White or black mentors for black managers: The proof is in the pudding

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Abstract

This article seeks to analyse the lived mentoring experiences of black managers. The study makes use of an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The participants were from the petrochemical and related industries.

The high levels of inequality in South Africa, diverse backgrounds, dissimilar opportunities, and varying levels of education make for entirely different mentoring views and experiences as presented by the participants in this study through semi-structured interviews. In assessing these lived experiences, the researchers investigated concepts such as employment equity, affirmative action, broad-based black economic empowerment, and aspects of mentorship.

The results showed that some mentors are mentoring their mentees in accordance with transformational policies, whereas others are not. The Ubuntu principles of care, respect, responsiveness, and interconnectedness are evident throughout the positive lived experiences of the participants and absent during the negative experiences. This confirms that Ubuntu plays an important role in mentoring.

Introduction and Background

Due to apartheid and South Africa's history, organisations need to and are in a position (Cloete, Bunting, & Maassen, 2015) to eradicate the racial and gender inequalities that form part of the organisational framework (Mayer, Oosthuizen & Tonelli, 2019). Most of these inequalities are still prevalent across society almost thirty years after the new dispensation. Organisations demonstrating inequality and a lack of diversity regarding management are most likely to experience problems when allocating the right mentors to mentees relating to race, gender and background.

Mentees are often allocated to mentors who are not of the same race, as companies do not necessarily have alignment between mentors and managers in terms of race. Many managerial positions are still filled by older white managers. This should be seen as a threat to organisations when it comes to transformation. This can also create a risk in the workplace or within a certain industry, as the next generation might lack the necessary experience required to do the job. Not having the right mentor allocated to the right black manager may negatively affect workplace transformation as these relationships are sometimes forced, unnatural and unproductive.

The researchers need to get a better understanding of the lived experiences of black managers under mentorship to understand (1) the progress made regarding mentorship, (2) the progress and changes that still need to be made, and (3) the extent of the progress that needs to be made. For this study, the term black is defined by the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Amendment Act of 2013. "The term 'Black people' is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians— (a) who are citizens of the Republic of South Africa by birth or descent; or (b) who became citizens of the Republic of South Africa by naturalisation— (i) before 27 April 1994; or (ii) on or after 27 April 1994 and who would have been entitled to acquire citizenship by naturalisation before that date" (Coetsee, 2021).

Mentoring has emerged as the best strategy to transmit know-how in a mutually beneficial relationship for both senior and junior managers (Santos, Pereira, Silva, Cadilhe & Cunha, 2019). Mentoring across different races is not a natural act in South Africa due to its history of segregation. According to Thomas (2001), there are four major obstacles, namely: (1) negative stereotypes, (2) difficulty identifying with the other person, (3) protective hesitation, and (4) fear or scepticism of intimacy. A mentor who has a negative stereotype about someone based on race will hold on to that until the individual has proven that they do not fit that stereotype.

Close mentoring relationships are more likely to develop when both parties can identify based on race, culture, age, or gender (Thomas, 2001). Mentors and mentees from the same race and background will relate easier to each other when they have similar lived experiences, opportunities, cultures, and fewer language barriers. These practices need to be continuously improved and reflect South Africa's democratic principles based on recognising and implementing individual human rights in mind and practice in an equal manner (Ebrahim, 2018).

Research Questions

The main research question was: What are the lessons learned for future mentoring relationships to facilitate the transformation process within South Africa?

Three secondary research questions were addressed:

How do black managers view mentoring in South Africa?

What are the lived experiences of black managers of being mentored by white and/or black mentors?

What is the significance of having a black mentor for black managers in South Africa?

Purpose Statement

It is necessary to consider and advocate mentoring models that make sense for Africa and Africans (Sikirivwa, Nyarwath & Muhenda, 2021). Such a model needs to be holistic and apply the best practices of Ubuntu (Nguni term meaning humanity towards others) so that it is less focused on the individual and more inclusive and culturally aligned within the African context (Geber & Keane, 2016). South African mentors, such as the middle-aged white male, may interact with the mentee in an unconsciously biased manner, which may have a negative impact on the mentee. When these managers mentor younger black managers, it is essential to remain aware of any mentoring that may contribute to the "colonisation of the mind" (Geber & Keane, 2016:502).

The current management and mentors of organisations need to be aligned with the next generation of management regarding race and gender for mentorship programmes to be effective. The more diverse a company is, the more a mentor and mentee programme is likely to be aligned. Okawa (2002) noted the significance of cultural similarity in mentoring. Mentoring may feel more natural when the mentor and mentee are of the same race and culture (Athey, Avery & Zemsky, 2000).

Literature Review

Since the mentorship of black managers is the focus of the paper, mentorship as a phenomenon is explored in the literature review. Sometimes mentoring and coaching are used as interchangeable terminology, although the approaches differ in many ways. Therefore, the concept of coaching is also explored.

