to integrate with the locals, as the foundation is to be able to build up your co-existence skills. As Langer (1992) expresses, "Language is shared by a community of speakers and listeners...where the individual is aware of alternative perspectives and conceptions of what is being said" (p. 327). This cultural and interpersonal awareness is vital for developing global co-existence skills.

Spending Time

I have enjoyed spending time with the beeds in different settings. Spending time with protégés is very important, as one of the sore points for protégés is lack of time spent with the mentor, what is referred to as distancing behaviour (Eby et al. 2000). I have used coaching tools to help them develop their potential (Friedman and Lobel 2003). My interest in unleashing people's potential prompted me to earn a certificate from Columbia University. I learnt a lot from my fellow participants. I learnt how one cannot impose work habits and thought processes on people. I continued to believe in working on the awareness framework and pushing levels of awareness (Schmidt-Wilk 2000). In my research paper I wrote on "Buddha as a Coach"; my framework was designed to understand these concepts based on the Buddhist principles of mindfulness, awareness, and presence. I continue to use them across geographies using secular tools. I have tried to redefine the word "meditation" for myself. Learning is meditative; the awareness in the learning process is even more meditative.

I am happy that in over eight years of existence, more than 125 people have gone through the beed experience, many as interns and fellows. I get feedback from their family members, friends, and acquaintances. I see them in their universities, jobs, and in different social settings. They cherish the beed intervention in their lives. We continue to be a sought-after destination for internships and fellowships. We continue to improve our processes as we continue to believe in the words of Buddha, "If there is one corner in your life that you can change, it is yourself".

Notes

1. "beed" is written in small letters, not capitals. According to Sujeev Shakra, the Founder and CEO of beed, "We use small letters to depict 'humility'".
2. Singh, Chandni, 2013 <http://beed.com.np/beed-insights/article.php?id=53>.
3. Singh, Chandni, 2013 <http://beed.com.np/beed-insights/article.php?id=53>.

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9

The Art of Mentoring: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Pitfalls

Rajiv Gupta

Introduction: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Thought

Mentoring as a concept is not alien to the Indian subcontinent. Mentoring and its practice find its roots in Indian mythology, where Lord Krishna mentors Arjunaduring during the Kurukshetra War in the Indian epic Mahabharata. In ancient Indian history we also find that Chanakya, the royal advisor, had mentored Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan Empire, to conquer and consolidate a large empire.

The centuries-old *guru–shishyaparampara* (teacher–student tradition) is testimony to the fact that mentoring played an integral part not only in the intellectual development but also in the holistic development of students/disciples/learners. Our earliest texts made special mention of

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the importance of the mentor–mentee relationship. It has been given this the garb of divinity, as the mentor is considered to have divine power, or is equated with God. Not only the teacher but also others in the mentee's social sphere like parents, friends, elders of the community and so on, exert a constructive influence on the mentee's overall development, ranging from professional to psychosocial. At the heart of this concept is the mentor's willingness to teach and guide and the mentee's willingness to be guided.

The divine nature of the mentor–mentee relationship has long been discarded and has now been replaced with the general perception that mentoring is an adult learning partnership programme in which senior leaders in an organization play the role of a mentor in assisting mentees (employees) to advance their careers. Today, if we look around us, we will find several live examples of mentoring in the public domain—a senior doctor mentoring his or her protégé (mentee), a sportsperson, corporate czars, a manager and so on, mentoring their juniors and so on. In most cases the boss, by default, is the mentor in the organization. Only in some cases a mentor who is not the boss is assigned. All in all, one person is assigned as a mentor to a mentee. But the question does the boss/designated mentor alone contribute to the development or are other players involved? Before we address mentoring in the Indian context, let us see what some of experts in the field have to say in their research.

Higgins and Kram (2001) indicated that adult development and career theorists have long espoused the benefits of a mentoring relationship for an individual's personal and professional development (Dalton et al. 1977; Hall 1976; Kram 1985; Levinson et al. 1978). Since these seminal studies, quite a lot has been learnt about the nature and benefits of traditional forms of mentoring. A 'traditional' mentoring relationship is one in which a senior person working in the protégé's organization assists with the protégé's personal and professional development (e.g., Fagenson 1989; Ostroff and Kozlowski 1993; Ragins and McFarlin 1990). Moreover, the mentor generally provides high amounts of both career and psychosocial assistance (Thomas and Kram 1988). Studies have shown that some of the career consequences of having a traditional mentoring relationship are related to enhanced career development

(Kram 1985; Phillips-Jones 1982), career progress (Zey 1984), higher rates of promotion and total compensation (Whitely et al. 1991), career satisfaction (Fagenson 1989; Riley and Wrench 1985; Roche 1979) and clarity of professional identity and sense of competence (Kram 1985).

Distinctions among terms that apply to mentoring relationships—mentor, sponsor, coach and peer—have all been made (Chao 1998). Scholars have distinguished between true mentors, who provide high amounts of both career and psychosocial support, and sponsors, who provide high amounts of career support but low amounts of psychosocial support (Thomas and Kram 1988). Rather than add to this list, an overarching term has been provided for people the protégé names as providing developmental assistance (i.e., career and psychosocial support): developers. This is similar to calling the individuals in one's advice network 'advisors' (e.g., Ibarra and Andrews 1993). Thus, an individual's developmental network may include, but is not limited to, a single, traditional mentoring relationship.

Developmental assistance means two types of support studied by mentoring scholars: (1) career support, such as exposure and visibility, sponsorship and protection; and (2) psychosocial support, such as friendship, counselling, acceptance and confirmation, and sharing beyond work (Kram 1985; Thomas 1993).

The phenomenon of mentoring—that is, the provision of career and psychosocial support—is of primary interest, but who provides such support and how it is provided are now more in question, especially when it comes to the concept of mentoring in India because, given the high power distance equation, and also the fact that in formal mentoring programmes the boss is also often the mentor, it is more challenging for a protégé to build up a developmental network of several mentors (such a network is being seen by scholars to be more advantageous than the traditional one-to-one mentoring [Kram 1985]). In a few studies, researchers have examined sources of mentoring support beyond a traditional or primary mentor. For example, Kram and Isabella (1985) examined peer relationships and the types of support they tend to provide. They demonstrated that although different subcategories of help are provided by different types of peers, at a more general level, these

forms of assistance are indeed career and psychosocial in nature and, thus, serve mentoring functions.

Taking the above research into consideration, we shall see how mentoring is undertaken in India, especially in relation to corporate dynamics.

