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The contribution of mentorship as an
entrepreneurial learning mechanism
for South African entrepreneurs

Kathryn Johnston

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Supervisor: Associate Professor Linda Ronnie

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ABSTRACT

Existing research in the field of mentorship as a mechanism for entrepreneurial learning suggests a requirement for more studies. Previous empirical research in the field has predominantly focussed on the workplace context and not the entrepreneur. The current research available in the field of entrepreneurial mentorship and its contribution to the business success of entrepreneurs is even more limited in the South African context. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the perceived contribution that mentorship makes as a vehicle for learning and development for South African entrepreneurs. In this mixed methods triangulation parallel design study, the qualitative component encompassed semi-structured interviews, presenting the narrative of twelve South African franchise principals who were entrepreneurs. The quantitative component consisted of an online survey which received responses from 35 business consultants. The surveys were created to capture perceptions of mentorship and what aspects were considered as important variables in the mentor-mentee match.

Key findings of this research were that mentorship was perceived to contribute to entrepreneurs' personal and business success. The sample highlighted that the nature of the contribution of mentorship was related to business management support and/or psychosocial support. The study found that the entrepreneurs perceived the mentor's experience and performance track as vital to the success of the mentor-mentee match and that it was critical that there was respect, trust and honesty in the relationship.

This study contributes to the growing field of research in mentorship specifically in the context of entrepreneurial learning. This is critical in South Africa where there is an absolute need for an improved state of entrepreneurship and therefore efforts must be made to create the support to improve this current situation. The research also offers insight into variables that should be considered when matching a mentor and mentee to increase the likelihood of success of the mentorship. The results of this research could potentially be used in the construction of a mentorship network for entrepreneurs with a mentor-mentee matching system that takes these insights into account.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Learning, Mentorship and Entrepreneurial Mentorship

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation

IT	Information Technology
MS Outlook	Microsoft Outlook
SA	South Africa
SAMAF	South African Micro Apex Fund
SAWIC	South African Women in Construction
SEDA	Small Enterprise Development Agency
SME	Small-to-Medium Enterprise
TEA	Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity
UCT	University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH AIM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Healthy entrepreneurial activity within an economy is critical and is even more important as a means of alleviating poverty and unemployment in developing countries such as South Africa. Despite the acknowledgement of the significance of entrepreneurship, the latest research still shows that entrepreneurship in the country is struggling and faces many challenges (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2016/17) such as the learning and development of entrepreneurs. One of the key learning mechanisms for entrepreneurs is their interactions with others, in particular, more experienced individuals such as mentors (Raiz, 2006). Thus, this research focusses on the field of mentorship as an entrepreneurial learning mechanism, and more specifically, investigates the perceived contribution and benefits of mentorship for South African entrepreneurs. This chapter provides an introduction to the research and presents the background and context of the research problem. The chapter also introduces the key concepts and questions which this study seeks to address and provides a high-level understanding of the motivation for and the purpose of conducting this research.

This research is based on South African entrepreneurs, therefore in the following section the importance of entrepreneurship and small business in South Africa will be discussed, after which the key challenges facing South African entrepreneurs will be explored with a specific focus on the learning and development challenges. It will then hone in on entrepreneurial learning and describe how mentorship is a vehicle of entrepreneurial learning which contributes to the business success of entrepreneurs.

1.2 BACKGROUND

This research focusses on mentorship as a learning vehicle to grow and develop entrepreneurs and ultimately contribute to their business success. The rationale behind focussing specifically on entrepreneurs is the importance of entrepreneurship as a critical mechanism for resolving some of the most prominent economic challenges facing South Africa (GEM, 2016/17). The benefits of entrepreneurship have been recognised globally as a means to stimulate economic growth and competitiveness, promote job creation, enhance self-esteem, social inclusion and social well-being and increase political stability (Dempsey, 2009).

However, in spite of all the benefits of entrepreneurship, there are still significant obstacles that hinder the performance and growth of entrepreneurs and their businesses. The most pertinent of these obstacles in South Africa include a highly regulated legislative environment, access to funding and finance and the development and learning opportunities for entrepreneurs (GEM, 2015/2016). Therefore, providing the appropriate learning and development opportunities for entrepreneurs could potentially contribute to the success of their businesses and ultimately contribute to improving the state of entrepreneurship in the country. These learning and development initiatives include both formal and informal learning interventions and one of the learning interventions specifically identified in the South African GEM survey (2016/17) was that of mentorship. Mentorship can contribute by developing entrepreneurs and can help them manage through challenging economic times and also assist them through the various points in a business life cycle (Fayolle, 2007). This research therefore explores mentorship in the entrepreneurial context and considers the contribution that mentorship makes to the success of the entrepreneurs and their businesses.

This research is based on South African entrepreneurs, therefore an in-depth understanding of the state of entrepreneurship in South Africa and the challenges these entrepreneurs experience is necessary.

1.3 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY

The environment in which the entrepreneurs in this study are required to function is the South African economy and labour market. According to South African Statistics (2018), the unemployment rate of the economically active population stands at almost 27% and is even greater for the youth, which is close to 60%. These statistics, in relation to other developing nations, is alarmingly high. The high level of unemployment has a negative effect on the economy and it has become imperative that potential strategies to alleviate poverty and improve the state of the economy are considered. The GEM report (2016/17) also highlighted that, in addition to high unemployment levels, South Africa has an excessively high income disparity ratio when comparing wealth among the population groups. One of the ways to address unemployment and income disparity and improve the economy is through increasing entrepreneurial activity by developing more entrepreneurs in the country (Mahadeva & Kaseeram, 2018). Entrepreneurship is considered to be a positive contributor to the economy of a country (Schumpeter, 1934). As mentioned earlier, the contribution of entrepreneurship to improving economic activity in a country has been recognised globally

(Mudau & Kruger, 2014). This was echoed at the World Economic Forum (2014) where it was identified that entrepreneurship is an economic driver that stimulates business growth. In addition to driving the economy, entrepreneurship also assists with the creation of jobs, which in turn assists in resolving unemployment as described earlier (Wong, Ho & Autio, 2005).

However, the state of entrepreneurship in South Africa is still not optimal and therefore the population is not enjoying its economic and social benefits. The Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) Rate is an index that provides information on the state of entrepreneurial activity in a country for people between the age brackets 18 and 64 years who have ownership in a business for less than 42 months. The TEA in South Africa is low (9.1%). The most recent research reflects that the general levels of entrepreneurial activity in South Africa are alarmingly low when compared to other developing countries (GEM, 2016/17). Over the last decade, the state of entrepreneurship has continued to decline in South Africa (Herrington & Kew, 2015), with only a slight improvement in the 2016/17 GEM results when compared to the previous year. The 2015/16 GEM report described South Africa “as having an alarmingly low level of entrepreneurial activity in spite of high unemployment (p. 4)”. Another measure of the state of entrepreneurship is entrepreneurial intent which measures the attitude of South Africans towards entrepreneurship and their propensity to partake in entrepreneurial activity. The South African GEM (2015/16) report showed that the entrepreneurial intent had worsened significantly from 2014 to 2016. However, all is not lost. In the last GEM report (2016/17), there was a substantial increase, even though it was still significantly lower than other emerging markets.

It is crucial to consider the factors and issues that contribute to the present state of entrepreneurship in South Africa. The latest research (GEM, 2015/16; GEM, 2016/17) identified several factors giving rise to the state of entrepreneurship in South Africa, the most prominent of these were related to unsupportive government policies, lack access to finance and limited relevant education and training opportunities. These factors have been identified as some of the most critical factors negatively affecting entrepreneurial activity in South Africa since 2001 (Herrington & Kew, 2015). SiMODiSA Association Trust (2015) reported similar findings to that of the GEM reports (2015/16; 2016/2017), identifying the most critical challenges facing entrepreneurs as skills deficit, regulations and policies, limited availability of opportunity and funding, private and public sector disconnects and trust deficit and low-risk tolerance. There are also some challenges that are inherent to the

nature of entrepreneurship itself in that there is a host of tasks encompassed in entrepreneurship, which make the role of an entrepreneur fairly complex. This complexity is well articulated in the definition which this study has adopted:

Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks, formulate an effective venture team, marshal the needed resources, build a solid business plan, and, finally, the vision to recognise opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion (Kuratko, 2009, p. 5).

The concept of entrepreneurship is complex as can be seen from the definition of entrepreneurship and therefore the role of the entrepreneur is also complex. The environment in which entrepreneurs operate and state of entrepreneurship in South Africa, as discussed earlier, further compounds this complexity.

All these conditions and factors create a sense of urgency for South African leaders and policymakers to consider initiatives and means to improve the state of entrepreneurship. There are several critical challenges facing entrepreneurs. However, this research focussed on one of the challenges – the lack of relevant learning and development opportunities. Research by Chimucheka (2014) emphasised the importance of entrepreneurs acquiring the relevant entrepreneurial skills, concepts and knowledge. There are various learning mechanisms and methods, which entrepreneurs can adopt to learn these various skills, knowledge and concepts. This research therefore honed in on one of the learning mechanisms which was specifically identified as a recommended method to improve the state of entrepreneurship (GEM, 2016/17).

In the 2008 GEM report and in more recent GEM reports (2016/17), certain recommendations focussed on building entrepreneurial capability in South Africa which included a mentorship fund and/or network being established. The recommendation emphasised that, for mentorship initiatives to be successful, competent and experienced mentors with a proven track record in small business support and development were required. In addition, sufficient provision for financing for start-up businesses was required, in conjunction with the on-going mentorship,

training and access to support services (Herrington & Kew, 2015). Research has confirmed the positive effects of mentorship in that it yields both personal growth and improves individual and business productivity (Brodie, Van Saane, & Osowska, 2017; Clutterbuck, 2001; Raiz, 2006; Sullivan, 2000). Furthermore, it was found the traditional higher education institutions such as universities and colleges did not present the best medium of learning for entrepreneurs and that a more experientially-based learning methodology could yield more learning (Smith & Paton, 2011). Therefore, this research study focused on exploring mentorship as a learning mechanism for entrepreneurs, which could assist and support entrepreneurs to grow and succeed in their ventures.

1.4 MENTORSHIP AND THE ENTREPRENEUR

The earlier discussion on the context of entrepreneurship in South Africa specifically highlighted the challenges facing entrepreneurs and suggested entrepreneurial learning and mentorship as a means to address some of these challenges. For the purposes of this research, the definition of mentorship by Bozeman and Feeney (2007) will be adopted.

[The] transmission of knowledge, social capital, and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and over a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom or experience (the mentor), to a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé [mentee]) (p. 17).

The concept of mentorship has been in existence for decades. However it is only since the last few years that mentorship has been studied in the context of entrepreneurship and at this stage, mentorship in the entrepreneurial context is perceived to have insufficient empirical investigation (Waters, McCabe, Kiellerup & Kiellerup, 2002). Therefore, throughout this research, mentorship will be considered in both the general context and then in the context of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial mentoring has been referred to as a learning mechanism that assists an entrepreneur (the mentee) develop business-related skills and develop the ability to manage all the functions of a business (Gravells, 2006). In research by Moulson (2015), a definite positive link was found between mentoring and the performance of the entrepreneur. This

research also emphasised the knowledgeability of the mentor (Moulson, 2015). However, it has also been found that there are entrepreneurs who acknowledge the support of a mentor but do not view it as significant (Cull, 2006).

It is also important that the objective of the mentorship is clear and understood by all parties. The primary goal of mentoring is to develop the mentee on both a professional and personal level. There is also a need for trust and respect in the mentor-mentee relationship (MindTools, 2014).

Ultimately, mentoring should lead to mentee learning. In entrepreneurial mentorship, there should be even higher levels of learning as the learning is experiential (Heilmen, Holt & Rilovick, 2008). Through mentoring, entrepreneurs should experience a change in their levels of satisfaction in running their businesses, business and financial performance, stress levels and engagement levels. The purpose of the mentorship should lead to some sort of development of the entrepreneur in their running of their enterprise, ability to identify opportunities, managing and procuring resources and executing business actions to achieve results (Amaeshi, 2006; Amaeshi, 2007; Osemeke, 2012). Many studies agree with the aforementioned with some research primarily focussed on business management (Bisk 2002; Cull 2006; Kent, Dennis, & Tanton, 2003), and other research focussed on the psychological and psychosocial growth of the entrepreneur (Nandram, 2003; Waters et al., 2002). Research has also considered both the business and psychosocial aspects and benefits of mentorship (Gravells, 2006; Miettinen, 2003; Wikholm, Henningson, & Hultman, 2005).

Various research studies have discussed mentorship as a learning mechanism for entrepreneurs that would yield both personal and business benefits for the entrepreneur. However, in order for all these benefits to be realised, it is imperative that the variables likely to improve the outcomes of mentorship need to be considered and leveraged. One of these variables is the mentor-mentee match. Studies have emphasised the mentor-mentee match as fundamental to improving the outcomes and contribution of the mentorship (Bozeman & Feeney, 2008; Bush, Coleman, Wall & West-Burnham, 1996; Forret, Turban, & Dougherty, 1996; Hale, 2000). Methodical pairing of mentors and mentees has proven to have greater success than random selection (Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992; Forret et al., 1996). Therefore, a secondary objective of this research was to consider the variables that were important to the matching of the mentor and mentee. In this regard, research has shown

that mentees may have a preference for same-gender mentorships. However the gender match has not contributed to the success of the mentorship (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). It was found in a mentoring relationship where the mentor was male and the mentee was female, there appeared to be more career development and support in comparison to other mentor-mentee gender matches (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). However, there has been little consistency in the findings of other studies. Research, which considered race as a variable in the mentorship, found that the mentee received more psychological and social support than cross-race mentoring matches (James, 2000; Thomas, 1990). In research by Ensher and Murphy (1997), there were conflicting findings where despite the racial makeup of the mentor-mentee, there was equal psychosocial support. Turban et al. (2002) found no differences based on the race and duration variables, while Ensher, Grant-Vallone, and Marelich (2002) found no differences in the support or perceived satisfaction of the mentoring relationship based on race. Furthermore, research by Ensher and Murphy (2005) highlighted that when the mentor perceives the mentee as having higher potential and ability, the relationship yields more value. The study also found that honesty, trustworthiness, dependability and an openness to learning as critical characteristics that the mentee should possess. There have been very few mentorship matching models. However, one proposed model, the “Goodness of Fit” model by Bozeman and Feeney (2008), considered knowledge, skills, experience and learning and communication abilities as important to the mentor-mentee match. The model also highlighted that the willingness to share knowledge and experience and the willingness to receive and absorb the information was critical. However, it is important that this model is further tested empirically (Bozeman & Feeney, 2008).

The above section discussed mentorship in the context of entrepreneurs and the benefits and contributions associated with entrepreneurial mentoring. Then the variables which have been researched in terms of being important to the mentor-mentee match were briefly considered. The following section will look at the objectives and purpose of this research in context of the above discussion.

1.5 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this parallel triangulation mixed methods study was to explore and describe the perceived contribution that mentorship makes as a vehicle for learning and development for South African entrepreneurs. Furthermore, to identify and describe which variables contribute

to the success of mentorship as a learning mechanism, with a particular focus on the success of the mentor-mentee match. To achieve this, the following objectives were identified:

- To understand if entrepreneurs perceived mentorship to contribute to their business.
- Then to understand the nature of the aforementioned contribution.
- Then also to understand the variables that were important to ensuring the success of the mentorship, and more specifically, the success of the mentor-mentee match.

The objectives of this research were addressed in the following questions:

The primary research questions that this study addressed was:

Question 1: How does mentorship contribute to entrepreneurial business success as perceived by South African entrepreneurs?

Question 2: Which variables most contribute to the success of the mentor-mentee match?

The secondary question that this study addressed were:

Question 3: What are the most effective learning mechanisms for entrepreneurs?

Therefore, the focus of this research is on the mentorship of entrepreneurs as a learning mechanism for entrepreneurs, which could assist the state of entrepreneurship in South Africa by improving the entrepreneurs' businesses. The qualitative sample comprised of franchise principals who all had commercial agreements with the same financial services organisation and were entrepreneurs. Therefore, the financial services organisation paid the franchise for providing services, as stipulated in the commercial agreement. The franchise itself was fully owned and run by the franchise principal. The quantitative sample comprised of business consultants who also had commercial agreements with the same financial services organisation as the franchise owners in the qualitative sample. The business consultants operated on their own/independently or as part of a franchise. However their commercial agreement was for their business operation to be run only by themselves with no other persons operating in or employed by the business consultant.

The focus of the data gathering in this study was to capture the experiences and views of the entrepreneurs to understand the contribution mentorship made to their business and also to establish how they learnt best and what they considered as important variables in the mentor-

mentee match. This research was undertaken as part of the Masters in Inclusive Innovation at the UCT Business School. The qualitative data were used to understand the influence of mentorship on the entrepreneurs and the nature of its influence in-depth. However, a larger group was required to give input into the variables, which were to be considered for the mentor-mentee matching system to make it more generalisable and valid. This formed the basis for using the mixed methods approach and enabled the researcher to collect sufficient data to fully answer the research questions.

1.6 RESEARCH RATIONALE

Research emphasising the importance of mentorship and the positive influence it can have on growing entrepreneurs and their businesses has been well-documented (Hisrich & Peters, 2002; Petridou, 2009; Sullivan, 2000; Timmons, 1999). Hisrich and Peters (2002) also emphasised that a robust support system and sound advice are required to support entrepreneurial growth and highlighted that the assistance from a suitable mentor can benefit entrepreneurs in both a professional and personal capacity.

Therefore, mentoring is potentially essential to improving productivity and performance in businesses and entrepreneurs. However, even though it is recognised that mentorship can influence the success of entrepreneurs, there is limited research in the field. Most of the research relates to mentorship that is specific to the workplace and more specifically, large organisations (Clutterbuck, 2004; Kram, 1985). The South African studies that explored mentorship also predominantly focussed on workplace and organisational mentoring (Steinmann, 2006). In this study, the theories and research from workplace mentoring will be considered in particular where there is limited research available from the entrepreneurial context. Therefore, due to the lack of existing literature in entrepreneurial mentoring, this study seeks to build on the existing literature in the field of mentorship and its effects, with a specific emphasis on entrepreneurial mentoring, and to provide insights into some of the new aspects emerging from the entrepreneurial context.

Much of the existing literature focusses on mentoring from the perspective of the mentor or the organisation and capturing their views. This study considers mentorship from the perspective of the entrepreneur-mentee. There is also limited research available on the variables that most affect the success of the mentor-mentee match, and where there is research, it has focussed more on biographical variables such as gender (Blair, 2008). This research study will consider

which variables are most important to the mentor-mentee match, and the variables will expand beyond biographical and demographic variables such as race, gender and culture.

From a more practical perspective, entrepreneurship in South Africa remains a focal point and the government has created strategies aimed at aiding South African entrepreneurs to overcome barriers and challenges they are faced with. However, despite the focus, creation and expansion of several institutions and initiatives aimed at supporting entrepreneurs, there has been little improvement and, in some instances, a decline (GEM, 2015/16). There have also been several recommendations from various studies and institutes suggesting mentorship and learning support as a means of addressing the obstacles facing entrepreneurs in South Africa (GEM, 2016/17). Therefore, this research seeks to test the rationale for creating platforms for additional mentoring networks for South Africa entrepreneurs.

1.7 COMPOSITION OF THE REPORT

In this research paper, there are six chapters. The first chapter has served as an introduction to the context, background, motivation and purpose of this research, and states the research problem that was addressed in the research paper. A robust literature review in Chapter 2 explores all the relevant existing research and literature relevant to the concepts in the research paper. These include entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial learning, mentorship and entrepreneurial mentorship. In chapter 3 the process that was followed when conducting the research, as well as the methodology adopted is discussed. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research, which will be followed by a discussion of the findings in Chapter 5. The last chapter summarises the research, draws conclusions and makes recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There has been an increased focus on the development of entrepreneurship globally and more specifically in South Africa (SA). The poor levels of education and lack of access to development opportunities, compounded by an increasing number of entrepreneurs failing in their ventures, all create an even greater need for entrepreneurial development and support in South Africa (GEM, 2015/2016). There is also limited research currently available on entrepreneurial learning in the South African context. Therefore, this research focusses on the field of mentorship as an entrepreneurial learning mechanism, and more specifically, examines the perceived contribution and benefits of mentorship for South African entrepreneurs and their businesses. Furthermore, there will be a focus on the variables that the entrepreneurs participating in this study viewed as important and beneficial to a successful mentor-mentee match.

This chapter will include sections that explore the concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning, following which the concept of mentoring will be analysed with a focus on entrepreneurial mentoring and the mentor-mentee match.

2.2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2.2.1 Definition of Entrepreneurship

There appears to be a vast offering of research on the concept and definition of entrepreneurship, with some common themes. Kirzner (1997) related it to a particular awareness of opportunity, while Onuohi (2007) referred to it as the starting or re-energising of a business, more specifically a new business initiated as a reaction to an identified opportunity. There have also been contrasting views on where to place the emphasis when defining entrepreneurship (Cunningham & Licheron, 1991). It has been proposed that entrepreneurship should be viewed as a multi-dimensional concept (Busenitz, Gomez & Spencer, 2000). Acs and Szerb (2007) suggested that opportunity recognition and the process of mobilising a new venture to exploit such opportunities are central to the concept of entrepreneurship.

Joseph Schumpeter (1965), considered to be one of the first developers of theories in the field of entrepreneurship, referred to entrepreneurship as either creating or doing something new or different. He also described an entrepreneur as a person who exhausts opportunity through

innovation. In his earlier work, he alluded to the fact that the “definition does not draw any sharp line between what is and what is not ‘enterprise’” and referred to this as an advantage (Schumpeter 1947, p. 151).

In 2011, the GEM Extended Report defined entrepreneurship as “Any attempts at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organisation, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business”. Schramm et al. (2008) defined entrepreneurship as the design, intervention or implementation of new or altered products, services, processes, systems, organisational structures or business models. This definition included the concept of value add and/or profit as an essential element of entrepreneurship.

The definition of entrepreneurship that best encapsulates the most relevant components, for the purposes of this study, is:

Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks, formulate an effective venture team, marshal the needed resources, build a solid business plan, and, finally, the vision to recognise opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion (Kuratko, 2009, p. 5).

Although there are various definitions for entrepreneurship, themes such as the notion of identifying some opportunity and then taking action by initiating or expanding something appear to be common to these definitions. To deepen the understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship, it is important to understand the characteristics associated with entrepreneurship. These characteristics are discussed in the next section.

2.2.2 Characteristics of Entrepreneurs

Numerous studies have focused on entrepreneurial characteristics (Baum & Locke, 2004; Byers, Kist & Sutton, 2007; Gorman, Hanlon & King, 1997; McClelland, 1961; Rasheed, 2003; Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006; Timmons & Spinelli, 2009). For example, McClelland (1961) proposed that entrepreneurs may hold certain personality characteristics, which others do not. Another example is research aimed at examining personality characteristics that could potentially identify persons more likely to become an entrepreneur (Byers, Kist & Sutton,

2007). In addition to defining and identifying the characteristics of entrepreneurs, it has been suggested that these characteristics may be attributed to nature (innate) or developed through nurture (Gorman, Hanlon & King, 1997; Rasheed, 2003).

Entrepreneurial characteristics encompass a series of variables, including that of personal attributes, personality, behaviour and attitude (Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006). Timmons and Spinelli (2009) conducted an analysis of more than 50 studies on the characteristics of entrepreneurs. Their research identified the following six common characteristics across the studies:

- commitment and determination;
- leadership;
- opportunity preoccupation;
- tolerance of risk, ambiguity and uncertainty;
- creativity, self-reliance and ability to adapt;
- and motivation to excel

Baum and Locke's (2004) research supported the Timmons and Spinelli (2009) findings indicated that entrepreneurial characteristics such as 'goal driven' and 'self-efficacy' were positively linked to growth and performance of a business venture.

It has also been argued that the fundamental difference between entrepreneurs and those identified as non-entrepreneurs is that entrepreneurs have a greater desire to have control over their own ventures (Carter, Gartner, Shaver & Gatewood, 2003). There are researchers who have suggested that, other than the characteristic of wanting control, there is no clear set of behavioural attributes that allows us to separate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. Drucker (2007, p. 23) further elaborated on this, "It is not a personality trait; ... everyone who can face up to decision making can learn to be an entrepreneur and to behave entrepreneurially".

It is evident there are diverse views on the common personality traits and characteristics of entrepreneurs. However, common themes, which give insight into the characteristics that are likely to predict the success of an entrepreneur, emerge. There are also varying views on whether there are definitive personality characteristics unique to those who are entrepreneurs. Many of the recommendations of the aforementioned studies have stated that more research is required in this field to resolve the conflicting views and to find more common ground.

However, for the purposes of this research, this section intends to provide a broad understanding of entrepreneurship only and what it encompasses.

2.2.3 The role of Entrepreneurship in the South African Economy

The previous section presented a conceptual understanding of entrepreneurship as a background to this study. The discussion will now expand on why there has been an exponential increase in the focus on entrepreneurship and the role it plays in the economy and South Africa.

Entrepreneurship, which organises all aspects of production into value creation, is a driver of economic activity. There is evidence suggesting that the concept of entrepreneurship dates as far back as the 18th century Industrial Revolution and that this risk-bearing activity is grounded in economic theories (Frederick, Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2007). One of the most recognised of these theories is the theory of creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1947) which posits that entrepreneurship serves as one of the responses from business and society to the current external economic conditions.

In 2014, the World Economic Forum identified entrepreneurship as a driver of economic and business growth. Not only does it stimulate economic growth but it also accelerates the rate of economic growth and the creation of jobs in any system in which it exists (Wong et al., 2005). Entrepreneurship and Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have become critical mechanisms in resolving some of the most crucial economic challenges facing South Africa. SMEs and entrepreneurs could influence the economy through the critical role they play in fostering innovation, which enables and assists technological development and change and further contributes to the productivity in an economy. Entrepreneurship is also an essential mechanism of inclusivity in that it enables people to become part of society and become active participants in the economy (Wong et al., 2005).

It is evident that entrepreneurship plays a critical role in contributing to the development of South Africa. However, its benefits have been experienced globally for far longer. In the world economy, entrepreneurship is seen as a stimulus for the creation of healthy competitiveness. It also enhances self-esteem and social inclusion, promotes job creation and the social well-being of the country and aids in increasing political stability and national security (Dempsey, 2009). Given the significant effect entrepreneurship and SMEs can have on the economy and its potential to alleviate unemployment and poverty, it should follow that the development and

creation of SMEs and entrepreneurs would benefit a country i.e. improve the living standard and alleviate poverty, as emphasised in the South African GEM Report (2016/17).

However, despite the awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship, South Africa is still struggling to use entrepreneurship as a lever to alleviate some of the core social problems it faces. The GEM report (2016/17) highlighted that South Africa has a wide disparity of incomes coupled with an unemployment challenge. The inability of South Africa to create sufficient jobs has amounted to a chronically high unemployment rate, which has been a key contributor to the persisting inequality and poverty in the country. Unemployment remains at a high of 27.6%, with an expanded rate of over 40%. Youth unemployment is higher at over 65%, which has placed great pressure on the South African leaders and policymakers to create a clear strategy to improve economic growth. To enable growth, there needs to be a focus on creating a conducive business environment in South Africa, specifically for SMEs that would assist with job creation. There is evidence that in developing economies, SMEs are a key mechanism for sustainable job creation, which stimulates economic growth and assists in reducing income disparities (GEM, 2016/17).