Creating context

During the first thirty years of South Africa's democracy, the discourse of heritage has been essential in correcting the wrongs of the past regarding the black majority who was deprived of basic human rights. Their rights were systematically erased by the effects of colonialism and apartheid (Geber & Keane, 2016). Prior to 1994 black South Africans were excluded from certain jobs, industries, and positions.

The ANC government introduced laws to promote equity and socio-economic development of groups disadvantaged by apartheid which gave rise to integration policies in organisations. The three integration laws are (1) Employment Equity (EE) which is governed by the Employment Equity Act (EEA), (2) the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) which is governed by the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BEE Act), and (3) Affirmative Action (AA). The EEA focuses on implementing policies and strategies to rectify disadvantages and to ensure non-discriminatory portrayal in various levels of the workplace (Millers, 2015).

Mentorship and Coaching

Most managers use mentoring or coaching to become more effective at their work (Stambaugh & Mitchell, 2018). Even though these terms are not new, academic interest grew considerably over the last few decades to such an extent that it is believed that a manager's success depends on mentorship and coaching (Koopman, Englis, Ehgrenhard & Groen, 2021).

Mentorship

According to Johnson (2015), mentoring is an interpersonal relationship between a mentor and a mentee, where the mentor guides, counsels and supports the mentee. The experience can be mutually beneficial and not only beneficial to the mentee, as is with traditional mentoring (Malin & Hackmann, 2016). According to Peiser et al. (2018), traditional organisational mentoring can be defined as the transmission of organisational cultures and values. This form of mentoring promotes the identity of the mentee as well as the company. Transformational

mentoring allocates more fluid roles to both the mentor and mentee. This form of mentoring focuses on development for both parties (Peiser et al., 2018). An indigenous transformational mentoring programme combines Western and indigenous perspectives in that mentors need to incorporate reciprocal learning, as well as implement applicable elements of Ubuntu (Geber & Keane, 2016).

According to Crawford and Smith (2005), the quintessence of mentoring is individuals' personal and professional development. However, according to Darwin (2000), mentoring relationships have been enclosed in a language of dependence and paternalism which originates from a power-depended, hierarchal relationship, aimed at continuing the status quo. Harris (1999) stated that if mentoring is based on a single definition, then the complex nature of the mentoring experience by under-represented groups, such as black management is often excluded. Even though there has been an increase in research on mentoring, more research needs to be done when it comes to previously disadvantaged groups and their mentorship experiences.

Coaching

According to Zuñiga-Collazos et al. (2020), managerial coaching looks at enhancing the skills of employees through a practical method. This improves the skills of an individual employee to inspire those around them, improve their communication, encourage, and manage new talent towards the same desired results. The possible benefit to the company is that the coaching influences the commitment of the individual at a personal, as well as at a team level. Presently, more managers, executives and companies are starting to realise the benefit of managerial coaching, to improve individual and company performances. The use of practical methods to enhance the skills of Africans through managerial coaching makes more sense for Africans and African businesses as access to formal education remains a problem. The literacy rate of Africans is poor compared to the rest of the world. Most of these problems can be attributed to colonisation and decolonisation.

Managerial coaching consists of a relationship between the manager and the coach, where the goal is to create a positive change in the behaviour of the manager being coached. This should improve the quality of the professional and personal life of the manager. Sustained change through managerial coaching focuses on the employee's working life, whereas the benefits can transfer to their personal lives too (Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2020).

It is important to coach leaders and base their training on deeper cultural knowledge, as this will improve cultural intelligence (CQ) within an organisation. If individuals gain a better

understanding of each other's cultures, they are likely to become more tolerant and accepting of one another.

African values such as Ubuntu are generally not valued enough in South African businesses. Coaching does not necessarily address these shortfalls (Myres, 2013). A study done on the top hundred South African companies found that multiple companies use coaching as a means of leadership development for black talent. This is, however, not incorporated into the business strategy and is largely based on Western values and norms, with little to no reference to Ubuntu (Geber & Keane, 2016).

Ubuntu Philosophy

Ubuntu is translated as 'a person is a person through other people' (Geber & Keane, 2016:502). According to Msila (2015), applying the spirit of Ubuntu allows for cohesiveness, teamwork, and caring for each other within the collective vision of the organisation. Geber and Keane (2016), explain that Ubuntu is a nature of being and a way of living, that differs significantly from the way of being and living in the West.

Individual rights and individualism are not always upheld when it comes to Ubuntu, which differs from pure Western thinking. Therefore, some of Ubuntu's values need to be excluded, as they may differ far too greatly from modern-day society. Ubuntu values which are relevant can be applied to mentoring programmes (Geber & Keane, 2016). Organisations should preserve cultural identity by allocating mentors to mentees that are from the same race or background and who share a common value system. There should be balance in the implementation of Western and African values to progress as a society as well as within organisations, whilst staying true to African identity and preserving the right values.

