



MENTORING TO SUPPORT WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

A Source Book for Strengthening Conservation Professionals, Practices and Institutions

Cape Action for People and the Environment



Executive Summary

Mentoring has always been a key organizational strategy towards developing professional capacity, improved practices and consequently stronger, more effective institutions. On reflection, most of us could probably recognize some form of mentoring in our institution, whether these are formal or informal processes. Mentoring in our institutions are however often fraught with a range of challenges. Some of these include too few mentors, a lack of mentoring capacity – both in competence and experience, traditional approaches that do not work as well as they used to, uncertainty about standard approaches used across a range of mentees, effective ways of structuring the mentoring interaction, working effectively with the younger generation, amongst many other questions that arise in our mentoring practices and approaches.

This source book has been developed in response to the many questions that mentors have in their interaction with mentees. It draws on experiences of both mentors and mentees participating in the Cape Action for People and the Environment's (C.A.P.E) Capacity Development Programme. And shares with you experiences and insights gained through mentoring interactions in the workplace. Some of the questions explored include:

- o What is mentoring?*
- o How does mentoring differ from coaching?*
- o How does mentoring relate to counseling, training and management?*
- o Who needs mentoring and is mentoring the same when working with staff at different levels?*
- o How can we effectively approach mentoring in a resource constrained environment?*
- o Where do we start and how do we make mentoring work practically in the workplace?*

Rather than intended as a resource that holds all the answers, this source book is offered as suggestion of approaches used by others in similar contexts that might work as is or might need to be adapted to suit the specifics of your particular work and mentoring context. It is also offered as a framework for reflecting on your current mentoring practices, and exploring new and innovative approaches to mentoring that works best in your work context.

This source book could be used in many ways to support mentoring in your institution, and we would like to suggest that it could be used:

- o As a guide to individual mentors in their interactions with mentees;*
- o As a framework for developing and implementing mentoring programmes;*
- o As a resource for training mentors in the workplace.*

We hope that whichever way it is used it will provide some guidance and stimulate deeper thinking and strengthening of mentoring approaches and practices in the workplace.

1. Stories of mentoring

Jeff and Charl at the Botanical Society



After completing an Honours degree in Environmental Management and a Master of Science degree in Ecology, Jeff was appointed to a one and a half year internship with the Botanical Society's Conservation Unit in 2005. With a focus on strengthening his capacity in Land Use Planning, Charl was assigned as his dedicated mentor.

Charl's approach was to create opportunities for experiential learning, '... creat[ing] an intimate work relationship with Jeff ... the approach was open and allowed the relationship to grow at different levels ... creat[ing] opportunities for experiential learning and involv[ing] Jeff in all aspects of and levels of work ... he was given opportunities to write proceedings of meetings and workshops, organize information and statistical data, co-present a paper, deliberate learning and implementation activities, exposure to people and forums'.

Jeff and Charl both experienced the mentoring interaction positively. Jeff feels that much of the effectiveness can be ascribed to assigning the right mentor, in the right institution linked to his chosen career direction of land-use planning.

Gaynor and Sally at Gold Fields Environmental Education Centre, Kirstenbosch



After completing matric, Gaynor was employed at the Gold Fields Environmental Education Centre at Kirstenbosch as an Assistant Education Officer (AEO). She was supervised by Sally who co-ordinates the centre's Gardens-based School Programme. During this time Sally came to know Gaynor as '... show[ing] initiative ...'.

After her first year Gaynor was accepted to do a learnership in Environmental Education, Training and Development Practices (EETDP). Sally was appointed as her formal mentor for this learnership. Course participants are required to develop and implement a learning programme in their work context. This workplace-based learning orientation provided Gaynor with structure for learning and development complemented by the mentoring provided by Sally.

Further structure was provided through weekly meetings with other AEOs to plan and develop lessons offered through the gardens-based programme. Formal mentoring took place through meetings and weekly planning sessions. Gaynor interacted very closely with all staff at the GFEEC to complete specific tasks which she feels constituted the informal mentoring amongst peers. Sally describes the mentoring interaction with Gaynor as being a '... hands-off approach ... because of initiative and independence showed ...'.