Despite an acknowledgement of the importance of entrepreneurship in South Africa, the latest research has indicated that there are considerable challenges hindering the development of entrepreneurship. The 2015/16 GEM report showed that entrepreneurial activity in South Africa had decreased during 2015 through to 2016. However, the latest GEM report (2016/17) has shown a substantial improvement in entrepreneurial activity from 2016 to 2017, it being at its highest since 2013, in comparison to previous years. Despite this improvement in entrepreneurial activity in 2016 and 2017, the report still highlighted the low levels of entrepreneurial activity in South Africa when compared to other countries participating in the GEM survey. The GEM (2015/16, p.4) described South Africa:

as having an alarmingly low level of entrepreneurial activity in spite of high unemployment... South Africa's rate of entrepreneurial activity is very low for a developing nation – a mere quarter of that seen in other sub-Saharan African countries... Entrepreneurial activity in South Africa, although very low, has increased marginally over the last 10 years, but in 2014 dropped by a staggering 34% (from 10.6% to 7%).

The attitude of South Africans towards entrepreneurship and their likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial activity has also worsened. In 2014, the entrepreneurial intent measure was close to double compared to the 2016 measure, which is more than three and a half times lower than in 2010. The GEM (2015/16) report indicated a decline in the entrepreneurial intent of South Africans over the last few years. However, the latest GEM report (2016/17) has shown a substantial increase in the entrepreneurial intent of South Africans, indicating that the attitude of South Africans towards entrepreneurship has improved.

The GEM report (2015/16) cited several reasons for the slow entrepreneurial growth, including factors such as ineffective and/or insufficient government programmes, research and societal/cultural norms. The most critical factors identified as hindering entrepreneurial development in South Africa were:

- government policy (61%);
- access to finance (44%);
- and education and training (42%).

These factors have been identified as the most critical factors negatively affecting entrepreneurial activity in South Africa since 2001 and were once again identified in the latest GEM report (2016/2017).

The findings of research conducted by The SiMODiSA Association Trust (2015), which was aimed at identifying common challenges facing South African entrepreneurs, were similar to the 2016/17 GEM survey findings, in that the report identified skills deficit, regulations and policies, limited availability of opportunity and funding, private and public sector disconnects and trust deficit, and low-risk tolerance as the most critical challenges facing entrepreneurs. These findings were also similar to those of the World Bank survey (2000), which identified many of the challenges that faced SMEs in South Africa and some of the mechanisms that could support SME growth. These mechanisms included policy stability, lower interest rates, education and training, promotion of SMEs in public services, flexible wages and business information.

It is evident that entrepreneurship is an important part of society and the economy and it is clear that South Africa has serious challenges that hinder the contribution entrepreneurship could

make to the country. Therefore, it is important to consider how entrepreneurial capability can be built to be more effective in the country.

2.2.4 Building Entrepreneurial capability

In the March 2010 budget speech, Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, announced a re-focus on stimulating entrepreneurial activity in South Africa and a re-emphasis on aiding entrepreneurs and SMEs by developing and expanding institutions and support mechanisms, aimed at assisting South African entrepreneurs to overcome the challenges as outlined earlier. These support mechanisms included organisations that assisted entrepreneurs with financing and raising funds, provided education and training and created networks. The organisations included Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), South African Micro Apex Fund (SAMAF), Ntsika, Khula, National Empowerment Fund, BRAIN, Business Partners Limited, SAWIC (South African Women in Construction), and the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA).

However, despite all the support from the aforementioned organisations and government efforts, the state of entrepreneurship in South Africa has not really improved (GEM, 2015/16). In several of the GEM Reports (2008, 2010, 2014, 2015/16 & 2016/17), mentoring and the establishment of a mentorship fund was provided as one of the recommendations to assist in improving entrepreneurial activity and intent in South Africa. The reports also specified that the mentorship fund would need to be managed by competent and experienced individuals who had a proven track record in small business development support. In the 2015/16 and 2016/17 GEM reports, an entire section was specifically focussed on mentoring support for entrepreneurs as a means to promote entrepreneurial activity in South Africa, in addition to full sections of the recommendations being dedicated to government policy, financial aid, education and training. The reports alluded that funding, technical training and business support in isolation could not resolve the noted challenges and that a more holistic and integrated strategy might yield more effective results.

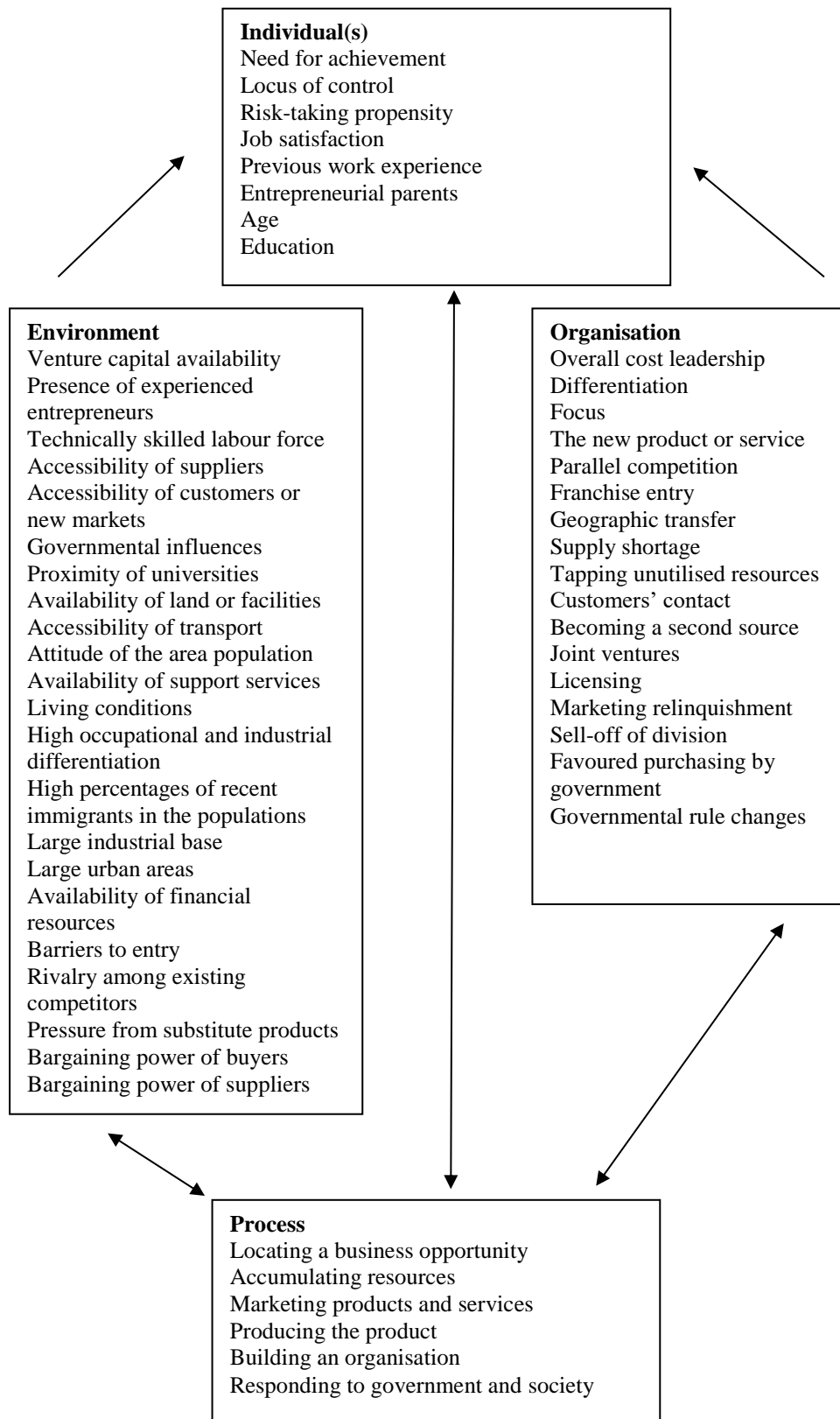
Learning plays a vital role in addressing the skills and experience shortage in South Africa, especially as one of the key factors contributing to the success of SMEs (Raiz, 2006). However, it has been argued that the traditional approach to practices of entrepreneurial education and training requires review. According to Sullivan (2000), there is a need to shift from the more traditional approach of learning by instruction to a more experiential and experience-based

learning methodology, using more present forms of learning, such as action-oriented learning and possibly mentoring and coaching. Sullivan (2000) referred to mentoring as a practice of reflective learning, which provides effective support for entrepreneurs. Through the reflection the entrepreneur allows themselves time to reflect on their experiences which results in a deeper understanding of actions related to their position throughout their entrepreneurial process.

Furthermore, a new business venture is difficult and complicated to start due to the complex nature of the environment and all the variables and considerations the new entrepreneur is expected to interact with, as shown in Figure 1. It is therefore understandable that such a great deal of assistance is required in order for entrepreneurship to flourish in South Africa.

Figure 1

Variables in new venture creation



Source: Adapted from Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004)

Figure 1 is the multidimensional approach model which provides categories/variables relevant to venture creation and therefore entrepreneurship, these categories include the individual, the environment, the organization, and the process (Kuratko & Hodgetts 2004). This figure describes all the factors which need to be considered in the different categories and this provides context in terms of how challenging and complex it must be for entrepreneurs to create ventures. Of particular relevance to this study are the components listed under the Individual category (i.e. the entrepreneur). In terms of some of the factors considered in the creation of a new venture is the need for an individual where there are the right combination and balances of factors such as need for achievement, locus of control, risk-taking propensity, job satisfaction, previous work experience, entrepreneurial parents, age and education (Kuratko & Hodgetts 2004).

The importance of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning support, coupled with all the challenges which existing and new entrepreneurs face have been highlighted. It is evident that more focus on understanding the support needed to improve entrepreneurial success is required. More specifically, it is important to understand how learning and entrepreneurial learning can aid in improving entrepreneurship on an individual and collective basis.

2.3 ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING

In the following section, the definitions of entrepreneurial learning will be discussed. The development of entrepreneurial learning as a concept and some of the challenges the concept faces will be explored. Understanding how entrepreneurs learn is critical to this research study as it seeks to assess the effectiveness of mentoring as an entrepreneurial learning mechanism for entrepreneurs.

2.3.1 Definitions of Entrepreneurial Learning

Entrepreneurial learning as a developing concept has drawn substantial interest over the last decade. How entrepreneurs learn and develop is a critical strategy of economic and social improvement and enhancement (GEM, 2016/17). Rae (2004) related entrepreneurial learning to that of recognising and taking advantage of opportunities and then making use of networks (social and other) to initiate and manage an enterprise. It is critical that a comprehensive grasp of entrepreneurial learning is established given that entrepreneurs develop and grow through a learning process (Cope, 2005).

Entrepreneurial learning has been described as occurring throughout life, where it is continuously evolving and reshaping itself as new experiences occur (Sullivan, 2000). Politis (2005) found that entrepreneurial learning encompassed experiential learning where innovative individuals consistently developed their knowledge through their experiences of work. According to Simpson and Bourner (2007), the fundamental basis of action learning is that we learn through our own experiences. They referred to reflection as part of the action learning process as it aims to enhance the performance of the action. Thus, part of how the entrepreneur learns is through reflecting on and gaining a better understanding of what occurred and the effect of their actions.

Cope (2005) and Corbett (2007) both echoed the idea that the entrepreneurial learning process involves individuals acquiring knowledge that is integrated and organised into their existing structures, which influences the actions of the individuals. Corbett (2007) further explained that entrepreneurial learning encompasses the process by which entrepreneurs recognise opportunities and focus on the cognitive instruments entrepreneurs call on for the identification of commercial opportunities and how they apply their minds in decision-making about these opportunities.

It is of particular interest that the way in which entrepreneurs grow and establish themselves is connected to how they learn and how they experience learning (Rae, 2006). Entrepreneurs have invested more time and attention in upskilling themselves in both formal and informal learning activities in recent years which, include attending tertiary institutions (Davidson & Honig, 2003) or learning from those in similar fields (Tell, 2008).

The concept of entrepreneurial learning has developed from information emerging from research in the field of entrepreneurship and from literature relating to organisational and managerial learning (Becker 2004). Although entrepreneurial learning is considered to be a relatively new concept, there are elements of it encompassed in the early work of Schumpeter (1934) and it has continued to evolve from there, as part of economic theory. One of the key elements referred to by Schumpeter (1947), in relation to entrepreneurship, was that of innovation as part of the core of economic systems. The following section will explore how the concept of entrepreneurial learning has emerged and evolved.

2.3.2 The development of the Entrepreneurial Learning concept

The field of entrepreneurial learning only really started to emerge as a concept in the 1990s. Some of the earliest research included a study by Deakins and Freel (1998) which investigated entrepreneurial learning in relation to the growth process in SMEs. This was one of the first occasions where it had been recorded that entrepreneurial learning was included in the entrepreneurial process of SMEs. Deakin (1998) later looked specifically at learning and entrepreneurs.

While some attention was given to entrepreneurial learning in the 90s, it was not until the mid-2000s that the concept gained traction. Harrison and Leitch (2008) looked at the various theories and practices of entrepreneurship. They focussed their research on entrepreneurial learning and the conceptual framework and application thereof.

The literature on entrepreneurial learning consists of various frameworks and theoretical approaches. Two main schools of thought appear to emerge. The first focusses on the experiences of the entrepreneur and their personal learning and journey. The second focusses on the organisation as a collective and how the system learns at scale. The next section highlights some of the prominent researchers in these main schools of thought.

Entrepreneurial learning has been viewed as part of the learning associated with management. This type of learning has brought into being the entrepreneur as a professional who takes advantage of business opportunities by initiating new ventures (Deakins & O'Neill, 2000). Research that focussed on the entrepreneur from an individual perspective was based on experiential learning theories stemming from the 1980s (Kolb, 1984). Building on the aforementioned research, the focus has shifted to entrepreneurial learning being grounded in the experience of the entrepreneur and how they learn from those experiences (Corbett 2005; Holcomb & Ireland, 2009; Politis, 2005; Rae & Carswell, 2001; Taylor & Thorpe 2004). There are theories and frameworks that explain how the concept of entrepreneurial learning has evolved and how it is grounded in the field of psychology, innovation, organisational development and resource-based theories (Corbett, 2005; 2007; Dutta & Crossan, 2005; Lumpkin & Lichtenstein 2005; Rae, 2006). However, the emphasis has remained on the individual entrepreneur and the cognitive process.

It has been suggested that organisational learning could be linked to entrepreneurial learning (Cope, 2003), for example, at a certain stage of a manager's career, entrepreneurial learning occurs, which means that an individual who has entrepreneurial potential turns into an emerging entrepreneur at a certain stage in their career (Erikson, 2003; Rae, 2000). Rae (2005) found that this stage generally emerges when there is sufficient experience and capital to initiate a new business venture such as in the middle of a professional career.

Entrepreneurial learning has also been viewed from the perspective of formal education and training, which considers whether someone can be taught to be an entrepreneur and if so, how it is this done (Leitch & Harrison 1999).

Furthermore, Deakins and Freel (1998) described entrepreneurial learning as being composed of a number of entrepreneurial competencies, the ability to network at an early stage, to integrate experience and opportunity, to learn from past successes and mistakes, and to access critical resources to build the entrepreneurial team. Tell (2008) supported the idea of entrepreneurs learning through their networks and through networking. His key finding was that much of the learning of an entrepreneur takes place through the network, which serves as a reflective tool, allowing them not only to learn spontaneously but also to learn retrospectively.

Studies on entrepreneurial learning have also been conducted in various contexts such as:

- Universities (Fisher & Graham, 2008; Matlay, 2007; Pittaway & Cope, 2007; Wee, 2004).
- Government interventions (Rae, 2007).
- Large business workplaces (Gompers, Lerner et al. 2005).
- SME workplaces (Lans & Biemans, 2008).

Entrepreneurial learning has been viewed from different perspectives, however, most researchers share the view that entrepreneurship is a series of behaviours that are built through experience (Deakins & Freel 1998; Rae, 2006). Entrepreneurial learning is a process that focusses on the recognition of opportunity and then further focusses on the cognitive activities that occur, resulting in decision-making. In other words, the cognitive activity that occurs during the learning process results in decision-making. However, the cognitive theories do not

adequately account for what is encompassed in entrepreneurial learning, which includes situational and experiential learning (Rae, 2006).

Even though entrepreneurial learning has been approached from various points of view, these views are not mutually exclusive.

According to Rae (2000, p. 148), “we need an approach which enables exploration of the choices they make, through the accounts they give”. Furthermore, gaining a proper understanding of the world in which entrepreneurs operate and the culture of the environment in which they are entrenched is required (Rae, 2000). Emphasis has also been placed on behavioural change in that it should focus less on the conceptual psychology and economic frame.

Rae (2005) further identified three main areas of entrepreneurial learning. The early stage includes personal development, the negotiated enterprise domain is concerned with the networking and interacting with the social system in order to establish and grow the business and the contextual learning stage occurs as a result of the entrepreneur engaging the industry and community in which they operate. As is evident in the three main areas of entrepreneurial learning highlighted by Rae (2005), entrepreneurial learning thus occurs in the context of social relationships and networks, which exist in the industry and environment in which the entrepreneur operates. According to a study by Rae (2005), the networks in a specific industry formed part of the entrepreneurs’ support and were part of the development programmes for the entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs need to learn about who they and others are, and how to manage a business. However, it is also important that entrepreneurs learn through others and their networks, ultimately learning how to use their networks to grow and develop themselves (Rae, 2005). Rae (2005) further highlighted that entrepreneurial learning focusses on how entrepreneurs learn to identify opportunities and develop on a personal level. He considered entrepreneurial learning to be predominantly the change of behaviour that occurs through a systematic and logical decision-making process. In the same way, this research will look at how interactions occur in the social system in order to initiate, arrange and manage new ventures.

There is growing evidence that learning is more prevalent during tempestuous and discontinuous events in a small enterprise, although how the learning occurs and what is learnt

is not entirely clear. It has been found that entrepreneurs learn best when in distress (Cope, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2010). In a phenomenological case study by Cope and Watts (2005), it was found that “the worst of times” (Cope & Watts 2000, p. 115) were highlighted by the entrepreneurs in the interviews they conducted. Irregular and disjointed events serve as a catalyst for entrepreneurial learning, through the process of insightful self-reflection, which is a critical part of the learning process (Cope, 2003). Cope and Watts (2000) argued that critical incidents bring about higher level learning outcomes. Furthermore, Cope (2010) focussed on identifying what entrepreneurs actually needed to learn. He investigated entrepreneurial distress and found that failure in an entrepreneurial venture correlated with the entrepreneur experiencing high levels of learning. Cope (2003) also acknowledged the lower level learning outcomes as the on-going learning that also takes place outside of discontinuous events. It has also been recognised that learning outcomes may be supported through mentorship, which would assist the entrepreneur to reflect and learn through experience (Sullivan 2000, as cited in Cope 2003). Fundamental to Cope’s (2010) argument is that through overcoming crises, discomfort and distress, learning will occur – an accelerated learning related to business success. The study also showed the competitive and volatile environment in which entrepreneurs operate as being optimal for entrepreneurial learning to occur. Cope (2000, 2003, 2005, 2010) emphasised that critical incidents are catalysts for learning to occur, which form part of the entrepreneur’s personal and business experience. A framework of the components which entrepreneurial learning seeks to achieve emerged through Cope’s (2000, 2003, 2005, 2010) research over the years. This framework encompassed elements that have been highlighted earlier:

- Learning about oneself:
- Learning about the business:
- Learning about the entrepreneurial landscape, environment and networks:
- Learning about the nature of relationships:
- Learning about small business and the management thereof

Cope (2010) described these elements in more detail as:

Oneself - Learning about one's strengths, weaknesses, skills, attitudes, beliefs. The
Venture (and its demise) - Learning about the strengths and weaknesses of the venture.

Networks and relationships - Learning about the nature and management of relationships, both internal and external to the venture. Venture management - Learning how to run and control businesses more effectively in relation to the wider environment (p.34).

Earlier in this literature review, the environment in which South African entrepreneurs need to operate was described in some detail. It is therefore important to consider the work of Cope (2010) in the context of the economic and political environment which South African entrepreneurs face. In the analysis of the findings of this study, the experience of entrepreneurial learning during difficult times will be discussed in terms of the responses of the entrepreneurs who participated in this study.

Experience is developed into entrepreneurial knowledge through either a process or mode of exploration or exploitation, as highlighted in a study by Politis (2005). Entrepreneurs who operated more in the mode of exploration would learn more about opportunity recognition and activation, whereas those who relied more on exploitation would learn more about coping with the unfamiliar and the associated adversities. According to Politis (2005), entrepreneurs who had more relevant business and industry experience would be more likely to effectively identify and engage an opportunity and manage the unfamiliarity of these new ventures. The study further considered the effect of mentoring on entrepreneurial learning and ultimately the development of the entrepreneur. Politis (2005) also emphasised that the current research available on entrepreneurial learning and the link between experiential learning and entrepreneurial learning were insufficient and recommended that further research was to be done in this field.

For the purpose of this research, it is important to note that despite the context in which the cited research on entrepreneurial learning has occurred, mentorship is a common feature and is identified as a mechanism that could support the learning of the entrepreneur (Cope, 2010; Politis, 2005; Rea, 2005).

It is clear that there are various contexts in which entrepreneurial learning has been explored, with the emphasis placed on the different ways in which learning may occur for the entrepreneur. The limited research on various aspects and contexts of entrepreneurial learning

is one of the key challenges the field faces and in the next section further challenges facing entrepreneurial learning will be explored in greater detail.

2.3.3 Challenges in the Entrepreneurial Learning field

Through analysing the literature available on entrepreneurial learning, it has become apparent that there is a lack of maturity in the field and therefore various challenges face the field (Leitch & Harrison, 2008).

One such challenge is that many researchers refer to literature from other fields because there is limited research in the field of entrepreneurial learning itself. Researchers often borrow from fields such as organisational learning and entrepreneurship. A major critique of these fields themselves has been that there is little consensus relating to the key concepts in those fields (Easterby-Smith & Lyles 2003; Ricketts 2008). As stated by Leitch and Harrison (2008, p.9) “There is, therefore, no clearly identifiable and agreed corpus of theory constructs, methodologies and results on which to build a theory of entrepreneurial learning.” There has possibly been too many concepts and relating make meaning unclear (Leitch & Harrison, 2008), resulting in much of the research being aimed at developing a conceptual framework (Franco & Haase, 2009).

The lack of consensus became clear when reviewing the literature on entrepreneurial learning as a concept. There are some researchers who argue that entrepreneurial learning occurs internally, while others propose it occurs as a result of interactions with a series of stakeholders (Rea, 2005), and then others who further propose that it occurs both internally and externally. The literature is also contradictory—some have indicated that entrepreneurial learning occurs in a moment of wisdom when an opportunity is spotted (Cope, 2010), while others have argued that it is something that occurs throughout a lifetime. In addition, the research has also highlighted that there are various contexts in which entrepreneurial learning is claimed to occur, such as in an organisation, or tertiary institute or outside when someone starts an SME.

Furthermore, the definition of entrepreneurship itself, which is core to the concept of entrepreneurial learning, too poses a challenge. As discussed earlier, there are several definitions of entrepreneurship with only some commonality. Even though this lack of consensus has been a well-known criticism of the field of entrepreneurship (Gartner 1988; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), it has instigated the ongoing pursuit for researchers to find a common conceptual base to define this phenomenon, such as in the research of Knudsen and

Swedberg in 2009. Despite the academic effort to derive a common definition, the situation is further blurred by alternate views coming from the political arena. As a result of the challenges and agenda of the political arena, it has created its own definition of entrepreneurship to suit the measures in the economy, which does not align with that of the academics.

The lack of consensus is perpetuated when prominent researchers in the field of entrepreneurship disagree. One such example can be found when Rae (2007) argued that there was already too much focus on the early stage entrepreneur, whereas the focus should more be on existing and mature business owners. Whereas Friga (2008) counter argued that there is more research required in early stage entrepreneurial ventures. Moreover, research in the field appears to be fragmented (Leitch & Harrison 2008; Warren, 2004).

The concept of learning itself faces the same type of critique as that of entrepreneurship. Learning is described by some as occurring in a personal capacity, whereas others claim it occurs in an organisational capacity (Van De Ven & Polley, 1992). Some researchers have described it is a gradual process (Van De Ven & Polley, 1992) and others more so a disruptive process (Cope, 2003).

Further contradictions are evident in the different ways in which (Schumpeter, 1934) and (Kirzner, 1973; 1997) describe the process of entrepreneurs. Schumpeter refers to the creative destructive process where an entrepreneur brings about opportunity resulting in a state of imbalance whereas Kirzner refers to entrepreneurship as a means of restoring balance in society and the economy (Dutta & Crossan 2005).

There are clearly many contradictions and therefore a lack of consensus in the research in the field of entrepreneurial learning, which are compounded by the lack of sufficient research studies, specifically qualitative research (Ravasi & Turati, 2005). Additional efforts to derive a more common definition of entrepreneurial learning and the various related key components would add great value in maturing this field of study (Macpherson, 2009). Despite these challenges, there is a growing interest in the development and maturity of this field. There is also recognition of the importance of how various mechanisms such as mentoring contribute to entrepreneurial learning (Cope, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the field of entrepreneurial learning by finding out how entrepreneurs in this study believed they learnt best.

2.3.4 Entrepreneurial Learning mechanisms

The various mechanisms of learning for an entrepreneur are important for the purposes of this study and although there may be contradictory views, research appears to support the idea that interactions are a critical learning medium for entrepreneurs.

Learning through interaction with others is regarded as imperative to entrepreneurial learning. Yu Cui (2010) investigated the role that entrepreneurial learning plays in building entrepreneurs' capabilities. The study explored the effect that the approaches to entrepreneurial learning had on building the capabilities of the entrepreneur, basing his argument on behavioural learning theory. An extensive empirical study found that changes in the entrepreneurs' capabilities were affected and influenced by changes in entrepreneurial learning. Ultimately, based on the findings of the study, a learning model that suggested a self-reinforced learning cycle of experiential learning, coupled with learning through social networks, was recommended and proposed. This approach to learning is important to consider in the context of this research because mentorship falls within the scope of the recommendation made by Yu Cui (2010), as a relevant instrument of entrepreneurial learning. Furthermore, Sullivan's (2000) findings also highlighted mentoring as a critical part of entrepreneurial learning. In a study by Taylor and Thorpe (2004), it was found the entrepreneurs not only learn through introspection and reflection on their experiences but also through their interactions with their networks and contacts, often in a relationship similar to mentoring. These networks and contacts could include family members, professional contacts and so on.

Rae's (2006) model of entrepreneurial learning considered the context in which entrepreneurial learning emerges i.e. social, economic or environmental. The model therefore specifies how the learning that is implemented is context-dependant (Rae, 2006). Lans et al. (2008) emphasised the social dimension of entrepreneurial learning where the entrepreneur's interactions, engagements, communication and support received from the various relationships aided learning. Storytelling too could help learning in that it helps others reflect, arrange and integrate their own learning experiences and thoughts (Rae, 2000).

There appears to be heightened interest and growing consensus that the social sphere plays a role in the process of entrepreneurial learning, which illustrates that a critical part of learning is achieved through the interaction with others. One of the most important types of interaction is that of engaging with those who have experience and knowledge, defined by Sullivan (2000)

as mentoring. In the following section, the concept of mentoring will be explored in greater detail.

2.4 MENTORSHIP

The main aim of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of mentoring/mentorship as one of the mechanisms to aid entrepreneurs to achieve business success. There appears to be extensive literature in the field of mentorship in the workplace and in the context of the organisation. However, there appears to be limited research on the mentorship of entrepreneurs or mentorship in the context of entrepreneurship.

In the following section, the concept of mentoring and its definitions will be explored in general. It is important that mentoring, in its definition, be distinguished from coaching. How mentoring developed as a concept and why it is important from an entrepreneurial perspective will be presented. The various roles that the mentor and mentee can play are considered along with the nature of the relationship. Lastly, the benefits of mentoring will be explored in order to justify why so much emphasis is placed on mentoring as an entrepreneurial learning medium.

