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THE ROLES OF MENTORING IN CA-REER DEVELOPMENT OF JUNIOR IT PROFESSIONALS

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THESIS
Abstract

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to explore how mentoring benefits new-to-career IT professionals towards their career development process as well as how mentees perform effectively in mentoring relationships.

Recent studies have shown that the number of employees actively utilizing mentoring to advance their careers has increased significantly. Mentoring is a long-term relationship process in which a more experienced employee supports, guides, and gives feedback to a younger one regarding personal and professional development. It is suggested that getting acquainted with the right people could assist one to move up in his/her career ladder. Once paired with the right mentor, a mentee can receive the skills and knowledge needed for his/her career development.

The qualitative research method was employed to investigate the topic. The empirical results were collected through interviewing employees who had been involved in mentoring: two mentees, one mentor, and one Human Resources specialist. The data shared by these participants were grouped into three themes: the mentoring experience, the effective mentees, and the organizational mentoring culture.

The empirical results indicated that fresh IT graduates could accrue several benefits from participating in workplace mentoring. Those benefits included the development of skills and competencies, the increase in self-confidence, and the access to resources necessary for career progression. In addition, the findings suggested that the mentees should actively get involved in mentoring activities as they were the main stakeholders of the relationship. The results also indicated that mentoring seemed to be a powerful tool to strengthen the employer branding of an organization in the process of attracting, maintaining, and developing potential employees.

Keywords
Mentoring, Mentee, Mentor, Career Development, IT Engineers

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

Employees are one of the most valuable assets that determine the success of any organization. Therefore, their development is always considered a crucial task that is worth paying attention to by the employers. This case is more visible in the tech industry, where trendy technology is always expeditive evolving. Facing these rapid changes, IT professionals at the entry-level, having little or no experience at all, are perhaps the most vulnerable sectors that need special supports from the management.

Creating an effective graduate mentoring program could help increase employee satisfaction and retain new hires. Mentoring is a valuable and effective tool that can be used to stimulate the goal-oriented and integration process of new employees. In fact, many companies are developing formal mentoring programs to foster workplace relationships. It is believed that when mentorship is implemented within the organizations, the employees being mentored show more commitment and satisfaction than those who are not. (Burke, McKeen & McKenna 1993, 23.)

Even though offering young or less experienced employees mentoring programs is considered a significant investment for the success of an organization, some thought mentoring is a rather complicated issue. Studies figure out that though mentoring could boost career and job satisfaction, many other factors such as education and the right to permanent employment weigh more in terms of career outcomes. (Hester & Setzer, 2013, 1-2.)

In addition to boosting employees' careers, mentoring can also positively affect employee engagement and retention. In a survey conducted by Deloitte in 2016, 68% of the interviewed millennials were willing to remain in their company for more than 5 years if they had a mentor, twice than those who responded that they did not need a mentor (32%) (Deloitte 2016, 18).

The author writes the topic of mentoring's impacts on career development due to two reasons. Firstly, during his visit to SLUSH 2019 in Helsinki, the author had a chance to discuss the difficulties some junior software developers and new graduates facing in deciding a suitable career path. A handful number of these juniors did not know exactly what they would like to do due to a wide range of career paths offered in the tech industry. More noticeably, some of them had never heard of career mentoring, or even mentoring before. This motivates the author to bring up the topic of mentoring and career development as a problem to further study. Therefore, this thesis aims at understanding how mentoring assists less experienced IT professionals in their journey of developing their careers properly.

Secondly, the author himself experienced the urge to have a mentor in his first job. Even though the organization he worked for provided sufficient orientations and training at the early stages, he found his career path too vague to direct him up to the upper ladder management position. What he lacked was a mentor with who he could trust and freely discussed his queries. Therefore, the outcomes of this thesis would equip him, as well as those who do not have a clear vision in his/her career path, with practical and useful tactics to make use of the benefits of any mentoring program in the future.

To tackle the thesis topics, the following investigative questions would be further studied and answered.

Question 1: What are the key benefits that mentees can get in an early career?

Question 2: How can mentees get the most out of a mentoring relationship?

Question 3: What should organizations do to enhance the mentorship experience gained by mentees?

The findings of the correlation between mentorship and career development could be applied in other fields of industry.

The thesis was divided into nine chapters. The first chapter introduces the thesis topic, the research questions, and the study's limitations. Chapter 2 follows up by presenting the theoretical surveys about mentoring, supported by models, and a comparison between mentoring and coaching. Chapter 3 deals with an analysis of different types of mentoring employed by organizations, followed by chapter 4 which discusses potential benefits and setbacks of the mentoring relationship. Chapter 5 highlights the suggested phases that a mentoring relationship takes place. Subsequently, the career development topic is studied in chapter 6. Chapter 7 tells the readers about the research methodology employed in this thesis, which is the qualitative method. It is followed by the interviewed findings presented in chapter 8. The final chapter summarizes the key results and suggests some potential recommendations for further studies about the topic of mentoring.

2   OVERVIEWS OF MENTORING

Nowadays, it is an undeniable fact that there have been dramatic changes in how firms operate and compete in a severe business environment. Technological changes result in new challenges accordingly. To gain a competitive advantage, companies need to assure that their employees should be productive and willing to continually learn and adapt to these changes. Attracting, nurturing, and maintaining new hires seem to be one of the key factors helping the company remain competitive. That is where the organizational mentoring program comes into place. Done right, mentoring could bring plenty of benefits not only to the ones being mentored but also the whole organization, as the employees will notice that their employers truly care for them (Stone 2007, 3-4). New graduates, especially, keen on working for those organizations that offer mentoring programs to support training newly hired (Cranwell-Ward, Bossons & Gover 2004, 17). Therefore, every three out of four Fortune 500 firms have formal mentoring programs (Steinmann 2017, 5).

Over the decades, mentoring has gained a lot of interest in both academic and vocational perspectives. Mentoring, if utilized properly, could provide great potential for enhancing career development (Baugh 2005, 19). Broadly speaking, The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2020) defines workplace mentoring as "a relationship in which a more experienced colleague shares their greater knowledge to support the development of an inexperienced member or staff." Mentoring can be a long-term process of passing on support, guidance, and advice.

To better understand the meaning behind the term mentoring, it can be useful to look back at history when the practice of mentoring originated. Tracing back to ancient times in Greek mythology, the adventurer Odysseus entrusted the education of his young son Telemachus to the care of his friend Mentor before his departure to the fight in the war with the city of Troy (Nankivell & Shoolbred 1997, 99). Telemachus was upbraided under Mentor's supports and nurtures in many aspects, ranging from personal, professional to political and military education. It is believed that Mentor contributed greatly to Telemachus' success in overcoming challenges faced in his life. For that reason, mentoring is believed to be both instructional and advice-giving (Steinmann 2017, 3). Nowadays, the need for a mentor is just like that in mythological Greece.

Likewise, Herholdt (2012, 23) agrees that mentoring is instructional. It involves the teachings of an expert in providing answers to questions and endowing new professional skills. He indicated that in the workplace, mentoring takes place when an experienced senior, a mentor, shares experience and gives advice to a junior, a mentee, or protege', who is working in the same field (Herholdt 2012, 24).

Being a mentor is like being an advisor, a coach, a role model, a networker, and a champion. Mentors try to remove obstacles for their mentees and provide opportunities for them within the profession. Besides, mentors usually pass on valuable life-experiences and professional knowledge. They not only guide but also challenge those chasing their dreams. (Steinmann 2017, 4.) One of the essential aspects of mentoring is to help another person clarify and achieve his/her goals. Mentoring is about assisting another person in finding their right path and trying to facilitate that path. Consequently, mentoring is essential in most fields.

The gene that a mentor carries is to have a heart for supporting others. Mentors are described as those who have "a love to see people grow, they get a kick out of seeing people being promoted, they celebrate their people, and have a generosity of spirit, they are not afraid to have strong people around them, and have an abundance mentality when it comes to sharing knowledge, experience, and lessons from life" (Herholdt 2012, 58). This greatly defines who a mentor could be, as well as the profound characteristics of a successful mentor.

Mentee, on the other hand, is usually someone who has a specific personal or professional goal and seeks guidance from a mentor to successfully achieve that goal (Clutterbuck 2014, 7). An effective mentoring relationship requires active engagement from both mentor and mentee, and each party should possess a certain characteristic. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter VIII of this thesis.

2.1 Models of mentoring

Choosing an appropriate model, or models, of mentoring could be a key decision to be made before implementing an organizational mentoring program. It is advised that factors such as the mentoring program's targets, or which model could best suit the organization, should be carefully considered before initiating a mentoring scheme into a company. Mentoring models are usually tailored following the organization's strategy and culture. Depending on whether the mentoring activities are mainly taken place in a company's central hub like the HR department or carried out regionally, the mentoring schemes are classified as centralized or decentralized, respectively. (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 29.)

2.1.1 A centralized mentoring model

A mentoring program is centralized when its activities are determined, developed, and supervised by an appointed central department, which most of the time is HR. The list of these activities is described in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. A centralized model of mentoring (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 29)

This type of mentoring is preferred when quick, adaptive decisions are needed as they are mainly made by the scheme manager. However, the potential drawback of this could be the lack of resources spent by the scheme manager for mentoring. In other words, decisions made for the mentoring program may not lay on the top priority among other daily-basic decisions by those scheme managers. (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 29.)

2.1.2 A decentralized mentoring model

This model is less commonly used than the centralized one. In this model, a local group or organization is responsible for the implementation of the mentoring scheme. Cranwell-ward et al. (2004, 30) suggest that this model could bring optimum outcomes once the concept of mentoring has been introduced and successfully growing within the organization.
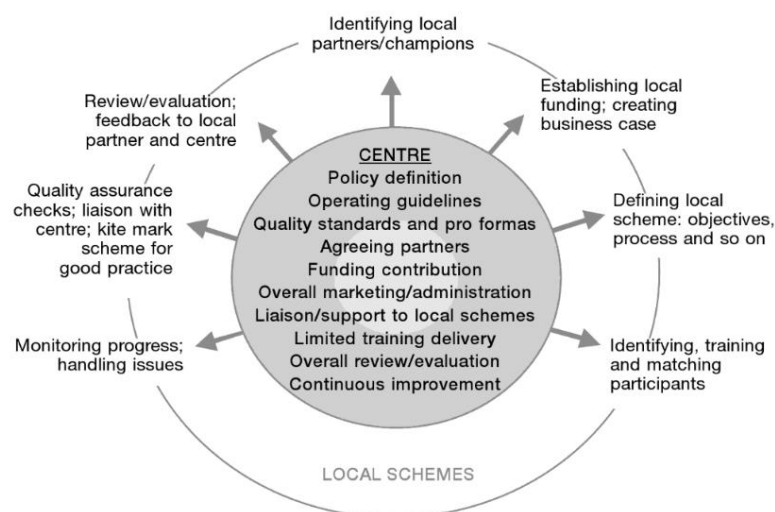

FIGURE 2. A decentralized model of mentoring (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 29)

The main advantage of decentralized mentoring is that it is close to the real action: guidelines and frameworks can be performed in such a way that they fit local circumstances. In this case, the local partnership is liable for making the decision. As seen in Figure 2, the center can accompany local partnerships by supervising the implementation as well as the quality of the mentoring scheme through quality checks and evaluation systems. (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 30.)

