MENTORING AS A TOOL FOR MANAGING TALENTS

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Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University or other academic or professional organisation whilst undertaking my research degree.

2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

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5. The word count of the thesis is 56,000.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how mentoring can be used to manage talents in an organisation, how people make sense of it in their everyday lives and how these perceptions play out in professional work life, particularly in a sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) context. The effect of superimposing the Anglo-Saxon etic approach to formal mentoring practice on the African emic culture of informal mentoring was also reviewed. The research was conducted in a typical reflexive hermeneutic style, and the evidence is taken from interviews with eight former bank employees.

There is agreement among researchers that mentoring produces a beneficial outcome in a wide variety of settings, and the participants in the study also expressed unequivocal support for using formal mentoring programmes to drive employee engagement and talent retention. Different types and styles of mentoring configurations can be beneficial and thrive in various contexts if there is an awareness of the cultural dynamics that are present and the purposes for the mentoring scheme are explicit.

This study proposes a persona called the *super-sponsor-mentor*, a new construct that describes the model of mentorship that will be most effective as a tool to manage talents in the workplace. The hierarchical and power-oriented culture prevalent in Nigeria and most SSA countries supports this model.

Much has been written about structured mentoring, but little of that work has been from an African perspective. This study is a vital contribution to developing literature in this area.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to my Father, Jehovah El-Gibbor, my Way Maker, Who enabled me to complete the work against all odds.

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Amen!

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Chapter 1: BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH AND PRE-UNDERSTANDING

1.1. Introduction

This study explores how mentoring can be a tool to manage talents. It is a journey that emerged from my mentoring experiences in an informal setting, both as a mentor and a mentee. The research was carried out in Nigeria, one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa. I have embarked upon this journey driven by a genuine interest and belief that organisations can use formal mentoring to manage talents and harness the full potential of their most valuable employees. This belief will be tested with the findings of this research.

This chapter shows why I chose the subject of mentoring to research, as well as my ideas and considerations at the time I began. I have chosen a hermeneutic path, which means I need to express my understanding of the research topic. This is important for hermeneutic research because the author's pre-comprehension is relevant for discussing conclusions drawn.

The chapter ends with a preview to give the reader a map of our journey before we begin.

1.2. My Interest in the Study and the Broader Research Context

I have been preoccupied with the issue of talent retention for a long time since I observed early on in my banking career that staff turnover was alarmingly high in the financial services industry. In striving to find an enduring solution to the challenges of employee turnover, especially as it relates to managing talents, I envisioned a solution that would result in a substantial emotional and developmental impact on the talents we are managing, to the point where it would influence their entire lives—beyond the job. I envisaged a solution that would be holistic and enduring, and yet relatively easy to implement and manage. Looking back at my career progress, mentoring began to attract my attention as a tool we can use to shape lives by addressing the careers of our best employees.

After working for three different banks within the first seven years of my banking career, I remained with S. Bank for the next ten years until I joined my current bank. I have attributed this ten-year job stability to the influence of mentor figures in my life and career. I have indeed benefited from being mentored, albeit informally. The guidance I received helped me better understand the typical job challenges and how to respond effectively to them. This made a

change of organisation a less likely option, even during the global financial crisis in 2008. In the same vein, and more importantly, reflecting on my career progress, I can identify several junior colleagues and subordinates who look up to me as their mentor.

These informal experiences of the mentor-mentee relationship have strengthened my resolve to explore formal mentoring as a tool for managing talents on a holistic basis. However, despite my positive experiences with mentoring, it remains to be seen whether formal mentoring is strong enough to handle talents at the level I envisage, positively impacting their careers and their entire lives for long-term retention and optimisation. Results from this study will either support or discount that belief, which is one of the biases I bring into the study.

I decided to continue with this line of research at the doctorate level to come up with some results that will be of value to the management of any organisation, particularly in the financial services industry in Africa, that decides to consider mentoring as a tool to address the high rate of staff turnover. This is not a challenge peculiar to S. Bank. It is a Nigerian banking industry-wide issue. Starting with Nigeria at the study's outset, I found a need to broaden the context to sub-Saharan Africa.

My experiences have led me to believe that formal mentoring can play an essential (positive) role in talent management, starting with onboarding. When we attach bright young talents to mentors early in their careers, they stand a chance of making better decisions as they progress. The observation further reinforces this belief that informal mentoring is already entrenched in Africa’s social culture. This can be formalised and used to drive talents towards realising their life and career goals. This belief is a strong motivation for this work, which I stand to be corrected as the research progresses and the results emerge, whether my opinion is valid.

1.3. The Nature and Significance of Mentoring

This is an initial consideration of the concept of mentoring to help situate the subject within the context of my research and clearly describe the approach and definition I adopted for this study. A deeper review of the matter is in Chapter 2 of the work.

A cursory look at the many research papers and studies on mentoring may lead one to believe that the field is mature and exhaustive. In practice, however, this is not the case because the

kaleidoscope of mentoring is still evolving and constantly changing (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). While mentoring has proved to be a promising and cost-effective intervention, scientific knowledge on the subject still needs to be developed (Mitchell et al., 2013). The word “mentoring” has many meanings and functions, most valid within the context in which they are used. Unless the researcher clarifies which model is being followed in particular research, it is often challenging to draw conclusions with confidence or compare them with other studies (Clutterbuck, 2013). Mentoring can take place in many different contexts, circumstances and modes; it makes a broad definition of mentoring for a programme vital (Clutterbuck, 2017) and, in the process, situates whichever definition one adopts within a specific frame of reference. Stokes et al. (2021) also support this view and posit that culture is agentic.

Ziegler et al. (2021) identify three fundamental challenges in resolving the mentoring paradox. First, there is no generally binding definition of mentoring. Second, the term mentoring can refer to a myriad of different educational measures and formats, making it impossible to identify structural characteristics that would hold for all mentoring. Third, mentoring never occurs in isolation. Instead, it is always combined with other measures and influenced by various factors. Therefore, mentoring effects are confounded with non-mentoring effects.

The journey motif overlaps modern-day mentoring from the earliest classical literature.

Homer’s epic story, in which Mentor was the wise and old friend of Odysseus, gave the general importance of the concept and practice of mentorship. During the Trojan War, Odysseus entrusted his son’s care, guidance and education to Mentor. The word *mentor* has become synonymous with a wise person, a trustworthy advisor, and a friend (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). Mentors have existed throughout history as wiser, older persons whose job is to guide the mentee’s development, and much of this idea of a mentor’s role is still prevalent today (Bierema and Hill, 2005). The broad agreement, however, is that mentoring is relational and developmental, has career (instrumental) and psychosocial (relational) functions, and includes phases and transitions (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021).

Its popularity notwithstanding, profound research on mentoring began relatively recently. Garvey (2017) brings the history of mentoring to life with his tracking of mentoring from

Homer's Odyssey to the more modern-day concept of mentoring. Although it is impossible to identify a single work and say categorically that it is the beginning of mentoring research, one can argue that Kathy Kram put formal mentoring into the public eye with her in-depth analysis of corporate mentoring programmes in the USA. Her 1983 Academy of Management Journal article began the contemporary research tradition. The 1983 article is still the most frequently cited journal article on mentoring, and her conceptualisation of mentoring has been either directly quoted or reworked only slightly in many subsequent studies (Allen and Eby, 2009).

In her seminal article, Kram (1983) identifies four stages of mentoring but provides no strict definition at any point. In a subsequent book, Kram (1985) notes that mentoring involves an intense relationship, whereby a senior or more experienced person (the mentor) provides two functions for a junior person (the mentee): one being advice or modelling about career development behaviours, and the second being personal support, especially psychosocial support. This is still the basis for most modern-day definitions of the concept (Clutterbuck, 2013).

There has been a great deal of refinement and articulation of mentoring concepts and measures. However, most of the branches connect to the same conceptual taproot. For example, Ragins et al. (2000) provide an appropriation of the Kram conceptualisation that is quite typical: Mentoring is an intense developmental relationship whereby advice, counselling and developmental opportunities are provided to a mentee by a mentor which, in turn, shapes the mentee's career experiences. They also expand Kram's (1985) conceptualisation of peer mentoring, moving away from the original focus on the mentor-mentee dyad.

David Clutterbuck brought the modern concept of mentoring to Europe in his first version of *Everybody Needs a Mentor*, a book inspired by his time in the USA (Clutterbuck, 2001). At present, only a few large organisations have yet to dabble with mentoring in some way or another, including 71% of the Fortune 500 (Bridgeford, 2007; Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021). It is also used extensively in education and government globally (Merrick, 2017).

The definition and functions of mentors vary widely, and there needs to be more agreement in literature on what mentoring is and what it is not (Clutterbuck, 2007). Definitions range

from a career sponsor to a peer counsellor or a coach, to a more classical sense of someone who facilitates all aspects of the mentee's development (Arora and Rangnekar, 2016). Somewhere in between a career sponsor and a classical mentor is someone who oversees the career and development of another person, usually a junior, through teaching, counselling, providing psychological support, protecting and, at times, promoting or sponsoring (Bierema and Merriam, 2002).

While researchers describe what mentoring is, it is also essential to clarify what it is not. In the mentoring literature reviewed, more than one definition of mentoring exists, and its meanings, like its practices, are changing and expanding. Competing definitions of mentoring have been advanced (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021). There is still some debate about whether a mentor's role should include sponsoring. Many definitions, mainly US-originated ones, emphasise sponsorship and hands-on help by the mentor (Ibarra, 2020; McDaid, 2019; Singh and Vanka, 2020); others, mostly European and Australian in origin, lean more towards the developmental aspects of mentoring (Suzanne et al*.,* 2013). I will expound on this in Chapter 2 when I delve deeper into the concept of mentoring and its various ramifications.

There is an ongoing debate among scholars and researchers as to whether mentoring is the same as coaching, and if different, to what extent. Traditionally, coaching has been associated with a shorter-term performance focus, with the coach portrayed as a process-based rather than a content knowledge-based expert. By contrast, mentoring has a longer-term holistic focus, where the mentor has direct experience and knowledge of the setting in which the mentee is operating (Stoke et al., 2021). As Clutterbuck and Gimson (2008) posit, coaching and mentoring have traditionally been intended as different and distinct helping relationships for other purposes and people. Conflating them is unhelpful as it does not recognise those differences, and this neglect raises conceptual and practical problems. Stoke et al. (2021) argue that, rather than seeking to decouple coaching practice from mentoring practice, it is more helpful to recognise the fundamental inter-connectedness of the two. Doing so "allows scheme participants to draw on various helping behaviours—some more traditionally associated with coaching and some more traditionally associated with mentoring—to meet developmental challenges"(p. 143). They conclude that context plays an agentic role in determining which aspects of these two helping orientations are likely to be used by

practitioners when faced with significant challenges while working in their organisations. We will take a closer look at this later in the literature review.

Some researchers have extended their mentoring definitions to include alternative forms of mentoring such as peer mentoring (Ulanovsky and Perez, 2018), formal and informal mentoring (Karkoulian et al., 2008), and diversified mentoring, relationships where individuals of different racial, ethnic or gender groups engage in mentoring (Hilsabeck, 2018; Blake-Beard, 2011). Although one can argue that the core meaning of mentoring remains widely used, there is no doubt that multiple meanings have added complexity and ambiguity in some instances. In Chapter 2, I will expand the discussion to include various alternative forms, like reverse mentoring and e-mentoring, to illustrate how these can substitute for or complement the more restricted traditional mentoring model.

While mentoring is complex and multi-dimensional, the focus of this study is necessarily more limited. I recognise that mentoring is a class of phenomena, and each phenomenon needs to be investigated in its own right. Therefore, in the section that follows, I will define exactly what kind of mentoring relationship is being studied as a context for this research.

I did a more detailed review of the concept of mentoring later in the study. Still, at this stage and for this study, it is sufficient to say that the definition of mentoring followed is based on the view of a mentor as an accomplished and experienced performer who takes a deliberate, personal interest in helping to guide and develop a junior or more inexperienced person (Arora and Rangnekar, 2016; Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021). This involves transmitting knowledge, social capital and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to their work, career or professional development (Varghese and Finkelstein, 2021). Whereas the process may be formal (set up by the organisation) or informal (initiated by either the mentor or mentee), mentoring often entails some informal communication—usually face-to-face—and for a sustained period. Within the context of formal mentoring, however, the duration tends to be more specific. This definition sums up the core insights of most recent analyses of mentoring, which builds on the early studies that initiated much of the current interest. Later in the study, I included a formal and informal mentoring section.

The definition of mentoring I have adopted is a convenient starting point as there is no generally accepted definition which could supply a better base from which to identify outcomes, as there is still debate about the nature of mentoring (Haggard, 2011). The central problem of determining what lies within the scope of mentoring persists, and there is still no explicit agreement about the focus or range of mentoring outcomes (Ziegler et al., 2021).

One aspect of this problem is that many other roles can be named “mentoring” when other titles appear more appropriate. The phenomenon of retitling different roles as mentoring may mean that the most straightforward evaluation will be that the function being evaluated is not mentoring at all (Clutterbuck and Gimson, 2008).

Another aspect of this problem is the increasing use of the idea that there are different “types” of mentoring. While this may be an excellent approach to analysing mentoring, it does not remove the need to identify the “core” elements which any variation would have to incorporate as a necessary part of its claim to be a form of mentoring. In establishing mentoring schemes, it is essential to emphasise the core, distinctive elements and highlight the possibility that people may negotiate particular relationships to suit their needs (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021).

In this study, I have focused primarily on the possible benefits of formal mentoring in connection with mentees’ attitudes rather than objective work outcomes like productivity or quality of delivery because work outcomes are more susceptible to external environments (Cheng C. et al., 2014). I examined affective commitment and turnover intention since the overarching objective of the study is how mentoring can be used to manage talents at a strategic level.

I concerned myself with whether formal mentoring can be beneficial and, if so, whether it can be used to manage talents. The focus has been on contacts within my organisation and samples within my network, although a narrow focus is a feasible starting point.

While there is a substantial number of literature on mentoring from other parts of the world, such as Europe and North America, there needs to be more research on mentoring from a sub-Saharan African perspective. According to Sawatsky et al. (2016), most mentoring research in North America and Europe has been undertaken to provide little understanding

of the broader mentoring context in the sub-Saharan African environment. Many examples of mentoring were mostly informal in a Nigerian context (Okurame, 2005; Aladejana, 2006; Ogar et al., 2019; Igudia, 2022). Ughasoro et al. (2022) posit that to institutionalise mentoring programmes, there is a need to explore the various challenges of the mentoring process and suggest potential approaches for effective mentor-mentee relationships in Nigerian institutions.

This yawning gap in mentoring research, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, strongly motivates this research work. I hope that this study's results will help in the quest to close that gap and open other research areas relating to mentoring.

1.4. The Research Questions, Aim and Objectives

The issue of managing talents, with particular emphasis on retention, has been of interest to me for a long time. As I pondered the matter over, I realised that I could dig deeper into the subject area of mentoring, explore it as a tool for managing talents and, in the process, contribute to academic knowledge and professional practice. My curiosity was fuelled by the desire to establish what mentoring meant as a concept that could be of benefit in a professional setting in an African context. The African context this research brings is one of my strong points regarding how I intend to contribute to academic knowledge and management practice.

I started with many questions in my mind. Questions I hoped to find answers to as the study progressed: Can mentoring be used to manage and retain talents? If yes, how? Does mentoring mean the same thing to everyone, or can it mean different things to different people in different contexts? How do people make sense of mentoring in their everyday lives? How do these perceptions reflect in professional work life, especially in an African context and setting? Since mentoring, despite being informal, was already entrenched in our social culture, can it play some role in managing talents if formalised? If mentoring was so important, what exactly was it, and how did it come to exert its influence? What are the challenges of setting up a formal mentoring scheme, and how can they be surmounted?

In the end, the last two questions became the fulcrum of this research work because they brought the big questions down to a practical level with a solid socio-cultural connotation. If

it is true that mentoring of some form is already being practised as a way of life in most African societies, it would have been expected that mentoring ought to be an essential part of our professional lives. Interestingly, it is not. At least not in a formal way. Facts like this strengthen my curiosity and deepen my interest in the work.

My first step was to return to some significant issues in order to consider the broader picture. This was crucial to allow my research to be brought into context in an academic setting and to determine whether I could contribute to the theory of organisational talent management and professional practice. I also wanted to contribute to socio-cultural theory based on the African cultural context, which is the setting for the study.

In that broader context, mentoring is a practice that occurs regularly, though informally, in the African setting. Linking it with talent management as a business and organisational research subject introduced a new twist that I found interesting and was willing to explore. This brings an attractive cutting edge to this research and informs the study's qualitative approach, as seen in Chapter 4.

In summary, this research explores mentoring as a tool that can be used strategically to manage and optimise the performance of crucial/brilliant talents within the corporate environment. To achieve this aim, the research objectives leveraged are:

- To critically evaluate the concept of mentoring and identify the value of a deeper understanding of the subject in a Nigerian/sub-Saharan African context.
- To examine the impact of national culture on organisational culture as a critical driver of the level of success of any mentoring programme.
- To evaluate how organisational culture fits into mentoring within a professional setting.

It is also important to state here that the research aim of the study and its corresponding objectives are liable to change, considering respondents' responses.

1.5. Overall Research Approach

This is a hermeneutic exploration to understand how mentoring can be used to manage the talent life cycle. I have done this using an approach that will enable me to gather information, form impressions, and develop an understanding from studying the patterns emerging from the research materials.

The hermeneutic methodology provides a framework that supports this objective mainly because, from the outset, I did not intend to separate myself from the study (McCaffrey et al., 2012). I would rather say that I "immersed myself" in the entire research work and thoroughly "enjoyed" the process as the understanding developed in line with the pre-set objectives. This approach explicitly recognises the pre-understanding and participation in the process.

The pre-understanding for this research was derived from many sources over a twenty-four-year period of my banking career from inception to date. My early life history—with particular emphasis on my banking experience, change of jobs as my career progressed, and the high level of staff turnover in the industry—were the elements that first stirred up my interest in this subject area. Added to this, from a life history perspective, are my informal mentoring experiences as a mentor and a mentee. A combination of the above-mentioned factors, which I have stated as my pre-understanding as well as a preliminary review of relevant literature, formed my early "hunches" for this research. At the early stage, the critical questions in my mind revolved around the question, "How does this work?" Mentoring emerged as a vital theme to explore during the research journey.

Bowers et al. (1990) indicate that a hunch is a highly creative process for generating scientific hypotheses. Tacit perception of coherence has led people to represent themselves explicitly in a hunch (Bowers et al., 1990). The experienced practitioner can generate hunches and follow them. Education research suggests improving our intuitive capabilities through systemic critical reflection on intuitive judgements (Greenhalgh, 2002). An excellent scientific investigation by Hayashi also points out that our emotions and feelings (or hunches) not only matter but can also be essential in our intuitive ability to make good choices. One theory claims that our senses help us quickly filter different options, even when unconscious about the screening (Hayashi, 2001).

1.5.1 Map of the Research Journey

In Chapter 1, "Background to Research and Pre-understanding", I present the background to the study, sharing details of my life history as it relates to this work and how it informed my earlier work on the subject, leading to this study. These considerations shaped my initial literature review and early research considerations, helping me arrive at a pre-understanding.

In Chapter 2, "Literature Review", I carried out a critical and evaluative examination of mentoring. I also looked at the benefits and problematic areas. As I continued with the research, mainly when I started to conduct the interviews, I needed to review further relevant literature on the impact of national culture on organisational culture. This is captured in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 3, "The Nigerian Economic, Banking and Social Context", I reviewed the Nigerian economy and the banking industry, eventually narrowing it down to S. Bank, my case study for this research. This was to create a social context for the work. I also critically analysed the literature on culture about the national setting and its impact on mentoring. These first three chapters helped me arrive at my early research hunches.

In Chapter 4, "The Research Journey", I narrowed the work down to the research problem and began to set the tone for my research area. In this chapter, I also presented my philosophical considerations and research methodologies, ending with my specific research methods and ethical concerns around the work.

In Chapter 5, "The Hermeneutic Exploration", I provided insights into my hermeneutic exploration of the collected data and interpretation of my research information.

In Chapter 6, "Conclusions and Personal Reflections", I reviewed the study's aim, purpose and objectives, my observations and conclusions, and the considerations for management praxis. I shared my thoughts on the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, and reflections on the journey.

1.6. Conclusion

Although many mentoring studies have been carried out, a comprehensive theory still needs to be developed due to the absence of studies that address certain persistent conceptual

lacunae within research and theory. Many studies showed the advantages of mentoring in academic and professional settings. Researchers studied the character of mentoring relationships to further define vital mentoring qualities in terms of personal, relational and structural aspects. However, despite the significant literature on mentoring, there are two main gaps in developing a larger model.

Firstly, a large part of the literature on the nature of mentoring mainly focuses on its inner and interpersonal aspects. Alongside certain people's desired features and actions, the more prominent roles of external and social mentoring factors are mostly ignored. For example, the impact of culture on the development and implementation of mentoring schemes is yet to be considered extensively (Sawatsky et al., 2016). The mentoring relationship takes place in a particular environment, and the development of a mentoring model must, therefore, include a broader understanding of how institutional and societal factors, including culture, influence mentoring. Culture and mentoring can provide further insight into the role of cultural mentoring in the corporate and occupational contexts.

Secondly, although it was discussed how the mentoring relationship could be formed with values, most of the research and conceptual understanding was confined to studies carried out in North America and Europe, giving limited insight into the broader context of mentoring in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Ogunyomi, 2013; Sawatsky et al., 2016).

I hope this study improves understanding and provides insight into SSA's culture and mentoring beyond the scope of North America and Europe. This work can inform future mentoring research and serve as a model for more tremendous efforts to implement organisational structured mentoring schemes across Africa.

I am starting from a desire to develop an understanding, and from my own experience, I have taken several subjects as early considerations in research. These include mentoring, and organisational and social culture. I shall examine these crucial topics from the literature standpoint in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This is a review of relevant literature relating to the central theme of my research—mentoring. This provided the basis for constructing the conceptual framework for the analysis. National and organisational culture emerged as new themes while the investigation progressed, which has also been reviewed in Chapter 3 as part of the cultural context for the study.

The following sections will discuss key themes relating to mentoring: first as a critical and evaluative consideration, benefits and problematic outcomes of mentoring, developing mentoring schemes, positioning mentoring (among other employee training and development methods), and mentoring from a Nigerian and sub-Saharan African perspective.

Furthermore, the review will show how different structures of mentoring (formal and informal), as well as transference and countertransference, can significantly impact the level of success of the mentoring relationship. The sections also differentiate between mentoring and other closely associated terminologies like coaching and counselling, often used confusingly and interchangeably with mentoring. However, the challenges of implementing mentoring schemes should have been considered.

2.1. Mentoring Discourse

2.1.1. Definition of Mentoring

Central to the discussion in this study is the definition of mentoring and how it is applied in modern usage. The traditional definition of mentoring refers to a one-way, long-term teaching relationship in a one-to-one situation whereby knowledge and wisdom are imparted by the expert (mentor) to the amateur (mentee). The mentee, typically younger and less experienced, receives career support and psychosocial (e.g. emotional, cognitive) benefits (Ragins and Kram, 2007; Rowland, 2012; Clutterbuck, 2004, 2013; Ridhi and Santosh, 2016). Over time, this definition has gained complexity in meaning and scope—some researchers consider its current status confusing and fragmentary rather than varied and fluid (Ogunyomi, 2013). The term reflects variability in the mentoring literature and new ways of thinking about the mentoring process, with traditional associations losing traction (Clutterbuck, 2017). Such modern use of mentoring has made the once general concept of mentoring become much

broader to envelop different other forms and practices of mentoring, including formal and informal mentoring, sponsorship and developmental mentoring, as well as other more recent variations of the concept like reverse mentoring and e-mentoring, which are all constituents to the mentoring process.

In an organisational context, mentoring is broadly defined as a relationship between a person with advanced experience and knowledge (mentor) and a more junior person (mentee) who seeks assistance, guidance and support for their career, personal and professional development (Kram, 1985; Cheng et al., 2014; Dashper, 2020).

Drawing on Kram (1985), Eby et al. (2010) define workplace mentoring as a developmentally oriented relationship between a less experienced, junior employee (the mentee) and a more experienced, seasoned employee (the mentor) where the goal is personal and professional development of the mentee. This is also the working definition I have adopted for this study.

Current definitions of mentoring range from a personal relationship to an educational process, an organisational or cultural context, or a systemic reform strategy that builds the capacity of individuals and groups (Allen and Eby, 2007; Kochan et al., 2015; Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021), including virtual and online global communities (Butler et al., 2013).

At the individual level, mentoring has been described as an advancement model for developing professionals (Megginson et al., 2006; Homitz and Berge, 2008). This concept appears appropriate for mentoring programmes at work, where more experienced professional guides stimulate a young practitioner's development (Okurame and Balogun, 2005). This concept of mentoring is not about the relationship or the organisation's benefit between the parties. The focus is on the growth and development of the junior group (Clutterbuck, 2013). Mentoring in the workplace is increasingly important as organisations are more complex and dependent on individual skills and applications (Dashper, 2020).

Although mutually beneficial, mentoring in the workplace typically focuses on enhancing the mentee's professional development. It is generally agreed that mentoring is the most intense and powerful one-on-one developmental relationship, entailing the most influence, identification, and emotional involvement (Hezlett and Gibson, 2007).

Although developmental relationships vary in length, Kram (1985) found that mentoring relationships generally evolved through predictable yet not entirely distinct sequential phases, and presented a four-phase developmental model based on findings from 18 mentoring relationships in one North American organisation. The stages included (1) *initiation* (when the relationship is started, where the duo meet and establish the connection), *cultivation* (through which the relationship develops, and the range of functions provided expands to maximum), *separation* (where the relationship comes to an end because the established nature of the relationship is substantially altered by structural changes in the organisational context or by psychological changes in one or both individuals), and *redefinition* (where the association may continue in another guise, perhaps as a peer mentoring relationship). During that time, the relationship evolves into a new form significantly different from the previous one, or it ends entirely. Kram used this model to describe the transitions inherent in mentoring relationships.

A primary goal of mentoring is to help mentees function independently (Allen and Eby, 2009). This developmental outcome of the mentoring relationship or process is congruent with Kram's 1983 pioneering study that identified separation from the mentor as one of four expected mentoring phases (initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition). Kram (1985) suggest that mentoring relationships evolve through stages as trust and confidence in one another are built; the more time a mentor and a mentee spend together, the more quickly trust and confidence develop.

Megginson et al. (2006), drawing on Kram's work, introduced five phases that move from initial contact, where rapport is established—through the development of goals in what they called the direction-setting and progress-making phases—toward the maturation of the relationship at the winding down and moving on phases. Clutterbuck (2017) further explained how these phases require modification of mentor behaviours, and that the skills needed for building rapport differ significantly from those necessary for gaining clarification and commitment to specific career or personal development goals. He suggests that a generic competence for mentoring might include recognising and adapting appropriately to the phases of the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring has experienced a tremendous upswing over the past decades, which has only recently slowed down somewhat. One possible factor explaining mentoring's popularity is numerous case studies suggesting that it is one of the most effective ways of helping individuals develop. Meta-analyses indicating effect sizes for mentoring below what would theoretically be possible appear to contradict the success stories. This circumstance raises questions about the professionalisation of mentoring practices (Stoeger et al., 2021).

Austin et al. (2020) also described how mentoring relationships have a pattern (and structure) that changes over time. He explained how developmental phenomena define the life course of a relationship, with adjustments to the evolving circumstances and significant events altering its developmental pathway. These attempts to characterise mentoring in terms of the evolution of the relationship all presuppose that relationship building is the key to mentoring success. The patterns identified are thought to contribute to relationship effectiveness and success.

The proliferating of mentoring alternatives challenges efforts to generate a comprehensive typology. Crow, nationally and internationally known for his body of research on mentoring, affirmed Mullen's alternative typology for clarifying how mentoring has expanded beyond the narrow field of traditional mentoring's as "mentor-mentee dyads, formal-only programmes, single rather than multiple mentors, and static as opposed to dynamic features of mentoring relationships" (Mullen, 2017). Crow (2012) implies that the classic mentoring model is static, outdated and uninspiring, and that the emergence of the new could benefit from an exhaustive, in-depth study.

Crow also criticises mentoring research for producing a construct of mentorship that lacks boundaries and confuses what mentoring is (and is not). In the literature he reviewed, being a practising mentor seems boundaryless, owing to the multiple support roles assigned to it: guide, advisor, teacher, coach, role model, sponsor, support, counsellor, and even friend. Crow questioned if all of these mentoring roles mean the same thing or are distinct, implying that mentoring theory suffers a plague of multiple intermingling roles that confound efforts to define mentorship (Crow, 2012). Without role boundaries in mentoring, the mentor-mentee relationship, as conceived, is unmanageable and incoherent. Even within highly fluid relationships, some boundaries should be set, such as timelines to follow and activities with

learning value. Owing to such dynamics, mentoring definitions inherit the confusion in mentor-mentee roles and vague expectations.

In the next section, we discuss how developmental mentoring differs from sponsorship mentoring and how it may affect the set-up of mentoring schemes and the plans' objectives.

2.1.2. Developmental Versus Sponsorship Mentoring

Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) clearly distinguish between North American sponsorship mentorship and European developmental mentorship. According to them, in the North American context, the learner (often a younger person, less powerful and perhaps inexperienced) is driven by an older, elderly and stronger person whose primary purpose is to sponsor and advise the former on how to move about. This contrasts the European context, where the mentor is not necessarily older or more powerful than the student; the mentor is only expected to have more significant experience in an area relevant to the mentee's needs rather than more power. In addition, as Owen (2011) points out, a mentor's role is not to discharge his knowledge to someone less experienced. Instead, it is to help the person develop thinking and insight into their wisdom. The European model emphasises (self-managed) learning and development rather than sponsorship.

In Table 1 below, Clutterbuck et al. (2017) document the critical differences between sponsorship and developmental mentoring. The benefits accrued by the mentor in a sponsorship relationship include the mentee helping the mentor perform some of their jobs, thereby contributing to the increase in the mentor's reputation (a form of empire-building). The mentee adds to the knowledge the mentor requires to maintain their position in the organisation (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). In developmental mentoring, the mentor can improve their communication, management and coaching skills, stimulate their learning (a two-way learning relationship), improve their processes and performance, gain insights into relationships with other people, have an opportunity to be challenged, and take time out to reflect and renew focus on their career and development.

Table 1

Differences Between Sponsorship and Developmental Mentoring

Sponsorship Mentoring	**Developmental Mentoring**
The mentor is more influential and hierarchically senior.	The mentor is more experienced in issues relevant to the mentee's learning needs (perhaps life in general).
The mentor gives, the mentee receives, and the organisation benefits.	A process of mutual growth.
The mentor actively champions and promotes the cause of the mentee.	The mentor helps the mentee do things for him or herself.
The mentor gives the mentee the benefit of his or her (mentor's) wisdom.	The mentor helps the mentee develop his or her own wisdom.
The mentor steers the mentee through the acquisition of experience and personal resource.	The mentor helps the mentee towards personal insights, from which they can steer their own development.
The primary outcome or objective is career success.	The primary outcome or objective is personal development, from which career success may flow.
Good advice is central to the success of the relationship.	Good questions are central to the success of the relationship.
The social exchange emphasises loyalty.	The social exchange emphasises learning.

Note. Adapted from *The SAGE Handbook of Mentoring*. Merrick, L. Design of effective mentoring program. In: Clutterbuck, D. A. et al. (2017) SAGE Publications, Limited. ProQuest ebook Central.

Experience from both business and academia suggests that sponsorship is critical for breaking through the glass ceiling and enabling the career advancement of individuals from lower-level to high-level leadership roles (Perry and Parikh, 2019). In business, sponsorship is defined as support from an individual in a highly influential leadership position. A sponsor serves to advocate for, protect the interests of, and fight for the career advancement of a mentee (Ibarra et al., 2010).

Sponsorship is different from mentorship. A mentor helps a mentee achieve personal and early career development by advising, supporting and sharing knowledge (Schoenfeld, 2018). In contrast, a sponsor publicly advocates for a mentee and actively seeks opportunities for a

mentee's career advancement (Ayyala et al., 2019). Because sponsorship serves to enhance the visibility and credibility of talented individuals to highly influential leaders, a sponsor must be knowledgeable about an organisation, the organisation's structure, and the opportunities available in the organisation to advance talented mentees in their careers successfully.

Mentoring can be performed by individuals of any professional rank instead of sponsors, who generally must be in high leadership positions to be effective (Gottlieb and Travis, 2018). Highly ranked, well-connected mentors can occasionally serve as sponsors. Although mentorship is especially valuable for career development earlier in an academic radiologist's career, sponsorship can be critical in the middle to late years of the job, helping a radiologist advance into high-impact local and national leadership positions.

Sponsorship and mentorship should not be confused with coaching, which is usually a short-term "task-oriented process" that strictly focuses on job performance training and development (Medford, 2015). Kathy Hopinkah Hannan summarised these three unique career-building roles best: "A coach tells you what to do, a mentor will listen to you and speak with you, but a sponsor will talk about you." To be most effective, sponsorship should never stand alone but instead be an extension of mentoring and coaching (Perry and Parikh, 2019).

Leaders should be aware that for sponsorship to be successful, a comprehensive support structure involving mentoring, training and development (i.e., coaching), performance evaluation, succession planning, and other similar measures must be in place (Ibarra et al., 2018).

In both types of mentoring, the mentee's development gives the mentor a feeling of pride and a sense of contributing to the organisation (Hilsabeck, 2018). Understanding these mentoring models can be beneficial in designing a programme, preparing, matching and supporting participants, and understanding some of the evaluation outputs to analyse later.

Sponsorship mentoring—in which the power and influence of the mentor is typically the driving force of the relationship—is shunned by many national and corporate cultures in Europe in favour of developmental mentoring, which emphasises mutuality of learning and the importance of helping mentees do things for themselves (Clutterbuck and Gimson, 2008). Developmental mentoring works on the quality of the learner's thinking. Giving advice and

helping the learner network are secondary activities, brought into play only when the mentee lacks the experience or perception to progress through their resources.

Despite the attempt to distinguish between developmental and sponsorship mentoring, Clutterbuck et al. (2017) opine that it is inevitable that some formal developmental mentoring relationships will lead to longer-term, close relationships that will evolve into some form of informal sponsorship. The problem is that this can damage the core mentoring programme by creating expectations that this will be an expected outcome from the relationship or the programme itself. Clutterbuck et al. (2017) report that senior leaders in some organisations are keen to shift their mentoring relationships in this direction to speed up the progression of talent; in this scenario, mentoring of talent becomes a blended approach between the two forms of mentoring. Therefore, in talent mentoring programmes, organisations often opt for a hybrid of both forms of mentoring.