2.4.1 Definitions of Mentorship

There are several definitions for mentorship and mentoring, many of which have overlaps and commonalities such as a long-term relationship involving an experienced and knowledgeable mentor and a less experienced mentee, where there is a transfer of knowledge and sharing of experiences and support, which results in learning and development for both parties and is associated with improvement or advancement. The practice of mentorship grew in popularity during the 1970s (Dziczkowski, 2013), however many of the current definitions of mentoring have roots in Krams's (1983, 1985) work, where the mentor is considered a more experienced individual developing a more junior person through providing psychosocial support and advice to assist in growing the mentee's career. Support could include coaching, providing challenging tasks, providing exposure, role-modelling, providing emotional support and acceptance, sharing ideas and experiences and serving as an advisor and protector (Gallacher, 1997). According to Murray (1991), mentoring involves "a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies" (p. 8).

Mentoring has evolved over the years to reflect a relationship where one person gives guidance, support and protection to another, usually a less experienced person (Allen & Poteet, 2011). Niehoff (2006) defined mentoring as “an activity in which an individual with advanced knowledge or experience actively provides assistance and support to enhance the career development of an individual with less knowledge and experience” (p. 322). Eby (2010) described the process as a “developmentally oriented interpersonal relationship that is typically between a more experienced individual (i.e. the mentor) and a less experienced individual (i.e. the protégé)” (p. 505).

Mentoring is practised in various contexts such as tertiary education, organisations, health care, entrepreneurship, government, and non-profit organisations. There are elements, which may vary in the definition, based on the context (Haggard et al., 2011). Gallacher (1997), for example, defined mentoring as “a caring and supportive interpersonal relationship between an experienced, more knowledgeable practitioner and a less experienced, less knowledgeable individual” (p. 196). Eby and Allen (2010) referred to mentoring as “a learning partnership” (p. 13). Mentoring not only advances the knowledge, skills and confidence of the mentee, but also provides a sense of pride, enhances personal growth and expands the experience of the mentor (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, few of the academic references are specific to the context of entrepreneurship (Waters et al., 2002). However, despite the context in which the mentorship occurs, the definition of mentoring generally refers to some sort of fostering individual growth, which is primarily dependent on the mentee and mentor relationship (Eby & Allen, 2008, Haggard et. al., 2011).

The definitions of mentoring tend to emphasise the role of the mentor. Clutterbuck (1998) provided definitions suggesting an expanded and integrated mentoring model where the mentor could take on various roles such as coach, guardian, networker or facilitator and counsellor in supporting the mentee. The mentor would select the appropriate approach, dependent on the mentee’s need and thus the mentor would require the flexibility to assume any of these at will. Some definitions are more relevant to the context of entrepreneurship than others. One such example is where entrepreneurial mentoring is defined as mentoring support provided to owners of small businesses during the early stage of their business and beyond (Graveills, 2006). Entrepreneurial mentoring can also be seen as a type of business development process

for business owners (Gold, Devins & Johnson, 2003). The mentorship seeks to assist a mentee to plan their business activity and provide the necessary guidance that will lead to the success of the entrepreneur's business. Watson (2004) highlighted that the purpose of a mentor is to provide support to an entrepreneur (mentee) to grow and sustain their business. St-Jean and Audet (2009) referred to entrepreneurial mentoring as a supportive relationship that is built between the mentee, who is a novice entrepreneur and the mentor who is an experienced entrepreneur. In these mentor-mentee interactions, the mentee develops as both an entrepreneur and on a personal level.

Even though the definitions that refer to mentorship in relation to entrepreneurship appear to focus more on defining who the mentee is i.e. an entrepreneur, the function and purpose of the mentorship and the desired value of the mentorship remain. Therefore, the definition of mentoring that encapsulates many of the components referred to in all contexts, which will be used for the purposes of this study, is that of Bozeman and Feeney (2007) who defined mentoring as:

[The] informal transmission of knowledge, social capital and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and over a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom or experience (the mentor), to a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé [mentee]) (p. 17).

The concept of mentoring has only been researched and applied to entrepreneurial activity, specifically start-up businesses or businesses in the growth stage, over the last 10 years. Therefore, mentoring in the context of entrepreneurship has not received sufficient empirical investigation (Waters et al., 2002). There are limited studies that have hypothesised explicitly and studied systematically the effect of industry or occupation and yet inferences from the employee context are applied to that of an entrepreneur (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007). Therefore, throughout this research, mentorship will be considered in the general context, by exploring mentorship from an organisational perspective, because there is limited research available in the context of entrepreneurship. This will be noted as a limitation and will be considered when making any inferences or comparisons from the organisational context to that of the entrepreneur.

It is clear that despite the context in which mentoring takes place, there are certain common fundamental components of mentorship and mentoring that appear in the definitions thereof. These include the roles of the mentor and mentee, the nature of their relationship and how the process is facilitated. All of these components will be explored in greater detail in the sections to follow. It is important, though, to first distinguish mentoring from coaching, a concept that mentoring is often confused with or used interchangeably with. Therefore, the differences between mentoring and coaching will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.2 The difference between Mentoring and Coaching

There is often confusion between mentoring and coaching, due to their similarities. However, there are very clear differences as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Differences between Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching	Mentoring
Relationship generally has a set duration	Ongoing relationship that can last for a long period of time
Generally more structured in nature; meetings are scheduled on a regular basis	More informal; meetings can take place as and when the client needs some advice, guidance and support
Short term (sometimes time-bounded) and focused on specific development areas/issues	More long term and takes a broader view of the person
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	Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the client, often a senior person in the organisation who can pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities
Focus is generally on development/issues at work	Focus is on career and personal development
The agenda is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals	Agenda is set by the client, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles

Coaching revolves more around specific development areas/issues	Mentoring revolves more around developing the client professionally
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Source: Adapted from *Coaching and Mentoring at Work: Developing Effective Practice* (Connor & Pokora, 2007).

According to Edwards (2003, p. 298), the “difference between coaching and mentoring was that mentoring gives advice and teaches, whereas coaching facilitates learning”. Edwards (2003) further stated that the traditional role of coaching has changed and that the main focus for the coach has been to help the coachee discover their own answers through providing proper feedback, creating the right thinking environment and asking high impact questions. Garvey (2004) argued that the newer definitions of coaching that have emerged have created great frustration and conflict. According to Garvey (2004, p.6), “The tragedy of mentoring is that it has been hijacked and mugged by the so-called coaching profession who are in it only for financial gain”. This author also suggested that there was a conflict of interest between the two fields. Coutu and Kaufman (2009) further described the field of coaching as filled with contradictions and having no consensus on the actual purpose of the process. Griffiths and Campbell (2009) referred to coaching as originating from various disciplines with a broad application, however the foundation was weak as there was insufficient research to properly construct the concept. It has also become difficult to differentiate coaching from other development and training concepts such as mentoring and counselling (Griffiths & Campbell, 2009). More recent research has shown that coaching and mentoring are similar and often considered to be interchangeable (Audet & Couteret, 2012). However, it is preferable to distinguish clearly between mentoring and coaching (Luecke, 2004, as cited in Ayer, 2011).

A recent study by Brinkley and Le Roux (2018) found that there was still much confusion around the concepts of coaching and mentoring. Furthermore, the study revealed that both mentoring and coaching were useful as support mechanisms for entrepreneurs. The benefits from both coaching and mentoring could include the development of skills, new perspectives, improved communication and increased self-awareness. Although the study revealed that there could be similar benefits, ultimately the nature of the contribution differed. Coaching contributed to the self-development of entrepreneurs, whilst mentoring more contributed to the development of managerial functions.

It is clear that there are varying views on the differences between coaching and mentoring. The findings of this study will provide a view of coaching and mentoring from the participants' perspective. For the purposes of this study, the focus is primarily on mentoring and the concept of coaching is only explored here in order to distinguish it from mentoring.

2.4.3 The role of a Mentor

The concept of a 'mentor' finds its roots in ancient Greece where, in Homer's *Odyssey*, the king, entrusted his son's care and learning to a person named Mentor. In the story, Mentor served as an advisor, teacher, friend and source of wisdom to the king's son, teaching him in the king's absence (Shea, Woodbury & Pittsley, 2001).

In an organisational context, mentoring has its roots in organisational behaviour, human resource management, psychology and adult learning. Ultimately, mentoring is concerned with the development of a mentee in two areas: development of the mentee's career and psychosocial development. In developing the mentee's career, the mentor serves as a sponsor, coach, protector and guide (advice giver) by providing exposure to stimulating work experiences. In the mentee's psychosocial development, the mentor serves as a role model and friend and helps the mentee build acceptance through affirmation (Kram, 1983). According to Kram (1983), the stages of the mentor-mentee relationship include initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. These will be explored later in detail.

The main role of the mentor is to facilitate the mentee's development and growth by helping them gain insight into their potential. The mentee can find this insight in various ways, some of which include the mentor giving feedback, giving recognition, assisting the mentee to identify and develop their unique skills and providing guidance on how to use this. For mentorship to add value, it is imperative that the mentor voluntarily invests time, knowledge and energy with belief in the value that the process can add (Shea et al., 2001). Effective mentors support mentees by helping them to challenge themselves and providing ideas on how to do so. They help the mentee develop confidence in themselves and lead by example (Shea et al., 2001). If the mentor does not have the appropriate skills to build the relationship or displays traits and behaviour such as being judgemental, not listening effectively, being untrustworthy or unable to foster trust and communicate effectively, then it is unlikely that the mentoring relationship will yield much value (Stone, 2004).

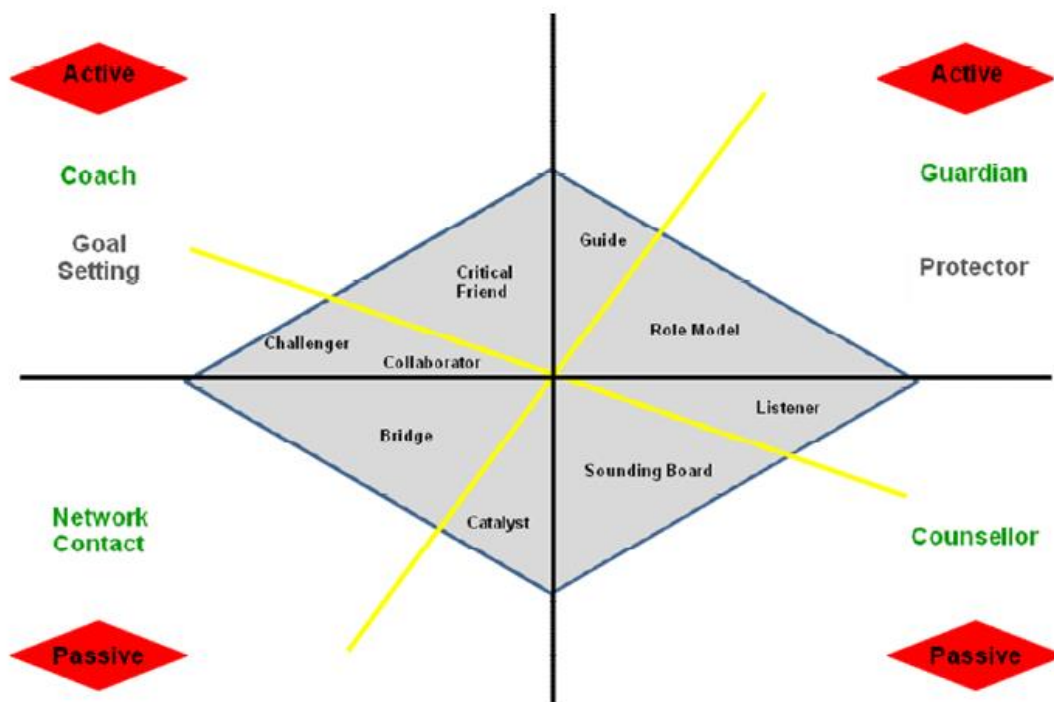
The nature of the role of the mentor also depends on the nature of the relationship i.e. whether it is formal or informal mentorship. Paek (2004) referred to the style of implementation and indicates that the mentor, depending on the style of implementation, could also be the manager of the mentee. According to Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002), mentorship requires the mentor to assume complex and multi-purpose roles, including that of a coach, guardian, supporter, counsellor and networker. Watson (2004) elaborated on the aforementioned roles as follows:

- The **coach** includes activities such as setting goals, challenging and collaborating with the mentee.
- The **guardian** includes activities such as providing protection and guidance.
- The **network contact** includes activities such as acting as a catalyst for the mentee, helping them build networks and resolving conflict where required.
- The **counsellor** includes activities such as listening and acting as a sounding board.

Clutterbuck (1998) summarised the various roles in a behavioural matrix as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 2

The Behavioural Matrix



Source: Adapted from Clutterbuck (1998, p. 10)

No matter which of the roles are assumed by the mentor, the underlying goal remains focussed on learning and development. Watson (2004) echoed Clutterbuck's (1998) view in that the mentor's primary focus is not to provide solutions, but rather to assist the mentee to draw their own conclusions and develop and implement a plan of action. The mentor tactfully enables learning and does not generate and action solutions (Ayer 2011; Sullivan 2000), which requires that the mentor creates the space for the mentee to make decisions and take ownership of the decisions and the future outcomes and repercussions.

A mentor is also expected to be concerned with psychosocial support such as "value systems, self-worth, personal advice, and issues of interpersonal relationships" (Bisk, 2002, p. 263). Research suggests that the mentoring relationship could last a few years (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002) and given this tenure, as part of the development and emotional support, the relationship may evolve into a friendship (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). The mentor also needs to implement various forms of engagement such as "verbal exchanges, explanations, questioning, role modelling, working together and encouragement" (St-Jean & Audet, 2009, p. 12) to allow for learning opportunities for the mentee. It is also important to note that the role of the mentor described here is based on studies that are specific to the context of entrepreneurship yet the role of the mentor appears to be similar to that of the organisational context (St-Jean & Audet, 2009).

Now that the role of the mentor has been discussed, the following section will describe the role of the mentee.

2.4.4 The role of the Mentee

In reviewing the literature available on the role of the mentor and mentee, it became clear that there is less research available on the role of the mentee. Walkington (2005) considered that the mentee's role is one of an active participant. In addition to being an active participant, the mentee should also assume the following responsibilities:

- The mentee must be open and willing to learn from the mentor (Meyer & Fourie, 2004), and be willing to have open engagements with the mentor and learn from the mentor in terms of their skills and knowledge (Freeman, 2008).
- The mentee needs to create time to reflect on the teachings received from the mentor (Meyer & Fourie, 2004).

- The mentee must ultimately be accountable for their development and do research (Meyer & Fourie, 2004), and complete agreed upon tasks when required (Kamvounias, McGrath-Champ & Yip, 2007).
- The mentee should set clear goals (Freeman, 2008).
- The mentee, like the mentor, needs to communicate their needs and expectations clearly and needs to listen intently and implement what they learn (Meyer & Fourie, 2004). The mentee should have conversations with the mentor in a professional manner and collaborate with the mentor in order to develop skills and acquire knowledge (Kamvounias et al., 2007).

For the mentee-mentor relationship to yield value, the mentee is to possess certain traits, which includes the ability to communicate effectively, be trustworthy and be willing to trust, have a certain level of maturity, and be respectful and willing to immerse themselves in the process through engaging in constructive dialogue with openness to constructive feedback (Clutterbuck, 2005). The mentee also needs to have a certain capacity to be agreeable and open to new ideas and experiences with commitment.

The available research focusses less on defining the role of the mentee. However, the associated role of the mentee becomes more explicit in the research on the role of the mentor. A mentor is required to be open, willing to listen and observe, a role model and willing to performing certain tasks (Meyer & Fourie, 2004) and as this is an onus on the mentor, the mentee should respond as follows:

- Use the insights and suggestions from the mentor and take action (Greene & Putzer, 2002).
- Reciprocate the openness and also share their own beliefs, ideas and perceptions. More importantly, they should also be willing to potentially develop or change existing perceptions and beliefs (Walkington, 2005).
- Use the guidance provided by implementing it to enhance their performance, and use the feedback received to grow their own practice and expertise (Lai, 2005).
- Ensure that they track their learning, through documenting it and have clearly defined goals that they are working towards (Walkington, 2005a).
- Observe how the mentor completes tasks and have discussions around their observations to hone their own skills and knowledge (Lai, 2005).

- Take the initiative and develop themselves by volunteering for learning experiences and creating opportunities for self-development.
- Reflect on their own performance and experience and engage with the mentor on their learning (Walkington, 2005a).
- Self-assess against agreed upon criteria (Bray & Nettleton, 2006).
- Use the input from the mentor to reflect, learn and alter their behaviour (Le Maistre, Boudreau, & Pare, 2006).

The roles of both mentor and mentee are multi-faceted. However, whichever of these roles are adopted in the mentorship relationship will be determined by the mentor and mentee collectively (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). Mentoring is an interactive process, which is both participative and interconnected (Bullough & Draper, 2004). In a study by Lucas (2001) in tertiary education, it was found that the roles of the mentor and mentee were constantly being defined and redefined. Lucas (2001) found that “time, experience together and the perceptions and interpretations of each person continually redefine the roles of the mentor and the mentee” (p.46). Now that the roles of the mentee and mentor have been explored, the next section will explain how they integrate into the mentoring relationship.

2.4.5 The Mentor-Mentee Relationship

The establishment of a relationship between mentor and mentee is critical to the ultimate success of the mentorship process. Formal and informal mentoring are terms used by Gray and Gray (1990) to describe the types of mentoring relationships in which formal mentoring usually emerges as part of a formal or planned programme. Informal mentoring occurs in a more free and natural manner.

Ragin and Cotton (1993, 1999) compared some of the benefits of formal and informal mentoring relationships. Their research included a sample of 1,162 mentees from three different disciplines namely, engineering, social work and journalism. The findings showed that informal mentoring relationships were more beneficial to the mentee. One of the key reasons for this trend was the differences in the nature of the support provided by the mentors. Formal mentors were found to adopt a counselling and role-model role, which assisted with the facilitation of social interactions, whereas informal mentors focussed more on career development, provided coaching and challenging tasks and were more present in the lives of

their mentees (Ragin & Cotton, 1993). Furthermore, Ragin and Cotton (1993) identified that the nature of the relationship was different in an informal and formal mentorship.

Throughout their research, there was a sentiment of the importance of chemistry in the mentoring relationship. In the informal relationship, the mentor and mentee identified and selected each other, where the mentor and mentee may have seen elements in each other that promoted their interest in the relationship. The mentor was inclined to select a mentee whom they viewed as having potential and the mentee then, in turn, selected someone they viewed as having the expertise and network they desired. This type of natural selection is difficult to attain in the formal mentoring context where the pairing is often done by others. The findings also suggested that the tenure of the relationship is a critical benefit of the informal relationship. Formal mentorship has generally been viewed as being of a shorter duration which may affect the sense of obligation between the mentor and mentee, ultimately making it less likely that a fully trusting relationship will develop. Ragins and Cotton (1993) also found that persons with formal mentors did not appear to be promoted in their careers more so than those not receiving mentoring, whereas those with informal mentors received additional career advancement and remuneration when compared to those with no or formal mentors. The summary findings of the Ragins and Cotton (1993) study was that the informal mentoring relationship was strongly based on mutual respect and attraction which was difficult to replicate in the formal mentoring relationship.

It has been acknowledged that not all mentoring relationships are productive and effective (Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1993). However research investigating the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee relationship and the influence of the mentor and their behaviour on the success of the mentoring relationship has become more prominent (Allen, Day & Lentz, 2005; Eby, Butts, Lockwood & Simon, 2004; Heimann & Pittenger, 1996; Lyons & Oppler, 2004; Scandura, 1998). The characteristics that contribute to the success and effectiveness of the mentoring relationship are explored in greater depth in the following section.

2.4.6 Characteristics of the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Ragins and Kram (2007) proposed that certain characteristics are common to mentoring. The first characteristic, which has been discussed earlier, encompassing the two primary functions of mentoring, is career development and psychosocial development (Eby et al., 2010; Ragins & Kram, 2007) though, it has been suggested that role modelling should be included as a third

key function (Scandura, 1992). The mentor may change the function at any point during the term of the mentoring relationship, based on the need of the mentee (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

The second characteristic is that even though there are similarities in mentoring relationships, ultimately each relationship is unique and varies in length, intensity and function (Eby et al., 2010; Ragins & Kram, 2007). In addition, the individuals in the mentoring relationship are unique with their own personalities, characters, needs, backgrounds and experiences, which they bring to the relationship. These elements influence how the relationship commences and unfolds, and the value it may ultimately yield (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

The third characteristic is concerned with the objective of the mentorship. Regardless of the first two characteristics of the relationship and other factors such as the context in which the relationship exists, the fundamental objective remains constant in that it seeks to promote the learning, development and growth of the mentee. It primarily focusses on doing this through assisting the mentee to acquire the relevant knowledge, skills and experience through various mentoring-related mechanisms (Eby et al., 2010; Eby, Butts, Hoffman, & Sauer, 2015). However, the benefits of mentoring are not one-sided. Research has illustrated the benefits which mentors may receive from the mentoring relationship (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2006).

Lastly, it has been proposed that there are different phases in the mentoring relationship. The model by Kram (1985), which includes initiation of the relationship, cultivation, separation and redefinition, was developed and based on a more naturally forming mentoring context.

However, in organisations these days the formal mentoring relationship is more popular and the employer is generally very involved in the initial stages of the relationship and also provides processes and guidelines (Eby & Lockwood, 2005).

In the mentoring relationship where the mentor and mentee are formally paired, research has suggested that the mentor and mentee may be less motivated and less invested personally, which makes the mentorship less effective (Hart, 2016; Joshi & Sikdar, 2015). However, the matching process and procedure is important for mitigating the aforementioned effect in formal mentorship programmes, thus it is important to understand how matching is done from both a formal and informal perspective. The mentor-mentee match is of particular interest to this

research study because its findings will form the basis of developing a mentor-mentee matching system, which will be used to develop the prototype for a mentoring network for entrepreneurs that is required as part of the requirements for this master's qualification.

2.4.7 The Mentor-Mentee Match

Research has shown that the mentor-mentee match is a key variable in determining the success and value of the mentorship (Bozeman & Feeney, 2008; Bush et al., 1996; Forret et al., 1996; Hale, 2000). A methodical approach to mentor selection is also more likely to yield success than random selection (Chao et al., 1992; Forret et al., 1996). There is limited empirical research that has focussed specifically on the variables that influence the mentor-mentee match and even less so in the context of entrepreneurship in South African. Therefore, one of the key outcomes of this study was to establish which variables are considered important to the mentee for the mentorship to be successful.

The existing research and literature in this field have mostly reported on more superficial type characteristics which include demographic factors such as race and gender (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). McKeen and Bujaki (2007) found that most mentees preferred being matched with mentors of the same gender. However, despite the clear preferences of the mentee in this regard, there was no actual link between the mentee's preference and improved learning outcomes. In other words, when the mentee was matched with a mentor they preferred, based on the demographic variable, no connection was found in their having been matched with a mentor of their preference and their improved learning or performance. Research on instructional methods echoed this view in that despite individual differences in preferring an instructional method, it has not been proven to actually enhance the learning (Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2008). The participants appeared to learn in both their preferred method of learning and in methods which they indicated were not a preference (Pashler et al., 2008).

In a mentoring relationship where the mentor is male and the mentee is female, there appeared to be more career development and support in comparison to other mentor-mentee gender matches (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Studies suggest that when both the mentor and mentee are female, there appears to be more psychosocial support and role-modelling (Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1990; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). However, findings in the research have been inconsistent. Ensher et al. (2002) found that cross-gender mentoring relationships appear to provide the most psychosocial support when compared to same-gender

mentorship matches. Turban, Dougherty, and Lee (2002) found that the stage of the mentoring relationship also affects the level of support experienced in that even though cross-gender relationships showed less support during the early stages of the relationship; in later stages it appeared to increase to more than what was perceived to be experienced in the same-gender match. It is evident that there are advantages and disadvantages to the various mentor-mentee gender matches and that each relationship is unique.

Research has shown that in same-race matches, the mentee appeared to receive more psychological and social support than in cross-race matches. However, there was no difference in the career development support received (James, 2000; Thomas, 1990). However, in research by Ensher and Murphy (1997), there were conflicting findings to the aforementioned. Despite the race makeup of the match, there was equal psychosocial support received, but less career development for cross-race matches. Furthermore, Turban et al. (2002) found no differences based on the race and duration variables, while Ensher et al. (2002) found no differences in the support or perceived satisfaction of the mentoring relationship based on race. This was similar to the findings of Ensher and Murphy (1997), which showed no significant differences in the perceived satisfaction of the mentoring relationship based on race.

The current political, economic and social landscape in South Africa could influence the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship, along with the organisational and entrepreneurial culture. In a small study done in the South African mining industry by Gilore, Coetsee and Schreuder (2005), the mentoring experience was positively perceived consistently with no evidence that challenges due to cross-race mentoring relationships were experienced. Ultimately, there appear to be varying findings in terms of race and gender with various advantages and disadvantages to the gender and race make-up. Given that these variables do not act in isolation, other factors such as the participants' attitudes and beliefs towards diversity may influence the conflicting findings.

In a research study by Ensher and Murphy (1997), it was found that mentors have a stronger preference for mentees whom they perceive as having high potential and ability. In addition, the study found that the mentors highly valued critical characteristics such as honesty, trustworthiness and dependability, and an openness to learning, which the mentee should possess. The research further showed that the matching of mentors and mentees was to take into consideration the similarities between the two parties. Furthermore, a correlation between

the perceived satisfaction of the mentoring relationship and similarities between the mentor-mentee was found (Ensher et al., 2002; Ensher & Murphy, 1997). Other considerations highlighted in the study included the mentor and mentee's values, world views and work styles.

One model proposed as a mentor-mentee matching model has been the "Goodness of Fit" model, by Bozeman and Feeney (2008), which factors in the following in the matching process:

- The knowledge, skills, experience and learning/communication abilities (referred to as endowments).
- The mentor-mentee's value associated with the willingness to share knowledge and experience and the willingness to receive and absorb the information (referred to as preferences).
- The composition of the mentoring relationship.

However, this model has not been adequately tested empirically. Bozeman and Feeney (2008) recommended that their model only be used for matching once more empirical research is done to establish its applicability. In another study which focussed on the mentees' preferences in terms of their mentors found various types of mentors or mentor combinations that exist in the entrepreneurship area. However, the entrepreneurs preferred mentors from academia and mentors with varied expertise. In this study, the entrepreneurs did not necessarily prefer mentors from the same industry. This study indicated that the preferences of potential entrepreneurs were important in that it would assist with the recruitment, training, and selection of mentors for the entrepreneurs and could outline an entrepreneurship development program (Jain & Chaudhary, 2017).

In this research study, some aspects of mentees having experienced certain variables that contribute to the success of the mentorship will be investigated.

2.4.8 Benefits of Mentorship

Mentoring can be a valuable learning mechanism in organisations and SMEs (Meyer & Fourie, 2004). In 2004, Meyer and Fourie identified the following benefits of mentoring:

- Supports leadership development
- Accelerates career development

- Promotes skill transfer
- Improves working relationships
- Increases job satisfaction
- Can be used as part of the strategy to advance employment equity in a South African context
- Builds a learning culture within an organisation
- Assists both the mentee and the organisation to reach their potential

Clutterbuck (2006) echoed this and built on these benefits by identifying primary and secondary benefits for a business and organisation. The primary benefits for an organisation include ease of induction, improved motivation, improvement in culture, additional development of succession planning, improved networking and communication in the business. Secondary benefits include indirect benefits such as improved morale, efficiency and productivity and generally faster integration.

The mentor and mentee might also benefit. Steinmann (2006) described the benefits of mentoring as “an enhanced rate of promotion, accelerated employability and career mobility, greater professional competence, better acceptance within the organisation, a greater alliance to the workplace and higher salaries” (p. 4).