How Mentoring Relationships Evolve

Mentoring today seems to be a new fad in India. Teachers/trainers are now called mentors. Those preparing you to crack a competitive exam, a counsellor who tells you what course is best for you, advisors on boards of companies, consultants empanelled by organizations and several other people in similar roles find it safe and respectable to call themselves mentors—notwithstanding the fact that their assignments might be contractual, bound by an agreed remuneration.

In this chapter we define mentoring as a relationship between a senior and a junior coworker in a workplace where the protégé seeks out career guidance, performance-related inputs and other support from a mentor that could help him do better professionally. In some cases, the mentor and mentee can be peers.

At times mentoring could take on the hue of the age-old *guru–shishya* relationship mentioned earlier. This happens especially when a very senior colleague is looked up to in awe and admiration by the protégé.

On the other hand, the relationship could just be simple camaraderie between two friends who may have worked or studied together at some point in the same organization, or known each other some other way. They could be working in different organizations and act as peer mentors to each other. They share professional pains and concerns, and learn a thing or two about how to deal with them. They find that their bonding and trust helps them share thoughts with each other and seek solutions. In some cases, these ‘equal’ relationships could be between two coworkers in the same organization. However, professional rivalry and a desire to do better than the other (when they are working in the same organization) can sometimes jeopardize the sustainability of these relationships. The bell-shaped curve that compels appraisers to rank each

employee in a department and to classify them from being super-performers to poor performers does not help either.

Thus, mentoring relationships often emerge on their own, without having to be consciously developed. A good and caring boss who likes to share his wisdom, an affable senior who seems to be a 'nice guy', a coworker who is a *gyani* (or a wise man) whose advice is often right and who shares a good personal rapport with you, a friend/contact in one's professional network with whom interacting is a gratifying experience, any of these could randomly lead to a mentoring relationship.

In the Indian corporate sector, few companies have a formal and structured mentoring programme. Some are doing work in this direction but examples of well-established mentoring frameworks that have stood the test of time are limited.

'The Boss' as Mentor—Examples of Dysfunctional Relationships

In a large number of instances, the boss is the de facto mentor. A boss is supposedly capable, knowledgeable, skilled and fully competent to be one's mentor. In fact, many bosses believe that no one else can be a mentor to their reportee. This seems to be the belief by and large.

This is fine as long as the boss is one who truly has the required expertise to be a mentor. And also assuming he is apolitical, fair and believes in the development of his team. This, however, is not always the case. Many bosses by nature are opinionated and judgemental. They quickly come to conclusions about what ails the subordinate and what qualities are good in her/him. This opinion could form very early in the working relationship.

This kind of a mentor can actually harm the development process. A protégé with an impressionable mind (who is likely to believe in his senior's judgement) is exposed to the risk of starting to doubt his capabilities (if the boss mostly finds fault). On the other hand, a protégé may develop a blind spot to his/her shortcomings if he/she is perpetually praised and pampered by the boss. Having a biased, opinionated

boss without the natural aptitude of being a mentor, can adversely affect the development of a mentee.

Mr. Kapoor¹ was the Senior Editor in a publication company. The company hired trainees every year in various departments. As a part of the trainee mentoring programme, these trainees were assigned to a senior person in the organization for initial mentoring. The purpose behind this exercise was to identify the aptitude of the trainees and thus advance them in the organization. Those who didn't get through the first year would not be absorbed into the company. This year the onerous task of being responsible for the trainees was given to Mr. Kapoor.

Eight trainees had been hired that year, including two females. Mr. Kapoor was not too happy since he was of the firm opinion that women had no place in the publishing business. He believed they had no commitment, could not work long hours and would bail out the minute they had a family emergency. One of the male trainees, Atul, was a distant relative of the Editor-in-Chief. Although the Editor-in-Chief was very clear that Atul was to be given no special treatment, Mr. Kapoor saw in him his ticket to promotion.

Mr. Kapoor was so biased against the women in his team that he basically neglected them. He withheld assignments from them, rated them poorly (although both girls had glowing recommendations from their respective alma maters,) and assigned them jobs that had no bearing on their interests or aptitudes. He was always evasive if they called on him for support and cited his busy schedule. On the other hand the boys were given plum assignments as per their strengths and inclinations. Atul, who was nowhere as good as the other candidates, was given special attention by Mr. Kapoor. His mistakes were covered up and his substandard work was glossed over into something passable, although his performance was below par. The women were no fools. They sought an appointment with an HR department representative and expressed their concerns. An enquiry was conducted and Mr. Kapoor was replaced as the mentor. Atul was not on the list of appointments the following year. He did not make the cut. While things turned out well in the end, the mentor's biases had led to a loss of mentee time and development, and was also emotionally draining for them.

Even if a boss does not belong to this category and takes his time to arrive at conclusions about people, we need to recognize the contextual

element of most organizations—that the boss is also the appraiser. He has to slot people into ‘The Good, The Bad and the Ugly’, as everyone cannot be given the highest increment or promotion. Once he has done so, he needs to be able to defend it. His developmental feedback given to a protégé is thus coloured by the appraisal rating he has given or plans to give.

A subordinate, on the other hand, who gets a lower than expected rating will often have difficulty in accepting his boss as a good mentor. In such a situation, the mentee may not be open to receiving inputs from the boss, as his angst would take precedence over empathetic listening.

Shalini worked in the public relations department of a reputed fashion house and was known to be a star performer. She was by far the brightest among her peers and everyone was of the opinion that she would be climbing the ladder to success in no time. Seeing that she had a natural flair for working with various media outlets, the company asked the public relations (PR) head to take her under his wing and mentor her in the nuances of various practical aspects of PR. Shalini was ecstatic at the opportunity of learning first-hand from a senior colleague, who would not have been accessible to her in normal circumstances.

Her new boss was a nice person and genuinely seemed to have her interests at heart. He shared a lot of knowledge with her and gave appropriate guidance whenever required, while taking care she did not get overly dependent on him. But at his core he was also a manager. He had other employees to manage and did not want to be seen as favouring one employee over another. During their mentoring discussions, he not only became aware of Shalini’s thoughts and dreams but also her mistakes, weaknesses and blindspots. In fact, Shalini had shared in good faith her fears, anxieties and vulnerabilities with her boss, hoping to get advice to manage these weak spots. It so happened that the information shared confidentially during the mentoring discussions found their way into the annual performance review. In the endeavour to appear fair to all his department employees, he tempered down her achievements by highlighting her mistakes and weak spots, thus putting a block on her fast track to success. Everyone was surprised at the review, but above all it was Shalini who felt that her trust had been betrayed.