Sven and Luzanne at the Edith Stephens Wetland Park



Sven completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental and Geographical Science followed by an Honours in Social Anthropology. He was appointed to an Environmental Conservation Officer

internship under the mentorship of Luzanne at the Edith Stephens Wetland Park where he focused on the socio-economic interface with conservation. Both Luzanne and Sven experienced this mentoring interaction as being one of co-learning, each bringing a different area of expertise into the interaction.

Luzanne recognized and drew on Sven as a team member, noting that ‘... he brought his sociology skills and understanding of community relationships to our team ... he is open to learning and also sharing ... he has contributed to the way we plan and report ... he has challenged the way we do things and this has contributed to growth ...’

Sven describes their mentoring interaction as ‘... fairly new to both of us ... not really sure what to do ... no formal mentoring ... we bounce ideas with each other ... the arrangement is rather tacit and not very deliberate and no set structure or formal process is followed ...’.

Neo at Flower Valley Conservation Trust

Neo was appointed to an internship with Flower Valley Conservation Trust while completing her National Diploma in Journalism at Tshwane University of Technology, to complete the required 1 year of experiential learning. Given that her studies were in classic communications with no exposure to the conservation sector or communications in this context, Neo was assigned 3 mentors. Lesley provided guidance and support in exploring the conservation sector as a whole, Roger provided for her needs as far as the specific Flower Valley conservation context goes and Ronel stepped in with guidance and support for communications, a field of expertise not held by the other 2. Neo refers to her team of mentors as the ‘... killer team ... all 100% experienced in their fields ...’.

Neo spent the first 5 months of her internship with Lesley at the Head Office of Flower Valley Conservation Trust in Bredasdorp. During this time her interactions with Ronel around the technicalities of communications was ongoing. To provide Neo with exposure to the sector as a whole and different partners working together, Neo accompanied Lesley to many meetings. Feeling that the small town of Bredasdorp is limited in exposure, Lesley arranged for Neo to be placed with a public relations firm in Cape Town for 1 month followed by another month with the C.A.P.E. Co-ordinating Unit at Kirstenbosch. Neo feels this provided exposure to various dimensions of the job which ‘... helps one to see if you are suited to it ...’. She spent the remainder of her internship at the Flower Valley Farm learning more about operations and approaches to conservation.

Neo speaks very highly of the dedication and commitment of her mentors, not only to the work they do, but similarly to her development and wellbeing.

Sabelo at Harmony Flats Nature Reserve



Sabelo qualified with a National Diploma in Nature Conservation and was appointed to the position of Site Manager at the Harmony Flats Conservation Site, managed by the City of Cape Town's Biodiversity Branch. Prior to this appointment he worked as a Field Ranger at Bontebok National Park for 1 year preceded by another year as a Conservation Facilitator with a skills development agency. Since Sabelo did not come into the position as a complete 'freshling', Roy as his line manager recognized interest, potential and enthusiasm for his development in the area of community engagement in conservation initiatives. Sabelo's case was therefore one of mentoring through management or supervision.

Because Sabelo's development was focused on community engagement in conservation initiatives, he was encouraged to participate in a year long course that would support the development and implementation of an appropriate programme, since he did not have the experience in the required depth. Whereas Roy played the role of mentor to enable, support and unlock opportunities for implementation in the workspace, in Sabelo's words '... Roy made things possible at work ... support for implementing the programme ... when support is not forthcoming he would recommend an alternative to provide support ... he always makes a plan ...'. Sindiswa provided guidance through learning and development of the programme in the course context.

Sabelo's mentoring was further complemented by Bongani, Roy's counterpart in a different geographic area. This mentoring interaction was set up to minimize the potential impact of tensions between Roy as manager and mentor at the same time. This is a different relationship to the other 2 interactions that focused on '... general stuff ... not mentoring specifically ...'. Sabelo felt that time constraints did not allow for the development of an '... established ... relationship with Bongani ...'.