Meyer and Fourie (2004) identified the following benefits, specifically for the mentor:

- Development of further leadership skills and abilities through providing mentoring;
- Receiving learning through the mentoring relationship and from the mentee;
- The opportunity to transfer skills and experience, and the associated recognition and satisfaction;
- Networking opportunity through building new relationships.

Furthermore, through listening, which the mentor does as part of their role in the relationship, there is much self-learning (Clutterbuck, 2006). The mentor also learns through hearing various perspectives, and through reflection and intuitive reasoning. There is a great sense of satisfaction that is generated when helping others and assisting with various issues. The mentor may also receive recognition and status that may boost their reputation (Clutterbuck, 2006).

Meyer and Fourie (2004) also identified the following benefits for the mentee:

- Learning from the experience of the mentor
- Improvement of professional skills and other development
- The development of relevant and valuable networks

The outcomes of mentoring benefit the mentee from a development perspective in that they acquire new competencies and knowledge (Clutterbuck, 2006). The mentee's career would benefit in that their mentorship may enable the accomplishment of their career goals. Other outcomes are that the mentee would receive access to a broader network and to resources. Furthermore, the mentee would have a well-established development plan to grow their career. The mentee would also benefit emotionally in that they would feel more confident, have a place for reflection, be exposed to challenges, and they would receive guidance and experience an improved sense of status.

Bard and Moore (2000) described the key learning outputs for the mentee as:

The possibility of resolving problems with a person other than their line manager; gaining a wider knowledge of the company, particularly outside their own business areas; receiving general advice on working practices, interpersonal skills, appropriate people to approach with questions; their own confidence; and faster integration into the company (p.258).

Lastly, mentoring improves cognitive, affective learning, and skill-based learning (Hezlett, 2005).

The discussion thus far has focussed mainly on mentoring in the general and/or organisational context. In the following section, mentoring will be examined in the context of entrepreneurship.

2.4.9 Mentorship and the Entrepreneur

As has been stated throughout this paper, currently there is insufficient research in the field of entrepreneurial mentoring. Deakins and Freel (1998) were among the first to identify clear benefits of mentoring that can be generalised to the workplace and the mentoring of entrepreneurs/SMEs. These benefits included improvement in management capabilities, goal

achievement and business transformation, resulting in improved productivity and accelerated learning. In a study by McGregor and Tweed (2002), which focussed on women business owners, several benefits as a result of the mentorship were identified. These benefits included receiving advice from the mentor, receiving input into finding solutions and suggestions for solutions, being given access to the mentors' network and receiving input into their business operations, including finance, marketing and other support functions. On a psychological level, the businesswomen reported benefits relating to an improvement in feeling motivated and confident, obtaining feedback and feeling less isolated. There are also other studies which focussed on the mentorship of women entrepreneurs. In one such study which used e-mentoring as an interventions to support women entrepreneurs in rural Greece, it was found that the successful role modelling that the mentor provided, aided the entrepreneur and that this mentorship relationship helped grow their network and connections (Petridou, 2009).

Another study which focussed on the mentoring of young entrepreneurs indicated that the risks and rewards linked to mentoring young people for entrepreneurship has been gaining more attention from policymakers, development organisations and scholars. In this study by Shittu (2017) which examined entrepreneurship mentoring relationships from the perspective of youth found that entrepreneurship mentoring can influence the entrepreneurial intentions of the youth.

Gravells (2006) referred to the mentor, in the context of entrepreneurial mentoring, as someone who assists in developing a business-related function capability, for example, marketing, human resource and financial planning and provides access to information and confirms positive effects of mentoring on the mentee. This is particularly important for entrepreneurs because they often lack experience in the support functions required to run a business, as stated in the latest GEM report (2016/17). Furthermore, Moulson (2015) found a definite positive relationship between mentoring and entrepreneurial performance. The effectiveness of mentors for millennial entrepreneurs could be improved by the mentor being knowledgeable of how start-ups operate, to make them more relatable to the entrepreneur (Moulson, 2015). In a study which focussed on the transitioning of students to student entrepreneurs, the finding indicated that effective mentoring and positive founders affect enables students to transition to entrepreneurs. The mentorship assisted by allowing them to assemble resources and engage in the necessary action to move their business forward (Ahsan, Zheng, DeNoble & Musteen, 2018).

According to Sullivan (2000) mentoring provides 'just in time' support and is a cost-effective means of development. A study by Cull (2006) which focussed on young entrepreneurs also found several benefits. However the responses varied. In this study, the entrepreneurs who started their own companies, which grew into large organisations, regarded themselves more as self-made. These entrepreneurs acknowledged a level of support from others on their journey but did not identify a prominent individual who aided them significantly. Entrepreneurs who were part of a family business recognised the role of their families and certain key members in their families. However, individuals who advanced in an organisation, specifically acknowledged the support they received from mentors and seniors in the organisation. Cox (1995) highlighted that there is a general lack of research relating to mentorship in the context of entrepreneurship, yet there is sufficient evidence that there is a need for entrepreneurs to learn and be supported through mentorships. This study will assess its findings and attempt to identify similarities to the results of the aforementioned studies. Furthermore, in business, it is clear that the benefits of mentorship are not just felt on an individual level, but the business itself is also assisted to develop and grow positively.

It is also important to have an understanding of the ultimate objective of mentoring which, is to develop the mentee in a professional and personal capacity with the mentor developing a trust relationship and serving as a role-model to the mentee (MindTools, 2014). When examining professional and personal development, it is evident that the nature of personal development is psychosocial and the nature of professional development is related to career improvement which echoes Kram's (1985) two primary functions of the mentor, discussed earlier. This includes career development, which can be related to business support (Ayer, 2010) and then also psychosocial support. The career development focusses on the mentee's career and business development. Psychosocial support relates more to the personal development of the mentee (Allen, 2004).

Mentoring should yield learning for the mentee, thus the mentoring of the entrepreneur should result in higher levels of learning, where the entrepreneur learns through their experiences, and these experiences result in objective and subjective entrepreneurial outcomes, which can be both positive and negative. Positive outcomes could include factors such as increased satisfaction for the entrepreneur in terms of running their business, high-level of commitment to their business operation and improved business and financial performance. The negative experience or outcome of mentoring could include low levels of satisfaction, performance and

engagement, increased stress and high turnover (Heilmen et al., 2008). These can be similar to entrepreneurial outcomes in that the mentee, who in this instance is the entrepreneur, could experience low levels of satisfaction in running their business, poor business and financial performance, high levels of stress, lower levels of engagement towards entrepreneurship. Ultimately, mentorship is linked to entrepreneurial development which has been related to the productive transformation of the entrepreneur (Ameashi, 2005; Ameashi, 2007). This transformation should contribute to the development of the entrepreneur, including their ability to identify business opportunities, their ability to procure and manage the necessary resources to take advantage of the opportunities, their ability to initiate and sustain activities that result in the realisation of business objectives (Osemeke, 2012). Another study indicated that the perceived benefits of the mentoring experience by start-up entrepreneurs included gaining business knowledge and guidance, prioritising goals, increasing confidence and access to relevant networks. The results indicated that the use of multiple mentors and peer support during the initial business phase maximised the benefits of the mentoring process (Brodie, Van Saane, & Osowska, 2017).

According to Gardiner, Tiggemann, Kearns and Marshall (2007), there should be tangible outcomes such as financial improvement or expansion, which emanates from the career development function of mentorship. On the other hand, the psychosocial mentoring could produce more intangible outcomes such as increased engagement and commitment towards entrepreneurship and the business venture, greater satisfaction in terms of the business and its operations, and personal development. Although some of the benefits of the mentorship of entrepreneurs are not always tangible, ultimately all the benefits, direct or indirect, are related to enhancing performance of the business. Therefore, in this research study, improved business performance was viewed as an outcome of both the direct and indirect, tangible and intangible benefits, which then included both the career/business and psychosocial functions of mentoring.

Several studies echo the aforementioned. Some have focussed on the elements relating to mentoring entrepreneurs and business management (Bisk 2002; Cull 2006; Kent et al., 2003), and others have focussed on mentoring entrepreneurs and the psychological and psychosocial outcomes (Nandram, 2003; Waters et al., 2002). There also those studies that have explored both the business management and psychosocial outcomes of mentoring entrepreneurs (Gravells, 2006; Miettinen, 2003; Wikholm et al., 2005). A more recent study by Kunaka and

Moos (2019) found that there were different mentoring outcomes. These categories of outcomes included skills transfer, knowledge transfer, entrepreneur resilience and business **outcomes**. The study also found the mentoring relationship to have various phases, such as initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. The study indicated that if the benefits and outcomes of mentoring were better understood, then this could encourage participation of South African mentors and entrepreneurs.

The benefits of mentoring have been explored in various contexts, such as in organisations and in SMEs, but more so the mentoring of entrepreneurs. It is evident that there are many similarities in the benefits of mentoring despite the context. The various studies discussed here have highlighted that mentoring is an important learning mechanism and yields benefits for all stakeholders. However, in order for all these benefits to be realised, it is imperative that the variables, which are likely to improve the outcomes of the mentor-mentee relationship, need to be considered and leveraged. Now that the potential benefits of mentoring have been explored, it is important to consider the potential challenges which mentoring could face.

2.4.10 Challenges of Mentorship

A number of factors may affect the nature and quality of the mentor-mentee relationship (Pinho, Coetzee & Schreuder, 2005). These may be external factors such as the timing or structure of a mentorship programme, which is more likely to occur in a more formal organisational context. The external factors include how the company is performing, what the general morale is and structural changes underway in the organisation such as either reducing or expanding the headcount. Therefore, if a company or individual is going through less positive times, then the mentorship may need to focus on dealing with change, while if an organisation or person is in a growth phase, then the mentorship may want to focus on accelerated development. When factors are related to time and timing, the mentor and mentee need to be in a position where they have sufficient capacity and resources to invest in the relationship in order for it to be successful (Pinho et al., 2005).

There are also factors that have been identified as being more internal. Some of these were discussed previously and include personality, gender, style of the mentor and the mentor needs (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). Internal challenges could occur when the mentor's style is to put pressure on the mentee to perform and may not acknowledge the mentee for their successes.

The mentor could also be more concerned with self-promotion than developing the mentee (Eby, McManus, Simon & Russell, 2000).

The mentoring relationship itself can sometimes become destructive. Scandura and Williams (2002) identified over-dependency, resentment, dishonesty or deception and harassment as ways in which the mentorship can become dysfunctional and destructive.

The findings appear to be fairly consistent regarding the difficulties associated with mentoring, as stated by Long (1997), “under various conditions, the mentoring relationship can actually be detrimental to the mentor, mentee or both” (p.115). Some of the variables that could contribute to a detrimental relationship include a lack of time, an inability to plan and execute the mentoring process effectively, poor mentor-mentee match and a lack of knowledge of how to mentor. Studies specifically in the field of mentoring entrepreneurs have found that some entrepreneurs did not experience benefits from mentoring. The reasons for this were similar to those that occurred in the organisational context, as referred to earlier, in that it was essential that there was sufficient time, dedication and engagement in the mentorship and that the mentor-mentee match worked. Furthermore, the studies suggested that some entrepreneurs based their success on their own efforts and not that of the mentor (Cull, 2006).

2.5 LITERATURE SUMMARY

Entrepreneurship is an imperative mechanism in the economy to assist the population, industry and government. However, despite the acknowledgement of the importance of entrepreneurship, it is still struggling to achieve the desired results. A key contributor to the struggle of entrepreneurship is that additional support is required for entrepreneurs to succeed and one of the most effective mechanisms of support is the development of entrepreneurs themselves. Entrepreneurial learning is therefore an imperative, and part of this is the function of entrepreneurial mentoring.

In the above section, the key elements of learning and mentoring have been reviewed and some of the most significant studies and literature related to these were explored. Studies specific to the field of entrepreneurial mentoring were also reviewed throughout the literature discussions. The research methodology and the detail of how this study was conducted follows, after which the findings will be discussed and analysed to see how they relate to the studies explored throughout the literature review.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology refers to the framework that determines the process the research will follow and the research design describes the plan of action resulting from the philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2003; Crotty, 1998). The primary purpose of this research study was to ascertain how South African entrepreneurs view mentoring as an entrepreneurial learning mechanism. In this chapter, the research methodology used to collect and interpret data will be discussed. It will justify the research methods and data collection techniques used and provide evidence to illustrate why these were the best choices of research design for the study. This chapter will also include a description of the research design, the unit of analysis, the sample, the protocol and the limitations of the study.

3.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR MIXED METHODS RESEARCH DESIGN

Rocco et al., stated that “a field is strengthened when its researchers show an awareness of the weaknesses and strengths of each approach” (2003, p. 23). In the following section, the justification for the selection of the mixed methods research design will be discussed.

Due to the complex nature of the human phenomena, a more robust research design is often required in order to encapsulate and understand the nature and complexity thereof (Sandelowski, 2000). In this study the mixed methods research design, where both qualitative and quantitative research is used, was adopted because “collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research problem” (Creswell, 2003, p. 21).

However, both qualitative and quantitative research approaches have advantages and disadvantages. Qualitative research generally uses smaller groups of individuals as its sample, which can result in increased subjectivity, making it more challenging when trying to generalise the findings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). On the other hand, quantitative research assumes that human experiences can be isolated from the context in which they occur, but by doing this, there is a possibility that a distorted and single dimension description of the reality would be created when trying to explore and articulate the findings. This paradigm assumes that the approaches are mutually exclusive and that the results cannot be combined in a meaningful manner (Sandelowski, 2001). However, qualitative and quantitative research can

be combined in a meaningful way in the mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The mixed methods approach allows for the “integration and complementarity of data through the process of triangulation to investigate a phenomena” (Leahey, 2007, p. 150). Through triangulation there is “a greater confidence in the results and may serve as the critical test, by virtue of its comprehensiveness” (Jick, 1979, p. 608-609). Onwuegbuzie and Johnson further built on the advantages of the mixed methods approach by stating that “complementary strengths” of both qualitative and quantitative research are leveraged when using mixed methods research (2006, p. 52). Furthermore, the mixed methods approach allows for “using the findings from one method to help inform the other method” (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006, p. 54). Creswell emphasised that the selection of the research methodology is also concerned with the researcher’s personal training and experiences and that mixed methods research best fits a researcher who, “enjoys both the structure of quantitative research and the flexibility of qualitative inquiry” (2003, p. 23).

Mixed methods research has four key objectives (Bergman, 2008; Caruth, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007; Ponce, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009):

1. It combines or integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to attain the most appropriate approach to the research problem itself.
2. It elicits both qualitative and quantitative research methods to assist in deepening the understanding of the research problem being addressed and could answer different aspects of the research problem.
3. It elicits both qualitative and quantitative data on the same research problem giving the researcher more assurance to draw inferences and statements that are compiled in the findings.
4. It makes research more robust by utilising the strengths of one approach to compensate for the shortcomings of the other thus making it more.

The primary research question that this study addressed was:

- How does mentorship contribute to entrepreneurial business success as perceived by South African entrepreneurs?

- Which variables contribute most to the success of the mentor-mentee match?

The secondary questions that this study addressed were:

- What are the most effective learning mechanisms for entrepreneurs?

The mixed methods approach made it easier to draw inferences and make statements in the findings because the qualitative data gave a deeper understanding of the answers and the research questions and the quantitative data gave a view from a bigger sample, making it easier to generalise the findings. The quantitative survey, by providing a broader reach of participants, compensated for one of the shortcomings of the qualitative interviews—the sample was small, making it difficult to generalise the findings.

When selecting the research methods and approach for this study, the assumptions, foundations and characteristics of the research model were considered (Caruth, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Ponce, 2011; Morse Niehaus, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Greene, 2007; Mertens, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The mixed method approach should primarily be used when the research problem is of such a nature that the complexity requires the use of both research approaches. This is based on the argument that the world has increased in its complexity and is continuing to evolve in this manner. Many of the social, economic and political challenges experienced globally are testimony to this complexity (Caruth, 2013). Therefore, the complexity of certain research problems may require the use of both research approaches to fully understand and address the problem (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In this study, the qualitative method was required to address the primary research questions with sufficient depth and insight. Given the nature of the primary questions – how entrepreneurs view mentorship and how it contributed to their success – it would have been limiting to only explore this via quantitative means. However, the second primary research question and the secondary question which focussed on which variables the entrepreneurs viewed as important to the mentor – mentee match and how entrepreneurs best learn, it was more appropriate to combine the results from the qualitative study with a quantitative survey in order to reach a broader audience and to make the results more generalisable and reliable for incorporation in the prototype.

Furthermore, mixed methods research attempts to measure the objective elements in a study, and it attempts to identify and articulate its subjective elements. One such element is the

behaviour of the researcher. Since the actions of the researcher are most likely pragmatic, the goal of the study might take preference to the process. The selection of the methodology for this study was largely based on how the approach could provide insight into a complex problem or question in order to achieve the ambitions of the research. The results of the study were also imperative in that the combination of qualitative and quantitative data to address the research problem provided a comprehensive view, allowing the researcher to make more informed recommendations or propose solutions, thereby reducing subjectivity.

This mixed methods research study used the dominant/less dominant approach to address the research questions, in that the qualitative approach was more dominant than the quantitative approach which was supplementary (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Quantitative data was gathered from 35 business consultants and entrepreneurs who completed a survey while twelve one-on-one interviews with entrepreneurs provided the qualitative data and was used to expand on these survey insights.

The above section highlights which methodology was used in the study. It furthermore explains the rationale for selecting the methods and flags some of the strengths and limitations of the selected methods. In the next section, the research design of the study will be explored.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design refers to the plan that was followed in the research. Mixed method research design is acknowledged as a means of integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in one research study. The mixed method research methodology guides how data are collected and analysed, and how the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches would be phased in the research process. Thus, as a methodology, it provides a guide on how to gather and interpret data and it mixes the two approaches findings into one study.

The various mixed method research designs differ in how they are structured and in the order in which the quantitative and qualitative methods are conducted, be they phased or parallel (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007; Ponce, 2011; Ponce, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

- Exploratory design using sequential phases. Generally, the exploratory approach is adopted when not much is known about a specific research question. Thus, the

qualitative research is done first and these findings are used to design the quantitative phase.

- Explanatory design using sequential phases. Generally, explanatory research design is adopted to describe the research question/problem in-depth. Thus, it uses quantitative research to measure the various aspects of the research problem and then makes use of the qualitative research to deepen the understanding and results of the study.
- Convergence design using parallel phases. The primary purpose of this type of design is to study the research problem in its totality. Quantitative convergence occurs as the different approaches are used to study different aspects of the research and the researcher does the integration of results.
- Triangulation design using parallel phases. The primary purpose here is to use the two approaches (quantitative and qualitative) to study the same aspects of the problem in-depth. Here the qualitative and quantitative instruments and strategies are to align and be complimentary; therefore the researcher triangulates the result of the same aspects.
- Complementary design using parallel phases. The primary purpose in this instance is to use one approach to compensate for the weaknesses in the other and vice-versa. Here one approach is more dominant. The objective of this design is to use one of the research approaches to counter the deficiencies of the other.
- Multilevel design (multiphase design). This is used when there are various dimensions or implications. Here different samples could be involved and the various approaches used to assist in decrypting complexity.
- Emergent designs. This can be used in instances where contradictory findings that emerge from the qualitative and quantitative research findings give the researcher a new perspective, which requires investigation. Should the researcher choose to not accept this as a limitation of the study and pursue further research in the study, then it is referred to as emergent.

The above section provides insight into the various mixed methods research design options that could be adopted and contextualises the reasons for selecting the triangulation design using parallel phases for this study. The qualitative and quantitative research ran parallel and the primary purpose for using this design was to study the same aspects of the research questions in-depth. The qualitative and quantitative strategies were also aligned and complimentary, therefore the researcher triangulated the result of the same aspects. The primary and secondary

research questions were addressed in both the qualitative and quantitative studies where the qualitative research approach was used to delve deeper into the findings related to the primary research questions and the quantitative research approach was used to give breadth to the findings linked to the secondary research question.

3.4 SAMPLING

At the time of the study, the researcher was employed as a business partner in the human resources division at one of the larger financial services organisations in South Africa. One of the areas that the researcher worked in was the franchise distribution division. This was also referred to as alternate distribution in that the traditional distribution business consisted of employees who worked for the organisation directly. However, in the franchise distribution model, none of the people were employed by the organisation, but rather were owners of their own small businesses who rendered services to the financial services organisation under a commercial agreement. The owners of these small businesses were referred to as franchise principals and performed certain functions on behalf of the financial services organisation and the franchise principal then received payment from the financial services organisation for these services.

The franchise principals are owners of their own franchise, whereas the business consultants functioned on a more individual commercial basis with some of the business consultant having a support staff member reporting to them. Therefore, in various ways, the franchise principals and business consultants were considered to be entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur is defined as an individual who, independently or together with a partner or founding team, establishes and manages a business with the principal objective of profit and growth, demonstrates innovative behaviour and employs strategic management practices (Carland, Hoy & Boulton, 1984). This definition was well suited for the franchise principals and business consultants who formed part of the sample for this study. One of the primary reasons for using the franchise principals and business consultants as the population for this study was that the researcher had access to them and this was convenient for the purpose of the research.

A key factor in a study is the unit of analysis (the sample) which the researcher seeks to engage, and as described by Patton (1987), it is important to know what the unit of analysis is that you would like to say something about. In this study, the researcher wanted to understand if entrepreneurs experienced mentorship to have positive tangible outcomes on their business and

personal success. Given the convenient access the researcher had to a group of entrepreneurs, the unit of analysis here was selected to be the franchise division. Based on this, the research employed the purposive technique for sample selection. As stated by Leedy and Ormrod (2005),

In purposive sampling, people or other units are chosen, as the name implies, for a particular purpose. For instance, we might choose people who we have decided are “typical” of a group or those who represent diverse perspectives on an issue (p. 206).

The purposive technique is used when a researcher specifically selects the sample participants based on certain characteristics, and this improves the validity within the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Richards & Morse, 2007). The characteristics identified for this sample were that the participants needed to be business owners and entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs also had to have experienced mentoring in the capacity of a mentee. Of the 14 franchise principals (entrepreneurs) identified to participate in the study, only 12 had previously been mentored and were available and willing to participate in the study. All 12 of these entrepreneurs had been mentored by a mentor, either as an entrepreneur or whilst employed at a previous organisation. The researcher arranged individual sessions, either face-to-face or telephonically, after the participants submitted their voluntary consent to participate by accepting the email (MS Outlook) invitation. All the participants were provided with an overview of the research, which explained the purpose and aim of the research prior to the one-on-one sessions.

Quantitative methods were employed to explore the second primary and secondary research question and the same purposeful techniques were used to identify the respondents. The sample was business consultants who were all business owners and entrepreneurs employed under the commercial agreements in the franchises. There were approximately 60 business consultants to whom the survey was sent. However, only 35 responses were attained for the quantitative part of this study. Therefore the response rate was 58%.

Therefore, for both samples, the sampling was a combination of convenience and purposive sampling, as described above.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Multiple methods of data collection, through triangulation, can strengthen a study (Eisenhardt, 1989). The initial phase consisted of an extensive literature review, which examined similar and related literature and research studies, after which the following two research approaches were taken:

- The qualitative approach included in-depth semi-structured interviews that were conducted either telephonically or face-to-face with the 12 participants. The purpose was to engage the participants and attain their expert views, in-depth thoughts and experiences of how they experienced mentoring and how it contributed to their success. The duration of each interview ranged from 60 to 120 minutes. The use of the semi-structured interview allowed sufficient flexibility for the entrepreneurs to comfortably share their experiences and for new ideas to be generated.
- The quantitative approach included a five to ten minute survey that was distributed electronically to 60 respondents out of which 35 responses were received. The survey was used to elicit the participants' expert views on which mentor-mentee matching variables most contributed to the success of mentorship. The participants also rated preferred learning methods or mechanisms and whether they considered mentoring to contribute to entrepreneurial success.

3.5.1 One-on-one Interviews

The one-on-one interviews were guided by questions in the semi-structured format. The 12 entrepreneurs who participated in the one-on-one interviews were asked open-ended and semi-structured questions in order to give them the liberty to express their ideas and thoughts (O'Leary, 2004). According to O'Leary (2004), recording an interview has its disadvantages, "the unease it can cause for the interviewee; its inability to capture non-verbal cues" (p. 169). Similarly, most of the interviewees did not want the interviews to be recorded as they felt uncomfortable. This was partly because the researcher was the human resource person involved in the franchises and partly because of changes in the Financial Services organisations franchise model. Although not audio recording the interviews had its advantages, it also has its drawbacks, as described by O'Leary (2004), "audio recording allows you to preserve raw data for review at a later date. It therefore allows you to focus on the question/answer process at hand" (p. 169). The researcher mitigated this by ensuring extensive notes were taken during

each interview. The interviews that were audio recorded were transcribed and, in conjunction with the extensive notes taken from those not recorded, were reviewed and analysed extensively. During the interview, the researcher also listened intently to ensure picking up the non-verbal cues.

All of the interviewees gave their consent and were willing to participate. O’Leary indicated that the “positions of power should not be used to get individuals to participate in a study” (2004, p. 53) and that the interviewees “must be aware of the research conducted” (2004, p. 53). The researcher was aware of the existing relationship between the researcher and the interviewee and the potential perception that her role might have on the interviewee. However, emphasis was placed on properly positioning this to the interviewees to ensure that they were aware that their participation was completely voluntary. Therefore, informed consent was given by each interviewee before they were invited to the interview and at the beginning of the interview.

3.5.2 Online Survey

The study included an online survey (Conway & Briner, 2005) which was administered via Survey Monkey. The rationale was that it “provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2003, p. 153). The survey was created based on the primary and secondary objectives that the study sought to address and was distributed to the sample via email.

There are various advantages and disadvantages associated with this type of data gathering. Bell and Bryman (2007) indicated that cost-effectiveness, ease of administration and convenience were all part of the advantages. Furthermore, this form of data gathering did not require the researcher to be present and therefore eliminated interviewer variability. However, Bell and Bryman (2007) also stated that there are a few drawbacks. The researcher was unable to probe when additional information was needed to understand a response because the researcher was not present during the respondents completing the survey. The length of a survey can also affect its feasibility in that it is not feasible to expect the completion of extensive surveys. However, shortening the survey can affect the quantity of data gathered and therefore there is the risk of missing data. The researcher requested input from several experts at the financial services organisation who worked in the centre of expertise, which regularly

dealt with organisation wide surveys. Two actuaries were also consulted to ensure that sufficient information was gathered to create the mentor-mentee matching model.

The researcher, in consultation with the supervisor, then designed the questions based on addressing the research questions, most of the questions in the online survey were close-ended. According to Babbie et al., “closed-ended questions are very popular because they provide a greater uniformity of responses and are more easily processed” (2001, p. 233). In this study the weaknesses associated with an online survey were mitigated in that it was compensated with the data from the qualitative research.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is about extracting implicit or explicit meaning from the data collected during a study. Three steps were followed during the data analysis process in this study (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015):

- In order to understand the meaning and message of the data, the information needs to be encoded and described.
- This information is then analysed and interpreted, in order to
- Articulate the findings in the most effective manner.

Since the mixed methods methodology was used, the following analyses occurred:

- Analyse the qualitative data;
- Analyse the quantitative data;
- Analyse the mixed data

The qualitative research was the primary source of data and the quantitative research was the secondary source of data used to assist in making the results of the second primary and the secondary research question more generalisable. Thus, the analysis of the mixed data-sets assisted with triangulation and depth of the study, with specific reference to the second primary and secondary research question. In this study, extensive volumes of qualitative data were used, and the analysing techniques applied to draw findings. This approach to analysing the data reduced the complexity and volume of data in order for the researcher to apply judgment and interpret the information (Lee et al., 1999).