Transformational Mentoring

Mentoring and coaching with different worldviews in mind can bring about change at a macro level within companies (Ivey et al., 2013). This is beneficial for a society like South Africa's, which is undergoing changes in the workplace regarding the composition, policies and practices (Geber & Keane, 2016). By applying a Western worldview, the world is categorised into dualities such as mind and matter, living and non-living. In contrast to this, through Ubuntu, the world is seen as holistic, an attribution of human motivation or behaviour.

Hierarchy in Ubuntu is valued as normal, whereas the West is constantly aiming for equality, being a universal value. Some of the other differences are that Ubuntu sees success as (1) belonging to the collective, (2) encouragement of working together, (3) being modest, and (4)

harmony with others and the community. The Western worldview on the other hand encourages success through (1) competition, and (2) individual achievement even if it is through critique or conflict. Indigenous transformational mentoring combines both indigenous and Western worldviews into a typical mentoring programme (Geber & Keane, 2016). Mentors need to be willing to learn about Ubuntu's principles and apply them to their mentoring practices. Respect and awareness of different worldviews need to be applied in mentoring across different cultures and races.

Social identification and choice of mentor

Based on the social identity theory developed by Tolman in 1943, individuals tend to identify themselves with different social categories such as religion, gender and age, and in South Africa specifically with race due to the past that used race as a basis for segregation. Ashforth and Mael (1989) state that social classifications firstly enable an individual to cognitively segment the social environment, enabling the individuals to define others and ascribe characteristics of the category to those associated with the category. Secondly, it enables individuals to define themselves in the social environment.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) identified four principles relevant to group and social identification, used interchangeably in this regard. Firstly, social identification is a perceptual cognitive construct that is not linked to any specific behaviours or the experience of feeling the underlying emotional state. The individual identifies with a group because they are psychologically entwined with the fate of the group. Secondly, it is linked to the personal experience of the successes or failures of the group. Thirdly, social identification is distinguishable from internalisation. Identification refers to the self, regarding social categories, whereas internalisation refers to the implementation of values and attitudes within the self as guiding principles. Even as individuals define themselves in terms of the category, group, or organisation, they may not necessarily agree with the values, attributes, authority or characteristics of the applicable category, group or organisation.

Lastly, identifying with a group is like identifying with a person, such as mentor-mentee, doctor-patient, and husband-wife (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Organisations often promote generalised identification of an individual with the organisation through the routinisation of charisma. This could be prevalent in mentor-mentee relationships proving ineffective in dealing with black and previously disadvantaged mentees.

Methodology

Qualitative studies normally follow an interpretive philosophy approach. This is due to the researcher needing to comprehend the subjective and socially constructed meanings that present themselves within the phenomenon being studied (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Phenomenology was first introduced by Husserl (1931) to comprehend the lived experiences of participants and to give meaning to their experiences. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) came into its own with the publication of Smith's (1996) paper which argued for an approach that was able to capture the experiential and qualitative and that could still dialogue with psychology. According to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to examining how people comprehend life experiences. It is seen by many as the most inclusive qualitative research approach with a sensitivity to the lived experiences of the participants (Alase, 2017). For the participants' stories to make sense, the interpreters needed to have a deep understanding of their lived experiences by putting themself in the participants' shoes. The researchers needed to try and envision the lives of the participants and see the world and their experiences through their eyes. A combination of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) interpretative paradigm and Guba's (1990) critical theory paradigm was used for this research. Using these two paradigms made it possible to critically interpret the lived experiences of the participants. Guba's (1990) critical theory paradigm sets out the exploration platform of the phenomenon, whereas Burrell and Morgan's (1979) interpretative paradigm forms the basis for the narrative of the lived experiences of those impacted. It was important to find a qualitative methodology that is participant-orientated and flexible to capture the real lived experiences of the managers that participated in the study (Alase, 2017).

Population and sample

The target population was black managers, male and female, within the petrochemical industry. The participants were selected from various departments within the selected companies. The traditional sample size for phenomenological research is between 2-25 participants. The researchers conducted ten interviews when saturation was attained.

Analysis Approach

Each interview was transcribed and analysed. The analysis of the interviews served as an open coding tool to identify and recognise patterns among the participants. The patterns were grouped into thematic categories. Transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for verification. A code was used to protect the identity of the participants (Alase, 2017).

Findings

Understanding of mentorship

The first theme investigated was the mentees' understanding of mentorship. The results revealed that black managers had a similar and accurate understanding of what is meant by mentorship. Participants A, B, C, F and I cited the following: to give assistance, support, or guidance to the mentee to grow or reach their goals. Three participants (Participants A, B & H) viewed mentoring as "the assistance you give to your team members, whether it be a senior or the lowest team member - you have to assist them" and subsequently they have to assist you.