Young conservators at the City of Cape Town



'... working in an urban context is ... fairly new ...' in the field of conservation. As the field of urban conservation grew in the City of Cape Town's Biodiversity Branch '... support with ... conservators in understanding and communicating with ... communities ... was needed ...'.

Conservators working in the urban conservation context of the City of Cape all qualified with a National Diploma in Nature Conservation, some advancing to a Bachelor of Technology in Nature Conservation. Though each of them came into these Urban Conservator positions with a fair amount of conservation experience - approximately 7 years – all of them were less confident in engaging urban communities in conservation initiatives. In response to '... no support ... we started a team gathering ...the purpose of the group was to ... discuss ... share and ... support'. '... from our own informal team gatherings ...' '... Cape Flats Nature came in as a partner ...' to provide support to the nature conservators in the work they do with communities.

Described as a Peer Learning Project, and facilitated through Cape Flats Nature, this offered conservators ‘... an opportunity to share ... experiences and knowledge through case studies ... and ... exposed us to the community aspects which was different and scary ...’. Further described as a form of facilitating ‘... learning in practice ...’ the Peer Learning Project used a case study methodology ‘... to assist in the capacity building of conservators ...’. Through documented case studies, conservators were encouraged to reflect on their practice and share understandings, challenges and insights in regular meetings, ‘... every Monday initially but now we meet every second month ...’.

Paula ‘... as the facilitator ...’ notes that ‘... we brought a lot of ourselves to the process ...’ for which ‘... you need the safe space ... you need to trust the people you work with ...’. All participants experienced this process positively which encouraged them ‘... to think out of the box ...’. This methodology of learning together is being taken up into individual work spaces: ‘... I have commissioned my staff to do case studies which is chosen strategically ... this has allowed us at the reserve to reflect and add what is missing in our work ... we have space to evaluate our work and see gaps and ways to move forward ... it creates a space for development ...’.

Rhett as a mentor / manager in Goukamma Nature Reserve

With approximately 30 years of experience in conservation management, Rhett has lost track of the number of students and young professionals he has mentored over the years at CapeNature. His approach to mentoring was shaped by his own mentor when he entered the organization as a student. He was encouraged to keep a diary / journal which is describes as ‘... a formative process ...’ that he really valued and sees this as ‘... a brilliant tool in the mentoring process ...’. Rhett showed an amazing commitment to mentoring young entrants into the conservation field, and despite many years of experience in mentoring constantly ‘... wanted to learn other ways of mentoring people and learn new skills ...’. Natalie and Deon are 2 conservators who have had the privilege of being mentored by Rhett as new entrants into the field of conservation.



Rhett describes himself as having ‘... strong ethics when it comes to work ... I teach by example ... I lead by being that example ...’. He notes that he was their supervisor and mentor and ‘... gave them different tasks that provided opportunities to learn ... they were exposed to specific work tasks which they had to learn as well as other things which I considered part of their holistic development as nature conservators ... such as audits, writing, presentations ... they were also thrown into the deep end so that they could learn to cope with different crisis situations ... I have a fairly relaxed way of mentoring but ensure that I am available if needed ...’.

Both Natalie and Deon speak highly of Rhett as their mentor, recognizing his immense dedication to supporting the development of young professionals, extensive experience and willingness to share his experience, focusing on the holistic development of individuals and his respect for everyone. In Deon’s words ‘... Rhett gave me the space to

grow and experience new things ... he is a hard, but a very fair person ... he knew his content and is highly experienced ... he treated me with respect ... taught me many life lessons and give advice ... was willing to share all he had ...'.

Learning in Communities of Conservation Stewardship and Extension Practice

'... the field of Stewardship is fairly new ...' and '... the staff needed training ... we needed to find a way to build that capacity ...'. A Peer Learning Network was set up as a forum '... where staff can share their knowledge and experience ...'. Since 2004 the forum has been convened annually and more recently has increased to a biannual meeting of CapeNature staff and others from partner organizations, such as South African National Parks and Department of Agriculture. This approach to supporting the improvement of conservation practice '... has turned into a network of learning ... reserve managers also wanted to come to the gatherings ... [it] has encouraged the formation of other groupings in the organization ... Community Conservation staff also meet in this manner ... at least quarterly ...'.