No wonder then that many subordinates are perpetually in 'trying to impress' mode. They do not like to share their vulnerabilities, dilemmas or discomfort so that they can continue to appear as good and strong in their bosses' minds. On the other hand, many managers use appraisal as a tool to safeguard and impress upon subordinates their power and position over them. In both types of case, the essence of mentoring is lost. The prerequisite of effective mentoring—which includes being natural, spontaneous, off guard, so that the conversations are made in deep trust, empathy and understanding—does not exist in such cases.

Can a mentee who realizes that his boss is not a good mentor reach out to other people in the organization?

Finding a Mentor in the Organisation Who Is not Your Boss

If someone wants a mentor other than his/her immediate boss, would that be acceptable?

Imagine a person reaching out to a senior who is at a similar level to his/her immediate boss, in terms of hierarchy, to seek out his/her guidance. If his boss finds him/her spending time with this other senior, what is the first question that is likely to come to mind? Why is he/she discussing things with this person? What business does he/she have? Why doesn't he/she talk through me? What is brewing that he/she chooses to speak to this other person? Given the way organizational hierarchies are set up, one cannot directly approach another department head. This would need to be done through one's immediate boss. Now, if a subordinate who is reporting to a manager (let us say, of the sales department) is seen spending time with another departmental manager (say, the marketing head), it will raise doubts in the mind of the former about what is really going on.

If the mentee says that he/she was seeking out mentoring, it would be seen as an act of defiance, sacrilege and doubting the competence of the reporting manager. A heightened sense of insecurity might even lead the boss to imagine that the subordinate was trying to scheme against

him/her, that he/she was collaborating with another senior to bring his/her position down.

In case the mentor belonged to another division (for example, a subordinate in marketing reaches out to a mentor in the manufacturing division), it might be misconstrued as the mentee trying to build a bridge to move out of marketing into manufacturing.

Mr. Chaterjee considered himself to be a friend, philosopher and guide to his employees. He professed that his doors were always open and would not hesitate to lend an ear to anyone who came to him for guidance. That was what he thought but his employees knew better, especially after what had happened with Kartik the previous year. Kartik was Mr. Chaterjee's favourite protégé and Kartik reciprocated with appropriate respect and gratefulness. He had been associated with the business development division since he had joined as a trainee and became a manager in just 5 years, whereas in normal circumstances it would take anyone 7–8 years to do the same. Mr. Chaterjee believed his guidance to be the key enabler of Kartik's success, which was true to an extent.

One day the head of the strategic planning and projects division, Mr. Sinha, approached Kartik and asked him whether he would be interested in a Senior Manager position which was to be advertised soon. Mr. Sinha had observed his career graph and was confident that someone like him would add considerable value to the division. Kartik was elated. Apart from the raise in position and remuneration, it was the profile that excited him. He said he would consider and get it back to him. He went to discuss this with his mentor and receive his blessings. But he did not foresee the reaction of Mr. Chaterjee, who was furious. How could Kartik think of leaving him after so much effort was put into his development? It was because of him and his guidance that Kartik was even being considered for a better profile. Where would he be otherwise? How could he let go of him so easily? Mr. Chaterjee felt cheated and betrayed and vowed to make things difficult for the 'ungrateful' Kartik, which is exactly what he did. It was another six harrowing months before Kartik managed to get officially transferred to the projects division.

A possessive mentor who believes that everything has to be provided by him alone sees it as a betrayal if his protégé reaches out to

someone else. It is an act which undermines his sense of security and completeness.

Mentors Outside the Workplace

People often seek mentors outside their workplace as that is the only safe bet. These people could be one's ex-boss or a senior who now works in a different organization. Or they could be people well placed in key positions and known through family networks.

However, in a large proportion of cases, the objective is to get a better job through contacts/references and to keep such a person in good humour so as to act as one's referee in case a prospective employee wants to do a reference check. It is a common belief that one must reach out to those who are in a position of power and influence and seek their guidance for career progression. The benefactor also knows that the mentee is not coming to him to learn anything professionally or to be transformed. Even if the mentor shares his/her advice, the protégé may not be listening deeply but only appear to be paying attention so as to remain courteous. The relationship is often self-seeking for the mentee. Mentors do not pay too much attention to the fact that the mentee has a deep self-interest. Over time, this comes to be accepted as it is also somewhat part of our culture and society—someone with power will be sought for help and would act as a benefactor to bestow his kindness.

Its roots might be in our patriarchal structure. It bolsters the mentor's ego to see someone pay so much respect to them. They may or may not eventually do much. The mentee also knows that there is no guarantee that the mentor would help, but sees no harm in trying. The mentor also plays along—he doesn't mind giving assurances that he will do something. In some instances, the mentor may have some interest—where he/she is from the same industry, the interaction may help him to get insider information.

Even in those few exceptional situations where the intention of protégé is to seek genuine advice, there may be pitfalls. Since there is no formal training on how to coach and mentor, the mentors often keep sharing the same repetitive stuff, especially personal examples from

their lives that they are proud of and which have been told several times before. These sermons often fall on the bored ears of mentees.

In rare instances, these relationships are symbiotic. The protégé may be bright and the senior may enjoy his/her company, feel intellectually engaged and also gain insights into what is going on in the world in general. The mentee on the other hand is able to see a mirror in the face of mentor and find solutions to his dilemmas and shortcomings.

How Much Honest Feedback Can the Mentor Provide?

The mentor often takes the easy path of saying only good things to the mentee, even though he/she is supposed to bring about positive change for which he/she needs to honestly point out shortcomings or limiting factors of the mentee. The mentor knows that doing so would hurt and annoy the mentee. He is aware that very few people have the ability to listen to their shortcomings with an open mind. Many start perceiving the person giving such feedback as their enemy. In an extreme case, the mentee may even walk away from such a relationship as he only wants to listen to good things about himself. Therefore, scratching each other's back through an informal, 'mutual admiration club' often becomes the norm. No one benefits, neither mentor nor mentee.

Referring back to the example of the trainee mentor programme in the publication house, if Mr. Kapoor had been honest with Atul early on in the programme, so much time would not have been wasted and probably Atul, although initially upset, would have come to realize over time that actually a great service was done to him by actually spelling out where his weaknesses lay.

Ex-Bosses as Mentors

At times a relationship in which one's ex-boss continues as a mentor, works quite effectively.

After Ajay moved out of a company his ex-boss, who continued in a key position in that organization, cared to keep in touch. Ajay was an excellent listener and had developed a deep bond with his boss. His ability to

listen and share new viewpoints encouraged the senior to keep in touch and they met once in a year over lunch whenever they were in the same town. It was very clear that Ajay did not want to go back to his previous employer. So, while the senior did help in several other ways by introducing people in the industry to Ajay, the essence of the relationship sharing experiences and exchanging thoughts and perspectives.