Volkoff, Strong and Elmes (2005) indicated that selective coding can progress the analysis from huge volumes of codes to a select few theoretical categories, which can serve as a base to include new theory or revise existing theory. Once all the data were collected and reviewed, the content of each of the 12 interviews was closely analysed to identify emerging trends and themes to gain a deeper understanding of the emotions embedded in the interviews. The next phase was to code the interviews according to categories that were linked to the various themes and these categories were then combined. This process reflected how strongly each theme emerged. Throughout the coding process, the researcher integrated the literature and the emerging themes from the transcripts. Analysing the nature of the relationship between the variables was a reiterative process. As feedback from the interviews were reviewed and key trends and insights identified, themes emerged and these were then linked to other research findings. Table 2 is an illustration of how data were segmented, sections selected, code developed and then themed.

Table 2

Data Analysis Sample

Raw Data from Qualitative Interview Question 1: How did the entrepreneurs attain their mentors (formal / informal)?
<p>FP 1: My father was my mentor. He had his own business and pulled me in from an early age. He had the biggest impact on my and shaped how I operate today. <i>I think it is much better when it is someone who has an interest in you and [it] is not forced projects and formal.</i></p>
<p>FP 2: I had a few people who were <i>assigned as my mentor, formal, but they were not the most influential.</i> The most influential mentors for me was those I chose to follow myself. I had several mentors whose work I followed, such as Stephen Covey, Maxwell, and Tony Robins etc. I studied them and who they studied, and they became my mentors. I had other mentors, but I consider these to be the most impactful in my career as an entrepreneur.</p>
<p>FP 3: Let me just think ... when I walked into the business space ... I had no one to look to but turned to google and I bought myself a lot of books ... Maverick. I learnt a lot from Jack Welsh, stuff I bought, and I read and upskilled myself. I think, more specific to a specific industry but not the general sense of business. That you can figure out ... you need more specific to your business. I had mentors before I became an entrepreneur, but these people weren't my mentors when I become an entrepreneur, [they were] more when I worked for a company. <i>These mentors were given to me based on some talent process.</i></p>
<p>FP 4: An executive within a large corporate was the most impactful mentor. I have had two executives that mentored me. They were part of me progressing in the company ... they shaped the way I think. <i>Both these people saw potential in me and supported my career and saw potential in me and chose to spend time with me.</i></p>
<p>FP 5: I had a few mentors. Basically, I had different mentors for different things. I had two <i>mentors who mentored me through formal programmes but these, for me, did not go well</i> and did not really help me. It felt forced and we often ended up missing meetings. I found the relationships that happen naturally to be much better.</p>
<p>FP 6: I met my mentor through a business coach who suggested I make contact with this person as they had recently gone through something similar in terms of their career. <i>I was on mentorship programmes but didn't really feel that this worked and that I learnt much.</i></p>

FP 7: I only really had one mentor and that was a *friend of a family who started his own business and who used to chat to me about things in business, informal*. Other than that, I self-studied and found people on Google who mentored me – like Mr Branson etc.

THEME	CODE	DATA EXTRACT
Formal/Informal Mentorship	Perceptions of formal mentorships and associated value and perceptions of informal mentorships and associated value	<p><i>I think it is much better when it is someone who has an interest in you and is not force projects and formal ... assigned as my mentor (formal) but they were not the most influential.</i></p> <p><i>These mentors were given to me based on some talent process.</i></p> <p><i>Both these people saw potential in me and supported my career and saw potential in me and chose to spend time with me</i></p> <p><i>... mentors who mentored me through formal programmes but these for me did not go well.</i></p> <p><i>I was on mentorship programmes but didn't really feel that this worked and that I learnt much.</i></p> <p><i>...friend of a family who started his own business and who use to chat to me about things in business (informal).</i></p>

After careful analysis of the data, the individual interview findings were compared to each other through cross-case analysis, which focussed on the similarities and differences across the individual interviews. Perry (2001) suggested that comparing and identifying commonalties and conflicts strengthens internal validity. Therefore, exploring both conflicting information allowed theoretical constructs to be sharpened, whilst research into similar literature assisted with generalisation (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Despite efforts to be objective, research bias is inherent and although external sources were consulted to increase objectivity, the researcher's bias remained an element to consider in the research. In this study, the intention was that as each of the above phases were underway, they would feed into each other and provide input to adapt each of the areas e.g. as the interviews were underway, the literature review might be amended (Perry, 2001).

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested a six-step process for identifying, analysing and reporting qualitative data using thematic analysis. These researchers recommended that the process is flexible and considered in the context of the research questions and the information gathered. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps were applied in this study as follows:

Step 1 "Familiarising yourself with your data"

Complete immersion and engagement with the data collected in the study was required. The recorded interviews were transcribed and then reviewed repeatedly. While doing so, thoughts and ideas were written down as these emerged. This step served as the foundation for the analysis, which followed because it created a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the data, its contents and its interactions.

Step 2 "Generating initial codes"

This step was used to identify preliminary codes. The codes identified in the study contained aspects of the data that were interesting and meaningful to the objectives of the research. These codes occurred more frequently and were more specific than themes but provided a start to create a context in which the discussion could occur.

Step 3 "Searching for themes"

This stage initiated the interpretation and analysis of the data and the collated codes. During the analysis, overarching themes emerged and the data that were relevant to these themes was extracted and combined or split. This process, with the application of the researcher's thoughts and ideas, helped identify where relationships between codes, themes and sub-themes existed.

Step 4 "Reviewing themes"

In this step, a much more intense look at the themes occurred and the researcher decided whether the themes were to be split, combined or even discarded. The information in each of the themes was to be coherent and meaningfully connected, and the different themes were to be clearly differentiated. A thematic map was generated through a two-pronged approach, themes that emerged were checked in relation to the extracts and then checked again for overlaps.

Step 5 "Defining and naming themes"

At this stage of the study, the themes and sub-themes within the dataset were further refined and then defined. Throughout this step of the process, data were repeatedly analysed to develop the identified themes. Names were given to the themes and well-articulated definitions captured the nature of the themes, allowing for the story to form.

Step 6 “Producing the report”

In the final stage of the qualitative research process, the analysis was transformed into a discussion of the data in a meaningful and logical manner with summaries, extracts and examples related to the various themes, research questions and literature review.

For the quantitative research, the responses to the survey were gathered and then extracted from the online survey tool called Survey Monkey. This part of the research employed descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics included processes and procedures, which were used to summarise and arrange information such as scores, responses and observations from the survey sample in a manner which gave meaning and made sense of the information (Privitera, 2012). Fortunately, the Survey Monkey tool has functionality which automatically summarises the data gathered and present it in tables and graphs. The researcher then extracted the summarised information and infographic and analysed and interpreted it in order to extract meaning and themes. Lastly, the quantitative and qualitative information was looked at together, compared and where possible integrated. This information was then presented and discussed in the analysis and findings chapter.

3.7 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND GENERALISABILITY

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) stated that the validity of a measurement instrument considers the extent to which the instrument actually measures what it is meant to measure. The one-on-one, semi-structured interviews and the online questionnaire sufficiently addressed the primary research questions—what the perceived impact of mentoring is on entrepreneurs’ success—and the variables which most contributed to the success of the mentor-mentee match—and the secondary research questions—how entrepreneurs learn best.

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), in relation to the internal validity of a study, there is to be “a good match between the researcher’s observations and the theoretical ideas” (p. 411). In this study, not only were the findings of the study discussed, but also the findings of other researchers were considered in the literature review and then related to the outcomes of this study.

The generalisability of this research was restricted to entrepreneurs in the franchise model who were part of the same financial services organisation. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), “external validity of a research study is the extent to which its results apply to situations beyond the study itself-in other words, the extent to which the conclusions drawn can be generalised to other contexts”(p. 99). It is imperative to note that the results of this study could not be generalised or be applied to populations outside the scope of this study. In other words, the results of this study could only be generalised to the sample inside the scope of this study.

An important aspect of research is if a study can be replicated. This study can be replicated in the future (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH APPROACH

There were a few inherent limitations in the study. These will be discussed next.

One of the limitations was linked to the methodology selected for the study. Mixed methods research involves using both qualitative and quantitative methods, therefore the amount of time required in the data collection stage was excessive. This was further compounded in the analysis phase where the researcher was required to analyse all the data gathered (Creswell, 2003), particularly the qualitative research component analysis which was done manually and required much time. The researcher overcame this by using Survey Monkey to facilitate and summarise the findings in the quantitative research component of the study.

A further limitation of this study was linked specifically to the sample selected for the study. The researcher only included franchises that had been in existence for between two to five years because these were convenient to access. Therefore, this study indirectly excluded businesses that were more mature i.e. six years plus. However, even though the selected franchises had only been in existence for a short period, many of the franchise principals had been entrepreneurs in other business ventures for much longer prior to opening the franchise. In addition, all the entrepreneurs who formed part of the sample were part of the same franchise business model in the financial service industry, thus other businesses that were not started as franchises of existing business models were excluded. It therefore also excluded other industries such as retail and fast movable consumable goods (FMCG) because it was predominantly based on a sample of businesses in financial services.

Most of the research in the field of mentorship is in the context of the workplace and large organisations, and limited research has been done specific to the context of entrepreneurship. Therefore in this research, the researcher was required to borrow information from the field of mentorship in various contexts where there was limited empirical research available specific to the context of entrepreneurship.

Finally, the data gathered in this study were based on the researcher's interpretation (self-reported data) and although experts were consulted during the course of the research, an element of bias was still included. However, this limitation was minimised by the extensive literature reviewed, which considered similar research studies and their findings thereby reducing the bias.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The intent of this study was to contribute to the field to assist both entrepreneurs and organisations better develop entrepreneurs and match them to mentors. The anonymous and non-threatening nature of the study, has added value to decision-making with regard to the development of entrepreneurs and has not caused any harm to any individuals who participated in the study or otherwise. It will ultimately feed into the prototype for a mentoring network which will encompass a mentor-mentee matching system.

A detailed application to the University of Cape Town, Faculty of Commerce Ethics Committee was submitted as part of the process to allow the research to be conducted. The application was reviewed to evaluate risk and approval was given to proceed with the research.

Due to the sample size of the entrepreneurs involved in the qualitative one-on-one interviews, the interview feedback was presented anonymously and there should be no or, at least, limited risk to any survey participants and thus the request to not reference the entrepreneurs directly was respected. Autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals involved in this study were respected in all aspects of the interactions and in the presentation of the research findings. Only notes were taken during the interviews and these notes were recorded anonymously by the researcher and were not shared with any other stakeholders, this was the same for the quantitative results. Additionally, very few biographical questions were asked, to ensure that the interviewees did not feel their privacy was invaded and anonymity was assured. The questions

were also select to be non-invasive and the research attempted to ensure that no sensitive questions were asked.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In the above section, the research approach and process followed were discussed. The methods used were justified and discussed objectively in terms of both its strengths and weaknesses. The process and methodologies were thoroughly thought through and discussed to illustrate that it followed proven and valid methods. This research hopes to further enrich the existing knowledge and understanding of mentoring and entrepreneurs and therefore followed tried and tested methods.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous section, the research methodology and approach was discussed, and highlighted the process that was followed when conducting the research. The next section presents the findings that emerged after the research was conducted and all the data gathered, reviewed. In this chapter, all the information gathered from the one-on-one interviews with franchise principals and the quantitative online survey with the business consultants is analysed and discussed with the purpose of addressing the research questions. The themes that emerged from the qualitative one-on-one interview data are presented and discussed, after which a summary of the findings from the quantitative online survey is presented. As this chapter is a review, it is important to note that the one-on-one interviews only included the Franchise principals and the online survey included the business consultants group.

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The semi-structured interviews were used to gather information about how the franchise principals (entrepreneurs) viewed mentorship. More specifically, these interview questions elicited the views of the franchise principals in terms of if they perceived mentorship to contribute to their business success. During the interviews, the nature of the contribution of mentorship emerged.

Before proceeding with the reflection and interpretation of the interview data, the sample of franchise principals who were interviewed is described in greater detail. In the next section, an overview of their backgrounds, work experiences and entrepreneurial experiences is provided. For the purposes of this report, the words ‘entrepreneurs’ and ‘interviewees’ will be used interchangeably to refer to the franchise principals who were interviewed.

4.2.1 Participant Overview: Interview Sample

During the one-on-one interviews, the twelve franchise principals were asked the question - please can you tell me about your background in terms of your career history?

A summary of the entrepreneurs’ professional experience is provided in Table 3.

Table 3*Summary of the entrepreneur's career and entrepreneurial experience*

Interviewee	Background and Work Experience
Entrepreneur 1	The interviewee had a total of over 20 years' work experience in financial services, 15 of which were as an employee in a large financial services organisation. The interviewee had predominantly sales experience and was a general manager during the last five years, working with entrepreneurs who distributed long-term insurance products. The interviewee had also previously run a health product import business for several years, however this business had closed down.
Entrepreneur 2	The interviewee had a total of over 25 years' work experience and had opened several businesses during the course of their career. The first business opened by the interviewee was at the age of 12 years and the business sold fresh fish. The last two businesses opened by the interviewee were franchises which distributed insurance products.
Entrepreneur 3	The interviewee had a total of year 26 years' work experience at one of the largest financial services organisations. The interviewees had various roles during the course of their career, however the majority of their experience was in management positions. The interviewee spent the most time managing a sales team, which distributed insurance products. The interviewee then resigned and opened a franchise, which has now been running for over two years. The interviewee therefore only had two years' experience as an entrepreneur.
Entrepreneur 4	The interviewee had a total of over 21 years' work experience in a corporate company in financial services, however due to lack of autonomy, moved into an entrepreneurial model as a franchise owner in 2015. The interviewee also previously owned other businesses in different industries, including a petrol station and car dealership.
Entrepreneur 5	The interviewee had over 20 years' work experience in a corporate company, moving from an advisor to sales manager, and then they were promoted to an area manager after which they were promoted to a regional general manager. The interviewee decided to start a franchise five years ago in distributing long-term insurance products.

Entrepreneur 6	The interviewee had over 21 years' work experience in a corporate company in financial services and then opened a business by purchasing a long-term insurance franchise six years ago.
Entrepreneur 7	The interviewee had over 25 years' work experience in a corporate company in various financial services companies. The interviewee was a regional general manager and decided to retire and move into their own business as a franchise owner.
Entrepreneur 8	The interviewee had over 15 years' work experience in a corporate company as a business consultant and wanted to expand and decided to open a franchise. The interviewee has owned this franchise for over five years.
Entrepreneur 9	The interviewee had over 25 years' business experience, some of which was in a corporate company and other experience was in the franchise model for various financial services organisations. All the franchises were financial services and was personally owned by the interviewee.
Entrepreneur 10	The interviewee had over 20 years' work experience in financial services, in banking and insurance. The interviewee had several businesses in financial services, all of which were franchises. These franchises were mostly in direct distribution however the latest franchise purchased by the interviewee was an intermediary distributor (third party sales).
Entrepreneur 11	The interviewee had over 10 years' work experience in a corporate company as a business consultant and made a decision to work more independently and became a small business owner in financial services. The interviewee then entered a commercial agreement to distribute financial services products.
Entrepreneur 12	The interviewee had worked in the medical field for several years and then moved into financial services. The interviewee then decided to open a franchise two years ago to be more independent and expand the financial offerings of their current business.

The information in Table 3, in conjunction with other details which emerged at different points in the interview, was used to identify trends and themes relating to the entrepreneurs' backgrounds and work experiences. These are discussed next.

a) Corporate experience

Eleven of the entrepreneurs interviewed had extensive work experience in a corporate company before opening their own businesses as franchise owners.

b) Financial services experience

Ten of the entrepreneurs interviewed had work experience in a corporate company in the financial services sector and all the entrepreneurs had specific financial service experience in the long-term insurance industry. Three interviewees had worked in the banking industry and a two had prior experience in the short-term insurance industry.

c) Entrepreneurial experience

All the interviewees had owned their own businesses and had been entrepreneurs for more than two years, specifically in the franchise model in the financial services sector. The entrepreneurs had various backgrounds and work experiences in other industries. However they all had entrepreneurial experience in a franchise model in the intermediated long-term insurance industry.

d) Sales experience

Another commonality that emerged was that all of entrepreneurs had sales experience in the financial services industry. This was relevant in that the franchise model was based on the franchise owners' business providing distribution and sales services of the principal organisation's long-term insurance products. This meant that all the entrepreneurs had direct experience in the roles and industry where their businesses needed to operate.

e) Formal learning/education

The entrepreneurs varied in their level and type of qualifications. All the entrepreneurs had matriculated and had participated in both formal and informal learning interventions after school, and had, at a minimum, a formal post matric qualification.

f) Informal learning/education

All the entrepreneurs had been mentored in a formal or an informal capacity or both. Five entrepreneurs had received coaching at some point during their corporate careers. All the

entrepreneurs had attended various workshops and courses on technical subject matter relating to the financial services industry as well as other areas such as leadership and management.

Although there were a few commonalities in the entrepreneurs' backgrounds and work experiences, it was clear that each interviewee's entrepreneurial experience was unique. All the entrepreneurs interviewed were passionate about sharing their journey of becoming an entrepreneur and expressed fulfilment and pride in the decision they had made to become an entrepreneur.

4.2.2 Key reasons for becoming Entrepreneurs

Even though each interviewee had their own unique story of their experience and reasons for becoming an entrepreneur, there were certain aspects and circumstances that were common to their motivation for becoming an entrepreneur. The common motivators and reasons, which the entrepreneurs provided for becoming an entrepreneur are discussed next.

a) Autonomy and Independence

All the entrepreneurs had experience in traditional employment and indicated that they had a need for a greater sense of independence, autonomy or control.

b) Decision-making

Eight of the entrepreneurs referred to wanting to make their own decisions. Entrepreneur 3 said, "I was tired of all the processes we needed to follow, and I wanted to be able to make my own decisions. When you start your own business, you have more control over how you want to run it and what processes you want to follow."

c) Career Progression and Succession

Entrepreneur 1 said, "I could no longer fit into the chain of command and I couldn't see opportunities in terms of moving upwards, no succession." Six other interviewees who indicated that they were unable to move upward in the organisation and therefore opted for moving into the entrepreneurial model shared this sentiment around succession and progression.

d) Opportunity and Gap Identification

Seven of the entrepreneurs referred to identifying an opportunity, need or gap to start their own businesses. Entrepreneur 4 recalled, "...from a very young age I was quite different. I saw opportunities where others saw problems." Entrepreneur 6 said, "I saw a gap in the system. I knew that if I had more freedom to run things the way I wanted to, then I would be able to take advantage of all the opportunities I saw in the market."

e) Risk Tolerance/Appetite

Each entrepreneur alluded to having an appetite or tolerance for risk-taking. Entrepreneur 5 observed:

Leaving fulltime employment and opening your own business is risky, so you really need to want it and be willing to take the risk, most people aren't. I did some investigation into the business model before taking the leap and decided it was worth it. People who open their own businesses need to have hair on their teeth. Some people will never have the appetite to risk a fixed income, but some of us see the opportunity for reward as greater than the risk.

Entrepreneur 7 said, "It is difficult becoming an entrepreneur. You need to be able to deal with uncertainty and take risks." Entrepreneur 8 pointed out, "I am all about balancing risk and reward. It is a risk to take your pension and invest it in a business, but if you are an independent businessman, then that's what you need to do."

The above section is a summary of the common reasons for becoming entrepreneurs as mentioned by the interviewees. Some of the common reasons such as needing more autonomy and independence, wanting to be able to make their own decisions, and not being able to progress within the organisation were as a result of the entrepreneurs' dissatisfaction with being employed at a corporate company or organisation. The other factors mentioned related more to the characteristics of the entrepreneurs themselves, such as being able to identify opportunities, needs and gaps, and then having the appetite for risk or a tolerance to act on these needs or opportunities.

4.2.3 Challenges facing Entrepreneurs

Each entrepreneur had their own story, and each had walked their own path to become an entrepreneur. However, there were certain challenges they had in common and certain

challenges and experiences, which were unique to each. In the next section, the common challenges are presented.

a) Access to Start-up Funding

A challenge expressed by all the entrepreneurs, at various points during the interviews, was access to capital, funding, cash flow and/or money. All the entrepreneurs agreed that funding was one of their greatest challenges when they first started and for most of the entrepreneurs, this was still a challenge. According to Entrepreneur 3, “Funding your own business is a risk, and then making sure you have enough money every month is the biggest challenge. If the company could put up funding, then half our battle would be over.”

b) Ongoing Cash flow and Breaking even

Funding and cash flow were mentioned as one of the greatest challenges when the entrepreneurs were starting out. However most interviewees (ten of the twelve) experienced this as an ongoing difficulty. Even those who had had their businesses for over five years still experienced cash flow problems. At various points during the interviews, the entrepreneurs spoke of their initial main aim being just to “make ends meet” (Entrepreneur 4) and to reach a breakeven point. Entrepreneur 12 elaborated, “When I started my business, I knew that it would be difficult, but my only goal was to work towards breaking even and making sure all my staff are taken care of, and this is still my aim today.”

c) Lack of Resources and Support

Another difficulty echoed by all the interviewees was the lack of support and resources. Many described being an entrepreneur as a lonely experience and/or having to do everything themselves. A key challenge identified by seven of the entrepreneurs was that they had to build their business on their own with no support. They had to build their own business and run it— from operations to human resources (recruitment) and finance to marketing. They were also solely accountable for the business and people outcomes and issues. They emphasised how in large businesses the organisations’ leaders and managers were provided with support and the various support functions, whereas an entrepreneur had to do everything on their own. Entrepreneur 11 described it as “You are all things to everyone.” The entrepreneur either needed to bring the functional skills in externally or develop the skills themselves. The support and resources that the interviewees mentioned included finance, information technology (IT), operational and administrative support, human resources (recruitment and payroll), marketing

and administration. Despite the lack of resources and the demands of managing all the functions of the business, two of the interviewees pointed out that they enjoyed running their own businesses and that it provided diversity in their day to day activities. Entrepreneur 1 acknowledged:

I have enjoyed learning how a business fits together, and you learn best by actually doing it. I have learnt so much about all the different parts of the business and now I actually like the fact that I can do everything, from start to end.

d) Remuneration Model

A variable that was unique to the business environment in which all the franchises operated, at the time of the study, was the remuneration model. The interviewees were unanimous in their views on the model. They believed the model used by the organisation to pay them was complex and difficult to manage and measure on a daily basis. The entrepreneurs all referred to the model having changed over the previous two years and that they had issues with the new model.

e) Talent Acquisition and Attraction

Eleven of the entrepreneurs felt that identifying and employing the right people in the business was critical. However, according to them, once those people were in place, then the next challenge was convincing those people to believe in the business, and its vision and mission. The entrepreneurs found sourcing and identifying people to employ a challenge, and they all spoke of that staff retention being important but was, or had at some point been, a key challenge in their franchise business.

f) Fear of Uncertainty and Failure

Six interviewees spoke of anxiety, fear and uncertainty created by their decision to leave traditional employment and open their own businesses. Entrepreneur 10 remarked, “There is an inherent fear of failure when making the initial transition to become an entrepreneur.” Entrepreneur 3 elaborated further, “Although there is fear of failure, failures are good. You learn the most from your failures.” Three more interviewees echoed this and indicated that fear was sometimes necessary and good, as clarified by Entrepreneur 3 who said, “You need to take risks, but the fear makes you take calculated risks.”

g) Lack of access to a relevant Network

Another challenge identified by the interviewees when they spoke of starting their businesses, was a lack of access to relevant networks. Seven of the entrepreneurs indicated that access to relevant people was a challenge and building networks which could add value to their organisation, was difficult. All the entrepreneurs mentioned that having access to a relevant network was critical to their business but difficult to acquire, as Entrepreneur 10 said, “having the right networks are critical when you’re a business owner but so hard to build in the beginning”. Six entrepreneurs pointed out that the network should include someone who could show them the ropes or advise them, however finding such a connection was a significant challenge, and as mentioned earlier many of the entrepreneurs referred to being lonely. With regard to this study, a definite theme emerged in relation to entrepreneurs feeling alone and lacking access to relevant networks, guidance and support, with specific reference being made to having someone with experience that they could talk to, such as a mentor.

h) Challenges throughout the Entrepreneurial Life Cycle

Four interviewees referred to the entrepreneurial journey as having different stages and that each of these stages had different challenges, Entrepreneur 2 explained, “Entrepreneurship is a journey, and this journey has different challenges at different times.” Entrepreneur 2 further elaborated by saying:

If you got a good plan, it helps. Mine was a 1000-day journey. Year 1 is about survival, [you] need to have [the] right plan. If you have done things right, then in year 2 you start living, [and in] year 3 you start flying. These are the principles that I based my business on.

Entrepreneur 7 described how new challenges emerged after managing to establish the business, “In terms of the more established franchises, one of the concerns is what to do next. Can you scale and is there opportunity to build and grow further?” The interviewees who also had more established franchises (five years plus) also referred to wanting to expand and scale.

Nine of the interviewees referred to being stressed or feeling concerned at some stage during their entrepreneurial journey, as recounted by Entrepreneur 6, “There is also a lot of stress

created in terms of being accountable for others. If this venture does not work, it is not just the entrepreneur who is impacted but all those they employed.”

4.2.4 Resources required

In the one-on-one interviews the entrepreneurs were asked, what resources do you have and what resources are missing?

Although all the interviewees referred to the lack of support and resources when recounting the challenges they faced as entrepreneurs, seven acknowledged that there was access to more resources in the alternate distribution or franchise model compared to the accessibility of resources available to other entrepreneurs who opened their own small businesses. Some of the resources that franchisees had access to, as mentioned by the interviewees, were training and product specialists. Despite their acknowledgement of having access to certain resources within an alternate distribution or franchise model, knowledge and resources that assisted with running a business such as finance, operations, payroll, and human resources, to name a few, were still lacking.

Five of the twelve entrepreneurs interviewed felt that there was a lack of exposure to best practice businesses, in that there was no access or exposure to other businesses or experienced people in similar industries and business models. The entrepreneurs indicated that this access or exposure would add much value to their development and their businesses’. Entrepreneur 5 explained, “It is much easier to learning from either doing it yourself or seeing how someone else does things. I would like to see how some, in a successful business, run their stuff.”

Three entrepreneurs mentioned the need for funding to employ more support and administrative staff in order to sustain their businesses. The need for funding was echoed throughout all the interviews with the entrepreneurs.

4.2.5 How Entrepreneurs learnt best

In the interviews the entrepreneurs were asked, how do you learn best? The following is a summary of how the interviewee’s best learnt and the learning mechanisms they found to be most effective.

a) Self-directed/managed learning and learning through experience

The most commonly cited learning mechanism highlighted by all the entrepreneurs was self-directed or self-managed learning. This was expressed during the interviews in various ways by the entrepreneurs, as evidenced by their remarks:

Entrepreneur 2: “I think entrepreneurs learn best through trial and error. They need to be able to learn through applying themselves.”

Entrepreneur 3: “When you become a small business owner, you need to teach yourself how to run a business.”

Entrepreneur 7: “There are many forms of learning, but I think entrepreneurs learn through doing it themselves and by experiencing things.”

Entrepreneur 9: “Entrepreneur teach themselves.”

Entrepreneur 10: “I learn best by reading [about best practices] on the internet and then applying these best practices. It’s about self-development.”

Entrepreneur 12: “As a franchise owner you are able to learn by yourself. There is no one around to show you what to do, so figuring things out on your own is important.”

As part of their self-directed learning, all the entrepreneurs relied on reading various articles and books to learn and then applied the skills learnt from these books. The interviewees also kept up to date with books on research in entrepreneurship, leadership and innovation and read online constantly. Entrepreneur 1 said, “Google is an entrepreneur’s best friend.”

