Workplace Mentoring: a literature review

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

This review is a brief exploration into the literature on mentoring for apprentices and trainees in the workplace. The scope of this review is confined to the literature that discusses mentoring *internal to the workplace* which supports on- and off-job learning. The review explores the literature on the mentoring of apprentices and other trainees to progress literacy development. The review provides the tertiary education sector with a springboard for exploring workplace mentoring in more depth, and to consider policy, professional development and practice that can strengthen the mentoring of trainees. It discusses the benefits, issues and gaps raised by the literature in terms of different types of mentoring offered in organisations.

The questions which frame this review are: What is the nature of workplace learning? What is mentoring and what are the types discussed in the literature? What are the benefits of mentoring to organisations, mentors and trainees, and what are the issues and gaps?

The nature of workplace learning

The literature shows that learning in the workplace occurs both formally (through on and off site courses) and informally, where people learn within a community of practice in the workplace. It shows that in both instances, learning confidence is affected by social relations, levels of power sharing and trust. Trainees learn best when they are supported, stimulated and challenged in both formal provision and workplace development. Mentoring is recommended in a number of studies, particularly where the workplace's language, literacy or numeracy may be an issue for the learner.

What is mentoring?

Two different models of mentoring are presented in the literature. The first is a restricted, functionalist model, where there is a formal distance between the learner and the mentor and where the focus is on learning outcomes rather than the learner as a whole person. The second is a relational model, where the learner is regarded as a valued equal who happens to have specific support needs, and where issues of respect and trust play a larger part. This relational model is regarded as the 'highest quality mentoring state' (Ragins and Verbos, 2006:21). It is also consistent with a Māori model of mentoring.

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Billet (2003) and others discuss distributed learning and suggest that a range of mentors might be utilised by a learner at any one time, rather than relying on a single mentor in a 1-1 relationship. The literature describes a number of ways in which mentors can work.

There are claims in the literature that mentoring benefits trainees and organisations, but that greater benefit results when social capital processes and goals (involving investment in the learner as more than a capital resource), are developed. The literature indicates that in a relational mentoring model, where trust and social capital are developed, mentors also develop in ways that benefit the organisation, and the culture of the organisation is improved. A positive workplace culture supports the aims of organisations to 'enculturate' workers into their vision.

Gaps in the literature and implications for further research

The literature shows that mentoring is important for all learners, but especially for those who are struggling to come to grips with the expectations of the workplace, and its language, literacy and numeracy demands. O'Neill and Gish (2001) assert that there is a specific need for research into the role of the mentor in terms of the development of interpersonal skills. A clearer understanding is needed of how mentoring should best be developed for different ethnicities and for women. More research is needed to examine how multiple mentors and multiple kinds of mentorship can help a trainee's socialisation.

Finally, there are currently no ethnographic studies in New Zealand which explore how learning organisations set up and support mentoring in the workplace, particularly for apprentices and other trainees. Such a study would make a valuable contribution to our understanding of mentoring in New Zealand workplaces.

Introduction

This review was funded by Ako Aotearoa as a brief exploration into the literature on mentoring for apprentices and trainees in the workplace. The literature was sourced from Europe, the UK, the USA, Australia and New Zealand

There are three points to make about the focus and parameters of this review: (1) It is recognised that support for apprentices and other trainees is offered by ITO training advisors and regional co-ordinators, and also by Modern Apprenticeship co-ordinators. These support persons may work with the trainee at the site of an organisation, but are nevertheless externally appointed. The scope of this review is confined to the literature that discusses mentoring *internal to the workplace* which supports on- and off-job learning. (2) There is debate in the literature about the differences between mentors, coaches and trainers, and their roles. This review takes the perspective that mentors are support persons whereas coaches and trainers take a much more direct teaching approach. (3) It is widely recognised that literacy support is a factor in the attainment of national vocational qualifications up to and including level four. As far as possible, the review explores the literature on the mentoring of apprentices and other trainees to progress literacy development.

Workplace mentoring for trainees in the New Zealand workplace has received little attention to date. The review is expected to provide the tertiary education sector with a springboard for exploring workplace mentoring in more depth, and to consider policy, professional development and practice that can strengthen the mentoring of trainees. The review discusses the benefits, issues and gaps raised by the literature in terms of different types of mentoring offered in organisations. The questions which frame this review are: What is the nature of workplace learning? What is mentoring and what are the types discussed in the literature? What are the benefits of mentoring to organisations, mentors and trainees, and what are the issues and gaps?

Because little New Zealand research were located that address mentoring directly or discuss mentoring support in relation to workplace literacy, much of the literature is drawn from international sources. The texts include academic journal articles, books, book chapters and (New Zealand) policy and research reports. The review was conducted using a search of internet and library databases using key words such as *workplace learning; mentoring; mentors; apprentice learning; support; trainee; coaching; new workers; new employees' learning; relationship; trust; organisational identity; socialisation; literacy; formal and informal*

learning. Publication lists on Tertiary Education Commission, Department of Labour, Ako Aotearoa and Industry Training Federation websites were also searched. Texts included have generally been published from 2000 onwards.

The review begins with a discussion of the nature of workplace learning, then examines various concepts of mentoring. Next, a range of mentoring approaches is explored, as well as the benefits and issues in mentoring. This is followed by a discussion of the establishment of effective mentoring, and finally, a review of the gaps in the literature and implications for further research.

