Mentoring and Diversity: A Review of the Literature

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Mentoring is a successful development tool used in HRD; however, research on mentoring between genders, ethnicities, and cultures is limited. As HRD continues to move forward in this global society, understanding people's differences will provide for more successful human development, particularly in the area of mentoring. This paper focuses on the current literature on mentoring in this area, to inform HRD practice and to recommend further research in the area of diversity and mentoring.

Keywords: Diversity, Intercultural, Mentoring

An ever increasing body of literature exists that sustains the opinion that mentoring is valuable to individuals and to organizations. Mentoring consists of strong one-on-one relationships in which an experienced employee provides support to a less experienced co-worker (Russell & Adams, 1997). Approximately one third of large companies in the United States are estimated to have formal mentoring programs (Axel, 1999). Two times that amount report informal mentoring as a development opportunity. According to Merriam & Cafarella (1999) mentoring is an important means to facilitate learning in the workplace.

As more and more women from diverse backgrounds enter the workplace and achieve positions of leadership in typically white male dominated environments, HRD professionals should assess whether these women are adequately prepared to mentor others into similar leadership roles (Cummins, 1995). According to Porter (2001) thirty three percent of major corporations are engaged in mentoring programs as a means for professional development. One of the continuing challenges in organizations today is to increase opportunities, for everyone in mentoring relationships, to have positive experiences, and to assist talented individuals of diverse backgrounds to rise to high levels of leadership positions.

Stereotypes and myths have led many members of the majority culture to assume the minority are less able and less talented (Thomas, 1990). Minorities and women who are beginning their careers are made to question their abilities and career goals far more than men or Caucasians (Thomas, 1990). Mentors can either shield their diverse protégés from negative encounters or they can assist in developing strategies to assist them in overcoming social and organizational cultural barriers to advancement (Robbins, 1989). Human resource development professionals have attempted to create conditions that will benefit the mentor, the protégé, the institution, and society.

Purpose and Question

The purpose of this paper is to summarize articles from current literature on mentoring in the context of women and culturally diverse workplace environments. Since HRD is concerned with the advancement and performance within organizations of every individual (McLagan, 1989), research on mentoring between various cultures becomes imperative to developing successful mentor programs. The question driving the purpose of this literature review is: what is known of mentoring when differences (gender, ethnicities, and cultural) exist in the mentoring relationship? As organizations seek to recruit, employ and retain women and people of various ethnic backgrounds, they must begin to consider various forms of diversity and mentoring. The research is important because there is a lack of research on mentoring women, cultures, and ethnicities in organizational settings.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study, internet search engines at a land grant, research public university were used to identify research. Search keywords associated with mentoring, diversity and women in intercultural workplace

environments were used to identify articles published in refereed journals. In addition, a few articles were used from non-refereed publications. The articles were reviewed and summaries were compiled. A limitation of this paper is the ability to find articles based on a keyword search.

Background on Mentoring

No single definition exists to define a mentor. Instead, the concept is defined in numerous ways in literature. Each organization, department, dean or director defines the functions of mentoring relationships as they deem necessary within their organization structure. Webster's Abridged Dictionary defines a mentor as a "trusted guide or counselor" (p.726). Mentoring can also be defined as a goal focused process aimed toward increased knowledge and competency development (Godshalk &Sosik, 2003).

According to Egan & Rosser (2005) successful mentor-protégé relationships can lead to increases in career mobility, job and career satisfaction, compensation and performance. The study of HRD, using learning goal orientations, career satisfaction, role modeling, and commitment continues to expand the definition of mentoring, both formal and informal. As the work progresses, we will begin to better define the role of women, diversity and cultural environments in mentoring. Limitations to the studies will decrease, and findings will assist us in better defining a productive cross-section of individuals providing positive mentoring in the workplace.

Mentoring focuses on the developmental needs of the protégé at a specific and personal level (Rosser, 2004). Understanding this concept should encourage researchers and mentors alike to gain greater understanding about the cultures of the individuals they are mentoring. According to Gibbons (2000), mentoring is a protected relationship in which learning and experimentation can occur; potential skills can be developed, and in which results can be measured in terms of competence gained rather than curricular territory covered. Cultural understanding and inclusive environments will add another dimension to mentoring in these protected relationships.

In recent years, mentoring has gained a strong foothold in many organizations (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995). The work of Chapin (1998) discusses the work of Stogill who in the 1960's defined a mentor as an 'ambitious authority figure'. Levinson (1970) described a mentor as a 'transitional figure in a man's life'. In the 1980's, the mentoring process became more of a manager guiding employee process, but as middle managers in the 1980's were replaced with a 'flat line' approach to management, individuals become more self-sufficient. Hay (1995) describes mentoring as a 'developmental alliance '; a relationship between equals in which someone is helped to develop themselves. Mentoring can and should be used as a tool to develop all people, with an appreciation of the differences both the mentor and the protégé bring to the organization.

