

## Factors of success for formal mentoring in Higher Education: Exploration through autoethnography

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**FACTORS OF SUCCESS FOR FORMAL MENTORING IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
EXPLORATION THROUGH AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

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## ABSTRACT

An auto-ethnographical methodology was used to collect field notes and reflective data over a three year period, which focused on the implementation of a formal staff mentoring scheme within a Higher Education setting. Through the analysis of collected data, observations about the implementation, process and outcomes have been made. Suggestions about the interactional nature of time invested into a mentoring relationship, the nature of the mentoring relationship, personal and organisational investment and the benefits of mentoring have also been proposed.

Formal Mentoring, Auto-ethnography, Staff Development, Implementation, Process, Benefits.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years mentoring has undergone research scrutiny. This research has utilised positivist, naturalistic and critical theory paradigms. Much of this research has been evaluative (Coe, 2004), has explored the content, process and outcomes of formal mentoring (Summers-Ewing, 1994), debated the benefits of formal vs informal mentoring (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999, Clutterbuck, 2004, Clifford, 1996) and considered the application of mentoring to a variety of settings, including academia (Ehrich & Hansford, 2008).

Mentoring in academia appears to focus on lecturing staff alone, citing the benefits of mentoring to new academic staff (Adams & Rytmeister, 2000) and debating the relational factors of academic mentoring (cf: Sands, Parsons & Duane, 1991). It identifies the constituents of a good match between mentor and mentee (Perna, Lerner & Yura, 1995; Blackburn, Chapman & Cameron, 1981). Debates about the appropriateness of formal or informal mentoring for University staff have also arisen (Ehrich & Hansford, 2008). With regard to the latter debate, Ragins & Cotton (1999) question the benefits of formal mentoring and states that "*there is a big question over formal mentoring schemes ... formal mentoring seems not to yield significantly more outcomes than no mentoring at all*" (p.256). Recent evaluative work of formal mentoring in a University setting questions this belief and proposes a number of psychosocial, developmental and career

related benefits for mentor, mentee and the organisation (Cureton, 2009). The difference between these pieces of work may arise from cultural and procedural difference between the schemes discussed and that Cureton's research evaluated a scheme that embraced all occupational groups within a University setting. Moreover, the earlier noted suggestion that much of the research in mentoring is carried out through the lens of evaluation must also be considered. Most evaluative work is retrospective, which could lead to difficulties in unpacking and understanding the complexity of the human process that takes place within a mentoring relationship (Coe, 2004). Consequently, the richness and human content that embodies the dynamic nature of mentoring could have been lost from some of the mentoring literature. As the impact of formal mentoring in academia requires further research, the application of different research methods can only benefit the knowledge base in this field.

Further, mentoring values the processes of reflection within the relationship to help enhance the benefits of the process (Coe, 2004; Garvey, 2004) and upon the mentoring process, such as when reflective interviewing is used as an evaluation technique (cf Thody cited in Cadwell & Carter, 1993). Therefore, utilising a research methodology such as auto-ethnography, which incorporates and encourages reflection could provide richer data that further elucidates the human process and benefits involved. As there is no auto-ethnography relating to the implementation, process and outcomes of formal mentoring in academia currently available in the literature, data from such a study will add to this small but growing field of research.

## **METHODOLOGY**

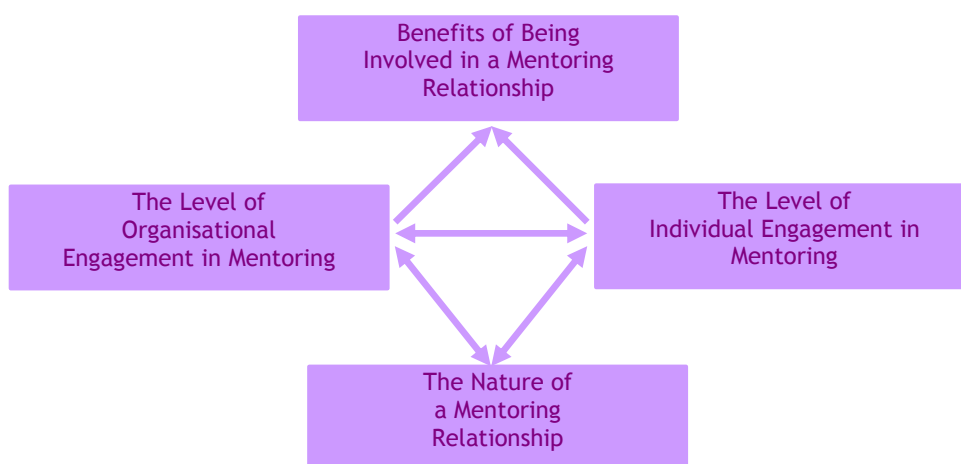
I chose auto-ethnography as a methodology, because it is a research approach that connects the personal to the cultural, by recognising the 'self' within a 'social context' (Reed-Dananhay, 1997). These accounts are written in the first person and utilise dialogue, emotion and reflection of self and others, as relational and institutional accounts that can be affected by social structure and culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Thus, auto-ethnography allows me, as a researcher and the co-ordinator of a mentoring