Participant F made a statement on how he perceived guidance in the context of mentoring: "Mentoring is standing on the shoulders of someone who is currently seeing further than you in pursuit of your interests." Participants A, G and J understand mentoring as the training or coaching of mentees so that they can improve their skills and expertise. Participants G and A stated that mentoring is about unlocking the potential of the mentee.

Participants A and H considered a mentee's needs and expertise as central to their understanding of mentoring. Participants H, I and J further viewed mentoring as encouraging growth on the mentee's side. According to Participant I, his "job is to enable them and maximize their potential so that they can be able to grow to a level that is required". Participant D made a single statement about mentorship being the sharing of information with those being mentored. Participants G and J explained mentorship as developing others. All the understandings and explanations of mentoring given by the participants can be linked to the mentee's development as a single thematic category.

Lived Mentoring Experiences of Black Managers

Two of the participants (Participants A & E) had lived mentorship experiences by mostly being mentored by white mentors. Both these participants mentioned that they had supportive white mentors and a generally positive experience. Participant A stated: "I knew that he wanted the best for me." Participant E mentioned that his white mentor would even call him during the night to find out if he was safe. Although both participants experienced compassion, their experiences were somewhat different. Both stated that the white mentors entrusted them with the responsibility to perform tasks, whilst installing belief in them simultaneously. Participant E added that the mentors "trusted" him and "liked" him, which made him believe more in himself. Participant A mentioned that her white mentor pointed out that in comparison to other

mentees, she may not have had the necessary “competencies or education”, but that he still wanted to see her excel in life. This comment by her white mentor installed trust and belief in her. Participant E had mostly positive mentoring experiences, while Participant A had some negative experiences as well with regard to the mentors who were responsible for her positive experiences.

In Participant A’s first mentoring experience of having a white manager as a mentor, she experienced a lack of respect from the mentor in the initial stages of their relationship. The participant stated that during a meeting with a client, the mentor started “swearing” at the participant. The participant excused herself and left the meeting. She further told him if he “cannot respect” her, she will put in a grievance against him. Another white mentor took her “under her wing” and taught her a lot. This mentor seemed to be very possessive towards the participant, which added another negative aspect to the lived mentoring experience. The mentor did not allow her to communicate or work with anyone except herself, as it seemed that she might have been intimidated by her.

There were some unfortunate racist behaviours towards Participant A on two occasions during her lived mentoring experiences as a black manager. The first incident was when a mentor called her “bushy” (i.e., a bushy afro hairstyle) and although she “never saw it as a racist comment”, it should be noted that others are likely to view such a statement differently. The second incident was when the participant was assigned to a project in a different part of the country. She stated that: “When I got there, I had a bit of trouble with some of my colleagues that didn’t accept us. “As a different race, they didn’t accept us.”

Participants C and J mentioned only having white mentors during their lived mentoring experiences, with no mention of a black mentor from either participant. Participant J mentioned that a white manager guided him and taught him “that you have to stand up for yourself”. He further adds that the same white mentor taught him to “solve the problems, do not run away from problems”.

Participant J recalled lived experiences of a white mentor who instilled belief in him and encouraged him to take opportunities when they arise. He stated that this particular mentor told him: “You are not destined. So, you should always look for opportunities.” This was followed by another statement: “When you see an opportunity where you can make a difference, then that is what you should strive for.”

In contrast to the participant that only had white mentors, there were also participants (Participants D & G) who were in their lived experiences predominantly mentored by black

mentors. Participant D mentioned that he learned a lot from the black managers he previously worked with.

Participant G spoke highly of an inspirational black mentor who has guided him and made him believe in himself. “He was inspiring,” as he taught him “how to achieve the goals that you want”. He continued to mention that: “The most important thing that mentors need to do is to unlock people’s awareness within themselves.” Participant G made a comprehensive point about why mentorship was not a formally introduced concept throughout his lived experiences. He argued that mentoring was a natural relationship that forms between a mentor and mentee. There were certain participants (Participant F, H & I) that have had significant mentorship experiences from both black and white mentors on both a personal and professional level. Participant F stated, “I was very fortunate to be mentored by the best people in the industry that are currently holding senior positions.” He added that “the nice thing about being mentored by those guys is that they understand the industry”. As a result, there were insights shared with him on how to make his business succeed within the industry. Participant H spoke highly of a white mentor that instilled belief in him through one memorable act. He got himself into trouble at work whereafter his mentor approached him and told him: “Face whatever happens here today, as you are one of my stars.” Instead of breaking him down, the mentor gave him an “opportunity to prove everyone wrong”. The mentor motivated him that day to turn his career around by giving him the necessary emotional and physical support. He confirms this by stating: “that was the turning point in my career”. It is worthwhile to note that the relationship was not only professional but personal too. Participant I mentioned a positive mentoring experience with a white mentor, where this mentor gave him the necessary guidance and training on how to perform his work successfully. As confirmed by the participant, “she took me through the process, and I learned a lot under her”. He further mentioned a similar positive mentoring experience from a black mentor, who gave him the guidance and training required to be a safety officer. He stated: “He took me throughout the whole thing, the site-based safety, risk assessments, toolbox talks, tools, and equipment inspections.”