Types and Uses of Mentoring

The two types of mentoring mentioned in this paper, are formal mentoring and informal mentoring. Formal mentoring often requires training, the organization identifies who to support and who to reward, and often the time spent in formal mentoring is protected and expected. In the informal mentoring process, one person (the protégé) seeks another for career advice or to be their career guide. It can also occur when a person (the mentor) reaches out to someone they know could benefit from their experience. These relationships tend to grow over a long period of time and are very effective and rewarding.

Mentoring is a one on one facilitative learning relationship. Traditional mentoring involves the process of an experienced person assisting in the professional development of a less experiences person (Wanberg, Welsh & Hezlett, 2003). A mentor is the more experienced person and a protégé is the less experienced person in the mentoring relationship. Informal mentoring is a relationship that forms arbitrarily or naturally between the mentor and the protégé. The individuals in informal mentoring relationships are not necessarily from the same organization. On the other hand, a formal mentoring relationship refers to mentoring which is typically part of a formal program, where both individuals are from the same organization and the relationship has been the idea and the formation of organizational hierarchy.

Mentoring relationships exist in a variety of fields including, business, education, politics, athletics, etc. (Givens-Skeaton, Baetz & D'Abate, 2003). Mentoring relationships have been used to instill confidence and transfer skills to unemployed people with the intent of assisting the unemployed in rejoining the workforce (Overell, 1996). The potential benefits include promotions and higher incomes (Dreher &Ash, 1990), greater career satisfaction (Fageson, 1989) and mobility within careers (Scandura, 1992).

Mentoring - Race and Gender

Wanberg et al. (2003) identified twenty studies focused on race, compared to more than fifty researching gender with regard to mentoring. Thomas and Alderfer (1989) reported that race has major influences on the dynamic of mentoring relationships. They go on to state that although African Americans do find mentors, they tend to receive more psychosocial support from same-race mentors than from others, but similar levels of career development support from same-race and cross-race mentors. Research shows that women and non-white men do not have equal access to influential mentors, particularly mentors of the same race (Dreher & Cox, 1996; Dreher and Dougherty, 1997). However, the authors of the literature suggest there are no race differences with respect to establishing mentoring relationships (Dreher & Dougherty, 1997). Ragins (1997) reported that individuals may be more likely to enter racially diversified mentoring relationships if they have positive attitudes toward diversity and have had positive prior experiences in racially heterogeneous relationships.

Thakur, R.P. (2003) states there are more similarities than differences in selection criteria for mentors between African-American, Asian Pacific Islander, Caucasian, and Hispanic students. Thakur goes on to say that all ethnic groups preferred a mentor who was older than the protégé and were inclined for low acceptance of mentor from a race different than their own. According to Catalyst's 2002 "Women of Color in Corporate Management Report." having an influential mentor or sponsor was reported as one of the top barriers to advancement of African American female executives. The study also shows that 69 percent of African American females who have mentors were promoted, compared with 50 percent of those who did not have a mentor.

In his research on the career progression of minorities at U.S. corporations, David A. Thomas, professor of organizational behavior and human resource management at Harvard Business School, found that white employees enter a fast track early in their careers, while employees of color and women who found success, shared the characteristic of a strong network of mentors. Thomas' (1991) goes on to say, "mentors must fully appreciate all the developmental roles they play, such as that of coach, advocate and counselor...and must also be aware of the challenges race [and gender] can present to the protégé's career development and advancement" (p. 481).

Grove & Montgomery (2001) state women, in general, tend to give up their quest for leadership positions when they feel overwhelmed and unsupported while attempting to navigate through obvious and hidden barriers. Could women of all races consider the fact that we are putting them together with mentors outside of their cultural comfort zones an obvious and hidden barrier? There are many racial/ethnic groups that define "women of color" and each of them has different sets of circumstances that have shaped all aspects of their lives and employment experiences. If hidden barriers keep each of them from achieving success, then strategies through networking, such as mentoring, when properly put in place should assist them to navigate and be retained in their work environments (Weis, 2003).

Establishing informal mentoring relationships have typically been more difficult for women in the workplace (Nemanick, 2000). Although, Wanberg et al (2003) suggests that women and minorities are as likely as men and Caucasians to have mentors. Their research also states that findings have been inconsistent, and therefore difficult to draw definitive conclusions regarding relationships between protégés' gender or race and mentoring functions. In the same study, there is some evidence that mentors' race and gender may be associated with differences in protégés' compensation (Wanberg et al., 2003). HRD professionals must continue to be cognizant of intergroup differences and conduct more research on the effects of mentoring relationships between races.