scheme, to comment on the processes and interactions that I have observed and been part of, during the development and roll out the staff mentoring scheme described below. Through examining the significant experiences that I have encountered and observed through this process, I hope to '*unearth subtle layers of meaning which an outsiders looking "in" may miss*' (Cousin, 2009, p111). However, rather than the delivery of my personal journey of setting up and coordinating a mentoring scheme, I have chosen to employ Chang's (2008) method for the structure of self analysis, as well as reflections on others and the collection of external data. This ameliorates my need to adopt a clinical and objective stand point in the data analysis, which has arisen from a background in experimentalism. Moreover, this acknowledges that the scheme is an entity in its own right and is as much 'I' as I am within this auto-ethnography. Therefore this research not only considers my journey but also that of the scheme as it develops. Chang's methods will be employed in the analysis of the field notes and reflections that I had collected throughout this journey in my roles as co-ordinator, trainer and with support from others, scheme supervisor. The information and interactions generated from providing these roles have facilitated a great deal of learning, which arose not only from my reflections but also from the feedback I received from participant in the scheme. This information is also recorded, reflected upon and included within this analysis.

Focusing on the question *what factors have lead to successful mentoring relationships that generate benefits for all stakeholders?*, I utilised a thematic analysis that combined and catalogued related patterns into sub-themes. The themes that I identified were inductive and semantic, or explicit within the discourse and framed within a pluralist, representational realist epistemological and ontological framework. However, the aforementioned schooling in empiricism has coloured my approach to communicating my findings. The identified themes were pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of the key aspects of success in formalised, organisation wide mentoring schemes. As a result of analysis and reanalysis

of the data, four interactional categories emerged: The Nature of a Mentoring Relationship; The level of Individual Engagement in Mentoring; The Level of Organisational Engagement in Mentoring and the Benefits of Being Involved in a Mentoring Relationship (See Figure 1). These categories are triangulated through the analysis of external data, that I collected through evaluative interviews with mentors and mentees involved in the scheme.

Figure 1: Model of Interactional Categories



## THE SETTING OF THE RESEARCH

This auto-ethnography is carried out with regard to a voluntary but formal mentoring programme that is implemented in a multi site, Midlands Higher Education Institution. The organisation employs over 2000 member of staff in Academic, Academic Related and Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical posts. The scheme is open to all members of staff, so provides professional development opportunities for lecturers, researchers, administrators and facilities staff of all grades and length of service. All staff are offered the option to join the programme as a mentor, mentee or both. Mentors and mentees are contracted to work together for 12 month and identify aims, benchmarks, timelines and schedules for review. Short term contacts are also available where appropriate. These contracts last up to 4 sessions and utilise a Solution Focused Approach (cf De Shazer, 1988). The scheme is outside of both organisational aims and the organisation's appraisal system, thereby ensuring that mentoring relationship focus on the

self identified development aims of the mentee. A matching criterion ensures that mentees are matched outside of the School or Department in which they work and that a match between the identified skills development or career progression are made. The scheme also provides training, continued professional development opportunities and supervision for mentors.

The data for this research was collected over a two and a half year period between Oct 2006 and April 2009. During this time a number of fiscal issues affected Higher Education in the UK. This led to a large number of academic redundancies and a wide scale restructuring in some Higher Education Institutions, including the institution in which this data was collected. As a result, the mentoring scheme was under threat of closure until an Executive decision made funding available to support the scheme co-ordination on a part time basis.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the data offered several insights into what has led to the successful implementation of the formalised mentoring scheme that I co-ordinate. Through the experience of being a coach, talking to other mentors during the training, CPD and supervision sessions that I provide as part of the scheme and discussing mentoring outcomes with mentors and mentees; I have come to believe that four factors are crucial to our understanding of what leads to successful mentoring. These are time investment, levels of engagement, the nature of a mentoring relationship and mentoring output or benefits. Through the course of this auto-ethnography, I will discuss each factor, how they interact to impact on the success of this scheme and how these link to the literature.