Participant B was the only participant who had negative mentoring experiences from mostly white mentors, as well as a single negative experience from a black mentor. At one of the previous companies he worked, he confirmed that “it was difficult as a black man”. From the interview, it was evident that there was racist behaviour by the predominantly white management, as he was “looked down upon as a black person” and “no one took him seriously”.

This oppressive culture has created a negative mentoring culture within this organisation where white mentors could still be resistant to change.

The Significance of a White Manager as a Mentor

Two participants had limited to no white mentors in their lived mentoring experiences and could not fully contribute as a result. After analysing the codes and noting the frequencies it is evident that there were both positive and negative lived experiences of having a white mentor as experienced by the participants. It is important to note that the majority of these experiences were positive. Three of the participants (Participants A, E & H) mostly had white mentoring experiences. Although mostly positive, there were certain negative mentoring encounters experienced by Participant A that should be noted under this sub-section. As stated earlier, the participant had a white mentor who became overly controlling and allowed her very little freedom or interaction with others. She capitalised on the participant's hard work. The situation got to the extent where the company sent the mentor back to the head office, where the mentor initially came from after the company conducted a performance evaluation.

Participant E spoke highly of his mentors who were predominantly white. It is evident that these mentors were supportive and entrusted the participant with responsibility on numerous occasions. The mentors would show the participant how to do the job correctly and then trusted him to perform it safely.

Participant H mentioned an important relationship that he had with a white mentor in discussing his lived experiences. The participant recalled that this mentor was and still is a relevant figure in his life. The participant goes on to mention another white mentor who entrusted him with the responsibility to get tasks done as this person gave him the ability to make decisions.

As stated earlier, Participant A experienced an unfortunate incident whereby a white mentor started swearing at her in front of a client. This participant "grew up with white people being owners of companies, businesses, running businesses and being managers". So, to her, it has been the norm for "the boss of the company to be white" and "the manager to be white". These are circumstances that the participant was used to.

Participant B mostly had negative experiences of mentoring by white mentors. He mentioned that the experience "wasn't good, as it was just dictatorship". He felt that black people had no say within the organisation.

Participant C and I, both had one white mentor who gave them guidance or support to solve problems. Participant C's mentor taught him to "solve the problems" and "not run away". He

also taught the participant to be independent and "stand up for yourself". Participant I had positive mentoring experiences from various white mentors during his attendance at university. He formed good and lasting relationships with some of his lecturers.

Participant F had a unique story to tell, as he was greatly influenced in his youth on a personal level by a white mentor. Golf was introduced to him by a white person, who after a few months invited the participant to stay with the mentor and his family for a few months. He was fourteen years old at the time and "lived with them for eight years". The white family was very supportive of him emotionally and physically. They kept close contact after the family had to relocate and remain in contact up to today. He experienced love from this family. He was "helped and encouraged" by this white mentor and his family and "considered them as his own family". They treated him with "respect and dignity", and "they were willing to share not only their experiences but their resources as well", something he also strives to do as a mentor for his mentees.

Participants G and J each had a single positive lived experience with a white mentor. According to Participant G, the manager thoroughly coached him, as he confirmed: "he coached me that for us to achieve what we want, is superb". The white mentor was also a significant motivator in the participant's life. The participant confirmed this when he stated: "he is the one who motivated me to do my postgraduate." He also confirmed that it was "very informal how he mentored" as well as "natural". This white mentor also entrusted him with responsibility, as he would give him tasks "and then he would just watch from a distance". The mentor also taught him sustainability through integrity. This mentor factored in sustainability in his decision-making process.

According to participant J, his experience was very positive, mostly due to the equal and consistent treatment he received from this white mentor. According to the participant, it did not matter to the mentor whether you were "black or white, he was handling us the same". The consistent treatment was another admirable trait portrayed by this white mentor. Participant J confirmed this trait when he stated, "even when there are ups and downs in our country, we always talk". The relationship between participant J and the white mentor was not solely professional, but personal as well. According to participant J, "even today, as he is on pension, we still talk". The participant continued saying, "the mentorship is always carrying on, I would think, for a lifetime". These statements confirmed the importance of mentor-mentee relationships stretching beyond a professional one. These relationships seem to leave a lifelong mark on both the mentor and mentee.