Many interviewees referred to certain authors whom they aspired to. Some of the books named were *7 habits of a highly effective people* by Stephen Covey, *Grit* by Angela Duckworth and books by Richard Branson.

All the interviewees felt that learning through doing and through experiencing was highly effective. Five referred to this as “on-job-training” (Entrepreneur 3) or “learning while doing” (Entrepreneur, 9). Eight of the interviewees also mentioned that they learnt through reflection and five entrepreneurs observed that they learnt even if they made mistakes.

b) Learning through networks and relationships

Entrepreneur 6 who had family assistance in becoming an entrepreneur said, “How you are raised and your exposure growing up is a significant contributor to your decision to become an entrepreneur.” Entrepreneur 3 provided the following, “How you grow up is important ... You develop that skill automatically ... As a teenager [you] learn automatically if you have

entrepreneurial parents. Otherwise then over the last 30 years you need formal training – attend workshops and seminars.”

A few of the interviewees referred to having interactions with someone who showed interest as important. Entrepreneur 5 observed “Some people just need someone to come and talk to them and find out how they [are] doing. It is a lonely world.” The interviewees also consistently emphasised the importance of a network not only as essential to success, but also because it was one of the fundamental means of learning for entrepreneurs. Nine of the interviewees also felt that learning from people with experience was important and an influential part of their learning journey.

c) Learning through formal education and training

Five interviewees who alluded to formal learning as a valuable learning mechanism but, as pointed out by Entrepreneur 2, it was “by no means as valuable as the informal learning mechanisms.” Two of the interviewees held a conflicting view to the five interviewees, indicating that formal learning did not add any value and one entrepreneur referred to it as “a waste of time” (Entrepreneur 4).

All the interviewees agreed that the face-to-face product and legislative technical training was imperative for their staff and themselves. The training was provided as part of the value proposition from the financial services organisation to the franchises and was paid for by the organisation.

d) Other methods of learning

Other learning methods mentioned by the interviewees, which were not consistent across all the interviews, were online courses, seminars, workshops, role-plays and development assessments. One entrepreneur also mentioned stretch assignments, rotations and secondments as an effective form of learning.

It is evident from the above that self-directed learning and learning through experience were important learning mechanisms for the entrepreneurs in the franchise model. Another important means of learning was learning from other people and through networks, specifically from those with knowledge and experience in an area relevant to the entrepreneurs’ learning needs. Other learning mechanisms were mentioned but these were not mentioned consistently in the

interviews. Learning mechanisms such as formal learning, workshops and courses were also criticised by some entrepreneurs.

4.2.6 Mentorship

The entrepreneurs were asked various questions relating to their experiences of mentorship during the one-on-one interviews. These questions included:

- Did you have any kind of mentor (formal/informal) in your career thus far?
- How did you come to acquire the mentor/s?
- At which stage in your business career did you have this mentor/s?
- What was the nature of your interaction (logistics of meeting (how often, how long, where), what forms of communication did you use?
- Did you perceive that mentorship assisted you and your business to succeed?
- If so, what were some of the key contributions mentorship made to you and your business?
- Which variables do you believe most contributed to the success of your mentor-mentee match?

In this section, the responses to these questions are reviewed and themes and trends are identified.

4.2.6.1 How the Entrepreneurs identified their Mentors

a) At the organisation the entrepreneur was employed by or in business with

The most common means of acquiring a mentor was through the organisation the entrepreneur was in business with or was employed at. Seven interviewees met their mentors through the organisation they were employed at or in business with.

Entrepreneur 3 stated “I had mentors before I became an entrepreneur but these people weren’t my mentors when I became an entrepreneur. It was more when I worked for a company. These mentors were given to me based on a talent process.” Other entrepreneurs specifically indicated that they participated in formal mentorship programmes at the organisations, such as Entrepreneur 2 indicated “I had a few people who were assigned as my mentors through the company’s formal programmes, but they weren’t the most influential.”

Entrepreneur 5 also highlighted,

I had a few mentors. Basically, I had different mentors for different things. I had two mentors who mentored me through formal programmes but these, for me, did not go well and did not really help me. It felt forced and we often ended up missing meetings. I found the relationships that happened naturally to be much better.

Entrepreneur 9 said “I had a mentor in my early career in the business. It was on a formal programme. I did learn something” and Entrepreneur 11 indicated “I was part of a mentor network, a more formal thing where you got an executive sponsor in the business to act as your mentor. It was nice to chat to the senior guys, but I can’t say that I really learnt much.”

Entrepreneur 4 had been mentored by executives within the organisation, stating:

An executive in a large corporate was the most impactful mentor. I have had two executives who mentored me at the company I worked for. They were part of my progressing in the company and they shaped the way I think. Both these people saw potential in me and supported my career and chose to spend time with me.

Similar to Entrepreneur 10 who indicated “My senior manager was my mentor, and even now they are still working in the business and still talk to me and mentor me. It’s all about the relationships you maintain.”

As is evident in the quotations from the entrepreneurs, two interviewees did not find this type of mentorship as valuable or effective because it was not as effective as mentorships outside the corporate programme. Furthermore, five interviewees specifically mentioned that these were formal mentoring programmes and that these were less effective in their experience.

b) Through social networks (family and friends)

The second way the entrepreneurs met their mentors was through family or friends. Five of the interviewees had been mentored by a friend or family member. They all referred to the mentorship as being helpful, beneficial or valuable. Three of the entrepreneurs’ mentors were direct family members. Entrepreneur 1 indicated:

My father was my mentor. He had his own business and pulled me in from an early age. He had the biggest impact on me and shaped how I operate today. I think it is much

better when it is someone who has an interest in you and the mentorship relationship is not forced.

Entrepreneur 8 stated “My father was my mentor, and this helped a lot” and Entrepreneur 12 highlighted “My first mentor was my cousin. He started his own company when he was 18. It was a huge success. He always gives me insight into my business.”

Two of these entrepreneurs met their mentor through social relationships. Entrepreneur 7 said “I only really had one mentor and that was a friend of the family who started his own business and who used to chat to me about things in business. I found this really good.” Entrepreneur 6 indicated “I met my mentor through a business coach who was also my friend and he suggested I make contact with this person as they had recently gone through something similar in terms of their career.”

c) Prominent authors, leaders and entrepreneurs (no direct relationship)

There were a few entrepreneurs who, when asked how they acquired their mentors, indicated channels such as reading books, searching the internet and watching videos of prominent entrepreneurs or leaders. The interviewees had never actually interacted with these mentors but followed their work and implemented what they learnt from their books, Youtube videos or articles. Three interviewees found this type of mentorship to be beneficial and helpful.

Entrepreneur 2 indicated that:

The most influential mentors for me were those I chose to follow myself. I had several mentors whose work I followed, such as Stephen Covey, Maxwell, and Tony Robison etc. I studied them and who they studied, and they became my mentors. I had other mentors, but I consider these to be the most impactful in my career as an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneur 3 said:

When I walked into the business space, I had no one to look to but I turned to Google and I bought myself a lot of books - Maverick. I learnt a lot from Jack Welsh, stuff I bought, and I read and upskilled myself. I think more specific to a specific industry but not the general sense of business. That you can figure out. You need more specific to your business.

Entrepreneur 7 stated “I self-studied and found people on Google who mentored me – like Mr Branson.” It is evident that some of the interviewees had more than one mentor during their careers, hence their input appears to actually fit into more than one mentor acquisition types. Furthermore, all the entrepreneurs interviewed had had some form of mentorship. Some entrepreneurs in this study had met their mentors in different ways and they experienced different levels of value based on the nature of the relationship. While most of the interviewees had met their mentors in the context of an organisation, some had not found it to be effective and valuable. However, those who had self-selected prominent authors and entrepreneurs, as well as those who had met their mentors through family and friends, found a high level of value from the mentorship.

4.2.6.2 Mentorship and Business Success

In the interviews the entrepreneurs were asked, did you perceive that mentorship assisted you and your business to succeed?

In discussing the effectiveness of mentorship, there was acknowledgement from the interviewees that mentorship as a learning mechanism had its benefits. However, despite this consensus, the extent to which the interviewees experienced it, as a contributory factor to the success of their business, varied. As was shown in the interviewees’ responses earlier, the nature of the mentorship relationship and how the interviewees met their mentors also influenced the degree to which the mentorship contributed to the entrepreneurs’ success.

Only six of the twelve interviewees felt that mentoring had directly contributed to their businesses’ success. According to the interviewees, their mentors appeared to be committed to their success as entrepreneurs, as stated by Entrepreneur 1, “They were genuinely interested in my business and its success.” and Entrepreneur 7 who said, “My mentor provided support and guidance. They also put me in contact with people [who] could help me.” “It was a real relationship. We made time to have discussions, whether it was over coffee or drinks,” said Entrepreneur 12. Mentorship provided “guidance and helped to establish my business quicker” for Entrepreneur 11. Entrepreneur 2 explained, “Yes, the advice I got from my mentor was definitely imperative and helped my business” and Entrepreneur 4 said “Yes, it did add to my business results.” For two of the interviewees, the mentors were relatives. “Yes, the advice I got from my mentor was definitely imperative and helped my business.”

Four interviewees had found their mentorship to be beneficial and believed they had learnt through the mentoring process. However there was no direct effect on their businesses' success such as financial growth. These entrepreneurs still found the mentorship to be available and indirectly contribute to the success of their businesses. Three of these five interviewees found that the support and guidance of their mentors accelerated the establishment of the business in its early stages and predominantly assisted them on a personal and psychological level.

Two interviewees felt that it had no direct or indirect effect on their businesses' success. They had benefitted from the mentoring process in that they had learnt from the mentor and appreciated having someone to interact with, however, as pointed out by Entrepreneur 3, "This did not really impact the success of my business, but was rather more beneficial to me on a personal [and] social level." These entrepreneurs did not connect their personal growth to their business success, such as the four interviewees discussed in the previous paragraph did.

Moreover, most of the interviewees indicated that they had become mentors and coaches to people in and outside of their businesses. All the interviewees also indicated that there were certain goal setting and coaching models that they subscribed to. Two of the most mentioned were the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timeous) GROW (Goal, Reality, Opportunity and Way forward) models. These two models had been provided to the entrepreneurs as tools by the franchisor, which might have influenced the extent of their utilisation.

4.2.6.3 Mentor-Mentee Match

In the interview the entrepreneurs were asked, which variables do you believe most contributed to the success of your mentor-mentee match?

The variables as indicated by the interviewees are presented next.

a) Relevant Experience

When asked which variables most influenced the success of the mentor-mentee matching, one variable was cited as important to all twelve interviewees—experience—in that the experience that the mentor had was critical to the success of the mentorship. The interviewees emphasised that the experience had to be relevant to what the mentee sought to learn. Eight interviewees indicated that the most significant learning came from mentors who had knowledge and exposure, which the mentee-entrepreneur did not have. Entrepreneur 1 explained:

I don't need to learn from people who know what I know and think like I think and [who] have a similar background. Rather I learn far more from those who are different to me. What is essential is that they have credible experience in whatever area they will help me learn and grow.

Only two interviewees were of the opinion that the mentor had to be more experienced or more senior than the mentee. The others emphasised the credibility and quality of the mentor's experience more and not the tenure.

b) Credibility and Proven Performance Record

In addition to a mentor requiring credible experience, eight of the entrepreneurs also specified that a mentor had to be considered credible and competent in their field of expertise. Entrepreneur 5 stated that “[It is] important that my mentor is considered competent and that they have a proven track record of relevant business performance.”

c) Respect and Trust

All the interviewees referred to respect or mutual respect as fundamental to the mentor-mentee relationship and the success thereof. They believed that if there was no respect or if there was not a high enough regard for each other, then the relationship would not be beneficial. It was also emphasised by the interviewees that mentees needed to have respect for their mentors and this respect had to be present throughout the term of the relationship. A variable identified by eight interviewees was that of trust. If the mentor and mentee did not trust each other or were unable to build a trusting relationship, then the relationship would not yield success.

d) Shared Values

Shared values were also an important variable to nine interviewees. Entrepreneur 4 said, “The mentor and mentee need to have similar values, and these do not always need to be exactly the same, but they cannot be in conflict.” An example provided by Entrepreneur 9 was that of innovation, “If I value innovation and it is very important to me, then someone who does not value this would perhaps think differently to me and I would not learn what I wanted to learn in the right context.”

e) Have a clear role and the ability to listen

Entrepreneur 6 emphasised that it was

[It is] important to understand what the role of the mentor is and that I am able to look up to them. The mentor needs to be able to listen well, and then help people think. They help facilitate ideas and help them to move in the right direction.

Six of the entrepreneurs also mentioned that the ability to listen effectively was key to the success of the mentor-mentee relationship.

f) Biographical Variables

The two interviewees who referred to biographical variables such as race, age and gender did not attribute much importance to these in relation to the entrepreneur or mentor. Entrepreneur 5 explained “Race and gender do not matter. It does not matter if you’re a man or woman, or what race you are to gel with your mentor”. The same interviewees also indicated that although having similar interests was beneficial to help build the relationship, it was not essential. Ten of the entrepreneurs in this study made no mention of biographical variables.

It is important to note that diversity was a key focus for the organisation with which all the entrepreneurs had the franchise agreement, and this may have influenced the level of discussion on the topics of race and gender.

4.2.7 Mentoring and Coaching

In the interview the entrepreneurs were asked, what is the difference between coaching and mentoring? Eight interviewees indicated that coaching was part of mentoring. Three said that the two concepts were the same or similar. One of the interviewees acknowledged that coaching did not exist in the business context and only acknowledged mentoring as a learning mechanism in organisations.

4.2.8 Challenges experience by South African Entrepreneurs

In the interviews, the entrepreneurs identified various challenges they believed South African entrepreneurs faced. In the interview the entrepreneurs were asked, what were some of the key challenges facing you at the time you wanted to enter entrepreneurship? Later in the interview the entrepreneurs were also asked, what are your thoughts about why entrepreneurs in South Africa struggle to enter the market and build a sustainable business? In response, the entrepreneurs also mentioned various reasons for South African entrepreneurs struggling to start and build sustainable businesses. The most common reasons were similar to those the entrepreneurs had mentioned as challenges they experienced themselves. These included lack

of credible data, lack of access to relevant training and learning, restrictive government policies and lack of access to funding.

a) Lack of Access to Credible Data

One interviewee indicated that a lack of credible data negatively affected South African entrepreneurs. Entrepreneur 3 said, “I think we’re missing the boat completely. We don’t really know what is happening out there. Data and research do not always pick up the detail – why people are doing things... Informal economy – we’re actually silly – they should focus on entrepreneurship.”

b) Access to Training and Learning

At least five interviewees mentioned the lack of training and learning as a big challenge facing entrepreneurs in South Africa.

Entrepreneur 3 said, “Corporates need to reach out more and assist entrepreneurs more and teach them. There is also much too little learning support for entrepreneurs.”

Entrepreneur 5 said, “Government is to have more technical skills training. Money and cash flow [are] also always a challenge.”

Entrepreneur 6 indicated, “Business planning upfront is important. I think entrepreneurs don’t understand return on investment and the target and need training. Once you start – we need a financial or business coach to help us manage business, for example, tax or employee challenges 6 months down the line.”

Entrepreneur 10 said, “There is insufficient training and support for small businesses.”

Entrepreneur 11 supported the above and said:

There isn’t much focus on technical skills. We should be teaching more mechanics, engineers and entrepreneurs. You must have people [who] are willing to work in that space. If you look at countries like China – many people do little things. [They] sit at the side of the road ... selling something. They don’t wait for loans, they start with what [they] have. No one wants to do the small things anymore.”

c) Government Policies and Political Climate

Two interviewees specifically mentioned the government’s policies and legislation as one of the biggest challenges facing South African entrepreneurs. Entrepreneur 4 said:

I have travelled quite a lot internationally. The biggest reason is that we are over-regulated from industrial relations to tax legislation for small businesses – [the] cost of running a business, more VAT (Value Added Tax) than profit. SARS (South African Revenue Services). The other thing is that decision-makers in the country... As a business owner, you are so busy with administration and compliance that you don't have time for work.

Entrepreneur 12 said:

I think there are so many [government policy challenges]. I don't think anyone questions the fact that there is a way to go. The political climate is a major contributor, but it is more than just that. The problem currently is that no one wants to go through the first five years as it is just so much hard work.

d) Access to Funding and Cashflow

All the entrepreneurs at some point during their interviews highlighted funding, capital and cash flow as problems for entrepreneurs in South African and for themselves.

Entrepreneur 6 said:

Honestly, it is about how big companies treat small business [es] with regard to billing. Adhoc contract, services delivered but we did not get paid in time and this makes cash flow a major challenge. He who has the gold makes the rule. So, you end up taking bridging finance. [It is] systemic in the way bigger companies operate. Financial opportunity ... risk of return. One of the big issues is financing.

Entrepreneur 9 said, "Business financing is the greatest challenge". According to Entrepreneur 3, "South African people want traditional employment. People need to change. And at school level, we need to start training them. [South Africans are] Not willing to [become entrepreneurs], [and they] blame no money and no technical skills. Chicken is still far, first start to understand the egg. Entrepreneur 4 observed, "Mindset is one of the greatest challenges–this and funding."

4.2.9 Support required by Entrepreneurs

The main support required by the sample of the entrepreneurs in this study was funding including an improved remuneration model, training and learning access and access to a relevant network.

All the interviewees indicated that funding was one of the major requirements. The second most mentioned factor was training. Entrepreneur 3 said, “Training is very expensive – a lot of small business owners will tell you” Entrepreneur 8 mentioned, “Capital and experience is the most needed support.” Another entrepreneur mentioned that support for the entrepreneur in the form of counselling and coaching/mentoring was very important.

4.2.10 Recommendation off Mentorship for Entrepreneurs

When they were asked if they would recommend mentorship as an entrepreneurial learning mechanism to other entrepreneurs, all the interviewees responded positively.

4.3 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

This section will discuss the quantitative results from the online survey. The quantitative online survey focused on gathering information from business consultants in three areas: The survey asked the business consultants some background questions, such as,

- How long have you worked with the company [company with which the entrepreneur had the commercial agreement]?

The survey then asked the business consultants the following questions:

- Have you been mentored/have you had a mentor?

These questions had a dropdown box option of yes or no options only. Should the business consultant select yes, it would then proceed to the next question.

The next question in the survey asked the question asked:

- Did mentoring assist you to improve your performance or achieve business results?

These questions also had a dropdown box of yes or no options only. The business consultants were then requested to elaborate on their answers in a free text box.

The following question in the survey was,

- Which variables do you believe are most important to matching you with the right mentor?

There was a list of possible variables given which the business consultant could rank from 1 (has no relevance and/or importance) to 5 (extremely relevant and/or important). These

variables will be discussed later in this section. The business consultants could then also add variables in a free text box and rank these.

Lastly, the business consultants were asked,

- Rank the learning mediums from the most effective to least effective? One (1) being most effective and five (5) being least effective.

These learning mechanisms will also be discussed later in this section. The responses to these questions will be discussed in the following section and will then be integrated with the qualitative feedback from the interviews with the twelve entrepreneurs.

Before analysing the responses received from the sample of 35 business consultants, it is important to understand more about the group themselves. The next section will provide further details of their entrepreneurial background in the franchise model.

4.3.1 Participant Overview: Online Survey Sample

Whilst the qualitative interviews were underway with the twelve franchise principals, a quantitative survey, to be completed online, was emailed to 60 - business consultants who had commercial agreements with the same financial services provider as the 12 interviewees, to render certain services independently. Therefore the response rate for the online survey was 35 out of 60 (58%). They were also regarded as entrepreneurs because they ran their own small businesses. Table 4 is a summary of the online survey respondent's tenure and experience as an entrepreneur in the franchise distribution model.

Table 4

Tenure and experience in the franchise model as an entrepreneur

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 6 months	0.00%	0
6 months - 1 year	6.06%	2
1 - 2 years	15.15%	5
More than 2 years	78.79%	26
TOTAL		33

There were a total of 35 responses to the 60 online survey participation requests emailed. Two respondents selected to not reveal their tenure in the entrepreneurial commercial agreement

model. Twenty six respondents had in excess of two years' experience in the commercial entrepreneurial model, with seven having less than two years' experience in the model. This is important to note because the sample needed to have sufficient entrepreneurial experience to add value in terms of their responses.

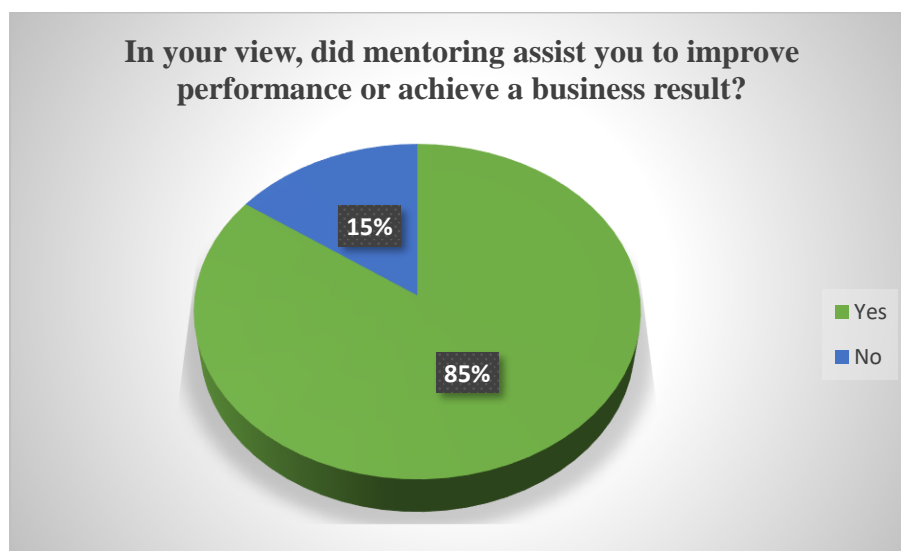
Furthermore, all the online survey respondents had worked as employees at an organisation before becoming entrepreneurs, a characteristic that was similar to the qualitative sample.

4.3.2 Contribution of Mentorship

In the online survey, the respondents were asked if they had been mentored. All the respondents indicated that they had been mentored at some point during their careers. As stated earlier, the researcher had sent the survey to 60 business consultants (entrepreneurs) with only 35 responses. Six of those who did not respond to the online survey informed the researcher that they had not completed the survey because they had never been mentored. The respondents were asked, did mentoring assist you to improve your performance or achieve business results? Most of the respondents (85%) indicated that mentoring improved their performance and business results and a few respondents (15%) indicated that it did not play a role in their performance and business success, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Impact of mentoring on performance and business results



n=35

The respondents who indicated that mentoring played a role in the performance and results of their businesses provided comments as to the nature of its influence. Table 5 illustrates how the comments were grouped according the themes that emerged from the analysis of the comments.

Table 5

How mentoring influenced the business consultants' business success

Emerging Theme	Respondents' Comments
Improved Thinking and Reflection	<p>"It helped me to think before I acted."</p> <p>"I learnt a lot about business and could test ideas and thinking."</p> <p>"[Fewer] mistakes occurred. It helps you make better decisions."</p> <p>"It motivated and guided me in the right direction. It is nice to have an impartial sounding board and "checking in" system"</p> <p>"Mentoring helps to clarify thinking and assist with [the] big picture view of the business."</p> <p>"Assisting with re-calibrating current thought."</p> <p>"Some of the things/processes were a struggle to find out by myself and mentoring can assist with this and save time and frustration. But on the other hand, most of my brokers say I am different and they like my approach, so I am glad that I got fresh thinking."</p>
Assisted with Decision Making	<p>"In terms of difficult decision to discuss with mentor"</p> <p>"...and business decisions that can potentially impact short, medium and long-term goals."</p>
Provided Motivation and Confidence	<p>"Mentoring made me more motivated and matured and patient."</p> <p>"Mentoring helped me in so many different ways, to start off with, and motivated me to be the best person that I can be for this opportunity."</p> <p>"Mentoring gave me confidence, motivation and knowledge."</p> <p>"Yes, without a mentor I could feel lost and unsure of what next to do or not to do. It helped me feel more confident."</p>

	<p>“It motivated and guided me.”</p> <p>“Find solutions and not look for excuses to the problems, motivates you to find a solution.”</p>
Provided Guidance and Knowledge	<p>“Mentoring shows the way and gives guidance and knowledge”</p> <p>“It was good to get feedback from a professional [who gave] input on progress and guide[d] and mentor[ed] certain areas in the journey and share[d] knowledge.”</p> <p>“It improved my knowledge in technical subject matter.”</p> <p>“Gives me access to insights and individuals in the organisation that I would not have had, and guided me”</p> <p>“It assisted me with technical knowledge.”</p>

There were four themes that emerged from the comments made by the respondents in relation to how mentoring improved their businesses, as shown in Table 5. The themes were: mentoring helped their thinking, assisted them with more effective decision-making, motivated them and built their confidence and lastly, provided them with guidance and knowledge.

4.3.3 Mentor-Mentee Match

In the online survey the respondents were requested to rate, which variables they believed were most important to matching an entrepreneur with the right mentor:

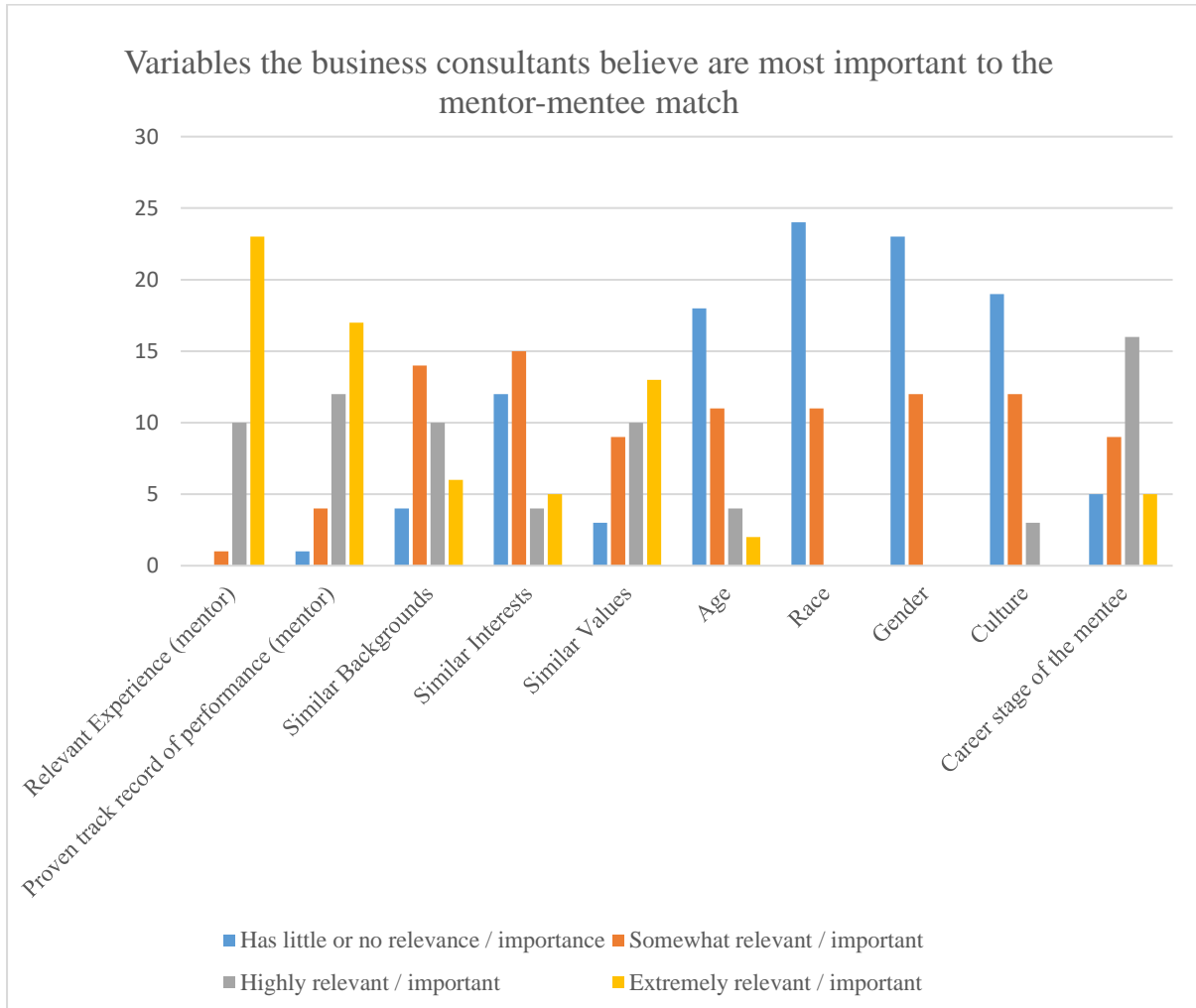
As shown in Figure 4 these variables included:

- Relevant Experience (mentor)
- Proven track record of performance (mentor)
- Similar Backgrounds
- Similar Interests
- Similar/Shared Values
- Age
- Race
- Gender
- Culture
- Career stage of the mentee
- Other variables you believe were important (free text option)

The variables were rated from 1 (no relevance and/ or importance) to 5 (extremely relevant and important). In Figure 4 a graphical representation of the results will be present, with Table 5 providing more detail in terms of the actual number and percentage of respondents who selected each of the 5 options per variable.