Deepak's boss, who was very senior in his current organization, moved to a very small organization. He could thus never have hired Deepak. Deepak made a point of keeping in touch and met him at least once every few months. He even found an excuse to do so through formally interviewing him for a research-based article that he was writing on CEOs. The relationship continued to prosper based on mutual trust. Neither sought anything from the other.

The MD of Vikas's company had retired 2 years previously and not taken up any other assignment. Vikas reached out to him and visited his home. He just expressed his gratitude for whatever he had learnt and the support he had got. He did not seek any favour. This blossomed into an excellent mentor-mentee relationship.

Friends as Mentors

A mentor who is not superior to the mentee in any manner and is an equal is also an excellent model of a mentor. Instances when one is comfortable sharing one's failures, humiliations, fears, insecurities and plight without worrying about being diminished in the other's eyes, work the best. The relationship in such cases has matured beyond trying to prove oneself to the other. One is assured that the mentor-friend would still hold him in high esteem irrespective of such a conversation. When two people meet with such intent, transformational mentoring relationships can emerge.

For example:

When Steve Jobs accidentally walked into Robert Friedland's room to sell his typewriter, he sparked off a bond of friendship that would last long enough to effect a serious change in Steve Jobs's attitude and working methods. According to the founder of Apple, 'He turned me on to a

different level of consciousness.’ The mentor in this case had pulled his mentee out of his shell and turned him into a more open and extrovert personality, (Arora [2012](#)).

Conclusion

A. Having a mentor who has the capability to guide as well as having the best interests of the protégé at heart, can make a crucial difference between a highly successful career and an uneventful one.

Chandler et al. ([2011](#)) have stated that in today’s turbulent career environment, there is a greater need for people to engage others in their career and personal development (Arthur et al. [2005](#); Higgins and Kram [2001](#)). The current reality is that at some point everyone is a novice, and individuals will experience mini-learning cycles throughout their careers as they transition between and within organizations (Hall and Chandler [2007](#)). Individuals are faced with the choice of managing their career development in isolation of others or of fostering developmental alliances.

B. Finding the mentor at the right stage of one’s career is equally crucial. Mentoring, if done well, is no doubt useful for the protégé. After roughly 30 years of research since Levinson et al. ([1978](#)) identified a mentor as developmentally critical in early adulthood, a significant body of scholarship highlights the value of mentoring for individuals and organizations, as well as the challenges associated with it (Allen et al. [2004](#); Kammeyer-Mueller and Judge [2008](#); Ragins and Kram [2007](#); Underhill [2006](#)).

C. Supervisor as mentor has to be handled by organizations with care.

In spite of the current economic downturn in which organizations have slashed their budgets for employee training and development (Capelli [2008](#)), HR professionals continue to design formal mentoring programmes that match mentors (often the direct supervisor) and protégés to aid employee career growth and advancement and to shape their contexts to provide conditions in which both formal and informal mentoring can flourish. These continue to be recognized as essential to effective talent development and succession planning.

Having one's immediate boss as a mentor is an excellent model provided that he/she has the skill, attitude, empathy and competence to be a mentor. In case one can find such a mentor, it is an excellent way to grow personally and professionally and get virtually real-time feedback on one's strengths and weaknesses, as one would be under the watchful eyes of the mentor/boss. While having a boss as a mentor is a good model to have, this may not always be possible. The immediate boss may not have it in him/her to be a mentor.

D. In India/South Asia, organizations that have a formal system of appointing (or facilitating finding) a mentor are limited, though growing. Irrespective of whether or not the organization has such a programme, it would benefit one to make conscious efforts to find a suitable mentor. Also, finding a mentor should not be left to chance as it could lead to negative mentoring experiences for the protégé (Kumar & Blake-Beard 2012).

E. Finding a mentor (other than one's boss) within one's organization has several advantages. He/she can provide context by knowing the inner workings, better understanding the root cause of things/issues, being aware of what will work and what will not in the organization. Also, he/she has the opportunity to watch the protégé live in action. However, often the challenge is that the immediate boss may be threatened and uncomfortable to see his subordinate seeking mentoring or guidance from someone else in the organization.

Hence, on balance, one may want to look outside one's organization for a mentor. Ex-bosses or senior employees who no longer work with the organization can serve as excellent mentors. They are aware of the work culture and dynamics of the organization and can better relate to a protégé's predicament.

Ideally, good mentors are those who:

- feel true joy in seeing the progress of their mentees; they have empathy, compassion and a deep love of seeing people do well
- have loads of patience and can bear the stressful stories of mentees without getting drained
- are curious, continuously reading and gathering new information and experiences, so that they have new stuff to talk about each

time they meet the mentee (and not bore them by repeating old sermons or anecdotes)

- are complete in themselves and have a high sense of self.

A mentee, on the other hand, can help to build a nurturing relationship with the mentor when:

- they are not seeking any favour or help overtly and do not reach out to these seniors or bosses just for a job change or reference, but do reach out just to keep in touch
- the mentee had established a bond and rapport with the mentor when they were working together, feeling that the mentor was a good human being and had always treated him fairly
- there was gratitude in the mentee for what the mentor had already done rather than a craving to extract something out of him
- the mentee had the ability to get the mentor energized, intellectually engaged and come out richer after every interaction. One said, 'If you really think my advice has helped you, and then let me tell you that it is you who brought it out from within me.'
- the mentee was not trying to impress the mentor and shared all his/her follies and failures blatantly, facilitated by the fact that the mentor was not appraising the mentee.

Perhaps one needs to weave the best from Western and ancient Indian models of mentoring to establish best practice for the modern Indian workplace.

To end, let us look at an example of two wrestlers, Yogeshwar Dutt and Bajrang Kumar who always eat, live and spar together at national camps and competitions, much like the 'ashrams' that generally require worldly ties be cut off as the disciple soaks in knowledge.

Dutt, who won India's first Asian Games gold medal in 28 years when he collected the 65-kg freestyle title at Incheon, is both an example and a teacher to Bajrang, who won silver in the 61-kg freestyle division.

'I feel my job is not just to win medals for India but to ensure the successes are carried on,' said Dutt. 'I try to teach Bajrang every possible nuance of wrestling and virtually each part of his day is monitored by me.'

'I've been improving with each competition and Dutt's contribution is immense,' Bajrang said of his 5 years under Dutt's tutelage. 'He is an inspiration, elder brother and Guru (teacher) all rolled into one. I virtually do everything according to what he says, including the way I practice and what I eat' (<http://www.firstpost.com/sports/yogeshwar-sushil-unique-mentoring-system-indian-wrestling-1740121.html>). Accessed 5 Nov 2016.