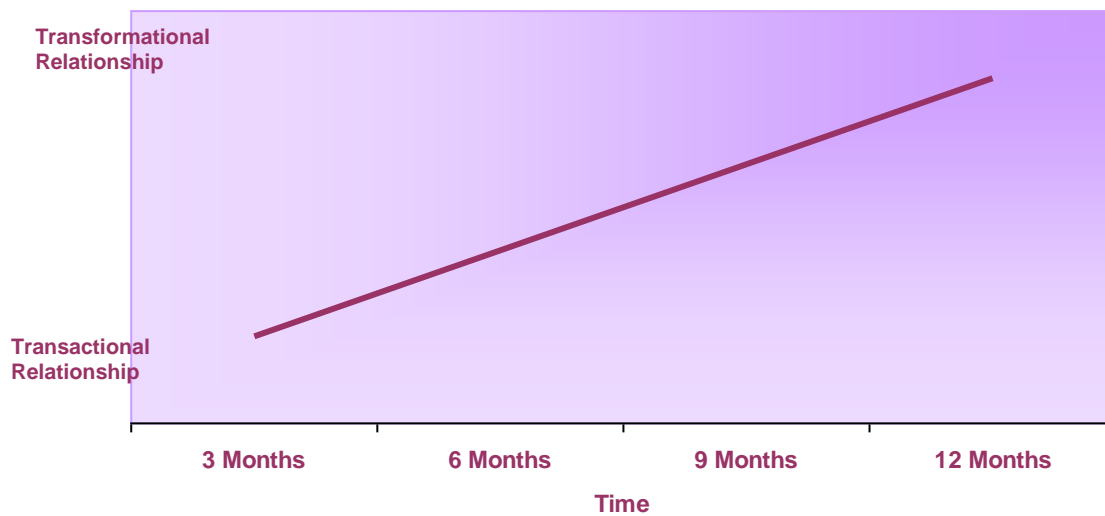
### *The Nature of a Mentoring Relationship*

Over the years in which I have worked in coaching and mentoring, I have come to believe that the success of the mentoring relationship has a great impact on the success of the overarching scheme and the benefits for those

involved. As the literature around mentoring tells us that no two mentoring relationships are the same and many potential roles and relationships can occur (Gibbs 2008; D'Abate et al, 2003), this is not surprising. Both as a mentor and scheme coordinator I have experienced mentoring relationships that not only have unique features, but also dramatic differences in the quality of the interaction. Thus I have concluded that these features and the nature of interaction impact on the character of the relationship achieved between mentor and mentee, which from the reports of those involved in the scheme, appear to fall along a continuum of *transactional to transformational relationship*. The notion of transactional and transformational *leadership styles* has been widely accepted in the leadership literature since the 1970s. It is argued that transactional leadership emphasizes transactions or exchanges between leaders, colleagues and followers and uses contingent reward and management by exception in dealing with others. Transformational leadership emphasizes transformation and change in an organization through the use of empowerment, visioning, and ethics (Connor, 2004).

Apropos to this, I have noticed that relationships that fall closest to the *interactional* pole of this continuum are characterised by an exchange of time between mentor and mentee and culminates in developmental reward for the mentee. The mentee appears to demonstrate a respect for the mentor's knowledge, experience and opinions through listening to and acting on the information the mentor shares with them. Although I have noted that some relationships remain transactional throughout their life cycle, time spent together has influence this in some relationships. The more time a pair spends together, the more complex their relationship can become. As time passes and more meetings take place, I have witnessed that a greater commitment can develop and more may be invested by both partners. This moves them along the aforementioned continuum (See Figure 2 Below)

Figure 2: Move from Transactional to Transformational Mentoring Over Time



I have observed and noted through discussion with mentors and mentees, that at the *transformational* pole of the continuum the mentor and mentee appeared to engage in long term relationships that are interactional. Both mentor and mentee make great investment in the relationship. Rapport is built, trust is established and respect for both parties is developed, which are known to be crucial factors to the success of a mentoring relationship (Walkington & Vanderheide, 2008; Grundy, Robinson & Tomazos, 2001; Beck Howard & Long, 1999). As a result, in-depth and meaningful personal experiences and insights are shared. The outcome of this is a more holistic development process, where an individual's unique career development, skills acquisition, networking and social support needs are identified and met and the mentee is encouraged to engage in self exploration. As a consequence of growing trust and respect, perceived weaknesses, fears and identified hurdles to success are discussed, discovered or disclosed. Mentors are observed to challenge unrealistic beliefs and these challenges are perceived as necessary and responded to in a positive way. This allows for reframing of situations to occur and for strengths to be identified, which are appreciated as genuine insight rather than disingenuous or flattery. I have found that an authentic and genuine relationship occurs in which

mentor and mentee learn from each other and in some cases mentee's report to be 'inspirational' or 'life changing' (Cureton, 2009).