1.   The Nature of Workplace Learning

Formal and informal learning

While formal learning in institutions has been the subject of a great deal of research, Vaughan suggests that workplace learning has been undervalued in the literature (Vaughan, 2008). *This attitude is changing.* Harris et al (2001) assert that a shift away from off-site learning towards learning in the workplace was an important development during the late 1990s and that there are now a growing number of research studies that seriously consider both off-site and on-site environments for learning. There are significant differences in learning within each environment. For instance, off-site institutional learning has focused on the transmission of factual knowledge related to broader industry qualifications. This learning is often resisted by employers who take the view that what is good for the trainee may not be good for the employer, in terms of potential loss of able staff (Dougherty and Dreher, 2007:79). Kell et al. reported different employer reasons for scepticism:

> … what really counted was workplace performance rather than the achievement of standards and qualifications for their own sake. There were numerous comments noting that completion of certificates does not necessarily translate into workplace performance. There were many examples of training for certificates that was poor in quality and unlikely to connect with shop floor issues. Insisting on such training as a basis for funding seemed more related to ease of reporting than to '... *the alignment between learning and what's needed in the workplace*' (Kell et al., 2009:45).

Support for learning is generally more immediately focused on employee learning and development that meets the demands of the organisation. Current research is exploring how learning in the workplace environment occurs, that is, on the situationally focused, context-

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specific and socially and culturally embedded aspects of workplace learning (Gee et al., 1996; Billett, 2003; Colley et al. 2003; Illeris, 2003). Fuller (2005) and others point out that in this new focus on situated learning, the role of formal education institutions is underplayed and "even cast as detrimental" (Fuller et al., 2005:56). Some of these ideas have been taken up by the Ministry of Education and TEC in relation to workforce and workplace literacy. The TEC's *Literacy Language and Numeracy Action Plan 2008 – 2012* states:

> Research confirms that improving workforce literacy, language and numeracy skills works best if the learning is in a context that is relevant to the learner e.g. existing workplace training (2008:9).

Communities of practice

This new direction has its roots in the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), who challenge the assumption that learning necessarily occurs through the transmission of factual knowledge or information, isolated from context. They assert instead that learning is a process of peripheral participation in communities of practice[1]. This conception of learning is centred on the interaction between the agent (e.g. worker), the activity (e.g. work) and the world (community of practice). "Peripheral participation" is where the learner initially operates at the edges of a community of practice within a given context, and gradually becomes a fully contributing participant.

In this early work, Lave and Wenger discuss *the individual's* peripheral participation in communities of practice. In a later work, Wenger (1998) discusses and extends the concept of communities of practice as existing in the *relationships between people*, within groups and communities. Ian Falk makes the seemingly obvious yet often overlooked point that "Learning occurs when interaction occurs" (Falk, 2002:21) and that interaction necessarily involves engagement. He further asserts that learning occurs in the engagements *between* members of a community of practice, and concludes that communities of practice and the learnings that occur within them are one and the same. In his discussions of social capital in workplace learning, Falk talks about learning as a "reconfiguration of existing aspects of personal identity, knowledge and skills" (ibid:22). Through an example of an interaction between a plumbing apprentice, a plumber and a plumbing inspector, he shows how learning does not simply reside in 'factual' information, but comes about through engagement and identification with other people (role models) and the way they do things.

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1 Communities of practice are groups of individuals that have a practice in common and engage and learn from each other by sharing, documenting and developing their knowledge (from http://www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz)

Wenger illustrates how, through engagement in workplace relationships, insurance workers tacitly absorb local, culturally embedded meanings, which include "... implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognisable institutions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared worldviews" (Wenger, 1998:47).

What Wenger fails to explore, however, is how the social use and distribution of knowledge in the workplace is regulated, and the positive and negative impact of learning as a result of that regulation. A commonly cited regulation of learning is when the conditions for learning are subordinated to the need of a business to remain viable and competitive (Harris et al., 2001). Relations of power may also regulate and determine the type of learning available to a trainee in that an organisation may show a preference for promoting organisational identification (serving its own interests) rather than supporting the development of more generalised industry knowledge (serving the interests of the trainee).

Enculturation and cultural dissonance

Seely Brown and Duguid (1991), explore how workplace learning as increasing participation in a community is essentially a matter of enculturation, where workers come to identify as members of the organisation and to find meaning and value in their work. Where there is no culture or identity conflict, learning may be unproblematic for the trainee. However, conflicts can occur in a number of areas linked to class, ethnicity and gender.

Paul Willis (1977) reveals how class, family background and gender predispose young people towards certain employment goals. Vocational identities are actively chosen by the individual from within their 'horizon of action' and are already established prior to entering work or a course of study. Willis shows that students from working class backgrounds tend to enter relatively low-paid work involving study in technical colleges - trades, childcare assistants, retail assistants etc. Colley et al. discuss how most of the parents of the engineering students in their study are skilled manual workers "... and a number of their male relatives have worked in the engineering industry" (Colley et al., 2003). Holland (2009) showed how, in trades areas, a young trainee from a 'trades family' may fit the culture of the workplace, thus facilitating learning. However, it was also evident that a learner from a non-trades family had difficulty negotiating the culture. Colley et al. assert that the learner aspires to a combination of dispositions demanded by the vocational culture (Colley et al., 2003) and thus they become "right for the job" (ibid: 488). Therefore, young people without this 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1977a) who choose a vocational career may be disadvantaged.

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Vaughan (2008) points out that if learners cannot find meaning or value in their work, they may become sceptical and resistant to learning. Furthermore, if confidence in the organisation is damaged, resistance is heightened. Vaughan refers to Billett's (2001) example of this in his study of coal miners in Australia, where the miners became sceptical of work safety training as serving the interests of management rather than workers. In the same way, Holland (2004) found that bakery workers were resistant to safety training when they saw that safe practices were overridden by supervisors in a hurry to meet production targets.