Organisations tend to be more black-and-white about whether the mentor is a sponsor and whether they will be allowed to have the mentee under their wing in a protective way (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). However, many organisations cannot stop senior, influential mentors from sponsoring and providing a significant degree of organisational immunity to the mentee.

Although these approaches differ, they mostly have a similar practical pathway to identifying processes, preparing participants, matching, supervision, evaluation and review.

2.1.3. Formal and Informal Mentoring

Formal mentorship is most often described as a deliberate relationship in which an experienced person (a mentor) helps develop specific skills and know-how to improve the professional and personal growth of a less experienced person (the mentee) (Hennigan, 2003; Ridhi and Santosh, 2016). The core of structured mentoring is a relationship between the participants, which the organisation voluntarily enters and supports.

Formal mentoring is a strategy—a formalised programme from highly intense, career-focused and developing relationships—which provides advice and sponsorship (Arthur and Kram, 1985; Gibson, 2004). D'Abate (2003) proposes that formal mentoring be defined in a way that specifies the formality of the structure and the matching process as key dimensions: its dyadic

nature, the top-to-bottom, and its internal position. This differentiates formal mentorship from informal mentorship and other developmental interactions such as coaching and action learning.

For decades, mentoring researchers have contrasted formal and informal mentoring, and some research studies have examined the outcomes of formal and informal mentoring (Cheng et al., 2014). Informal mentoring is considered the classic, familiar case, whereby mentor and mentee encounter each other spontaneously and naturally, based on mutual identification and interests (Allen and Eby, 2007; Mullen, 2007). In contrast, formal mentoring occurs intentionally and planned (Fletcher and Mullen, 2012; Mullen, 2008; Single, 2008), being initiated, managed and sanctioned by an organisation (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Feeney, 2008). Formal mentoring arises when the organisation provides and sets the support structures to ensure that participants have clarity of purpose and the support they may need to make a successful relationship. On the other hand, informal mentoring occurs when two people, without the assistance and guidance of the organisation, establish a developmental alliance (Karkoulian et al., 2008).

In formal mentorship, what characterises establishing an informal relationship, namely mutual attraction and connection, only applies if other forces are involved at the beginning. In this case, the mentor and the mentee try to focus on each other. You look for a way forward, see whether your expectation can be reconciled with that of another and have limited time, which makes it less natural to enter an informal relationship than a formal one to start with (Allen and Eby, 2009). This is very important in the context of Nigerian research, and in this context**,** where most mentoring relationships are informal (Aladejana, 2006; Okurame, 2008b).

In the past decades, research has verified the positive impact of informal mentoring on mentees' career successes. Thus, organisations have attempted to reap the same benefits by establishing formal mentoring programmes (Karkoulian et al*.,* 2008; Holt et al., 2016). Despite the popularity of traditional mentoring programmes in organisations, researchers such as Cheng et al. (2014) indicate that the dominant literature on mentoring has focused on the benefits of informal mentoring relationships. More recently, however, formal mentoring

studies have received more attention (Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Gannon and Washington, 2019).

Historically, informal mentoring—mentoring that arises spontaneously due to mutual interest, and provides interpersonal comfort—has predominated. In recent decades, mentoring relationships have been increasingly institutionalised and formalised. In formal mentoring programmes, mentees and mentors are assigned to each other, and mentors have specific, usually predetermined responsibilities related to their mentees' development, progress, and success (Stoeger et al., 2021).

The association of informal mentoring with favourable career outcomes has encouraged the creation of formal programmes in which organisations create or foster mentor-mentee relationships (Holt et al., 2016). Because of the positive effects of mentoring, many organisations have adopted formal mentoring programmes to cultivate meaningful developmental relationships. These traditional programmes develop mentoring relationships through the organisation's assistance, establishing guidelines that outline how the relationships are formed as well as the roles and responsibilities of those involved (Underhill, 2006; Chun et al., 2010; Weinberg and Lankau, 2011).

Although initial research findings suggest that formal mentoring relationships have significant potential to achieve career outcomes analogous to informal mentoring (Fowler et al., 2021), several studies suggest these benefits are only sometimes realised (Wanberg, 2007). Some scholars wonder whether mentors and mentees in formal relationships can become as close as informal ones (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005).

While well intended, as mentoring becomes more formal, several research outcomes (Eby et al., 2006; Underhill, 2006) suggest that the level of interaction as well as the quality of information shared decreases, resulting in fewer long-term advantages for mentees, mentors and organisations when compared to mentoring relationships that develop naturally and voluntarily, based on perceived competence and interpersonal comfort. Johnson and Anderson (2009) suggest that mentors in formal mentoring programmes report less motivation to fully invest their time and effort, indicating that the more formalised a mentoring programme becomes, the less likely mentors are to participate fully. In cases

where formal mentoring is inadequate, mentees often seek an additional informal mentor to gain the benefits that are not part of the formal programme.

Kram's (1985) early work on mentoring predicted that formal and informal mentoring would result in different outcomes because assigned relationships may lack the personal chemistry and commitment necessary for success. In support of Kram's concerns that formal mentoring may lead to mentor-mentee mismatch, Christensen et al. (2020) report uncomfortable relationships with minimal communication. Allen and Eby (2002) report increased mentee turnover and stress. Overall, informal mentorships produce more benefits than formal ones (Feeney 2008). Schunk and Mullen (2013) also suggest that informal mentoring may offer more significant benefits than formal mentoring, although this remains unresolved. Mentees with informal mentors reported that they provided more career and psychosocial functions, greater satisfaction and more compensation (Clutterbuck et al., 2017).

According to Weinberg and Lankau (2011), mentoring, whether formal or not, results in more substantial job satisfaction outcomes. However, many studies report that informal mentoring is more beneficial than formal mentoring. For example, Chen (2021) conclude that individuals in informal mentoring relationships (i.e., not part of formally sanctioned programmes) report more career support and higher salaries than those in formal (approved) mentoring relationships, but that mentees in both formal and informal mentoring relationships report more positive outcomes than non-mentored individuals. In the same way, Allen and Eby (2002) opine that relationships based on formal programme assignments can result in poor dyadic fit, leading to more negative experiences and higher turnover and stress than in mentoring relationships that are informal in origin.

Traditionally, informal mentoring relationships are part of a shared attraction between a mentee and a mentor because of recognised similarities (Ensher et al., 2003; Parise and Forret, 2008; Gowdy and Hogan, 2021). One concern with formal mentoring programmes is that a quality relationship might only be created with a certain amount of similarity between assigned members. In formal relationships, mentors may not be assigned mentees with whom they have things in common, in which case perceived differences between the mentor and mentee could negatively affect the potential outcomes of the relationship (Parise and Forret, 2008). These results are consistent with the similarity-attraction paradigm, which states that

people with a great deal in common report stronger feelings of attraction toward one another (Jones, 2012). Weinberg and Lankau (2011) suggest that it takes much longer to develop a meaningful relationship when it does not emerge out of mutual admiration.

Karkoulian et al. (2008) point out that informal mentoring is highly and positively correlated with knowledge management; the more employees practice mentoring willingly, the more the knowledge will be shared and used in an organisation. According to the same study, there needs to be more support for formal mentoring. The results indicate that formal mentoring results in knowledge sharing, although the knowledge is only sometimes utilised. This could be the result of the formal programme structure. Formal mentoring requires learning to be shared between mentor and mentee, but that does not mean that the knowledge shared is helpful to the mentee. The analysis of this study shows that informal mentoring is positively and significantly associated with knowledge sharing and utilisation. The correlation coefficients demonstrated a strong association. However, when formal mentoring was evaluated, there was a negative correlation when knowledge utilisation was assessed.

Informal mentoring relationships are generally regarded as superior to those achieved in formal relationships, though further research is needed to confirm this viewpoint (Parise and Forret, 2008). The view concurs with Jones (2012), who argues that formal mentoring is potentially more limited than informal mentoring and, thus, more likely to fail. Qian et al. (2014) also found that mentees in informal mentorships reported higher levels of intrinsic job satisfaction and better organisational socialisation than those in formal mentorships.

Results indicate that mentees report more favourable outcomes from informal relationships, and that mentors and mentees prefer the everyday mentoring process over making the process “too formal” (Harvey et al., 2017). The more the dynamics of formal mentoring relationships mimic informal relationships, the more successful they should be in terms of support exchanged, participant satisfaction and evaluations of programme effectiveness (Allen et al. 2008; Ragins et al. 2000).

A downside of such an informal approach is that the benefits of mentoring may only be available to those staff members with access to networks of senior staff. Addressing the

opportunity for staff to participate, formal programmes enable successful mentoring relationships to be more widely available to a more diverse range of staff (Aladejana, 2006).

Some researchers, for example, Feeney (2008), argue that although formal mentoring has challenges, one may not be able to conclude outright that informal mentoring is more beneficial. Instead, they suggest that formal mentoring may be more advantageous to some goals and outcomes while informal mentoring may benefit others. Indeed, the diversity of findings from empirical research suggests as much (Feeney, 2008).

Since formal mentoring is more likely to be based on attributes chosen by the organisation rather than mentor and mentee preferences in informal mentorships, we can expect that formal mentoring will be more oriented to specific objectives of the organisation, perhaps including the development of network ties within the organisation (Feeney, 2008).

Despite the lack of adequate evaluation, the popularity of formal mentoring schemes indicates that formal mentoring can be as effective as “natural” mentoring. Others would argue that formal schemes are not a good option. It is possible to create effective mentoring only by making the right “conditions” emerge rather than artificially prescribing mentoring relationships. Perhaps the more critical issue is not formalising mentoring, but retaining some of the core elements of informal mentoring: a one-to-one relationship where personal (or individual) and professional issues are dealt with (Harvey et al., 2009).

An extensive analysis of the preconditions for successful implementation has accompanied the establishment, extending and developing of formal mentoring schemes in workplaces. These have explored the “mechanics” of formal mentoring schemes: policy development, scheme design, mentor competence, and mentor training (Cheng et al., 2014). After reviewing volumes of mentoring literature, Bierema and Merriam (2003) posit that the effectiveness of formal mentoring programmes is mixed, and that certain factors can enhance the potential for a successful mentoring experience (Bierema and Hill, 2005). Research on traditional mentoring programmes suggests that management support, participant input into the matching process, and training are critical success factors (Allen et al., 2006; Parise and Forret, 2008).

The development and management of formal mentoring schemes also depend on evaluation, which can identify particular schemes' specific issues. Mentoring schemes should be considered something other than standard systems with universal problems and solutions. They are as distinct as the circumstances which create a need for mentoring as well as the people who come to make the mentoring schemes work (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). Research has shown that if mentoring is chosen as a process with a specific objective (for example, to help someone transition to a new management level), it is more likely to succeed within a structured scheme (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). That way, the scheme can be designed in such a way that it achieves the set objectives.

In summary, although informal mentoring tends to be more effective than formal mentoring in supporting mentees to grow in confidence and become more competent over time, there is evidence that formal mentoring can also achieve specific set objectives if correctly set up and managed through its life cycle. Some imperatives for setting up a successful formal mentoring programme are discussed later.

2.1.4. Reverse Mentoring

The ageing workforce and the advent of Millennials represent a significant demographic and sociological phenomenon that can have dominant implications for organisations (Smola and Sutton, 2002). This presents a situation where the Boomers and Millennials will work together for the next decade. Given this background, organisations that effectively manage their demographically diverse workforce will enjoy a competitive edge (Chaudhuri and Ghosh, 2012). Moreover, as the world's expatriate workforce becomes increasingly younger and with an increased number of female global managers, it is vital to re-examine traditional mentoring programmes and other forms of social support provided by organisations competing in hypercompetitive global marketplaces (Harvey et al., 2009).

Although a rich stream of research on mentoring now exists, it has focused mainly on traditional mentoring relationships between senior and junior members, primarily intending to help junior employees develop their careers within the organisation. While this mentoring has historically been the predominant form in organisations, other mentoring programmes, such as "reverse" mentoring, are now being implemented to capture the nuances of a more technology-driven global market (Murphy, 2012).

Reverse mentoring programmes pair younger junior employees as mentors with older senior colleagues as mentees to share knowledge. The objectives of these relationships are learning and leadership development (Murphy, 2012). Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012) argued that this inverted type of mentoring has arisen primarily from the rapid technological innovation/change and the globalisation of business. Given the lack of experience of many top-level managers with technology and globalisation, it has been recommended that junior managers be provided access to senior managers to help them develop their technical skills and stimulate their interest in cultivating a global mindset (Murphy, 2012).

Reverse mentoring is an innovative tool for organisations that foster cross-generational learning and develop their current and future leaders (Spreitzer, 2006). Such mentoring relationships also expose participants to different generational perspectives and build on participants' strengths. Given that the mentor is usually younger than the mentee, reverse mentoring provides an opportunity for the older employees to learn from their younger counterparts, unlike traditional mentoring, where learning is dispensed hierarchically in most cases, from a more senior mentor to a younger mentee (Chaudhuri and Ghosh, 2012). Reverse mentoring is situated in the mentoring literature as an alternative form of mentoring, with unique characteristics and support functions exchanged that distinguish it from other developmental relationships (Murphy, 2012).

In traditional mentoring situations, the mentor transfers existing organisational knowledge to the mentee. In reverse mentoring cases, shared understanding is often from outside the organisation. This "importing" of information is critical when the business context changes radically (e.g. digitisation), rendering some or most of the operational knowledge of the older manager redundant or obsolete (Yi et al., 2010).

The key difference from traditional mentoring is the structural role reversal, with the mentee (rather than the mentor) in the senior position in the organisation's hierarchy. It is a unique mentoring relationship in its explicit focus on knowledge sharing, including current topic/technology and generational perspectives, and the leadership development of the mentor. Because of this, the developmental functions exchanged also differ from traditional and other alternative mentoring relationships (Clutterbuck, 2004; Harvey et al., 2009).

General Electric's former CEO, Jack Welch, is generally credited with introducing a formal reverse mentoring scheme in 1999 when he ordered 500 of his top managers to find young employees who could teach them about the Internet (Brinzea, 2018). Since then, reverse mentoring has become a "best practice" among several large corporations, including Dell, Procter and Gamble, and Time Warner (Brinzea, 2018).

Successful mentoring relationships are built on the principles of reciprocity and respect (Kram, 1985). Like most workplace initiatives, fostering good reverse mentoring relationships requires thoughtful planning and attention. Given the unique dynamics of reverse mentoring, it is essential to encourage the use of technology, as both participants are likely to learn from utilising and discussing technology in their relationship. Thus, organisational leaders who pursue the creation of a reverse mentoring programme must consider the up-front resources required and how to manage the process to best support participants' professional development (Murphy, 2012).

While reverse mentoring can work well throughout an organisation, it most often occurs in areas of high technology or dynamic and fluid industries, such as globalising or participating in hypercompetitive markets. Reverse mentoring is beneficial for developing workers who need more technology and computer skills and may be hesitant to learn these new skills (Joshi et al., 2010). Today's college graduates have grown up using computers, e-mail, the Internet and other web-based technologies, and are usually eager to share those skills.

Although the premise for introducing the concept of reverse mentoring was to teach technology to the senior employees in most of these organisations, limiting the potential of reverse mentoring to helping baby boomers gain the latest technical expertise from their younger counterparts is somewhat shortsighted (Frey et al., 2009). In addition to gaining new insights into technology, reverse mentoring relationships can help Boomers develop sensitisation to issues of workplace diversity, subject matter advances, work-life balance, and global perspective—all of which can contribute to increasing their levels of engagement at work (Rollag, 2005).

It must be stressed that while reverse mentoring is often cross-generational, it is not necessarily age-dependent. It works when it is recognised that junior and outside members

who join the organisation have the knowledge to share and are willing to do so with senior managers (Meister and Willyerd, 2010).

However, reverse mentoring promises to build the leadership pipeline, foster better intergenerational relationships, enhance diversity initiatives and drive innovation. For individuals, reverse mentoring is an opportunity for participant learning and a creative way to engage millennial employees (Murphy, 2012).

Developmental relationships play a vital role in the learning and growth of leaders. In particular, the opportunity to interact one-on-one with members of senior management helps newer employees develop a more sophisticated and strategic perspective on the organisation (Jayadeva, 2018). Developing millennial leaders should be a primary strategic goal for organisations, as this group is the second largest population, following baby boomers, and represents a significant source of talent and new ideas.

Perhaps more than traditional mentoring programmes, reverse mentoring has a dual focus on the leadership development of both mentor and mentee. Millennial mentors can demonstrate leadership capabilities by coordinating tasks and goals in this relationship. In addition, the mentors are getting access to more senior people to see how leaders think and offer insights (Meister and Willyerd, 2010). Thus, reverse mentoring is a valuable leadership development tool for mentors and mentees, which enhances their networks and builds intergenerational bridges across the organisation (Murphy, 2012).

Murphy (2012) outlines four structural and content-based characteristics that organisations and participants must know to manage reverse mentoring relationships effectively. These include (1) unequal status of partners with the mentee, rather than the mentor, being the senior member in the hierarchy of this dyad; (2) knowledge sharing with the mentee focused on learning from the mentor's technical or content expertise and generational perspective; (3) emphasis on professional and leadership skill development of mentors; and (4) commitment to the shared goal of support and mutual learning.

Reverse mentoring formalises the informal reciprocity that has occurred for years, whereby older professionals are mentored by their younger counterparts. These relationships have the potential to provide all three broad functions, including several sub-functions in common with

traditional associations (Murphy, 2012). In the process of reverse mentoring, both parties likely benefit from each position through dynamic exchange processes. However, the importance of various sub-functions may vary for everyone, depending on their needs and role in the relationship.

2.1.5. E-mentoring

The information age is changing the dynamics of many relationships, including mentoring (Sanyal and Rigby, 2017**)**. Traditional learning, organising and teaching models are challenged in an age of rapid change and scientific advancements. Increasingly, the world is becoming more global economically, politically and socially. Technology is facilitating this shift by promoting mentoring across boundaries that can be social, economic, cultural or physical (Bierema and Merriam, 2002).

In this age of the Internet, innovative educators combine mentoring with the reach and convenience of new telecommunications technology. With the advent of ICT, access to a broader range of communication media has redefined mentoring as a learning and development activity (Clutterbuck, 2017). It has heralded what is now called telementoring, e-mentoring or virtual mentoring, using online solutions to open up possibilities of mentoring relationships that cross boundaries of time, geography and culture (Sanyal and Rigby, 2017). Bierema and Merriam (2002) define e-mentoring as a computer-mediated relationship between a senior individual (mentor) and a lesser-skilled one (mentee), where the former provides learning, advice and encouragement to develop the latter in a way that helps them succeed.

Globalisation has also created more opportunities internationally, while individuals change jobs more frequently and have less loyalty to organisations. Traditional, face-to-face mentoring relationships are only sometimes practical in a knowledge society where communication is instantaneous, computer-mediated, and global. This condition has fuelled the rise of virtual mentoring or e-mentoring (Bierema and Hill, 2005). E-mentoring, or virtual mentoring, is now recognised as an alternative, and the multiple forms of communication used allow mentoring relationships to erode barriers in traditional mentoring programmes (Bierema and Merriam, 2002; Bierema and Hill, 2005).

E-mentoring also assists in linking various parties together in the spirit of learning, a core strength in this shrinking global economy. Bierema and Merriam (2002) posit that e-mentoring holds promise for redefining mentoring relationships and changing the conditions under which mentoring is sought and offered. They also expressed that e-mentoring could make mentoring relationships more available to groups with limited access to mentoring. This view is also supported by Sanyal and Rigby (2017). E-mentoring has potentially increased access to mentoring for those for whom spatial and temporal divides had once made it difficult.

The possibilities for e-mentoring are as endless as the Internet. The extent to which this medium will be used for mentoring is still unknown, as are the best ways to maximise the nature of this medium for this purpose (Zey, 2011). The path is wide open for applying technology to human development. Mentoring electronically is a primary area for exploring these crucial questions of learning and development.

While there are benefits and drawbacks to formal and informal mentoring online, in the virtual environment, mentoring success relies on mentees' commitment and training to learn remotely (Tinoco-Giraldo et al., 2020). E-mentoring has typically been used as a supplement to face-to-face mentoring. Its numerous advantages include providing more frequent communication, reducing time for personal meetings, offering a venue for developing a relationship, and exploring issues less threateningly (Iqbal, 2020). However, this reality is rapidly changing. Traditional mentoring is augmented with technology, especially the internet and social media outlets. Greater reliance on digital tools in mentoring is occurring, though more research is needed to settle the accuracy of this claim (Clutterbuck, 2017).

E-mentoring differs fundamentally from traditional face-to-face mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2013), and their definition of e-mentoring, Bierema and Merriam (2002), suggests that it is often borderless, egalitarian and qualitatively different from face-to-face mentoring. Their claims are supported by research evidence of an increasing number of organisations with global reach using asynchronous emails for mentor-mentee communications because of its practical advantage for geographically distant mentoring pairs (Kaufman, 2017; Iqbal, 2020). There is also clear evidence of a rapid increase in online mentoring websites and opportunities across various professions (Ensher et al., 2003).

Clutterbuck (2001, p. 156) argues that rather than being an inferior substitute to face-to-face mentoring, e-mentoring "is simply a different approach to mentoring and can be effective–and in some cases, potentially more effective–than traditional mentoring". The medium of technology can act as a shield by rendering physical or visible disparities neutral, offering greater flexibility and mutually beneficial mentoring relationships. It also removes some visual status cues sometimes inhibiting communication between the more senior or experienced mentor and the less experienced mentee. It also eliminates noise due to personal bias. However, mentees and their mentors are separated by physical and temporal distance. There are suggestions that virtual mentoring can better support a multicultural workforce by providing broader access to mentoring (Bierema and Hill, 2005) and erasing the disparity issue (Rowland, 2012).

Some challenges to e-mentoring, both perceived and actual, are also highlighted in some research papers. For example, Bierema and Hill (2005) and DiRenzo et al. (2010) raise the issues of cost, reliability and compatibility of technology and the total dependency on electronic technology. An essential process in any mentoring programme is matching pairs. However, this process is at risk without face-to-face opportunities to build rapport. The absence of physical body language or facial expression cues challenges both parties. Therefore, virtual intimacy may be difficult to obtain, particularly if the mentor and mentee have never met in person (Bierema and Merriam, 2002; Zey, 2011). Kaufman (2017) offers advice for making e-mentoring more effective by initially developing the mentoring relationship in person or by phone.

Finally, finding ways to sustain the relationship may be another challenge, as miscommunication can occur on several levels in e-mentoring if both parties are not conscientious and motivated about making quick responses to requests for information or advice (Bierema and Merriam 2002; DiRenzo et al., 2010). Ensher et al. (2003) report that the development of relationships through online mentoring and computer-meditated communication is usually slower than face-to-face mentoring, and practical challenges due to unfamiliarity or incompatibility with technology must be addressed in web-based online mentoring programmes (Williams et al., 2012).

2.1.6. Positioning Mentoring Among Other Employee Training and Development Methods

The incredible effectiveness of mentoring in faculty and student learning and development is in being an integrated method, according to Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002). This view is also supported by Livingstone and Naismith (2018). This integrated method combines elements of four other one-to-one developmental interventions: coaching, counselling, facilitation and guardianship. It uses each of these at different points, depending on the decision criterion that is needed at the time by the mentee. Developmental mentoring is more valuable than these, as all four approaches are integrated. All these approaches are presented in Table 2.

There is an ongoing debate among scholars and researchers as to whether mentoring is the same as coaching, and if different, to what extent. Traditionally, coaching has been associated with a shorter-term performance focus, with the coach portrayed as a process-based expert rather than a content knowledge-based expert. By contrast, mentoring has a longer-term holistic focus, where the mentor has direct experience and knowledge of the setting in which the mentee is operating (Stoke et al., 2021). As Clutterbuck (2008) posits, coaching and mentoring have traditionally been intended as different and distinct helping relationships for different purposes and people.

Table 2

Developmental Mentoring

	Learning Objectives	**Power Balance**	**Motivation to Instruct**	**Direction of Learning**	**Style**	**Dependency**
Counsellor	Changes in thoughts, beliefs related to personal life issues specified by both parties but strongly influencing by counsellor	One-sided (in favour of counsellor)	High	One way (to learner)	Mainly hands-off	High dependency on counsellor for learning
Guardian	Development of knowledge, skills and abilities that help individual to advance their career; specified by guardian	One-sided (in favour of guardian)	High	Typically, one-way to learner	Mainly directive	High dependency on guardian for learning
Facilitator	Learning objectives related to networking skills; set by both parties	Initially one-sided (in favour of facilitator)	Initially high	Initially one-way	Initially directive	Creates independent, self-managing learners
Coach	Changes in beliefs, thoughts, behaviours, and skills acquisition related to work performance; objectives specified by coach	One-sided (in favour of coach)	High	One-way (learner)	Mainly directive	High dependency on coach for learning
Mentor	Mentee's own objectives	Equal	Low	Two-way (learner and mentor both learn)	Both directive and hands-off	Creates independent, self-managing learners

Note. Adapted from *The Complete Guide to Mentoring*. Owen, H. (2011) 1st Ed. Kogan Page Limited.

Conflating them could be more helpful as it needs to recognise those differences, and this neglect raises both conceptual and practical problems. Stoke et al. (2021) argue that, rather than seeking to decouple coaching practice from mentoring practice, it is more helpful to recognise the fundamental interconnectedness of the two. Doing so "allows scheme participants to draw on various helping behaviours—some more traditionally associated with coaching and some more traditionally associated with mentoring—to meet developmental challenges" (p. 143). They conclude that context plays an agentic role in determining which aspects of these two helping orientations are likely to be used by practitioners when faced with significant challenges while working in their organisations. We will take a closer look at this later in the literature review.

Peer coaching, like mentoring, is a non-judgmental and non-evaluative approach to professional development. Some researchers view peer coaching as mentoring, whereas others see the reverse. Peer coaching has become especially popular in school systems because it tens to foster quick results, skills development, and instrumental learning (Becker, 2001).

On the other hand, some authors posit that mentoring differs from coaching despite their similarities. For example, Owen (2011) argues that though a mentor may coach, a coach is not a mentor. Mentoring is "relational" while coaching is "functional". Coaching usually addresses issues that need performance improvements and is generally approached by a more directive style rather than entirely new knowledge or skills, as we find in mentoring (Owen, 2011).

In support of this view, Clutterbuck and Gimson (2008) posit that coaching and mentoring need to be defined distinctly in different contexts and that this is a potential strength as much as a current weakness. According to Crow (2012), the generic difference is that in most applications, coaching addresses performance in some aspect of an individual's work or life, while mentoring is more often associated with much broader, holistic development and career progress. Clarifying them in a particular programme or relationship is fundamental to mutual commitment to the chosen process. Mentoring can be distinguished from other personal connections that make a difference in people's lives through its embeddedness within the career context (Rebecca et al., 2008). This view is also supported by Boniwell (2007).

Mullen (2013) argues that mentoring is more theory- and developmentally-oriented than coaching. Whether traditional or progressive in form, the relationship is long-term and sustained, and the learning is intrinsically focused, with feedback geared toward self-learning. Garvey (2004) reported that mentoring is a developmental theory that promotes the mentee's growth as a whole person or transformation of a community: the growth patterns are not unidirectional or limited to one-way development. Furthermore, mentees and mentors are situated as learners and commentators, and sometimes as change agents.

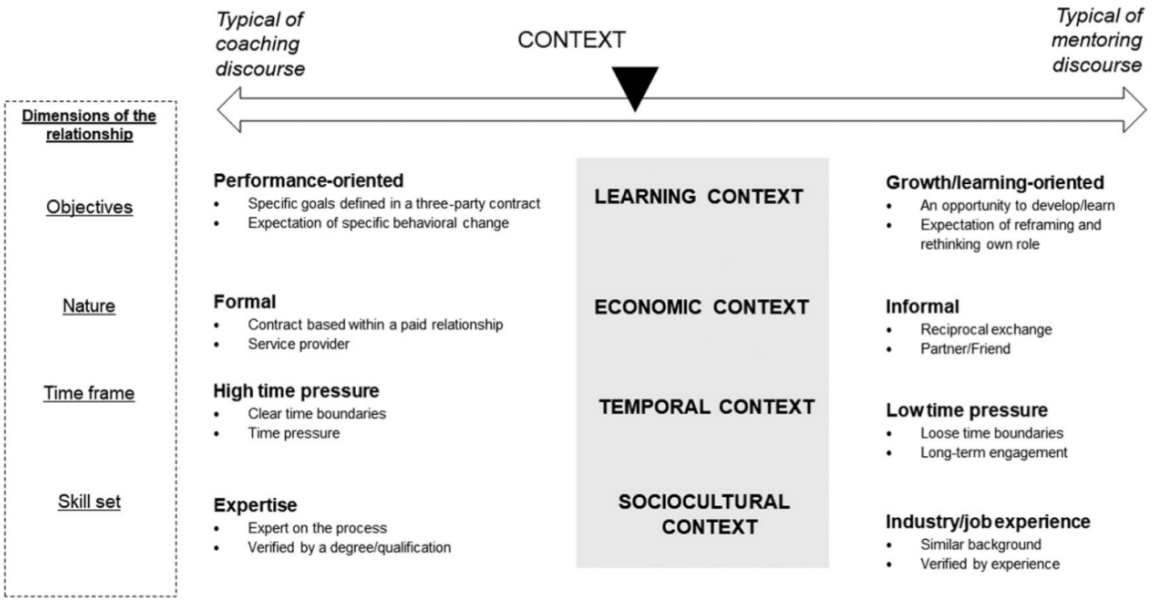

Figure 1: A conceptual framework of coaching and mentoring (Stokes et al., 2020).

While acknowledging that coaching and mentoring may have originated from different theoretical discourses, Stokes et al. (2020) argue that "rather than seeking to decouple coaching practice from mentoring practice, it is more helpful to recognise the fundamental interconnectedness of the two." They assert that context is crucial in determining which orientations should be prevalent in any helping-by-talking relationship.

2.2. Benefits of Mentoring

Based on research, can it be maintained that mentorship leads to the mentee's success? In other words, has there been a relationship between a mentoring period and a positive result for the mentee? Researchers in various environments agree that mentoring leads to a positive outcome.

Mentoring is becoming increasingly common and may be an effective way to facilitate knowledge creation and sharing. Karkoulian et al. (2008) argue that mentoring can be a proper method for sharing complex tacit knowledge. Mentors impart their tacit knowledge and demonstrate their skills and exemplary behaviours (McMurtrie, B. (2014). Hence, mentoring is a means to support professional growth and development, empowering the mentee and thus benefiting the organisation (Murphy, 2012).

More than 80% of respondents confirmed that mentorship improved the achievement of individual performance targets and objectives in a 1999 survey published by the industry society, covering over 300 companies (Hennigan, 2009). Moreover, a 1999 CIPD study of 800 training managers shows that 87% of UK companies have mentoring schemes (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). The Heidrick and Struggles consulting firm examined 1,250 managers to determine what helped them succeed; about two-thirds of the people confirmed they had a mentor. The report added: “Management leaders with a mentor earned more money at a younger age, are better off and are more pleased with their work” (Owen, 2011, p. 14).

Feyissa et al. (2019) searched and synthesised 30 reports from 24 studies that assessed the effectiveness of mentorship programmes using diverse approaches to mentorship among healthcare workers in seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and reported that mentoring interventions were used to improve managerial performance and increase adherence of professionals to guidelines, standards and protocols. While different interventions were reported to be effective, they found no evidence to recommend one mentoring model. They note that further research is required to compare the impact and cost-effectiveness of different mentoring models.

Letsoalo (2021) reasons that mentoring remains an important role that employees must assume, formally or informally, at some point in their professional lives. Mentoring benefits all parties—mentee, mentor, and an organisation or institution. The study recommends that an appropriate evaluation model or approach be used to rigorously evaluate mentoring programmes continuously for good practice.

Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) report that mentoring is one of the best ways to improve learning and development for individuals from all walks of life. Companies establish

mentoring programmes to attract and retain talented persons and match changing market conditions. An efficient mentoring programme, in the interest of the individual and the business, helps to harness untapped potential (Robertson and Rejo, 2012).

Research reveals that mentoring is one of the critical factors for business success (Rowland, 2012). Mentoring tends to ensure a safe and secure environment for learning. The person mentored benefits from the mentor's experience without learning the same lessons through trial or error. Consequently, there is no need for an employee to repeat the mistakes, and time is compressed. It transmits valuable lessons, knowledge, attitudes and opportunities (Owen, 2011). Mentoring changes quickly, and whether you expand your business or not, organisations currently employ it to meet training needs (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). When a business expands, mentorship can help integrate the staff members of that organisation. It can help people make the next step in their careers if they are not growing up. Mentoring can keep employees skilled, allowing a business to grow (Eby et al., 2006).

From an employee's perspective, mentoring reduces fear or shyness between management and the employee, which is an advantage of the formal programme (Swap et al., 2001). It can create capable and motivated people to manage their learning continuously. The speed at which performances can be carried out is another significant advantage of mentoring over other learning approaches. It is not simply adapted to a person's particular needs but to the needs of many people, which causes further changes to occur in a shorter period (Allen et al., 2008).

Mentoring is an essential aspect of career development. Bierema and Merriam (2002) report a study in which mentored and non-mentored men and women in business were surveyed about their level of satisfaction, career mobility and opportunity, recognition, security and promotion rate. The survey showed that mentored individuals reported having greater job satisfaction, career mobility and opportunity, commendation and a higher promotion rate than non-mentored individuals. Mentoring has benefited both mentees and mentors in instrumental and psychological ways (Dashper, 2020). Both women and men report benefits from mentorships, including tremendous job success and satisfaction as well as increased self-confidence and use of skills (Feeney, 2008).

Cheng et al. (2014) propose two main reasons to theoretically explain why formal mentoring can reduce employees' turnover intentions. In formal mentoring relationships, mentees establish good communication, trust and friendship with their mentors. These positive emotions may nurture empathy toward their organisations (engendering reduced turnover intentions) because the mentors are regarded as representatives of their employers. In addition, mentees who receive more formal mentoring are more likely to successfully enhance job skills, acquire social capital and advance within the organisation. They argue that this will deter mentees from leaving because of the high perceived costs.

Globally, there is emerging evidence that some mentoring programmes have reduced turnover rates, employee turnover costs, medical negligence rates improved job satisfaction, communication skills and professional identity (Feyissa et al*.,* 2019). For example, Igudia (2022) suggests a highly positive relationship between career counselling, employee training and career mentoring with employee job satisfaction, and a significant positive relationship between employee job satisfaction and organisational performance. The study concludes, among others, that for organisations to achieve maximum productivity, they must design and implement an effectively pragmatic employee career development programme to meet their employees' expected needs.