The network was co-ordinated by Kerry as the Stewardship Programme Co-ordinator and various participants in this process included Arnelle, Garth, Christina, Adri, Johan, Graham and Anita all of who experienced the network as '... provides connection opportunities for people ... a network for learning and sharing ...'. A list of topics and themes were identified by all participants and the programme for the 2 day interaction would be structured around these topics and themes which Arnelle feels was '... focused and relevant ...'. Christina notes that senior management would also be present in these sessions to share things from a different perspective which she found to be particularly useful. This process of peer learning '... was a spring board for other skills development opportunities ...' including '... opportunities for inter-province exchanges ...'. Kerry notes that '... peer learning provides one of the critical institutional training opportunities ... ' with the potential '... to change the culture of the organization ...'.

Learning and development amongst professionals and the practice of stewardship was complemented by a formally structured mentoring programme. Ben, with extensive experience in the agricultural context, supported professionals in engaging farmers around conservation objectives. For the 15 mentees with whom Ben worked, these were mutually beneficial interactions, in that they learnt from Ben about extension into the agricultural context and he learnt from them around the technical aspects of contracting for conservation. Christina says '... I involved Ben during my interactions with landowners ... I found his inputs and presence to be useful during these visits ... he would participate in the negotiations and afterward give me feedback on how I did ...'. Adri and Johan note that '... the steps of negotiation were good to learn ... Ben did this well ... we in turn exposed him to some of the technical information around contracts ...'.

A third complementary aspect of learning and development for stewardship and extension is a professional development opportunity made available through a structured course with a workplace-based learning orientation. Christina says ‘... the processes provided different perspectives looking at the things from different angles ...’.

These 3 learning engagements appear to have worked well to strengthen the capacity of the stewardship and extension professionals individually and their practice collectively, evident in ‘... the best extension team has been developed through this process and their skills and experience are now in high demand ...’.

Collegial interactions in the Boland Area of CapeNature

Dian manages the Boland Area of CapeNature, which consists of 4 reserves, 1 additional office and 75 staff members, 15 of who report directly to him, including 12 managers. Dian notes that there has always been ‘... a culture of working together and supporting the work of others ...’. There is an emphasis in the area to ‘... to build a strong team ... managers are wanting to learn more ... to use all opportunity to develop staff and self ... staff are keen to learn ...’.



Dian says that staff stability in the area is fairly constant which supports the development of strong collegial relationships, ‘... there is great significance in working together over time ...’. Over time staff have been supported in career development and these individuals in turn work with younger professionals joining the organization. Arnelle for example, worked in a reserve management context and was mentored by Deon, who was previously mentored by Rhett in another area. When she moved into Conservation Services, she worked more closely with Dian and her new function was complemented by her reserve management experience. Despite her career move, through consultation with 2 managers Arnelle agreed to mentor some of the ‘... 75 Field Rangers [who] need to develop capacity in the reserve management context. Arnelle was joined by another conservation services staff member described by Dian as ‘... both strong individuals ...’. ‘... Hermien came in and worked to support them and learnt the ropes through this ...’. Garth and Arnelle also supported Leandi and Christina based in another office. Dian says that ‘... because they are in the same area they work to support each other ... they avail themselves to give advice and the others often called to raise and discuss issues ...’. Christina values the opportunity to ‘... be able to call on reserve staff for support and getting them more involved in stewardship ...’.

Dian’s approach is to use all management meetings as opportunities for reflecting together, learning and growing together as professionals around their practice of conservation. Monthly management meetings are convened to discuss strategic management issues and ‘... junior staff are invited to these meetings ...’. Weekly meetings between managers and their respective staff ‘... translates monthly meetings down ...’.