Loss of trust, skepticism or cynicism may arise when there is a gendered or ethnic mismatch between the learner and the organisation. Certainly there is an unequal distribution in apprenticeships by gender and ethnicity. Fuller et al., (2005) comment on how the Modern Apprenticeship programme in the UK was aimed at reducing the segregation by gender of apprenticeships and traineeships, and yet has failed to do so. The Modern Apprenticeship programme was introduced by the New Zealand Government in 2000 in order to rebuild trades training towards nationally-recognised qualifications for young people in New Zealand. The programme aims to improve employment outcomes for women, Māori, Pacific peoples, migrants and ethnic communities. The Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women's Affairs in New Zealand observed in 2005 that men predominate in modern apprenticeships, with women holding only 8% of the more than 8,298 apprenticeships (Callister et al., 2006). According to a Government press release, the September quarter statistics for 2008 show "…a total of 14,411 Modern Apprentices, of whom … 1,500 are Māori." (NZ Government website). This is approximately 10%, and is not therefore reflective of the percentage of Māori in the population as a whole. Hook et al. (2007) suggest that Māori can become disenchanted when the Pākehā workplace does not afford Māori employee development, by not acknowledging important principles and connections such as whanaungatanga (relationship / togetherness / collectivity), the preservation of mana, mahakitanga (humility) and Wairuatanga (spirituality).

Malcolm et al. (2003) refer to the power differential afforded by hierarchy and status, claiming that "... all learning situations contain significant power inequalities ..." and that "... the extent to which learning is emancipatory or oppressive, depends ... on the wider organisational, social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which the learning is situated" (ibid, 2003:315). Thus power imbalances and the potential for loss of confidence in the organisation and self by the trainee through a lack of cultural 'fit' have serious implications for the success of learning in that environment.

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Workplace affordances

Opportunities provided by the workplace that support learning, are referred to by Billett as 'affordances' (Billett, 2001). Michael Eraut (2007) explores these affordances. He presents a taxonomy of learning processes in the workplace. The taxonomy takes both individual agency and organisational support into account. It includes participation in group processes, working alongside others, consulting with others, tackling challenging tasks, making mistakes, problem-solving, trying things out, consolidating, extending and refining skills, engaging in independent study and working with clients/customers. Eraut states that learners need to have the opportunity to listen and observe, reflect and distinguish significant learning and to learn from mistakes. In other words, learners need not only confidence to meet challenges, but also to feel confidence in the real support of others in the workplace. Eraut posits a triangular relationship between learner confidence (in his/herself and the organisation), organisational support and job challenge in workplace learning. He observes that to be able to locate a resource, for instance, a person requires confidence and social understanding, but also "a positive learning culture of mutual support" (2007:415) within the organisation, which, in Billet's terms, would constitute workplace affordance.

While Eraut does not specifically address enculturation, a number of other researchers have discussed how learning in the workplace involves an active process of becoming a particular kind of person mediated by the learner's environment (see, for instance, Frykholm & Nitzler, 1993; Colley et al., 2003; Keesing-Styles, 2006). The extent to which this enculturation is demanded by the organisation or desired by the worker/learner, is contested. Colley et al. suggest that both organisational demand and worker desire are at play when they assert that the learner aspires to a combination of dispositions demanded by the vocational culture (2003) and thus they become "right for the job" (ibid:488).

Gee takes a more critical approach to enculturation. In his 1994 article *New Alignments and Old Literacies: critical, literacy, postmodernism and fast capitalism* he describes how the new work order is characterised by state and business interests seeking a competitive advantage by producing high quality, just-in-time products and services to niche markets, and a smaller, flexible and multi-skilled workforce. This workforce, he asserts, is induced through various 'empowering' discursive practices (such as the democratic workplace and flat management), to identify with organizational goals (Gee, 1994). Gee advocates a critical approach to learning through which learners can gain meta-understandings of their learning, environments and worlds.

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Expansive and restrictive paradigms

The literature also provides examples of expansive, power-sharing paradigms (Fuller and Unwin, 2003), as well as more restrictive paradigms in workplace learning. According to Fuller and Unwin the 'expansive learning' paradigm (2003:411) provides stimulation and challenge for learners. Trainees are supported as they are exposed to unique and broad learning opportunities both on and off the job. Billett points out that the more unique worksite activities with which a worker can access and engage, the more learning may result (Billett, 2003). The alternative is a restricted learning paradigm, the features of which include lack of organisational support and limited opportunities for learning and reflection. In the United Kingdom, Evans and colleagues found that workers confined to routine work, with roles that are not highly valued, may have fewer chances to expand their learning (Evans, Hodkinson, Rainbird & Unwin, 2006).

Language and literacy

In Kell et al.'s 2009 study of in-house literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) initiatives in New Zealand workplaces, the authors support expansive paradigms of learning. They comment on how the workplace can support trainees' language, literacy and numeracy development by drawing on a range of formal and informal approaches. In addition they discuss Townsend and Waterhouse's (2008) study in Australia, which outlines a shift from 'provision' only (stand alone education and training opportunities for individuals) to provision and 'development' (workplace learning that is fostered within the organisation as a whole), since, they claim, literacy delivery is unable to account for the range of ways in which literacy is used in workplaces. New Zealand companies in Kell et al.'s study reported that they understood how LLN needed to be widely supported if trainees were to achieve their national vocational qualifications, and commented that their first approach would be to get a supervisor, co-worker or mentor to help out.