More recently, researchers have focused on mentoring and social capital relationships. Bozionelos et al. (2011) highlight that mentoring can build network resources and influence career success. The dimension of particular interest in our research is the social capital aspect of mentoring and how mentors enhance mentees' social capital resources through conveying contacts, personal introductions and network ties.

Mentees develop knowledge and social linkages valuable for their immediate job or current organisation and their longer-term career aspirations. While often intrinsically motivated, mentors understand that high-potential mentees enhance their status. If we accept that better-connected people enjoy higher returns, mentoring can increase network ties as well as individual and even organisational effectiveness (Feeney, 2008).

Although there is evidence to show that both sets of participants (mentors and mentees) benefit from mentoring, most research focuses on the advantages accrued to mentees (Allen

et al., 2004; Clutterbuck, 2004; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). Kram (1985) points out that mentee benefits fall into two main categories: career advancement and psychosocial support (Gannon and Maher, 2012). These professional and personal advantages are evident through more promotions, higher salaries, more job satisfaction and reduced levels of turnover (Allen et al., 2004). The nature of the professional or career-related support typically involves "sponsorship, exposure, visibility, coaching, protection and challenging assignments" (Zagenczyk et al., 2010, p. 240; Kram, 1985). The personal or psychosocial support aspects of mentoring focus on interpersonal dimensions such as friendship, confirmation, acceptance, confidence building and counselling (Kram, 1985; Zagenczyk et al., 2010). These psychosocial and career advancement dimensions of mentoring produce different mentee outcomes, as outlined by Ragins and Kram (2007). See Table 3.

The appeal and increase of the mentoring process can be understood because it is a low-cost crime prevention and intervention option that takes advantage of local community resources (Gagliardi et al., 2014). Mentoring services can be customised for various needs and situations—from individual, group, peer-to-peer, cross-age and e-mentoring direction—suitable for delivery (Woods, 2013).

Table 3

Mentoring Support

**Career Functions*	***Psychosocial Functions*
Sponsorship	Role modelling
Exposure and visibility	Acceptance and confirmation
Coaching	Counselling
Protection	Friendship
Challenging assignments	

**Career functions are those aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance career advancement.*

***Psychosocial functions are those aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance the sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in the managerial role.*

Mentorship is also a remedy for misconduct and crime among at-risk young people (Ragins and Krams, 2007). Overall, mentoring has been positive for results such as improved attitudes, self-perceptions (Poor and Shane, 2013), interpersonal relationships (Mayer, 2014), reduced drop-out rates and reduced abuse of drugs (Zhang et al., 2016). Findings indicated that mentoring programmes requiring frequent interaction and long-term relationships achieve higher success rates (Friidchis-Hareli, 2011). The advantages of mentoring for mentees, mentors and the organisation are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Benefits of Mentoring

Mentors	**Mentees**	**Organisation**
Value and satisfaction Learning experience Credit Own reflection	Competence Goal Setting Motivation and satisfaction Employability Psychological support Creativity Networking opportunities Organisational change Personal change Time-effectiveness	Organisational effectiveness Performance Motivation and satisfaction Organisational change Retention Recruitment High-flyers Organisational learning Cost-effectiveness Organisational culture National and cultural diversity Development Time efficiency Internal and external communication Strategic succession planning

Source: Implementing Mentoring Schemes. Klasen, N. and Clutterbuck, D. (2002) 1st ed. Butterworth-Heinemann

Another possible route to creating meaning was the facilitation of mentoring relationships. In the workplace, a process advantageous to mentees is at least as effective as other leadership programmes are almost axiomatic (Lester et al., 2011). Kram (1985) suggests that effective mentoring can improve understanding of competence and efficiency. Because the mentoring relationship is close and exchanged, it is reasonable to guess that the mentors experience some benefits reciprocally.

The development of the relationship between mentor and mentee is essential to the success of mentoring, as outlined in historical texts. Historical writers described this as a form of friendship. “Friendships” are still strongly linked to mentoring in modern writings (Chan, 2018).

A literature meta-examination on higher education mentoring by Ehrich et al. (2004) concluded that mentoring has many positive results for mentors and mentees from 159 study courses in schools and universities. The benefits include collegiality development, networking, reflection, professional development, support and personal satisfaction. Additional student benefits include higher retention and promotion rates, higher successes with external research grants, increased publishing rates and a higher academic perception of themselves. These results show the ability of mentoring to engender positive results across multiple dimensions, including “hard” (behavioural) and “soft” (developmental) outcomes (Gardiner et al., 2007).

Positive psychological research shows that significant work is a crucial driver of engagement. Organisational management is increasingly concerned with fostering employee participation and is, thus, keen to understand how meaningful work is created. In a study by Kenneth and Lomas (2015), they point out that becoming a mentor might be an excellent way to experience more meaning at work. In that study, four experienced mentors conducted in-depth interviews and analysed the effects of mentoring on mentors, using interpretative phenomenological analyses. Mentoring was found to be a significant experience which improved work performance. More detailed analysis revealed that a sense of significance was created through a powerful combination of independence (incorporating autonomy, relationship and skill) and self-reflection. The paper guides organisations, showing that mentorship can benefit both mentors and organisations. This is supported by several other studies (Gagliardi et al., 2014; Qian, 2014; Kennett and Lomas, 2015).

Mentoring has long been viewed as improving individual learning and career development. It is also considered instrumental in initiating and maintaining employee socialisation in organisations. Many companies in several industries have established formal and informal programmes to help newly hired employees learn the ropes (Harvey et al., 2009).

Although mentorship is more beneficial to mentees, many mentor-mentee relationships also help mentors professionally (Cole et al., 2016). Mentoring practice is also a platform for mentors to build or enhance their professional competency and capitalise on their leadership role as they interact with novice teachers and colleagues (Wong, 2018). Brewer (2016) maintains that mentors can also be inspired by their mentees' teaching and their sense of professional commitment. Mentors can gain professional development when they engage in mentoring practice by relearning, expanding their views, having different roles, developing a new understanding of mentoring, and realising the programme's impacts on their professional development (Kochan, 2017). Given this, mentoring practice can be viewed as a platform for mentors to achieve self-actualisation by reflecting on their practice when interacting with their mentees and colleagues.

Career mentoring functions—which include challenging assignments, coaching, exposure, protection and sponsorship—directly assist mentees' career advancement (Li et al., 2018; Hackman and Malin, 2018). Psychosocial mentoring functions such as acceptance, confirmation, counselling, friendship and role modelling enhance mentees' sense of identity and self-worth (Hezlett and Gibson, 2007).

Mentoring benefits all involved (Holt et al., 2016). For mentees, mentoring has been positively related to increased job satisfaction, greater promotion possibilities, opportunities for increased pay, higher self-esteem, and a heightened sense of professional competence. For mentors, the positive feelings generated by playing a vital role in a mentee's development can lead to more productive work and significant commitment (Chun et al., 2012). In addition, mentors may feel that their identification of and support for up-and-coming stars will increase their chances for further advancement (Kram, 1988). Several have suggested that the organisation also benefits, as mentoring increases the speed with which mentees learn and reduces the likelihood of leaving the organisation voluntarily (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

Formal and informal mentorship programmes have been associated with positive organisational experiences and career success. According to Karkoulian et al. (2008), newcomers are advised to seek mentors at different levels of the organisation in the twenty-first century. The most formidable benefit of mentoring is that it transforms not only the

mentee but also the mentor and, eventually, the organisation. When designed and implemented well, everyone wins.

Even with the positive aspects of workplace mentoring, in comparison with other types of relationships, mentors and mentees can experience difficulties in their relationship, and the set objectives of the programme may not be achieved. This is the focus of the next section.

2.3. Challenges with Mentoring

Based on a study conducted by Bierema and Merriam (2002), a study of women and minorities in computer science demonstrated the mixed results characteristic of mentoring research. In that study, 15 mentor-mentee pairs were followed. After 18 months, when the results were evaluated, only three of the 15 pairs met the researchers' criteria for success, while two other pairs were partially successful and 10 were unsuccessful. The authors conclude that mentoring can be demanding, and certain organisational and personal factors must be in place to achieve success.

Compared to the abundance of studies on positive aspects of mentoring, there has been less exploration of toxicity in mentoring (Carr and Heiden, 2011), even though (Allen and Eby, 2002) report incidences of negative mentoring experiences as typical. Eby (2008) notes that successful mentoring relationships might encounter short-term toxicity. Research finds mentors and mentees report bad mentoring experiences (Gibb, 2003). Evidence shows mentoring relationships can be dysfunctional or even outright damaging for mentees (Dashper, 2020). To minimise breakdown in mentoring relationships and maximise positive outcomes, structured programmes and regular overviews of individual relationships may be beneficial (Headlam-Wells, 2004).

Many staff members still find the task of mentoring demanding. Indeed, Allan (2010) found barriers and discrimination caused by poor mentoring practices. These poor practices can sometimes lead to "toxic mentoring", in which the relationship harms one or both parties (Rhianon and Elaine, 2016). Anecdotal evidence of toxic relationships—identified by Megginson et al. (2006)—states that such relationships are unpredictable and insecure, lacking trust and commitment. Clutterbuck (2004) describes toxic mentors as having manipulative goals and misaligned organisational values. A wide variety of symptoms can

indicate toxicity, ranging from mentees consistently cancelling meetings to mentors who burden mentees with their problems or even abuse them through inappropriate use of power (Eby et al. 2010). Therefore, toxicity could be described as the result of any behaviour (by a mentor or mentee) that harms the common purpose of the mentoring process.

The most common negative experience reported by mentees is mentor-mentee mismatches, ranging from differences in values to personalities and sometimes even work styles (Eby, 2010). Neglect can also occur if the mentor is not interested in helping the mentee develop. Mentees may report a lack of expertise (technical or interpersonal) or manipulative behaviour by mentors (Eby, 2000). Finally, mentees complain that some mentors exhibit general dysfunctionality in the form of personal problems or negative attitudes that can negatively impact their relationship (Eby et al., 2010). Mentees' perceptions of bad experiences are correlated with a wide range of outcomes, including adverse reactions to the relationship, strain reactions and less favourable attitudes (Allen and Eby, 2009; Eby et al., 2010). Mentors can also report bad experiences with mentees (Eby, 2008). Mentee performance problems involve the mentee failing to meet the mentor's expectations or being perceived as unwilling to learn (Lillian and Stacy, 2004). Interpersonal problems include conflicts, disingenuousness on the mentee's part, and other difficulties, such as over-submissiveness (Eby and McManus, 2004). Destructive relational patterns are more intense and involve a breach of trust, relationship exploitation, sabotage, jealousy and competitiveness toward the mentor. Mentor reports of bad experiences with mentees are related to less favourable work attitudes, strain reactions and reduced relationship quality (Eby et al., 2009).

Eby (2000) uncovers five causes of problems in the mentoring process: (a) poor match within the dyad, (b) distancing behaviour, (c) manipulative behaviour, (d) lack of mentor expertise and (e) general dysfunctionality. Eby and Lockwood (2005) reported that 20% of their sample experienced misaligned expectations, with 12% reporting neglect and lack of commitment from the mentor. Kilburg and Hancock (2006) found recurring problems for dyads through apparent mismatch and poor communication. In another study, Huskins et al. (2011) highlight the issue of mismatched expectations and relate it to a lack of contracting.

Eby (2008) confirms that the causes of negative experiences include mismatches within the dyad, distancing behaviour, manipulative behaviour, and lack of expertise. In that study, Eby

et al. recognised the frailties of poor mentoring scheme design and inadequate safeguards. Kay and Hinds (2012) catalogue causal factors of toxicity in mentoring: lack of time, poor preparation and under-developed empathic skills.

Toxicity in the relationship has been variously attributed. Feldman et al. (2010) note that while culpability is usually ascribed to the mentor's role, mentees influence the relationship dynamics equally. Sambunjak et al. (2020) identify personal factors, such as a lack of appropriate mentoring skills on the part of the mentor or lack of courage on the part of the mentee as well as relational factors, such as a lack of fit between mentor and mentee, which makes rapport building difficult. More recently, Straus (2013, p.86) identifies factors contributing to poor mentoring, such as "lack of commitment, personality differences, perceived (or real) competition, conflicts of interest, and the mentor's lack of experience". They discovered that most participants experienced a failed mentoring relationship. These attributions have led to various explorations into how to avoid such failure.

Regarding the prevention of toxicity in the mentoring relationship, research has focused on three main areas: the use of empathy by the mentor, matching, and the awareness of power dynamics. Several researchers suggest that empathy has a role in preventing toxicity. Dashper (2020) identified mentoring dispositions such as expressing care and concern as the basis of a nurturing relationship that could guard against toxicity. In a case study of a destructive relationship, Kram (1983) offered an open systems perspective as a potential solution: transition from conflict, understanding, development of an empathic stance, identification of concerns and recognition of any psychosocial change. Since then, Liang et al. (2002) found that among 296 students, the relationship quality in terms of engagement, authenticity, empathy and empowerment had a more significant impact on success than previously thought. In a later qualitative study of a mentoring scheme, Hargreaves (2010) noted that, by constructing knowledge with an empathic mentor, the mentee's confidence grew and enabled better coping. Other researchers have also suggested that empathy is essential in the empowerment of the mentee (Eby et al., 2010; Ensher and Murphy, 2011).

Matching has been criticised for forcing a relationship that should occur naturally. It is argued that dyad members should be attracted to each other independent of organisational or scheme requirements (Allen et al., 2009). Wanberg (2007) argues that satisfaction with

mentoring relationships was more significant when both parties had a choice. Blake-Beard (2011) warns that mentee choice is most likely based on similarities and comfort, thereby avoiding the challenge and growth that can arise from a mismatch. Despite this, the emphasis on matching dyads within schemes is considerable. Several authors have conducted empirical research on mentor-mentee matching issues ranging from gender (Gray and Goregaokar, 2010) to complementary skills (Ensher and Murphy, 2011) and role modelling (Cox, 2003).

On the other hand, Cox's (2003) research with 52 mentoring dyads in a community project suggested that matching may be unnecessary since the real needs of the mentee can change over time. Similarly, Troisi et al. (2015) found that initial dyad compatibility was not considered essential in their study of peer mentoring. Therefore, the debate on the best way to match and its importance in successful outcomes remains unresolved.

Some other researchers have also reported that mismatches and uneven or abuse of power within the mentoring dyad can lead to toxicity. Some authors (For example, Eby et al., 2000) suggest that many of the issues created through the misuse of power derive from the mentor and the mentee or the organisation. Ensher and Murphy (2011) posit that management does not necessarily sit with the mentor; the mentee also has some control. Earlier, Cox (2003) identified the power of the mentee in the relationship and introduced the term "empathic authority" to describe the investiture of trust in the mentor over time as sufficient rapport is achieved.

Hamilton and Scandura (2003) observe that power differentials might exacerbate power dynamics in gender. However, later research offers contrary findings on whether cross or same-gender dyads contribute to toxicity. For example, Viola et al. (2019) found that participants were uneasy in cross-gender relationships, and gender-role stereotypes consciously or unconsciously caused dysfunction. In contrast, Sosik and Godshalk's (2005) study of 217 mentoring relationships identified that cross-gender mentoring dyads secured more outstanding psychosocial support than same-gender dyads.

While researchers have identified power as both a cause of failure and as having the potential for preventing toxicity, we have not found anyone who has examined whether models of mentoring that promote relationship development act as a defence against negative

experiences. However, Hamlin and Sage's (2011) investigation into practical and ineffective mentor and mentee behaviours concluded that research was needed into the relationship between developmental mentoring and negative behaviour. They recognise the difference between models, noting that many criteria were consistent with the developmental mentoring model of Megginson et al. (2006).

2.4. Making Mentoring Work: Designing Mentoring Schemes

Mentoring cannot be forced; pairing people up rarely leads to the desired relationship in a mentoring situation (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). Bierema and Hill (2005) outline three critical considerations for setting up a successful mentoring programme. First, mutual respect, trust, comfort and confidentiality between the mentor and mentee are essential components of the mentoring relationship, and must evolve naturally. Second, both parties must be committed to the relationship and expectations must be articulated. In formal programmes, the organisations involved must also be committed to the programme's value. Third, successful mentoring involves frequent and regular interaction. While this might seem obvious, all sorts of barriers—time, work responsibilities, geographic distance and lack of trust—often reduce, if not halt, interaction. In support of the need for constant interaction, A study carried out by Holt et al. (2016) reveals that the time mentees spent with their mentors had a significant impact on their perceived satisfaction, and the amount of contact time was significantly correlated to mentees' and mentors' intentions to continue their relationships, especially for formal programmes. According to the report, the amount and frequency of formal or informal mentoring contact time between mentoring relationships positively impacts the relationships, members' perceived similarity and the mentees' performance. Therefore, if the formal mentor spends too little time with a mentee, the employee will likely seek mentoring elsewhere. The importance of trust as a critical ingredient for successful mentoring programmes was also highlighted by Chan (2018).

In another report, Gannon and Maher (2012) outline the main components of successful mentoring programmes: matching, preparation and interaction. Assigning mentoring dyads through participant-matching activity is essential in most formal mentoring programmes (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Clutterbuck, 2004). Ensuring some elements of compatibility, such as personality factors, learning styles, interests and values or demographic links, is

strongly recommended by most commentators (Clutterbuck, 2004; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002), and some opportunity for mentees to identify—along with their developmental needs—their preference for mentors is also associated with more effective mentor-mentee matches (Clutterbuck, 2004). However, Caruso (2016) argues that compatibility and similarities between mentors and mentees may emerge over time, and these do not necessarily have to be used to match the pairs. According to Clutterbuck et al. (2017), using the "hunch" method (making matches based on the personal assessment of the compatibility of the dyad) can be beneficial in small schemes where there is an intimate knowledge of the mentors and mentees through recruitment, selection, and training. In larger schemes, the designer has the option (if budget is available) to use one of the many matching systems on the market or more of a self-service approach. Voluntarism is a critical factor in making mentoring more successful. Programmes vary in the formality of the recruitment process, but making participation compulsory or "politically correct" for individuals or key talent can turn a mentoring programme into a competition to obtain the most senior sponsor in the organisation.

The value of participants is also clearly made in literature (Clutterbuck, 2004; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). Setting expectations, outlining roles and responsibilities, and interpersonal skills such as giving feedback, active listening, and questioning are vital for mentors. Mentees, on the other hand, are more likely to benefit from the training that incorporates aspects of personal reflection and self-awareness as well as active listening, setting expectations and being clear on their roles and responsibilities (Stacy et al., 2007; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). Research has demonstrated that relationships are three times more likely to succeed if mentors and mentees have formal training (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). As well as mentoring skills development, training provides the opportunity to raise concerns and questions before the relationship commences. At a minimum, this preparation should encompass the programme purpose, objectives and process, roles and responsibilities of mentor and mentee, contracting and agreeing on expectations and boundaries. Clutterbuck (2017) reports that not preparing mentors or mentees in any way and letting them "make it up as they go along"—especially when the principles of a mentoring agreement between mentor and mentee are not covered—the most important "safety net"

in their relationship is indeed a big mistake. Nowadays, this training/education is conducted virtually through interactive webinars.

Considerations on how mentors and mentees will conduct their relationships, through which media, the frequency of their interactions, and any specific goals and agendas in mind (participant interaction) form the third component of successful mentoring programmes that must be addressed at the preparation stage. Mentoring pairs may be designed to exist for a definitive period, so aspects of closing a relationship must also be considered at the commencement of the programme (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Connor and Pokora, 2007). Support mechanisms for the mentors and mentees will need to be identified in any interaction documentation (and the briefing stages), with the role of mentoring programme co-ordinator being critical in this context. Regular meetings between the mentor and mentee would enhance communication and strengthen the commitment to the mentoring programme. In support, Olaolorunpo (2019) states that regular meetings should be scheduled appropriately and held occasionally. Feedback and documentation can satisfy the mentoring programme's reflection and quality assurance needs.

Finding a suitable mentor and the right mentor-mentee match is crucial to the success of mentoring relationships (Blake-Beard, 2011). Good mentors possess a balance between soft and technical skills, the ability to build relationships, and an understanding of the expectations of the mentees (Jordaan, 2018). Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) point out that better knowledge of matching techniques in formal mentorship programmes is fundamental. He opines that research needs to be focused, among other factors, on matching criteria and their effects on goal fulfilment, the link between these criteria and the purpose of the programme, and matching methods about ethnicity, gender and diversity.

Mentees can select their mentors in specific formal programmes. There are two advantages for people who can choose their mentors. Firstly, selecting a mentor reduces the likelihood of mistakes, heightens their agency, and thus positions them better in the power relationships inevitably present within and, therefore, mentor-minded pairs. However, as Metros and Yang (2006, p.7) highlighted, the risks associated with mentees choosing mentors by themselves are as raised in these questions: Will a relationship between professionals or individuals be damaged if the potential mentor rejects the request? Will a potential mentor consider the

application as an honour or a duty? Will an ambitious mentee who could compete for future positions threaten the mentor's sense of safety? Does the person in the organisation understand how others will perceive their choice of mentor? Is the mentor well-known within the organisation? If the mentor fails, is the mentee association a failure?

Some mentees in the pilot programme, where mentors and pupils met as one group, first reported that selecting and approaching a mentor was uncomfortable and intimidating. (Bell and Treleaven, 2011). For mentees to quickly decide when choosing mentors, more potential mentors should express their interest. The downside is that particular potential mentors are inevitably not selected, giving rise to the need for the programme coordinator to manage feelings of rejection and potential disappointment in those circumstances (Bell and Treleaven, 2011).

In another study by D'Abate et al. (2003), the mentors were delighted with the pairing process in a programme that combined mentors and mentees based on informal knowledge and biographical information of the participants. Previously, in a comparative study led by Boice (1992), the allocation of pensioners to mentors was successful; half of his people formed pairs unaided, and the other half were assigned to a couple of mentors.

Chao et al. (1992 p. 634) propose the "analogous blind match [with] a slight probability of success" to random assignment of mentees to mentors. Boice (1992) discovered that most peers have successful mentoring relations. Ragins et al. (2000) did not validate such programmes when they assumed that participation in matching processes by mentees and mentors would yield more positive attitudes than programmes that assign participants to mentoring pairs.

In contrast, Viator (1999) opines that the importance of participant input to the pairing process to be far less satisfied with the participants' mentor, who had no input in the pairing process. Similarly, in formal programmes, pairings are done by the programme coordinator. Ragins and Cotton found that informal, spontaneously formed pairs benefitted the mentees more significantly than mentors. Perceived input into the pairing process is probably essential for both parties. Allen et al. (2008) suggest that mentors and mentees can start investing by realising they can choose in the matching process; hence, both parties can begin investing in

the relationship before its official initiation by perceiving that they can influence the matching process. Consequently, both parties will probably feel more motivated to maximise the relationship. This increased investment may explain why the perceived contributions to the matching process seem crucial to effective formal mentoring (Allen et al., 2008).

Some researchers maintain that organisational mentoring programmes must be flexible in developing relations to avoid individual mentors' association with mentees where possible. This is consistent with Johnson (2007), who found that formal mentorship programmes are mainly inefficient compared to informal and organic relations. However, whatever the forming of the pair, the matching of mentees and mentors can sometimes cause problems. Ehrich et al. (2004) list professional expertise and personality disruption among the top problems with the mentoring relationship in their review on mentoring in education, company business and medicine.

Gannon and Washington (2019) argue that the context within which a mentoring scheme operates influences the scheme tremendously. Therefore, adapting the scheme framework to suit its context is one of the critical success factors for the scheme. Lack of integration of good practice and experience across schemes, seen as a problem overseas (Clutterbuck, 2001), will likely be more of an issue in the sub-Saharan African context because of the lack of easily accessible information regarding mentoring schemes.

When considering the mentoring programme's requirements and how such will add value or contribute strategically to the organisation, it is vital to identify the business and organisational objectives to be satisfied by the mentoring programme and the outputs or success factors to be obtained (Opengart and Bierema, 2015). Mentoring needs a lot more attention to be paid to evaluation, and its value as a cost-effective way of development must be evident and justified from the beginning of the programme's inception. As mentoring programmes require resources in terms of people, finance and time, it is essential to clearly understand its specific objectives and measurable success factors (Clutterbuck, 2017).

Mandatory prerequisites are necessary for effective structured mentoring. A key element in mentoring scheme design is supervision and ongoing support for participants. Supervision in formal mentoring programmes is the type that has been minimally researched, and there

needs to be more evidence of good practice in programmes globally. However, this situation is beginning to change, and more programmes are investing in individual and group supervision. Nowell et al. (2017) identify the coordinator as vital to facilitating a programme. In addition, other aspects include orientation and matching mentoring pairs to ensure that relevant mentors are appropriately paired with mentees. According to that study, the mentoring programme should have clear and specific objectives so stakeholders understand their roles and expectations. Sharing information, regular communication and feedback are essential aspects of the mentoring programme (Nowell et al., 2017).

The evaluation of a mentoring programme should be planned as part of the initial design whilst it is being set up, and the programme outputs and success factors should be agreed upon. Mentoring programmes should be continually assessed to provide formative evaluation, which can be used to review the design and future implementation of the programme. In addition, a summative assessment should be completed at the end of each programme cycle. Evaluation should focus on processes and outputs at the programme and relationship levels (Clutterbuck, 2017). Evaluating mentoring can identify the overall value of mentoring and provide a critical perspective on its use and potential (Gibb, 2003).

As identified by Stokes and Merrick (2013), the importance of senior management commitment to the success of a mentoring programme is recognised by Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) and Megginson et al. (2006). Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002, p.190) reason that “unqualified support is needed from all those involved”, while pointing to the dangers of not involving senior stakeholders. The use of mentoring champions to support different types of mentoring has also increased significantly, contributing a valuable role in ensuring the success of a programme.

Looking at this from another perspective, five key constructs emerged from a review of various researchers (Shrestha et al., 2009; Risquez, 2008; Yaw, 2007; Hamilton and Scandura, 2003; Homitz and Berge, 2008) as being pivotal to the understanding and implementation of mentoring schemes. These constructs included a more experienced one-to-one relationship with the mentor, a broad relationship, confidentiality, and individual growth and development. Shrestha et al. (2009) describe the individualised relationship as an arrangement in which a person, usually the elder, gives a (younger) person advice, coaching

and counselling. The face-to-face concept of mentored care was also described as one of the aspects of this picture (Hamilton and Scandura, 2003).

The **mentoring scheme's experience** refers to the participants' relative institution in a profession or field (Akin and Hilbun, 2007). The more skilled person is the mentor, while the young or less experienced person is the mentee or beginning professional (Yaw, 2007).

Extended relationship refers to the developmental mentorship process over time (Bierema and Merriam, 2002; Guest, 2000; Murray, 2001). The relationship between the two parties is initiated and fostered by frequent personal contact in traditional mentoring environments (Hamilton and Scandura, 2003). As mentoring refers to a relationship between two organisational members, it stands to reason that the time spent cultivating the relationship would influence the satisfaction with the relationship and the outcomes derived (Holt et al., 2016).

Confidentiality or privacy means information exchanged between a mentor and the mentee is not disclosed to people not part of the mentoring relationship. According to literature, effective mentoring relationships are founded on confidence (Eby et al., 1997; Risquez, 2008; Single and Single, 2005). The mentor is considered to be unbiased about the mentee's performance and to ensure that the mentee is not open to the contexts of the mentor to foster confidential exchanges (Risquez, 2008).

Individual development and growth involve developing skills and expertise in mentoring activities (Murray, 2001). The development of mentors in different contexts—including newly employed women (Headlam-Wells, 2004), staff (Lee, 2009), managers in the workplace (Gentry et al., 2008) and trainees—is helpful for the individual development of mentees (Homitz and Berge, 2008). Mentoring has been a model in the fields of bibliology (Lee, 2009), corporate enterprises (Homitz and Berge, 2008; Rothman, 2007), entrepreneurship (Perren, 2003), public health (Mahayosnand, 2000) and education (Ehrich et al., 2004; Forsbach-Rothman, 2007).

Harris (1995, p. 478) argues that the mentoring process is framed in different contexts: by "establishing a historical context that describes how mentoring is conceived and developed, and by creating a competitive context that constantly affects continuous mentoring processes

and practices". Therefore, Garrigan and Pearce (1996, p. 27) suggest that "in the specific context for which a mentor is responsible, it is important that the mentor be aware of the individual's specific needs." Mentor research confirms that empathy with a client is more likely when coaches or mentors have had similar life experiences or have encountered them. The mentor can share powerful feelings with his mentee based on a long-standing previous experience and consider what questions should be addressed if the challenge arises.

In this study, mentoring is widely seen as a process by which a less experienced person is assisted, guided and (possibly) defended. It may overlap with networking and other collaborative efforts and can occur in various modes, specifically in hierarchical and formal frameworks. The following is consistent with Russell and Adams (1997, p. 12), in which mentoring was defined as an intense interpersonal exchange between a senior colleague with more experience (a mentor) and a younger partner with less experience (a mentee), whereby the former supports, leads and provides feedback on career plans and personal development to the latter. The supporting aspect that is prevalent in the American context is necessarily excluded.

It is necessary to note that although mentoring is one type of workplace learning intervention, it does not exist in isolation. It is influenced by other workplace learning activities (D'Abate et al., 2003) and other factors, such as the organisational structure and context, which are internal and external to the individual and the organisation involved (Lee et al., 2004).

Arthur and Kram (1985) assert that relationships are significantly influenced by the context in which they develop and the individuals' expectations, needs and skills. This illustrates the organisational (more incredible system) and developmental context and their influence, supported by developmental functions. They explain further that these two forces interact to create the dynamics of relationships that would make a difference in a person's development (positive or negative). Hegstad and Wentling (2005) report on factors that facilitate mentoring relationships and other factors that hinder them; these include support from top-level management, effective communication as facilitators and management priorities, and time constraints. A study by Stok-Koch et al. (2007) discovered excessive workload and unstable organisation to be two key factors that hinder workplace learning.

Eby et al. (2006) submit that mentors who feel like managers are likelier to see the benefits and rewards of participating in the mentoring programme. Allen et al. (2006) agree that to the extent to which even the best-designed programmes, immediate supervisor support for the mentoring programme may be effective. Parise and Forret (2008) have shown that perceived management support is critical in motivating and participating in mentoring programmes. If managers are supportive and can see the value, they feel that their participation is also recognised and appreciated, and therefore, they will be more likely to participate.

The results of different forms of mentoring are presented in many research papers without specifications for the exact condition of mentoring. However, some authors, including Weinberg and Lankau (2011), pay particular attention to a mentoring programme, otherwise known as formal mentoring. There is a difference between this type of mentoring and informal mentoring on many levels, that is, a volunteer-to-people relationship. Informal mentorship begins with a mentor and is determined to build a developmental relationship; hence, initiating mentorship in a formal programme involves matching people to obtain appropriate combinations of people (Owen, 2011).

Additionally, there are more critical concepts to consider in the mentor-mentee relationship, majorly from a psychoanalytical perspective. The mentor-mentee relationship goes beyond the structure of the relationship—formal or informal. Instead, the relationship's success is also dependent on transference and countertransference. In this light, the transference theory postulates that the mentor projects feelings about the mentee based on encounters in the past or views about someone else. In this case, if the mentee is uncomfortable, they would respond with resistance; if satisfied, the mentee would respond with affiliations.

McAuley (2003), in his work on transference, countertransference and mentoring, established that the mentor is characteristically older, more knowledgeable and experienced than the mentee. As a result, the mentor would be ascribed seniority by the organisation. When the principles of transference are ignited in the mentoring relationship, the mentor projects positive or negative experiences from relationships between them and the mentee; hence, based on the seniority mentality, he or she would transfer such expectations or realities from the past relationships to the current connection. If the mentee encourages this projection

from the mentor, positive transference is said to have happened, while negative transference has occurred if the mentee resists.

This implies that negative and positive transfers are essential for self-comprehension when working for the mentee and the mentor. In the mentoring position, as McAuley (2003) states, positive transfer enables the mentor to develop the mentee and the latter's understanding; a negative transfer allows the mentor to be independent and, in due course, to have a degree of helpful scepticism. There is a different face to the coin, however. This is when the relationship contains dysfunctional elements. Thus, positive transfer in dysfunction cases means an unhealthy dependency on the mentor, while negative transfer in dysfunction could translate to a desire to destroy the mentor.

Countertransference is seen as the mentor's response to the mentee, which can be positive or negative. However, proponents of countertransference in the mentoring relationship assert that it is necessary to prevent failure in the mentoring relationship, as it helps the mentor know where the mentee stands in the transference issues. The counter transfer is excellent and cheerful, says McAuley (2003), giving the mentee "good enough" consideration, respecting the mentee's position, and generally being encouraging. On the contrary, when countertransference is positive but dysfunctional, the mentor "loves" the mentee, agrees with each word, and does not want to discourage them. Where the contrast is benign but adverse, the mentor disagrees with the mentee's position, challenges deeply held beliefs and expresses controlled irritation. The mentor might wish to destroy the mentee when the countertransference is negative and dysfunctional.

Varghese and Finkelstein (2021) support the postulation that shared experience between the mentee and mentor facilitates perspective-taking on behalf of the mentee. Although the findings of the experimental studies showed that a mentee's perspective-taking moderated the positive transfer of efficacy beliefs from the mentor to the mentee, the field study failed to replicate this finding. Our current research findings have implications for training and developing employees.

By defining behaviours through strictly worded mission/value statements, mentors and organisations need to be careful about toxic expectations or projections of the mentor and

mentee. It may be self-defeating if everyone is to accept any aspect of behaviour; the provision of automation, one of the core components of self-determination, is, as seen above, an essential part of the success of mentoring (Ryan and Deci, 1985). This caution is outside the mentoring arena. For example, programmes for corporate social responsibility in which local communities work must include an element of consultation of employees to make full use of experience; the mentee must perhaps be "asked first" before such initiatives become a reality.

2.5. Mentoring from a Nigerian and Sub-Saharan African Perspective

While a substantial amount of research demonstrates the benefits of mentoring, conceptual understanding has been confined to studies performed in North America and Europe (Sawatsky, 2016); there needs to be more research on mentoring from a Sub-Saharan African perspective.

It should be noted that some previous studies have found that formal mentoring provided by mentors is positively linked with successful mentees' work outcomes. However, the previous studies have been conducted predominantly within the Anglo-Saxon cultural context, and some scholars have doubted whether research findings could be generalised across cultures (Cheng et al., 2014). Also, Bozionelos and Wang (2006) indicate that having a mentor is a common practice informally in the Chinese organisational environment (in line with Confucian values). Thus, the benefits of mentoring for mentees' career successes in a formal setting may not be guaranteed. They, therefore, propose the need to examine whether formal mentoring influences mentees' work attitudes in the Chinese context. This is a similar consideration for the African context, which is the bedrock of this research.

Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa fall within low-middle income countries (LMIC), and researchers have observed that many LMIC institutions do not yet have a strong tradition of mentoring (Prasad, 2019). Lescano et al. (2019) report that formal mentoring is an infrequent and largely unsupported practice in most institutions in LMICs, suggesting that this has historically inhibited the growth of research studies on mentoring. Mentoring programmes are uncommon; only some LMIC scientists have received mentorship training, and institutions need more resources and capacities to institutionalise mentoring programmes and processes (Lescano et al., 2019). This is a challenge for implementation in LMIC settings. Also, existing

evidence portends that best practices and norms for successful mentoring are not fit for LMICs; instead, they are highly biased toward the environments and resources of high-income countries, particularly in Europe and North America, where opportunities abound. A diverse array of professionals with different backgrounds are trained, prepared, supported and often rewarded to serve as mentors (Lescano et al., 2019).

Despite the growing interest in mentoring across public and population health research in Africa, certain factors impinge on the practice in the continent's research ecosystem (Khunou and Rakhudu, 2022). Apart from the scarcity of mentors, the mentoring system in Africa's institutions of higher learning faces a myriad of challenges, from ambiguity in the mentor-mentee relationship and role definitions to supervisor-mentor role conflict, limited mentoring knowledge and skills, and lack of formal structure (Ssemata et al., 2017). Also, a cultural environment that supports mentoring is critical to the overall implementation and experience of mentoring in varied contexts (Cole et al., 2016). However, the cultural atmosphere in some African institutions of higher learning poses a barrier to establishing and maintaining productive mentoring relationships, particularly the culture of politeness and respect for elders (Sawatsky et al., 2016). Given these documented challenges, mentoring is not common in SSA institutions. In places where it exists, mentoring is not as well developed as it could be (Ssemata et al., 2017).

The most cited challenge faced in mentoring young scholars is time. Factors like having multiple roles and administrative workplace places a significant demand on time, resulting in limited time for mentoring (Somefun and Adebayo, 2021). In a study in South Africa, many researchers reported that mentoring increased their workload without financial rewards. Opportunities to support themselves and their research are limited and highly competitive, while support to invest time in mentoring is often nonexistent (Nundulall and Dorasamy, 2012).

Another significant bottleneck was that mentors and mentees expressed frustration about needing more responsiveness. Mentors described mentees as being nonresponsive, but mentees argued that mentors did not always respond either. Irrespective of who is on the receiving end, responsiveness is a challenge in a mentor-mentee relationship. Other challenges mentioned include a lack of mentoring skills, lack of motivation or zeal on the part

of mentors and mentees, getting mentees to understand their roles, low achievement of set goals, and lack of or limited funding and resources (Somefun and Adebayo, 2021).

Reporting on the experiences and perceptions of mentors and mentees in an African study, Ssemata et al. (2017) note that both mentees and mentors identified a need for a more formalised and structured mentoring programme to ensure access to and accountability in the mentoring process. In particular, mentors suggested the need for more excellent infrastructure to support growth in mentoring and a more formal acknowledgement of the mentoring role. In that same study by Ssemata et al. (2017), participants suggested that the college design a mentoring model adapted to the local context. There were discussions about the existing divide concerning respect, hierarchy and levels of authority at the college and its impact on the mentoring relationships.

Adopting mentoring practices in LMICs is not a straightforward process of uptake and introduction. However, a complex implementation science issue requires adapting approaches to different settings until structural change occurs (Lescano et al., 2019). Having time for mentoring in LMICs is often viewed as a luxury. Therefore, mentoring capacities should be developed with an institutional commitment to implementing mentoring programmes and recognising the critical contribution of mentoring activities.

The picture is similar in Nigeria, with similar challenges to most LMICs. Okurame (2005, 2007, 2008a, 2012; Okurame and Fabunmi, 2014; Oladipo et al. 2016) provide significant insights into this gap by explaining the view of mentoring from a Nigerian perspective. His works, spanning over two decades and cutting across many different industries, provide helpful insight into mentoring from an African perspective. His multiple articles and research papers reveal exciting findings.

David E. Okurame's studies emphasise that there is an inadequacy of literature relating mentoring to career success in the Nigerian and, indeed, the African work environment (Okurame and Balogun, 2005). He further highlights that his various research works seek to bridge this gap in literature and, in some way, correct the inappropriateness of generalising from foreign cultures to Nigerian and sub-Saharan African society. This study shares his

aspiration and is one of the main motivations for continuing this research. He writes, “There is …a virtual absence of African perspective in the mounting mentoring literature…” (p.512).

In another study, Okurame and Fabunmi (2014) assert, “The absence of African perspectives on new career directions in most reference journals limits the global scope of comparative studies.” He provides information on “the under-researched role of mentoring … in modern career models from Africa” (p. 75). He makes helpful theoretical contributions to new career perspectives, especially in how relationships among study variables may differ across national cultural contexts.

Highlighting the need for further research with objective measures from a broader domain, Okurame and Balogun (2005), in a survey of ten banks in four central business districts of Lagos, Nigeria, report that informal mentoring played a significant role in career success. In another study, Okurame (2008) revealed that mentoring occurrence in most Nigerian settings was almost entirely informal, with respondents reporting that they preferred the career-related benefits of mentoring. Even when reverence was the most mentioned mentee quality, respondents preferred qualities that enable a mentor to deliver career-advancing functions.

Professor Okurame postulates that training and policy intervention should be considered to enhance mentoring delivery to create equal opportunities for male and female employees. He highlights the need for further research with objective measures from a broader domain. He concludes that an intervention was needed to make informal mentoring thrive, enhance its quality and ensure career success.

Ogar et al. (2019) reported that career management needs to be given more attention in most organisations in Nigeria. The report posited that career development practices like mentoring should be given adequate attention for corporate sustainability in today’s emerging world. Career management plans, career pathing and development programmes should align with employee needs for optimum results. Some other Nigerian authors support this view (Enyioko and Ikoro, 2017; Agboola et al., 2020; Anekwe et al., 2020; Obaze and Samikon, 2022).

Other African authors have also expressed their views on mentoring. In a paper presenting an overview of mentoring, with a particular focus on mentors and mentoring among academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions, it is reported that senior faculty members are naturally

more comfortable with mentoring and more likely to mentor others (Ofovwe and Agbontaen-Eghafona, 2011). They also reported a somewhat worrisome discovery that mentoring, when it lacks structure, can quickly deteriorate into something that becomes negative instead of positive. However, they ended with a conclusion supporting the need to foster a mentoring culture in academia to promote professional development and job satisfaction.

Mentoring is vital in equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to foster the growth of independent, creative and lifelong researchers. Eyiuche et al. (2015) investigated the characteristics of research mentoring provided to post-graduate students in universities in Southern Nigeria. Findings from that research indicate that supervisors' criticisms characterised research mentoring across institutions without providing insights, setting unrealistic deadlines and expectations, and eroding students' self-esteem. Where supervisor-supervisee brainstorming was almost lacking, the observed characteristics would not serve as catalysts for research as they are most unlikely to promote quality post-graduate research. Recommendations were made to propose curricular enhancement strategies to reinvigorate research mentoring for quality postgraduate study. These characteristics and values show that the role of a mentor is complex, involving many dimensions of the mentor as a counsellor, observer, giver of feedback, instructor and assessor.

In a survey investigating the effect of mentoring on the commitment to work and job satisfaction in the Nigeria Police, Aremu and Adeyoju (2003) report that mentored male police officers are more committed to their jobs. The mentored female police showed more satisfaction with their job than the mentored male police. Mentoring is also found to predict commitment to employment in the police.

Similarly, in a study connecting career plateauing to job satisfaction, organisational commitment and turnover intentions on the one hand with the moderating effects of mentoring on these relationships on the other, Salami (2010) demonstrated that career plateauing was negatively correlated with job satisfaction and organisational commitment and positively correlated with turnover intentions. Using a sample of 280 female employees who are more than 30 years old working in the Nigerian public sector as civil servants, the study employed hierarchical multiple regression analyses, which indicated that mentoring played a significant moderating role in these relationships, with the potential to reduce career

plateauing while increasing job satisfaction with the possibility of further moderating turnover intentions downwards. The benefits of having or being a mentor have received ample attention in research. For example, studies showed that employees who have mentors or who are mentors report more promotions, have higher motivation, earn higher incomes and score higher on work satisfaction than employees without a mentor or who are non-mentors (Salami, 2010).

Mentoring in the Nigerian work setting reflects broad activities, which primarily focus on counselling, protection and sponsoring an individual's career advancement. Mentors in spontaneous or assigned relationships are frequently older and more practical than their mentees. A common feature of these relationships is the great allegiance and respect accorded to mentors by their mentees. This is mainly due to the African perspective that accords wisdom to advancement in age. Though some negative connotations of mentors as godfathers exist, mentors are generally appreciated for guiding younger colleagues (Olukayode, 2014).

On the Nigerian perspective equating wisdom/experience with how long a person has lived, Umukoro and Okurame (2018), in evidence-based research conducted on 1,626 Nigerian graduates participating in their Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC)—where 780 were male and 846 were female—discovered that the effect of entrepreneurial mentoring on career adaptability was more significant the more expansive the age difference between the mentor and the mentee. The authors thus recommend in that study that mentorship models within the Nigerian context should always cater for contextual factors such as age differences between the mentor and the mentee.

The importance of age and respect in the mentoring process within the Nigerian and African context can be tied to the national culture of long-term orientation. Also, the importance of values such as respect, credibility and building long-lasting relationships in the mentoring process within the African and Nigerian perspective relates to the long-term orientation characteristics of Hofstede's national and organisational cultural stratification (Beugelsdijk, 2006).

Modern training methods in organisations, human resource management and society are changing. It is common for senior or older members of organisations (or the community) to engage junior or younger members in dyadic or one-to-one relationships to enable the latter imbibe the desirable knowledge, skills, abilities and, sometimes, attitudes of the former. This process is known as mentoring (Lawal, 2011).

The need for more research on mentoring from an African context must be considered. Many authors, as seen from previous references, share this view as a way of avoiding the challenges that result from the generalisation of imposing findings from research carried out in Europe and North Africa in a sub-Saharan African context.

2.6. Summary and Conclusion

Central to this study is the definition of mentoring and its application in modern usage within academic and management circles. In the previous sections, I carried out an evaluative examination of the subject. Now follows a summary of key findings and how those have shaped my understanding and the direction of the research.

Mentoring theory, research and practice have moved past traditional conceptualisations of mentors as older, more experienced managers or professionals providing advice, support and role modelling to younger organisational mentees. Instead, mentoring literature now considers these relationships to be developmental network processes that evolve with profound consequences for both parties and the systems in which these parties work (Rebecca et al., 2008). Such modern use of mentoring has made the once general concept of mentoring become much broader to envelop other forms and practices of mentoring, including sponsorship and developmental mentoring, formal and informal mentoring, as well as other more recent variations of the concept like reverse mentoring and e-mentoring, which are all constituents of the mentoring process.

As discovered by Clutterbuck and Gimson (2008), sponsorship mentoring (in which the power and influence of the mentor is typically the driving force of the relationship) is shunned by many national and corporate cultures in Europe in favour of developmental mentoring (which emphasises mutuality of learning and the importance of helping mentees do things for themselves). Developmental mentoring works on the quality of the learners' thinking—giving

advice and helping the learners' network are secondary activities, brought into play only when mentees lack the experience or perception to progress through their resources. Understanding these mentoring schools of thought was beneficial in designing a programme, preparing (as well as matching and supporting) participants, and also in understanding some of the evaluation outputs to analyse later.

For decades, mentoring researchers have contrasted formal and informal mentoring and closely examined the outcomes of formal and informal mentoring (Cheng et al., 2014). Informal mentoring is considered the classic, familiar case, whereby mentor and mentee encounter each other spontaneously and naturally, based on mutual identification and interests (Allen and Eby, 2007; Mullen, 2007). In contrast, formal mentoring occurs intentionally and planned (Fletcher and Mullen, 2012; Mullen, 2008; Single, 2008), initiated, managed and sanctioned by an organisation (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Feeney, 2008).

While well intended, as mentoring becomes more formal, several research findings (Eby et al., 2007; Ragins and Cotton, 1999; Underhill, 2006) suggest that the level of interaction as well as the quality of information shared decreases, resulting in less long-term advantages for mentees, mentors and organisations when compared to mentoring relationships that develop naturally and voluntarily, based on perceived competence and interpersonal comfort. In agreement, authors such as Johnson and Anderson (2009) point out that mentors in formal mentoring programmes report less motivation to invest their time and effort fully, indicating that the more formalised a mentoring programme becomes, the less likely mentors are to participate fully; in cases where formal mentoring is less than fully adequate, mentees often seek an additional informal mentor to realise those benefits that are not being gained as part of the formal programme.

Even though informal mentoring tends to be more effective than formal mentoring in supporting mentees to grow in confidence and become more competent over time, there is evidence that formal mentoring can also achieve specific set objectives if well set up and well managed through its life cycle.

Reverse mentoring is an innovative tool for organisations that foster cross-generational learning and develop their current and future leaders (Spreitzer, 2006). Such mentoring

relationships also expose participants to different generational perspectives and build on participants' strengths. Given that the mentor is usually younger than the mentee, reverse mentoring provides an opportunity for the older employees to learn from their younger counterparts, unlike traditional mentoring, where learning is dispensed hierarchically (in most cases) from a more senior mentor to a younger mentee (Chaudhuri and Ghosh, 2012). Reverse mentoring is situated in the mentoring literature as an alternative form of mentoring, with unique characteristics and support functions exchanged that distinguish it from other developmental relationships (Murphy, 2012).

The information age is changing the dynamics of many relationships, including mentoring (Sanyal and Rigby, 2017**)**. Traditional learning, organising, and teaching models are challenged in an age of rapid change and scientific advancements. Increasingly, the world is becoming more global economically, politically and socially. Technology is facilitating this shift by promoting mentoring across boundaries that can be social, economic, cultural or physical (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). Despite the challenges with e-mentoring, arising mainly from its dependence on technology, this type of mentoring has come to stay. It can only be accelerated by the digital revolution and globalisation. This area calls for more attention from researchers due to its relevance in the future.

Overall, mentoring is seen as a potentially powerful source of people development, and many examples of significant transitions and growth are given in both academic and management sources (Karkoulian et al., 2008; Owen, 2011; Murphy, 2012; Clutterbuck, 2017; Feyissa et al., 2019; Letsoalo, 2021). Hence, there is a high degree of interest in mentoring in international organisations, where there is an excellent need for accelerated individual development and various social and community development. Over 70% of Fortune 500 companies have embraced mentoring as a management practice.

Although mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the mentee, mentoring in the workplace is typically focused on enhancing the mentee's professional development. It is generally agreed that mentoring is the most intense and powerful one-on-one developmental relationship, entailing the most influence, identification and emotional involvement (Allen and Eby, 2007; Hezlett and Gibson, 2007). Despite these benefits, some organisations, especially in Africa, have yet to realise the importance of organising mentoring programmes

or evaluating the impact of existing mentoring programmes on employee performance (Afolayan and Babalola, 2020).

The positive aspects of workplace mentoring notwithstanding, mentors and mentees can experience difficulties in their relationship, and the set objectives of the programme may not be achieved. Compared to the abundance of studies on positive aspects of mentoring, there has been less exploration of toxicity in mentoring (Carr and Heiden, 2011) even though incidences of negative mentoring experiences are reported as typical (Eby and Allen, 2002). Although successful mentoring relationships may encounter short-term toxicity during the process, research finds that mentors and mentees can report bad mentoring experiences, and there is evidence that mentoring relationships can be dysfunctional (Dashper, 2020). To minimise breakdown in mentoring relationships and maximise positive outcomes, structured programmes and regular overviews of individual relationships have been beneficial in reducing toxicity in mentoring schemes (Headlam-Wells, 2004).

Mentoring cannot be forced. Merely pairing people up rarely leads to the relationship desired in a mentoring situation (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). When considering what the requirement for mentoring is and how it is going to add value or contribute strategically to the organisation, it is essential to identify what the business and organisational objectives are to be satisfied by the mentoring programme and what outputs or success factors are expected to be obtained (Gannon and Washington, 2019).

Despite the growing interest in mentoring across various research fields in Africa, certain factors influence the practice in the continent's research ecosystem. Apart from the scarcity of mentors, the mentoring system in Africa's institutions of higher learning faces a myriad of challenges, from ambiguity in the mentor-mentee relationship and role definitions to supervisor-mentor role conflict, limited mentoring knowledge and skills, and lack of formal structure (Ssemata et al., 2017). As a result, adopting mentoring practices in sub-Saharan Africa is not a straightforward uptake and introduction process, but a complex implementation science issue requiring the adaptation of existing approaches into different settings until the needed structural change takes place (Lescano et al., 2019).

While many works of literature demonstrate the benefits of mentoring, conceptual understanding has been limited to studies performed in North America and Europe (Sawatsky, 2016). There needs to be more research on mentoring from a sub-Saharan African perspective. These studies have been conducted predominantly within the Anglo-Saxon cultural context, and some scholars have wondered whether research findings could be generalised across cultures (Cheng et al., 2014). Also, Bozionelos and Wang (2006) indicate that having a mentor is already popular informally in the Chinese organisational environment (in line with Confucian values), thus meaning the benefits of mentoring for mentees' career successes in a formal setting may not be guaranteed. They, therefore, propose that it is necessary to examine whether formal mentoring influences mentees' work attitudes in the Chinese context. This is a similar consideration for the African context, which is the bedrock of this research.

David E. Okurame's studies emphasise a paucity of literature relating mentoring to career success in Nigeria. He further highlights that his various research works seek to close this gap in literature and, in some way, correct the inappropriateness of generalising from foreign cultures to Nigerian and sub-Saharan African society. This study shares his aspiration as one of the main motivations for continuing this research.

In summary, there are two main gaps that the extensive evaluative examination of mentoring research has identified. Firstly, most studies on the nature of mentoring relationships focus on the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of mentorship, including mentors' desired characteristics and activities (Sawatsky et al., 2016). However, the relationship between mentor and mentee occurs in a specific environment. Therefore, developing a mentorship model must also include a more comprehensive understanding of institutional and societal factors, particularly culture, that can affect the mentoring process. Culture's role in developing and maintaining mentoring relationships in the professional work environment becomes crucial. It will be studied in Chapter 3 to gain more insight into the broader context and further shape the research. Culture investigation and mentoring can provide insight into the importance of culture in mentoring, which is one of the main objectives of this study.

Secondly, in reviewing all the research work that has been carried out concerning mentoring, the study discovers that the majority of that has been concentrated in Europe and North

America, with a limited view of the broader context of mentoring from a sub-Saharan Africa and, particularly, a Nigerian perspective. The African context the research brings into the subject strongly motivates me to continue the work.

Gannon and Washington (2019) report a shift in mentoring where more organisations, based in the private or public sectors, are using mentoring schemes to tackle issues of development and disadvantage. This "turn" in mentoring—from personal, informal relationships to organised, formal relationships—is achieved through formal mentoring initiatives or schemes. Again, this was also more from the European context. The need for more research on mentoring from an African context must be considered. Many authors, as seen from the references above, share this view as a way of avoiding the challenges that result from the generalisation of incorrectly appropriating findings from research carried out in Europe and North Africa to a sub-Saharan African context.

In the next chapter, I will review the Nigerian economy and the banking industry, eventually narrowing it down to S. Bank, my case study for this research. This was to create a social context for the work. I will also critically analyse the literature on culture about the national setting and its impact on mentoring.

Chapter 3: THE NIGERIAN ECONOMIC, BANKING AND SOCIAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT

This research journey is more than an academic pursuit for me. It is an attempt at finding a practicable solution to the niggling business problem of talent optimisation.

I have invested most of my working life building a career in banking, spanning over two decades. Ten of those years were in S. Bank (name changed to maintain anonymity). I was a pioneer staff of the bank and served at three strategic leadership levels—from branch management to regional management and later senior management. I resigned from my appointment with the bank in August 2015 and took up a strategic leadership role in my current bank. Despite the change of jobs, I decided to retain S. Bank as my case study for this research work because I had completed the study framework and made substantial progress before resigning from my appointment with the bank. I also built excellent social equity within the bank, which helped me to continue enjoying all the support I needed from S. Bank to finish the undertaking. In the next chapter, I will discuss S. Bank as my case study for researching and reviewing the Nigerian economic, banking and social contexts.

I seek to test the findings of this research in a proper, professional work setting, and after working at S.Bank for ten years, it would be an excellent place to implement the findings of this research. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to build an overview or narrative around the Nigerian banking industry and the Nigerian social culture to give the reader a foundation for critical discussions in subsequent chapters that discuss the relationship between organisational culture and national culture, as well as the impact of culture on the setup and practice of mentoring in SSA. By providing an overview of S. Bank, using the Nigerian social culture and the Nigerian banking industry as the frame of reference for the research, the study has built a foundation for the reader to understand the correlation between organisational and national culture within the contexts of the Nigerian financial services industry and sub-Saharan Africa.

The need to explore culture's role in developing and maintaining mentoring relationships within a professional working environment became crucial as the study progressed. We see how national culture is embodied in the mentoring process—especially from the Nigerian and

SSA perspective—where national cultures exhibit power, respect, credibility and building long-lasting relationships, all constituents of Hofstede's 5-dimensional theory of culture.

Based on the value congruence principles, the sections will also show the interaction between an organisation's culture and national culture, asserting that organisations choose values or sets of cultures that fit within the national framework. In summary, this chapter is significant in providing insight into the Nigerian banking sector/industry and the Nigerian economy as central themes for understanding the Nigerian social culture. It thus becomes clear why the author has chosen S. Bank as the research context, having shown the challenges bordering on the "war for talents" the Nigerian banking industry is currently facing. The chapter also builds the foundation for understanding how organisational culture is influenced by national culture and how the emic and etic approaches to culture likely affect mentoring in Nigeria and SSA, with a focus on the Nigerian banking sector.

Nigeria is the largest country in Africa, with a population of approximately 200 million people and nearly 50% of the population of West Africa. Nigeria is Africa's largest oil exporter, with the continent's largest natural gas reserves. The country is the 6th largest in the world, with a GDP of $510 billion. The debt-to-GDP ratio decreased from 19% to 11% when Nigeria's GDP was refinanced. The attractive financial and other opportunities presented to the different sectors with the potential to increase are anticipated to be used by foreign financial institutions, investors, service providers and local banks.

3.1. The Nigerian Economy

Nigeria is the largest country in Africa, with a population of approximately 200 million people and nearly 50% of the population of West Africa. Nigeria is Africa's largest oil exporter, with the continent's largest natural gas reserves. The country is the [2]6th largest in the world, with a GDP of $510 billion. The debt-to-GDP ratio decreased from 19% to 11% when Nigeria's GDP was refinanced. The attractive financial and other opportunities presented to the different sectors with the potential to increase are anticipated to be used by foreign financial institutions, investors, service providers and local banks.

Although Nigeria's leading foreign exchange revenue and public funding source is crude oil, growth expectations for the economy have deteriorated with a recent decline in oil prices.

With the recent devaluation of the naira, rising inflation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy witnessed a contraction; it was officially declared to be in recession as of the third quarter of 2020, though the nation bounced back almost immediately.

Non-oil revenues are growing gradually (particularly in agriculture), and power is expected to become more stable, with the recent privatisation of the sector beginning to yield noticeable dividends. In recent times, however, global oil prices decreased by almost 70%, resulting in a decrease in government income in Nigeria. Since the current oil glut shows no sign of a slowdown—especially with West Iran sanctions lifted and the ban on US oil exports removed—petroleum prices are projected to remain lower for years. Oil prices falling and public revenues declining weakened the government and corporate balance sheets, placing renewed pressure on the banking system.

3.2. The Nigerian Banking Industry

The banking industry plays a vital role in the economy of a nation by mobilising resources from savings-surplus citizens to savings-deficit citizens (financial intermediation), implementing the government's macroeconomic policies and, above all, satisfying shareholders and stakeholders' expectations of a fair return on investment and equitable distribution of such returns (Akhigbemidu et al., 2022).

Nigeria's banking sector has undergone several financial reforms, which have shocked it and triggered much debate, tension and uncertainty. Nevertheless, most banks appear to have emerged more robust in the country than before the storm.

A study of the Nigerian banking industry can only be clearly understood with the background given by Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), on the first significant regulatory consolidation in the industry from 2004 to 2009. The need to strengthen financial institutions and increase their economic performance and development roles in July 2004 justified the consolidation action of the CBN. Economic gurus expected the banks to play a more crucial role in fund mobilisation and wealth creation as critical institutions in the financial intermediation process. The sector was, however, not living up to these expectations because there were pervasive weaknesses and uncertainty in the banking system (Soludo,

2009). This was the CBN's primary justification for the consolidation programme it initiated in 2004.

The global financial crisis in 2008/2009 brought a new dimension to regulating the CBN financial system. 2009 was a year of transition between Professor Charles Soludo's administration and the CBN-led Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi term. Nigeria's economic and banking systems experienced a severe shock following the 2008 global financial crisis, a decline in international petroleum prices, poor corporate governance and a weak risk management framework (Bismarck, 2013).

By taking the lead in initiating reforms to achieve the long-term economic and financial stability of Nigerian banks, the CBN has continued to implement a comprehensive programme to enhance the operations and quality of banks in Nigeria. Available data show that the macroeconomic environment has improved considerably since 2008—the inflation rate moderated to a single digit, the prime lending rate went down significantly, and the exchange rate was relatively stable. All these influenced the growth of the real economy. Nigerian banks became healthier and more robust in Nigeria's financial sector than in the turbulent 2008–2009 period (Sanusi, 2011).

Nigerian banks also face a rise in the level of their non-performing loans due to the decreased economic growth caused by the declining price of petroleum and restricted foreign exchange from the Nigerian Central Bank to prosecute the lucrative foreign currency, which is because the government has made more than $3 billion out of its cheap deposits from the banks (Sanusi, 2012). With the tenure of Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi as the CBN governor cut short, he was replaced by Mr Godwin Emefiele, and the new leadership of the CBN continues to tackle the critical economic challenges of foreign exchange shortage, leading to the devaluation of the naira, high inflation and high-interest rates.

A much-wavering currency and a low oil price impact government revenue. These and other factors present challenges and opportunities for local and international investors, which need expert guidance. The economic outlook will be around 0.2–1.5% in the coming years. Exchange rate volatility and falling global oil prices have affected public sector spending, coupled with the pandemic. During all these, Nigerian banks continue to face challenges;

competition remains stiff even as income lines thin out. Considering this development, this is the worst time for banks to lose their most talented staff members. Key talents are often the most valuable and the ones the competition will go after. The war for talent has intensified and, from all indications, it has come to stay in the Nigerian banking industry despite the dwindling fortunes of the Nigerian government. In a study by Kadiri et al. (2017), using a sample of 320 employees working in selected Nigerian banks, the findings show a positive and significant relationship between talent management and employee turnover.

3.3. S. Bank as a Business Context for My Research

S. Bank Plc, one of the banks that resulted from the consolidation programme of the CBN, is a merger of five banking institutions. The merger occurred in December 2005, with the five banks combining their operations, assets and liabilities. On 1 January, 2006 the new company (S. Bank Plc) commenced operations.

After its seamless consolidation exercise in 2006, S. Bank Plc became a top financial institution in Nigeria. It functions as a group that offers aspects of financial products and services, supported by a technology framework that supports customer service delivery. Building on its strength, S. Bank completed the acquisition and full integration of M. Bank, putting it in the league of the tier-one banks in Nigeria concerning the number of customers and branches.

However, recent challenges bordering on board politics and insider lending have led to the removal of some key board members, with new appointments made by the CBN. The bank is now under the regulator's control, which must provide liquidity support, leading to a name change and rebranding from S. Bank Plc to P. Bank Limited. The bank remains solid and has met its financial obligations to its stakeholders, with a high probability of rebounding. There is no better time to attract and nurture talents than now.

3.4. A Perspective on Culture

There are many definitions of culture and, in all of them, some key elements emerge as the embodiment of what culture represents. Such vital components include integrated patterns of human knowledge (Trompenaars, 2007), a belief system (Kamal, 2015; Vazonyi et al., 2015), and a set of values and behaviours that differentiates one organisation from another (Schein, 1990).

Discussing culture in the social sciences is challenging without mentioning Clifford Geertz (1926–2006), who is now recognised as a true giant of social and cultural theory (Alexander and Smith, 2011). Geertz is best known for his definition of culture and "thick description" theory, an effective technique that depends on fresh interpretative approaches (Brooks, 2011). For Geertz, cultures are "webs of meaning" in which everyone is suspended (Somers-Willett, 1980). Understanding culture, therefore, is not so much a matter of going in search of law but of setting out an interpretative framework for meaning that focuses directly on attempts to define the real meaning of things within a given context (Dadze-Arthur, 2017). For Geertz, the best way to do this is via "thick description": a way of recording things which explores context and surroundings and articulates meaning within the web of culture (Lichterman, 2011). Ambitious and bold, Geertz's most incredible creation is a method all critical thinkers can learn from.

Geertz regards culture as a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms. In other words, he views culture as an organised collection of symbols and signs with particular meanings (Apter, 2011). To begin with, he suggests that anthropologists can only understand culture properly if they look at how people express themselves through symbols, signs, symbolic acts and rituals (Giesen, 2011). Then, Geertz argues that anthropologists ought to study culture from the perspective of the people concerned. In his opinion, cultures and peoples should speak for themselves, with anthropologists learning to converse with and interpret them (Alexander and Smith, 2011). To rephrase it, culture ought to be interpreted from the viewpoint of the person whose culture it is. It can be concluded that anthropologists should read the meanings of symbols or symbolic acts just as native people do and then translate and convey their meanings to outsiders. Geertz calls this process an interpretive approach.

With over 40,000 citations, Hofstede's ([1980, 2001) seminal contribution—Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values—is among the 25 most cited books in social sciences Beugelsdijk (2006). Hofstede's 5-dimensional theory of culture identifies cognitive systems which help explain the reason certain employees in specific organisations (and from certain nationalities) behave the way they do. Hofstede (1980, 1993) identifies five dimensions of culture from a management/leadership perspective: the power-

distance dimension, individualism-collectivism dimension, uncertainty-avoidance dimension, masculine-feminism dimension and long-term orientation versus short-term orientation.

According to Hofstede (1980), culture is a multi-dimensional construct that involves the crystallisation of history to inform the current generation's way of thinking, feeling and acting. Culture can be broadly understood from multiple perspectives of the continuum. However, the high power distance culture is particularly prevalent in Nigeria (Oruh and Dibia, 2020) and, therefore the most relevant for this study.

A country's national cultural ethos shapes how organisations operate and behave towards stakeholders (communities, employees, etc.) within such an environment (Hofstede and Bond, 1984). While cultural context is broadly explained along seven continuums, power distance and paternalistic culture are considered most relevant to the issue highlighted in this current study.

A power distance culture (low or high) explores the degree to which power disparity is endorsed and accepted within a social space. In a high-power distance (HPD) cultural setting, which is dominant in developing countries (including Asian, Arabic and African countries such as Nigeria), inequality is endorsed and widely accepted (Umar and Hassan, 2014). Most developed countries (including Germany, The Netherlands and the UK) have a low-power distance (LPD) index culture. In a low-power distance index cultural setting, the emotional distance between those in a position of power and their subordinates is relatively tiny; furthermore, their relationship is more democratic and consultative. A low-power distance index cultural society encourages power-holders and their subordinates to be interdependent. Hence, there is relatively lower inequality in the power distance among people (Cheng et al., 2014; Qian, 2014).

According to Hofstede, France (in the European context) is characterised as HPD. However, in the broader social context, French culture is distinctively European, and this context sets French HPD in its enactment as entirely different from sub-Saharan African HPD. From a socio-cultural perspective, Nigeria is an HPD society and endorses a work culture based on a master-servant relationship and respect for hierarchy (Yange et al., 2016). According to Ituma and Simpson (2009), these broad Nigerian institutional issues frame and sustain HRM practices

and organisational culture. The aforementioned is consistent with Hofstede's (1980) cultural implications that unravel the HPD index in Nigeria's employment relations system (Okpu, 2016).

There is a detailed discussion of Nigerian culture in the next section, which sets the context for developing mentoring in the sub-Saharan African context.

3.5. Dynamics of the Nigerian Social Culture

In Nigeria and most parts of Africa, "consultation with elders" is a way of life. This is well entrenched in the social culture of the people (Eyiuche et al., 2015). To illustrate, before deciding to tie the knot with my wife, I made several trips around the country, "presenting" her to uncles and aunties and getting their "approval". Without these, she might not be accepted into the family, resulting in her being considered and treated like an outsider. The common saying in our clime is that you do not only marry a man or woman but also marry his or her entire family. Though informal, This "approval" is so ingrained in our culture that the marriage itself is threatened without it. This is the social culture of the African people. This is who we are.

At least, in a sense, informal mentoring is deeply entrenched in the social culture of Nigeria (Okurame, 2008b). Practically everyone has someone they defer to and approach for counsel at critical decision points. That person may be a religious leader, an uncle or a senior professional colleague. It is someone they respect and defer to before making important decisions. Counselling and seeking guidance are integral parts of the way of life in Africa. (Sulaiman et al., 2014).

If mentoring, although informal, is a way of life in an African context, does it then follow that mentoring can also be used to manage talents in a professional setting? This curiosity lies at the very heart of this research work.

Bringing the discussion to the Nigerian setting, the social culture in Nigeria is centred on respect. It is hierarchical and power-oriented, where the leader is a prominent "father figure", while the values, norms and atmosphere are set by this "father" or "elder brother". Harrison (1972) describes this as the "power culture", with a top executive exercising great power towards all organisational processes. This correlates with the Zeus culture in the works of

Charles Handy (2009) and the family culture, according to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998). In this culture, the "boss" is respected and may even be feared. Relationships are also personal-oriented, and who you are is more important than what you do. It is represented by a spider web, where power is concentrated at the centre, and valued employees are concentrated around Zeus in the centre of the spider web (Mulder, 2018).

This highly autocratic and hierarchical nature of the culture may be why informal mentoring is thriving and deeply entrenched in the social culture of the Nigerian people. Both the national and the organisational culture of S. Bank, and indeed most organisations, favour mentoring but because formal mentoring schemes hardly exist, informal mentoring is prevalent.