2.2 Mentoring versus coaching

This section explores how mentoring is similar to and different from coaching.

Coaching and mentoring are among the many tools that are commonly used to develop high-potential employees. Crawford (2010, 2) considers coaching and mentoring essential means that should be included in any personal training and development program. He further points out the similarity shared by coaching and mentoring: both are continuous processes. In addition, they are powerful means of helping to develop individual skills, which could result in improved performance, effectiveness, productivity, and much more (Crawford 2010, 5; Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 23). Clutterbuck (2008, 9) indicates the common features that they both share, including:

- Require and draw upon the helper's experience.
- Involve giving advice.
- Work with goals set by or for the learner.
- To be concerned with personal growth ambitions.
- Provide solutions needed for transitions the learners wish to make.

Crawford (2010, 2) expands upon Clutterbuck's research that in most cases coaching and mentoring form a relationship between the parties involved, usually being called partnership.

However, mentoring and coaching are not always identical. Even though they are usually used inter-changeably, there are distinct differences between them. CIPD (Jarvis 2004, 19) provided a precise comparison between the terms, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Differences between coaching and mentoring (Jarvis 2004, 19)

Mentoring	Coaching
Ongoing relationship that can last for a long period of time	Relationship generally has a set duration
More informal and meetings can take place as and when the mentee needs some advice, guidance, and support	Generally, more structured in nature and meetings are scheduled on a regular basis
More long term and takes a broader view of the person	Short term (sometimes time-bounded) and focused on specific development areas/issues
Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the client. Often a senior person in the organization who can pass on knowledge, experience, and open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities	Coaching is generally not performed on the basis that the coach needs to have direct experience of their client's formal occupational role, unless the coaching is specific and skills-focused
Focus is on career and personal development	Focus is generally on development/issues at work
Agenda is set by the client, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles	The agenda is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals
Mentoring revolves more around developing the mentee professionally	Coaching revolves more around specific development areas/issues

According to Nigro (2008, 23), mentoring is usually a more informal and open-ended relationship than coaching. With their real-life experiences, a mentor can provide valuable advice on career paths and guide a mentee in the right direction towards his/her career goals (Crawford 2010, 16). In other words, mentoring aims to help a mentee overcome obstacles in transitioning to self-, personal, and professional development (Connor & Pokora 2012, 35; Nigro 2008, 49). Furthermore, mentoring usually requires significant time for building bonds and commitment between mentors and mentees. This strong relationship may last for years. In most instances, a mentor, from which a mentee can seek trustful advice, serves as a role model and professional counselor and advisor for that mentee.

Coaching, on the other hand, is often time-bounded (CIPD 2020). Coaching is used to manage and improve performance and is nothing unless result-oriented (Connor & Pokora 2012, 20). Coaching is

all about learning and change, usually focusing on learning and developing a specific skill set or on the present job responsibilities that require improved performance (Zeus & Skiffington 2001, 3). Moreover, coaching tends to be conducted in a more structured and formal approach than mentoring. Along with an internal coach, external ones may be sought and selected.

Clutterbuck (2018, 9) observes the biggest difference between coaching and mentoring in the way that, "coaching in most applications addresses performance in some aspect of an individual's work or life; while mentoring is more often associated with much broader, holistic development and with career progress". In short, coaching deals with what an employee *needs* to do, while a mentor assists a mentee in what he/she *wants* to do (Crawford 2010, 37).

3   TYPES OF MENTORING

3.1   Informal mentoring

An informal mentoring relationship can be found in many places, throughout educational institutes, workplace, society, religious organizations, just to name a few. In this relationship, one party may obtain insight, experience, knowledge, and support from the other one. (Inzer & Crawford 2005, 35.) It can be informally initiated and tends to be comfortable for both parties, a mentor and a mentee, and be flexible enough to successfully develop in a natural manner. A mentor and mentee seek out each other and are not assigned by anyone else.

Informal mentoring programs are usually free form. They are implemented with no structure and based on the core values and goals set by both parties in such a way that no one is bound to the possible outcomes. Being volunteer work, it is normally carried out on personal time. (Crawford 2010, 107.)

In general, informal mentoring relationships require dedicated time to develop. In some cases, they can last even 5-6 years (Allen, Finkelstein & Poteet 2009, 80). Although some researchers argue that they should only last until the mentee achieve his/her goals, Crawford (2010, 107) holds the position that informal mentoring relationships may last for a lifetime.

The study of both Stone (2007, 49) and Douglas (1997, 13) revealed that the proteges in informal mentoring received more career-related support from their mentors and higher salaries than those joining formal mentoring relationships. That results in the fact that informal mentoring relationship receives more satisfactions from the mentees than proteges with formal mentors (Crawford 2010, 103).

3.2   Formal mentoring

However, not all people have the chance to participate in an informal mentoring relationship. Therefore, the organization could step in to provide, develop, and operate a mentoring program in a formal way. (Inzer & Crawford 2005, 36.) A formal mentoring program is structured, organized, and implemented by the organization. It is considered a useful tool to transfer knowledge and expertise from an experienced senior leader to less experienced staff. It is more often that the organization will identify and select employees to be mentored as well as which individuals to be mentors.

Formal mentorship is formed to address the specific goals and objectives set by the mentee. The strategic matching of the mentor and mentee is based on the spirit that the mentor could help the mentee in career advancement. Furthermore, a formal agreement, which provides guidance in terms of content, number of meetings, frameworks are often signed between the parties. To make sure the program could meet the set goals, regular measurement and supervision are often conducted by the management. (Crawford 2010, 79-82.) Formal mentoring relationships are usually short-term and can last for a limited period, usually 9-12 months. Once finished, they are expected to grow informally for longer. (Crawford 2010, 84.) The empirical research of this thesis mainly deals with formal mentorship.

3.3 Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring is a mentoring arrangement between people at the same career stage or status in the organization. It is helpful to facilitate collaboration and mutual understanding among colleagues, to encourage learning and development attitude, and to gain new insight and perspectives. It is not merely a friendly chit-chat environment, a "buddy" system, but exists to support a healthy working environment (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 37). When entering a peer mentoring relationship, both parties recognize the value which the other person can provide in terms of competency support, counseling, and knowledge (Clutterbuck 2014, 91-92).

Crawford (2010, 116) argues that peer mentoring could be one of the most practical ways to integrate newly hired into an organization. This finding is supported by Cranwell-ward et al. (2004, 37), indicating that peer mentoring relationships can help new talents increase understanding across the departments and could be used especially to smooth the process of mergers and acquisitions.

However, both Crawford (2010) and Cranwell-ward et al. (2004) propose that peer mentoring is not an effective solution for developing talents in the long term. As a rule, it would not function as expected should there is competition for promotion. Both the mentor and the mentee in such a peer-to-peer mentoring relationship will tend to compete with each other for advancement within the same division or organization. (Crawford 2010, 116; Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 38.)

3.4 Group mentoring

Group mentoring involves one senior-level mentor mentoring a group of individuals who want to achieve learning goals. It is considered an excellent substitute for one-to-one mentoring when there is not a sufficient supply of mentors and can be fundamental to enhancing performance. The study of Zachary (2011, 197-199) suggests three common approaches to group mentoring:

3.4.1 Facilitated group mentoring

Facilitated group mentoring provides many participants with experience and expertise shared by a mentor simultaneously. It can be provided by using an internal facilitator, or a mentor may act as a facilitator. The facilitator plays an important role in stimulating conversations, encouraging members to raise their voices, and offering valuable feedback to participants. The group benefits from thought-provoking and consequential dialogues. One model could be one mentor and several mentees. An alternative is that a facilitator works with several participants in the group. (Zachary 2011, 199.)

3.4.2 Peer mentoring group

The name says it all. Functioning like the peer mentoring described earlier, a peer mentoring group consists of peers who share comparable goals and interests. Each member of the group shares responsibility in setting the group agenda, requesting resources for their development (Ensher & Murphy 2005, 87), directing, and managing the group's activities (Zachary 2011, 199). An ideal peer mentoring group should between 2-8 members, determined by the desired interests and outcomes. A peer mentoring group is a good channel for each participant to raise a problem or issue. The rest of the group will help solve that issue. That is how they learn and grow. (Zachary 2011, 199.)

3.4.3 Team mentoring

Team mentoring can offer mentees more benefits than one-on-one mentoring. The mentees can approach multiple sources of experience and knowledge and receive mutual support from each other. Team mentoring may promote fundamental collaborative culture (Pomeroy 2020), which then builds up the achievement of organizational goals.

3.5 Reverse mentoring

Reverse mentoring has increasingly gained popularity in many organizations recently. It is the learning process from each other irrespective of the hierarchical level. In other words, seniors can learn from juniors. Reverse mentoring involves the practice of rethinking the process, changing the rule, where the traditional paradigm of mentoring has undergone a 180-degree turn. (Crawford 2010, 117.)

The two most popular scenarios leading to the implementation of reverse mentoring are technical-skills education to the senior managers (Stone 2004, 14) and concerns in gender or diversity programs (Clutterbuck 2014, 93). The former case is quite apparent to acknowledge where the boomers tend to stay out of touch with fast-changing technology. Accordingly, there is a huge demand for them to be mentored by someone who has specific technical knowledge that they can learn from to stay up to date (Zachary 2011, 9-10). For instance, GE's chairman and CEO, Jack Welch, is well-known to be a key player in a reverse mentoring relationship (Stone 2004, 14).

In terms of gender or diversity-based, Clutterbuck (2014, 93), Fassinger, and Hensler-McGinnis (2005) advocate the view that the lack of awareness from top management about the issues has been demonstrated as a barrier to progress and career advancement for women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. To solve the problem, for instance, a Fortune 500 company has introduced a reverse mentoring program to pair junior women mentors with predominantly top executive male mentees. The relationship addresses issues such as shared perspectives on policy, business strategy, and work-life topics as well as creates a climate for the junior midlevel female to become more visible within the organization. After 2 years, the company witnessed an increase of 20% in the number of women advancing to leadership positions. (Ragins & Kram 2007, 561-563.)

Again, Clutterbuck (2014, 93) provides a summary of the benefits of a reverse mentoring program.