Diversity Factors Effecting Protégé Outcomes

Ragins (1997) conducted research on the 'diversified mentoring relationship" which comprises mentors and protégés who differ with regard to power differences within the organization. A diversified mentoring relationship in a predominantly white male organization might involve the pairing of a white male and a woman, an African American, or a member of an underrepresented group. A key finding from Ragins' research was that mentor behaviors in both informal and formal mentoring relationships vary as a function of the composition of the relationship. The behavior of the mentor is often influenced by stereotypes and perceived knowledge and abilities of the protégé, which can be affected by the race or gender of the protégé. Therefore a mentor's behavior can positively or negatively affect the protégé's career and professional development based on the mentor's perceptions and behavior.

Ragins and Cotton (1991) researched perceived barriers to mentoring caused by gender differences. The reasons for expected barriers included gender roles, sexual perceptions, and lack of opportunity to gain a mentor (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1985). Kram (1985) suggested that a variety of problems could arise in cross-gender mentoring, such as marital disruption, sexual attraction, and gossip that can damage the effectiveness of a relationship. Kram (1983) also identified early in the literature that female protégés are more likely to experience

overprotection, greater social distance, and general discomfort in a male-mentored relationship. However, Noe (1988) claimed mentoring by a male may help women develop career plans and acquire self-identity.

In another study, there were no effects associated with career progress outcomes for the interaction of mentoring and socioeconomic origin (Dreher & Ash, 1990). However, Whitely, Dougherty, and Dreher (1991)

indicated the career progress of young managers from high socioeconomic origins may benefit more from career mentoring than managers from lower origins. This outcome may have occurred because the Whitely, Dougherty and Dreher (1991) study focused primarily on the career development function. Because only one function, career development, was included in the study it is undetermined if the results will hold true if both functions were considered.

Bova (1995) suggests that there is evidence that cross cultural mentor relationships provide less psychological support than homogenous relationships. Bova's research encourages more research in this area. Since there is evidence that cross cultural relationships provide a protégé less support psychologically than a mentoring relationship with someone from similar cultural backgrounds, what does this say about support beyond psychological support and what impact does a mentoring relationship have if psychological support is nonexistent. Also, Tillman and Cochran (2000) suggest that the absence of psychological support in a mentoring relationship, due to the lack of trust and confidence, could prevent a strong relationship from forming; therefore, diminishing the success in the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring in Diverse Environments

According to Van Eron (1995) mentoring has been cited in relieving work stress and promoting career progression within organizations. There is a myriad of problems that can result from intragroup differences, including inequitable hiring and promotion practices, biased supervision, and race based hierarchy (Sims, 2004). We must continue to be cognizant of intergroup and intercultural differences in the workplace and conduct more research on the effects of mentoring relationships between cultures.

Quezada & Louque (2004) posited that there is a need to develop networking with people of color through their own caucuses, providing mentoring through alignment of good matches. The amount of research on this issue, however, is minimal. More research on the availability of mentors in diverse environments would serve practitioners well as they develop mentoring programs. Davies (1994) study suggests that the availability of mentors for Black professionals indicates that race is significant in mentoring relationships involving Blacks. He goes on to conclude that race is the strongest predictor of pairing successful mentor relationships. If this is true, then we must ask ourselves if enough people of various cultural backgrounds are in positions of leadership to serve as mentors and if not, what alternatives we have for leading and mentoring employees.

Tillman and Cochran (2000) suggest that mutual choice, trust, and confidence are vital to the mentor/protégé relationship. Adie (2003) concurs that for the process to be successful a good match between the mentor and protégé must be evident. Crocker and Major (1989) state the minority is suspicious and distrustful of the majority, and when the power dimensions of majority/minority categorizations come into play, the situation creates additional affective biases between the two groups. These complexities of intergroup relations have been the subject of research in social psychology for the last six decades. As we consider this research, relative to mentoring, one can begin to understand the importance of a solid understanding and comprehension of diversity and intercultural competence when forming and developing relationships between people of different cultures.

Thomas (2001) states cross-race mentoring has difficulties and that in order to develop good cross-race relationships; mentors must be willing to suspend negative stereotypes that require inordinate levels of proof that a minority protégé is worthy. Cross-race relationships also require that the parties include race as a topic for open discussion. Thomas discovered that minorities tend to advance further when their white mentors understand and acknowledge race as a potential barrier. In addition, the mentor needs to be aware that race may make a difference in whether the advice fits for the protégé, and not be offended or turned off from the relationship if not all of their advice is adopted. Thomas's work is important in the work of mentoring between people of various ethnicities. His focus is not on universal relationships, and yet he draws valid conclusions from his work on what he calls "cross-race" mentoring.

One consideration for mentoring between cultures might be a greater understanding on the part of the mentor of their own level of intercultural competence. This term describes an individual's response to cultural differences and perspectives of people from other cultures (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). Intercultural competence is developmental in nature, which implies that the intercultural competency levels of an individual may change over time.