Handy (1999), based on the work of Harrison (1972), divides organisational culture into four major categories: power culture, position culture, task culture and individual or help culture. Handy's model helps comprehend why some persons feel more at ease in some organisations than others. The Nigerian organisational culture best fits Handy and Harrison's power and task culture. The Nigerian banking industry/sector has a power-centric culture, with the Central Bank of Nigeria being the spider positioned at the centre, spinning the webs.

More in organisations but less in the social culture, task culture is also prevalent in Nigerian and sub-Saharan Africa, where skills and competencies are considered essential. This is akin to the Athena culture—represented by a fishing net, with meshes representing the connections between departments or sections of the organisation (Handy, 2009)—and the Guided Missile (where they take the views of those whose expertise is needed to solve their problems). Such persons with this expertise are considered real bosses. This is at the very heart of capitalism.

Relating this notion of the real boss with expertise to the Nigerian banking industry, the Nigerian banking industry is highly regulated with multiple new rules and regulations emanating from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and other regulatory bodies without end. The CBN and these other regulatory bodies are the real bosses. It is, therefore, not surprising to find the role of culture also appearing where there is a reliance on formal rules. The Eiffel Tower culture also typifies this.

The person's culture is hardly expressed in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. As summarised in its typology of Harrison, the culture of the person, or the support, differs from all others since it has no power relationships. In power-oriented cultures, an employee is valued by his/her ability to please the boss. The role-driven culture is vital in how accurately procedures and instructions can be followed: how effectively a person can perform a particular task is essential in a task- or performance-driven culture. An employee is subordinated to their organisation in all three cases. The only distinction is who has the power and who (or what) dominates an employee. It may either be a superior or it may be a task to fulfil rules and regulations. In a person-oriented culture, the situation differs from the other three types; a personal organisation mainly serves its members' needs. The organisation itself is a means to satisfy the needs that members cannot otherwise meet, just as some organisations constantly evaluate and accept or reject the value of individual members as instruments (Handy, 1995).

It is essential to know that national culture affects all kinds of management, including knowledge and talent management. In a study aimed to gain insight into the impacts of Nigerian culture on knowledge management, which in turn affects knowledge management practices, Adeola and Ellis (2015) suggest that the hierarchy of Nigerian society supports centralised decision-making, influencing knowledge management practices in Nigerian organisations. They further state from the study's results that Nigerian organisations' short-term orientation impedes their commitment to motivated employees' relationships and values. This paper concludes by stressing that Nigerian organisations lack trust, though there is no evidence to support Nigeria's religious and tribal diversity.

The following section examines the relationship between national and organisational culture, and mentoring and talent management. The study above shows that national and corporate culture influences talent management and, consequently, the mentoring process.

3.6. The Notion of "Value Congruence"

Organisations exist within (and reflect) cultural beliefs and values like individuals. Luria et al. (2015) suggest that among the many definitions of organisational culture, the common elements are that corporate culture is a learning outcome of experiences within a definable group, and that tangible and intangible behaviours represent the culture in an organisation. This view is also supported by Osayawe et al. (2011).

The concept of congruence of value directly addresses the consideration of both organisational and national culture. The congruency between values (Glazer and Beehr, 2002) suggests that performance is enhanced when organisational values "fit" the country's cultural context. This is reflected in this study, as it demonstrates the foundations of corporate and national culture for specific characteristics of new product success. The two frameworks take into account, among other factors, insecurity, flexibility and stability; rules creation and violation; and measurement of performance. Where such essential values correspond between organisational and national culture, managing new product concepts becomes more effective and leads to success. Concisely, value congruence predicts when firms can expect new product performance to be successful.

Newman and Nollen (1996) report that (work unit) financial performance in organisations tends to be higher when management practices are congruent with the national culture. Van Oudenhoven (2013) and Scheider and De Meyer (1991) observe a similar trend. They found that the interpretation and responses to environmental insecurity were influenced by national culture. Schneider (2006) also argues that national culture may (and should) affect the strategy development process because it influences the nature of an organisation's relationship with its environment and the relationships between people within it. In the same vein, Brewster (1995) maintains that, due to differences in the institutional (significantly increased legal/regulatory) pressures in Europe, what worked in the United States could not function in Europe.

In their work involving students from ten different countries, Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2001) report a strong correlation that supports the hypothesis that national culture does reflect organisational culture. According to that study, national and corporate collective programming takes place. National cultures differentiate between members of one nation and others, while organisational cultures distinguish between employees. The ways people conduct themselves in school, with family, at work and other aspects of life reflect these findings. Moreover, national laws and policies concerning education, family life and business are reinforced.

As described in the preceding paragraph, the positive relationship between national and organisational culture positively correlates with high-performance work systems (HPWS).

HPWS are a core component of organisational culture. This is shown by Tanja et al. (2014) in their discovery that high-performance work systems are interdependent with national culture. Their findings show the importance of the HPWS: business performance relationships in the national culture and managerial discretion. Based on their work and several other authors, they conclude that the strategic approaches for HPWS may not necessarily operate the same everywhere. They claim this is a core theoretical idea in human resources, strategy,and international management literature.

The relationship between national and organisational culture also changes to product performance as a component of corporate culture. Therefore, the better an organisation's cultural orientation is suited to national cultural orientation, the greater the performance of a new product (Büschgens et al., 2013; Taras et al., 2011). In their postulation, this is due to the congruency model of value, which suggests a positive result in the event of congruencies, such as increased employee satisfaction, lower conflicts, more efficient processes, more significant commitment, and better outcomes (Knoppen et al., 2006). These positive results are expected because a standard set of values reduces the uncertainty in employees' thinking, feelings and work. Information is similarly processed and tasks are performed to produce superior outcomes (Schein, 2004). Furthermore, congruency in value facilitates organisational change because organisations operate similarly (Glazer and Beehr, 2002).

In a study to demonstrate concepts, measure and examine different concepts of organisational culture and performance, Shahzad et al. (2012) found that corporate culture profoundly impacts the various processes of organisations, employees and their performance. Research has shown that employees who are committed to—and have the same standards and values as—their companies can increase performance and contribute to the organisation's overall objectives. They recommend that managers and leaders develop the company's strong culture to improve employee performance. This view is also supported by Nebojsa (2014).

In a study of organisational performance in the Nigerian banking industry, Akhigbemidu et al. (2022) report that organisational culture significantly influences the relationship between corporate governance and organisational performance, thus strengthening the relationship between them. The report concludes that corporations with dominant cultures that adopt

and implement sound policies formulated at the board and cultures that uphold good ethical practices will ultimately be differentiated from a host of others in the designated industrial arena.

There is strong evidence that national culture reflects organisational culture, and results from this research and supporting literature on mentoring in an African context may validate mentoring as a practice in Nigeria, albeit unstructured. This supports the need for structured mentoring programmes in African organisations. Indeed, more study needs to be carried out in this regard from an African context, but the results from the initial literature reviews have further fuelled an interest in the subject of this research.

3.7. Emic and Etic Approaches to Culture

In his seminal work, Kenneth Pike (1954) argues for two complementary research perspectives (emic and etic) that come into play when researching human behaviour, society and culture. The etic researcher, he argues, explores human behaviour from an objective outsider position. Accordingly, the researcher aims to identify and examine elements of human behaviour that transcend a single cultural setting and can, hitherto, be seen to relate to the human condition in general. Alternatively, these are limited to a single culture or cultural setting. By contrast, the emic researcher is concerned with human behaviour within a culture or cultural setting. When taking an emic perspective, the aim is to communicate the particulars of culture, social context or group.

The etic view is cross-cultural in that its units are derived by comparing many systems and abstracting from their units, synthesised into a single scheme and then analytically applied as a single system. The emic view is mono-cultural, with its units derived from the internal functional relations of only one individual or culture at a time. “[…The] etic viewpoint studies behaviour from outside a particular system [and the] emic viewpoint results from studying behaviour from inside the system” (Pike 1962, 1967). In this respect, Pike argues that emic and etic research “lenses” complement each other and can assist researchers in making sense of a deeper cultural story. However, he warns that too much focus on the etic (the universal)—especially when researchers enter distinctly different cultural settings from their own—can distort the story or even overlook it completely (Marchenko, 2018).

Orey and Rosa (2014) describe emic and etic as means of scoping the size of the research story being told, with emic referring to the local and etic referring to the global. They argued that the etic viewpoint can only be sourced through objective research methods and methodologies, and it is replicable because it is assumed that the story will be found everywhere. Punnett et al. (2014) also connect emic to the local and etic to the global perspective. In line with this, they define emic and etic as approaches to research, whereby emic is purely qualitative in design and application while etic is quantitative.

Currently, there is a tendency to see the emic and the etic as viewpoints in tension rather than in terms of the complementary nature that Pike originally envisioned. Within this tension, researchers have largely discarded the idea that the etic is a story that can be read across all levels; instead, it is often framed as a settler-colonial story that is imposed upon the emic or particular story being researched (for example, Gallagher, 2012; Persson, 2012). Gallagher (2012) posits that researchers need to acknowledge that the etic standpoint of research is an imposed story derived from the dominance of Anglo-American research and the imposition of the more traditional IMRaD (introduction, methods, results and discussion) framework for research design and presentation. In support of this, Persson (2012) argues that, by nature, academia imposes an etic viewpoint onto the world being researched and the world of students entering the study. Students are taught that culture and society are "correctly" researched through established processes and forms of analysis.

It is this tension between the centre and the margin that students of ethnographic research enter when their own ethnic, gendered or classed identities collide with those of academia. At these times, many emerging researchers find themselves grappling with notions of emic (insiderness) and etic (outsiderness) while negotiating where they are (as insiders or outsiders) in the life worlds of their research subjects (Burtăverde, 2018; Engler and Whitesides, 2022).

In this research, I had to deal with emic and etic approaches in connection to the impact of culture on the practice of mentoring in sub-Saharan Africa. In this regard, the emic approach is the one "from inside", where all explanations are embedded into the culture and traditions of the group; the etic approach is the one "from outside", which focuses on external, measurable characteristics of any phenomenon (Pike, 1967; Beals et al., 2020). Taking into

account this knowledge of the emic and etic approaches to mentoring, it is safe to assume that the theory and practices of formal mentoring in Africa, dominated by Anglo-Saxon reports, correspond to the "etic" approach to the phenomenon, characterised by the lack of historical background. However, the actual practice of mentoring already rooted in the African culture—despite being informal—corresponds to the "emic" approach to this phenomenon, focusing on historical and cultural background. Therefore, this tension is worth giving attention to if formal mentoring in SSA is to succeed.

3.8. The Impact of Etic (Outsider) Culture on Mentoring in SSA

Some previous studies in SSA have identified challenges to mentoring (Lescano et al., 2019; Ssemata et al., 2017; Sawatsky et al., 2016). However, they still need to address the more significant cultural implications of mentoring. To better understand the aspects of culture that affect the mentoring relationship, we now explore the role that culture (in both the academic setting and the broader context) plays in the development and maintenance of mentoring relationships against the background of the tension caused by the imposition of etic approach to mentoring practice.

Several institutional challenges to mentoring in SSA have been identified, including the need for more institutional standardisation and oversight of mentoring, insufficient clarity of the roles of mentors and mentees, and the lack of financial, logistical and training support for faculty mentors (Clutterbuck, 2007). Research indicates that to be successful, any person involved in a mentoring relationship must seek to be culturally aware and sensitive (Blake-Beard, 2011).

If mentoring programmes are to succeed, it is not sufficient for organisations to create them. Instead, they must develop mentoring cultures that welcome and support all who are involved in them. Within such cultures, there must be clearly understood agreement among all the stakeholders about the purposes and functions of their mentoring relationships (Kent et al., 2013). Sambunjak (2015) asserts that cultural factors permeate every level of the mentoring relationship. For example, at the intrapersonal level, the cultural backgrounds of mentors and mentees appear to be intrinsic contributors to mentoring style. At the societal level, culture permeates societal factors that are integral components of mentoring

relationships and, as a result, mentoring may flourish slower than one might hope (Andrea et al., 2013).

Geber (2015) considers Western models of formal mentoring programmes (etic) and how these intersect with underlying notions of African mentoring (emic). He opines that only some African writers are building theory around mentoring or offering definitions that reflect the unique context in Africa. Furthermore, he argues that there is a need to focus more clearly on cross-cultural knowledge and African values, such as designing mentoring schemes for implementation in Africa.

In a Zimbabwean study, Manwa and Manwa (2007) question the applicability of the Western concept of mentoring to African organisations, and maintain that the generalisability of these findings to an African organisational culture has yet to be established. They conclude that mentoring that ignores traditional African values is not optimal in African organisations. To elucidate, in Africa the individualism of the West is seen negatively as unrestrained competitiveness in which individual interest rules supreme and society or others are regarded as a means to personal ends. This starkly contrasts the African preference for cooperation and group work (Louw, 2019). Although competitiveness is increasing in academic and business contexts in Africa, traditional collaborative values endures.

Research and practice findings indicate that mentoring programmes must be designed with the recipients in mind. If the mentees are Africans, attention must be given to African cultural values and traditions. These should be discussed and integrated into the mentoring programme and process. Lescano et al. (2019) report that the oppressive histories in many countries have contributed to research and education structures with authoritarian approaches, which are additional obstacles to effective mentoring (Ssemata et al., 2017). Culture distils profoundly rooted respect for hierarchy and seniority, which is echoed in medicine, academics, research and even the workplace, as well as a strict formality in communication and dialogue, to the point where challenging the opinions of a senior scientist or faculty can often be considered offensive or inappropriate (Wilson et al., 2012). The formal addressing of peers and superiors by their titles and ranks instead of first names continues to be considered a sign of respect in Africa. This can represent a barrier to developing a robust

mentor-mentee relationship, preventing the trust that can enable questioning or disputing of the mentor's position or views (Detsky and Baerlocher, 2007).

In addition, the absence of such a close link may prohibit the creation of a personal bond that can frequently make mentorship relationships last beyond specific training periods (Blickle et al., 2010). Verticality and formality are present in varying degrees across countries in the African continent, which promote paternalism and limit the ability of "mentoring up," a process through which mentees are empowered to direct the mentoring relationship, and thus, places equal or greater emphasis on the mentee's contribution to the mentoring relationship (Lee et al., 2015). The scarcity of resources and opportunities adds to this, as mentors can erroneously perceive the mentee's success as increased competition and failure on their part (Ssemata et al., 2017). Furthermore, remnants of colonial master-servant beliefs may prevent mentors from understanding that mentorship implies a shared power between the mentor and mentee instead of the mentor alone having all the power.

Interestingly, some authors (such as Girotti, 2016) opine that superimposing the Anglo-Saxon cultural element (etic) on the established model of mentoring (emic) is helpful to the extent that it allows us to understand how mentoring occurs in many settings that are often diverse and multicultural, positing that the etic-emic approaches are complementary instead of opposing. This would involve using etic-derived dimensions (personality dimensions mainly developed in a Western cultural context) and emic-derived dimensions (identified in a specific cultural context). In support, Cheung et al. (2011) argue that the etic-emic (an integrated) approach is superior to the other two approaches individually.

Conclusively, different types and styles of mentoring configurations can be beneficial and may thrive in various contexts if there is an awareness of the cultural dynamics that are present and the purposes for mentoring are explicit. This section provides insight into culture and mentorship in SSA, adding an understanding of mentoring outside North America and Europe. The author has highlighted culture's strengths and challenges as they influence the delivery of mentoring relationships.

Chapter 4: THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

In this section, I share details of how my philosophical stance, approach to early research considerations and the research methods I have chosen helped shape and inform my overall approach.

4.1. Introduction

In the earlier chapters, I provide a full background to my research, giving insight into my pre-understanding as a basis for inspection. I started by discussing my early research considerations of mentoring. I ended up with a discussion on the impact of social culture on organisational culture and mentoring, and how these have influenced my mentoring experience and informed my initial literature review. In those chapters, I analysed my own experiences and how those have led me to the "hunch" that structured mentoring can be used to manage talents. I also referred to my observation of the social culture and the practice of mentoring informally in the day-to-day lives of the African people. An overall objective was ultimately influenced by juxtaposing these considerations and the confidence to proceed from my first literature review.

4.2. The Research Project

This study aims to explore the concept of mentoring at a strategic level and determine whether it can be used as a tool for managing talents at all stages of the learning and development process. As a result of my earlier study of available literature, I am now more definite about formal mentoring as a focus area for this study.

Since this is an exploratory study of the experiences of mentoring the participants, a qualitative approach has been considered most appropriate. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not test a particular hypothesis or theory; rather, it examines what participants experience in situations and understands it "as is" (Willig, 2000, p. 556). The aim was not to "evaluate/disprove" the "hypothesis" but to inquire about the possibility. However, an original conjecture has guided this research from positive psychological literature (namely, mentoring may be undertaken because a sense of significance is generated).

I am concerned with developing professional understanding and contributing to knowledge and management praxis in this field by combining information in the context and the data collection as well as the interpretative approach I have adopted. Particularly unique to this study is the sub-Saharan African context, forming a solid basis for the research. At the end of it all, I anticipate the result of my findings being used to support and strengthen the resolve of the management team of organisations desiring to set up and implement a structured mentoring programme anywhere across the African continent.

An important consideration for me throughout this study is my curiosity about whether mentorship programmes can be developed and implemented in a manner that is systematically organised to manage talents with the context in clear view. Moreover, new concerns—such as the best way to go about it and the impact the application might have—emerge if that is achievable. As a result, I find the opportunity to help stir up this interest and inform this debate very exciting. I consider this an essential and valuable work because literature inquiry revealed a shortage of this in an African context.

This journey has led me down a path that has allowed me to study people in a business context in qualitative research. My two previous works in this area were quantitative. I had to *"*pretend*"* that I was separate from the work, even though I do not consider it possible (as my epistemological preference will reveal later). Adopting a hermeneutic approach for this present study allows me to immerse myself in the research and "enjoy" being a part of its journey.

One of the first considerations was identifying the most appropriate methodology for my study, which was more complex than I initially expected. There are differing opinions on how the methodology should be chosen, with questions about how well it fits the study's underlying ontology and epistemology. Gill and Johnson (1997) posit that research methodology is always a compromise among choices, and the availability of resources often determines options. However, Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) suggest that there is a possibility of flexibility and a route between the two conventional and safe positions that this study has already defined in preceding sections.

Gill and Johnson define methodology as “the study of methods or processes used to gain knowledge” in a discipline (Gill and Johnson, 1997, p. 177). As for the approach, Gummesson (2000) states that it logically arises at the beginning of a research project, deductive where theory or concept exists, and inductive where the author has a pre-understanding from personal and (or) professional experience and observations. When the approach is chosen, he suggests this is logical.

I indicated a qualitative research approach primarily because I have no pre-defined hypothesis or theory I want to test and do not intend to seek causal links in my materials. In examining how mentoring can be used as a strategic tool to manage talent, I aimed to develop an understanding by accurately analysing the qualitative material with my experience and knowledge. I was aware that a quantitative research method would not be best suited as a research method since I did not anticipate finding a positive truth about the topic. My interest in the study was better to understand my participants’ everyday life concepts. I also knew that I would not use questionnaires as a research method because my subjectivity and that of the interviewees are crucial for evaluating the data and the conclusions.

This chosen approach has many advantages. Interviewees did more than provide information. Instead, they shaped the research direction directly (by confirming or rejecting my insights and suggesting new ones) and indirectly (by focusing their answers on aspects of the areas under discussion), and thus emphasised their interpretation of mentoring and what aspects were essential for them.

4.3. Philosophical Considerations, Research Methodologies, Practical Issues and Methods

The purpose of this section of my study is to articulate, as far as I am concerned, the nature of “truth” in management and organisational research with a reflection on the various ontological and epistemological gazes. Following that, I will explore the issues of my research design—critically discussing and evaluating the research methodology, and creating the research methods I have adopted for my doctoral-level research.

Scientists are generally believed to be objective observers of the world because of their education and training; they can gather empirical evidence on the social and natural worlds with their expertise and rigorous deployment of accepted procedures and protocols. The form

and contents that either world understands depend on the methodology scientists use. In other words, the data gathered, instead of observational processes, dictated the findings and theories of science. For many years, this was the dominant position in the field (Wengraf, 2004; Richie et al., 2014).

Interestingly, many social scientists have adopted that same philosophy, methodology and methods in conducting research in management and organisational fields. Was this the result of a well-thought-out stance towards research, an attempt to copy the natural sciences or social empiricism? In the social sciences, a desire to replicate the methods of biological studies leads to an observation that all constructs used to explain the world should be directly and reasonably strictly linked to what can be observed (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Therefore, the studied human beings in the social sciences are viewed similarly to animals or inanimate objects in natural science studies.

Studies like these revealed that managers must apply appropriate methods for assessing the correct solutions to organisational problems to face an objective reality. These methods reduce administration to "a bag of tools, technologies, analytical techniques and applied instruments" (Johnson and Duberley, 2000).

However, it is interesting that a view of science as free of value is based on a specific epistemological tradition, which becomes very controversial when subjected to critical examination. Like several other authors, Mulkay (1979) took the stand that knowledge and science are the arbitrary results of social processes from which no one is exempt—that there are no objective ways of discriminating between the warranted and the unjustifiably justifiable. All we have are culturally diverse, varying ways of knowing the world.

Here, we point out that the processes by which we create what we consider justified knowledge of the world influence our epistemological commitments. Deep assumptions about how we "know" affect what we experience as true or false, what we mean by true or wrong, and whether we believe true or false are viable buildings (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Although we may not be aware of it immediately, everybody has a view of what is demarcated by unjustified belief. Our claims to be rational, irrational or true against false are tacitly based on these implicit differentiations. Those ways of thinking are so embedded in

our speech and culture that they appear to be common sense and, therefore, natural and irresistible if we think about them.

Research in the social sciences can adopt either a positivist or an interpretive approach. The positivist approach derives from the natural sciences. It takes place in a paradigm that reality is objectively determinable and, therefore, firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect in social sciences. This approach adopts quantitative methodologies. The interpretive approach evolved as researchers recognised that reality is different for different people, and that reality derives meaning through human experiences and perceptions. Qualitative methodologies are used in the interpretive approach (Abbot et al., 2010).

4.4. Ontology and Epistemology

Philosophical assumptions on ontology and epistemology support every scientific endeavour. We often need to consider how our tacit responses to philosophical issues affect how we understand the world. Thus, I will discuss my ontological and epistemological position in a general section.

Ontology deals with the nature and existence of phenomena. It raises questions about whether a phenomenon we are interested in exists regardless of our knowledge and perception. Epistemology is the study of criteria we use, which shows and determines what constitutes (and is not) a justified world claim or which could constitute justified knowledge (Willig, 2019; Gopinath, 2015). The importance of these philosophical questions is that the way we believe the world to be (ontology) influences what we think we know (epistemology) about it and how we believe that we can investigate (methodology and research techniques) (Fleetwood, 2005).

We are all epistemologists, or at least routinely take certain epistemological conventions as evident in our everyday lives, according to Johnson and Duberley (2000). It is rare for us to express, discuss and question them consciously. Epistemology is, in other words, a study of the criteria by which we can know what constitutes—and what is not—scientific knowledge or knowledge justified (Gopinath, 2015).

Positivist or realist assumptions imply that, independent of our perceptive or cognitive structures, phenomena such as “organisations” exist “out there” independent of our

attempts to know them. The realists think it is true of itself and wait for us to discover this truth (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). On the contrary, subjectivist assumptions believe that what we consider a social reality is the creation of our consciousness and our cognition of what is usually supposed to be “out there”. That is, we create it with our knowledge of the social world. In these creative processes, we tend to be usually unaware of our role. These ontological differences are the source of significant organisational theory disputes, the same as epistemological positions.

Positivists believe that the observer can stand back and observe what they understand to be an external reality objectively or neutrally. In doing so, positivists think they can observe without influencing what they see if the correct methodological procedures are followed (Johnson and Duberley, 2000).

Conclusively, ontology is the “reality” researchers investigate, epistemology is the relationship between that reality and the researcher, and methodology is the technique used by the researcher to investigate that reality (Healy and Perry, 2000).

4.5. My Research Paradigm—Ontological and Epistemological Position

Research philosophy entails a system of scientific beliefs that shape the research design and guide researchers in the approach and the critical decisions they must make in executing the research (Cole, 2007; Vilakati, 2012). Scientific beliefs constitute the scientific frame of reference known as a research paradigm. According to (Lin et al., 2016), a research paradigm consists of four interwoven parts: ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology.

I had to decide on the methods and the overall methodology to adopt for the study, bearing in mind that the methods usually arise from the methodology, which in turn takes root in the research paradigm—ontological and epistemological gaze. Researchers must develop a reflexive awareness of these to conduct any study (Willig, 2019) effectively.

I will now discuss my research paradigm and how it affected my approach to this study. Since two concepts—ontology and epistemology—fundamentally influence how one plans and executes a qualitative study (Johnson and Duberley, 2000), I first discuss my stance on them.

Progressing with my findings, I am afraid I have to disagree with the positivist view that reality is entirely or almost objective (Crotty, 1998); neither do I sustain the post-modernistic view that nothing exists independently and is separate from knowing it. Fortunately, existing between the extremes of the objectivist and subjectivist ontological perspectives is a continuum of positions, including critical theory and critical realism, that can be considered middling philosophies. Critical realism takes a more positivist epistemology, whereas critical theory takes a more subjective epistemological position. Conversely, despite pointing to different positions along the subjective epistemological scale, both critical theorists and critical realists recognise the crucial role of the researcher and those being researched in the research process (Cole, 2007).

Critical theorists, unlike positivists, do not believe it is possible to be a "passive receiver of sensory data no matter what methodology we use…" (McCaffrey et al., 2012, p. 228). The possibility of engaging neutrally with the objective world is one that critical theorists reject entirely. Jurgen Habermas, a key writer on critical theory, accepts an independent reality in the world, which exists independently of an individual's appreciation of it and restricts human endeavours. However, like Kant, he also rejects positivism, arguing that it ignores individuals' experiences and the part this plays in filtering and colouring sense data to constitute knowledge (Habermas, 1974; Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Hence, critical theory is based on a subjective realisation of objective reality.

While aspects of my study reflect moments of critical theory, it is executed mainly based on critical realism. According to Hesse-Biber (2016), critical realism can provide a good interchange between an objectivist-positivist ontology and a subjectivist-constructivist ontology. It considers that even though knowledge or truth is not something absolute, it is also more than the output of discourse. The critical realist stance asserts the existence of an independent reality but does not commit to a pure, unadulterated knowledge of that reality. As is the case with critical theory, critical realism accommodates the possibility of a modifiable and co-constructed view of reality. It believes that social reality is a subjective phenomenon that can also be socially constructed (Vilakati, 2012).

To sum it all up, I have reached a position where critical realism is my primary ontological framework for this research, though tainted with some elements of critical theory. These

positions sit well with my beliefs and describe my philosophical position. With my ontological and epistemological perspective in mind, I now reflect upon the next stage of my journey—the research methodology.

4.6. The Research Methodology

Colley (2003) argues that mentoring is a topic which is not conceptualised and has no clear theory base; therefore, researching the mentoring process should not use quantitative methods—she viewed responsible research as an engaged social science that grounds itself in the experiences of the field to do justice to the meanings they make in practice.

I chose hermeneutics as my preferred methodology for this research study. Looking back now, this was a much easier decision for me to make than arriving at a position with my research paradigm. Before settling for hermeneutics, I had considered grounded theory a possible option, which I eventually rejected after some contemplation.

Grounded theory is split between its qualitative humanistic interest and its insistence on coding. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) observed that coding and theoretical sampling are necessary and central to a grounded theory approach. This makes it a challenging approach to study individuals and relationships in organisations, as my intention was. As a result, I had to reject grounded theory for this research. As stated earlier, my knowledge, views and experience have been my starting point and a crucial part of my study. My early considerations and hunches have been drawn from my mentoring experience, as discussed in Chapter 1, rather than from the initial exploration and interpretation of the research material. This favours the hermeneutic methodology, which recognises the involvement and influence of the author as an integral part of the entire research process. The author also gets transformed in the process.

To the mix of critical realism and hermeneutics, I must now add “reflexivity”. Neither critical realism nor hermeneutics is about looking for and finding absolute truths; both require interpretation and subjective understanding of data that is already subjective. This double subjectivity can give rise to a cyclical re-interpretation of material, which may lead to some problems of never-ending deconstruction in subjectivity (Gibbs, 2018). Consequently, I adopt

reflexivity to moderate that process and find valuable outcomes. I will discuss reflexivity more fully in the section where I set benchmarks for the validity of the research.

I now turn my attention to my choice of research methodology.

4.6.1. Methodology: Hermeneutics

In the following section, I share my thoughts on the hermeneutic frameworks, reflecting on their features and benefits and why this is my chosen research methodology.

This is a reflexive study (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000) and it would be misleading to suggest that I had a clear view of how I intended to carry out the study from the outset. I have had to decide on the method and methodology I will use. Starting from my ontological and epistemological considerations and knowing myself better from that perspective has helped shape my chosen methodology and research methods.

A positivist view tends to be inappropriate when approaching social science phenomena like mentoring and talent management involving humans and their real-life experiences. This treats respondents as independent, non-reflective objects while ignoring their ability to reflect on problem situations and act on them interdependently (Healy and Perry, 2000). Positivists separate themselves from the world they study. At the same time, researchers within the realism paradigm acknowledge that they have to participate in real-world life to some extent to understand better and express its emergent properties and features. This type of research typically applies social theory to help develop an in-depth interpretation of phenomena's features and characteristics. In this way, the researcher can share the experiences of those being observed. As a result, a researcher can better understand the subjects' behaviour, culture and beliefs, tacit routines, etc., in the social situation. Consequently, the formal and informal social "structure" characteristics can be understood to explain discovered phenomena (Kawalek and Jayaratna, 2003).

There is the danger of pretending that this research followed a neat course from beginning to end so that it can be conveniently labelled in simple academic terms. It did not. The reader may get the impression that I immediately settled into a clear epistemological and methodological pattern that was the most appropriate for this research. I did not.

After several hours of lectures, seminars, learning group discussions and years of reading, it has become apparent that despite many authors' attempts to clarify matters by boxing up ideas and giving the boxes labels, there is no absolute certainty about terms because of inevitable subject bias (Johnson and Duberley, 2000, p. 148). Despite the common currency of the terms employed, there is no agreed-by-all narrative on epistemology and methodology, and no single source of definitions of alternative approaches. However, there is enough agreed upon to assume a sufficiently objective ontology to enable us to progress.

Therefore, I will use others' terms and definitions as accurately as possible in what follows, knowing that the readers' understanding may differ from mine. Some things are relatively straightforward (for example, this research was conducted from a hermeneutic approach and used interview methods). I do not request that the reader jettison his/her preconceptions, but to recognise his/hers and consider mine.

It is essential to point out that data collected in this manner can be considered highly coloured by the social constructs of the individuals concerned and by the interviewer's subjectivity. Therefore, conclusions from this approach must be treated as one of many possible views. However, they carry the authority of the weight of the interviewers and researchers. If supported across the research data, conclusions can be regarded as reliable enough to warrant severe considerations as influencers of change in the workplace.

The overall approach to this research is hermeneutics, "…with its focus on truth as an act of discourse..." Alversson and Skoldberg (2000, p. 52). There is a general agreement that, at its core, hermeneutics is about interacting with text so that lost meaning can be recovered. Through that, present understanding and accepted knowledge can be challenged. McAuley (1985) strikes a pragmatic balance, saying, "…what we do is get data from [interviewees] …and then get them to explore for themselves the implications of what they are saying…" Importantly, there is nothing here about reaching the absolute truth. Moreover, there is a foundation here of both researcher and interviewee being on the same journey together, but from subjectively different starting points and perhaps with different motivations (Oliva, 2011).

I have chosen to conduct my research through qualitative investigation and by interpreting the research information using a hermeneutic framework. Like themes, methodologies cannot be accurate or false, only more or less applicable (Silverman, 1998). They must, however, be credible if they are to fundamentally overcome any concerns surrounding the validity of the research (Easterly-Smith et al., 1997). The hermeneutic approach I have chosen has this credibility. It will facilitate a greater understanding and, as such, may be of more excellent value in a practical sense going forward.

Hermeneutics is the study of the interpretation of texts, which includes interviews. From a hermeneutical viewpoint, the interpretation of meaning is the central theme, with a specification of the kinds of meanings sought and the attention to the questions posed to a text (Regan, 2012). The concepts of conversation and text are pivotal in the hermeneutical tradition, and there is an emphasis on the interpreter's foreknowledge of a text's subject matter. Hermeneutical interpretation aims to obtain a valid and shared understanding of the meaning of a piece of text (Kvale, 1983; Brockmeier and Meretoja, 2014).

"Hermeneutics" comes from the Greek verb *hermeneuein,* which means "to interpret" or "to translate". Today, it refers to the science, theory and practice of human interpretation. Hermeneutics is an umbrella movement with many different themes that have evolved into a surprising array of theories, most dramatically so since the late nineteenth century. Fortunately, there is a strong tradition of shared interest in concepts and motifs such as language, creativity, experience, authority, history, tradition, freedom, application, knowledge, understanding and science (Porter and Robinson, 2011).

Hermeneutics has a long and complex history, with many surprising twists and turns. As a discipline, it is relatively modern, yet the idea of hermeneutics may be traced back to the ancient Greeks. In its most basic sense, hermeneutics refers to the many ways we may theorise about the nature of human interpretation, whether that means understanding books, works of art, architecture, verbal communication, or even nonverbal bodily gestures (How, 2011). From hermeneutics, qualitative researchers can learn to analyse their interviews as texts, look beyond the here and now in the interview situation, and pay attention to the contextual interpretive horizon provided by history and tradition.

I come to the fore in hermeneutic research with the recognition that no methodology can achieve an unmediated objective representation of the facts. Moreover, according to Kilduff and Mehra (quoted in Johnson and Duberley, 2012), researchers should seek to demystify the technology of mediation by explicitly detailing their involvement instead of trying to erase all traces of themselves from their work. Researchers should also be humble about their findings, recognising their role in constructing those findings.

I find this somewhat liberating, as I do not have to try to play God, "writing as a disembodied omniscient narrator claiming universal, atemporal general knowledge"; I want to eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as a situated speaker, subjectively engaged in knowing/talking about the world as I perceive it (Richardson, quoted in Ritchie et al., 2014).

Ödman (1979) states that the hermeneutic tradition in natural science focuses on the world, that is, the definition of meaning and interpretation. According to Ödman, this understanding may be characterised as "inter-subjective" because it is defined by a "dialogue" (p. 49) (1) which is a more abstract interpretation made by a researcher, (2) the interpretation of the story (which includes a higher degree of abstraction in the process of interpretation), (3) the scientific interpretation of the story (scientific interpretation), and (4) the interpretation of storytelling in the hermeneutic tradition. Ödman claimed that the last one is more formal than the three other types of interpretation. Scientific interpretations (or theories) usually involve a more comprehensive range of incidents (Age, 2011).