Figure 4

Variables in the mentor-mentee match



	HAS NO OF LITTLE	SOMEWHA	HIGHLY	EXTREMELY	TOTAL	
	RELEVANCE	RELEVANCE	RELEVANT	RELEVANT	RESPONDENTS	
	CE OR IMPORTANCE	OR IMPORTANCE	/ IMPORTANCE	AND IMPORTANCE		
Age	34.29% 12	17.14% 6	31.43% 11	11.43% 4	5.71% 2	35
Career stage of the mentee	5.71% 2	8.57% 3	25.71% 9	45.71% 16	14.29% 5	35
Culture	29.41% 10	26.47% 9	35.29% 12	8.82% 3	0.00% 0	34
Gender	48.57% 17	17.14% 6	34.29% 12	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	35
Proven track record of performance (mentor)	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	11.76% 4	35.29% 12	50.00% 17	34
Race	45.71% 16	22.86% 8	31.43% 11	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	35
Relevant Experience (mentor)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	29.41% 10	67.65% 23	34
Similar Backgrounds	2.94% 1	8.82% 3	41.18% 14	29.41% 10	17.65% 6	34
Similar Interests	11.43% 4	22.86% 8	42.86% 15	11.43% 4	14.29% 5	35
Similar Values	0.00% 0	8.57% 3	25.71% 9	28.57% 10	37.14% 13	35

Figure 4 and 5 clearly articulates that the most important and relevant variable, as selected by the respondents, was that the mentor had to have relevant experience. Most of the respondents indicated that this was extremely or highly important and relevant to the mentor-mentee match. Another variable of extreme to high importance and relevance was that the mentor had to have a proven track record of success in their industry. A variable that was selected as having the least relevance and importance, when compared to the other variables provided, was that of age, race, gender and culture. Most of the respondents also indicated that the career stage of the mentee was highly to somewhat important. The mentor and mentee sharing similar values were also perceived to be highly relevant and somewhat important, while sharing similar interests was of less relevance and importance to the mentor-mentee match.

Other variables identified as being important and relevant to the mentor-mentee match in the online survey, as stated by the respondents in the comments section were:

- Genuine interest
- Authenticity
- Competent communication skills
- Trust / Trust and Respect are critical (included by 3 respondents under other)
- Mentor and mentee must be good listeners
- It is important that there is good chemistry
- The mentors' knowledge and ability to teach and the mentor should have different knowledge and be someone from whom the mentee can learn

All the variables listed above were only mentioned by a single respondent, however trust and respect was mentioned by at least 3 respondents.

4.3.4 Most effective Learning Mechanisms

The respondents were requested to rank the following learning mediums from the most effective to least effective with 1 being most effective and 5 being least effective. Therefore each respondent needed to rank the below mechanisms either 1,2,3,4 or 5 and could only use each ranking once:

- Computer-based (text, CD-ROM, multimedia)
- Online or E-learning (web-based training, video conferences, emails)
- Classroom-based or Instruction-led learning;
- Interactive methods (quizzes, role-plays, small group discussions, case studies, Q&As)

- Hands-on training/On-the-job training (demonstrations, coaching, apprenticeship, mentoring)
- Other [free text box where the respondents could add learning mechanisms]

Thirty one of the 35 business consultants in the online survey responded to this question. Table 6 is a summary of the responses to this question.

To assist with the interpretation of the Table, the first learning mechanism will be explained in more detail. The first learning mechanism in Table 6, Computer-based (text, CD-ROM, Multimedia), was ranked as follows: only 3% of the respondents ranked it as number one (most important/effective), 6% as 2nd most effective, 13% as 3rd most effect, 45% ranking it 4th and 32% ranked it as fifth (least important/effective).

Table 6

Learning Mechanisms ranked from most to least important/effective. n=35.

Learning Mechanism	1 Most Important and Effective	2	3	4	5 Least Important and Effective
Computer-based (text, CD-ROM, multimedia)	3%	6%	13%	45%	32%
Online or E-learning (web-based training, video conferences, emails)	9%	18%	18%	24%	30%
Classroom-based or Instruction-led learning	15%	26%	37%	11%	11%

Learning Mechanism	1 Most Important and Effective	2	3	4	5 Least Important and Effective
Interactive methods (quizzes, role-plays, small group discussions, case studies, Q&As)	27%	47%	13%	7%	7%
Hands-on training/On-the-job training (demonstrations, coaching, apprenticeship, mentoring)	50.00%	6%	31%	3%	9%

As is evident from Table 6, half of the respondents (50%) found ‘Hands-on and on-the-job training’ to be the most effective and ranked it number one. The least effective (ranking 4 and 5 respectively) were computer-based learning and e-learning. Interactive methods (quizzes, role-plays, small group discussions, case studies, Questions and Answers ranked the second-most effective learning method (47%) and classroom-based learning ranked the third-most effective learning mechanism (37%). Although certain learning mechanisms were selected more than others, the table also illustrates that there are different views and preferences relating to how entrepreneurs learn most effectively and that these mechanisms did not need to occur in isolation. This will be discussed in greater detail in the analysis of the findings.

4.4 INTEGRATION OF RESULTS: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE

In this section, the qualitative and quantitative findings from the interviews and online survey respectively will be integrated and compared so as to interpret each construct in the context of the purpose of this study. Table 7 shows the integration of the qualitative and quantitative findings, a mixed methods technique suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). To explore the objectives of this study, the findings relevant to the primary and secondary research questions will be explored.

The quantitative online survey addressed three areas relevant to the study, and these same three areas were also covered in the qualitative interviews, these included:

- If the respondents perceived mentorship to contribute to their performance and business success and what the nature of this contribution was.
- Which variables the respondents believed were important to the success of the mentor-mentee match.
- Which learning mechanisms the respondents experienced as most effective.

Table 7

Joint Display table of Qualitative and Quantitative findings

Research Area	Qualitative Findings: Franchise Principals	Quantitative Findings: Business Consultants
Did mentoring contribute to the entrepreneurs' businesses' success	<p>Entrepreneur 2: "Yes, the advice I got from my mentor was definitely imperative and helped my business." Entrepreneur 4: "Yes, it did add to my business results."</p> <p>Entrepreneur 1: "They were genuinely interested in my business and its success."</p> <p>Entrepreneur 7: "My mentor provided support and guidance. They also put me in contact with people that could help me."</p> <p>Entrepreneur 12: "It was a real relationship, we made time to have discussions whether it was over coffee or drinks."</p> <p>Mentorship provided "guidance and helped to establish my business quicker" (Entrepreneur 11).</p>	85% indicated that it positively contributed to their businesses' success.

	Entrepreneur 3: “This did not really impact the success of my business, but was rather more beneficial to me on a personal [and] social level.”	15% indicated that it did not impact their businesses’ success.
Which variables the entrepreneurs believe are most important to the mentor-mentee match	Entrepreneur 1: “I don’t need to learn from people who know what I know and think like I think and that have a similar background. Rather I learn far more from those who are different to me. What is essential is that they have credible experience in whatever area they will help me learn and grow.”	91% indicated that relevant experience was important.
	Entrepreneur 5: “[It is] important that my mentor is considered competent and that they have a proven track record of relevant business performance.”	86% indicated that a proven track record of performance was important.
	Entrepreneur 4: “The mentor and mentee need to have similar value, and these do not always need to be exactly the same, but they cannot be in conflict”.	66% indicated that shared values (such as respect and trust) were important.
	Entrepreneur 5: “Race and gender does not matter. It does not matter if you’re a man or women, or what race you are to gel with your mentor”.	For the biographical variables (age race, culture and gender), the majority indicated that it was of little to no importance or relevance. For culture, 56% indicated it was of little to no relevance or importance. For race, 69% indicated it was of little to no relevance or importance. For

		gender, 66% and for age, 51% indicated it was of little to no relevance.
Most effective learning mechanisms for entrepreneurs	<p>Entrepreneur 2: “I think entrepreneurs learn best through trial and error, they need to be able to learn through applying themselves.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 3: “When you become a small business owner you need to teach yourself how to run a business.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 7: “There are many forms of learning, but I think entrepreneurs learn through doing it themselves and by experiencing things”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 9: “Entrepreneurs teach themselves”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 10: “I learn best by reading [about best practices] on the internet and then applying these best practices. It’s about self-development</p> <p>Entrepreneur 12: “As a franchise owner you are able to learn by yourself, there is no one around to show you what to do, so figuring things out on your own is important.”</p>	50% indicated that hands-on and on-the-job training was ranked as the number one most effective learning mechanism.
	Entrepreneur 12: “As a franchise owner you are able to learn by yourself, there is no one around to	27% ranked interactive methods as the most effective learning mechanism and 50% ranked it as

	<p>show you what Entrepreneur 3: “How you grow up is important ... You develop that skill automatically ... As a teenager [you] learn automatically if you have entrepreneurial parents. Otherwise then over the last 30 years you need formal training – attend workshops and seminars.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 5: “Some people just need someone to come and talk to them and find out how they [are] doing. It is a lonely world.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 10: “having the right networks are critical when you’re a business owner but so hard to build in the beginning”.</p> <p>Entrepreneur 2: “formal learning is by no means as valuable as the informal learning mechanisms”.</p> <p>Entrepreneur 2: “I think entrepreneurs learn best through trial and error. They need to be able to learn through applying themselves.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 3: “When you become a small business owner, you need to teach yourself how to run a business.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 7: “There are many forms of learning, but I think entrepreneurs learn through doing</p>	<p>the second-most effective learning mechanism [learning through interactions and networks].</p> <p>77% ranked computer based learning the second least to least most effective mechanism, compared to online and e-learning where 55 % ranked it as second least to least most effective.</p> <p>26% indicated that more formal classroom based learning was the second most effective learning mechanism and 37% ranking it in the middle as third most effective.</p>
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	<p>it themselves and by experiencing things.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 9: “Entrepreneur teach themselves.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 10: “I learn best by reading [about best practices] on the internet and then applying these best practices. It’s about self-development.”</p> <p>Entrepreneur 12: “As a franchise owner you are able to learn by yourself. There is no one around to show you what to do, so figuring things out on your own is important.”</p>	
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From Figure 3 it is clear that overall the sample found mentoring had a direct or indirect positive contribution to their businesses’ success. Therefore, the findings for this area were similar in both the qualitative and quantitative datasets. In terms of the variables that were most important to the mentor and mentee match, both the qualitative and quantitative findings indicated that relevant experience was important. In addition, a proven track record of success and shared values were also found to be fairly important in both qualitative and quantitative findings. Biographical variable such as age, race, gender, and culture were highlighted as being of lesser importance in both the qualitative and quantitative findings.

The preferred learning mechanisms had a lesser degree of similarity in the findings. Self-learning and learning through experience were highlighted as the most effective learning mechanisms followed by learning through networks in the qualitative findings, whereas in the quantitative findings, hands-on and on-the-job training were highlighted by 50% of the sample as most effective, followed by interactive methods. Although these results were articulated differently, self-learning and experiential learning could encompass on-the-job training where the entrepreneur learns through their own experiences. Interactive methods could also be encompassed in learning through networks as interactions occur within the networks of the

entrepreneur. Both the qualitative and quantitative findings highlighted that entrepreneurs had different learning methods preferences.

4.5 SUMMARY

The research results section aimed to analyse and outline the themes and insights that emerged from the interviews and surveys conducted and then to integrate these findings from all the research conducted. The findings from the franchise principal interviews and the business consultant online survey strongly suggest that mentorship was perceived as valuable and beneficial to the entrepreneur-mentee and to the success of their business. The informal mentoring relationships appeared to be preferred and more valuable to entrepreneurs. Furthermore, in the mentee-mentor match, there were variables such as race, gender and culture which entrepreneurs did not find of value. However, there were variables such as the mentor's experience and proven track record of success, together with shared values such as trust and respect that the sample considered to be of great importance to the mentor-mentee match. The findings also strongly highlighted that self-learning, learning through experience and trial and error, and learning through networks and critical incidents were all effective mechanisms for entrepreneurs to learn. The following chapter will discuss the integrated findings in light of the relevant literature.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, the overall discussion in this section will be guided by the primary research question:

- How does mentorship contribute to entrepreneurial business success as perceived by South African entrepreneurs?
- Which variables most contribute to the success of the mentor-mentee match?

The discussion will then further be directed by the secondary research question:

- What are the most effective learning mechanisms for entrepreneurs?

The rationale for embarking on this research was to make a contribution to improve the state of entrepreneurship through providing relevant learning support to entrepreneurs. Before commencing the discussion directly related to mentoring as a means of supporting South African entrepreneurs, it is important that the various studies and the findings from this study be compared and contrasted in the context of entrepreneurship and some of the perceived challenges facing entrepreneurs.

5.2 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SOUTH AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURS

In the qualitative component of this study, certain common challenges were identified by the franchise principal sample. One of the challenges established in the findings was access to funding and cash flow, especially when the entrepreneurs started out but for most funding and cash flow remained a challenge. Another challenge that was common to the entrepreneurs in this study was the lack of access to resources and support which included finance, information technology (IT), operational and administrative support, human resources (recruitment and payroll) and marketing and administration.

Another critical challenge identified was the lack of relevant networks and having the right network for business success. It was found that a key function of the network was having access to experienced persons in their network who could assist with guidance and advice. Many of the challenges highlighted by the entrepreneurs in this study were echoed in the GEM reports (2015/16, 2016/17) which mentioned that government policy, access to finance and access to

networks, resources and education and training were amongst the most critical factors hindering entrepreneurship. These challenges have been mentioned in the GEM reports since 2001. Furthermore, the findings of research conducted by The SiMODiSA Association Trust (2015) identified skills deficit, regulations and policies, limited availability of opportunity and funding, private and public sector disconnects and trust deficit, and low-risk tolerance as the most critical challenges facing entrepreneurs. These findings were similar to the research conducted by the World Bank Group (2000) which found the challenges to include policy stability, lower interest rates, education and training, promotion of SMEs in public services, flexible wages, and business information.

The challenges of access to funding and access to relevant networks, resources and learning sources emerged repeatedly in all the aforementioned research studies and in this study. Furthermore, GEM (2015/16, 2016/17), SiMODiSA Association Trust (2015) and World Bank Group (2000) also highlighted government policies, regulation and legislation as major challenges, which were touched on in this study, however these generally did not emerge as challenges to the entrepreneurs in the study.

A challenge that was specific to this study and not highlighted in the surveys referred to earlier, was that of the franchise remuneration model. However, the remuneration model of the franchises could be linked to the cash and funding challenges in that the remuneration model was the formula used by the principal company to pay the franchisee-entrepreneurs. Therefore, the remuneration challenge relates to the cash flow and income of the entrepreneurs which falls into the category of funding. Another challenge specific to this study was talent acquisition and retention, which could also have emerged for this group of entrepreneurs in the franchise model, because limitations with regard to how they could recruit and reward were imposed on the franchises by the franchisor organisation and were strongly linked to the retention of staff in the entrepreneurs' businesses.

5.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTREPRENEURS

As the entrepreneurs in this study shared their journeys to becoming entrepreneurs, their reasons for becoming entrepreneurs emerged along with certain characteristics that were specific to being an entrepreneur. The idea that certain characteristics are more prevalent in entrepreneurs was supported in the research by McClelland (1961). Byers et al. (2007) also found that there are some people with certain characteristics who are more likely to become

entrepreneurs. Timmons and Spinelli (2009) identified six characteristics that were common to entrepreneurs. These included commitment and determination, leadership, opportunity preoccupation, tolerance of risk, ambiguity and uncertainty, creativity, self-reliance and ability to adapt, and motivation to excel. Kuratko (2009) also identified characteristics common in entrepreneurs, such as opportunity identification, risk taking and taking initiative by creating or growing a venture.

The reasons the participants in this study becoming entrepreneurs were found to be related to two aspects. One of these was being dissatisfied with traditional employment because they were unable to progress and had to deal with bureaucracy and hierarchy in the organisation. The second aspect was related to the entrepreneurial characteristics that motivated them to become entrepreneurs and which gave rise to their frustration with traditional employment. These characteristics included a desire to be more autonomous and independent and to have more control over their business and decision-making. This is similar to Gartner et al.'s (2003) findings who argued that the main difference between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs is that entrepreneurs have a greater desire to have control over their decisions. Other factors identified related more specifically to their entrepreneurial abilities such as being able to identify opportunities, needs and gaps, and having the risk appetite/tolerance to act on these needs or opportunities. The characteristics of the entrepreneurs in this study and their reasons for becoming entrepreneurs are well aligned with those identified by Kuratko (2009) and Timmons and Spinelli (2009) in that these studies also identified to some degree, opportunity identification and obsession, desire for control, the ability to deal with risk and uncertainty and take/initiate action as common entrepreneurial characteristics.

The definition of entrepreneurship selected for this study was:

Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion for the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks, formulate an effective venture team, marshal the needed resources, build a solid business plan, and, finally, the vision to recognise opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion (Kuratko, 2009, p. 5).

It is clear in the findings that the characteristics of the entrepreneurs in this study appear prominently in the definition of entrepreneurship itself. Although the findings in this study align well with the aforementioned studies on the characteristics that are common to entrepreneurs, it is important to note that there are also studies that argue that there are no common characteristics. One such study, which argues that the element of control is important in entrepreneurship, also emphasises that no clear set of characteristics and behaviours separate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs (Drucker (2007), “It is not a personality trait; ... everyone who can face up to decision making can learn to be an entrepreneur and to behave entrepreneurially (p. 23)”. In this study and according to Drucker (2007), the element of control is emphasised as an important characteristic of entrepreneurs. However, this study differs in that other variables were identified as common to entrepreneurs whereas Drucker (2007) did not.

5.4 EFFECTIVENESS AND BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP ON ENTREPRENEURS

In both the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study, the majority of the entrepreneurs experienced mentoring to have had a direct or indirect positive effect, which contributed to the success of their businesses. These findings are similar to studies that found that various effects and benefits of mentorship for entrepreneurs (Ncube & Wasburn, 2010; Ozgen & Baron, 2007; St-Jean & Audet, 2009). According to Fielden and Hunt (2011), the nature of the mentoring relationship was to include long-term support to contribute sustainably to the business success of an entrepreneur. Furthermore, mentoring often provided the entrepreneur (mentee) with direction (St-Jean & Audet, 2009).

In this study, the entrepreneurs learned through mentoring and one of the ways in which mentoring assisted them to learn was by clarifying their thoughts, reflecting and ultimately improving their thinking. Their mentors assisted them with working through their thoughts and they used their mentors as sounding boards. These findings are similar to the findings of Cope and Watts (2000), Deakins and Freel (1998), Sullivan (2000) and Watson (2004) in that in these studies the mentees also learnt from their mentors through reflection and by working through their thoughts with their mentors.

Although this study, like others cited here, found mentorship to have a positive influence and beneficial for the entrepreneurs, the nature of its influence/effect and benefits may be different. In this study, the entrepreneurs mentioned several ways in which mentoring benefitted them.

This included improving and assisting their thinking in that their mentors assisted them to think before they acted. Their mentors also assisted them with generating ideas, served as a sounding board to test their thinking, clarified and ordered their thoughts and assisted with better decision-making. They also motivated the entrepreneurs and made them feel more confident, which was an outcome of the mentor making the entrepreneur feel less unsure. The mentor also assisted the entrepreneur with technical and business management knowledge and leadership. Finally, the mentor also provided the entrepreneur with guidance that was based on their own experiences.

These benefits of mentorship, as found in this study, align with some of the categories identified by Rae (2000):

Confidence, self-belief and self-efficacy, personal values and motivation to achieve, setting and achieving ambitious goals, personal theories derived from experience, known capabilities – existing skills and knowledge, relationships through which social learning occurred, and active learning: the ability to learn through and use learning in action (p. 154).

It is important to note that these categories did not occur in isolation of each other or in a systematic manner in this study. Guidance and advice provided by the mentor seem to be common benefits identified in this and other studies, as indicated by Cull (2006), who referred to a mentor as a resource providing advice to the entrepreneur and more specifically, providing insight on running a business. Similarly, Bisk (2002) found that advice of a general nature is often what new entrepreneurs seek specifically from a mentor. According to Chrisman and McMullan (2000) and Wikholm et al. (2005), sharing experiences and knowledge that could give entrepreneurs and their businesses a competitive edge was the main benefit of entrepreneurial mentoring.

St-Jean and Audet (2012) found that the ultimate benefit of mentorship, specifically for novice entrepreneurs, is the effective transfer of knowledge about business and business operations from the mentor to the mentee. Further benefits of mentoring include career development or business development, in the case of entrepreneurs, increased competence, and an improved self-image and motivation (Shek & Lin, 2015; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015).

The benefits of mentoring, which include guidance, knowledge sharing, motivation and confidence building, although articulated in different ways and to different degrees, emerged in this research and were found to be common in the aforementioned studies. However, some entrepreneurs in this study felt that mentoring did not yield any benefits and referred to their success as being achieved independently. According to St-Jean and Audet's (2009) findings, some entrepreneurs might choose to not be mentored or might not have experienced mentoring as a means to improve themselves or their business. Furthermore, it was found that this was as a result of their wanting to act independently and not ask for aid. Alternatively that they did not view mentorships as beneficial like some of the entrepreneurs in this study.

5.5 VARIABLES IMPORTANT TO SUCCESS OF THE MENTOR-MENTEE MATCH

There are various elements that influence the perceived satisfaction and thereby success of a mentorship (St-Jean & Audet, 2009). One such variable identified is that the mentee values the background, knowledge and experience of the mentor and also that the mentor should have a relevant proven track record of success. There also needs to be trust and respect between the mentor and mentee (St-Jean & Audet, 2009). Augustine-Shaw and Funk (2013) also identified the element of trust as a critical characteristic of the mentorship. Ultimately, the mentor and mentee must see visible results and outcomes of the mentorship (St-Jean & Audet, 2009).

A section in this study specifically looked at which variables were considered as important to the mentor-mentee match. Various studies have focussed on the most critical variables relevant to the mentor-mentee match (Bozeman & Feeney, 2008; Bush, Coleman, Wall, & West-Burnham, 1996; Forret et al., 1996; Hale, 2000). A methodical approach to mentor selection has been more likely to yield success than random selection (Chao et al., 1992; Forret et al., 1996).

Most of the research that exists in this field has focussed more on demographical variables such as race and gender (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). This research found that mentees preferred same-gender mentors, however this was only a preference and no actual link between the mentees' preferences and improved learning outcomes were found. The findings in this study agree with the findings by McKeen and Bujaki (2007) in that limited importance was attributed to the variables of gender and race. None of the entrepreneurs in the qualitative component of the study identified gender or race to be of any importance to the mentor-mentee match which was similar to the quantitative findings of the study where it was found race and gender were of little or no importance in the mentor-mentee match. Other research echoed this and

confirmed that there is no proven enhancement in learning or enhanced mentor-mentee match success based on the biographical variables of race and gender (Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2008).

However, there are studies that suggested that there is more career development and support in mentorships where a male mentored a female (Sosik and Godshalk, 2000). This study did not find any evidence of gender influencing the mentorship relationship, although it has been found that when both the mentor and mentee are female, there appears to be more psychosocial support and role-modelling (Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1990; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Furthermore, Ensher et al. (2002) found that there is more psychosocial support in cross-gender relationships. There is however no consistency in these studies' findings. Therefore, gender is somewhat inconsistent as a variable that influences the success of the mentor-mentee match because it was of no consequence in this study and varied in its contribution to the success of the mentor-mentee match in other studies cited here.

The race variable showed similar findings in this study to that of gender in that there was no or limited importance placed on it in relation to the success of the mentor-mentee match. In other studies, which specifically looked at race as a variable that influenced the mentor-mentee match, it was found that the mentee received more psychological and social support in same race mentorships than cross-race mentorship matches. However, the same study also showed that there was no difference in career development support received (James, 2000; Thomas, 1990). In research by Ensher and Murphy (1997), there were conflicting findings, suggesting that despite the race of the mentor and mentee, equal psychosocial support was received but less career development was shown for cross-race matches. As is clear from these studies, there are conflicting findings and views with regard to race as a variable in the mentor-mentee match.

Moreover, these studies referred to were not conducted in the South African context. In a study in the South African mining industry by Gilore et al. (2005), the experience of the mentorship was consistently perceived positively, with no evidence that race played a role in the success of the mentorship. This study complements the findings of the aforementioned South African study in that race was identified as being of little or no importance in contributing to the success of the mentor-mentee match or the success of the mentorship.

The mentor-mentee match and its success are impacted by honesty, trustworthiness/respectfulness and dependability, and an openness to learning as critical to the

success of the mentor-mentee match (Ensher et al., 2002; Ensher & Murphy, 1997). Furthermore, a link between the perceived satisfaction of the mentoring relationship and similarities between the mentor- mentee were found (Ensher et al., 2002; Ensher & Murphy, 1997). The findings of this study were similar in that honesty, trust and respect were identified as important variables in the mentor-mentee match. However, the similarities between the mentor and mentee were found to be of limited importance.

One of the variables in this study, which was found to be of significance to the mentor-mentee match, was that the mentor needed to possess relevant experience and knowledge. The mentor also needed a proven track record of success in the field. These findings were similar to the variables mentioned in the “Goodness of Fit” model, by Bozeman and Feeney (2008), which indicated that the knowledge, skills, performance, experience and learning/communication abilities of the mentor were critical in the mentor-mentee match. However it is important to note that this model has not been adequately tested empirically. Bozeman and Feeney (2008) recommended that their model only be used for matching once more empirical research has been conducted to establish its applicability.

It is clear that there are variables that are important to the success of the mentorship and then also those aspects that are of lesser importance. This study has identified that relevant experience and a proven track record of success on the part of the mentor, plays a significant role in the success of the mentorship relationship in addition to the values of trust, honesty and respect being present in the relationship. Furthermore, biographical variables such as race and gender are of no importance to the success of the mentor-mentee match in this study, which conflicts with studies that found race and gender to be advantageous to the mentor-mentee relationship.