My own experiences of being a mentor has also highlighted that there are a number of factors can affect the type of relationship that mentor and mentee achieve. These have also been confirmed through discussions I have had with mentors during supervision, when they discuss their experiences within the scheme. Firstly, mentoring is a number of things to a number of people. The definition and subsequent application of the process engaged in, is generated by individual beliefs about the nature of mentoring, views about the aims of the relationship and the arena in which mentoring is applied. Mentoring has a long history in Higher Education and I have found that the discipline to which it is applied and its purpose, impacts upon the theoretical approach that is adopted and the corollary relationship between mentor and mentee. Academic disciplines which use mentoring as a tool to support and develop students in the workplace, such as teaching, engineering and nursing, tend to adopt a hierarchical and directive approach (c.f. Kram, 1985) to mentoring for this purpose. This is very necessary, as in all of these professions the mentee in a position of *power*, where mistakes can be critical. Thus, the mentor has a responsibility to ensure the good practice of the mentee, which appears to leads the belief that a *mentee should do as the mentor does and says*. Whereas, other schools and departments have the freedom to adopt developmental approaches (c.f. Megginson, Clutterbuck, Garvey, Stokes, Garrett-Harris, 2005) to the mentoring that takes place.

Consequently, I have become increasingly aware that the approach to mentoring that a school adopts with its students, appears to become endemic and colours the expectations of the relationship and outcomes, of staff who become involved in career development mentoring. Thus, staff from disciplines that implement directive and hierarchical relationships with students appear to feel comfortable when executing directive and hierarchical mentoring relationships with colleagues. These relationships

tend to feature role modelling, where the mentee is expected to learn and develop from the mentor's experience, unless the benefits of alternative approaches are demonstrated and felt to be productive. This has led me to believe that this can affect the type of relationship that the mentor and mentee have and render it difficult to progress to the *transformational* pole of the continuum. I feel this may occur, as no matter how much time a mentor and mentee engage in mentoring, this approach can reduce the likelihood of either party engaging self exploration, challenging unrealistic beliefs and expectations and reframing of situations.

As a result of my early psychodynamic training in counselling, I encountered a crisis when I chose to embrace other theoretical disciplines. This focused on the level to which I should engage with my clients and the extent to which I should be authentic. Through supervision and engaging in reflection I realised that the theoretical approach we are originally schooled in will have an unconscious impact on my actions and beliefs throughout my work with others. With regard to mentoring, my observations, reflection and my interactions with those involved in the scheme confirm this also to be the case. I have found that the first theoretical approach to mentoring encountered can impact on the actions and beliefs of the mentee and mentor and affect the quality of the relationship they go on to have. As mentioned before, it appears that in some hierarchical mentoring relationships, a lack of engagement in the mentee's self exploration and self development occurs. This may occur as mentees report a belief that they should be less active in the earliest stages of mentoring than the mentor, who should be highly active in providing knowledge and insight, identify strategies for progression and instigate networking opportunities. Couple this with the influence of directive mentoring styles implemented in some disciplines, or a possible interaction with memories of didactic teaching approaches that mentees may have experienced in the past; it not surprising that some mentees may believe that mentoring *is something that is done to them*. A lack of ownership and personal autonomy within the process may result. In contrast have noticed that developmental mentoring encourages

both parties to have equally active, but diverse, roles in the relationship. A mentor is a facilitator of insight and development and a sign post to information. They support and encourage the mentee's development of situation and self knowledge, which allows the mentee to grow. The mentee on the other hand actively engages in the development process and reports feelings of equal power in the relationship, which ultimately leads to a deeper level of initial engagement. Therefore, I suspect as self exploration and development, engagement in the mentoring process, personal autonomy and ownership of the process are more likely to lead transformational relationships, the theoretical approach to mentoring is important to the ensuing relationship. This has important consequences for the development and theoretic stance of mentoring schemes for staff development in Higher Education.

#### *The level of Individual Engagement in Mentoring*

It is obvious that the more one engages in a process the more one is likely to achieve. This is highly pertinent to the mentoring process as you *get out what you put in* (Walkington & Vanderheilde, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that throughout my mentoring and coaching career I have been aware that level of engagement has an effect on the outcomes a mentoring relationship. Within the scheme I have noticed that both mentor and mentee engagement are important and that a lack of engagement by one of the parties can affect the others satisfaction and ultimately the outcomes of the relationship. During outcome interviews mentees have suggested that a lack of mentor engagement impacts on their motivation, their perceptions of actions available to them and their career based organisational knowledge. Whereas, mentors report that a lack of mentee engagement negatively impacts on their satisfaction about the relationship and their subsequent level of engagement.