Giddens (1976) recognises that scientific theories are more formal than other interpretations but points out that definitive categories of interpretation are more challenging to identify in the social sciences than in the natural sciences. For example, Giddens describes double hermeneutics, which occurs when sociologists create second-order concepts through so-called meaning frames that become first-order concepts. In practical terms, this could mean that the social actors are transferred to, and used to focus on, their everyday activities to develop a concept of the second order invented by social scientists, such as "social class".

The focus was on what might well be called the "dialogical nature of understanding", Giddens (1976) and Ödman (1979). The understanding process should involve dialogue between the

author and the research subject. This means that social science is an interactive process of a dialogical nature between the scientists and the actors involved which can, in practice, lead to the development of concepts inherent in changing the views and activities of the actors.

Other hermeneutic philosophers have focused on the context of research and the author. Gadamer (1975) claims, for example, that a phenomenon's understanding requires researchers to recognise its disadvantages and noted that "to be in a tradition does not limit freedom of knowledge but makes it possible" (p. 316). Therefore, "a person believes they unwittingly dominate him" (p. 315). Gadamer suggests that scientists must examine the legitimacy of [their] "previous meanings" (p. 308) and adapt them to the phenomena under consideration to achieve "truth" (p. 309).

However, hermeneutics has a more methodological meaning in modern contexts—"a universal doctrine for sign interpretation". During this Renaissance, this concept of hermeneutics was given a stimulus in the quest for theological objectivity. However, hermeneutics was seen as a universal "dialogical" condition by Schleiermacher and other philosophers of the Romantic Movement (McAuley, 2004; McCaffrey et al., 2012).

My study is mainly based on the hermeneutical research methodology I have employed. It explicitly acknowledges my role in this process.

4.7. The Design of My Research

4.7.1. My Research Area

The topic for my research is "Mentoring as a Strategic Tool for Managing Talents." This being action-learning research, the study revolves around S. Bank Plc as a case study. The more significant objective, however, is for the study to be found helpful by any corporate organisation desirous of setting up a structured mentoring scheme, especially in an African context (and mainly) in the financial services sector.

The fact that I am still active in the financial services industry justifies my choice of the hermeneutic methodology. I cannot, and do not, claim to be separate from the subject and the process of gathering data for this research report. The research is conducted in a traditional hermeneutic style from a critical perspective, and the evidence derives mainly

from interviews with ex-staff members of S. Bank Plc, the bank being my case study for this work. The decision to focus on ex-staff members is driven mainly by the fact that my original motivation for this research revolves around talent retention as a core theme, and speaking with ex-staff instead of current staff members may reveal how they could have been retained otherwise, especially if they had the benefit of a mentor in a structured system.

In all research, the subject matter should determine the method used. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), too few researchers stop and ask whether interviews represent the best research method before embarking on their projects.

4.7.2. My Research Method—Interviews and Observations

Life history primarily compiled through interviews, observations and company documentation in a semi-structured manner would be utilised as research methods to allow us reflect on and review the research material.

Interviews are the best way to collect information about individuals' mentoring experiences (Gibb, 1999). The approach explicitly acknowledges the author's pre-understanding and involvement. At the core of this work is the iterative approach of engaging, reflecting, examining, exploring, interpreting and questioning literature.

There are several advantages to the interviews. The interviewees did more than contribute data; they shaped the direction of the research either directly (by confirming or rejecting my findings or proposing new ones) or indirectly (by focusing their answers on aspects of the areas under discussion) to emphasise their understanding of mentoring and to reveal which aspects were necessary for them.

The data collected in this way can be considered very much coloured by the social structures of the people involved and by the subjectivity of the interviewer. Therefore, conclusions from this approach should be treated as one of many possible viewpoints. However, the viewpoint of interviewees and researchers is their responsibility. If the research data is supported, conclusions can be considered sufficiently reliable for serious reasons such as influencing change in working conditions.

We should be for interviews when the subject concerns aspects of human experience or our everyday reality (when a broadly discursive approach is relevant). When the research question can be formulated using the little word “how”, there is a good chance the qualitative interviews are relevant: How is something experienced? How is something done? In contrast, “how much” questions are better answered using quantitative instruments like questionnaires. Interviews are better suited for inductive explorations into our qualitative, conversational worlds (Kvale, 1983; Brinkman and Kvale, 2015).

An interview is an executive and purposeful conversation. In everyday conversations, it goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views and becomes a careful interrogation and listening approach to obtain thoroughly tested information. Qualitative research can provide compelling descriptions of the human world, and qualitative interviews can give us a sound understanding of our conversation. Thus, research interviews generate knowledge (Kvale, 1983).

The qualitative research interview seeks to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the significance of their experiences, and to discover their lives before scientific explanations. Although the term subject has fallen out of a mode to appoint participants in qualitative research, it is still being used by some authors to stress that qualitative interview research approaches people, not as objects, but as people. These subjects act and actively create meaning (Morgan and Smirch, 1980).

Wisdom and knowledge are produced socially in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee in qualitative research interviews. In the qualitative interview, the production of the data goes beyond the mechanical observation of rules. It is based on the ability of the interviewer to ask questions and his opinion. Knowledge of the interview topic is required to ask second questions when responding (Wengraf, 2004).

In the research interview, a discussion between two partners about a mutual-interest theme is an interpersonal situation. Knowledge “inter” the views of the interviewer and the interviewee is created in the interview.

Different interview forms have different aims: journalistic interviews are ways to record and report important social events, therapy interviews aim to improve weakened situations in

people's lives, and research interviews aim to produce knowledge. The interview is based on daily conversations in which the interaction between the interviewee and the person interviewed builds knowledge. The interview involves two people discussing a topic of mutual interest and interchanging views. The interdependence of the interaction of people and the production of knowledge is the main aim of the interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

Using interviews as a research method is no secret. Also, it is a powerful and valuable research method and can be exciting. In the interview interaction, it is helpful for both parties to unfold stories and discover new insights. When I read the transcribed interviews, I can get a new understanding of well-known phenomena, and interviews can bring significant new knowledge to a given field (Morgan and Smirch, 1980).

The open research structure is a source of value and a problem for interview research, according to Wengraf (2004). There are no standard procedures or rules for conducting a research interview. However, standard approaches and techniques exist at the various interview investigation stages.

My observation of the work environment, an essential part of the study to ensure a daily organisational setting, was based on qualitative interview material. This is necessary to avoid conducting my research in isolation from strategic and operational changes in the financial services industry. My observations were carried out throughout the research process in the organisational environment.

Observations are an integral part of my work life and one of the methods I have chosen to collect quality material. In this context, there was some overlap in some of my observations. By taking notes of my observations, I have recorded qualitative information—notes I originally planned to explore and interpret myself.

4.8. Semi-Structured Life-World Interview

A semi-structured life-world interview can be used to obtain descriptions of a person's life and the meaning of the phenomena described. A half-structured interview in the life world seeks to understand subjects from the same perspective of the everyday world lived by people. This type of interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the lived world of interviewees regarding the meaning of the phenomena described. It comes close to everyday

conversations but has a particular purpose as a professional interview with a specific approach and technique. It is semi-structured, not an open daily conversation or a closed questionnaire. The interview guide is conducted according to specific themes and can contain proposed questions.

The life-world is the world you meet in your everyday life and experience, irrespective of the explanations. The interview is usually transcribed, while the combined written text and sound recording are the materials for subsequent analysis.

4.8.1. The Interviewer as a Miner or as a Traveller

Two contrasting metaphors of an interviewer illustrate two different epistemological conceptions of interviewing. Although not logically distinct categories, these two metaphors of interviewing inspired me to reflect on what conceptions of knowledge I bring to the interview inquiry (See Table 5).

I have approached this study not as a miner but as a traveller, and this is important in many ways because it ties up with my choice of research methodology and methods. The approach I have adopted is not of someone looking to uncover some buried truth, uncontaminated. I intend to generate knowledge in the research process by interpreting the narratives of the interview text. This is more of knowledge construction rather than knowledge collection.

I am not searching for knowledge already there waiting to be found; instead, I seek to construct new knowledge and self-understanding methods, all in the same process. At the centre of this experience is that I am not approaching this as an objective observer. My background and experience will affect the interpretation of the text in constructing knowledge. I also expect self-understanding and self-transformation in the process of the research.

4.9. Sampling

Sampling, the strategic selection of a subset of a population for inclusion in a study, is an inevitable part of almost every scientific investigation (Stablein and Anthony, 2017). Four points holistically encompass the challenge of sampling in interview-based qualitative studies:

defining the sample universe, deciding on sample size, selecting a sample strategy and sourcing cases. The more explicitly and systematically all four points are addressed in a study, the greater the validity of that study and the stronger the quality of any corresponding write-up (Robinson, 2014).

I now enumerate how this was done for my study, the choices, and reasons for those decisions.

4.9.1. Sample Universe

In considering the homogeneity/heterogeneity trade-off, I delineated a sample universe coherent with the aims and questions of my research and the resources at my disposal. Robinson (2014) points out two challenges inherent in using a heterogeneous sample. The first is that findings will be relatively removed from real-life settings, and the second is that the sheer diversity of data may lessen the likelihood of meaningful core cross-case themes being found during analysis. In researching mentoring, my interest was in the real-life experiences of the participants. I now enumerate how this was done for my study, the choices and reasons for those decisions.

Employing a non-random (non-probability) sampling design limited my ability to generalise about the larger population of professionals. Still, what I learnt from this sample of participants contributes to a broader understanding of the mentoring practice. This strategy also allowed me to learn about and identify problems through invaluable firsthand experiences that future research might explore systematically among the wider population. From the beginning, I had little desire to generalise the study's results. This informed my decision to go for a homogenous sample with life history homogeneity as a critical determinant of whom to include in the sample universe for my study.

I applied the following criteria to delineate the sample universe for the study: Ex-staff members of S. Bank with a minimum of five years of banking experience and some direct personal experience of mentoring in the workplace, either as the mentor or mentee, or both at different times. To obtain a group of individuals who are representative enough of the scope of my study, I involved individuals with different levels of management seniority, length

of service and role experience. Age or gender were not selective conscious criteria for the study, even though I had a sublime desire to achieve some balance with the eventual sample.

Table 5

The Allegory of the Interview Researcher as a Miner or Traveller

	Miner	**Traveller**
Process	Knowledge collection.	Knowledge construction.
Main Interest	Reports that are meant to reflect facts of the world of the interviewee.	The conversation itself and the accounts it occasions.
Knowledge	Understood to be buried metal waiting to be uncovered by the miner in the inner subjects. Understood as real objective data or as genuine subjective meanings that are already waiting.	Through the interpretation of narratives by travellers, the potential of meaning in the original stories is differentiated and revealed. Not only can the journey lead to new knowledge, but the passenger can also change. The trip will take the travellers to new ways of understanding themselves as well as to discover previously accepted values and customs in their country of origin.
Interviewer	A miner who explores the valuable metal, digs out knowledge from the experience of a subject, unpolluted by major problems.	A traveller travelling to a far country which leads to a story that is told when he returns home, walks around the scenery and talks with the people he or she meets. Walks with local people, asks questions and encourages them to tell their own life stories.
The Interview	A data collection site separated from the subsequent analysis aimed at obtaining valid reports from the respondents.	Interviews and analyses are interconnected phases of knowledge building with an emphasis on the story to be told to the public.

Source: Brinkmann and Kvale (2015)

I limited myself to S. Bank because that organisation is my case study for the research. Talent retention is at the heart of this research and the core of my interest in this work. This informed my choice of focusing my interviews on the former employees of the bank. I wanted to hear

from the interviewees if mentoring or some other intervention could have retained them in the bank instead of leaving as they did.

Four of the eight people I interviewed left the banking industry entirely, while the remaining four were still in the industry but had left S. Bank and moved on to join other banks. In the selection process of interviewees for the study, I did not set out to make a balance between the ex-staff members of S. Bank, who are still in the industry and those who have left the industry entirely; the pattern emerged by itself as the interviews progressed.

4.9.2 Sample Size

The number of participants required depends on the purpose of the study. In an interview with a biographer, this subject is enough if the objective is to understand the world as experienced by a specific individual. If the purpose is to study and describe in detail the attitudes of boys and girls towards grades, new interviews could occur until further interviews give little new knowledge (Saunders et al., 2018). If there are too few subjects, hypotheses of group differences or statistical generalisations are difficult to generalise and impossible. If the number of subjects is too large, the interviews can hardly be analysed in depth.

Interview research with an idiographic aim typically seeks a sample size that is sufficiently small for individual cases to have a locatable voice within the study and for an intensive analysis of each case (Robinson, 2014). This sample size range provides scope for developing cross-case generalities while preventing the researcher from being bogged down in data and permitting individuals within the sample to be given a defined identity rather than being subsumed into an anonymous part of a larger whole (Robinson and Smith, 2010).

Interview studies tend to have between five and fifteen interviews. The number may result from research time and resources and the laws on decreasing returns (therefore, adding more respondents will yield less and less new knowledge). Contrary to the bias against small N-studies, several authors (for example, Brinkman and Kvale, 2015) have argued that many advantages are associated with avoiding large N-studies and opting for a “less can be more” approach with just a few participants.

I used a provisional number of twelve at the research design stage and ended up interviewing eight participants for the study.

4.9.3. Sample Strategy

Mason (2002) recommends a purposive strategy on the rationale that the researcher assumes, based on their prior theoretical understanding of the topic being studied, that specific categories of individuals may have a unique, different or essential perspective on the phenomenon in question, and their presence in the sample should be ensured (Mason, 2002). If the objective is theoretical insight, a strategy of intensity sampling can be used to locate an information-rich case explicitly chosen to be insightful, comprehensive, articulate and honest (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

I adopted a purposive strategy for this study, reaching out, selecting participants who met the criteria for the research and obtaining their voluntary consent for inclusion. This sampling strategy allowed us to seek out and interview a select group of individuals with common characteristics and experiences who may be challenging to locate when employing conventional data collection and sampling techniques.

By adopting a purposive strategy and selecting samples primarily from my network, I put forward an automatic acknowledgement of possible bias upfront. Nevertheless, to the best of my effort, I am confident there was no conflict of interest in the study. However, my background, location and connections may have influenced the recruitment process. I knew the possibility and acted in good faith to avoid conflict. This was made possible because this is an explorative study of how professionals have experienced mentoring in the workplace, and the purpose of the study is not to prove anything or generate any generalisable results. The study was not sponsored, and the participants were not offered any form of incentive; therefore, there was no ulterior motive for anything other than knowledge construction in the research process.

An aspect of voluntary participation is that individuals who consent to be involved in interviews may differ from those who do not in ways unrelated to sampling criteria, increasing the risk of self-selection bias (Costigan and Cox, 2001). The self-selection bias cannot be circumvented in interview-based research, as voluntary participation is central to good ethical practice. Therefore, all a researcher can do is be aware of the possibility of bias and consider its possible impact on findings and generalisability.

4.9.4. Sourcing Cases

The participants recruited were those with the most extensive mentoring experience, whether formal or informal. This decision was based on the assumption that these respondents would have had the most extended range of mentoring experiences and could, thus, give me the broadest and most nuanced picture of the phenomenon.

Following an initial set of emails to solicit participants and a sure indication of interest, I contacted each of the 18 prospective respondents. I explained the context and purpose of the study before asking for their agreement to participate. My role as the researcher was an "informed outsider", someone knowledgeable about the topic but not about each participant's particular setting and experience. In selecting interviewees, I knew the dangers of prejudice when choosing those I know—those I think are interesting, important or easily accessible—and I did my best to avoid them. As stated, this research study gathered information on the characteristics and experiences of mentoring. This had the ultimate objective of recommending how best to design and implement formal mentoring schemes.

Ten out of the eighteen ex-staff members of S.Bank I contacted met the inclusion criteria for the study, and the ten agreed to participate. They were thus engaged further to arrange venues for the physical meetings for the interviews. Two of these ten participants I had pre-selected for the interview process eventually declined: one due to time constraints and other commitments; the other became uncomfortable with the recorded interview, so we discontinued the conversation. All interviews were face-to-face, involving a bodily presence with access to non-linguistic information expressed in gestures and facial expressions. I used basic telephone interview techniques to narrow the study's initial list of possible interviewees. However, the actual engagement for the study was strictly face-to-face.

This decision presented some logistics challenges because some of the selected subjects had relocated out of town, especially since I was dealing with former employees of the bank. This caused some delays, with me having to travel intercity to meet with them for the interviews. That is a price I was willing to pay to enable me to uphold the planned standard and quality of the research. The value of non-verbal cues and gestures in this work can never be overemphasised. Critical details about my participants are presented in Appendix 1.

Below is a summary of the details of the participants:

- All interviewees were ex-staff members of S. Bank, with many years of banking experience, ranging from eight to fifteen years, when the interviews were conducted.

- Four interviewees had resigned from their appointment at S. Bank to take up new roles with a direct competitor, another financial institution. Three left the banking industry to start their businesses after resigning from S. Bank. The eighth person made an appointment in another organisation in a different industry.

- One of the interviewees had experienced formal mentoring designed and implemented by a bank where he had worked before joining S. Bank. He had also experienced informal, unstructured mentoring. Six of them had experienced only informal mentoring and no formal mentoring. The last person never had any structured or unstructured mentoring experience.

- Six of the interviewees have had experiences mentoring other people in an informal setting. None of the eight interviewees has mentored anyone under a formal arrangement.

4.10. Data Collection

I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with eight participants for the study. This interview method captured informants' experiences with mentoring as told through their own words and considerations. It allowed me to pursue a theoretical agenda while allowing other relevant issues to emerge in conversations. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents were informed about the nature of the interview; they were told that the interview would be audio-recorded and anonymised. Consent was sought prior to the interview and was included in the recording. Interviews were conducted for over 45-60 minutes, and the interviewees were recorded by permission.

The questions in the interview guide (see Appendix 2) were designed to address the broad themes of the study while allowing for novel themes to emerge. I accomplished this by structuring the interview guide into broad, open questions about the participants'

experiences that corresponded to the themes identified for the study. To these questions, I added narrower follow-up questions. The broad open questions prompted respondents to freely share their experiences and associated considerations, allowing for the emerging issues and themes I had not anticipated. In contrast, the narrower follow-up questions ensured that I addressed the issues that had shaped my research questions in the first place.

During the interview, participants were encouraged to think broadly about these questions and topics, and elaborate on their thoughts, views and experiences with examples. My understanding of participants' experiences and this process also evolved iteratively during interviews, which allowed me to identify and build upon themes from interview to interview. I continued to ask these questions for each interview. However, as interviews progressed and were repeated, I capitalised on the information I learned from previous interviews to develop talking points and draw comparisons from other participants' experiences.

The exploratory qualitative interview design, composed of open-ended, probative questions, offered an opportunity to understand the expectations, perceptions and interactions during the mentoring process and the mentor-mentee communication and information exchanges. This exploratory process allowed us to identify new issues and ideas gleaned from interviews in an ongoing effort to develop and focus on central questions, themes and participants' shared experiences. The qualitative interview approach suited the exploratory process, allowing me (the researcher) to develop ideas and understand participants' experiences as the study progressed.

The total length of the interviews was transcribed verbatim and subsequently analysed. The interviews were explorative, so the analysis did not employ predefined codes. Instead, I opted for data-controlled analysis, corresponding to the themes that emerged from the interviews.

The texts were analysed through the collection and passage of related messages that allowed me to detect and identify the subjects familiar to many or all of the interviewees. Where these common topics supported the results of the work reported earlier, the hunch was now more or less confirmed and could be concluded. Factors like this were further tested to build substantial evidence against the literature. This was a prolonged, time-consuming process to go through.

The interview transcripts produced a large amount of data, which could generally be assembled against the initial areas of questioning. These broad headings were then broken down into sub-headers suggested by the data, not by the questionnaires alone. As a result, new headings and subheadings were generated unconsciously and only emerged once the interview data had been analysed. These headings were revealed. Data sets from several interviews were required to support subheadings if they were considered substantive issues.

Therefore, a single set of data makes the framework for breaking down the data in the broad sections in the interview key questions and subheadings derived from data analysis into manageable groups. As the analysis continued, the grouping became more precise. After the process was completed, four main areas—the chapters of evidence for the thesis—were naturally associated with the group. The data set was increasingly assigned to clear emerging themes between the subset groups.

To understand the context and get an overall sense of the interview, each interview was transcribed, read and re-read several times before the analysis. First, transcripts (including emotional responses) were analysed line by line for relevant descriptive content. In the next analytical step, metaphors, quotations and linguistic patterns (such as the repetition of words/phrases) were identified as significant experiences. These emerging subjects have been combined to form superior subjects (i.e., constructs which apply to each participant in the study but could be displayed in various ways).

In the interviews, many themes were found in all eight; this might have arisen from the sample's homogeneity or consistent questions throughout the eight interviews. This shared connection between transcripts resulted in many indicative quotes illustrating the emerging topics below.

4.11. Ethical Issues in Interview Research

Ethical problems in interview research arise because of the complexities of "researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena" (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, p. 85). Ethical problems go through the whole interview process. Potential ethical issues from the

beginning of the investigation to the final report should be considered (Johnson, 2017; Saunders et al., 2018).

There were several ethical factors in designing and conducting this study. Here, I discuss some of these issues I considered before and during the interviews, and the strategies undertaken to minimise risks and promote sound ethical conduct. I sought and obtained the ethics approval of the ethics committee of Sheffield Business School (SBS) before commencing the study. This gave some comfort *ab initio* about ethical issues.

4.11.1. Ethical Guidelines

As a framework for preparing an ethical protocol for my qualitative study, I have used the four areas of ethical guidelines highlighted by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), which are used as an ethical reminder of what to look out for in practice when conducting actual interviews.

4.11.2. The Role of the Researcher

The asymmetric power relationship between the interviewer and the respondent, where researchers are generally positioned as the rather powerful part, typically raises ethical issues in interview research (Vogt et al., 2012).

The role of the researcher as a person—with consideration for the researcher's integrity—is critical to the quality of scientific knowledge and the soundness of ethical decisions in qualitative inquiry. Morally responsible research behaviour is more than abstract ethical knowledge and cognitive choices: it involves the moral integrity of the researcher, his or her empathy, sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and actions. In interviews, the importance of the researcher's integrity is magnified because the interviewer is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge (Vogt et al., 2012; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

4.11.3. Informed Consent

Information on the purpose, the main characteristics of the research, and any possible risks and benefits of participating in the project are supposed to be obtained by informed consent of the participants in the research. The consent letter should address the specific challenges

of confidentiality, privacy and the participants' roles. This was described by Voltelen et al. (2018) as "extended informed consent" (p. 518).

Paradigmatically, informed consent is constituted by the provision of written information relevant to participation in the study (duration, methods, potential benefits/side effects/risks), together with the subject's signature, confirming his or her agreement to participate in the study (Kongsholm et al., 2018). For this study, I obtained all appropriate signed participant consent forms with full disclosure about my research goals. In the form, the participants consented to participate voluntarily and for the information to be used for the study. The participants were assured that their names and initials would not be published and due efforts would be made to conceal their identity. No inducement was offered to (or requested by) participants for participation.

All the participants were well informed of the implications of volunteering for the study, which was recorded during the interview session. They were also allowed to opt out of the study whenever they felt uncomfortable. The notion of informed consent is built on the principle of individual autonomy and benefit (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Furthermore, the participants' accounts generally displayed a powerful sense of trust in the research process, which is cited as an overall motivating factor in decisions to consent. Moreover, in this context, recorded verbal agreements and the obligations that implicitly follow from them are regarded as morally strong and binding in addition to the signed document.

4.11.4. Confidentiality

Confidentiality in research refers to agreements with participants about what may be done with the data that arise from their participation (Kaiser, 2012). It often implies that private data identifying the participants will not be disclosed. When giving their consent, many potential interviewees worry about their privacy, which means they worry about how you will report what you have learned from them. Moreover, they will not contain labels that can link the records with their names. The site for the interview is essential for maintaining privacy. The primary consideration in selecting a site is the comfort of the interviewees, where they feel that their privacy is best assured (Iphofen and Tolich, 2018).

Confidentiality was vital for this research, and it was confirmed during interviews when participants discussed personal experiences with mentors and mentees. Care was taken to anonymise participants' responses by enabling them to choose whether or not to share their real names, and advising them not to mention names if possible (Botfield et al., 2019). The organisation's name was disguised, and a pseudonym was used to describe each for reporting purposes. All interview transcripts were de-identified. Interviews were generally undertaken outside the business premises and often outside working hours.

4.11.5. Consequences

A qualitative study must address the consequences of the potential harm to participants and the benefits expected from their participation. The charity ethical principle means at least a potential risk of harm to a participant. The sum of potential benefits for the participant and the importance of the knowledge acquired from a utilitarian ethical perspective should outweigh the risk that the participants' might be harmed, thus justifying the decision to carry out the study (Vogt et al., 2012).

4.12. Ethical Issues I May Encounter with My Organisation

This is not commissioned research, and no organisation is funding it. I am undertaking it because of my interest in the subject and the perceived need for it in African organisations. Though most of the work will be done within S. Bank, various other aspects will not directly affect my organisation, from which I resigned my appointment more than seven years ago. Therefore, I do not envisage any significant ethical issues arising from the study related to S. Bank.

More than possible ethical issues, other considerations for me were the moral questions that I would have to consider during the research. The four fields of uncertainty highlighted earlier were used as a framework that served as ethical reminders of what I felt in practice when doing my research.

4.13. Validity of Qualitative Research

Many authors criticise hermeneutics and, indeed, all qualitative methodologies for carrying out research. This is despite attempts to set criteria for validating such studies. The critics argue that the subjective position of the researcher in the constructivist approach makes the

outcomes—the data and the conclusions—invalid because it gets too biased. In this section, I review various criteria that have been presented, validating qualitative research as a basis for setting the benchmarks for the validity of this study.

The difficulty of establishing acceptable validity criteria in qualitative research has been the subject of many discourses (Whittemore et al., 2001), and according to Kawalek and Jayaratna (2003), "since the nature of 'subjective construction' is central to the interpretative tradition, evaluation of research processes and findings is a challenging area." In contributing to the discourse, Healy and Perry (2000) posit that despite the attempts at applying rigour to develop the validity of the process of interpretation, there remain no universal criteria by which this type of research can be validated. Whittemore et al. (2001, p. 522) put forward one of the reasons for the difficulty: "Developing validity standards in qualitative research is challenging because of the necessity to incorporate rigour and subjectivity as well as creativity into the scientific process." Some of the questions that have been raised include: Which interpretation can be considered as a "legitimate" contribution to knowledge for research purposes? Since the conclusions are derived from the interpreted verbal accounts of the subjects, what criteria can be used for selecting and verifying (or refuting) the knowledge?

Despite the apparent difficulty in establishing quality standards for qualitative research, some authors believe it is possible to establish benchmarks for validity in the research processes. Lewis (2009) postulates that the validity standards set by positivists, constructivists and naturalists for all scientific research can also be used to prove qualitative research. The challenge, however, is that not all qualitative researchers believe it is necessary to adhere to these or any standards of reliability and validity, for that matter. For example, DeLuca (2011) argues that validity cannot be considered a "static property expressed through a single score." The author disputed that validity can be viewed through a single lens. "Validity is a matter of degree, not all or none … it is an evolving property, and validation is a continuing process" (p. 305). This perspective suggests that there can be no absolute measure of validity, but that validity claims are always provisional and, therefore, granted on specific terms.

Maxwell (2013) documented five threats to the validity of qualitative research. These include how observations are described and interpreted and how the data might be consciously or accidentally manipulated to fit a specific theory. He also notes that bias and the researcher's

presence could affect what is observed. Despite these challenges, the author believes that validity can still be achieved. He then offers some procedures that can help strengthen the validity of qualitative research.

The five validity criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba are the most widely used for evaluating qualitative content. This view is supported by Cope (2014), who also proposes the same criteria. In that notable work, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term "trustworthiness" to support the argument of which findings are worth accepting as valid. They propose the following criteria for developing trustworthiness in qualitative research:

- Credibility (how truthful the data or participants' views are and how the researcher interpreted them).
- Dependability (how consistent the data is and how replicable the findings are over similar conditions).
- Confirmability (how well the researcher can demonstrate that the data is devoid of their viewpoints).
- Transferability (how much of the findings can be applied to similar settings).
- Authenticity (how well the researcher can express the feelings and emotions of the participants' real-life experiences) (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Kawalek and Jayaratna (2003), drawing on findings from various studies, highlighted some ways of developing "deeper research" (p. 404) that can help an interpretative account in certain aspects of the validity of the interpretation. They put forward five key considerations: (1) including a more extensive "sample" of those "representing" the perceived situation, (2) increasing the frequency or length of the studies as done in most longitudinal studies, (3) using a variety of data collection and analytical approaches to achieve triangulation, (4) applying more detailed or "rigorous" qualitative data analysis techniques like content analysis or inductive coding, and (5) using a social theory such as structuration theory to give more clarity to the concepts.

Similarly, Healy and Perry (2000) developed six comprehensive and explicit criteria for judging interpretative research along the lines of the three elements of a scientific paradigm of ontology, epistemology and methodology: (1) ontological appropriateness, (2) contingent

validity, (3) multiple perceptions of participants and peer researchers, (4) methodological trustworthiness, (5) analytic generalisation, and (6) construct validity. Elucidating further, they explained that because of the complexity of the social world, realism research should be primarily analytic generalisation or "theory building" rather than the notion of "theory testing" which tries to apply theory to a population as is commonly done in positivism.

Rose and Johnson (2020) discuss ten validity techniques for building trustworthiness in qualitative research: (1) member checking, (2) triangulation, (3) critical reflexivity and subjective positionality, (4) detailed, thick description (5) catalytic validity, (6) crystallisation (7) searching for disconfirmation, (8) peer debriefing (9) prolonged engagement, and (10) external auditor and audit trail. According to the paper, reflexivity can strengthen the study's validity, mainly because the researcher is the research instrument. If the way the researcher's subjectivity is likely to influence all aspects of the research—from the subject, pre-understanding and methods to data analysis and conclusions—can be thoughtfully articulated initially, it can become a strength instead of a weakness (Rose and Johnson, 2020).

Expanding on this, Teusner (2016) describes how reflectivity and reflexivity can address validity issues that may arise before, during and after data collection of a research study. Reflectivity is about the researcher "thinking upon the conditions for what they are doing" and "investigating how the…context of individual and intellectual involvement affects interaction" with what they are researching (p. 88). Reflexivity, on the other hand, is "the process of self-examination". The researcher can "identify the active role they play as part of the research project which can shape the nature of the process and the knowledge produced from it" (p. 88). Here, the researcher identifies the biases or preconceptions they will likely bring into the project because of personal and/or professional experiences. Teusner posit that this should also encompass convictions about possible outcomes and perspectives relating to the research. The author supports the belief that the researcher's reflectivity and reflexivity could improve the research's quality. "Reflexivity is the hallmark of excellent qualitative research, and it entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge" (p. 89).

Leaning on the above-referenced postulations in defining the benchmarks for validity in this research, I have recognised that mentoring is a class of phenomenon and that each abstraction within that class may need to be researched separately. This assures "contingent validity", as Healy and Perry (2000) propose. Also, according to Clutterbuck (2013), providing a precise definition of the kind of mentoring I am investigating and putting it in context—and ensuring that "all the samples lie within that definition"—is necessary to increase the validity of the research. This ensures that the data is not generic and too broad to apply purposefully to specific mentoring relationships. The study also suggests the need for relatively narrow selection criteria to increase validity because the more variables introduced, the larger the sample size needed to conclude confidently. These benchmarks proposed by Clutterbuck as a way of increasing validity were adhered to in the design of this research, particularly in the definition of mentoring as it applies to this study and the yardstick for defining the selection criteria for the interviewees for the study.

Criticality and thoroughness were validated in this research by the detailed description style adopted in analysing the data. The transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to provide a process to achieve a wide breadth of understanding of the phenomenon. The criteria of confirmability and vividness were addressed using thick, rich quotes which personified the emerging themes. Triangulation was confirmed through multiple data collection methods, including data from the interviews, the notes from the reflexive journal and the scientific literature. In this way, I met the various validity benchmarks of confirmability proposed by Cope (2014), detailed or rigorous qualitative data analysis techniques proposed by Kawalek and Jayaratna (2003), as well as the rich, thick description and triangulation proposed by Rose and Johnson (2020).

This research was of a constructionist epistemology in line with the hermeneutic tradition. Therefore, the acts of reflectivity and reflexivity were embedded throughout the research process to improve the quality of the study. These were essential instruments used to gain insights into my pre-understandings before and during the data collection phase as well as the interpretation of the data. Incorporating subjectivity and reflexivity means that it is improbable that different researchers might arrive at similar results, and this discrepancy is, in fact, a strength of qualitative research (Rose and Johnson, 2020; Teusner, 2016).

Validity is both a regulative and a relative ideal, connoting its need to be evaluated in relation to the research's purposes and circumstances. The context in which (formal) mentoring (programmes) has been investigated in this study is a tool for managing talents in an African context. Therefore, the results and conclusions may not apply to every conceptualisation of the subject of mentoring but can be validly relied upon for studies within the same context as this research.

4.14. The Process of Analysis

As my journey advanced, I received a new understanding of the deeper meaning of my early ideas that helped me develop my material's meaning. My approach to the analysis was interpretative and iterative.

Following my initial interpretation of my qualitative material, I revisited the literature on the subject to search for "competencies" for the evolving ideas and topics. Then, my exploration was revisited, and my interpretation was repeated, reflecting on new literature information. In doing so, my considerations developed, becoming more natural instead of mere hunches.

I also began drawing the various interview texts together in this exploration stage, connecting them contextually and comparing their learning and themes. I grouped information to identify emotions and behaviours common to interviewees while I began to reflect on the lessons from my interpretation.

I have been through this classical, hermeneutic cycle, considering, reflecting, interpreting and reviewing the literature, and then returning several times to exploration, consideration and reflection.

Details of my hermeneutic exploration results are presented in the next chapter. In line with the confidentiality agreement I had with the participants during the interviews, their real names were not used in writing up the interpretations of the research material. This is a crucial ethical consideration in research interviews.

Chapter 5: THE HERMENEUTIC EXPLORATION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will provide details of my foray into the hermeneutic exploration and interpretation of my research data.

Informed by the background set in the previous four chapters, I now endeavour, in the following sections, to bring my hermeneutic exploration of the experiences of individuals, both as mentors and mentees, in their banking careers to life.