TABLE 2. Benefits of reverse mentoring (Clutterbuck 2014, 93)

Benefits to senior manager	Benefits to the more junior partner	Benefits to the organization
- Understanding perspectives of other groups in the organization – gender, age, culture. - A sounding board on how new policies and/or strategies may be viewed from below. - Guidance on new and emerging technology. "Friends in low places". - A source of challenge to their thinking.	- Visibility - Access to senior management thinking. - A role model for their own development. - Challenge to their thinking. - Greater comfort in speaking with people in authority.	- Increased understanding and support for diversity management. - Enhanced leadership credibility. - Knowledge management. - Improved communication between layers in the organization. - Constructive challenge to company policy and practice.

As we can see, reverse mentoring brings people from different backgrounds together. Young employees bring hints and insight. The culture of the organization could become better. Requirements are that both parties need to trust each other, be open to feedback, show empathy. In the end, personal growth will come into effect.

3.6 Distance mentoring

Distance mentoring, or E-mentoring, occurs when a mentor and a mentee communicate with each other via digital methods such as phone, emails, social media networks, video calls, etc. Single and Muller (2001, 108) provide a clear definition that conveys in details what distance mentoring is, "… a relationship that is established between a more senior individual (mentor) and a lesser skilled or experienced individual (protégé), primarily using electronic communications, that is intended to develop and grow the skills, knowledge, confidence, and cultural understanding of the protégé to help him/her succeed, whilst also assisting in the development of the mentor."

Many pieces of literature have shown that distance mentoring has become more and more popular over the past couple of decades (Garringer, Kaufman, Stelter, Shane, & Kupersmidth 2019, 3), can be utilized as well as face-to-face relationships (Clutterbuck & Hussain 2009, 8), and can even be more beneficial over traditional mentoring (Stone 2004, 76). A virtual mentoring relationship is convenient as it erases any geographical barrier between two people. Communications are easily initiated when it makes the most sense to the participants' calendar (Stone 2004, 76). Also, E-mentoring gains much "media richness" through a variety of channels of information, as well as allows more frequent conversations between partners, which then results in "Just in time" solutions for problems (Clutterbuck & Hussain 2009, 15-17).

At the same time, virtual mentorship may also face some drawbacks. Distance mentoring relationships may require more monitoring and support than face-to-face mentoring. It is caused by potential challenges with communication and relationship building. Creighton (2018) argues that if

mentees and mentors fail to commit to the mentorship relationship and agreement, the mutual relationship may slower develop (Bierema & Merriam 2002, 213) or never fully forms. Besides, technology issues are seen as problematic to virtual mentoring. There is no doubt that the high literacy of computers and access to digital devices is essential to participants. Furthermore, noise in communication, or technical problems such as dropped calls, weak internet connection might dramatically affect the quality of transmitted information (Creighton 2018).

4 THE MENTORING EXPERIENCE

4.1 Benefits to the mentor

Participate in training programs - Mentor can be allowed to take part in the organization's training and developing strategies. This happens when mentoring is embedded in the training and development strategies. To be qualified, the mentor would be recommended to undertake courses from these training programs, through which he/she can learn new skills and knowledge in return. (Kay & Hinds 2009, 79.)

Learn new perspectives - Mentors could also learn from mentees. According to Clutterbuck (2014, 36), mentorship is a great way to both impart knowledge to other professionals and to learn different experiences from those partners. As discussed in reverse mentoring in the previous chapter, mentoring someone who just graduated from college, for instance, could bring the mentor new perspectives towards updated techniques and current changes. Furthermore, teaching someone or explaining new concepts to them is a good practice to reinforce knowledge. It is undeniable to say that one of the best ways to learn is to teach (Bing-You & Harvey 1991; Steward & Feltovich 1988). Leading a learning process with the mentees requires the mentors to continuously updating knowledge as well as spotting any gaps. It is also often acknowledged that mentoring even encourages the mentors to live up to his or her values when he/she is playing a role model in a mentoring relationship. (Clutterbuck 2014, 36.)

Develop leadership skills – When mentoring others, mentors can obtain critical leadership skills to grow as a leader. To motivate and encourage mentees, the mentors need to learn to discover talent, understand the views of mentees (Clutterbuck 2014, 35), to recognize strengths and weaknesses, and most crucially, to look within to make changes and bring out the best in the mentees (Preston 2016). Once the mentors possess these skills, they can adapt them to groups, departments, and even entire organizations. The leadership skills inadvertently learned in the mentoring relationship are considered valuable and transferable to daily managerial tasks in the workplace.

Advancing career - When entering a mentoring relationship, the mentors are most likely to gain credibility, leading to a chance of career progression. The skills learned from mentoring others, especially leadership skills, could strengthen the mentors' on-the-job performance, perhaps enhancing future career promotion. Besides, mentees show their respect for the mentors' input in facilitating the learning and development. (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002, 34.)

Sense of satisfaction – Clutterbuck (2014, 36-37) observes that mentors usually feel rewarded in a sense of pride when seeing the mentees achieving personal goals. They tend to gain enormous personal satisfaction, feel stimulated, and improve revitalized interest in work when successfully contributing to the juniors' growth and development (Cranwell-Ward et al. 2004, 149). The knowledge that they have made difference in someone else, and that they have transferred their skills, experience to the next generations makes them satisfied and gain a sense of purpose (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002, 33-34). It is rewarding to see the mentees' progress being the result of their input.

4.2 Benefits to the mentee

When taking the journey into a mentoring relationship, the mentee can gain multiple benefits.

Improve self-confidence – The mentees can benefit from mentoring in terms of self-confidence and self-awareness. Being mentored by the mentors, the mentees have the feeling that the organization truly values their contribution and considers them as an asset. In addition, the mentees become more confident after overcoming challenges faced in given tasks, under supervision, and help by their mentors. Once being able to recognize their potential, the mentees' self-awareness is strengthened. (Cluuterbuck 2014, 32.)

Career advice and advancement – The impact of mentoring on the mentees' career journey cannot be overstated. The mentees can receive meaningful insights, feedback, and guidance related to topics such as career direction, projects to join, or the degree of the pace of advancement to climb up the career ladder. In addition, the mentors, acting as a role model, can help the mentees identify developmental objectives and turn them into real ones. (Clutterbuck 2014, 33.)

In fact, the mentees can pick up the right path to career goals by avoiding problems in the first place by following the mentors' advice. These pieces of advice are the results of years of experience in the mentors' working life. They may be in the same position as the mentees; therefore, they know exactly what the mentees need. (Clutterbuck 2014, 32.)

In traditional US mentoring practice, the mentors often help the mentees be visible towards executives by frequently describing their performances and progress. The mentors may even offer the mentees opportunities to take part in projects, to speak up at invited meetings with the management, enable networking opportunities (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002, 32), or even to recommend them for new positions. (Clutterbuck 2014, 32-33.)

Greater competence – Being mentored by an experienced senior in the field of work provides a valuable opportunity to develop and enhance the mentee's competence substantially. These competencies could be gained through the help of the mentor in identifying personal needs, action plans, and problem-solving supports. As a result, the mentee can score better in their job performance, as well as get access to a rare insight into his/her field. Moreover, as the mentoring relationship is tailored according to the mentee's needs, the knowledge and skills gained are highly directly applicable to his/her job. (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002, 32.)

Psychosocial support – Even though mentors are not necessary to be special counselors or psychologists, they can still provide useful psychosocial advice besides technical/professional terms to the mentees. The findings of Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002, 32) confirm that in most cases, the mentors can act as a trustful listener, a confidential sounding board, where mentees can reach out to express any personal and/or professional concerns such as fears of failure or feelings of low self-esteem.

Exposure to the formal and informal structure of the company – a mentor can support mentees in understanding formal aspects of the organization, including topics of values, visions, culture, style of management, etc. Through the mentor's help, the mentees can learn how to present themselves as

individuals as well as in collaborative works. Regarding the informal culture perspectives, Clutter-buck (2014, 32) suggests that the mentor can show the mentees "hidden" political issues such as who holds the corporate power or key decision-makers to problems.

Cranwell-ward et al. (2004, 150) highlighted the benefits gained by the mentees as following:

TABLE 3. Potential benefits of the mentoring relationship for mentees (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 150)

Vehicle for learning
- Improved confidence and self-esteem   - Development of transferable skills including management, leadership, behavioral, professional   - Creativity and problem-solving   - Become more self-awareness
Support
- Confidential coaching   - Safe learning environment to test new ideas   - Continuity of support in a changing environment   - Support whilst undergoing a major transition   - Sense of value within the organization
Broader perspective
- Access to different perspective and experience   - Exposure to a senior manager who can be a role model as a leader and manager   - Develop a wider view of the organization – being helped to understand and resolve organizational and political issues   - Opportunity to broaden networks
Career development
Help in developing long-term career and development goals and plans

Like what has been discussed by previous authors, Cranwell-ward et al. (2004, 150) argue that a mentoring relationship could bring fruitful outcomes to mentees if they seriously consider it a means of perfecting themselves in many aspects. Most of the time, mentoring is beneficial to the mentees who are seeking supports in career advice, broader experience, professional/personal sounding board, and resources for learning (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 150-151). Bozionelos, Bozionelos, Kostopoulos, and Polychronio (2011) conclude in the research of about 190 MBA students that mentoring was an excellent tool leading to career success.

4.3 Benefits to the organization

There are also a handful of benefits that mentoring can bring to the organization. Mentoring could help companies attract talents through a better recruitment process and increase retention rates (Hart 2009). This study is similar to those reported by Renton (2009, 40), which showed that mentoring helped to retain two-thirds of the newly hired young employees after the post-training year.

Studies have shown that mentoring programs provide an effective way to create leaders for the organization. Mentoring provides future leaders with the skills and knowledge required to succeed within the organization. Through role modeling, emerging managers could have their leadership and

managing skills upgraded. Besides, mentoring programs can provide those promising leaders a safe learning environment where mistakes are safely supervised. (Clutterbuck 2014, 28.)

Mentoring could enhance organizational connection and commitment. (Hart 2009; Clutterbuck 2014, 28). Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002, 39) claim that mentoring could boost organizational internal communication through networking activities. This helps improving mutual understanding between departments and employees at different levels. Furthermore, it is easier for the junior to approach the senior through mentoring, which could make the delivery of new or innovative ideas more apparent and well recognized by skipping hierarchical procedures.

The organizational benefits of mentoring discussed above could be summarized in the table below.

TABLE 4. Organizational benefits of mentoring relationships (Douglas 1997, 87)

Major benefits
• Development of managers in the organization
• Reduced turnover
• Increased organizational commitment
• Low costs or cost-effectiveness associated with formal mentoring programs
• Improved organizational communication

4.4   Potential downsides of mentoring

It is not easy to write about the disadvantages of mentoring because there are not enough critical studies on this topic. Besides, the potential downsides of mentoring are often seen as challenges to overcome for obtaining fruitful results. Klassen and Clutterbuck (2002, 40-41) identify some pitfalls caused by mentoring and group them for mentors, mentees, and/or organizations as these problems are usually linked together.