O'Neill and Gish (2001) explore employer and employee opinions of apprentices' and trainees' English language and literacy skills (ELL) in workplace performance in Australia. Emerging issues and trends reported include ensuring English language and literacy skills are addressed in training and mentoring. Employers, through the recruitment process, were aware of literacy issues, particularly in report writing and work logs. O'Neill and Gish (ibid) note that in most cases apprentices and trainees are young, and that for many, the apprenticeship or traineeship is their first job. They may not be familiar with work-related literacies such as work logs. In addition, the *course*-related literacies that are part of off-job

learning and which are required to achieve national vocational certificates may also be unfamiliar. They include information literacy skills, research skills and critical thinking skills. Holland (2009) reported similar findings with glass apprentices. In O'Neill and Gish's study both employers and employees identified the need for improvement in a range of reading and writing areas. O'Neill et al comment:

> The visibility of written texts makes skills associated with writing more prominent, but the need … to communicate effectively with supervisors, colleagues and customers and work in a team is an important part of work which relates to English language skills … effectiveness in practice involves other factors such as how the employee integrates and applies his or her skills, thinks critically, evaluates, uses initiative, organizes time, conceptualizes business operations and behaves strategically in terms of achieving business goals (2001:146).

Apprentices in O'Neill and Gish's study requested a mentoring process that emphasized expert demonstration, guided practice and support. O'Neill and Gish warn that "employees requiring assistance with ELL skills are likely to have 'suffered' in some way in their past educational experience" and, while English language tuition may be acceptable to a trainee, literacy tuition may stigmatise (ibid:142). They advise against establishing formal tuition as a learning intervention, and recommend mentoring.

Research into industry trainers' responses to literacy development have implications for how mentors should address literacy, and be supported to do so. Holland (2007) observes that the general practice by vocational trainers regarding literacy in training is to *circumvent* potential or actual learning issues workers might have, through strategies that include simplifying resources, using pictures, repeating and writing answers for trainees to copy. Trainers reported pressure of time, and lack of professional development with regard to literacy. Trainers reported that these strategies helped trainees to understand the requirements of the job and to achieve certification. The risk was that trainees could 'pass' but have little understanding of course content and therefore have the potential to make inefficient, costly or life threatening errors in their work. The Tertiary Education Commission's strategy for workplace literacy is to develop vocational trainers' capability for *intervention* in deliberate acts of teaching literacy. These issues need to be considered when developing parameters for mentors' work with trainees. Requirements to support trainees with literacy may overwhelm and turn away potential mentors. Holland (2009a) asserts that mentor support of trainees in literacy and numeracy should only be given where the mentor

feels confident and able, and has appropriate professional development and other organisational support.

2. Concepts of Mentoring

Contrasting definitions

Mentoring has been used for centuries as a way of helping younger protégés to advance, and, according to Darwin (2000) mentoring is presently at the forefront of strategies to improve workplace learning. Harris et al. argue that "... workplace mentoring is the most critical factor in worksite learning" (Harris et al., 2001:274). Today mentoring is commonly used in professional and managerial learning, but is relatively new as a means of supporting low-paid trainees and apprentices doing certificate-level qualifications. Below are two definitions of mentoring, or Āwhinatanga. This is followed by an account of the origin of the term, and a discussion of its past and present use.

> *Mentoring is planned early intervention designed to provide timely instruction to mentees throughout their apprenticeship, to shorten the learning curve, reinforce positive work ethics and attitudes, and provide mentees with role models.*
>
> Hipes and Marinoni (2005:1)

> *Awhina. v.t. Assist, benefit, befriend.* H.W. Williams, Dictionary of Maori Language. Seventh Edition (2002) in Hook et al. (2007:5)

While both of these definitions contain the notion of assistance, they have significant differences in emphasis. The first, more restricted, functionalist definition involves a hierarchical process of support for limited purposes such as changing the mentee to suit the employing organisation or the industry. An older mentor assists a younger learner. It focuses on instruction, learning and attitudes. There is no overt statement about the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. The second definition suggests that the mentee is regarded as a valued equal who happens to have specific support needs. The relationship is one of generalised supportive friendship. The model is thus more expansive in its approach to the mentee and to the mentoring relationship. Grant (Ratima and Grant, 2007) points out that either of these models can be found in Māori and Pākehā workplaces. Darwin (2000) suggests that alignment to either approach may in fact be gendered.

Received and alternative traditions

Where then does the term 'mentor' originate? In Homer's Odyssey, Mentor was a wise and faithful advisor, entrusted to protect Odysseus' son, Telemachus, while Odysseus sailed against Troy (Ragins and Kram, 2007). Perhaps Mentor, offering his assistance as a more experienced friend, would have been hailed by Māori as possessing the Māori principle of āwhinatanga. In traditional European/Pākehā workplaces the mentor/mentee relationship came to have a power dimension, as "... an older, powerful member of an organisation who provided career and psychosocial support to a younger, less powerful person" (Darwin, 2000:198). Modern day workplace mentors tend to develop the same kind of relationships with mentees. They tend to work with less powerful individuals (in terms of organisational status and income) in order to help them fit in to the norms and values of the workplace and to develop their formal and informal learning.

Fletcher and Ragins (2007) suggest that because workplace mentoring theory originated with the experience of white male professionals, it reflects the dominant identity. Darwin (2000) seeks to expose unequal and often exploitative power relations between mentors and mentees in the workforce. She observes that "The mentoring relationship has been framed in a language of paternalism and dependency and stems from power-dependent, hierarchical relationships, aimed at maintaining the status quo" (ibid: 197). Darwin observes that power and control of knowledge can become barriers to open communication, and states that the notion of mentoring as an exclusive activity undertaken predominantly by older males for younger males is no longer appropriate (ibid:199).