Intercultural Development and Mentoring

Bennett (1986) posited a framework for conceptualizing dimensions of intercultural competence in his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The DMIS constitutes a progression of worldview orientations toward cultural difference that make up the possibility for increasingly sophisticated intercultural experiences. Three ethnocentric orientations, where one's culture is experienced as central to reality (Denial, Defense and Minimization) and three ethnorelative orientations, where one's culture is experienced in the context of other cultures (Acceptance, Adaptation and Integration), are identified in the DMIS (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003).

Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Fleishman & Reiter-Palmon (1993) argue that conditions of task performance change from situation to situation and therefore leaders cannot rely on a set of prescribed rules or specific behavioral practices for predetermined circumstances. This concept supports Bennett's (1986) model as the focus of the model is on the development of theory based knowledge that will assist in the transfer of learning in cultural environments to relevant situations.

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Cushner (1990) noted that concepts and processes learned through investigations in cross-cultural psychology can become the cornerstone for educational efforts to improve people's interactions and ability to work together. The development of empathy, he continued, is a key in interacting with those different from oneself. Cushner's work uncovered just one more fascinating aspect about people's attributes, if we can acquire certain skills, such as empathy, then we will have one more way to interact effectively; thus, may have successful mentoring partners with people who are different than us.

Marger (1994) states outcomes of interaction between race, ethnicity, and culture span from levels of hostility, indifference and violence, to acceptance, cooperation and harmony. Currently, researchers do not have universal agreement as to what defines race, ethnicity and culture within the social sciences. This disagreement extends to how intercultural dynamics impact individual interactions with society. Without a solid understanding of these definitions and the psychological impacts relative to this lack of information, asking how we successfully mentor between them is a dilemma that needs to be considered in this research.

As leaders in organizations are often chosen to be mentors, a greater understanding of other people's cultures is important. Katz and Kahn (1978) reported that leaders are expected to solve problems and influence others in the pursuit of organizational goals. They suggest that even though the leader's behavior is prescribed by the current situation, the leader must perform in a way that encourages the mission goals of the organization. Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, Marks (2000) propose that leadership development becomes a matter of developing performance capacity for each particular social role. Their findings indicate that short behavioral training will not equip leaders for the challenges they face. Possibly, a greater understanding of the tools currently available for intercultural competencies and a greater understanding of how a leader perceives other cultures will positively influence their behavior as they pursue strong, positive mentoring relationships in their work environments.

Implications and Future Research for HRD

As HRD ventures forward in this global society, and as we attempt to understand the work of intercultural competencies practitioners and researchers can begin to build professionals armed with the knowledge and skills to build bridges and develop all individuals. Bhawuk & Brislin (1992) suggest that to be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures.

As mentors face problems regarding the foundational approaches to maintaining a commitment to the mentoring relationship, HRD professionals must begin to identify solutions. According to Ragins & Cotton (1991) mentors face problems about when, how and where to share with protégés and how to build and maintain solid relationships in the experience. Eby &McManus (2004) state the mismatch of mentors is the most frequently reported problem, but mentor distancing behavior and lack of mentor expertise were more often reported when the relationship ended.

Possibly, these issues between mentors could be overcome if the increasing interconnectedness of global and domestic organizational needs continues to insist on better models and more research. Intercultural effectiveness depends on us considering an intercultural mindset and skill set. Possible future research topics include the following:

- Are women and minorities more likely than men or Caucasians to have successful mentoring relationships?
- Are there different techniques to mentoring that might encourage a positive relationship between mentors who are not homogeneous
- Will more training within cultural contexts by organizations make mentoring more effective
- Does culturally related communication styles effect productivity and team work in organizations
- Global and domestic diversity will be integrated in a growing number of programs
- Are there benefits to a mentor/supervisor who has a good understanding of diversity and culture
- Is "intercultural competence" the term of choice to refer to the combination of concepts, attitudes, and skills necessary for effective cross-cultural mentoring.

As this work continues, it is important to understand that role modeling and setting examples of specific behaviors, necessary for mentoring, is one of the most effective means of teaching and reinforcing strong mentoring strategies. Shea (1994) discusses the importance of using the skills of encouragement and guidance in helping employees reach their full potential. We must continue to work to produce respectful encounters and collaborative problem-solving in this field of study.

Mentoring can and should be used as a developmental tool for professionals seeking to grow and develop within profession. Women and ethnically diverse populations are particularly in need of guidance, particularly psychological support; inclusive dialogue and cultural understanding are a part of the organizational culture that needs to be present in order to provide the environment necessary for effective mentoring, both formal and informal. This paper has provided an in-depth review of what is currently known about this topic and hopefully will begin a needed dialogue among HRD professionals to continue to develop opportunities in these areas.

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