When a mentee becomes too dependent on his/her mentor for guidance and support, that mentee stops thinking for his/herself and cannot function appropriately without the mentor's presence. When ceasing the thinking process, the mentee becomes less creative, lowers productivity consistency. It could lower the creative edge of the organization. Moreover, it may violate the goals of the mentoring relationship, where the mentor's main role is to assist the mentee's growth. In the worst case, the mentor could withdraw from the relationship. (Klassen & Clutterbuck, 2002, 41.)

Frustration perceived by both mentors and mentees is considered another possible "dark side" of mentoring. The mentor may get frustrated to find out his/her effort put in the relationship is not valued by the mentee, or when the mentee simply takes the support and guidance for granted. Similarly, a mentee might get disappointed when he/she does not receive the desired guidance from the

mentor. Furthermore, Murray (2001, 41) expresses concern about the lack of advancements opportunity at the organizational level where the mentoring is conducted could lead to the mentee's frustration too.

Lack of time for mentoring appears to be the common downside for the mentors (Clutterbuck 2014, 47; Cranwell-ward et al. 2004, 151). Mentoring is a long-term process that requires adequate time and commitment, especially from the mentor side to bring about good results. Under work pressure, mentors might cancel some mentoring sessions, but this practice should not happen more than once in twelve months. It is suggested that the mentor be careful to consider the necessary time resource needed for mentoring and to consider the mentoring tasks as one crucial part of their work. (Owen 2011, 39.)

The enhanced feeling of resentment is indicated another downside of mentoring. Clutterbuck (2014, 38) presents an argument to emphasize that if the mentor's effort put in mentoring is not recognized, or the mentor does not receive the reward or merit that he/she deserves, then the mentoring role could produce resentment. In other words, the mentor feels like he/she is asked to do tasks more than other colleagues. This would demotivate the mentor to provide sufficient support to the mentee. Then, the mentee may realize that he/she does not receive enough investment that he/she deserves. Eventually, the resentment is carried by both mentor and mentee. (Clutterbuck 2014, 37-38.)

From an organizational perspective, mentoring is considered a costly investment. Good mentors are not naturally born. They need to receive training from the ground up, be supported by working experiences, and be motivated by the management team. This long investment process might cost organizations. Without these investments, however, there would not be good mentoring programs in the workplace. (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2020, 44.)

Some of the potential risks have been identified and summarized in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Drawbacks of mentoring programs (Douglas 1997, 86)

ORGANIZATION	MENTEE	MENTOR
Lack of organizational support	Neglect of core job	Lack of time
Creation of a climate of dependency	Negative experiences	Lack of perceived benefits
Difficulties in coordinating programs with organizational initiatives	Unrealistic experiences	Lack of skills needed for the mentoring role
	Over-dependence on the mentoring relationship	The pressure to take on a mentoring role
Costs and resources associated with overseeing and administering programs	Role conflict between boss and mentor	Resentment of mentees

5   PHASES OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

It is crucial to understand the phases and components in each phase of the mentoring relationship to utilize its benefits. This section of the thesis will explore some different models of the mentoring relationship.

5.1   The three phases of mentoring

Cranwell-Ward et al. (2004, 145) divide the mentoring lifecycle into three stages: beginning, middle, and end, which is demonstrated in Figure 3 below.
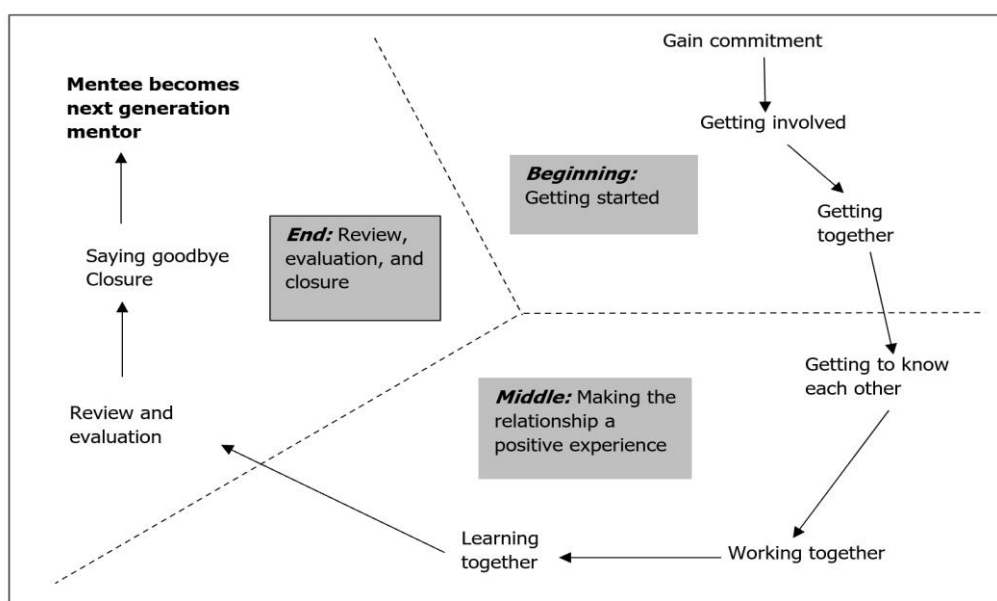

FIGURE 3. The mentoring process lifecycle (Cranwell-Ward et al. 2004, 145)

Beginning – Getting Started

This stage is served as an icebreaker for the mentor and mentee to orient themselves with each other. Both parties spend time getting to know each other, developing chemistry, and forming a new relationship. It is the time when the matching process happens, where both parties assess if they share things in common, like talking with each other, and desire to continue the relationship. If matched, the pair would focus on discussing objectives set by the mentees, showing personal commitment in the new relationship, and sketch out an initial plan to work together. (Cranwell-Ward et al. 2004, 143-171.)

Middle – Making the relationship a positive experience

This is the stage where "real" mentoring is initiated. This stage witnesses the relationship truly blossoms, where rapports between the mentor and the mentee are built, and they both make use of the skills and experience to strengthen the relationship. It is highly recommended that the two parties

follow approved instructions and guidelines to perform tasks and do activities. (Cranwell-Ward et al. 2004, p.145.)

The study of Cranwell-ward and associates (Cranwell-ward et al. 2004) emphasizes that both mentor and mentee should make active contributions to get the most out of the mentoring relationship. For instance, they both develop a goal-oriented action plan, where the mentee points out which support and guidance that he/she is searching for, and the mentor specifies precisely how the best help will be given. Additionally, it is proposed that frequent meetings are necessary to foster the relationship, suggesting every 6-8 weeks. Finally, positive relationships require mentors to use certain skills and tactics to be successful. They include creating a safe environment, listening without judgment, focusing on learning, agreeing on objectives rather than approaches, and appreciating differences. The mentors, especially, should always keep in mind that the best practice is to listen and assist the mentee in finding solutions to his/her issues, rather than to take over the relationship. (Cranwell-Ward et al. 2004, 188-208.)

End – Review, evaluation, and closure

According to Cranwell-Ward et al. (2004, 146-147), the review and evaluation activities take place throughout the mentoring process and last until this stage. Both mentors and mentees are supposed to continuously evaluate the relationship in interim meetings to ensure that needed adjustments be implemented in time. The final review, as those authors indicate, plays a crucial role in helping to summarize the knowledge and benefits earned from the relationship.

The evaluation process could be conducted either formally or informally. If it is formal, most of the time it is necessary to refer to the mentoring contract signed at the beginning. In case the mentoring program is one part of the development strategy of the organization, the scheme manager may get involved in the evaluation process (Cranwell-Ward et al. 2004, 218-219).

Cranwell-Ward et al. (2004) also recommend that the mentors and mentees be given a chance to give feedback on the overall results. For the mentees, the focus could be on the accomplishments of agreed developmental objectives or learning outcomes. From the mentors' perspectives, the review is to address issues such as the satisfaction level achieved from the relationship, or any competencies to be developed in the future. Likewise, both parties should never underestimate the importance to cover topics on behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs, and finally emotions and feelings (Cranwell-Ward et al. 2004, 220-222).

The final review and evaluation signal the time that the mentoring relationship comes to closure. If the desired outcomes have been successfully obtained and the relationship has run its full course, there is a strong possibility that the relationship will transform into a long-lasting friendship. As a result of the achievements gained, the mentees might feel motivated to give back by becoming future mentors. In their research about the reviews of a mentoring relationship conducted in a range of organizations, Cranwell-Ward et al. (2004) assert that very often the mentees wanted to continue the mentoring relationship. (Cranwell-Ward et al. 2004, 223-230.)

5.2   The four phases of mentoring

Zachary (2011) establishes a predictable structure of mentoring relationships, including four distinct stages: preparing, negotiating, enabling growth, and coming closure.
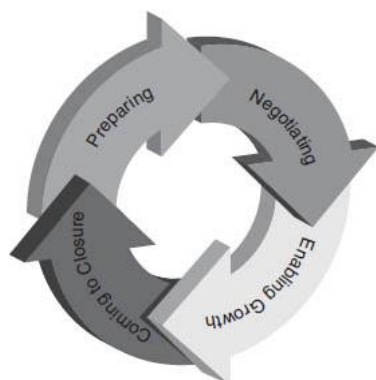

FIGURE 4. The Mentoring Cycle (Zachary 2011)

Phase 1: Preparing (getting ready)

This discovery stage initiates the relationship by providing the mentors and mentees the necessary time to get engaged through conversation, build up mutual understanding, and understand other partners' purposes. Zachary (2011) mentions that the preparing stage happens individually and then jointly. This means both mentors and mentees first need to conduct a self-analysis on motivations to enter the relationship, as well as reflect on what outcomes they want to attain. For mentors, it is recommended to check their mentoring skills to make sure that they are well prepared for the relationship. For mentees, honestly understanding themselves and pointing out expectations are necessary to achieve the goals. (Zachary & Fischler 2009, 7.) The process follows their willingness to meet up and discuss these issues. The relationship would likely be successful if there are clarifications concerning expectations and roles defined by both parties (Zachary 2011, 50).

Phase 2: Negotiating (establishing agreements)

Evidence shows that a well-prepared plan to establish agreements between mentors and mentees will enable them to achieve desired learning objectives and become more satisfied in the relationship. Through conversations, the learning goals are clearly defined, the content is composed, and the process is sketched up. Therefore, it is considered the business phase of the relationship. (Zachary 2011, 88-89.)

Besides the learning agreements, soft issues concerning accountability assurances, ground rules, confidentiality, boundaries, and mentoring work plan are also addressed. They serve as an iron rod leading to the end goals, helping the relationship stay on track. (Zachary & Fischler 2009, 55-56.) For instance, setting boundaries can help to lay a foundation of trust. Both parties know what the limits are to avoid stepping over. Or concerns such as breach of honesty, or improper language are pointed out, making the learning process go smoothly. (Zachary & Fischler 2009, 67.)