Relational Mentoring

Paternalistic mentoring maintains a distance between those who have knowledge to pass on to workers lower on the hierarchical ladder, and the receivers of that knowledge. In contrast, relational mentoring focuses on the relationship between mentor and mentee – the mentoring process is defined by relationship (see also *The importance of trust relationships*, P. 21, this review). Ragins and Verbos (2006) believe that relational mentoring is the highest quality mentoring state. They explore how relational mentoring research may expand mentoring theory and inform positive relationships at work. They attribute to relational mentoring the ability to develop empathic, empowering processes that create personal growth, development and enrichment for both mentors and protégés. They claim that relationships have the potential to increase the learning development of individuals through new knowledge, resources, identities, and psychological growth. Chao (2007) argues that

relational mentoring, associated more with female mentors, also includes reciprocity, mutual learning (ibid). Darwin alleges that women in mentoring roles are more likely to share power (working with others rather than using it over others) and to value learning within relationships (Darwin, 2000). She suggests that valuing interdependence over dependence and intimacy over distance may be easier for women than men. While the power-sharing that women bring to the workplace is contested, research with women mentors in the glass industry (Holland, 2009) suggests that women in the workplace may have more appropriate attitudes and skills for the role than men. McKeen and Bujaki noted that women generally have less power and thus were less often in a position to offer themselves as mentors (McKeen & Bujaki 2007:205). They also found that women protégés are more likely than men to be in cross-gendered mentoring relationships.

A focus on relationship is a stated value within Māori mentoring (Hook et. al., 2007), but can also be found in Pākehā mentoring models. Grant comments that "… within the Pākehā framework there is a great diversity of modes and purposes for mentoring, some of which may have strong values-based connections [to] mentoring within a Māori framework" (Ratima and Grant, 2007:4). For instance, in some Pākehā mentoring, mentors acknowledge and seek to equalise power relations through what Darwin describes as risk-taking, dialogue and horizontal relationships (Darwin, 2000). In fact the internationally favoured model of mentoring is a 'development' model (Clutterbuck and Lane, 2004; Connor & Pakora, 2007) and has the following characteristics: the agenda is mutually driven; power and authority are irrelevant or 'parked'; the mentor is more experienced than the trainee in one or more areas of development; there are regular, scheduled, structured face-to-face meetings; there are specific development areas and goals; it is non-discriminatory and non-reported; mentor and mentee are in frequent face-to-face contact. In this view of mentoring, Darwin notes that "Mentoring becomes a collaborative, dynamic, and creative partnership of coequals, founded on openness, vulnerability and the ability of both parties to take risks with one another beyond their professional roles" (Darwin, 2000:203). She cites some examples of mentoring, where relationships are collaborative, open and equal, with 'expert' and learner' changing places, reflecting reciprocity. These examples align with Māori concepts of reciprocity (utu) and the preservation of mana in mentor-mentee interactions.

Formal and informal mentoring

The literature on formal and informal workplace mentoring may refer to the way in which it is developed and implemented in the workplace (the structure), to the type of relationship, or to the learning itself (for formal qualifications or to manage a range of tasks). There is insufficient opportunity in this brief review to explore all three dimensions of the formal/ informal dichotomy. Baugh and Fagenson also describe formal relationships as those which are formally initiated by the organisation, assign the mentor-trainee dyads and facilitate and support developmental relationships (Baugh and Fagenson 2007:249). For the purposes of this discussion, this definition of formal mentoring will be used. 'Informal' mentors are those for whom mentoring is not formally recognised by the organisation, but who nevertheless tacitly agree to mentoring trainees.

Baugh and Fagenson propose that formal mentoring programs might be a second best to informal relationships. However, both types seem to have their benefits – formal mentoring arrangements are likely to be able to be more consistent and planned, whereas informal relationships may vary regarding frequency, length and content. They may be more trusting and therefore open and may also benefit from a 'just-in-time' factor.

3. *Types of mentors and mentoring*

However mentors have been appointed or elected, they tend to include qualified trades people, team leaders, supervisors, administrators, managers, and, in some workplaces, tribal elders and co-workers. They may even include persons outside the organisation in industry training support roles, or community members with expertise. Mentoring usually takes place when people first enter an organisation and are most in need of guidance and support. Ragins and Kram (2007) suggest that there are stages in mentoring: initiation (up to 1 year), cultivation (years 2-5), separation (from 6 months to 2 years) and redefinition (where it becomes more peer-like).

As mentioned earlier, the traditional, functionalist model of workplace mentoring is of a one-on-one formally sanctioned arrangement between an experienced senior-status and a junior-status person. Much research has identified the importance of conceptual knowledge such as understanding the bases for work tasks, and of learning the 'tricks of the trade'. This kind of knowledge may be difficult to learn without direct guidance of more experienced co-workers (Billett, 2000). Such knowledge, the research reveals, can be passed on by telling

stories, modelling and explaining. Billett discusses the concept of guided learning originally developed by Rogoff and enhanced by Billett to refer to:

> ... a more experienced co-worker (the mentor) using techniques and strategies to guide and monitor the development of the knowledge of those who are less skilful (the mentees). This approach places the onus on the learner to engage in the thinking and acting required for rich learning. (ibid: 274).