The Significance of a Black Manager as a Mentor

A split in opinions by the participants was evident regarding the significance of having a black mentor. Three of the participants (Participants A, B & E) stated that race had no significance for them, whereas five participants (Participants C, F, G, H & J) stated that it was indeed significant. It is also important to note that two of the participants (Participants D & I) were undecided on whether race was significant for them and made additional comments as to why they were undecided.

Participants A and E gave similar responses on the matter, as they were both adamant that race was not significant. This is important for the researchers to note as both participants predominantly had positive mentoring experiences in having white managers as mentors throughout their careers. According to Participant A, it did not matter whether "it is a black or white manager", as long as that mentor has respect. She also mentioned that "I feel that as a leader, you need to mentor people and, as a manager, you must be a people person. So, whether you are black or white makes no difference." Participant A stated that as a coloured woman, she felt that they "are always in the middle" compared to other races. "So, whether your manager is black or white, you need to fit in with them".

Participant E stated that he does not "have a problem working under the black, the whites, the Indians or the coloureds" as race is not significant to him. What he does find significant is that there needs to be mutual respect.

As seen throughout the interviews, Participant B mostly had negative experiences with both black and white mentors. Subsequently, he viewed race as not being significant. He said that having a black or white mentor would "not have made a difference, as it depends on the mindset of the person". Most participants (Participants C, F, G, H & J) agreed race was indeed significant. It is also worth noting that four of the participants (Participants C, F, G & H) had both black and white mentors during their lived mentoring experiences. Participant J is the only exception, as he only mentioned a positive mentoring experience from a white mentor. Participant C stated that "previously there were no black mentors or managers. Now everything is much easier for us to be leaders".

The participant argued that the younger generation should be able to see opportunities for themselves and take the necessary action to capitalise on them. Participants C and F gave a comprehensive overview as to why having a black manager was significant to them. They both

believed that things had changed for the better in South Africa and that black individuals had much better opportunities now. Participant F stated that "we as blacks understand our struggle and being mentored by a black person who is open-minded" makes the process more effective. Participant F continued to build on this statement when he confirmed that, "given our history, black people were not given opportunities", so it is encouraging for him to see that "South Africa has changed and is busy transforming for the better." Participant G says that "there is still a barrier between relationships, especially personal relationships between people of colour and whites". "There is still that grey area, whereby that relationship ends only on a professional level", and rarely overflows to a personal level, especially if the mentor and mentee are not of the same race. Participant G mentioned that when one talks about a personal relationship, it must be "guided by respect and be on a personal level not only a professional level".

Participant J said that race was indeed significant as black people understood each other's culture and their way of doing things. This participant also mentioned that it was easier for a black mentor to relate to certain situations in comparison to a white mentor. He continued by saying, "to a white mentor, you have to explain and make them understand" which is not the case with a black mentor. According to Participant D, race is not significant. He did, however, mention that in terms of communication, "it is better because of the language barrier" as people of the same culture are likely to "understand each other better". He went on to make a point on the lack of support between black people, stating that "there are those notions that with us as blacks we don't give one another the necessary support". He further mentioned that when a black mentor feels that a black mentee "can do better than him, he will make sure that he does not get the necessary attention to perhaps be promoted to the position where he is supposed to be". Lastly, he elaborated on this point by highlighting black mentors "become cautious when giving out information", as they feared that the information they were sharing "might come up against them", making them reserved to share information with fellow black mentors, mentees or colleagues. Similar to Participant D, Participant I made additional statements on the matter in which it seemed that he agreed with the importance of race in EE, BBBEE and equity, but that once a black person is appointed, race should not be an issue, as equity had been attained in terms of race. However, on a personal note, he believes "that goals and standards are the same" in terms of mentoring and that a mentor needs to comprehend these goals and standards. Based on the latter, the participant confirmed that he "won't go with a white or black manager who does not understand the goals and standards, as the objectives remain the same". To conclude, this participant felt that regardless of race, the objectives of mentorship should be reached.

Black Managers' Perspectives on lessons learned for future mentoring.

There are various views from the participants on what they would do differently as mentors going forward. Some of the themes that stood out were: (1) forming personal relationships with mentees, (2) instilling belief, (2) addressing shortfalls, (3) increasing interaction, and (4) encouraging authenticity and developing others. Participant G and Participant I both emphasised that they would focus on the personal aspects of mentoring. Participant I was adamant when it came to future mentoring relationships that he would "not just keep it professional". It should become a mutually beneficial friendship for both the mentor and mentee. He further stated that he would be focussing on one-on-one sessions so that he "can be able to go deeper". The participant further added that by crossing this personal barrier, the mentor and mentee were likely to confide in each other. Participant G and Participant I also mentioned the importance of understanding each mentee's aspirations, and shortfalls, as well as encouraging authenticity.