From these discussions it also emerged that the level that a mentor is engaged in the process is demonstrated through an interaction between behavioural and intellectual components, which provide a set of hierarchical

and inclusive engagement outcomes. This ranges from simply meeting with the mentee, through investing time, into building a rapport, making the decision to commit to the mentoring relationship or to invest in the mentee development, the mentor exhibiting good listening and communication skills, through to a steady increase in the mentor’s understanding of and demonstration mentoring tools and techniques.

Figure 3: Hierarchy of Engagement



I have observed that level of engagement appears to be affected by a number of factors. This includes how well a mentor and mentee are matched. The importance of matching to a mentoring relationship is already recognised in the literature (c.f. Gibb, 2008; Cox, 2005), however I noted that a good match not only includes matching based on knowledge base, but also encompasses matching for personality type. My role as coordinator means that I provide mediation when mentoring relationships become difficult. Although I have had little experience of assuming this role, I have become aware that if a mentor’s and mentee’s personality clashes, building rapport will be more difficult. If rapport can not be established, the relationship engagement tends to be characterised by meeting and exchanging some information. Thus may remain closely tied to the transactional pole of the relationship continuum. However, relationships that demonstrate lower levels of the engagement can be

enhanced if a match ensures similarity in information processing styles. This enhances the communication and understanding between mentor and mentee. However, I noted that this is not as crucial for relationships that progress quickly along the engagement continuum, as mentors who demonstrate intermediate and enhanced mentoring skills, appear to naturally adapt their language or mirror a mentee's information processing style and related language patterns.

Playing the mediator has also highlighted that ensuring a match between mentor's and mentee's expectations of the mentoring process is important to engagement. Both parties involved in a relationship have beliefs about the process and the outcomes. The extent to which these align impinges on the view each has of the relationship. When a mismatch between expectations occurs, misunderstands, miscommunications and dissatisfaction for either or both parties can arise, which in turn affects their enthusiasm as well as the effort they place in the relationship. Therefore, ensuring that both mentor and mentee explore expectations is crucial to the success of a formalised mentoring scheme.

As previously mentioned, mentors can adopt hierarchical and developmental approaches to mentoring. These also affect engagement. During outcome interviews, I have noted that hierarchical mentoring relationships are most productive for mentees who wish to make career progression, whereas developmental relationships are most appropriate for those who wish to enhance their skills base, whilst also providing a suitable platform for successful career enhancement. Those mentors, who approach skills development from a hierarchical theoretical position and implement a directive approach, are often not as successful in their mentoring outcomes. In a few cases this has led to a mentee becoming dissatisfied with the mentoring process, as they are not achieving the developments they desire and this can ultimately lead to a disengagement from the process. This loosely fits with the literature appertaining to Transactional and Transformational Leadership Styles, especially if we bear in mind the

relationship, proposed earlier, between directive, hierarchical mentoring and transactional mentoring styles. This literature proposes that transactional leadership styles negatively correlate with upward mobility of staff and employee satisfaction (Deluga, 1988). Furthermore, as mentioned above, I suspect mentees expect, or are comfortable with, a particular mentoring approach. When this is not presented by the mentor, incidents have occurred where the mentee has become confused and consequently, they have disengaged as they feel that the mentor is not skilled, or knowledgeable about the correct approach to mentoring. This suggests that careful matching of mentee's need to the mentor's theoretical approach will facilitate the mentoring process and eliminating possible tensions or hurdles that may hinder both parties level of engagement.

Through my own practice I have found that time impacts on engagement and increased engagement occurs over time. Within the scheme I have noticed that perceptions of time investment can affect mentor and mentee engagement. A mentor's engagement can be negatively affected by the belief that a mentee is not devoting enough time into their development. Incidents have occurred where a mentor's engagement has waned or a hiatus has occurred in the relationship, when they believe a mentee is making excuses for not attending sessions, not investing suitable time into working toward goals and not achieving deadlines agreed with the mentor. This can be mediated if a mentor believes a mentee has justifiable reasons for not investing time into their development. However, if the mentor perceives that a reason is not justified or an excuse, disengagement can be almost total. To some extent a mentee's engagement in mentoring can also be affected by a mentor's time investment. Interestingly I have noticed that mentee's who feel their mentor is devoting time to them, have a deeper engagement in their mentoring relationship. This is enhanced if the mentee perceives that their mentor is dedicating time that they do not have to spare. Ubiquitous support for this notion is evident in both the economics (c.f. Montani, 1987) and the social psychology literature (c.f. Sherif & Sherif, 1953), who argue that greater value is given to scarce

resources. However, when a mentor continually cancels meetings, a mentee's engagement in the mentoring process is negatively effected unless the mentee believes the mentor has a genuine reason to minimise contact. Even so, engagement can still be compromised.