However, Vaughan (2008) and Billett (2003) note that while the responsibility for mentoring may be held by one person, it may also be distributed among several people (Billett, 2003). Ragins and Kram (2007) assert that individuals have constellations of mentors in their lives and that an individual draws upon support from multiple sources. Lave and Wenger's (1991) studies suggest that distributed learning within communities of practices is more common than learning that is supported by an individual mentor.

It has been argued that distributed mentoring is more successful in the workplace. For instance, McManus and Russell, writing about peer mentoring relationships, note that "Repeatedly, researchers have suggested that individuals who have multiple sources of support fare better than those who do not" (McManus and Russell, 2007:294). Where an individual mentor-mentee relationship has been established, informal support may still co-exist with this model. Eraut observes how designated mentors are often assisted by 'helpful others', in a process called "*distributed apprenticeship*" (Eraut, 2007:413). Hook et al. comment that within a Māori framework mentoring is not restricted to individuals and can extend not only to groups but to whole whanau (Hook et al 2007:5).

Sometimes this distributed mentoring is confused with 'peer mentoring'. Harris et al. discuss difficulties in the concept and practice of peer learning if 'peer' means equal in status and knowledge. They argue that this definition of peers as equals would exclude various forms of learning such as instruction, training and expert information transfer. They conclude that peer learning would therefore be predominantly informal, although there might be a time when a worker is called upon to give a presentation to peers (Harris et al., 2009). However, this model seems to be a weak model of mentoring, since in order for mentors to be able to *assist* their co-workers they need to be more experienced in at least some aspects of the mentee's development. In peer mentoring, peers may have no more experience than the mentee, and in this case might more aptly be called peer support. Darwin recommends peer mentoring, or 'co-mentoring', comprising "mutually supportive and challenging partnerships of co-equals" (2000:9). Yet a further difficulty with peer mentoring, or peer support, is that it

tends not to be formally recognised or monitored, and this impacts on learners' mutual support time.

Higgins et al. (2007) introduce the concept of developmental networks, which are groups of people who take an interest in and act to advance the careers of particular individuals. The network is identified by the protégé. Higgins et al. comment:

> From this vantage point, an individual receives help from multiple dyadic relationships, not one, and from individuals whose help may span organisational boundaries as well as hierarchical lines of authority (ibid, 2007:352).

4. The Benefits and Issues in Mentoring

There are claims in the literature that mentoring benefits trainees, mentors and organisations. The ways in which mentoring benefits trainees will be explored first:

Trainees

Dougherty and Dreher identify paths that mentoring facilitates for trainees. The first, the 'human capital path', provides job-related knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that ultimately enhance performance on the job and in turn contribute to career benefits such as increased salary and advancement (Dougherty and Dreher, 2007:85). The second path identified is the 'movement capital path' (ibid, 2007:86), which provides information about available opportunities in the workplace and labour market, but may not enhance performance on the job. This path seems to be linked to formal, off-site learning and national qualifications.

Taylor and colleagues assert that learning engagement in both formal and informal learning is likely to be stronger when formal learning is linked, and acts as a catalyst for informal learning activities in the workplace (Taylor et al., 2007). In supporting trainees to develop their skills and abilities, the mentor has a pivotal role, therefore, in linking workplace learning to institutional, course-based learning. However, if we return to Falk's claim that the essence of learning occurs in engagement, we understand that engagement (and therefore learning) are only partly achieved through a human capital path and a movement capital path, both of which forefront skills and knowledge.

Dougherty and Dreher suggest that the 'social capital path' (ibid) also facilitates career-enhancing relationships throughout the organisation. A mentor, they say, can bring about greater visibility for the trainee and can make decision-makers more aware of the trainee's potential (Dougherty and Dreher, 2007). Falk describes social capital as "... the social values (norms) networks and trust that resources a group's [or individual's] purposeful action", and argues that engagement, or the interactions between people, (thus the very act of mentoring) builds social capital for the trainee. Holland (2009) found that having a trusted mentor who can act as a resource for learning has a definite impact on trainees' completion rates in formal vocational courses, particularly where distance learning is a component. It was found that trainees who had not been supported by a mentor either one-on-one or in a group, made little or no progress, while those who had been supported showed a marked increase in completions. One of the more successful models of workplace mentoring for distance learning was where an office administrator had been used to organise and keep records of the workbook and assessment materials, help the apprentice to plan his study, work with the apprentice to identify difficult learning areas, help the apprentice to identify where to locate the information (e.g. internet, tradesperson), help the apprentice to develop internet searching skills and send off completed assessments. None of these supportive interactions dealt with vocational content, but all were necessary underpinnings to learning.

Mentors

There is insufficient research into the gains for mentors in participating in mentoring programmes. Eby (2007) claims that the benefits to mentors include learning, developing personal relationships, and enhancing managerial skills. Research undertaken by Dymock supports these findings, and adds others: improved understanding of other areas of the company's operations, opportunities for extended networking, a better understanding of their own practices, and the development of personal skills and satisfaction (Dymock 1999: 316).

Billett notes that the status and acknowledgement that can flow from being asked to mentor junior staff and evidence of the efficacy of mentoring, provided an incentive for mentors to persist, as did coming to understand co-workers' needs as learners (Billett, 2003).

Lack of support for professional development is an issue for mentors. Holland (2009) noted that mentors in companies are usually selected because they are skilled in their industry jobs. Mentoring has different skill sets, and many workplace mentors report that they struggle with the role. Difficulties for mentors noted by Billett were high demands of the role, and being under-prepared for it. According to Billett, preparation would include

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understanding the purpose of strategies and opportunity to practice them prior to utilisation. He asserts that the factors assisting strategy use are training and practice, support from other workers, experience in using strategies, and observing and understanding learners' requirements (Billett 2003).