Zachary and Fischler (2009, 7) also call this stage the "detail phase", as it requires the mentees to clearly define the logistics of their work, upon determining the frequency, location, duration, and target dates for the desired goals.

Phase 3: Enabling growth (facilitating learning)

It is considered one of the most crucial phases where learning happens. Being called the work or implementation phase, this phase provides the mentoring partners an excellent opportunity to nurture learning and encourage growth. The mentors have to create a learning stimulating atmosphere by encouraging the mentees' questions and giving instant, constructive and valuable feedback. Zachary and Fischler (2009) emphasize the importance of maintaining strong mutual trust to overcome potential obstacles that can derail the learning process, as this phase is the most vulnerable for both parties. (Zachary & Fischler 2009, 89.)

For the mentees, they are advised to stay proactive in doing the work. To make the relationship a positive one, they should make a great effort in three areas: time, learning, and relationship.

- Time: Zachary and Fischler (2009) view lacking time as the most reasons for being blamed for an unsuccessful mentoring relationship. The authors advise mentees to effectively manage their time for mentoring. For instance, the time reserved for mentoring activities should be divided carefully into smaller portions – shadowing mentor, reflecting learning, daily problem solving, and providing feedback. Then, mentees ought to stay focus on mentoring tasks completely, especially during the time with the mentors. Multitasking, for that reason, should be avoided. (Zachary & Fischler 2009, 79-82.)

- Focus on learning: the mentees' learning is the main purpose of the mentoring relationship. The mentees are responsible for exploring the learning styles that work best for them. It is recommended that the mentees should practice journaling, as it is an outstanding method of learning. Keeping a learning journal can help recording knowledge learned, reflecting systematically, increasing the stimulation to facilitate insight, and apprehending the richness of the learning process. A learning journal requires discipline and commitment from the mentees. (Zachary & Fischler 2009, 82-84.)

- Building and developing a good relationship – Successful mentoring is built upon trust. Besides, effective communication also assists in maintaining a good relationship. Both mentees and mentors should be open to feedback and show a good attitude towards feedback. They are encouraged to seek, receive, accept, and act on feedback received from their partners. (Zachary & Fischler 2009, 89-97.)

Phase 4: Coming to closure

This ending phase is also referred to as the integration and moving forward phase. It is the time for the mentor and mentee to reflect on the learning outcomes, the fostered relationship, and the personal and professional growth. Evidence shows that the closure phase of a mentoring relationship

could be a great challenge to some people (Zachary & Fischler 2009, 100-101). This happens, for instance, when a mentee is too dependent on the mentee, which causes this mentee not to know what to do next. Or it is simply hard for some people to express attitude and do not know how to end a relationship in a good manner.

The closure often anticipates enormous emotions: discomfort, fear, disappointment, relief, joy, or excitement (Zachary 2011, 146). It is, however, not easy for some people to handle these feelings, even though it is an unavoidable part of the relationship.

In a formal mentoring relationship, it is often that the mentor triggers the ending process. The most apparent signal for planning the closure is the time the mentee has achieved the desired goals. The time for closure agreed by both parties is often determined when the mentoring agreement is negotiated. Furthermore, another key part of this phase is the learning conversation: both mentor and mentee discuss the learning results gained during and at the end of the mentoring relationship. This conversation serves as a cornerstone for further development later on. (Zachary 2011, 151-152.)

To sum up, there could be more available mentoring models by well-known authors. Depending on the preferred styles of mentoring partners, as well as organizational factors, both mentees and mentors should carefully consider and apply the model that fits them the most.

6   CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Dessler (2011, 373) defines a career as the "occupational positions a person has had over many years." Choosing a suitable career and performing well in that career may be one of the most important factors bringing life success to one. However, needs and preferences relating to a career are often changing throughout one's working life, according to changes in external environments such as economic issues, politics, and society. Envisioning and solving these challenges by having a sound career management strategy enable each employee to reach his/her career goals. And that is where career development steps in. Career development is a lifelong series of activities and ongoing efforts such as workshops and supports to help employees understand and boost their skills, knowledge, and motivations in career decision making and maximizing their contributions towards the organization they are sitting in. Similarly, Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk (2010, 13) define career development as "an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterized by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks." By thoroughly understanding the developmental tasks throughout his or her career life, each employee would know which competencies and knowledge are critical to their career plan so that they can be well prepared in alignment with these requirements.

In the scope of this thesis, the author is going to explore the different stages of career development introduced by Greenhaus and colleagues (2010, 34) to examine wherein those stages mentoring could function best to assist the young employees. The model is developed basing on Greenhaus et al.'s reading of literature in career development, combining with a study of Levinson's work on adult life development. Table 6 below summarizes the four stages of the model, followed by some discussion about it.

TABLE 6. Four Stages of Career Development (Greenhaus et al. 2010, 35)

> **1. *Occupational and Organizational Choice***
>
> Typical age range: Initially 18-25; then variable.
>
> Major tasks: Develop occupational self-image, assess alternative occupations, develop initial occupational choice, pursue necessary education, obtain job offer(s) from the desired organization(s).
>
> **2. *Early Career***
>
> Typical age range: 25-40
>
> Major tasks: Learn job, learn organizational rules and norms, fit into chosen occupation and organization, increase competence, pursue career goals
>
> **3. *Midcareer***
>
> Typical age range: 40-55
>
> Major tasks: Reappraise early career and early adulthood, reaffirm, or modify career goals, make choices appropriate to middle adult years, remain productive in work
>
> **4. *Late Career***
>
> Typical age range: 55-Retirement
>
> Major tasks: Remain productive in work, maintain self-esteem, prepare for effective retirement

Stage 1. Occupational and organizational choice

According to Greenhaus et al. (2010, 35), this stage consists of tasks involving forming and defining an initial idea on the promising occupation that one would like to pursue. Finding an ideal career requires a great deal of research and exploration of individual interests, self-image, capability, values, along with the occupation's growth-perspective, requirements, and expected compensations. The occupational choice is followed by thoroughly examining different occupations and obtaining necessary competencies and education for that occupation.

In terms of organizational choice, the individual selects an organization to enter his/her first employment after having selected the occupation. The number of years of education and qualifications that one obtained is claimed to determine how long it may take that individual to land his/her first job. (Greenhaus et al. 2010, 35-36.)

Stage 2. The early career: the establishment and achievement phases

During this career stage, the individual strives to find a place in this world together with gaining recognition at the workplace. The first-job entry follows with continuous learning to develop technical proficiency related to the job, as well as understanding the organizational norms, values, and visions. (Greenhaus et al. 2010, 37.) Once these challenges are successfully overcome, the new employee could be rewarded with promising job satisfaction, career advancement, and increased financial compensation (Werner & DeSimone 2012, 405).

After becoming established within the organization, the employee in the early career stage might face several queries concerning desired achievement aspects such as career moving-up, independence, contributions, and authority in the achievement phase. At this point, there is a strong desire for vertical mobility, for instance, career promotion. Greenhaus et al. (2010) hold the view that mentoring plays an important role in supporting entry-level employees to achieve these career goals. Research steadily shows that entering a mentoring relationship is a crucial developmental task in the early career. Other studies also show that those who received support from mentorship were more likely to follow a career plan than the ones who did not have access to a mentor. (Greenhaus et al. 2010, 207-213.)

Stage 3. The midcareer

The mid-career stage appears at the same time as an individual's midlife transition. In this stage, an individual tends to reappraise the occupation and organization chosen in the earlier stage, as well as reexamining the accomplishments achieved. Additionally, midcareer employees must update and upgrade their skills to remain productive at work. However, they might experience negative experiences such as fears of getting old, missed opportunities, and slower learning ability, which are often seen as a career crisis. (Greenhaus et al. 2010, 230-232.) This is supported by Levinson's study, which showed that 80 percent of male and 85 percent of female research participants experienced a career crisis in this career stage (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, McKee 1978; Levinson 1996). As a result, the career plateau and career obsolescence will most likely occur. Career plateau happens when the employees have little chance for career advancement and/or are unable to get the hierarchical promotion, whereas career obsolescence means that the employees do not have sufficient skills required to perform certain tasks due to unavailability training in new technological change. (Greenhaus et al. 2010, 232-233; Werner & DeSimone 2012, 406.)

Stage 4. The late-career

This stage of the career is dominated by two tasks. First, the aging individual must strive to stay productive at work and maintain a sense of self-worth. However, the bias of the society towards the productivity of older employees may hinder their effort in keeping their self-esteem. Second, the employees at this stage should be prepared for retirement. Retirement is not always an easy process, happening when the employees gradually become disengaging from work. Retirement may cause psychological and financial changes. It, therefore, should be planned carefully in advance. A sound retirement planning program concerning financial status, health, housing, and safety is necessary for smoothening the transition from work to non-work life. (Greenhaus et al. 2010, 37.)

In short, Werner and DeSimone (2012) remark that this model is suitable to analyze the experiences and possible events that happened during one's career. The age range suggested in the model may differ for some employees as someone might start his/her career later than the others. However, the experiences of the challenges may be identical, and they require the employees to have appropriate actions correspondent with other issues during different stages in real life. (Werner and DeSimone 2012, 406.)

7   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The thesis will be conducted using qualitative research. The theories would be discussed from se-
lected academic books, journals, and data collected from the internet. These theories will then be
examined by comparing the findings from a set of interviews.

Qualitative research is an optimal option to understand human beings and their behavior. By using
qualitative research methods, researchers can understand the context within which the examined
people are living in. Therefore, qualitative research is favorably chosen to investigate people's moti-
vations, actions, and reasons for their behavior comprehensively. (Myers 2013, 5.) As this thesis is
to explore the impacts of mentoring on the career development of the newly hired, the author de-
cided to utilize this method.

As aforementioned, the empirical data will be obtained from a couple of interviews. Interviews can
"generate data which give an authentic insight into the people's experiences" (Silverman 1987, 87).
As the author is aiming at collecting the experiences, ideas, and expectations of the mentorship par-
ticipants as a result of their involvement, in-depth qualitative interviewing is the primary tool to be
employed. Results of the study done by Rubin, Rubin, and Rubin (2012, 29) show that in-depth in-
terviewing provides researchers with rich and descriptive data rather than merely yes-no or agree-
disagree answers. This technique involves asking the interviewees open-ended questions. In other
words, the interviewees are free to express their opinions, elaborates on the answers, or even sug-
gests new issues. Besides, the interviewer can flexibly ask questions in random order if it makes the
flow of the conversation moves smoothly.