Finally, a mentor's skills, abilities and repertoire are not only an indicator of a mentor's engagement in mentoring, but also impacts on a mentee's engagement in the process. Through the evaluation process I have found, that the more skilled the mentor, the more engaged the mentee. I suspect this may occur for a number of reasons, including the mentor's ability to encourage the mentee in the mentoring process, their skill and knowledge of facilitating change, development and self knowledge and their management of the mentoring process. In hierarchical relationship mentors often have a high level of situational knowledge. This allows them to provide mentees with the benefit of the wisdom and experience. A mentee learns from this and attempts to model their example. They may provide solutions for some mentees, but as we are all individuals, a mentor's approach may not be generalisable to all their mentees. In some cases a mentor may have had other mentees and can use their experiences, approaches and solutions to issues, to help develop a mentee. However, not all mentors have this array of experience and this lack of diversity in approach may generate disengagement. Consequently, in my experience, a combination of situational knowledge and coaching skills often results in a much stronger mentee engagement, than either pure coaching or situational knowledge alone.

### *The Level of Organisational Engagement in Mentoring*

During the development of this mentoring scheme, the financial climate changed rapidly and a number of fiscal modifications occurred within the organisation. As a consequence, the mentoring scheme was under threat of closure. This has permitted me to observe the impact that organisational engagement plays in the success of mentoring and allowing me to reflect on two extremes of this influence. Obviously, without organisational backing a

scheme is going to fail. An organisation needs to invest time and resources into the development, rollout and coordination of a scheme. Without investment for development, a scheme is unlikely to meet the needs of the mentee, mentor or the organisation. I believe that a lack of investment in rollout is likely to lead poor involvement in the scheme; possibly resulting in too few mentors for potential mentees or too few mentees for mentors to work with. Not investing in scheme coordination can lead to poor matches between mentor and mentee, a lack of training, CPD and supervision for mentors. A lack of evaluation and further development is also inherent, which can lead to the scheme becoming stagnant.

However, through the impact of the economic down turn on the scheme, I have detected that organisational engagement is more complex than the organisation providing funds for scheme development. I have found that organisational engagement consists of an interaction between financial investment, as outlined above, and involvement. This part of engagement is personal support for, and involvement in, the scheme by senior levels within the organisation. In my opinion the interaction between these factors leads to greater success. Without involvement from senior levels, the scheme can appear to promote a glass ceiling beyond which employees are not expected to progress. It can also lead to the perception that the scheme is good enough for the masses but not superior enough for senior management. Clearly investment can take place without involvement and involvement can place without investment. Involvement without investment generates seniors who want to promote the scheme, but find the scheme lacking. Mentees find they are offered the opportunity of being mentored, but without investment the time required for mentoring is not recognised and allocated as workload. Whereas an interaction between the two allows for a well managed scheme that is supported, promoted and engaged in equally, by all staff.

Through the many interactions I have with staff about the scheme and with those staff who are involved, it has become apparent that organisational

engagement affects mentee and mentor views and their subsequent engagement in the scheme. If there is no involvement from senior management in the scheme, both mentors and mentees view the scheme negatively. This includes the belief that if a scheme is unsupported, it is at risk of not continuing. Or that senior management are not involved as the scheme is not effective. Therefore, they choose not to engage. People also believe that none involvement suggests that senior management have a negative view of the scheme. This may engender a lack of engagement because employees feel that participation may reflect badly on them, or their requests for time to become involvement may be vetoed.

My observations of this scheme and others that I have been involved in, has lead me to believe that organisational engagement takes many forms and ranges in intensity. Low levels of engagement include, developing a basic strategy, providing someone to administrate the scheme and facilitate matches. This may also include some support for the scheme within the management structure of the organisation. Moderate engagement also incorporates some training for mentors, which leads to greater investment in the administration and coordination of the scheme. It may also include seniors believing the scheme is valuable and encouraging their staff to become involved. A high level of organisational engagement may additionally include the provision for continued professional development for mentors, supervision of mentors and therefore a coherent mentoring strategy within the organisation. This is often coupled with the scheme being valued by all levels and occupations groups in the organisation, which may generate greater involvement. The level of support an organisation provides for a scheme also impacts on mentoring relationships, individual engagement, and nature of the relationship. I have observed that the greater the organisation engagement, the better the outcomes for staff and the organisation. Conversely, the possibilities that the scheme may end or that investment would reduce, negatively impacts on both the mentor and mentee's psychological perspective, leaving them feeling that the organisation is not only reducing investment in the scheme but no longer

investing in, or valuing, them. As a consequence, both mentors and mentee's report less organisational loyalty.