Participant G highlighted that going forward, he would encourage his mentees to follow their own dreams, so that they do not become a mutation of him, ultimately striving towards authenticity. Another sub-theme that arose from the interviews was that going forward, increased interaction and communication with their mentees were important. According to Participant D, he would give mentees more information in terms of professional career development, as well as give personal advice on issues such as using their money wisely. Participant H stated that going forward, he would increase his interaction with mentees, as well as form closer bonds by having one-on-one sessions. The feedback given by Participants D and H, indirectly indicated that they also understood the importance of a mentoring relationship being both professional and personal.

Participant B and Participant I stated that going forward, they would focus on the development of mentees, which encapsulated codes such as giving guidance to mentees as well as encouraging growth. According to Participant H, "we all have our skills and at the end of the day I want to help you take your skills and make them your strength". Participant I contributed to this view and added that "one needs to look at the weaknesses and strengths and build on them".

Discussion

There are significant similarities between the definitions of mentoring as given in the literature and how the black managers from the interviews understand it. As the literature states,

mentoring is where the mentor guides, counsels and supports the mentee (Johnson, 2015). The majority of the participants (Participants A, B, C, F & I) viewed mentoring as assisting, supporting or providing guidance to the mentee. Some explained mentoring as the training or coaching of mentees to develop skills and expertise. According to Participants G and J, mentoring is to develop others. The researcher found this view significant, as it aligns with all other definitions and possibly serves as a summarised definition of mentoring.

There are various views from the participants on what they would do differently as mentors going forward. Some of the themes that stood out were: forming personal relationships with mentees, installing beliefs, addressing shortfalls, increasing interaction, encouraging authenticity and developing others. The literature mentions the significance of having both a personal and professional relationship within a mentoring relationship (Crawford and Smith, 2005). This highlights the significance of this factor when it comes to successful mentoring.

The main themes that arose in the understanding of mentoring are that mentoring is the development of others, followed by assistance and guidance given to the mentee and then some also added training and coaching as themes.

The lived mentoring experiences among participants differ significantly. It confirms that white and black people, as well as mentors and mentees, still have different views as South Africans on mentoring relationships. There is also a difference in behaviour between how black and white mentors treat their mentees, as they most likely had their own mentoring experiences. South Africa's high levels of inequality, diverse upbringings, unequal opportunities, and differing levels of education make for entirely different mentoring views and experiences.

There were positive and negative experiences from both black and white mentors. The positive experiences were linked to themes such as, emotional, and physical support from a black or white mentor, instilling belief, guidance or assistance, solving problems, training, mutual respect, and sharing of information. In contrast, the negative experiences were linked to themes such as racist behaviour by white mentors as well as lack of respect from white mentors. As stated in the literature, negative attitudes towards EE by white mentors slow down progress within South African organisations in the fear of affecting self-image (Mayer et al., 2019).

According to Geber and Keane (2016), to achieve cultural intelligence (CQ) within an organisation, it is important to consider management and leadership issues unique to South Africa and find unique South African ways of dealing with those issues. The training and coaching of leaders need to be based on gaining better cultural knowledge, especially in a multicultural society like South Africa. Sharing these different worldviews and perspectives,

allow for a higher level of thinking within society and organisations. Several CQ principles are already present in the participants' lived mentoring experiences from white and black mentoring experiences. Respect is one principle that is evident in the positive mentoring experiences of the participants. However, to culturally integrate the other principles, the relationship between mentor and mentee needs to be personal and not merely professional, so that concepts such as Ubuntu can effectively be incorporated.

The literature confirms that mentoring is an interpersonal relationship between a mentor and a mentee (Johnson, 2015). Other literature states that the essence of mentoring is the development of individuals on both a professional and personal level (Crawford & Smith, 2005). Participant G made a valuable contribution to the importance of a mentoring relationship needing to be both personal and professional to break down the barriers between people of different races, as these mentoring relationships rarely overflow onto a personal level.

Participant G also argued that a mentee is likely to form a relationship with someone who shares similar attributes with them. As Thomas (2001) confirms in the literature, close mentoring relationships form easier when parties share attributes such as race, culture, age, or gender. According to Athey et al. (2000), mentoring may feel more natural when the mentor and mentee are of the same race or culture.

Black mentors can relate more easily with black mentees regarding cultural issues, as African cultures share similar attributes. This allows for the relationship between mentor and mentee to form more naturally. It is important to note that although the relationship has the potential to form naturally, there is still a personal element required for a mentoring relationship to be mutually beneficial, even between black mentors and mentees. According to the literature, mentoring is the best strategy to share knowledge in a mutually beneficial relationship for both the mentor and mentee (Malin and Hackmann, 2016; Santos et al., 2019).