Team building is emphasized in the area through ‘... ongoing interactions with staff ... talk to staff on site visits, ongoing communication, supportive base for working together as a team and work with what people have and their interests ...’.

Learning through team work at SANPark’s Cape Research Centre



Zishaam completed a Bachelor of Science Honours degree and after a 2 year internship with the City of Cape Town joined the Cape Research Centre of SANParks. Melodie was assigned to Zishaam as a key mentor and he is ‘... responsible for the information management systems which covers the population of species information ...’. He interacts closely with other staff members at the centre as ‘... he needs to assist other staff and therefore needs a basic understanding of what they do and how they do it ..’.

When recruited the intention was to provide him with an opportunity to strengthen his information technology skills along with experience in fieldwork. Melodie however realized that Zishaam ‘... has a specialized skill ...’ in information technology and ‘... he is valuable to the organization for his skills ...’. They agreed to shift the focus of the internship to information technology and supporting the center and colleagues in this area of expertise and Zishaam is ‘... compiling species lists which are critical for the organization ...’.

Melodie says ‘... his outputs is task based ... ’ and she ‘... created deliberate exposure to different jobs within our work context to help him understand the organization and what his colleagues needs to do ...’. He regularly accompanies staff members on fieldtrips and he and Melodie ‘... meet on a weekly basis ...’ to ‘... report on what has been done and what is still outstanding ...’and ‘... have after event discussions to place things in context ... ’.

2. What is mentoring?

The term 'mentoring' has its origins in Greek mythology where Odysseus, in preparing to go off to war, is said to have entrusted his home and the well being and education of his son to a friend, called Mentor. Mentoring is generally understood as passing on wisdom and knowledge from a mature and experienced person to a younger, less experienced individual.

Words typically associated with mentoring include lead, instruct, guide, coach, advise, teach, counsel, amongst others. Mentors typically fill one or more of these roles at some time during the mentoring interaction. Depending on the level of experience of the mentor and / or mentee, the aim of the mentoring interaction, the task at hand, the relationship between mentor and mentee, the workplace context etc. a collective of all or some of the above make up the mentoring interaction. Mentors seek to guide and support the development of the mentee through various work related processes. Some of these processes are more instructive and others more flexible in providing opportunity for the mentee to grow within themselves and in their chosen career path.

Defined in our modern context, mentoring in the workplace is ...

*... a **developmental relationship**, focused on the **professional practice** of the mentee to increase and **strengthen competence** through support, guidance and providing appropriate **opportunities for personal, professional and career growth and development** ...*

... which highlights a few key aspects that should define the mentoring interaction:

developmental in nature

Mentoring is synonymous with growth and development. It implies personal and professional growth of an individual supported by another or group of people. Mentoring is more than simply the relationship between mentor and mentee. It requires purposeful processes and interactions through which the development of the mentee, and at times the mentor too, is enabled. Key therefore in thinking about mentoring is the *development* of professionals for stronger work practices.

The intention in the establishment of the conservation stewardship peer learning network was to develop and improve conservation stewardship practices amongst professionals and organizations working together in the

C.A.P.E. programme and Kerry says that through this process ‘... the best extension team has been developed ... and their skills and experience is now in high demand ...’.

Rhett’s approach to mentoring was to give his mentees ‘... many different tasks which provided them with opportunities to learn different things ...’.

Charl says that ‘... I created opportunities for experiential learning and involved Jeff in all aspects and levels of work ... he was given opportunities to write proceedings of meetings, organize information and statistical data, co-present a paper ... deliberate learning and implementation activities ...’.

relationships of guidance, support and trust

Traditionally mentoring is thought of as a one-on-one relationship between a single mentor and single mentee. In many of our organizations mentoring needs are often broad and diverse and a single mentor rarely has the experience to meet this breadth and diversity. This is almost always coupled to limited mentoring capacity, both in terms of the number of people and their collective experience. In addition, much of our work is characterized by innovation and change, further challenging our mentoring capacity. In response we need creative and innovative ways of stretching our mentoring capacity. The stories of mentoring offered as an introduction reflects a range of alternative mentoring relationships that respond to some of these challenges.