Note

1. The names in each of the caselets have been changed.

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10

Social Stigma Stifles Growth: Challenges for an Executive Coach

Ajay Goyal

Let's Start at the Very Beginning—the Stigma Around Coaching!

Let me tell you an interesting story from my childhood—my first brush with coaching!

Born into a family of Einsteins, I did not initially realize that I was the odd one out. But during my journey of growing up with my brilliant cousins in the serene ambience of Ajmer, way back in the 1960s, I became conscious that my world needed something that was alien to everyone else in my family—tuition!

Indeed, none of the exceptional scholars in my family ever needed extra classes or tuition to be the best in their class, especially in science. But I was different—I desperately needed help with this subject and soon resolved to overcome my impediment. But the decision I took

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led to a tsunami of emotions and became the well-guarded secret of the family—I started taking tuition classes out of school!

My parents' initial reaction was to recoil in shock. How could their son bring shame to the family by attending tuition classes? They eventually relented under one condition—this would have to be a top-secret affair. I grudgingly agreed and started my furtive visits to the tuition class, with every instance of my disappearance from home shrouded under a cloak of mystery. No one could know where I was going—I always had to come up with an exciting story to explain my mysterious sojourns to any curious onlooker. My childhood was, indeed, tough!

However, over the years, the stigma around tuition started to fade as people realized that the pace of learning and intellectual capability varied across individuals. Parents started acknowledging that while their children did exceedingly well in certain subjects, they possibly needed help with a few others. They began accepting that tuition, or some other form of extra support, could go a long way in filling this gap in comprehension.

Let us now fast forward to the present-day—the transformation is unbelievable! Tuition and extra classes (or educational coaching) have become not only the order of the day but also a matter of pride for many parents. In total contradiction to the old times, students who do **not** attend tuition classes are now frowned upon. The almost 40-year transformational journey of educational coaching (or tuition) from its stigmatic existence to its glorified status in today's world is overwhelming. This changeover is true for many more such initiatives.

Strangely, history repeats itself in modern times with executive coaching in the corporate world. While coaching is a well-accepted practice in Western countries, as one of the most recently developed services, coaching is still in its infancy in India. Just at the beginning of its evolution, executive coaching in today's business environment has a long way to go before it entirely combats the associated stigma.

Why is that? Well, there are plenty of reasons.

- In the current corporate environment, reaching out to a coach is often considered a weakness. Thus, executives often prefer to keep their problems close to their chest, rather than seek a coach. Despite

being a developmental activity aimed at shaping potential leaders in an organization, coaching is often buried under many perceived misconceptions, which leads some executives to feel insecure about the concept. They often fear that they have been chosen for coaching because their performance does not meet the required standards. Thus, they completely miss the bigger picture that the company considers them to have the potential to be future leaders. Hence, the possible leaders of tomorrow either avoid coaching or get through the sessions reluctantly thereby not realizing the full value of the coaching.

- People tend to take advice from misinformed and unskilled sources instead of qualified experts. For example, executives in need of a coach many times prefer talking to their parents or friends. Despite being well-meaning individuals, these sources speak more from their own experiences, prejudices and beliefs rather than approaching the executive's requirement from a professional perspective, often missing the larger picture the executive may have.
- The situation might worsen if the executive seeks a coach in a manager who actually has a hidden agenda. In such instances, the manager might, for example, prevent any intervention from a professional coach for fear of the executive leaving the team for a better role within the organization. Of course, it is possible that such managers might eventually realize that this negative approach is not in the best interests of their executives, and they may later encourage them to look for relevant opportunities outside the department or even with another company.
- Coaching is often confused with correction or solving all organizational problems. Many businesses do not understand what coaching is and what benefits it can achieve. Thus, coaching is often used by organizations as a panacea for all corporate concerns. This lack of information has led to a lot of misconceptions, serving only to further increase the associated stigma.
- As one of the most recently developed services, coaching is still in its infancy in India. Hence, many organizations feel that coaches, or providers, require no minimum qualification. With hardly any coaching-specific licensing laws in existence, anyone can bear the title

of Coach. The credentials that follow a coach's name on their business card may not have any legal definition and varies depending on the programmes they attended.

If executive coaching is associated with so many misconceptions, then why not clarify what the concept actually means? So, let us start at the very beginning!

What Is Executive Coaching All About?

To understand the term “coaching” and its guiding principles, we need first to learn various terms and their meanings.

Who Is a Coach?

A coach is a guide who helps clients to brainstorm ideas, challenging them to find answers. The clients confront their limiting beliefs and prejudices to walk boldly out of their comfort zones. In the process of seeking answers, they develop fresh perspectives that help them move towards excellence. The pace of transformation is chosen by the client, with the coach acting as a safety net, always walking alongside the client.

A coach supports clients in setting their own goals with the enhanced self-awareness and responsibility of what is important for them in various areas of their life. Once the client has chosen these goals the coach follows various coaching skills and tools and coaches the client over a period. A coach's emphasis is on the client's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in relation to the set goals. Coaching is for both the goals and individuals who may be confronted with the beliefs they have about achieving these goals which are so dear to them. Clients have “aha” moments when they see the simple thing that is stopping them from playing big in their life and what is between them and their goals.

What Services Are Similar to Coaching?

Although the role of a coach has now begun to take shape, there are more questions to be resolved. To shed light on the concept of coaching, we need first to understand specific personal or organizational support services that are similar to coaching, but in comparison to which professional coaching is indeed different.

- **Consulting: consulting delivers answers to your specific problem through expert knowledge.** A consultant is knowledgeable and has expertise. A consultation is usually a short-term engagement on a specific topic where the consultant works with individuals, families, groups or organizations. Teaching or training could also at times be part of this engagement.
- **Counselling:** the focus is on gaining relief from distress through a counsellor who has the ability to build trust and openness in you and work with you so you can cope with distress, adapt to situations and build skills to overcome adversities. Your counsellor guides you in assessing specific patterns in your life that will help you gain a better understanding of yourself and support you in building unique, adaptive methods of coping. The relationship is most fruitful when your counsellor is understanding, accepting and authentic.
- **Psychotherapy:** a longer process than counselling with a deeper association, where clients seek modes of making in-depth and significant changes within themselves. Depth psychotherapy, a branch of psychotherapy, involves
 - uncovering early history
 - becoming conscious of all parts of one's self
 - improving awareness and expression of one's self
 - sharing dreams, ambitions, hopes, daydreams, narrative stories, metaphorical experiences, intuitions, bodily sensations and the experience of one's self in relationship to the therapist.
- **Mentoring:** a relationship where an expert with immense knowledge and expertise in a specific field provides guidance and wisdom

to newcomers or less experienced individuals. A mentor is the expert who provides this guidance on the strength of his or her expertise and experience. Mentoring may include, but is not limited to, guiding and coaching, but it does not include counselling or advising, and instead focuses on individuals or groups reaching their own pre-defined objectives. Of all the related services, coaching is closest to mentoring; hence these terms are often confused with each other. But there are significant differences between the two specializations.