However, one of the drawbacks that the qualitative method brings about is that it is time-consuming
if the number of samples is large. To solve this problem, Baarman (2019, 25) suggested using a
purposive sampling method instead of random sampling. Patton (2002, 230) described "The logic
and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study and depth…yields
insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations." When using purposive
sampling, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016, 301) suggest using judgment when selecting cases
to best answer research questions. This method is useful when dealing with very small samples. For
that reason, the interviewees purposefully chosen for this research are those who have already par-
ticipated in a mentoring relationship. This helps in obtaining relevant, rich, and in-depth information.

The profile of the interviewees can be found in Table 7. Upon request, their identity would not be
revealed. Among the participants, two have been mentees, one has been an active mentor during
his working life, and the last one is a Human Resources (HR) specialist. They all come from different
IT organizations.

TABLE 7. Interviewees' Profile. Own illustration.

Interviewee	Occupation	Gender	Age	Role in mentoring
A	Software Developer	Male	22	Mentee
B	User Experience (UX) Designer	Female	21	Mentee
C	Senior IT Manager	Male	45	Mentor
D	HR specialist	Female	32	Mentorship coordinator

Due to the COVID19 pandemic and constraints in geographic location, the interviews were conducted virtually on Zoom and Skype platforms, as agreed in advance by the participants. The interview questions can be found in appendix 1.

Questions 1 and 2 were asked of all interviewees to build rapport and to grasp a general experience that they have for mentoring. The mentees A, B, and mentor C were asked question 3 to investigate what motivated them to join mentoring. Questions 4-8 were solely answered by mentees A and B to explore their perceptions on potential mentoring setbacks, mentoring roles towards career development, and the employment of virtual mentoring in their career life. Questions 9,10 aimed at understanding the desired characteristics of the effective mentees from the mentor's point of view. The final questions are concerned with organizational views about mentoring.

8   FINDINGS

8.1   The outcomes of mentoring

8.1.1 Motivations

When being asked what triggered them to join in mentorship, interviewee A mentioned that he had experienced the importance of having a mentor when he was in high school. In his junior year, whilst he was confused about which universities and degree program he should pursue, his headteacher, also teaching him mathematics, had shown him his strengths and suggested that he study computer sciences, as he was very good at logic. That teacher also told him which universities to apply to accord with his skills and knowledge. The advice he received had helped him greatly in passing the entrance exam to a university of applied sciences located in Helsinki, exploring and developing his passion for creating applications on mobile devices.

In contrast, interviewee B had not entered any mentoring relationship before she landed her first job. However, the organization she works for has a very strong mentoring culture, where each newly hired employee is introduced to the internal mentoring program, which is one of the development tools that the company offers. Through her colleagues who had been mentored before, she learned a handful of positive feedbacks and was encouraged to look for a mentor. According to interviewee B, she would lose nothing when being mentored, and that was the reason why she gave it a try. In addition, interviewee B mentioned that there was a need for guidance and advice that she wanted to receive from someone who is more experienced than her, as she felt a bit lost when transitioning from college to real working life.

8.1.2 Benefits

Both mentees agreed that mentoring brought them plenty of benefits and they never regretted joining into such a relationship.

The first positive effect that was mentioned by interviewees A and B was the general knowledge related to the organizations through onboarding mentorship. It was said that the mentors helped interviewees A and B understand issues such as a new working environment, facilities, working rules, and regulations in their department, just to name a few. As they both just landed their first job right after college, both interviewees A and B found these onboarding instructions exceptionally crucial because they served as a strong foundation for them to be productive in their new roles and to meet the requirements set by the management. According to interviewee B, the conversations with her mentor during her probation period made her less nervous as she knew there were reliable sources of information that she could seek when needed.

Thanks to his mentor, interviewee A's professional skills and knowledge leveled up faster than it would have been if he worked on his own. Even though learning from the internet seems to be one of the most popular learning methods utilized among software developers, interviewee A stated that he especially valued the good coding practices that were taught by his mentor. Writing clean and understandable codes are among one of the best seeking skills for any developer. And interviewee A was fortunate enough to learn these skills from his mentor through the code review sessions, which

is one part of the mentorship. In addition, the critiques and feedbacks received from his mentor during these pair-programming meetings significantly helped the junior interviewee A understand the codebase and produce high-quality code lines from the very beginning in any project he joined, which could save a great deal of time needed for any bug fixes later on. According to interviewee A, these learning opportunities took place commonly when he and a more experienced one working on the same project. He considers it as informal mentorship as well.

Interviewee B emphasized how much mentorship helped her building up her confidence. As a fresh graduate from college, she was assigned to work with a senior UX designer, who is also her mentor at the present. The company she works for has a strong learning culture, and this philosophy is also embedded in her mentoring practices. She explained, "I was encouraged to raise voice in discussions because questions were always welcome from my mentor." She recalled a situation where her disagreement with the mentor's proposal was complemented by that mentor. The mentor indicated that there was much he could learn from her as well. That comment had boosted her confidence so much that she barely had any fear to speak up again in the following discussions. Interviewee B emphasized that working in such a male-dominated industry seems to be very easy for any female IT professional like her to hold back their opinions. However, the mentor taught her a lesson that her ideas could be valuable, and her voice could be heard even by more experienced ones. That shaped her to be a confident employee as she is today.

Equally important, her mentor served as a great source of motivation, according to interviewee B. As a fresh graduate, she realized that there were always many new things that she needed to learn. It was very often that the knowledge obtained at college was not applicable in her work-life projects, or they were even out-of-dated. These occasions somehow demotivated her at some point. And that was where her mentor stepped in to help because more often her mentor had faced the same issues as her in the past. Interviewee B emphasized that her mentor acted as a friend who listened to her concerns, showed empathy, and even provided her with valuable lessons to overcome these difficulties. Moreover, she was encouraged to report to her mentor any progress she made along the way. By doing that, the mentor has helped her to stay on track with pursuing her career goals.

When asking the interviewee C what motivated him to be a mentor, the following benefits were pointed out. First, the mentoring relationship helped mentor C to recognize his learning gaps, which stimulated him to develop his professional knowledge. To become a good IT mentor, he must become a better software developer himself first. Besides, mentor C always keeps the idea of "you have to learn something three times before you can explain it to someone else" in his mind while preparing the knowledge before each mentoring meeting, particularly the pair-programming sessions. That forces him to continue learning to improve both tech skills and pedagogical skills. He explained, " You learn best by teaching others." In addition, a mentor can also learn from the mentee in many ways. If they have different domains, the mentor can benefit from the knowledge gained from the mentee. Or very often the junior mentees could bring fresh ideas as well as up-to-date knowledge learned from college to the mentoring, which could be something out of reach for the

mentor. In this way, the reverse mentorship takes place, where the mentee and the mentor switch the roles without the mentee's notice.

Furthermore, mentorship makes the life of a senior IT professional less boring. The opportunity to meet and match with junior employees brings diverse experiences and memories to interview C. The challenges derived from senior assignments are balanced with the joys brought by mentoring activities. Likewise, Interviewee C also addressed the importance of matching with a good mentee, as that mentee could become a potential partner for business later. For instance, mentor C has co-founded a small web development company with one of his mentees, after recognized that they both share some visions as well as match certain personality traits and work values. By seeing the growth and development of this mentee through the mentoring relationship, mentor C identified this mentee as a trustful one to cooperate with.

Finally, interviewee C could not deny the intrinsic benefits of being a mentor, which is the satisfaction gained when seeing his contribution to the success of someone else. Anytime he was paired with a fresh IT graduate, he saw the image of himself in that less experienced employee, who is eager to learn but lack the necessary tools provided by someone who has been in the game long enough. Whenever his mentees reach their career goals or achieve any occupational success, mentor C is proud of himself, being filled with a sense of giving back to society by producing a better generation of coders.

The following table summarizes the benefits received by the interviewed mentees and mentors in their mentoring relationship.

TABLE 8. Benefits of mentoring. Own illustration.

Mentee	Mentor
- Onboarding knowledge - Technical skills - Increase of self-confidence - Sources of motivation - Broadening network	- Learning opportunities - Knowledge gained reversely - Joys - Satisfaction

8.1.3 Drawbacks of mentoring

Lack of time was noted as the biggest challenge that interviewee A faced in mentoring. He mentioned that there seem to be too many tasks he needs to complete, which gave him just a short amount of time to prepare for mentoring meetings. He indicated, "Very often I felt overwhelmed with assigned works that I wanted to quit the mentoring as I thought it took up so much time from me." Moreover, interviewee A perceived that the amount of time that his mentor spent on developing his career was excessive, causing him a "feeling of guilt and embarrassment" whenever he asked for help.

Another problematic outcome of mentoring stated by interviewee B was a lack of understanding of mentoring program goals and processes. She recalled, "When I entered the mentorship for the very first time, I had no clue about what I was supposed to do. The situation got worse as my mentor assumed that I understood my tasks". She, therefore, recommended that each mentee spend enough time to investigate and discuss the goal of the relationship with the mentor to ensure any possible vague issues should be pointed out and solved. It is also important for the mentee to understand what is expected from his/her mentor. By meeting the expected requirements, it shows the mentor that the mentee is serious in the mentorship, as well as the mentor's time and effort, are valued by the mentee.

The third negative problem associated with mentoring cited by interviewee B is personality and values mismatch, which happens more often in a formal mentorship where organizations assign mentors to mentees. It is true that the outcomes of mentoring most likely depend on the personality traits carried by mentors and mentees. For instance, a mentor who scores low on openness would hardly be able to effectively provide learning experiences to his mentees who are more open-minded towards changes. It even gets worse when values difference between the partners could completely damage the relationship. Interviewee B continued emphasizing the chemistry between the two people. The above-mentioned differences could prevent the chemistry from developing. To avoid these problems, interviewee B suggested that organizations should conduct personality and values assessment tests among mentors and mentees first before matching them in a formal mentoring program. If any of them needs the training to improve a specific personality trait, it should be implemented as early as possible. Another solution is that both mentors and mentees should bravely accept these mismatches and discuss a way-out openly. If the problem remains unsolved, they had better look for different partners.

TABLE 9. Drawbacks of mentoring to the mentees. Own illustration.

Mentee
• Lack of time • Unclear mentoring goals and processes • Mismatch with the mentors

8.1.4 Mentoring towards career development

As part of the company's personnel development program, interviewee A was connected with his mentor, whose technical and leadership experience provided the guidance he was missing. The knowledge gained through mentoring guided him in the right direction; he now understands better what he ought to focus on. Furthermore, the mentor helped him lay out a suitable career path by setting short and long-term goals, say in the next 5-10 years, and counseling him on how to pursues them. The emphasis was to sketch a sound plan to improve necessary skills such as technical skills, soft skills, knowledge, etc., and the techniques to expand further towards the desired goals.