Conservation stewardship is a newer and evolving approach to conservation. It aims to work with various stakeholder groups in different contexts towards defined conservation objectives. In CapeNature most professionals have a sound background and experience in conservation. Their work in stewardship is mainly in the agricultural context and requires ongoing engagement with farmers. Most stewardship professionals are less familiar with this context. To support the development and strengthening of stewardship practices in the agricultural landscape in CapeNature, Ben was appointed as a mentor to 15 professionals. He has extensive experience in agricultural extension gained through many years with the provincial Department of Agriculture. Whereas Ben’s experience in conservation was limited, he provided valuable guidance and support to these 15 mentees in understanding and engaging with landowners in the agricultural context.

Mentoring relationships often require more experienced mentors working with less experienced, mentees. This approach can be useful in showing the mentee the ropes. This might however also be limiting in a work environment requiring rapid change in work practices. In this case the ‘been there done that’ mentor could potentially stifle development for change. This environment would demand a different kind of mentor. A mentor prepared to critically engage

with traditional practices and encourage the mentee similarly to explore new and innovative work practices.

Charl in mentoring Jeff in the changing landscape of land-use planning and decision making ‘... insisted that I read as much information about the field as possible ... he swamped me with readings ... after 6 weeks of close mentoring he gave me space to explore on my own ...’

Mentees should ideally develop within themselves, and are able to do so dependent on opportunities provided. They should be allowed to explore new and creative ways of thinking about and doing their work. For a less experienced and less confident professional this can be most effective in safe and secure spaces. This implies a certain measure of trust in the relationship between mentor and mentee. The mentee should be confident in the opportunities created, the guidance and support provided for growth by the mentor. The mentor should also then be confident that the mentee optimally and professionally uses the opportunity, guidance and support provided. This implied relationship of trust is perhaps evident in the many descriptions of mentors in positions of trust ‘... trusted friend, counselor, teacher ... wise and trusted guide and advisor ... teacher and trusted counselor ...’

Neo commenting on Lesley’s mentoring style says ‘... her way of mentoring was ‘holistic’ not only concentrating on my work but also how my personal life was going ... this was great for me as it made me open up more to her and more free to tell her my honest opinion and ideas ...’

Mutually beneficial opportunities for development

Mentoring can be mutually beneficial to both the mentor and mentee and has the potential to support growth and development of both. It should be seen as a learning interaction with all participants being open to learning in diverse ways.

In reflecting on his own role as mentor Charl says that ‘... mentoring in the workplace should take place where there will be mutual value ... where ... mentee and mentor ... can jointly develop and grow ... a mentor must grow and be interested ... both must learn and find out together ...’.

Sindiswa writes that Sabelo ‘... challenged me a lot ... he always found a reason to challenge me with regards to advice or comments that I had given him ... he brought wild energy and kept me on my toes most of the time ... although a bit of an irritation sometimes, I found this sort of interaction most useful for my self-confidence ... I was encouraged to speak up more and stick to my guns where there was a need for it ... and I have been carrying this new attitude with me ever since ... interactions with Sabelo strengthened my competence with the course and

content ... it increased my experience and improved my confidence ... most people on the course were older than I am ... as time passed I became more confident in supporting them ...'.

Luzanne writes that Sven '... brought his sociology skills and understanding of community relationships to our team ...he is open to learning and also to sharing ... he has contributed to the way we ... plan things ... he has challenged the way we do things and this has contributed to the growth of our reserve ...'

Responsiveness

Needs in different mentoring interactions require appropriate responses. In some cases content-based experience is critical, for example in environmental management, land-use planning, conservation management, amongst others. In others, contextual experience is more important, for example to support an orientation to and understanding of particular contexts. Others might require a focus on interpersonal skills to support the work done. This requires a clear assessment of the developmental needs of the mentee and designing a mentoring interaction that responds effectively to these needs. Some key considerations include the experience of the mentor, the developmental needs of the mentee, background and experience of the mentee, work contexts and trends and patterns in work practices, amongst others.