Coaching is task oriented, short term, performance driven, requires no design and the immediate manager is a critical partner.

Mentoring is relationship oriented, always long term, development driven, requires a design phase to determine the strategic purpose and has an indirect involvement of the immediate manager.

- **Training programmes:** curriculums based on predetermined objectives set out by the trainer or instructor. The objectives of training programmes are clarified at the beginning of the process. They can be set by the individual or the team that is being coached, with guidance provided by the trainer. Training traverses a linear learning path that follows an established curriculum. Coaching, in comparison, is less linear and does not include a set curriculum.
- **Athletic development:** although sport metaphors are commonly used in executive coaching, sports coaching is quite different. An athletic coach is an expert who guides, oversees and directs individual or team behaviour based on experience and knowledge. Professional coaches possess all the qualities they deliver training in, and the experience and knowledge gained by the individual or team navigates the direction and success of the athletic development. In addition, professional coaching, in contrast to athletic development, does not concentrate on correcting behaviours that are executed poorly. Instead, the focal point is the identification of every opportunity for development in terms of individual capabilities and strengths.

What Is Coaching and What Are the Characteristics of a Treasured Coach?

Now that we have a clear understanding of the various forms of mediation, let us come up with an ideal definition for coaching. What does quintessential coaching look like?

Coaching is defined by experts in the field in different ways and may sometimes use jargon. I have attempted to put it in simple words. Coaching is about bridging the gap between the ideal situation and the current situation.

Effective coaches are, indeed, comparable to the coaches and carriages from the past. The purpose of these coaches was to assist people in their long journey towards their destination in the quickest possible time and to provide the best possible security—certainly not an easy feat in those times, given the atrocious state of the roads (full of barriers and unexpected obstacles) and frequent incidences of coming across brigandage. All these complexities meant that the journey was filled with uncertainty, ambiguity, complexity and volatility. In this context the purpose of the coach was to ensure that its passengers reached their destination safely.

Similarly, the purpose of coaching is to bring out the hidden potential in individuals, taking them to their destination of optimal performance in their lives.

Although anybody can claim to be a coach, there are certain minimum competencies required and it is expected that clients make the effort to check whether a coach brings these skills or not before opting for their coach. These include rapport building, deep listening, giving constructive feedback, asking the powerful questions, using intuition to guide the outcome, challenging existing beliefs and holding the client accountable.

It may sound a little strange but the coach need not have relevant experience or knowledge in the area where the coachee's development is sought. However, the coach must be an expert in the process of change. There are elements of mutual collaboration, it is a partnership of equals and the agenda is purely driven by the client. The coachee is an expert

of his or her life, while the coach is a master in human motivation and change.

*My Transformational First Experience as a Coach*¹

Working with Mr. Laxman, my first client, was quite a life-changing experience, not just for him, but also for me! He called me one evening, about 5 years back, seeking my help. He told me that the moment he came to know that I had started offering executive coaching services, he was anxious to get in touch with me. I was thrilled that Mr. Laxman understood the purpose of coaching and had taken the bold step of connecting with me—indeed a courageous first move towards personal transformation. But I was in for a shock!

His first question about my coaching abilities was whether I could help him get a new job. I struggled to explain the purpose of coaching, treading gently since he was already under a lot of stress. Soon I realized that what Mr. Laxman was seeking was a symptomatic quick fix for the distress he was going through with his job. The moment he was informed about being transferred to another job, he was overwhelmed with anxiety, discomfort and uncertainty about the rules of the brand new game. That was why he was looking for options to escape from his seemingly inevitable professional future.

This phone call taught me my first lesson—one of the toughest initial challenges of being a coach is to explain what I do and describe what benefits coaching can achieve. I successfully cleared this first hurdle and Mr. Laxman understood the purpose of coaching and agreed to go ahead with the initiative.

Then came the next hurdle. Mr. Laxman was extremely hesitant to come to my office and even suggested that I visit him at his home so we could talk informally. It took a lot of persuasion to convince him to come to my office. I realized that my first session with Mr. Laxman was critical in establishing the road map for the transformational journey.

I hence used about 1 h of our first introductory session to explain how coaching works. I said, “Through coaching my role is to empower you to fish for yourself rather than just feed you a fish every day. I’ll help you develop the relevant skill set that’ll stay with you forever.”

I think this explanation of the purpose of coaching struck a chord with him and our coaching sessions proceeded commendably.

At the end of the assignment, Mr. Laxman was extremely satisfied with the coaching experience. So I proudly assumed that my first task as a coach was successful. Little did I realize that I had a final, major hurdle to cross!

After successful completion of our sessions, I asked Mr. Laxman if he could provide me with a testimonial recommending my coaching service. He replied, “I will definitely give you a testimonial, but please do not mention my name.” Slightly disappointed, I further requested him to refer my coaching service to his friends, family and colleagues. This request met with a cold response. Mr. Laxman was clearly reluctant to share his coaching experience with anyone and was not willing to acknowledge the contribution of coaching in transforming his professional journey.

Despite this setback, I was excited! This was my first accomplishment—we had achieved our objective as envisioned, although my client was still not comfortable with the thought that he needed support to streamline the course of his life.

This experience gave me the much-needed impetus and taught me precious lessons. I developed a coaching tool kit and attended the 125-h Approved Coach-Specific Training Hours (ACSTH) programme as per the guidelines of the International Coach Federation (ICF) .

Executive Challenges and the Dire Need for Coaching

The corporate scenario for executives has changed tremendously over the years. As I look back, I remember the days when a corporate job meant security, stability, a consistent salary every month, a healthy work–life balance, regular promotions and enhanced status in society. But those days have long gone! Most of my present-day interactions are with executives in the 40–50-year-old age group, and there is hardly a

day that passes without hearing them complain about high stress (“it’s a dog eat dog world”) and the feeling of being stuck in their career.