The researchers have noted that most positive experiences by black managers in having white mentors had a personal aspect to their relationship, i.e., the relationship was both personal and professional. They formed friendships with their white mentors that took the relationship beyond their professional relationships.

The majority of the black managers agreed that having a mentor of the same race was indeed significant, as mentoring across different races was not a natural act especially in South Africa with its past being one of segregation. Close mentoring relationships are much more likely to

form when the mentor and mentee can relate with each other based on race, culture, age, or gender (Thomas, 2001). Three of the participants convincingly agreed with the literature.

Even though Participant D did find race significant on a personal level, he also viewed language as a possible hindrance to communication when it comes to mentoring across differences. According to Participant F, black mentors and mentees get along more easily, as they understand each other's struggles. "Struggle" in this instance refers to the economic hardships that the majority of black South Africans faced daily. Participant J believes that race is indeed significant when it comes to culture and beliefs. African traditions and beliefs are often difficult for white South Africans to comprehend and incorporate into organisations. It is more convenient to have a black mentor who understands traditional or cultural situations.

Another main theme as expressed by the participants on the significance of having a black manager as a mentor is that it encourages the realisation of better opportunities for black South Africans post-Apartheid. Participant F was encouraged by the progress South Africa has made in providing opportunities for black South Africans through transformation. Black people did not have the same opportunities in the past as they do in the present. This is largely due to transformative laws such as B-BBEE, EE and AA, which has the main function of correcting the wrongs of the past and addressing issues like inequality and lack of opportunities as experienced by black South Africans. Participant C added that there are more opportunities now for black people to be leaders.

Conclusion

Although there are numerous positive examples, certain South African organisations still lack equality and diversity, and certain organisations still have an oppressive culture toward black employees. White, middle-aged mentors who still have the mentality of apartheid are resistant to mentoring relationships and the benefits that may arise from it. It should be seen as a threat to organisations and society when it comes to transformation as it will hinder progress within organisations. Although significant progress has been made as seen with some of the participants, much more still needs to be done.

It is evident in the way certain mentors, black or white, treated their mentees that some companies are indeed on track regarding implementing policies (from EE, AA & B-BBEE legislation) and mentorship programmes that support transformation in applying best practices such as Ubuntu. The Ubuntu principles of care, respect, responsiveness, and interconnectedness are evident throughout the feedback given by the participants. This applies particularly to business sectors where the focus needs to be placed on gaining a better understanding of

cultural aspects in the workplace to allow for a more inclusive organisation, and better relationships between employees of different backgrounds and races.

The researchers noted that the mentoring participants' understanding aligned with the Western view of mentoring. Most of the participants viewed mentoring as giving assistance, support, or guidance to the mentee, whereas the literature defines mentoring as a personal enhancement strategy where the mentor develops the mentee by sharing ideas, expertise, values, skills, perspectives, proficiencies and attitudes.

The more transformed and developed a society is, the less significant race ought to be. It is evident from the data that the majority of the participants still view race as being significant given the history of South Africa. Factors which contribute to this are that black people share similar or related cultures, languages, backgrounds, and the history of one or other form of struggle against inter alia apartheid. It is also easier for a black mentor to form personal relationships with a black mentee because they share some of these elements just mentioned.

Recommendation

South Africa is a very diverse and complex society. A society that is constantly faced with enormous social-economic issues and the complexities of correcting these issues. Transformational mentoring allocates more fluid roles to both mentor and mentee, focussing on the growth of both parties (Peiser et al., 2018). In conjunction with concepts such as Ubuntu, transformational mentoring can assist South African organisations in finding a single identity for mentoring. Mentoring that combines Western and indigenous views into an authentic South African view. This process should not be forced, but handled with the correct intent, urgency, and desired outcome in mind, so that past mistakes are not repeated. Multiculturalism has, in many instances, become the desired goal, resulting in neglect of certain issues and how they are resolved so that terms such as Ubuntu do not lose their depth and value.

Managerial Implications

Management and stakeholders need to do more to create an inclusive society in an organisational culture that allows for a better understanding of cultural differences and encourages improved relationships between employees of different races. Organisations need to improve on CQ by dealing with issues when it comes to diversity. Leaders, managers, and mentors need to be coached on deeper cultural knowledge to improve the CQ within an organisation or society, especially in a complex society like South Africa. If individuals gain a better cultural knowledge of each other, individuals will become more tolerant and accepting.

Based on the results of the study, mentoring should be used more in a transformational manner within organisations, where the mentee learns from the mentor and the mentor from the mentee. They should also develop more personalised relationships. The mentor must also take interest in the personal career and life aspirations of the mentee. Mentees should be encouraged to have the urgency to identify their development opportunities, with the mentor providing support for this.

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