5.6 FORMAL AND INFORMAL MENTORSHIPS

In this study, the entrepreneurs referred to formal mentorships as those mentorships where an organisation facilitated the process of selection and matching of the mentor and mentee and where there were structured outcomes and guidelines. Informal mentorships were those that developed more naturally and had no third party required to establish the relationship with the objectives of the mentorship emerging as the relationship progressed. Furthermore, most of the entrepreneurs experienced formal mentoring as less effective. The entrepreneurs’ descriptions of formal and informal mentorships align with that of Niehoff (2006) who found that informal

mentorships encompass mutual selection and the aim of the relationship revealed itself over time whereas formal mentorship is more structured with specific outcomes and guidelines.

The results of this study align with the outcomes of another small study done on South African entrepreneurs, where informal mentorships were experienced as more effective (Ayer, 2010). Ragin and Cotton's (1991, 1992, 1993) research also echoed these findings indicating that informal mentoring relationships were reported to be more beneficial to the mentee.

Research by Clutterbuck (2004) indicated that the mentorship relationship could experience problems when roles were not clearly defined as in the case of formal mentorships and mentoring programmes. However, this was not the case in the findings of this research, where instead the entrepreneurs believed that the less structured mentorships were more effective. Furthermore, Clutterbuck (2004) found that the most effective mentorships were those that integrated both formal and informal mentorship aspects, which again did not align with this study's findings, indicating that less structured mentorships offered more value.

The findings of this study support the existing research that informal mentorships are perceived to yield more benefits than formal mentorships even though there are studies that have found formal mentorships or a mixture of formal and informal mentorships to be of more value.

5.7 MENTORING AND COACHING

In this study, most of the entrepreneurs understood that coaching was one of the components of mentoring. Clutterbuck (1998) highlighted that the mentor needed to assume various roles, coaching being one of these roles, and the other roles included being a guardian, network contact and counsellor. The findings here are in keeping with Clutterbuck (1998) in that coaching was seen as one of the roles that a mentor should assume and therefore, an element of mentoring.

5.8 EFFECTIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING MECHANISM

Several learning mechanisms were identified as being most effective for the entrepreneurs in this study.

5.8.1 Self-directed Learning and Learning through Experience

In this study, the entrepreneurs indicated that there were certain mechanisms and ways of learning which were most effective in facilitating their development as entrepreneurs. One of their most utilised forms of learning was self-directed learning and learning through experience. Self-directed learning was described as having two components. The first was that information was acquired through reading or other sources such as the internet or videos/YouTube and the second was the application and experience of the learning.

The concept of self-directed learning has increased in popularity over the last few years, and as the internet has become a prominent part of everyday life (Garrison, 1997; Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 2002). Brookfield (1985) found that self-directed learning occurred within a social context of learning networks where information was exchanged. Most of the content on self-directed learning literature had a greater focus on the processes of self-directed learning and the characteristics of the self-directed learners. In terms of self-directed learning, the learner required the ability to plan and organise and then the ability to employ the relevant resources where necessary. It is important to note though, that context and environment influence this (Berger, 1990; Brookfield, 1985; Rager, 2006; Spear & Mocker, 1984; Spear, 1988). It is critical with self-directed learning that the entrepreneur or learner has certain characteristics such as control, autonomy, motivation and responsibility for learning (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Garrison, 1997).

The characteristics mentioned as essential for self-directed learning appears to be similar to the characteristic of an entrepreneur. Research by Timmons and Spinelli (2009) found that characteristics such as motivation to achieve, opportunity preoccupation, commitment and dedication, autonomy and self-resilience were all amongst the most common characteristics of an entrepreneur. These characteristics are then also mentioned as the characteristics required for self-directed learning, i.e. elements of control, commitment, dedication, responsibility and autonomy. It is thus interesting to note, that the entrepreneurs in this study indicated that self-directed learning was highly effective as a learning mechanism and that characteristics common to entrepreneurs are similar to those required for self-directed learners.

Entrepreneurs learn through their experiences according to Politis (2005) who further highlighted that entrepreneurs are innovative individuals who consistently develop their knowledge through their experiences of work. The entrepreneurs in this study learnt effectively

through experiences such as on-the-job training and trial and error. Simpson and Bourner (2007) indicated that the fundamental basis of action learning is that we learn through our own experiences. Furthermore, reflection becomes an essential learning mechanism as part of the action learning process. Therefore, an important part of how entrepreneurs learn is through reflecting on what occurred and the effects of their actions, thereby gaining a better understanding. Several entrepreneurs in this study validated that one of the ways in which mentoring aided their learning was through reflection.

Entrepreneurship as a series of behaviours that are built through experience (Deakins & Freel 1998; Rae, 2006). The findings in this study showed that the entrepreneurs' learning was often self-directed and they learned through their own experiences, which are similar to findings by Cope (2005) and Corbett (2007) that agreed that the entrepreneurial learning process involves individuals acquiring knowledge by themselves that are integrated and organised into their existing structures, influencing the actions of the individuals. Corbett (2007) further explained that entrepreneurial learning encompasses the process by which entrepreneurs recognise opportunities and focusses on the cognitive instruments that entrepreneurs call on for the identification of commercial opportunities and how they apply their minds in decision-making about these.

Therefore, as is made clear in this study's findings, entrepreneurs learn through experiences—experiential learning is part of entrepreneurial learning—and their learning is often self-directed.

5.8.2 Learning through Networks and Relationships

According to Raes (2004), the entrepreneur's network and relationships are important components of entrepreneurial learning. In this study, for most of the entrepreneurs, learning from interactions with those in their networks was essential and a commonly employed learning tactic.

The entrepreneurs referred to having interactions with someone who showed interest was important. They also consistently emphasised having a network as important and essential to their success. Moreover, it was also one of the fundamental learning means for them. Many felt that learning from people with experience was important and that it played an influential role in their learning journey. Deakins and Freel (1998) related entrepreneurial learning to several entrepreneurial competencies including the ability to network, to integrate experience and

opportunity, to learn from past successes and mistakes, and to utilise resources. Tell (2008) further supported the idea that entrepreneurs learning through their networks and through networking. In his research, the key finding was similar to this study's in that much of the learning of the entrepreneurs took place through the networking and networks.

5.8.3 Learning through Distress

Entrepreneurs learn best during distress (Cope, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2010). Cope and Watts (2005) also found that “the worst of times” were identified as high learning stages by entrepreneurs (p. 115). The learning occurred as the irregular event occurred which resulted in the distress, serving as a catalyst to the entrepreneurs' learning (Cope, 2003). Cope and Watts (2000) argued that critical incidents bring higher level learning outcomes. Cope (2010) further argued that by overcoming crises, discomfort and distress, learning would occur for the entrepreneur and that this learning is accelerated and related to business success. In this study, several entrepreneurs felt fear and distress during their entrepreneurial journeys, and they learnt the most during these times.

5.8.4 Formal Education and Training

Most of the entrepreneurs in this research had only five years or less experience in their franchise, which might have impacted how they valued formal education and its contribution at that specific stage in their entrepreneurial cycle. Some entrepreneurs found formal learning to be a valuable learning mechanism however, they emphasised that it was by no means as valuable as informal learning. Yet, there were others in this study who indicated that formal learning did not add any value.

According to the findings of this study, there appears to be agreement with the research related to entrepreneurs learning through experience in a self-directed manner. There is also agreement that learning through networks is an important mechanism for entrepreneurs and that entrepreneurs could learn through distress. Lastly, there appear to be varying views on the value of formal education. This could potentially be considered based on all the entrepreneurs in this study businesses being within the first five years of existence. Levie and Autio (2008) highlighted that the business stage of an entrepreneurs business influences the role and level (formal or informal) of education.

5.9 SUMMARY

This study established some of the challenges that South African entrepreneurs faced and the resources they most required. It was found that funding and access to learning and resources were amongst the most prominent. The study then explored access to learning as a means to support the entrepreneur and tried to establish the most effective learning mechanisms. Experiential learning, self-directed learning and learning through networks were found to be the most effective learning mechanism. Mentoring as a means of aiding entrepreneurs was looked at by sampling the perceptions of respondents who were entrepreneurs and owners of small businesses. It was found that mentoring was beneficial and had a direct or indirect effect on their business success. This study also established that the mentors' experience and record of performance, and values such as respect, trust and honesty were considered important variables to the mentor-mentee match and the success of the mentoring relationship. Little importance was attributed to the biographical variable of race and gender in the mentor-mentee match.

In the next chapter, these findings will be discussed in terms of their potential for broader implications in the field of mentorship of entrepreneurs in South Africa.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the findings of the research, the contributions that this study could make to the field of mentorship specific to the South African entrepreneurial context, along with recommendations for future studies.

6.2 MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND

The literature on entrepreneurship, as reviewed in this research, highlights that, in spite of the recognition of the necessity for entrepreneurship as a key mechanism for resolving many of the social and economic challenges facing South Africa (Dempsey, 2009), entrepreneurial activity remains alarmingly low (GEM, 2016/17). Among the most prominent of these challenges was the lack of relevant learning and development opportunities for entrepreneurs with a specific recommendation on mentorship as an entrepreneurial learning vehicle to support and grow entrepreneurs and their businesses. Several studies have supported the recommendation that mentorship can assist entrepreneurs (Clutterbuck, 2001; Raiz, 2006; Sullivan, 2000).

Although it is evident that there is research that has focussed on the mentorship, there is limited empirical work that specifically considers mentorship from the perspective of entrepreneurs, as most of the studies on mentorship have occurred in the context of the workplace and large organisations (Clutterbuck, 2004; Kram, 1985). Furthermore, the existing research on the mentoring of entrepreneurs is even more limited in the South Africa context (Steinmann, 2006). Therefore, this study intended to build on the existing literature in the field of entrepreneurial mentorship specific to the context of South African entrepreneurs and ultimately, to address the primary question of the study:

- Does mentorship contribute to the business success of South African entrepreneurs?

In addition to this study's academic purpose and contribution, the practical contribution was to recommend the development of a mentoring network for entrepreneurs that matched mentors and mentees based on the most important variables identified by entrepreneurs. Therefore, to expand on the primary research questions, the secondary research question related to identifying these variables:

- What are the most effective learning mechanisms for entrepreneurs?

6.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY UTILISED

The triangulation parallel mixed methods research methodology was adopted in order to address the primary and secondary research questions. Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted with 12 entrepreneurs who owned a franchise with the same long-term insurance company. The semi-structured interviews included questions that tested the entrepreneurs' perceptions of entrepreneurship, learning and mentorship. A quantitative online survey, which was sent to a sample of 35 business consultants – also entrepreneurs – who had commercial agreements with the same company as the qualitative sample, occurred concurrently to the interviews. The online survey questions were centred on the same questions as the interviews. Once the semi-structured interviews were concluded, the transcription and notes from the interviews were reviewed and analysis using thematic analysis and the results from the survey was analysed, interpreted and trends presented. Once both the qualitative and quantitative research results were analysed, the findings were integrated.

6.4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

6.4.1 Importance and Challenges of Entrepreneurship

Healthy entrepreneurial activity in a country could assist to reduce the high levels of unemployment and narrow income gap. Entrepreneurship could also assist to grow a country's economy and create a more inclusive economy. However, despite the necessity for entrepreneurship and the many benefits it has for a country, the lower levels of entrepreneurial activity and intent in South Africa, when compared to other developing countries persist. Coupled with this is the alarmingly high rate of entrepreneurial start-up ventures that fail, which creates a call for action to support entrepreneurs in South Africa.

There are various challenges facing entrepreneurs which contribute to the state of entrepreneurship in the country. Some of the most significant of these are access to funding, learning, resources and networks, as well as challenges as a result of the political climate, policies and regulation. In an attempt to address some of these challenges such as access to learning and networking, mentorship could be considered as a mechanism to assist entrepreneurs that could influence/contribute to their businesses' success.

6.4.2 Contribution of Mentorship on the business success of Entrepreneurs

This study aimed to research the suitability of mentorship as an entrepreneurial learning mechanism, which could potentially aid the success of entrepreneurs' businesses. The study explored how entrepreneur-mentees perceived the effects of mentoring, how the entrepreneurs best learnt and which variables they considered were important to a successful mentor-mentee match. The findings provided clear evidence that the entrepreneur-mentees perceived mentorship to directly or indirectly contribute to the success of their businesses and yielded various benefits for the entrepreneurs and their businesses. Unfortunately, due to the intangible nature and many complexities of mentorship, it would be difficult to draw a direct causal link between mentorship and a business' success. However what this research indicated clearly was that entrepreneurs who had been mentored experienced its positive effects on either themselves and/or their businesses' performance. The entrepreneurs also emphasised the value of mentoring during the early stages of a start-up business.

6.4.3 Benefits of Mentoring for Entrepreneurs

Mentorship yielded various benefits for the entrepreneurs related to either business management support and/or psychosocial support. The key contributions highlighted were that mentoring helped improve the entrepreneurs thinking and decisions in that the mentor assisted the entrepreneur to think before acting, assisted them to generate ideas, served as a sounding board to test their thinking, clarified and ordered their thoughts and assisted with better decision-making and reflection. Furthermore, the mentor also motivated them and built their confidence, thereby reducing the entrepreneurs' uncertainty. The mentor provided advice and guidance to the entrepreneurs along with building their knowledge, leadership and business management skills through their sharing experiences. In addition, the entrepreneurs experienced informal mentorship as more valuable than formal mentorship. It is important to bear in mind that in this study, most of the entrepreneurs had met their mentors formally i.e. in an organisational context and then, at a different point in their lives, may have experienced a more informal mentor-mentee relationship.

6.4.4 Mentor- Mentee Match

The research explored the variables that most prominently emerged as important to the mentor-mentee match in order for a successful mentorship to occur. The findings showed that the experience and proven track-record of performance of the mentor were considered extremely important to the mentee's perception of a successful mentorship match. Furthermore, values

such as respect, trust and honesty were highlighted as also essential for a successful mentorship between the mentor and mentee. Other biographical variables such as race, gender and culture were perceived as being of lesser importance to the success of the mentor-mentee match.

6.4.5 Effective Entrepreneurial Learning Mechanisms

The research also revealed what the entrepreneurs considered to be the most effective mechanisms for learning. Here experiential learning or learning through experience emerged as a key mechanism of learning. Self-directed learning was another important and well-adopted mechanism for entrepreneurs to learn. Learning through networks and interactions were also identified as effective entrepreneurial learning mechanisms. Some entrepreneurs believed they learned the most during their most distressful times and experiences. Other means of learning added value but were not considered to be as effective as the aforementioned. These included formal learning, courses, workshops, development assessments and role-plays. It was also found that coaching was one of the roles the mentor could adopt.

6.5 STUDY CONTRIBUTIONS

The primary purpose of the research is that it results in purposeful action (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). In this research, the primary focus was to contribute to broadening the depth of research on mentoring as part of the entrepreneurial learning mechanisms in South Africa. This study then built on existing theory and knowledge in the mentorship field and revealed more insights into developing concepts such as entrepreneurial learning in the South African context. Most mentorship theories and research are contextualised in management, leadership and large organisations. There is limited research entrepreneurial mentoring, specifically in the South African context. This study therefore contributes content to the field of entrepreneurial mentoring in South Africa.

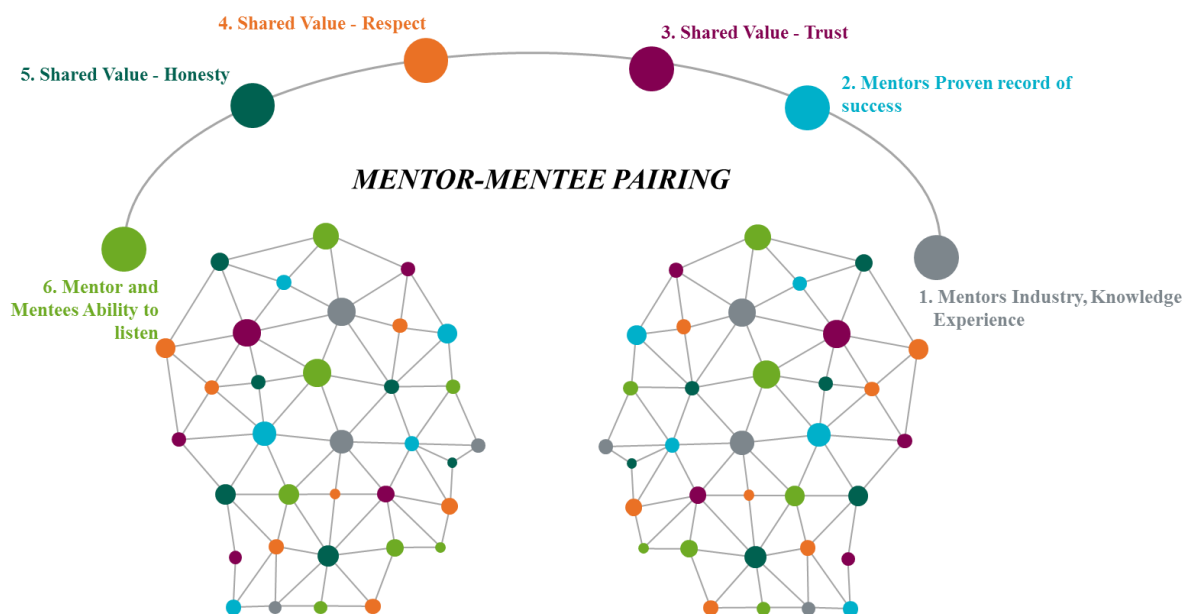
From a South African perspective, this study contributes to the limited research on the entrepreneur-mentee's perception of the effectiveness of mentorship. This study also resulted in deeper insight into South African entrepreneurs and their challenges. The recommendation emerging from the findings of this study is that mentorship is a valuable entrepreneurial learning mechanism, which can contribute to the success of entrepreneurs and their businesses. Therefore, mentorship should be provided as a learning instrument to entrepreneurs and a mechanism for connecting people to establish informal mentorships should be created. This study further recommends that certain variables be considered when matching the mentor to

the mentee and that certain values be emphasised from the onset of the mentorship. Furthermore, the recommendations provided here could be incorporated into existing mentor-mentee matching models such as the “Goodness of Fit” model.

Based on the findings of the study, Figure 6 is a model created by the author to incorporating the variables that should be considered when matching a mentor and mentee who is an entrepreneur, these elements are based on the trends which emerged from this study.

Figure 5

A suggested model for mentor-mentee matching for entrepreneurs



Source: Johnston (2019)

Authors own

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings could be used to make recommendations for improving or developing the field of entrepreneurial mentoring as follows:

- a) There are several challenges facing entrepreneurs, which are repeatedly emphasised by the entrepreneurs who participated in the study and the literature discussed. The South African government should collaborate with the private sector more to find more innovative ways of addressing these challenges because, based on the findings of this

study and large surveys done on entrepreneurs in South Africa, the strategies employed currently do not appear to be adequately improving the state of entrepreneurship.

- b) Mentorship had been recommended by various GEM reports as a learning support mechanism for entrepreneurs and their businesses. A network of mentors should be built and made available to all entrepreneurs whose financial turnover is below a certain amount.
- c) The existing mentoring networks should be communicated and marketed better to ensure entrepreneurs make optimal use of the existing support networks.
- d) Existing entrepreneurial mentorships should be further assessed to determine its impact and to build off the strengths of mentorship identified in the findings here.
- e) The government and large corporates in the private sector should be part of creating a culture of support for entrepreneurs. Both should provide access to mentors through creating relevant networks and partnerships.
- f) Although mentoring was the primary learning mechanism explored in this research, it is merely one element of a holistic learning strategy and development plan for an entrepreneur. Therefore, the findings which highlight other learning mechanisms that entrepreneurs find to be most effective should be used to support the development of learning interventions.

6.7 FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of the study can be used to make recommendations for future research and also provide suggestions on possible actions and initiatives which could support entrepreneurs.

- a) An extensive study could be done to investigate the number of South African entrepreneurs who receive mentoring and what their perceptions are of its effectiveness. This study was limited to a small group of entrepreneurs in one financial services franchise model.
- b) This study did not sufficiently investigate formal mentorship programs and therefore further research and investigation are recommended to assess the effectiveness of formal mentoring programmes. In this study the entrepreneurs had a strong preference for informal mentorship and this aspect could be tested in more detail against formal mentoring programmes for entrepreneurs.
- c) A more extensive quantitative study should be conducted to determine and confirm the variables which most affect the success of the mentor-mentee match, specifically

biographical variables which held little weight in this study but were in conflict with other findings. This would also allow for the findings to be more generalisable.

- d) In general, more research is needed on entrepreneurial learning across all disciplines and sectors in the South African context.

6.8 LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitations in this study. Some of these limitations relate to the research approach selected by the research, and these were discussed in chapter 3. Another limitation was the sample itself since this study included only franchises that were all related to the same organisation, were the same in the nature of their business and their general length of existence was between two to five years. This study indirectly excluded businesses that were more mature i.e. six years plus and also only included businesses in the same industry, the financial services industry. Furthermore, the study was interrupted by changes in the business and therefore the franchise principals were reluctant to audio-record the sessions. This research therefore relied on the ability of the researcher to capture the nuances and details of one-on-one interviews.

Although not a limitation to the study, the researcher also experience some challenges during the research process. One such challenge was based on the selected mixed methods research approach. Given that mixed methods include data from both qualitative and quantitative sources, a time and resource requirement was placed on the researcher to gather all the data. It was even more time consuming to analyse and integrate the data (Creswell, Hanso, Plano Clark, & Gutmann, 2003).

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APPENDIX 1: ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

My name is Kathryn Johnston, and I am currently registered as a Student at the Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town to do my Masters in Philosophy in Inclusive Innovation.

As a requirement for my studies, I need to complete a Dissertation which requires research to be done on my selected topic. The topic I have selected to do this dissertation on is the:

“IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP AND COACHING ON SOUTH AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURS”

I would thus like to request your consent to participate in my research. It is important that you are aware of and take note of the following:

- This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee.
- Your participation in this research is completely voluntary.
- You can choose to withdraw from the research at any time.
- The questionnaire will take approximately 60 minutes to complete
- You will not be requested to supply any identifiable information, ensuring anonymity of your responses.
- Due to the nature of the study you will need to provide the researchers with some form of identifiable information however, all responses will be confidential and used for the purposes of this research only.
- Should you have any questions regarding the research please feel free to contact the researcher (insert contact details).

Please could you confirm, by signing below, if you are providing consent to participate in the interview / survey or focus groups?

Name:

Surname:

Signature:

Date:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS: FRANCHISE PRINCIPALS

1. Please can you tell me about your background in terms of you career history?
 - 1.1 Where / when did you start your career?
 - 1.2 When / how did your entrepreneurial career?
 - 1.3 What were the key reasons for becoming an entrepreneur?
 - 1.4 What did entrepreneurship mean to you, and has this changed for you over time?
 - 1.5 What were some of the key challenges facing you at the time you wanted to enter entrepreneurship?
 - 1.6 What support did you have? / What support was missing?
 - 1.7 What resources did you have? / What resources were missing?
 - 1.8 How do you best learn?
2. Did you have any kind of mentor (formal / informal) in your career thus far?
 - 2.1 How did you come to acquire the mentor / s?
 - 2.2 At which stage in your business career did you have this mentor / s?
 - 2.3 What was your relationship like / what was their role (formal or informal)?
 - 2.4 What was the nature of your interaction (logistic of meeting (how often, how long, where), what forms of communication did you use, did you have to pay, was the conversations structured)?
 - 2.5 Did you perceive that they assisted you and your business to succeed?
 - 2.6 If so, what was some of the key contributions they made to you and your business?
 - 2.7 What was missing (if anything)?
3. What variables do you believe are most important to matching with the right mentor?
(E.g. Experience, background, biographical factors, career stage, opportunity factors, mind-set etc.) - note that this will be ranked from 1 to 10 in the quantitative study.
4. Are you familiar with the concept of coaching?
 - 4.1 What does coaching mean to you / what does a coach do?
 - 4.2 Does coaching differ from mentoring?
 - 4.3 Have you been coached, and if so, what was the nature of this relationship / what was their role?
 - 4.4 What was the nature of your interaction (logistic of meeting (how often, how long, where), what forms of communication did you use, did you have to pay, was the conversations structured)?
 - 4.5 Did you perceive that they assisted you and your business to succeed?
 - 4.6 If so, what was some of the key contributions they made to you and your business?
 - 4.7 What was missing (if anything)?

5. What variables do you believe are most important to matching with the right coach?
(E.g. Experience, background, biographical factors, career stage, opportunity factors, mind-set etc.) - note that this will be ranked from 1 to 10 in the quantitative study.
6. What are your thoughts about why entrepreneurs in South Africa struggle to enter the market and build sustainable business?
7. What support did you most need when starting and what support do you require now?
What support do you require now?
 - 7.1 What support do you believe South African Entrepreneurs need to succeed?
8. Do you believe that if mentoring and / or coaching were to be provided to all new entrant entrepreneurs, that this would increase the likelihood that they would succeed?
9. Would you recommend mentoring and/or coach to other entrepreneurs?
Yes and no.
10. Would you benefits from mentoring currently and would you be willing to remunerate the mentor and / or coach?

THANK THE INTERVIEWEE FOR THEIR TIME AND PARTICIPATION!!!!

APPENDIX 2: ONLINE SURVEY

Quantitative Masters Research Online Questionnaire

My name is Kathryn Johnston, and I am currently registered as a Student at the Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town to do my Masters in Philosophy in Inclusive Innovation. As a requirement for my studies, I need to complete a Dissertation which requires research to be done on my selected topic. The topic I have selected to do this dissertation on is the:

“The contribution of mentorship as an entrepreneurial learning mechanism for South African entrepreneurs.”

I would thus like to request your consent to participate in my research. It is important that you are aware of and take note of the following:

- This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee.
- Your participation in this research is completely voluntary.
- You can choose to withdraw from the research at any time.
- The questionnaire will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.
- You will not be requested to supply any identifiable information, ensuring anonymity of your responses.
- Should you have any questions regarding the research please feel free to contact the researcher.

Kathryn Johnston

072 928 3192

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Question Title

* 1. Please state that you understand and grant permission to use your responses to analyse data and report on the findings of the study. (Yes / No)

Question Title

2. Base Location

City/Town

Question Title

3. How long have you worked at the company?

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months - 1 year

- 1 - 2 years
- More than 2 years

Question Title

4. Have you been mentored / Have you had a mentor? (Yes / No)

Question Title

5. In your view, did mentoring assist you to improve performance or achieve a business result?
(Yes / No)

If yes, please provide further commentary in terms of how mentoring assisted you?

Question Title

6. What variables do you believe are most important to match you to the right mentor?

Has no relevance or importance to Extremely relevant and important

- Relevant Experience (mentor)
- Proven track record of performance (mentor)
- Similar Backgrounds
- Similar Interests
- Similar Values
- Age
- Race
- Gender
- Culture
- Career stage of the mentee
- Other (please specify)

Question Title

7. Rank the following learning mediums from the most effective to least effective? One (1) being most effective and five (5) being least effective.

- Classroom based or Instruction Lead learning
- Interactive Methods (e.g. quizzes, role-plays, small group discussions, case studies, Q&A's)
- Hands-on training / On-the-job training (e.g. demonstrations, coaching, apprenticeship, mentoring)
- Computer-based (text, CD-ROM, Multimedia)
- Online or E-learning (web-based training, video conferences, Emails)

APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
FACULTY OF COMMERCE
 Igniting Knowledge and Opportunity



Ethics Approval Request for the Study entitled:

Impact of Mentoring on South African Entrepreneurs

Signed by:

	Full name and signature	Date
Principal Researcher/Student: Kathryn Johnston	Signature removed to avoid exposure online	10 June 2016

This application is approved by:

Supervisor	LINDA RONNIE Signature removed to avoid exposure online	
Co- Supervisor		

Approved.

The approval of this application is based on the researcher ensuring that all requirements regarding the permission to interview staff at the various organizations have been fulfilled prior to any interviews or surveys being conducted.

9.08.2016

Signature removed to avoid exposure online

Prof U Rivett
 Chair, Ethics in Research Committee
 Commerce Faculty
 University of Cape Town