The analysis of the academic and research literature led me to an emerging mentoring discourse which, in conjunction with my preconceptions, gave rise to my exploration of the questions in the interviews. This chapter discusses the interview data, and as the chapter progresses, I shall present a brief new literature, which will be further developed in the next chapter in the *Discussion* section. At the heart of this methodology are reflection, considerations and investigations, providing another layer of reflecting on, interpreting and questioning literature. This is the hermeneutic spiral that leads to knowledge construction.

In this exploration stage, I began drawing the different interview texts together to link them in context and comparison to the lessons and the themes revealed within them. I have gathered information to identify common feelings and significance. I also started to weave in and reflect on the lessons I learned. So, now I have several rich and varied contextual parts to intertwine and begin to interpret.

One last choice I had to make as I began to present the results of my hermeneutic exploration was deciding on the best way to organise this chapter for clarity. First, I considered the option of organising the work to line up with the flow of the interview questions. As I continued in the hermeneutic loop, this did not turn out well because I discovered that the questions' responses kept weaving into one another as fresh insights emerged from the various themes. After all, the interview questions were to serve as a guide and were inflexible, as you would find in survey questions. I eventually decided to organise the findings in line with the recurrent themes that emerged as the analysis continued along the hermeneutic cycle and results gained flesh. This created a map that I followed in presenting my findings.

5.2. Map of the Hermeneutic Exploration

The insight into my hermeneutic exploration and interpretation of the research information is presented in four sections as determined by the themes that emerged while weaving the various contexts of the interview texts together. It is simply amazing how much came out of the hermeneutic triangulation.

In the first section, “Mentoring as a Tool”, I presented what the participants said they understood by *mentoring.* This understanding, derived from the participants’ lived experiences in a work setting, is a necessary contextual background for the study and the interpretation of the information.

In the second section, “Benefits of Mentoring”, I went deeper into the benefits experienced and described by the participants. Their varied background provided a rich variety of perspectives on the subject. This is a significant piece of the hermeneutic exploration because it touches on some critical elements in the study.

I dedicated the third section, “Morgan, on Mentoring”, to one specific candidate among my eight interview participants. This is a section I decided to write much later after going through the texts repeatedly to draw new meanings. While pulling different pieces of text and information from the interviews to write the mentoring benefits section, I realised Morgan's uniqueness among other participants. I dedicated a whole section to his interview’s rich and profound insight. As you will discover later, Morgan is the only one I can describe as having a 360^0 view of mentoring because he has experienced formal and informal mentoring. He has also been a mentor to someone in a mentor-mentee relationship, albeit informal. He had a vibrant wealth of experience to share on the subject.

I then focused on the fourth section—“How Would Formal Mentoring Have Helped You?”—on the other seven participants in the study, who have only experienced mentoring in an informal setting and have not been part of any formal mentoring programme. In my interviews with them, I asked questions that would help me get their views on the impact they believed being part of a formal mentoring programme could have had on their lives and careers. This was to reach deeper into their minds and draw more insight based on their informal mentoring experiences.

This question was added to the interview discussion after I engaged with Morgan and listened to him share his view on how much mentoring had impacted his life and career. This allowed me to hear the opinions of the other participants on how they believed formal mentoring could have helped them if they had that experience.

5.3. Mentoring as a Tool?

There is a vast amount of literature on mentoring as a management concept, which I have discussed extensively in Chapter 2. This section, however, looks away from conventional literature and focuses on what employees themselves expressed to me as their understanding of the term *mentoring* in a professional context. This is their understanding of mentoring from their lived experiences. We will see a commonly accepted concept of mentoring, which is easy to describe because it relates much to the academic models and emergent discourse from Chapter 2. The conclusion to be drawn from this will be discussed in Chapter 6 when I synthesise my conclusions from the discourse.

Another point: This chapter is titled "Mentoring as a Tool?" Instead of *tool*, I could have used words like *skill, competence* or *capability.* However, I prefer to describe mentoring as a tool that can be "held in hand" and used deliberately and intentionally, not just a skill that can be acquired or lost. I believe the word *tool* conveys that meaning better than the others.

5.3.1. "What Do You Understand by the Term *Mentoring*?"

I asked each participant early in the interviews how they understood the term *mentoring* concerning their work life. This was always the first question after the preliminaries. Given the significant degree of shared experience and culture at work, an overlap of definitions was expected from the interviewees who were (or have been) career bankers. I found many similarities in all the responses.

For example, Augustina, the most senior in terms of banking experience and grade level, puts it this way:

> *I see mentoring as **a relationship** between two people, someone that has more knowledge or **more experience** [the mentor] trying to impact one that*

*has **less experience** [the mentee], to put them through the right path either on the job or in any part of life, most especially on a job or a career path.*

*This person [the mentor] has experience … but sees **potential** in this other person [the mentee]. They [the mentor] pull up this person [the mentee] to make them a better person, helping turn their weaknesses into strengths.* (Augustina, Senior Manager)

Augustina's definition of mentoring threw up three crucial areas of the concept of mentoring for a closer look. First, she describes mentoring as a "relationship", a critical element that distinguishes mentoring from other "helping by talking" interventions like coaching and counselling (Shrestha et al., 2009; Risquez, 2008; Homitz and Berge, 2008). In support of this understanding, the Harvard Business Essentials: Coaching and Mentoring (2004, p.xiii) describes mentoring as "a highly personal experience that requires a good match between mentor and mentee". This close relationship between the mentor and the mentee, coupled with relatively more extended periods of association (Murray 2001), is believed to be one of the benefits of mentoring (Goldner and Mayseless, 2009).

Secondly, she emphasises the difference in experience between the mentor and the mentee, stressing the need for the mentor to be "more knowledgeable" or "more experienced" than the mentee. This is an area of agreement among all the interviewees, a view that is also well supported by several authors in the literature I had reviewed earlier, for example, Guest (2000), Okurame (2005) and Yaw (2007).

Thirdly, she identifies the fact of the mentor seeing the "potential" in the mentee as an integral part of the mentor-mentee relationship, helping to "pull up" the mentee and "turning weaknesses into strengths" (as she puts it). The word *potential* in this definition is noteworthy, as it links the concept of *mentoring* with *talent management*. Many proponents of the exclusive talent management model (to illustrate, Fernandez-Araoz, 2014; Thunnissen, 2013) emphasise potential as an essential element in the entire talent management process, particularly for identifying and selecting talents. Maximising potential is a crucial objective of talent management (Collings and Mellahi, 2009).

In summary, the mentor's experience goes *pari-passu* with the aspiration of the mentee, which gives rise to what I like to call "common aspiration", a concept I discuss in the next sub-heading.

5.3.2. The Notion of Common Aspiration

At the other end of the scale, regarding grade and experience, Zapel offers another variant of the description with a little over five years of banking experience. While agreeing with Augustina concerning the mentor being more experienced and possibly older (because she uses the word "younger" to describe the mentee), she introduces a new dimension to the discourse:

> *Mentoring is grooming a younger person towards a career path. The younger person could be in terms of experience or age. A mentor is a more experienced or successful person in the area in which you would want [the mentee] to succeed.* (Zapel, Junior Manager)

She adds to the developing construct by bringing in the concept of "common aspiration" between the mentor and the mentee, which implies that the mentor and the mentee have a common goal regarding what they want to achieve. She highlighted that the mentor's experience should be relevant to the mentee, especially an area in which the latter "wants to be successful".

The relevance of the mentor's experience to the mentee is a notion that many proponents of mentoring schemes share. For example, the *Harvard Business Essentials: Coaching and Mentoring* (2004, p. 89) proposes that "…the mentor should know or have insights that the mentee lacks..." This becomes even more important when the mentee's skill and expertise enhancement is the mentoring activity's focus. According to Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002), the mentor ought to have more experience in an area relevant to the mentee's needs, a view also shared by (Garrigan and Pearce, 1996).

Alice, another participant in the study, agrees with the concept of common aspiration, but captures it differently thus:

Maybe you [the mentee] want to be like this, and you have seen somebody that has those qualities, and you would like to be like the person [the mentor], and you have probably made friends with the person because you want it to rub-off on you somehow. (Alice, Middle Manager)

She uses the phrase "rub off" to imply the one-on-one relationship that Augustina highlighted in her definition of mentoring. Victoria uses the word *groom* to make the same point. Both mean spending time together because only with regular communication will any rub-off happen, as described by Alice (Guest, 2000).

Timothy, though sharing the same opinion with the other participants about the general concept of mentoring, had a different view about the notion of common aspiration. As far as he was concerned because mentoring goes far beyond career goals, the mentor can be in a different career or industry than the mentee. He was very emphatic about this, as expressed thus:

Just because I am in the financial [services] industry does not mean I want to grow my career in the financial industry. I could have other goals, like to own a school or a shoe manufacturing company, for example ...choosing a mentor, for me, does not necessarily have to be too focused on my career in the financial industry alone. (Timothy, Senior Manager)

For better understanding, he put his point in context:

He (his mentor) does not even live in Lagos; he lives in Ibadan [a different town about an hour's drive away]. I see him occasionally and spend one hour or so talking to him. When we see it, it is worth so much. We talk on the phone, chat, … [he] asks me questions.

These tie up with his broad definition of mentoring, which emphasises the fact that mentoring must not only be career-related, as he proceeds to say:

Mentoring ...is someone taking you over, guiding you in the right path or career. It could be a career, it could be personal, or any one aspect of your life. Mentoring is having someone there for you, supporting you and helping you take the right

path, making the right decisions and generally guiding you in making some decisions in your life.

However, he agrees that the mentor needs to be older, more mature, and more experienced, even if in a different field than the mentee. The existence of a more senior, more mature and more experienced mentor could sometimes lead to sponsorship mentoring. The more experienced, older and mature mentor tends to "sponsor" the mentee directly or indirectly to achieve common goals. Sponsorship mentoring was another strong theme developed from the discourse.

5.3.3. Sponsorship Mentoring

The notion of *sponsorship* being one of the critical constructs of mentoring is something I struggled with in the early stages of the study while reviewing relevant literature on the subject. I had noticed the preference for sponsorship mentoring in implementing mentoring schemes in North America, whereas I leaned more towards the European concept of developmental mentoring (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Russell and Adams, 1997). Interestingly, all the candidates indicated sponsorship, directly or indirectly, as something they expect to be a natural result of a mentoring relationship and a key benefit they expect to derive from the process. They consider sponsorship as integral to the construct of mentoring. This significant discovery eventually shaped one of my key conclusions from the study.

For example, Mary was straightforward in expressing sponsorship as an integral part of what mentoring meant to her. I asked her to shed more light on her expectations in this regard, and she related an incident where a team member she considered a high potential was asked to resign from the organisation. The colleague's mentor could not do anything about it. In her opinion, the person standing as her mentor (though informally) ought to be empowered, to some extent, to have stopped (or, at the minimum, influenced) that decision and stopped the disengagement process from happening. In her words:

…you mentor someone, and the bank says the person should resign abruptly, [and] you do not have a say? If there is a mentoring system to manage talents, there would have to be a structure in place for the mentor to say, "No, these

are some of our best hands that have to be retained for us to grow in this direction and that direction, or diversify or not…" (Mary, Middle Manager)

This strong emphasis on sponsorship by Mary, a view also expressed by all the other participants, is something I should have envisaged. I later discovered as the research progressed that this notion kept showing up at every stage of the interviews with all participants.

Morgan was nominated as a regional change agent by his mentor, which was a high point in the mentor-mentee relationship.

Alice believes your mentor should "be able to put in a word for you".

For Paschal, mentors should (be able to) "get you fixed in a particular role".

In Victoria's opinion, your mentor should be "your advocate".

All of them inferred the need for sponsorship in the mentor-mentee relationship.

While many authors agree that mentoring relationships often entail sponsorship and vice versa, such that the two constructs may be considered part of a continuum (Hilsabeck, 2018), others suggest that both are distinctly different. However, neither is exclusive to the other (Helms, 2016). This difference is stated perfectly by Ibarra (2020): "While a mentor is someone who has the knowledge and will share it with you, a sponsor is a person who has power and will use it for you."

Mentors serve as guides, talk to you about issues and tell (encourage you to be aware of) what you can do; sponsors act as cheerleaders, talk to others openly about you and tell them what you can do. Sponsors work at a completely different level than mentors and in a different way. The value of sponsoring is to turbocharge your career by helping you get critical jobs and earn promotions quickly, often even before you feel ready (Ibarra, 2020).

Mentors provide advice for the mentees; sponsors support their mentees. Anyone with experience can be a mentor, while a sponsor is in senior (often executive) management. Mentors help create a vision for your career. Sponsors drive the career vision of their mentees. Mentors propose ways of expanding the network of mentees. Sponsors provide

protected persons with active network links and make new links for them. Sponsors are personally engaged in their mentee's upward movement and career development, and they advocate the visibility of their mentees (Hilsabeck, 2018; Helms, 2016).

Sponsors are supporters who actively promote their mentees' careers, promote their achievements and potential, connect them to others in their network and advise them on their role as major sponsors. A sponsor urges his mentee to undertake complex tasks and actively advance his career—including meetings with other leaders off the record or behind closed doors. Since people who can advocate and create opportunities for others have certain levels of authority in an organisation, they are probably top leaders—influential people (Ibarra, 2022).

The most significant difference is the access to power and visibility in an organisation between a mentor and a sponsor: Nearly anyone can be a mentor, but only people with access to leadership positions and who could improve their mentees' visibility can act like sponsors. Finding a mentor can help you navigate daily and guide you as you progress and face new challenges. However, a sponsor is the most helpful to a mentee when landing a promotion, assigning himself to a significant project or even changing careers.

Sponsorship is, traditionally, a way of transferring power in organisations. Hence, access to power—and the ability to use it for anyone else—is a crucial difference between mentorship and sponsorship. Different findings suggest that action-oriented sponsorship can complement mentoring and achieve the desired results (Singh and Vanka, 2020).

Having examined different concepts related to mentoring, such as sponsorship and common aspiration, it is vital to examine other related elements to the idea of mentoring that emerged from the interviews. This is presented in the succeeding section.

5.3.4. Other Elements of the Definition of Mentoring

Now, back to the definition of mentoring, seeing through the lenses of the participants, others continued to introduce subtle shades of new meanings.

According to Morgan, *"Mentoring is having someone guide you, especially in your career or chosen path. It means you have someone you can look up to. You can discuss whatever issues or challenges you have—just someone that can be there for you."*

We are getting a fuller picture now of how bank employees see and expect to experience mentoring. Despite the considerable degree of consensus, each person added short riders or qualifications that brought their understanding more to life. For example, Mary puts it this way: *"…someone you look up to, that puts you on the right track… to point you in the right direction in a chosen career or field."*

From Paschal's view, a mentor is *"…someone trying to get you fixed into a particular role, helping you be what you will become; trying to make you do what you want to do…You get someone to help you out…in a particular way of doing things."*

These individual notes add many colours. Concepts such as *"pointing you in the right direction", "trying to get you fixed"* and *"someone helping you out"* are very picturesque, and they place a generalised concept like mentoring into a much more human landscape. Meanwhile, we continue to see the desire, already highlighted above, for something more than regular mentoring as often defined.

5.3.5. Mentoring as a Tool: Concluding Comments

At the core of this study is the impression the participants have formed based on their separate and different life experiences of the subject matter. Interestingly, this is already coming out of the early stages of this hermeneutic exploration, with each participant introducing different subtle shades to the definition and their understanding of mentoring in a professional setting.

Five critical dimensions have come from the definition of mentoring, described by the candidates, which we will dig deeper into as we progress with the study. First is the notion of "difference in experience", with the mentor expected to be more experienced and knowledgeable than the mentee. Second is the idea of "building a relationship" between the mentor and the mentee for the key objectives of the scheme to be achieved. This is the main difference between mentoring and other "helping by talking" interventions like coaching or counselling. The third is the notion of "common aspiration". I found this intriguing because

the participants were divided as to whether the mentor ought to be in the same field as the mentee, though more of them supported the mentor being in the same industry. It appears that this will depend primarily on the set goals of the mentoring scheme in the first place. Fourth is the notion of "sponsorship" as one of the expectations of the mentor-mentee relationship. All the candidates emphasised this as one of the benefits they desired from the relationship, and one could even get the sense that this, perhaps more, is at the core of the relationship as expressed. Fifth is the notion of "potentials" as an essential element of what the mentoring process is expected to maximise. This is also crucial to this research because it links mentoring with talent management, the other key theme explored in the study. As mentioned before, the potential is now a vital element in deciding who is talent in the 21st century.

The earlier literature review identified five key constructs crucial to understanding and implementing mentoring schemes (Shrestha et al., 2009; Risquez, 2008; Yaw, 2007; Hamilton and Scandura, 2003; Homitz and Berge, 2008). These constructs include a more experienced one-to-one relationship with the mentor, an extended relationship, privacy/confidentiality, and individual growth and development. I have now included "sponsorship" as the sixth fundamental construct for a successful mentoring scheme in an African setting. Sponsorship entails the mentor "speaking for" and "opening doors for" the mentee while also putting their professional network at the disposal of the mentee to draw for the latter's personal development and career growth (Hilsabeck, 2018; Helms, 2016; Singh and Vanka, 2020).

In conclusion, all the interviewees thought mentoring had some precise defining characteristics. The language was broad and sweeping, but aligned with the various definitions. We will discover that this straightforward model becomes considerably more complex as we discuss other aspects of how mentoring manifests itself in the workplace.

5.4. Benefits of Mentoring

This chapter establishes whether mentoring can be a strategic tool for managing talents. In addition, and possibly beyond what has already been learnt from the literature review in Chapter 2, this is directly from the participants' life experiences and stories told in their own words. I looked forward to these discussions on the benefits of mentoring uniquely in all the

interviews, mainly because the answer to this question relates directly to my main hunch for this study.

There has been clear evidence from the initial literature review that formal mentoring schemes were beneficial and that many organisations across Europe and North America were using them to drive employee engagement. Still, as highlighted earlier, there needed to be more information based on the limited number of studies to help reach the same conclusion for sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, the few reviewed studies on mentoring in an African context showed that mentoring was mostly informal (Adejana et al., 2006; Okurame, 2008a, 2009).

There was also the issue of culture and its impact on formal mentoring in SSA, with the Anglo-Saxon example being the etic approach. In contrast, the culturally established informal mentoring practice in SSA is emic. The imposition of etic theory over emic methods creates a tension that is yet to be resolved, at least in the literature I reviewed (Gallagher, 2012; Persson, 2012). Remember the emic-etic integration as a third approach that some authors posit as complementary (Cheung et al., 2011; Girotti, 2016).

With that background, I look forward to hearing from persons who have experienced mentoring first-hand, despite being informal, to see if my hunch (that it can be used to manage talents in a formal setting) will be validated. Hearing these individuals express their hands-on involvement in mentorship—with me looking into their eyes and drawing meanings from their inflections and non-verbal communication—is an experience I deeply cherish. The results were eye-popping and transformational for even me as the researcher. This experience—where the researcher is immersed in the study, often transformed by it—is at the heart of the hermeneutic methodology.

5.4.1. Confidence

Morgan sets the tone in this manner: *"Having a mentor was helpful and insightful because it gives you **confidence**. [I believe] mentors are there to **help**. They guide you. They tell you the system's benefits, helping you navigate the organisation's complexities."*

Of all my eight participants in this study, Morgan stood out in that he had experienced mentoring in both formal and informal settings in the work environment. That accounts for

why his comments about the mentoring experience and how much benefit he derived from the relationship with his mentors are fascinating in this study. This led to my decision to devote an entire section to him, as we will see later in this chapter.

Before joining S. Bank, Morgan had worked with another commercial bank (F. Bank) in the Nigerian financial services industry. He was assigned a mentor soon after his training induction and onboarding as a young officer at the inception of his banking career. That was under a formal mentoring arrangement, rare in most indigenous companies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The mentoring programme, designed for one year in the first instance, eventually lasted the rest of his career until his mentor passed on. The relationship he built with him in that first year continued and got richer, even after the programme was deemed to have officially ended.

Morgan's initial comments about the benefits of mentoring caught my attention, mainly when he spoke about *confidence* and *help*, so I requested that he shed more light on the specific type of help he derived from the mentoring relationship and how it helped boost his confidence. His response was:

> *It helps because you are reasonably confident and do not go through the system with fear or anxiety about what tomorrow holds. You can look through the system and protect yourself. Moreover, it was easy to get the brand out of you at the end of the day because you are confident in all you do, bearing in mind that you will always have someone to fall back on.*

Throughout the interview, Morgan talked about how much confidence he derived from having a mentor in the system. He continues by saying:

> *…with mentorship, you can face the system boldly. Moreover, you find out that you can harness your potential well, and with time, you will be able to face the system on your own because you feel that there is direction and guidance, and that initial fear will be eliminated. You will have that confidence and feel or know you can do things.*

In the same manner, Alice and Augustina expressed the same notion of an increased confidence level derived from their relationship with their mentors. Augustina was more direct; she put it thus:

> *…everyone who saw me knew there was something different. There was this confidence in me. He (my mentor) built that confidence in me that, "You can do anything, so long as you know what you are doing; just believe in what you are doing."*

Alice also spoke in support of this. She expressed this through the "can-do spirit" she cultivated from her relationship with her mentor. Quoting her directly, she goes on to say, *"I have worked in a different unit, and the things that I have learnt working with him [her mentor] gave me this 'can do spirit'."*

In this connection, a sturdy by Kitsis et al. (2019) revealed that the mentoring programme significantly improved mentees' confidence in knowing how to identify their professional values and goals, how to turn education into scholarship, work with a mentor, integrate work and life, and give a presentation. This study evaluated the effect of a junior faculty mentoring programme on change in confidence in crucial academic skills. This view is also supported by O'Sullivan (2017).

5.4.2. Harnessing Potentials

This section briefly discusses harnessing potentials as a benefit of establishing a robust mentor-mentee relationship. Starting with Augustina, she had more to say about the benefits she derived from the mentoring relationship:

> *He [her mentor] believed in me, saw my potential, and brought out the best in me. What every other of my bosses did not see, he saw that in me and started grooming me. He never criticised me wrongly; for every criticism, he was constructive about it.*
>
> *There was this heart-to-heart relationship; he was my boss and a leader who took the pain to develop me. Moreover, I am very grateful that*

he saw my weaknesses, turned them into strengths and helped me develop my career.

I asked her to say more about how the relationship had continued even after she resigned from her appointment at the bank where she had worked with her mentor. She eagerly shared:

Up till now, before I take any step, I still call him because I know he always leads me in the right direction in everything to do. He would criticise what I had not done well, making me want to improve. He applauds what I have done well, which makes me happy.

5.4.3. Lifetime Impact

One of the benefits of mentoring that recurred in all the engagements was how participant after participant, during the interviews, kept on talking about how much of a positive and enduring impact the mentoring relationships have had on their lives, even far beyond the office working relationships, and touching every other dimension of their lives. Everyone could point to life skills they acquired during the mentor-mentee relationship that they were still practising and using to make progress in their lives and careers. I found this to be profound because it struck the heart of my motivation for this study. It is also important to reiterate at this point that all (but one) of the participants in the study have only experienced mentoring in an informal, non-formal setting, without any set time frame for the commencement and the termination of the mentor-mentee relationship in the way one may experience it in a formal mentoring programme. Therefore, these informal mentoring relationships tend to last longer than what may be obtained in a regular formal mentor-mentee connection.

We now focus on what the participants had to say about the lifetime impact of mentoring relationships.

Mary learnt about *patience* and *attention to detail* from her mentor, and she has imbibed these virtues "for life". In her words:

I got my first learning experience of being patient, paying attention to detail before deciding [on the action to take] from him [her mentor]. …you have to sit

back, go back to the drawing board, and look at the implications of your decisions before you implement them. I learnt that from him.

She also learnt *collaborative skills* from him. Putting it this way, she continued:

…it gave me a better understanding of how to relate with people and the importance of association. Collaborating with all the departments you interface with is vital. I learnt from my second mentor that you need to establish a relationship or contact with people you have an interface with or will have one or two reasons to meet.

Alice had this to say about her mentor, re-emphasising the "can-do" spirit as a significant benefit of the relationship for a lifetime:

You know, he does not take no for an answer and always finds ways to get around you. There is no saying to him, "No, we cannot do this", you know. There is always a way around it, and... he always finds a way to work around something. He is open, reachable and ready to help you whenever needed. He believes everything can be done, which has changed me.

I could see that she enjoyed telling the story, hence I encouraged her to tell me more. This led to her bringing up the topic of self-control as another learning point from the relationship, which she imbibed by observing and emulating her mentor.

I used to panic a lot before because sometimes there is no product, and you have somebody requesting. [Yet] he takes it very calmly. So, I look at how he addresses it [such situation]. Somehow, I try to emulate how he handles it without panicking, and eventually, things get sorted out. So, it has started working for me.

She laughed, and you could see the excitement written all over her as she continued:

I still look up to him. I have the skills that I have learned from him; I still use them. They still come to play now. I still see or talk to him, and I remember those things. I even went to him when I had one or two challenges because I

liked how he handled things. Even when we were no longer in the same group, I still ran things by him. I still needed him to tell me, "This is how you do it."

Mentoring, like coaching and counselling, is one of those practices that is often described as *helping by talking*. However, an important discovery for me in this study is the role that observation and emulating behaviour play in the mentoring process. Beyond speaking, mentoring is *learning in action*, leading by example and following talking with the corresponding action. Alice says, *"I just try to emulate how he handles it."*

In a study examining the content of developmental networks from the self-determination theory perspective, Suzanne et al. (2013) reported that mentees identified the importance of emulating effective behaviours as one of the manners in which developmental relationships meet their needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. In a similar study, Nowacki (2015) highlighted how employees become engaged by observing, working with, and learning from their supervisors. Mentees are constantly watching their mentors' behaviours, considering what, how and when they (mentors) do things. Being always professional remains essential for mentors and other leaders in the organisation. Subordinates in the learning environment will emulate leaders and mentors as role models for their future practice (Vinales, 2015).

The following section introduces the reader to the relationship between career progress and lifetime impact discussed above. It will be shown how career progress feeds into lifetime impact as part of the many benefits mentoring provides to the mentee as part of the mentee's development and growth.

5.4.4. Career Progress

One of the areas where mentoring has been found to make some substantial positive impact on mentees is the area of career growth and development. This is well reported in various studies (Arthur and Kram, 1985; Clutterbuck, 2004; Hegstad and Wentling, 2005; Gentry et al., 2008). I now turn my attention to the interviewees to see what their experiences have been in this regard.

Morgan spoke about the impact of the mentoring relationship on his career progress. Incidentally, his mentor had passed away, which may have affected his decision to resign from

the bank. He expressed that his chances of being retained would have been much higher had his mentor been around. In his words, this is a clear example of how mentoring can help talent retention:

> *I think I had gotten to the level where I was very confident; I was rooted in the system. Through his mentorship, I became a regional change agent. So, I was already rooted in the system by the time he passed on.*

Timothy's decision to change roles was influenced primarily by his mentor. He had spent seven years doing the same thing in the same bank branch. Even though he was getting promoted to higher grade levels, he also wanted to grow in other ways by learning new things. Here is how he put it:

> *I was doing the same thing, from retail banking to priority banking. I wanted something else; I wanted to move to commercial banking because I felt it would be different. However, it was not happening, but then I spoke with him. Moreover, he said it was time to move. He'd say, "If you are doing the same thing and are bored, you may need to try something more exciting." I think that helped my decision to move.*

Augustina learnt the importance of supporting her subordinates from her mentor. She gives more details thus:

> *He will always say that "a leader pats on the back", and that I learnt from him and began to apply it in my leadership roles at S. Bank, and that was what differentiated me from most people. I never for one day took my subordinates to a meeting and brought them down. I fight for or stand for them, and when we return to the office, I let them know their faults and possible solutions.*
>
> *In mentorship, there is nothing like being guided by someone with vast experience. For everything he taught us, I did not let it go; I put it all in my head and continue to apply it to my life until now.*

Moreover, in relating career progress to career choices, we find a remarkable example with Augustina, where her mentor encouraged her to resign from her appointment at the bank

and develop herself as an entrepreneur. This further strengthens the fact that mentoring, in its element, is beyond career development and much more about life skills.

Timothy had more to say about mentoring and career progress:

> *…he [his mentor] played a major role in my career and has been a great mentor. I pass by him with every step I take, and then we talk things through; he also helps through motivational books. He helps me on the right path to go.*

The following section summarises the benefits of mentoring from the participants' lived experiences.

5.4.5. Benefits of Mentoring—Concluding Comments

Through the iterative line-by-line interpretation of the research material, the purpose has been to develop understanding. The section on the benefits of mentoring is crucial to this understanding. While carrying out my earlier review of various studies on the subject, I noted many benefits of mentoring. I was curious to hear first-hand how the interviewees have experienced this.

The results give a unique insight into the advantages of mentoring. According to these research findings, mentoring is a meaningful activity that all the participants found fulfilling. Mentoring seemed to generate a sense of meaning through the facilitation of a powerful combination of (a) self-determination, (b) reflectivity and (c) trusting oneself. The reciprocal interaction of these three products of the mentoring process led to a constant, generally rewarding and psychologically advantageous experience without requiring the type of soul-searching, which could be detrimental (Wong, 2018). Thus, it can be concluded that the participants lived in meaning instead of looking for purpose.

The fact that all but one of the candidates for the study experienced mentoring in an informal setting may also have affected the results. Informal mentoring is usually for a more extended period and often borderless from a timing perspective, making it easier for the mentor to teach life skills instead of business skills alone. All the participants maintained relationships with their mentors even after leaving their employment at S. Bank and moving on to other life endeavours. The emphasis is on soft skills, ensuring lifetime impact.

Worthy of note is the high impact a mentor could have on a mentee's confidence level in an organisation, especially at the beginning of the latter's career. This came out strongly to me from the interviews. Particularly for Morgan, the confidence was reverberating in his voice; it could be felt in his comportment. It was evident to me that the impact of mentoring, even in the early days of his career, had a lasting effect on his entire work life. This was quite striking, and I will now turn my attention to it in the next section of this hermeneutic exploration, which is explicitly dedicated to drawing more insights from Morgan's experience.

5.5. Morgan on Mentoring

This section was written after going through many rounds of the hermeneutic loop. After reading the texts from the interviews repeatedly, drawing more and deeper meanings, it became apparent that mentoring has had a much more profound and enduring impact on Morgan than on any other study participant. As I mentioned earlier, Morgan is the only one of my participants who went through a formal mentoring programme at the very start of his career. Combining that experience with informal mentoring and later being a mentor to some younger colleagues completes the story in a way that is worth dedicating a section of this chapter to.

I deliberately included many more direct quotations from the interviewee in this section to retain more emotions and meanings communicated in the interview process. This is consistent with Rose and Johnson (2020) and Cope (2014), where detailed, thick descriptions, retaining direct quotations from the interview text, were proposed as a way of demonstrating that the data is devoid of the researcher's biased viewpoints, thereby increasing the validity of the research.

5.5.1. From the Outset

There are only a handful of companies across sub-Saharan Africa where mentoring is practised as an integral part of their employee engagement, development and support structure; from my observation, most are multinationals. You will hardly find a wholly indigenous company setting up the machinery for a formal mentoring programme. Morgan started his career in one of the very few of those.

Morgan had been in banking for about 13 years across three different banks at this interview. S. Bank was his second bank after the bank, where he started his career and was put into a formal mentoring programme through the bank's graduate trainee initiative. Providing some insight into the formal mentoring programme, he pointed out,

> *For graduates, employees that are coming in, there is a mentorship system where you go through training, and as soon as you come in, you are assigned a mentor. Moreover, you have monthly conversations where you tell him about your experiences, fears and aspirations. You discuss your career, how you are faring at the branch where you have been assigned, and what your experiences are. He would ask if anyone is trying to intimidate you or utilise the system to put you under pressure, and so many other questions all about your job and welfare.*

From his response, it was easy to picture the setting and the goals of the formal programme he was put into. He had face-to-face meetings with his assigned mentor at least once a month. They met more frequently as required, and the mentee could also ask for more time with the mentor if there were specific areas in which he needed support and guidance. The programme guidelines mandated a minimum of one meeting per month, details of which were documented in a report and submitted to the bank's Human Resources department.

Morgan said, *"You could converse with your mentor as often as needed."* I asked for more information about who the mentors were. To that, he responded with, *"They are very senior employees of the bank. They are not people of the same professional level or grade as the mentees. They are usually senior managers, regional managers, assistant general managers and the like."*

On the question concerning how the mentors were selected and how the pairing was done, his reply was:

> *I cannot say because I do not know how it was done. I think they pick seniors. Usually, there is a human capital relationship to it. If, at any point, you feel you are not getting the desired outcome, or you do not have that connection with*

your mentor, they assign you to someone else. They are very particular about the right connection between you and your mentor.

He elucidates further:

I think they were people that have gone through the system because I noticed many of them were older people with many years of experience. They have gone through the system.

No matter how senior, I did not notice any new employees among the mentors. They were always people that had the bank's culture or had the background of that bank, and they wanted them to instil that in the graduate trainees, so the system was more of fewer people that have gone through the bank system and they have gotten to a certain level.

Upon further probing, Morgan shared his views of formal mentoring with me compared to informal mentoring based on his experiences with both forms. According to him:

…if you compare both, I think the driving force was that one was systematic, and the other was self-driven. The formal mentoring was systematic. It was something that was embedded in the system, something you had to go through. The informal mentoring part is self-driven; you probably have some people you have seen or heard grow in the banking system, and you aspire to be like them, so seek their counsel and mentorship and talk to them frequently.

Moreover, he goes on:

Even though for the informal, they would not know that I saw them as mentors (they thought I saw them as senior colleagues), I took them as mentors, and I do not try to push myself on them in terms of mentorship because you cannot tell. So, I try to look up to them as much as possible. I try to pick one or two things to help my career from them.

Morgan was very emphatic, and you could see his passion when we discussed the benefits of mentoring. I asked him to talk to me about the impact mentoring had on his career and how he thought his career would have progressed if he had not had the privilege of mentoring. He had a whole lot to say about this:

> *They tell you how they have gone through the system. They guide you. They tell you the goal starters and the benefits of the system. It was a beneficial one. It helps because you are confident and do not go through the system with fear or anxiety about what tomorrow holds. You can look through the system and protect yourself. Moreover, I think it is easier to get the brand out of you at the end of the day because you are confident of all you do, bearing in mind you will always have someone to fall back on.*

I asked him to elucidate on the issue of fear, which he spoke very eloquently about and be more specific about how mentoring helped him to overcome those fears. He delved into the more:

> *As I said, usually when you get into the system, you have these feelings of anxiety, fear, and with these, you might not be able to find your direction easily, you know. You feel alone sometimes when it comes to decisions and all, but with mentorship, you can face the system boldly.*
>
> *Moreover, you find out that you can harness your potential well, and with time, you can face the system on your own because you feel that there is direction and guidance.…it helps you build your confidence. It helps you easily understand the bank, the process, and the whole bank culture.*
>
> *It was quite good because we (the mentees) could assimilate into the system much faster than our peers who were not in the mentoring programme. You find out that you assimilate into the system much faster. You are well grounded in the mentoring support in a year or two.*

He hinted at why and how mentoring can help talent retention, and this caught my attention immediately when he proceeded by explaining that:

If someone feels annihilated in the system, the natural way is that he is looking for the next way out of it. Even if he cannot go out immediately, he begins to bottle up, and it downplays many things, for example, his potential, which he would have given up to benefit that system if he felt he was a part of it.