Here are some of the common challenging scenarios that corporate executives frequently battle (the names mentioned in the following scenarios are not real, to maintain the confidentiality of my clients):

1. **The expectation to deliver more with limited resources:** Ram was managing his team of five people well, exceeding performance expectations consistently. However, the latest performance assessment noted that the time had come to raise the bar further—he has been instructed to cut down his team strength by three resources and yet perform at the same level.
2. **The expectation of performing faster:** Shruthi was quick in completing her work but after being transferred to the new team, she felt overwhelmed with work. Tough deadlines, late-night conference calls and sensitive clients meant getting work done within 24 h as against the earlier standard of 3 days. Days somehow never seemed to end.
3. **The expectation to perform exceedingly well from day one:** Shyam was in a fix—he had just been shifted to a new role at work. It was a completely new responsibility with many new skills to master. However, his manager gave him no time to settle down in the new team. He was expected to perform to the best of his abilities from day one and clear the entire backlog at work. There was a perception that he was already underperforming at the end of his first week in his new team, although he felt it was not his fault!
4. **Justifying your capability on a daily basis:** Gopal is exhausted—not just physically but also psychologically. His performance at work has been consistent—always completing tasks on schedule, meeting work specifications, and supporting colleagues in the team. However, both his manager and the client are extremely demanding and he feels that very often his past performance track record is forgotten. He is under pressure to prove his capabilities on a daily basis, leading to a feeling of complete insecurity and exhaustion.
5. **Long-term loyalty seems to be a thing of the past:** Rajan is one of the most respected employees in the entire organization. He is

considered an old-timer, having spent more than 20 years in the company. Everyone comes to him for guidance, yet Rajan feels disregarded. With younger and less experienced people getting promoted and challenging his position in the company, he feels that his experience and knowledge are being sidelined.

6. **Having to compromise on work–life balance to compete with Gen Y colleagues:** Suma has been feeling stressed out of late. Work has always been an important part of her life, but the recent few years have been tough. All the talk about the tech-savvy Gen Y seems to be threatening her self-confidence. The fiercely competitive work environment is making it tough for her to contest younger, more energetic, more qualified work colleagues who are tech savvy and ready to chase their career at any cost. This rat race has meant putting in 14–16 h at work every day and no weekends or vacations. Suma realizes that her work–life balance is in serious need of repair.
7. **All work, but no fun and not enough money:** Raima and Siddharth literally burn the midnight oil, working long hours in the office to meet the financial demands of their family. However, despite all the hard work, their financial problems remain. They have no time for each other and this is affecting their relationship. They feel that while some of their expenses are essential, the others are the result of a lack of planning, peer pressure or competition—two car loans, a home loan, expensive eat outs, furniture purchased for no reason, and so on. All the extra work is resulting in poor health and a stressful environment at home.
8. **Job insecurity:** Raghav is intelligent, quite a performer at work where he spends a lot of time. But recent months have been tough. His company is downsizing and deciding to lay off employees. With the HR team working with teams in batches, every day is stressful as every employee steps into the workplace wondering if this is going to be the last day at work. Quite a challenge indeed for Raghav, who has no clue how he will handle the sudden issue of a lay-off notice.
9. **Inability to keep pace with changing technology:** Mitasha, a 45-year-old employee in a multinational corporation, was

comfortable at work until technology encroached on her comfort zone and challenged her skill sets. Being averse to using technology, Mitasha has found mastering technological innovations challenging, especially since her manager has not given her enough time to learn the new tricks of the trade. She hence feels threatened that the necessity of acquiring this new skill set might affect her job prospects.

10. **Fear of losing out to technology:** Sabarish works in a BPO (business process outsourcing) concern and is now used to the quirky lifestyle that the work demands—the new identity, the new accent, the middle of the night work shifts, and so on. However, of late, all the talk of bots being experimented with to take up the role of customer interaction has left him worried. With many of his peers complaining of their jobs slowly getting replaced by technology. Sabarish fears that very soon his services might become redundant as the process he has expertise in might get automated.
11. **Staying stuck in the same role:** Rhitika no longer feels inspired to get to work. She has been in the same role for about 2 years, with no increment or incentives. Just the same work, same feedback and same stress, but with no returns she feels she is being taken for granted. With rising inflation and no scope for an increase in salary unless she is transferred to another department or finds a new job, Rhitika feels stuck in a rut.
12. **The mental pressure of hanging on to a swanky lifestyle:** Tushar has no complaints about work, yet life is not easy for him. A high-end job and the world of credit cards and e-commerce led him to choose a way of life that he could not afford in the long run. Maintaining this lifestyle of borrowed funds and paying off EMIs (easy monthly instalments) is taking a huge toll on his financial status and peace of mind. Tushar realizes that he is living beyond his means but peer pressure is forcing him to continue this dangerous habit.
13. **You do not own the money you spend through credit cards:** Alisha was excited as she stepped into her new life as a salaried youngster living on her own in the swanky town of Bangalore. Having always lived under the protective wings of her parents,

Alisha did not have to worry about anything at all. But now that she was on her own, the initial thrill of having so much money and credit cards at her disposal created an illusion that she could really spend to her heart's content. Soon, she was on a spending spree on e-commerce sites and in malls. Before she realized it, Alisha was buried under a huge burden of bills. Spending more than she could afford, living beyond her means, has now made her life a living hell.

14. **High ambitions fanned by peer pressure:** Being ambitious is never wrong, but in Shivraj's case, it went horribly wrong. Shivraj's life-long wish has been to own a swanky villa by the sea and an Audi just like his buddy. But the only detail he did not work out was how he would work towards this goal. With quick cash and credit options, Shivraj lived in a world of dreams as if he was well on his way towards reaching where he wanted. But he had no solid plan—thus, while he bought his dream car and booked his dream apartment, he is neck deep in debt, which is killing his happiness every minute.
15. **A life of comparison and no joy:** Ahmad had everything he needed—a comfortable apartment, a car, enough savings in the bank for his family's future, yet he was not happy. The reason was his tendency to compare himself with others who were more successful. However, instead of using this as an inspiration, the thought makes him depressed. Ahmad is constantly feeling stressed out and pressurized because he feels incompetent.
16. **Fragile reporting structure:** Gone are the days when you had one manager and his assessment of your performance was enough. This new age of the 360° appraisal system and matrix reporting seems to be making Shraddha's life a nightmare. Before, Shraddha's work had to be noticed only by her boss, but now she is under tremendous pressure since her performance feedback is based on the whims and fancies of people who do not even know her. She is worried that her merits as a diligent worker will be overshadowed by unfair judgments.
17. **Delayed payment of salary causing anxiety:** The start of every month is a nightmare for Vishwas. All the loan payments and his son's school van payments are all due within the first 5 days of the

month. However, the situation of his company is not favourable and hence his salary has not been credited in a timely manner for the last 4 months. He is thinking about changing jobs owing to the delayed salary payments. However, he is not confident about making this change owing to the volatile market.