The mentors Billett studied were prepared for their role through two three-hour sessions on guided learning techniques including modelling, coaching, questioning, diagrams and explanations. The duration of preparation sessions turned out to be insufficient, and mid-way through the project, additional preparation was provided. Billet advises that mentoring training should comprise at least two four-hour sessions and should be oriented to guided learning techniques of modelling, coaching, diagrams and explanations, how to develop conceptual knowledge, group discussion and extended questioning (Billett, 2003).

Harris-Worthington of Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) has developed a mentoring guide and a training resource for academic staff at the Institute. It recommends that mentors undertaking training should attend two half-day training sessions prior to commencing the mentoring relationship. At MIT a community of practice has been developed to support mentors, and monthly timetabled meetings have been set up. (Harris-Worthington, 2009:3).

Billett asks whether this work should be counted as a reasonable part of the mentors' paid position in the workplace, or whether it should be remunerated separately. He also raises potential job security issues, citing Japanese mentoring arrangements where more experienced workers are expected to assist the development of junior staff, but are protected from having mentees take over their positions. Harris et al. (2009) assert that workers need to have paid time off to learn how to be effective mentors. They add that:

> It was clear that ... once the mentor had been assigned a mentee, both mentor and mentee also needed structured time to facilitate the creation and maintenance of their relationship and the learning that needed to take place. This of course slows the production line or the provision of services and this change in work time needs to be facilitated and supported by management (ibid: 60).

Organisations

Many organisations have developed formally structured mentoring programmes in an attempt to capture the perceived benefits resulting from informal relationships within the workplace. However, Boud et al. warn of the danger of believing formalising learning

opportunities in the workplace improves learning outcomes. They show how workers who enjoy the experience of governing their learning through informal learning connections can shift to a sense that they are being governed by others and are under surveillance, when the relationship is formalised (Boud et al., 2009). They suggest instead that organisations concentrate on fostering conditions under which everyday learning can occur.

Despite the reported issues with formalising informal learning connections, the evidence remains that mentoring, formal or informal, benefits the trainee's incorporation into the organisational culture and encourages leadership development among mentors (Dougherty and Dreher, 2007). Other research indicates that mentoring is a powerful tool which can accelerate the development of talent, improve staff retention and create a high performance culture that offers a real competitive advantage (Clutterbuck & Lane, 2004; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Connor & Pakora, 2007; Blake-Beard et al., 2007).

Much management literature tends to promote enculturation in the workplace as 'socialisation', which is seen as a one-way benefit to the organisation, in which the learner must adjust to management expectations. Chao defines the process:

> Organisational socialisation is a learning and adjustment process in which the individual acquires social knowledge for a particular organisational role, understands expected behaviours of that role, and assumes the values and attitudes supported by that role (Chao, 2007:179).

Chao claims that "The socialisation literature identifies mentoring as a potentially powerful agent of organisational socialisation" in that mentoring relationships can develop between newcomers and organisational members who help them adjust (Chao, 2007:181). Socialisation outcomes, states Chao, include role clarity, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Specific examples of socialisation include developing: performance proficiency; specific language related to organisational acronyms and jargon; relationships with other organisational members; understanding of power structures and organisational politics; understanding of organisational goals and values; understanding of organisational history (ibid:181). Chao's study into mentoring reveals that mentored protégés learned more about organisational goals and values, politics, people, language, history and performance proficiency than non-mentored subjects (ibid:182). Successful socialisation, Chao claims, also reduces the turnover of new employees. However, quoting the Saratogoa Institute figures for 2003, Chao comments that about 22% of new hires voluntarily leave their jobs within the first year. She claims that "This turnover is often due to poor socialisation,

particularly where the new hire perceives a lack of fit between himself or herself and the organisation" (ibid:179). Chao quotes Arnett (2004), who asserts that "Young adults often leave their jobs because the work did not mesh with their identities" (ibid:179).

This conception of mentoring fits the restrictive functional model, where mentoring has a limited purpose (socialisation), and where the trainees' learning and development is less important than the fit with the organisation. Harris et al. warn:

> The trend towards greater emphasis on workplace training will require sensitive monitoring to avoid potentially narrow practices that serve the immediate requirements of individual worksites at the possible expense of longer-term industry needs and the career needs of apprentices themselves (Harris et al., 2001:276).

5. Establishing Effective Mentoring

What works, what doesn't work

All eight mentors in Billett's 2003 study concluded that their mentoring was effective, although one noted the difficulties in finding time to perform the role adequately. Other mentors identified issues associated with time, production flow, managing learners' interest and their own readiness. Eby et al. (2007) warn that some mentoring relationships can be actively destructive, which may include manipulation, bullying, sabotage of career, betrayal and/or harassment. They found that a mismatch in values, personalities and work styles sometimes resulted in mentor neglect or abuse of power. Billett states that there is evidence to suggest that "... the more supportive the workplace environment, the greater prospect of positive benefits and ease of enacting the mentoring" (Billett, 2003:111). Overall, Billett claims that learners benefit from workplace mentoring, learning knowledge that would not otherwise be learned alone (ibid, 2003).

Allen (1997) lists several factors that assist mentors to carry out their role effectively. These factors include organisational support (company training programmes, manager support, team approach to work) and organisational philosophy (mentor empowerment, comfortable work environment, a structured environment). Factors that inhibit mentoring include time and production demands, irregularities of production, a weak organisational structure, a competitive environment, unclear expectations of the company and the attitudes of trainees and mentors (Allen, 1997; Billett, 2003:110).