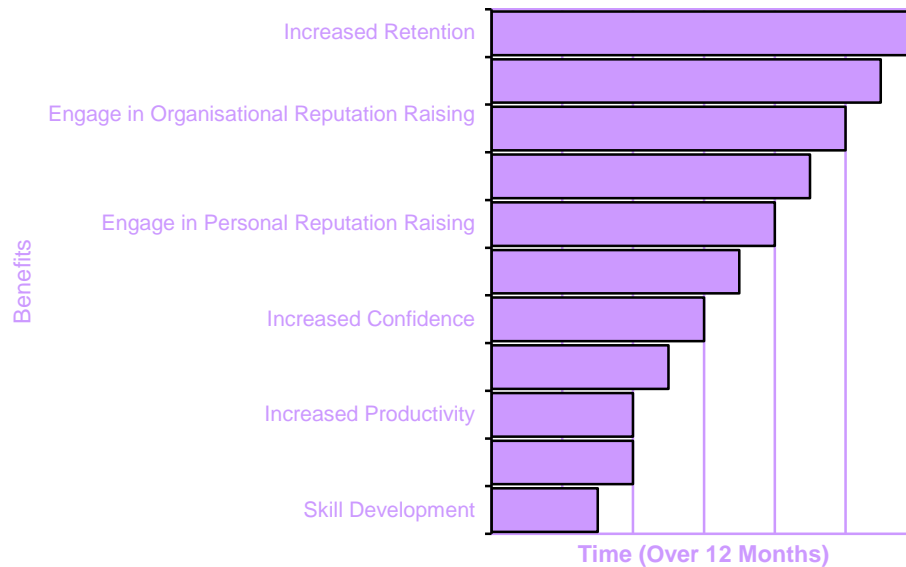
However, I also observed that the scheme was greatly valued and loyalty towards the scheme grew when staff perceived it to be under threat. This loyalty was demonstrated as staff involved in the scheme became active champions. Further, in the face of academic redundancy and restructure an increased number of staff utilised the scheme for support, this has led to the scheme becoming a valued commodity. Further support for this is echoed by staff who have approached the scheme since the threat to its continuation had been settled. These offer the opinion that *it is generous of the University* to provide such a scheme in the current fiscal climate. This evidently helps to promote the organisation as a good employer and helps to mediate some of the negatively felt because of impending redundancies. Therefore, I have learnt that continued organisational support is crucial to the success of a scheme. If modifications to funding are required, it should be carefully managed. Moreover, when faced with economic restriction that negatively impacts of staff, an organisation may be wise to continue investing in support avenues, such as mentoring.

### *The Benefits of Being Involved in a Mentoring Relationship*

There is copious literature that considers the output of mentoring and how these benefit mentors, mentees and the organisation, which proposes that a successful mentoring scheme must ensure that the outcomes benefit all stakeholders. I observed that individual engagement, along with organisational engagement and the nature and length of a relationship, impacts on the outcomes achieved in mentoring. Consequently, through outcome interview, exit questionnaire and evaluation, I have noted a number of personal and organisation benefits arise from the mentoring process. Moreover, I have witnessed an ordinal affect in the demonstration these outcomes, which also appears to be influenced by time, the nature of a mentoring relationship and level of engagement. These include both general and Higher Education specific benefits, which fall into categories of

enhanced development, psychosocial support, enhanced work engagement and enhanced organisational loyalty (see Figure Four).

Figure 4: Benefits of Mentoring



Through the information I have been privy to, I have come to understand that short term relationships or those characterised by either the mentor or mentee not engaging in the process, appear to achieve few benefits. Some report that their lack of engagement is due to unforeseen increases in workload, which results in minimum input into the relationship and the development of a transactional relationship, where the mentee exchanges time for enhanced skills or information about career development. This is also accentuated by a lack of organisational engagement, especially when financial investment or senior level support is not given. Again a tenuous link is found between this observation and the leadership literature, which proposes that managers who find themselves under considerable pressure tend demonstrate a transactional leadership style (Connor, 2004). However, with the investment of more time and greater levels of engagement, the nature of the relationship changes and the benefits increase. A little more time and engagement appears to produce the beginnings of an enhanced engagement with the organisation, increased motivation and greater productivity. As time progresses and engagement deepens, the receptivity

of the relationship increases which allows for psychosocial benefits to occur. Initially these are demonstrated through people feeling happier but further develops into feelings of greater confidence and the knowledge that one is emotionally supported in the work place.