Another interesting thing commented by interviewee A was that his mentor did not act as a teacher, who provided course syllabus and imposed his knowledge to the mentee, yet he brought to interviewee B some perspectives to the problems he faced in the past when being a young software developer so that interviewee B would not step in the same mistakes.

As technology is a fast-changing field, it is easy for a software developer to get lost and become demotivated along the way. Interviewee A did face the same problem, as he got confused about which software development lines he should follow. He stated, "I was not sure which programming languages among the many emerging ones to master, or which programming frameworks would become trendy in the future." However, after some sit-down-and-talk mentoring sessions, his mentor provided him good books to read, trustful internet resources to expand the knowledge he was missing, and even recommended him to the right persons who understood the issue better than the mentor himself. The help of the mentor significantly helped interviewee A know the steps he needed to follow to become an achievable software developer. Lastly, interviewee A was grateful for the skills assessment test undergone by his mentor. That test helped him know that he is suitable for a career in the web-application route, not the hot-trend data sciences that he wanted to pursue.

Likewise, interviewee B quoted, "The role modeling that I learned from my career mentor, together with her instruction and shared experiences, has provided me valuable insights about my future role. It helped me have a clear picture of how an inspiring senior UX design manager performs the job." Before being mentored, interviewee B did not think of concrete next position in her career. She did not know which position she wanted to take as the next step. Her working routine was merely finishing the assigned tasks with the above-moderate results. Nevertheless, it was her career mentor who dramatically assisted her in reflecting and thinking about goals, helping her explore interests, abilities, values, and finally envisioning her career aspirations.

One of the most important benefits of her career success that mentoring brought interviewee B was again the self-confidence. She mentioned, "I believe self-confidence is one of the keys to professional achievement. Luckily in my early career, I was paired with a developmental mentor, who figured out the confidence I lack, and after that accompanied me on my journey to build up the self-confidence in me." Interviewee B recalled that in the first mentoring meeting, her mentor assigned her to read a few chapters from the book The Power of Self-Confidence written by Brian Tracy, preparing for the discussion in the next meeting. What interviewee B learned was that great leaders did not rely solely on professional expertise but largely on self-confidence and emotional intelligence. This lesson motivated her to work on improving herself. Later, the focus on the following mentoring meetings was helping interviewee B gain confidence. The mentor challenged interviewee B to stop sitting silently in her UX design team meeting as she used to be, but strive to speak up for just a single comment. Interviewee B commented, " I did it, and it was surprising to see how my contribution was valued by my team. It encouraged me to continue raising my voice in the next many meetings. I finally overcame the feeling of self-doubt and turned out to communicate more with my colleagues. The self-confidence gained through mentoring has shaped me to become a trustworthy team lead as I am now."
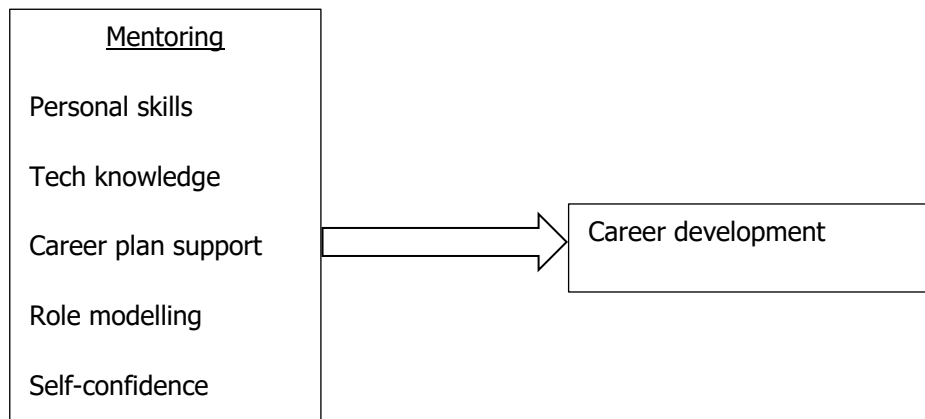
FIGURE 5. How mentoring supports mentees in career development. Own illustration.

8.2 Characteristics of effective mentees

When asking how to be an effective mentee, interviewee A mentioned that being proactive is considered a valuable characteristic. A proactive mentee is always actively engaged, not passively observing, and is taking responsibility for the mentoring relationship. To get the most out of the mentorship, the mentee ought to have the attitude that he/she is the owner of this relationship because mentoring overall is for the sake of the mentee: making the mentee advanced in life and career. To put it more realistic, interviewee A emphasized that being a proactive mentee includes building a relationship based on shared values and principles. It is also about the eagerness to accept advice and criticism, to question the advice, and even to bravely reject the advice given by the mentor. For example, if a mentee considers the way that his/her mentor writes codes differently than him, that mentee could stick with his way of thinking and coding, even when he is following his/her mentor during pair programming sessions. However, the mentee in this case should be prepared to explain to his/her mentor about the reason. Again, the clearer the expectations are clarified, the easier for the mentee to achieve the mentoring goals and the help he/she is looking for.

Similarly, interviewee B added that a good mentee should come to the mentoring meetings well prepared. For instance, it is the mentee's task to prepare the agenda for the meeting. Completing the agenda shows that the mentee has in mind what is expected from that meeting. In addition, the mentee is advised to complete all the readings required by the mentor, read before asking, show the mentor how much he/she has figured out by him/herself concerning the problem. Interviewee B recalled a time when she wanted to expand her knowledge about the topic of the product roadmap, a technique in the UX design method. Then, she came to the mentoring meetings with a pile of books about this topic, asked the mentor's opinions about those books, and which ones were good resources for her to read. Her action pleased the mentor well, as it showed her mentor that she was ready to learn about the topic.

Both interviewees A and B agreed that high competencies in communication skills are essential as well. It is indicated that clear and effective communication is the cornerstone determining the suc-

cess of the mentorship. True relationships will foster through clear, concise, and constructive dialogues. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the mentee should continuously improve communication skills to make sure that his/her ideas are correctly understood.

Another characteristic mentioned by interviewee B was trustworthiness. A trustful mentee shows commitments through attending mentoring meetings, following up set-points in those meetings, and strive to apply what had been told by the mentor. A trustful mentee keeps his/her promises and knows how to keep any confidential information undisclosed to irrelevant parties.

It was interesting to see that none of the interviewees mentioned any skills relating to technical knowledge. It is quite understandable because professional skills can be learned at any time, but the right attitude and right soft skills seem to be more crucial for any potential junior IT mentees.

The same issue was investigated from the perspective of a mentor. When being asked who an ideal mentee is, interviewee C responded that he looks for mentees who are goal-oriented, sincere, and reliable.
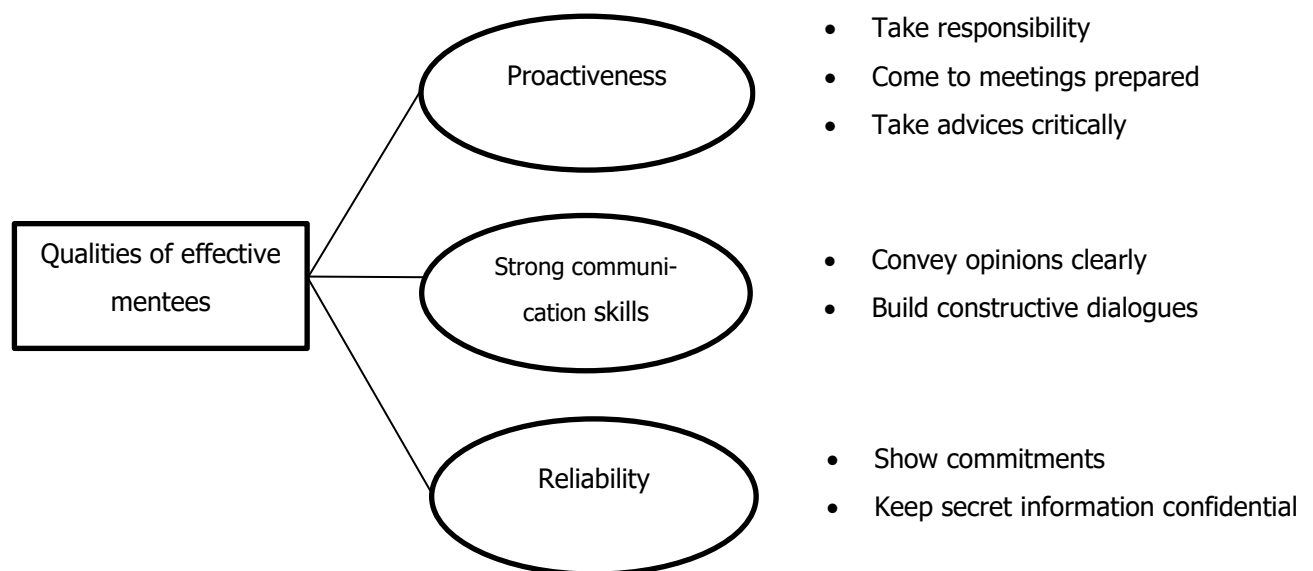

FIGURE 6. Characteristics of effective mentees. Own illustration.

8.3 Virtual mentoring

Both interviewees A and B have been mentored virtually. The use of E-mentoring has been significantly utilized starting from the end of the year 2019 when the COVID19 pandemic spread throughout the world. To avoid face-to-face meetings and risks caught through communing, the mentoring meetings were implemented through different virtual environments.

When asking about his experience with virtual mentoring, interviewee A expressed his tremendous satisfaction. Being an IT specialist, interviewee A had no difficulties in learning and using E-platforms to communicate with his mentor. The mix of media used includes telephone, text messages, email, and meetings conducted via Microsoft Team. Most of the time, conversations on phone happened when interviewee A was traveling on public transportation. When quick and short replies

were needed, text messages were sent. However, if any issues that required time for the other party to think and consider, E-mail is a better solution. According to interviewee A, the advancing technology makes it easier to conduct mentoring meetings virtually. Interviewee A admitted that he was fully pleased with the benefits brought by Microsoft Teams. The meetings on this platform are no different compared with the face-to-face ones. Modern technology allows for a better quality of images and sounds transferred. Even the pair-programming sessions are feasible with this platform, as interviewee A could see his mentor's screen which was shared with him. In this case, a double-screen computer would be highly recommended. Especially, the meeting could be recorded for later reference upon agreed by both parties. A full engagement experience was achieved, despite the long-distance apart between interviewee A and his mentor.