18. **Stringent rules of performance assessment:** Shamina has had a roller-coaster ride at work this financial year. Some days were great, with positive feedback from the client, with others being quite stressful owing to some problem or other. But with appraisals and salary increments being linked to performance, Shamina is apprehensive about how well the deciding authorities at work are going to understand her performance and why those instances went wrong.
19. **Never-ending worry about your children:** Geetansh has a lot of expectations from his sons. Both are in their teens, but their current lifestyle, demands and aspirations are beyond what he can afford in addition to the high cost of their education and their tendency to bow to peer pressure. He is worried that their current craze is to take up car racing as a profession, a completely unconventional career choice. He is extremely anxious about their future.
20. **Obsolete skill sets:** Anuradha has been with her organization for about 5 years. She is now feeling apprehensive about her job since she realizes that she is ineffective when compared to the current set of newcomers. With the organization adopting new work practices, she is completely at a loss since the training from her mentors has been inadequate. The organization seems to be finding it easier to hire personnel with the required skill set at a much lower salary. Anuradha understands that her job is really in jeopardy.
21. **Competitive stress at office:** Gone are the days when you could share your negative experience or opinion openly with your colleagues. Shahul can feel the change in the level of trust between colleagues at work. The confidence level between team members is at an all-time low and no one shares their challenges at work with colleagues or seniors. There is always an undercurrent of distrust, lest words shared in confidence are used against them.

22. **Whether to shift jobs or hop on to the entrepreneurship wagon:** Sharon is not able to make up her mind. Of late, she has been feeling unenthusiastic about her work. She is clear that she needs a change, but she is confused regarding the options available to her—starting her own venture or a change of job. The choice is all about having the freedom to express herself and be independent versus job security. Entrepreneurship is a route she has been longing to take, but the risks involved are the greatest hurdles. Sharon needs help to make the seemingly irreversible decision.
23. **The desperate need for training in basic operational skill sets:** Shahid is not a happy man—most organizations want a “prepackaged” employee with already sharpened skills, such as time management and financial planning. However, all that he learnt at college was engineering and he did not realize that these additional skills would be as important as his academic qualifications. His lack of assertiveness and low self-esteem are of no help either, since these hindrances prevent him from asking for help. With no formal training given in these areas, Shahid is struggling to survive in the rat race at his workplace.
24. **Unsympathetic office environment:** Sunayna started her corporate life a little later than the usual transition straight from education to work. She waited until her children were ready to go to school—so she started her first job at 32 years old. However, the work atmosphere was like nothing she had imagined—with no one around to lend her a sympathetic ear or help her out, she spent her days at work with a sense of resignation feel victimized and suffocated. The huge disconnect in approach between her and the boss was not helping to create a good rapport at work. Sunayna realizes that this cannot go on forever.
25. **Seeking the ever-elusive satisfaction at work:** Roshan feels that he consistently puts in his best effort at work, but the results are never satisfactory (in terms of remuneration, growth prospects and recognition in the workplace). Surprisingly, through casual discussions at work, he realized that, on average, every one executive out of four is not satisfied with work and professional growth options. Roshan feels like he is stuck in a time warp.

26. **Looking for a career transition is not easy:** Maria is desperately looking for a job change. But, to her disappointment, almost one out of four executives in this space is in competition for her role. Despite clearing multiple rounds of interviews, she faces rejection at the final stage. She realizes that she needs to reassess her skill set, since there is clearly something missing in her competencies. But Maria is not able to determine what the missing link is.
27. **I am looking for a change—but is it really a change of job?** Malcom is clearly not happy. He wants a change of job, but every time he applies for a job and clears the interview, he starts making a comparison and finds some reason to reject the offer. After rejecting the fourth offer for a new job, he realized that there was something weird going on in his mind. He does love his job—he is not looking for a job change, but it was something else—was it his boss or some recent change at work that has been irritating him? He is not clear.

Each of these scenarios represents an inner battle, a turmoil that breaks out through symptoms of stress, resentment, unhappiness, fatigue and depression. This cloud of negative emotions, however, masks the root cause—the actual issue. Many of us are obsessed with correcting the symptoms, often ignoring the core issue. This is where a coach can provide effective support: by digging deep into the client's statements about the problem to get below the surface; by facilitating the client to see their authentic self and not the external image they portray to the world. This approach helps them understand the core problem and find a solution.

What Results Can Coaching Achieve?

Coaching is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. Every coach follows a systematic process to understand the unique requirements of each client and designs client-specific approaches aimed at addressing the fundamental concern. The results of such interventions are often phenomenal. Lasting anywhere from three to 18 months (sometimes even more),

coaching delivers a lasting transformation by working on individuals on a case-by-case basis.

Whether it is managing a job change and moving to Dubai or looking for options to earning a passive income, the client-coach engagement supports the client in smoothly managing any desired transition. During this process, the coach also helps identify and work on additional hidden issues, such as weight management, soured relationships or unintentional resentments that have grown over the years. Thus, coaching enables complete life transformations and builds up the client's confidence levels, clearing the clouds of insecurity and doubt about the future.

Although each client is unique, the approach used in coaching can be summarized as identifying the main client concerns, organizing their thought processes, overcoming their apprehensions, listing options they have, helping them make the ideal decision, and implementing planned steps in a systematic manner. The coaching process thus catalyzes change by providing a client with much-deserved guidance in objectively assessing the options available.

Coaching can also act as a bridge to bring conflicting thought processes, wishes and ambitions to the table and objectively analyzing each point before zeroing in on the desired goal and action plan.

Failures are common in personal and professional lives, but standing up straight after such defeats to build one's confidence takes a lot of effort. This endeavour requires working on a person's self-confidence, dwindling energy levels and focus. Coaching helps achieve this difficult feat.

To summarize, coaching is indeed priceless as an intervention that can help today's busy executives handle personal and professional challenges. The sooner one realizes what the hurdles are, the earlier you can navigate towards achieving your desired outcomes. A coach guides you in understanding your impediments, helps you build a road map of new possibilities, and encourages you to assess uncharted possibilities that will lead you to personal and professional success.

So what's the first step that can reshape your life? Get over the stigma, and get a coach!

Note

1. The names mentioned in this case study have been disguised to maintain the confidentiality of my clients.

Author Biography

Ajay Goyal following over three decades of corporate experience, including being VP of Reliance Industries Limited, is the Founder of “7Cs Xcellency” offering Leadership Training, Executive Coaching and business consulting services. He is a trainer and coach, armed with several certifications including: ICF-CCA Accredited Certified Executive Coach; certification in Inspiring Leadership through Emotion Intelligence, Case Western Reserve University, USA; Certification in Essential Negotiation Skills from the University of Michigan, USA; and has completed the Curriculum for Living Program from Landmark Worldwide, USA, the world’s leading training and development institution.

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