Feedback is also an important component of effective mentoring. In Eraut's research (2007) with nursing, accountancy and engineering learners, new recruits were more likely to be given advice and feedback informally by those around them than formally by those designated as mentors. Eraut asserts that "Learners need short-term, task specific feedback as well as long term, more strategic feedback on general progress" (ibid:416). He observes that the lack of feedback can result in a lowering of commitment to the employer (ibid, 2007).

Matching mentor to mentee

Blake-Beard et al. discuss the critical importance of getting the matching process right at the beginning of the mentoring relationship (Blake-Beard et al., 2007). They identify three ways commonly used to match mentor and mentee – administrator-assigned; choice-based and assessment-based matching - and discuss the pros and cons of each. Administrator-based matching tends to be tightly aligned to organisational goals and seems to be more functional in its approach. Choice-based matching is where the apprentice or trainee is given the opportunity of choosing their mentor. In some cases the arrangement might be reviewed after the first six months and another choice made. There are examples where these choices are made at 'speed-dating' type events. Allowing the learner choice in their mentor is said to increase psychological ownership and commitment on the part of mentee. There are also positive psychological effects for the mentor, who has been chosen among others. Assessment-based mentoring is the third matching method. Through assessments which give precise information, mentors are able to be appropriately matched. An undemocratic process can create resistance in trainees. Billett reports that some mentees in his study were ".... affronted by the mentoring process, claiming to be more knowledgeable then their assigned mentors" (Billett 2003:107).

The importance of trust relationships

Higgins et al. (2008) point out that mentors who build significant trust relationships with mentees can help them to engage effectively with learning on or off the job. In Hughes' study of the supervisors' influence on workplace learning, the two issues that were most significant in choosing and retaining workplace support persons were trust and identity (Hughes, 2004). He concludes that having a supervisor as a mentor has implications for worker trust. He explains that the worker must trust the facilitator/mentor, and the facilitator must prove trustworthy "... otherwise [the learner] will not be willing to reveal and jointly reflect upon the messiness of his or her learning" (ibid: 282). However, in his /her role as supervisor, the mentor requires the *worker* to be trustworthy, and therefore that is how the

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worker strives to be seen. Thus there is a different direction of trust between the supervisor and mentoring role, creating a conflict for a supervisor acting as mentor and for the trainee. For the worker, the need to maintain a workplace identity (e.g. as a competent worker) also conflicted with sharing learning difficulties with a supervisor as mentor. Finally, Hughes found that although supervisors as mentors motivated and shaped the learning of their staff, they did not involve themselves directly in the trainees' learning. This distance was seen by both supervisors and trainees as appropriate for supervision, but not so appropriate for mentoring. Hughes' conclusion is that "... organisations that wish to support the facilitation of workplace learning may need to look beyond line management to relatively independent individuals whom staff could reasonably come to trust in a facilitative role" (ibid: 286). Eraut warns that a lack of trust in learning support offered by an organisation can result in lack of commitment to the organisation (Eraut, 2007).

Darwin (2000) argues that "knowledge needs to be viewed as an active process in which curiosity is encouraged and learning becomes a dynamic, reciprocal and participatory process" (ibid:4), and that exclusive power-dependent mentoring practices cannot continue in work settings. According to Keesing-Styles, this active engagement is critical to learning – learning must engage the learner fully. This implies a relationship which allows for the agency of the learner (Keesing-Styles, L. 2006). Such engagement, she explains, is a process of continuous enquiry, and is messy, ambiguous, uncertain and inconsistent.

6. *Gaps in the literature and implications for further research*

Mentoring to support language, literacy and numeracy

The Tertiary Education Commission's *Literacy Language and Numeracy Action Plan 2008-2012* is committed to "supporting relevant 'in house' training initiatives" and the like, but nowhere discusses the role and value of mentors in the workplace, in terms of literacy and numeracy support. This review was unable to locate substantial research into mentoring that supports language, literacy and/or numeracy development in the workplace. There is an urgent need to establish and research the development of mentoring that can support workers in these areas. O'Neill and Gish (2001) assert that there is a specific need for research into the role of the mentor in terms of the development of interpersonal skills.

Mentoring, gender and ethnicity

Chao suggests that "... traditional models for assimilating employees may not be appropriate for newcomers with diverse cultural values and expectations" (Chao, 2007:186). McKeen and Bujaki ask "Are there differences between same-gender and cross-gender mentoring relationships? What are these?" (McKeen and Bujaki 2007:204). A clearer understanding of how mentoring differs for women and men is needed. Research might also explore how people from diverse ethnicities might mentor others of the same ethnicity in the workplace, drawing on the work of Hook et al. (2007).

Distributed mentoring

Chao comments that more research is needed to examine how multiple mentors and multiple kinds of mentorship can help a trainee's socialisation (Chao, 2007:186). Billett and others have discussed distributed learning and distributed apprenticeship. More research is needed to explore the processes and benefits of distributed mentoring, where the trainee may have a number of resource people within and external to the organisation that he/she can call upon to support learning.

Organisational affordances to mentoring

Billet talks about workplace affordances to learning. Although there are reports, guides and case studies (Holland 2009, 2009a; Harris-Worthington, 2009), there are currently no ethnographic studies in New Zealand which explore how learning organisations set up and support mentoring in the workplace, particularly for apprentices and other trainees. Such a study would make a valuable contribution to our understanding of mentoring in New Zealand workplaces.

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