Reflecting on her experiences, interviewee B mentioned that telephone, emails, and Zoom was chosen as a means of communication when the mentoring was shifted from face-to-face to virtual. Emails were used mainly to confirm issues discussed on the telephone and online meetings, to set the time for meetings, and to share documentation and materials. Interviewee B also mentioned that emails work best when extra time is needed to prepare for more accurate or complicated answers. For example, after one mentoring session concerning the possible ladders in her career, the mentor of interviewee B sent her an email with an enclosed illustration about the steps discussed, which dramatically helped her to recall the information. Furthermore, when asking which implementation worked best for her, interviewee B said that a combination of face-to-face and virtual mentoring would be her choice. In her thinking, periodic face-to-face mentoring is a great tool to build rapport and chemistry between the parties. It also allows more personal, facial and body cues perceived. Virtual mentoring, on the contrary, could be easy for participants to get distracted through emails checking, daydreaming, or doing other works during the meetings. Technical glitches such as poor internet connection could lower the quality of virtual mentoring meetings. Finally, she emphasizes the importance of self-discipline to make sure the virtual mentoring relationship to be effective.

8.4 Organizational mentorship culture

It is undeniable that the firm itself is one of the crucial factors in determining the success of organizational mentoring. The company's visions, strategy, and culture can significantly affect the nature and the outcomes of the mentoring relationship. HR specialist D was interviewed to examine another angle of mentorship from organizational perspectives.

8.4.1 Effective mentoring

Not all mentoring relationships produce good fruits. Throughout her career life as an HR specialist who assisted in running some organizational professional mentoring programs, interviewee D has witnessed many failed mentorings. To ensure mentorship programs work effectively and successfully, interviewee D recommended some tactics as followed.

First, the company should provide clear policies and procedures about mentoring so that both mentor and mentee become more committed when entering the relationship. For example, in her former workplace, mentoring activities were happening but no statistics or reports showing the existence of

mentorship. Therefore, interviewee D recommended that mentoring policies should be communicated clearly to gain awareness among mentors and mentees. This could also result in a better process of evaluation and rewarding at the end of the relationship.

Second, to make sure the mentoring outcomes align with the organizational values, the management should promote a culture where the organization's values, visions, and goals are perceived by its employees. The shared understanding of the organization's values and objectives could direct the mentoring programs to produce the desired outcomes set by the management level.

Furthermore, the quality of mentors greatly determines the success of mentoring programs. An ideal mentor should possess valuable experiences in his field, could be a manager of the mentee, and should be accessible to the mentee, and can transmit the knowledge to his/her mentee. To her notice, a large amount of junior IT employees lack soft skills to assist them in climbing the ladder of promotion. This could be the result of either misunderstanding of the importance of these skills comparing with tech skills, or the lack of training during years of college. Therefore, a senior scoring high in mentoring skills, emotional intelligence, and empathy could be effective mentors in supporting the junior ones.

Lastly, the interviewee D also emphasized the importance of mentor-mentee matching in the organizational formal mentoring program, where the matching process is done by the program coordinator. In this case, the coordinator must inform the mentee about his/her potential mentor's profile and vice versa. This practice could give both parties hints and context for making the decision, as well as possible resolutions if the relationship goes wrong. Once both mentor and mentee agree to match, the program coordinator should let them sign a mentoring agreement. This agreement serves as guidelines and principles that lead their performances to the desired outcomes.

8.4.2 Mentoring benefits the organization

Interviewee D pointed out some positive impacts of mentoring on the organizational level. Firstly, mentoring can help in boosting organizational effectiveness. It is accomplished in many ways, such as improve employees' performance, recognize and training potential leaders, and retain key staff. With the help of mentoring, mentees obtain new skills and competencies, which make them perform their tasks more efficiently. Naturally, once the employees perform better, it will contribute to the growth performances of the whole organization.

Secondly, having mentorship programs as a learning tool can be a low-cost way to enhance employer brand. Job seekers nowadays not only pay attention to benefits or monetary rewards but also choose companies that assist them in professional development. For that reason, mentorship programs are considered a powerful selling tool to gain potential talents' attention. Interviewee D mentioned, "Our company always promotes the organizational mentoring culture in every job advertisement, on company's social media platforms such as company's blog posts, or our career pages. We want to tell job seekers out there that our company does care about them, and are willing to invest in their growth through the help of professional mentoring programs."

In addition, mentoring can improve organizational communication and connection, and foster stronger employee relationships. Because it might take time for both mentor and mentee to get to

know each other, once they are paired, both mentor and mentee would become more connected at work. This might lead to a more engaging atmosphere within the company. Lastly, the organization can benefit from the transfer of tacit knowledge, which is considered one of the most important factors of mentoring.

TABLE 10. Benefits of mentoring to the organization. Own illustration.

Organization
• Increase effectiveness
• Enhance employer branding
• Attract more talents
• Improve organizational connection
• Retain knowledge from the retiring employees

8.4.3 Developing a mentoring culture within the organization

Right after a new employee is hired, the organization should start thinking about helping that new hire to grow in the chosen career. Mentoring seems to be an effective tool to improve one's leadership, thanks to the transferred skills and learning reflection a mentee gets from his/her mentor. Mentoring helps the mentee understand who they are, what is important to them, and how to emerge bigger and stronger. However, mentoring can do more than just helping the mentees improves their skills. In fact, at the end of the process, the mentees will continue developing leaderships to the others. That is how organizational learning and mentoring culture evolves.

In terms of the mentoring matching process, it is proposed that organizations could assist by providing meetings, platforms, chatting café where potential mentors and mentees could meet up to exchange ideas. For instance, interviewee D's current company offers its employees periodic entertaining activities such as saunas days, summer hiking trips, or short-stayed cruise trips to make the employees both release work-stress and encourage them to initiate any possible mentoring relationship. Alternatively, the employees are encouraged and can receive financial support in participating in technical events such as Slush or technology talks following their interests. Most likely participants in these events share the same interests, which could stimulate the chances of initiating mentoring needs.

To make the mentoring culture to be seen within the organization, the mentoring program should be widely promoted using various platforms such as newsletters, the company's website, email blasts, or flyers on notice boards. The more the mentoring activities gain awareness, the more employees get motivated to take part in it.

Finally, the organization needs to think in the long-term. It is crucial to have a sustainable plan in developing current active mentors. Seminars, training sections, and meetings should be organized

so that mentors would be able to learn and upgrade their mentoring skills to become greater mentors. This could also help them stay motivated to mentoring others.

9   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research of this thesis shows that mentoring can play an important role in the professional development of less experienced IT employees. The knowledge, skills, and guidance transmitted from a senior mentor could help to diminish any uncertainty at the early stage of the career perceived by these new hires. This finding considerably supported prior studies of Cranwell-ward et al. (2004, 150) regarding how mentoring can help employees expose to the formal and informal structure of the company. Furthermore, new-to-career junior IT professionals could benefit by understanding the roles of mentoring towards their career development journey and techniques to stay efficient in any mentoring relationship.

The study found that mentoring can help to boost self-confidence in the mentee, which is considered one of the most crucial characteristics determining the mentee's success. A similar conclusion was reached by Cranwell-ward et al. (2004, 150). The mentors equipped with emotional intelligence skills would know how to plant the seed of confidence in the mentees. Furthermore, mentors are considered reliable resources of technical knowledge that the mentees can lean on. It is shown that to get promoted higher in their tech career, junior professionals should gain enough technical competencies first, followed by other personal skills.

Career development requires the employees to conduct a self-assessment of their interests and abilities first, and then to draw up a plan to achieve the necessary skills to perform harder tasks required at higher positions. To climb the career ladder, there is a need for thinking and doing. At this point, the mentor acts as a supporter who suggests strategies to the mentee regarding the know-how to achieve the mentee's career goals (Jyoti 2015, 14). This finding correlates with the perception of the interviews in this thesis, where the mentor was indicated to be valuable resources that the mentee can rely on for seeking help.

It is suggested that the mentee should take initiative and drive the mentoring relationship if he/she wants to get the most out of this partnership. Being a pro-active mentee means that he/she determines aspects relating to mentoring activities, for instance, pace, duration, objectives, and measurement methods, etc. Based on these actions, the mentor then only needs to focus on offering insights and guidance. Furthermore, mentees who can be trusted are also sought by many mentors, as trustful mentees know how to protect confidential issues and hold responsibility for everything they do. These results corroborate with the ideas of Nankivell and Shoolbred (1997, 102), who suggested that a mentee should be honest, active, and committed to the mentoring relationship to make it a successful one.

Concerning the organizational level, mentoring can help build up an effective workforce that inherits valuable experience and knowledge transfer from the aging employees. Once learned by the mentees, the organization would not face the loss of these know-hows when the senior staffs retire. Interestingly, this result goes beyond previous studies in section 4.3, where knowledge retention could not be found. On the other hand, an organization with a strong mentoring culture could highly attract and retain top talents because high-quality talents would like to seek employment at compa-

nies that offer professional learning and personal growth through mentoring programs. This is consistent with what has been found in the study of Kelly (2001, 21) which showed that mentoring could bring new talents to the organization's core elite and ensure the transmission of organizational knowledge. Lastly, companies are advised to embed the organizational values and goals into mentoring activities so that the mentoring outcomes are always aligning with expectations set by the management level.

The author acknowledged certain limitations in this research. First, the participants in the interview work in different organizations, the generalizability of the findings, therefore, remains unknown and may not represent the true situation happening within a single firm. Second, because the number of participants is moderately low, the perceived roles of mentoring towards career development seem not likely to be representative of the whole IT industry.

Junior IT professionals, in this context, are defined as new graduates who are landing their first job and lack working experiences in a specific field. Those who are elderly or switching from another occupation field are not the main targets.

As career development is a wide concept, this thesis prefers it as career advancement, the progression from an entry-level job to a management position. In addition, this thesis is aiming at suggesting practical recommendations on implementing successful mentoring programs that any organization could employ. Therefore, the expected outcome would not be a guideline. Lastly, the literature review did not cover the matching process between mentors and mentees, which is essential in determining the success of a mentoring relationship.

In the future, it could be interesting to expand the study on developing a mentoring guideline for an IT organization, supported by a more handful of insights from IT mentors and mentees. Furthermore, deeper perspectives on virtual mentoring seem to be a worthy topic to be discussed, for example how to successfully employ E-mentoring for small Enterprises, as online learning in general and virtual mentoring, in particular, are becoming a growing trend in this current digital era.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Theme 1 Outcomes of mentoring

1. How long have you joined this company?
2. How many times have you mentored/been mentored?
3. What motivated you to join a mentoring relationship?
4. Do you find mentorship beneficial?
5. Did you experience any drawbacks from mentoring? Please explain.
6. After you landed your first job, did you have a clear vision of your career path? How did mentoring support you in developing your career?

Theme 2 Effective mentoring

7. What did you do to stay effective when being mentored?
8. Have you ever been mentored virtually? Could you share your experience with it?

Questions interviewed to mentors

9. What are the characteristics of mentees that you find attractive?
10. Why would you become a mentor?

Theme 3 Organizational Mentorship Culture

11. What are the factors determining the success of a mentorship?
12. How is mentoring beneficial to the organization?
13. How does an organization promote mentorship culture?