So, mentoring is that important, and I think it is important at all levels. Especially for people just coming into the system, even if it is just six months or one year. People need to be mentored. People need to have a relationship outside of just coming to the bank; they need to have a relationship with someone in the system that they can always relate with, have conversations on their jobs, and even extend to personal discussions.

I latched on to using mentoring to support talent retention, and asked him to comment more on that specific point. He obliged: "*Why have organisations not realised that people coming into a system must have a relationship in the organisation? I believe that while transitioning from one environment to another, people need others to help them assimilate well into the system.*"

It was as if he was unforgiving of the industry leaders for not ensuring that mentoring was implemented across all banks. He could not imagine why there was no strong realisation of this. With a hint of displeasure in his voice, he said:

Because I was just thinking, the whole idea is that you want to be able to retain your talents, but a person feels he is not a part of the system per se, he will look for the next and the easiest way out of the system.

Some people can stay because they naturally have a good relationship with the system; if you do not, you look for the next way out. So, it is easy to say that if you want to retain talent, you should be able to assimilate people easily. A formal arrangement must assimilate people easily into the system.

I asked him to tell me what he could describe as the major highlight of his mentoring experience:

I think it (mentoring) just helps you get better. You come out more confident; your potential is harnessed faster. Career-wise, you are also able to progress faster. You develop the ability to learn on the job faster. Overall, it just helps you grow much faster in the system.

Morgan had more to say about his experience with formal mentoring:

It [mentoring] helps you understand the bank, the process and all. You know the whole bank culture easily, which was good because they can assimilate into the system much faster. Besides using you to grow through the system, you assimilate into the system much faster. In a year or two, you are grounded well.

When I asked him to share some of the major highlights of his relationship with his mentor, he gave the following in response:

I think it just helps you be better. You come out more confident. Your potential is harnessed faster. Career-wise, you are also able to progress more quickly. You develop the ability to learn on the job more quickly. Moreover, it just helps you grow faster in the system.

As I said earlier, the impact of my first bank, where there was a formal or systematic structure, is that I could grow much faster in the system in less than a year or two. I could do certain things, and at that point, I got nominated to regional levels for being a change agent for the region, even as a graduate trainee. It ensures that people's potentials come out faster and they can achieve or progress in their careers much quicker.

Incidentally, Morgan's mentor passed on after some years into his career. It was as if a dark cloud moved across his face as he told me about his mentor's demise. It was evident that they had shared a strong working relationship. His decision to resign his appointment and join another bank was taken without the benefit of the usual guidance from his mentor. Morgan believed there was a high chance of remaining in the same bank if his mentor was still alive.

5.5.2. Morgan on Mentoring—Concluding Comments

For Morgan, mentoring meant everything to his career development. The benefit of being part of a formal programme right from the outset accelerated his growth and helped him maximise his potential. His mentor helped him to settle quickly into the organisation, boosted his confidence and assisted him in dealing with his initial feelings of fear and anxiety. Beyond the job, the mentor-mentee relationship that he developed and sustained enabled him with life skills that he still speaks fondly about. He is an advocate of formal mentoring programmes.

Also, and very importantly, we could see the notion of the sponsor-mentor playing out in Morgan's life and career. Within the first two years of starting his banking career, after going through the graduate training programme and getting placed under a mentor within a formal programme, he got nominated for a regional role as a change agent based on the recommendation of his mentor (who played the role of a sponsor in this instance). That assignment gave him visibility and accelerated his career in no small way. According to him, this has been the high point in his career.

5.6. Would Formal Mentoring Have Helped You?

Following the section on Morgan and the insights from his experience through a formal mentoring programme, I now turn my attention to the other seven candidates to explore their views on what they believe formal mentoring could have achieved for them if they had gone through such a programme. It is essential to point out that this section is based on something other than the actual life experiences of the candidates since they have not experienced mentoring under a formal programme. What is analysed here is their views of what they believed formal mentoring could have achieved for them. Nonetheless, their opinions are valid for this study and will further enrich the context.

Alice was very definite in answering this question. She expressed the clear view that she would most likely have remained in the banking industry, at least for longer than she did, if she had benefited from a formal mentoring programme. Her comment, which implied the lack of proper guidance and sponsorship due to the absence of a mentor figure in her work life at the time, was:

> *Okay, maybe if I had the benefit of mentorship advice, that person who could advise me and put in a word for me, I probably would still be in the banking*

sector. It is one thing for the person to give you advice, but yet another thing for the person to be able to put in a word for you saying, "No, I think this person should do this", and [that] the person too should be heard.

Like Alice, Timothy also expressed the belief that he would have derived more from the mentoring relationship if it was in a formal setting. He opined that his career would have progressed much better, mainly because formal mentoring programmes are designed around set goals with timelines, usually missing from the informal relationship. In his words:

Of course! I often look back, like, "I wish I had such." It will be fantastic to have something like that, appropriately formal by the organisation. If I was part of a formal mentoring programme against having a mentor that just fell into my laps, I think I would be different.

You know, in the mentoring programme, I am sure there will be a lot more because it is a programme, and my mentor in a programme might see something different in me, especially if they are in the same field as me. Even though I mentioned earlier that it does not matter, with a formal mentorship in the same area, I feel my career would have been more advanced if I had the privilege of the mentor/mentee programme.

Zapel agrees with Alice and Timothy. She opined:

> *Well, it could be because no experience is a waste, and I think there is so much to learn, and having a mentor would make the journey easier because there is a path that has been created for you to follow to your destination. So, it would have helped.*

Unlike Zapel, Alice and Timothy, Paschal was quite hesitant at first. He later voiced his thoughts: *"I am not so sure. As you said, we are thinking or imagining, but because I did not have anything like that, I am not sure where it would have ended."* However, as the discussion progressed around the same question, he could point out some benefits he believed he would have derived from a formal mentoring programme. He spoke at length,

> *...but it would have been better. Maybe I would have made better decisions in my career, you know. Looking back, maybe it would have helped me be better. I could have been better at every duty that I did.*
>
> *As you said, mentoring is not only about the job; it could cut across the job, my personal life, future, career and all. A mentor could have helped to structure everything in place because a mentor is supposed to be an experienced and trusted person. That is why I said maybe it could have helped me make better decisions than I did.*

Zapel believed that the level of impact of a formal mentoring programme would depend on the peculiarities and prevailing culture of the organisation. She was also of the opinion that formal programmes have helped some banks to achieve high employee retention. In her opinion:

> *In some organisations, it would work; in others, it would not. It depends. For banking, it is obvious that some banks have a mentor programme, so the retention level is very high. So, I want to believe something like that is on the ground. Yeah, they are okay with the grooming and everything; they see the light at the end of the tunnel. Many banks do not have that, and even if they*

do, it might still not work for some banks, maybe due to their culture and policies.

Like Paschal, Augustina was also quite reluctant about the possible outcomes of implementing a formal mentoring programme. Nonetheless, she believes that taking leaders in the bank through a mentoring programme will equip them to be better leaders. She believes having competent leaders at all organisational levels will reduce the need for mentoring. Her indication of benefit was more for the mentors than the mentees.

She concluded with:

I do not know how it will play out, but for me, I think everyone that is a leader in S. Bank should go through a formal mentoring program so that when they have a new intake or employee in the system, a leader should be able to guide them through the process and values of the bank. The new person should be able to look up to anyone as a leader and not look out for a mentor.

Then, she went ahead to share the experience of a subordinate she mentored who left the bank shortly after she left. She was convinced he left because he needed a mentor in the organisation to provide guidance. Somewhat upset about how it all played out, she went on to say:

Today, Tunde [pseudonym] (her mentee) is no longer with S. Bank. He left because his mentor had gone. That is what mentorship does. Once you have someone who has impacted so much in you, as soon as that person leaves, be sure that the mentees are ready to go with the person. That is what mentorship does; there is loyalty involved.

5.6.1. Would Formal Mentoring Have Helped You? (Concluding Comments)

The immediate previous section answers, "Would formal mentorship have helped you?" All participants, some more than others, expressed the conviction that a formal mentoring programme would have positively influenced their careers. In some instances, they believed that with the benefit of hindsight, they may have reconsidered their decision to resign from the organisation if they had what one described as "the privilege" of mentoring under a

controlled programme. They all agreed they could have made better career decisions with proper guidance.

This is highly significant because employee retention is at the heart of my motivation for this study. The need to retain and maximise talents also led to me selecting candidates who have resigned from their appointment at S. Bank for interviews for the study.

The last chapter of this study follows my thoughts and reflections on the data collected and the insights from the data analysis. I also summarised my conclusions and recommendations and what contributed to knowledge and management praxis in how mentoring can be used to manage talents in an African context.

In reviewing all the work done about mentoring, the study discovers that most of them have been concentrated in Europe and North America, with very little to refer to from a sub-Saharan Africa, particularly a Nigerian perspective. The African context the research brings into the subject strongly motivates me to continue the work.

Gannon and Washington (2019) report a shift in mentoring where more organisations—whether based in the private, public or third sector—are using mentoring schemes to tackle issues of development and disadvantage. This *turn* in mentoring from personal, informal relationships to organised formal relationships is achieved through formal mentoring initiatives or schemes. Again, this was also more from the European context.

A review of the few works the study came across from an African context revealed that mentoring had been mostly practised informally. This was not surprising because the study had observed that fact is very prevalent in most African societies' socio-cultural practices.

A key question for me then was why formal mentoring is rare in organisations across sub-Saharan Africa since informal mentoring is already the way of life for African people. At this point, the study found the need to expand the literature review to include some studies on culture, where, indeed, the study revealed that culture profoundly influences the practice of mentoring.

With that, the study now has some rich and varied context, which has sharpened my pre-understanding and helped the analysis form some opinions for this research. My opinions

from this were first that mentoring—if designed and implemented formally, with full cognisance of the impact of culture—can help an organisation at every stage of the talent management process. I also posit that talents mentored through a formal programme have higher chances of being retained through their career and greater possibilities of maximising their potential in an organisation than their peers who have not gone through such a programme.

Chapter 6. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

A DBA thesis, with its dual purpose of being both academic and practical, must pay as much attention to phenomena in the study as to the underlying philosophical arguments. In this last chapter, I examine my study's goals, aims and objectives; theoretical perspective, conclusions and observations; contribution to knowledge; and management praxis. I share my views on the journey, its implications for my professional practice, and the general consequences and considerations for management. I also bring the strengths and limitations of my study together, along with my recommendations.

6.1. Discussion: The Aim, Purpose and Objectives of the Study Reviewed

This section reviews my study's aim, purpose and objectives before detailing my contribution to knowledge and management praxis. The discussion starts with key learnings from the theoretical review of mentoring and then culture, which are the key themes of the study.

This study is about whether or not formal mentoring can be used to manage talents at a strategic level in an organisation and how people make sense of it, specifically in a sub-Saharan African context. It is a journey that emerged from my mentoring experiences in an informal setting. Fundamentally, I desire to see organisations recruit, retain, develop and manage talents most effectively. I have embarked upon this journey driven by a genuine interest and belief that organisations can use formal mentoring as a veritable tool to retain and manage talents and harness the full potential of their most valuable employees. This belief has been tested, validated and further supported with the findings of this research.

The study's overall objective was to explore people's mentoring experiences, how they make sense of it in their everyday lives, how these perceptions play out in professional work life, and to use mentoring as a strategic instrument for managing talents. I started with mentoring as the key theme, and as the research progressed, I found the need to examine the impact of culture as a vital driver of any mentoring and talent management programme. I did not start my research by testing any hypothesis. Instead, my pre-understanding and preliminary literature review combined formed my early "hunches" for the research (Bowers et al., 1990; Hayashi, 2001).

This was not a sponsored research. I have aimed to develop a professional understanding and contribute to management praxis in this field by combining the subject, the strong African context and the approach I have adopted to collect and interpret the qualitative research material in this field.

I started with a desire to develop an understanding. From my own experience and pre-understanding, I took mentoring and culture as critical themes for early consideration in my theoretical review. Though researchers have studied the subject of mentoring across a wide variety of contexts (Mueller, 2004; Lee, 2009; Aladejana., 2006; Homitz and Berge, 2008), it became clear from the theoretical frameworks that most of the research on the subject has been in Europe and North America, with minimal understanding coming out from an African context (Sawatsky et al., 2016). Additionally, most of the work from Nigeria, for example, has been primarily informal (Aladejana et al., 2006; Okurame, 2008). Okurame and Balogun (2005) emphasise the need for more African literature in formal mentoring. This study is a vital contribution to developing literature in this area. I will elaborate more on this in the section on contribution to knowledge.

Five key constructs are crucial to understanding and implementing mentoring schemes (Shrestha et al., 2009; Risquez, 2008; Yaw, 2007; Hamilton and Scandura, 2003; Homitz and Berge, 2008). These constructs included a one-to-one relationship with an experienced (more senior) mentor, an extended relationship, privacy or confidentiality, individual growth, and development. I had to eventually include “sponsorship” as the sixth fundamental construct for a successful mentoring scheme in a sub-Saharan African setting. Sponsorship means to “speak for” and “open doors for” the mentee, with the mentor putting their professional network at the mentee’s disposal. At this point, I also introduced some additional literature (Hilsabeck, 2018; Helms, 2016; Singh and Vanka, 2020) to support this new construct of mentoring I added to the other five.

The participants in the study clearly defined their mentors, partly by their experience or seniority. Some emphasised their elderly status as a critical representation of their level of expertise. They highlighted the “key man” aspects of the roles and responsibilities of mentors. They introduced metaphors in their history that show the importance of their images for them, and the importance of the views and credentials of these mentors.

There is agreement among researchers that mentoring does produce a beneficial outcome in a wide variety of settings, for example, improving the achievement of individual performance goals (Hennigan, 2009); enhancing the happiness and work pleasure of executives (Owen, 2011); improving learning and developments in all walks of life (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002); helping to develop untapped potential (Rowland 2012); improving job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Robertson and Rejo, 2012); helping to retain skilled employees (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Eby et al., 2007); reducing fear or shyness factor between management levels (Swap et al., 2001); causing more positive changes to happen in a shorter period (Allen et al., 2008); and also serving as a remedy for misconduct and delinquency among at-risk youths (Ragins and Krams, 2007). The formidable benefit of mentoring from the theoretical study is that it transforms the mentee, the mentor and, ultimately, the organisation. When designed and implemented well, everyone wins (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Arthur and Kram, 1985).

The participants in my study expressed unequivocal support for using a formal mentoring programme to drive employee engagement and talent retention. Each could point to particular benefits they believed they could have derived from such a programme if they had the privilege of joining one. It was easy for them to reach that conclusion because they had also articulated the benefits they derived from an informal mentoring relationship at one point or another in their careers.

Halfway through the theoretical study, I had to introduce social culture into the research. As Newman and Nollen (1996) put it, organisational performance tends to be higher when management practices align with national culture. This notion is described by Glazer and Beehr (2002, p. 187) as “value congruence”. Some other researchers agree with this notion (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2001; Tanja et al., 2014; Shahzad et al., 2012). Harrison (1972) describes the hierarchical and power-oriented culture we observed as prevalent in Nigeria and across most African locations. A top executive exercises excellent power in this cultural practice towards all organisational processes. This is why informal mentoring thrives because it is deeply entrenched within the social culture. I believe the construct of *super-sponsor-mentor* will also succeed because it fits perfectly with the culture. I will describe this in greater depth later.

The impact of super-imposing etic approaches on emic culture and the tension that results from that practice was also reviewed. In summary, different types and styles of mentoring configurations can be beneficial and thrive in various contexts, as long as there is an awareness of the cultural dynamics and the purposes for mentoring are explicit.

6.2. In Search of a "Super-Sponsor-Mentor"

The more I read through my texts and played back the interviews in my head, the more apparent it was that the participants wanted something more than regular mentoring. They wanted a mentor, a coach, a counsellor, a role model and a sponsor—all wrapped up in one person. I then went back to literature and began to search for a word or phrase that would best describe this persona. I came across the word *super-mentor*, which sounded right at first. Still, as I studied more about who a super-mentor is, I realised that the term also fell short of expectations because the participants were prominent on sponsorship, which is not well captured in the personality of a super-mentor. Then I knew that I must, of necessity, come up with the term that best describes the persona that I could picture in my mind based on my discussions with the participants at the interviews; that was when I coined the compound word *super-sponsor-mentor*.

The term super-mentor has been used to describe a small number of mentors given allocated time and enhanced support to support other mentors (Traynor and Mehigan, 2015). Russo (2007, p. 881) offered the closest description to the persona I had in mind, describing a super-mentor as "a selfless soul that is an expert teacher, a coach of life and an outstanding networker, all packed in one". None of the other definitions could fully match what I wanted. He further substantiates that:

> The best mentors are lifelong. Their doors have been open throughout their careers. They are generous with their time, guide a project, and provide wise advice on potential career paths. You can find new ways of presenting the same principles and techniques. They find a suitable project and examine why a student (the mentee) may not be passionate about his job. (Russo 2007)

Whilst I am interested in, and have an affinity with, the sense of their perspective of the super-mentor, it is still a materially different definition and application of the role. My notion of the super-sponsor-mentor has a far more encompassing essence.

This hero image consistently appeared in the discourse with all the participants in the study. They likened their mentors to courageous leaders, saviours and people advocates. They expected their mentors to be able to *put in a word, pull you up, rub minds with you, groom you, take you over* and *try to get you fixed* to mention only a few of the phrases that the participants used to describe and set expectations of this *hero* now called a super-sponsor-mentor.

According to David Clutterbuck (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002), mentoring results in an integral way that flexibly combines the elements of another four-single development: coaching, counselling, facilitation and custody. It is a very effective way of learning and development for employees. It uses each criterion at various points, the standard of decision to meet the mentee's needs. This supports more than any mentorship since it integrates all four approaches, including sponsorship. The study provides more practical support to the construct.

Taken together, these traits are a pretty tall order. So, the big question is, "Is there such a person as a 'super-sponsor-mentor' out there?" Although I do not have a direct answer to that question, it is crystal clear that a regular, basic mentoring programme may not achieve its full potential in an African setting. This is a vital context for this study. There is an opportunity to develop this new construct of mentoring further, as I have found no reference to the term in the writings and theories of others I reviewed during this study.

The key objectives of my study have been successfully achieved. I have explored how individuals view and experience mentoring in their day-to-day work life, mainly in an informal setting. The impact mentoring might have on their personal development and career progress if the mentoring they have experienced informally was under a formal programme with clear goals.

My exploration informs the ethnological discourse by providing insight into how mentoring can strengthen talent management practices within the financial services sector and in an

African context. I could coin a new construct of the mentoring model that ran through most of the text in the hermeneutic exploration that I have given the title of *super-sponsor-mentor.* This is the model that will be most effective in the implementation of mentoring schemes in Africa. Within this context, my research consideration that mentoring (which is already entrenched in the social culture in an African context) can be used to drive employee engagement and talent management at a strategic level has been brought vividly to life and evolved.

After reviewing national cultural models, I reported earlier that sub-Saharan Africa's social and organisational culture is about *power*. It is hierarchical and power-oriented, where the leader is a prominent fatherly figure, and "the father sets the values, norms and atmosphere". This highly autocratic and hierarchical nature of the culture is why, as I have demonstrated, informal mentoring is thriving and deeply rooted in the social culture in Africa. Setting up a mentoring scheme that does not take cognisance of this—and provide for it in its design—will likely be less effective. This further strengthens the emerging construct of the super-sponsor-mentor, where the mentor must also have enough power to sponsor and almost be like a father to the mentee. As Glazer and Beehr (2002) suggest, performance is enhanced when organisational values "fit" the national cultural context.

Going back to my earlier analogy of the miner and the traveller (Brinkman and Kvale, 2015), I have completed this study not as a miner but as a traveller, which ties up with my choice of research methodology and methods. I did not conduct this study as someone looking to uncover some buried truth, uncontaminated. My intention, which was to generate knowledge in the process of the research by the interpretation of the narratives of the interview text, was fulfilled. This has been a journey of knowledge construction rather than knowledge collection for me. I was not in search of knowledge already there waiting to be discovered; instead, I used the research to look for new ways of knowledge construction and self-understanding, all in the same process. At the heart of this experience is that I did not approach the study as an objective observer. I know that my background and expertise might have influenced the interpretation of the text in constructing knowledge. I also experienced immense self-understanding and self-transformation in the process of the research.

In the following sections, I shall summarise the conclusions and observations, the contribution to knowledge and management praxis, and the study's limitations. The section ends with my reflections and thoughts as I journeyed through this research. These have been directly drawn from my research material and interpretation—as well as my thinking on the theories of others—and they inform the outcome by providing insight into the individual's personal experiences in the mentorship process.

6.3. Contribution to Knowledge

In an article titled "Originality and the PhD: What Is It and How Can It Be Demonstrated?" Gill and Dolan (2015) gave 15 definitions of what constitutes originality in doctorate research, and at least four of them have been fulfilled in this study: (1) using already known material but with a new interpretation, (2) trying out something in a country or region that has previously been done only elsewhere, (3) bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue, and (4) expanding the scope of the understanding.

This study is considered a pioneering study in the sub-Saharan business environment. It contributes to the mentoring field in a novel way, initially by combining social and organisational culture frameworks in the context of (primarily) mentoring and talent management (to a lesser extent). I did not find any literature that dealt with implementing formal mentoring schemes in Africa, bringing in a vital cultural context. Furthermore, by cSoming up with a new construct of mentoring that suits the social and organisational culture prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa and---in a way, beginning to address the tension between the Anglo-Saxon etic approach to formal mentoring and the African emic approach to informal mentoring. This tension must be addressed if the implementation of standard mentoring schemes would succeed in Sub-Saharan Africa.

At the beginning of the study, I identified two gaps. Firstly, much of the literature on the nature of mentoring focuses mainly on the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of mentoring (Chao et al., 1992; Aladejana, 2006; Eby, 2006; Gagliardi et al., 2014), but largely ignore the broader role of external and societal forces, particularly culture, on the concept. Sawatsky et al. (2016) report that phenomenon. In contrast, there are some ongoing discussions on the impact of culture on the development and implementation of mentoring programmes, but this is yet to be extensively considered. The mentoring relationship occurs

in a particular environment. Therefore, the development of the mentoring model must include a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of mentoring on institutional and social factors as well as culture. As done in this study, the exploration of culture and mentoring has contributed to closing that gap by giving further insights into the role of organisational and national culture in mentorship along with the notion of value congruence (Glazer and Beehr, 2002; Casey et al., 2015).

Secondly, while the discussion has been conducted on the impact of mentoring and how it can shape organisational values, most of the research and conceptual understanding has been limited to studies in North America and Europe, providing a limited knowledge of the broader mentoring context in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Ogunyomi, 2013; Sawatsky et al., 2016). This study has increased understanding and inspired culture and mentorship in within a sub-Saharan African context. This work will also shape future research on mentoring and serve as a model for implementing formal mentoring programmes across African organisations. This study provides insight into culture and mentorship in SSA, adding an understanding of mentoring outside of North America and Europe. I have also highlighted the strengths and challenges of cultural considerations as they influence the delivery of mentoring relations.

Another essential contribution is identifying and discussing the role of a *super-sponsor-mentor* as a new construct for serious consideration in setting up mentoring programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. The results of this investigation and subsequent recommendations will help develop formal mentoring schemes in an African context. This construct is considered valuable as a point of intersection between culture and management practice concerning mentoring.

In summary, the study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding formal mentoring practice and how it can be used to manage talents in the sub-Saharan African context. Integrating the lived experiences and perceptions of eight ex-staff members of S.Bank with concepts derived from academic and management studies, a substantive theoretical framework for the study and practice of formal mentoring in Africa is constructed. Integrating shared African human values to create business goals focused on retaining and optimising our best talents outlines contributions to the business (Vilakati, 2012).

The actual contribution to knowledge is incremental, bearing in mind that the African context currently needs more studies on mentoring in the work environment. This work extends the horizons—the knowledge boundaries—of the mentoring field, which is sufficient for the award of a doctorate.

6.4. Contribution to Managesment Praxis

Development mentoring is a mandatory tool for human resources throughout Europe and North America. Still, it is challenging to implement the same model across Africa due to a lack of sufficient research in this direction. It is becoming more evident that empiric guidelines must be developed to foster the mentoring relationship, and create predictable and replicable value for organisations in sub-Saharan Africa. This study narrows this literature gap and provides practical information to managers to effectively address real mentoring issues, thereby providing a basis for advancing the debate on mentoring for Africans beyond the Nigerian environment. This work addresses weaknesses in the academic scope of reference journals, whose empirical findings on mentoring within the African context are grossly inadequate.

Official mentoring programmes are increasingly popular as organisations have been trying to reap the benefits of informal mentoring for many years (Weinberg and Lankau, 2010). This study adds to a few mentor-centred studies and provides a unique hermeneutic examination of formal and informal tutoring programmes. Notably, the section on making mentoring work and highlighting the challenging nature of mentoring will be helpful to anyone designing a formal mentoring scheme for implementation in Africa.

An additional contribution from this research is that we further the theoretical support for mentoring research, with insight into psychological-contractual theory and research into generations and related variables. Based on these considerations, we create a framework that will guide future research and practice in severe demographic challenges by understanding the drivers of talent retention and challenges between different generations. This is the basis of Chapter 3 of the study, where S. Bank was reviewed as a business context for the research—an essential step in the preliminary implementation of the recommendations of this study.

6.5. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The current research has limitations, with recommendations to address them. In the first instance, the selectivity of the data is a pivotal point to mention. The limited number of participants makes it difficult to generalise these findings. However, the research does open up a discussion that is worth continuing. Engaging in reflexiveness in qualitative research means that you realise how far your conclusions are shaped by methodological choices, such as selecting interview questions (Cutcliffe, 2003).

Given that Ehrich et al. (2004) have found that less than half of mentoring studies have assessed the benefits of reporting to a mentor, further work is necessary to explore factors that could lead to an invaluable mentoring experience. In addition, those who were voluntarily mentored, especially within an organisation, were participants in the current study. There is, therefore, a question of whether similar meaningful experiences can be derived by imposing mentorship as part of the daily work environment. Although sufficient evidence supports it from Europe and North America, it remains to be seen in Africa.

Organisational mentors may need to be more expansive in their work and delivery. Consequently, experience in all forms of mentoring may only sometimes be typical. Further investigation of other mentoring relationships is crucial for better understanding the specific conditions under which mentoring is a successful experience, particularly in institutions where prescription or coercion is regarded as mentoring. Furthermore, the new mentoring construct of *super-sponsor-mentor* needs to be researched further as a proposed model for implementation across sub-Saharan Africa. The resulting tension from the superimposition of the etic approach on emic practice is another area requiring more studies. Finally, there is no certainty that our results could remain valid in Western culture because the present study was conducted in Africa.

In summary, there is a need for more research on the impact of culture on mentoring practices from a sub-Saharan African perspective, particularly the high-power distance and paternal culture. This has been a hermeneutic research. Hence, further research could employ other phenomenological methodologies like critical theory or even outright inductive methods like surveys.

6.6. Personal Reflections on the Hermeneutic Exploration

This has been a fascinating journey for me. I have reflected on some of my feelings and emotions and share these as an insight into my experience during my collection, transcription and interpretation of the qualitative material.

The results of the research documented here have been the outcome of reflexive hermeneutic exploration. My objective has been to understand how individuals make sense of their world by using an approach in which I could gather information, form impressions and build knowledge by studying emerging patterns from the research material. The hermeneutic methodology provided a framework that supported this objective. The approach explicitly recognises my pre-understanding and my participation in the process. The iterative and triangular approach I have used—embracing reflection, consideration and exploration, interpretation, and literature interrogation—sits at the core of this methodology. I have undertaken my study with awareness and acknowledgement of my intellectual pre-understanding and perspectives. I recognise that these (and my intuition) will inevitably influence my interpretation of the research material.

Throughout this study, I have tried to bring my hermeneutic exploration and understanding of people's real-life mentoring experiences in their workplaces. All through the investigation, I focused on understanding what mentoring means for the study participants. There are also signs and detailed observations of how the participants expresses themselves as strongly affected. My own experience of mentoring, both as a mentor and as a mentee in organisational life, my perspectives and personal considerations, my review of relevant literature, and my ontological and epistemological considerations all had a part to play in helping to shape and inform my overall approach to my exploration and the research methods adopted.

My interpretation can be validated in several ways. For example, the research material supports my understanding of my themes, my themes are accessible to readers, and my early research considerations and evolved themes are consistent with my study's aims. Also, participant descriptions support my themes, while my interpretation provides insight into my research area. Confidence in the adequacy of my interpretation can be taken from the

transparent, reflexive and triangular nature of my approach, using information drawn from different qualitative research methods and the consensus of the participants.

My role in this research has been to create an open discourse and exploration. I am not interested in searching for some superior insight or privileged truth. Instead, I am passionate about the subject, and I have a lot to contribute from my own experiences of being mentored and being a mentor to many. At the end of this work, I am also interested in doing further work into the processes of setting up formal mentoring programmes for implementation in organisations, especially in an African setting.

Using S.Bank as a case study for this research is to begin implementing some of the survey results. The plan is to re-engage the bank's management and start working with the organisational capital team to set up a formal pilot mentoring scheme for the organisation. Preliminary discussions have already begun and will be accelerated as soon as this study is approved for the award of a doctorate. Meanwhile, I have some junior colleagues I mentor informally because of my seniority and level of experience in the banking industry. My transformational journey in carrying out this research already impacts all those engagements and how those mentoring interactions are being held.

For McAuley (2004, p. 196), there are two ways in which the hermeneutic approach can be legitimised as a mode of understanding: “the professionalisation of the hermeneutic researcher, and the methodic process through which the hermeneutic work is conducted”. I trust I have been able to provide confidence and satisfy the reader in both of these areas during this study.

This hermeneutic journey has been transformational for me, and I must emphasise that completing this thesis is by no means an end. The journey continues.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Key Details of Participants in the Study

S/N	Names	Gender	Grade	Banking experience (in years)
1	Victoria	Female	Senior Manager	15
2	Morgan	Male	Middle Manager	8
3	Alice	Female	Middle Manager	13
4	Zapel	Female	Junior Manager	5
5	Mary	Female	Middle Manager	12
6	Timothy	Male	Senior Manager	13
7	Paschal	Male	Junior Manager	6
8	Augustina	Female	Junior Manager	6

Appendix B: Interview Template

- Introduce the purpose of the study and interview process.
- The interview will be recorded.
- All information is treated in strict confidence without reference to names and specific positions or organisations.

Guide Questions

1. Tell me a bit about what you currently do for (your) bank and areas of responsibility.

2. Give me a brief background about your banking career, particularly your roles and how long you stayed in each position and (or) bank. You may omit the specific names of organisations if you are uncomfortable mentioning them.

3. What do you understand by the term mentoring, and how would you define a mentor?

4. Do you have anybody you can describe as your mentor, whether now or in the past? Please tell me about your experience with that mentor-mentee relationship.

5. Do you know of any person(s) who would describe you as their mentor, whether now or in the past? Please tell me about your experience with that mentor-mentee relationship.

6. How would you describe these mentoring relationships' impact on your banking career?

7. Tell me about any business or professional decisions that may have gone differently if you had mentorship advice.

8. What are your views about the idea that formal mentoring should be introduced into banking?

9. Have you ever been part of any structured mentoring programme in any organisation? Kindly provide some details.

10. Looking back and self-reflection, do you believe your career may have gone differently if you had the benefit of a structured mentoring programme earlier in your career?

11. That is the end of my questions. Do you have anything else you would like to share with me, or are there any questions you would like to ask.

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet

Project Title - Mentoring as a Strategic Tool for Managing Talents

Introduction

I want to invite you to participate in a research project. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and ask questions about anything you need help understanding. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

This study explores how mentoring can be used to manage talents at a strategic level in an organisation, how people make sense of it in their everyday lives and how these perceptions play out in professional work life, particularly in a sub-Saharan African context. S.Bank is our case study for the research.

2. Why have I been invited to take part in the study?

S.Bank is our case study for the research, and you have been invited to participate in this study because you are an ex-staff of the bank and have some experience mentoring either as a mentor or mentee.

About 12 to 15 participants will take part in this study.

3. Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to participate. There will be no adverse consequences regarding your legal rights if you decide not to participate or withdraw later. You can withdraw your participation at any time. You can request that your data be removed until the publication of the data without giving a reason and without prejudice. If you withdraw from the study, this will mean the following for your participation and data:

Both identifiable and anonymised data will be destroyed. No further data would be collected, or other research procedures would be carried out with you.

4. What will my involvement require?

We will ask you to sign a consent form if you agree to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and a copy of your signed consent form. The research will last for about years, but your involvement would only be for about one to 2 hours. You will be asked to answer some questions and discuss your mentoring experience and views during this time.

5. Will my participation in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be anonymous.

6. What will happen to the information which you give?

The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study, available only to my research supervisor and me. It will be securely stored. On completion of the project, they will be retained for at least ten years and destroyed.

7. What will happen to the results?

The results will be presented in the thesis. My supervisor, a second marker, and the external examiner will see them. Future students may read the thesis on the course. The study may be published in a research journal.

8. What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

I do not envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. It is possible that talking about your experience in this way may cause sSome distress.

9. What if there is a problem?

At the end of the procedure, I will discuss how you found the experience and how you feel.

10. Who has reviewed this study?

This study has been reviewed by, and received a favourable ethical opinion from, Sheffield Hallam University *Social Sciences and Humanities* Faculty Ethics Committee.

11. **Any further queries?**

For additional information, contact me: [*Name, mobile number, email address].*

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign the attached consent form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.

Appendix D: Consent Form

I……agree to participate in [*name*]'s research study.

The purpose and nature of the study have been explained to me in writing. I am participating voluntarily. I permit my interview to be audio-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while participating. I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that the write-up will ensure anonymity by disguising my identity. I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

Please tick one box:

I agree to the quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

I do not agree to the quotation/publication of excerpts from my interview ☐

Signed:……. Date: ……..

PRINT NAME: ……