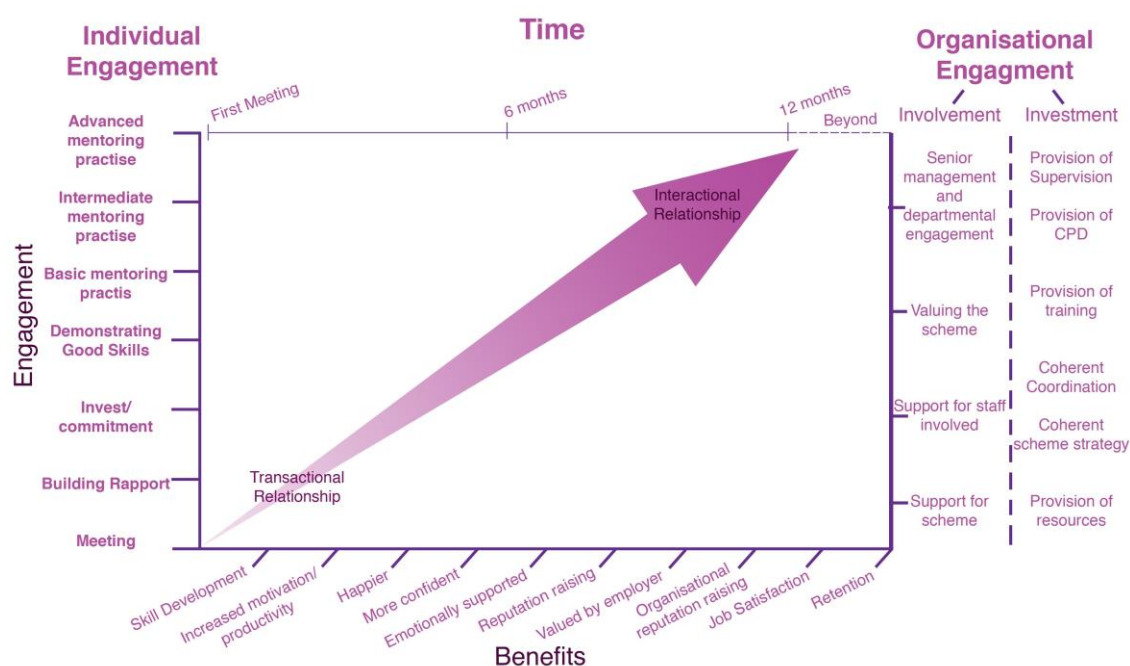
If a mentoring relationship progresses beyond 9 months duration and is characterised by good mentor, mentee and organisational engagement and a transformational mentoring style; the benefits demonstrated appear to include enhanced work engagement. Through scheme evaluation I found that both parties engage in more activities that raise their personal reputation, they feel valued by all levels of the organisation and engage in more activities to enhance organisational reputation. If this relationship continues, the benefits appear to extend beyond the life time of the relationship, and mentoring positively impacts on satisfaction as well as decisions to stay working within the institution. Although, the benefits outlined here are not novel and copiously references are found to these in the literature, there is no or little reference in the current literature to an ordinal effect in the demonstration of benefits, or the impact of the interactive effects of time, individual engagement, organisational engagement and the nature of the relationship.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

As this is an auto-ethnography the findings discussed above are the reflection of one person in relation to one scheme that has been implemented in one Higher Education Institution. However, these findings raise a number of interesting perceptions and suggestions relating to the implementation of formalised mentoring for staff development in an academic setting. This research outlines observations and reflections about the process of mentoring. Specifically, this study has observed an interaction between time, invested into and engagement in the process of, mentoring. It proposes that the more time invested into a relationship and greater investment made by mentors and mentees, the more likely the mentoring relationship achieved will be of a transactional nature. Further,

this work had noted a further interaction between time, personal investment, organisational investment, the nature of the mentoring relation, which impacts on the benefits achieved within the mentoring relationship (see figure 5). Hopefully some of these finding will open debate and inspire further interpretivist and empirical research.

Figure 5: The impact of Time, Engagement, Nature of a Mentoring Relationship on Mentoring Benefits.



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