5 months into the internship Lesley felt that the small town context of Bredasdorp limited Neo's exposure to the real world context of communications and public relations. Lesley arranged for Neo to be placed with a public relations firm outside of the conservation context for 1 month as well as the C.A.P.E. Co-ordinating Unit at Kirstenbosch for further exposure.

The focus of Zishaam's internship shifted after 3 months in recognizing his skills and interest in information technology and similarly attempting to meet this pressing need for support in the organization.

Mentoring as a manager

In our resource constrained environment most managers are mentors as well. Approaches to management and mentoring however differ and would require the manager / mentor and mentee to wear different hats.

Mentors are primarily concerned with the growth and development of the mentee. The job at hand is considered in as far as it guides and supports the development of the mentee. Mentors are described by Mervold (1997) as '... provid[ing] the magic that allows [mentees] to enter the darkness, a talisman to protect [them] from evil spells, a gem of wise advise, a map or

sometimes simply courage ...'. Mentors in essence serve the developmental needs and interests of the mentee.

Managers on the other hand are more concerned with the job at hand and required deliverables. Their position requires that they must be more concerned with achieving the institutions objectives. They sometimes need to call on their mentees to step up to the plate to deliver on set objectives, shifting the mentees developmental needs into second place.

Rhett mentored Natalie and Deon in a supervisory capacity and notes that '... mentees need to be kept motivated and given work challenges ... this draws out their abilities ...'.

Management and mentoring objectives are not always the same and filling both roles could potentially cause tension in the mentoring relationship. Since resource constraints are unlikely to offer the luxury of separating these roles to different individuals, the mentor-manager needs to be creative in the way they manage subordinates to meet both mentoring and management objectives.

In the City of Cape Town's Biodiversity Branch, Bongani and Roy set up mentoring relationships that minimized the potential tension between the role of manager and mentor. Both are Area Managers managing staff with the same key performance areas. Bongani mentored staff in Roy's management area and Roy mentored staff in Bongani's management area. Both felt this worked well for staff being mentored by one and managed by the other.

In summary

Mentoring is synonymous with development. Mentoring interactions could be focused on the professional development of the individual, the development of a community around specific or general conservation practices and the development of an organization and its capacity to deliver on its conservation mandate. Mentoring interactions, whether deliberate or coincidental, has developmental outcomes for the mentor, either in exposure to different dimensions of the broader scope of work or in strengthening mentoring capacity, at an individual, practice and organizational level.

Mentoring is made up of relationships and interactions, between 2 or more people. All positive mentoring experiences reflect good interpersonal engagements, made up of mutual trust and respect. These seem to be essential ingredients to an effective and positive mentoring experience.

3. Purposes of mentoring

Mentoring is often approached from a point of deficiency. Individuals, practices and / or institutions are seen to be lacking and mentoring is seen as a way of 'plugging the gap'. This is appropriate in some cases however trends in thinking about and implementing mentoring interactions reflects shifts from the deficiency to the developmental model.

Purposes that underpin a developmental approach to mentoring include:

Mentoring to strengthen competence in key work areas is critical in the context of changing work practices.

Paula says that '... working in an urban context is a fairly new field ... the City needed support with their conservators in understanding and communicating with communities ... peer learning through case studies ... was initiated as a means to assist in the capacity building of conservators ...'.

Neo took up the position as an intern while still in training in communications. Ronel was appointed specifically to '... provide technical support based on communications and PR expertise ...' in the conservation context that Neo worked.

Patricia came into CapeNature with a particular interest in community conservation and working with the Rastafarians who harvest indigenous flora from the reserves. At the time this was an increasing and evolving field of work in CapeNature. In her position as Field Ranger, Deon and Arnelle were key in providing her with support as she moved into this area of work. Deon as her line manager provided the reserve management expertise and Arnelle having moved from reserve management into conservation services, provided guidance in both areas. Patricia has moved into another organizational context and says that she still calls on Arnelle's guidance and support in her new position as Community Conservation Officer at Paarl Mountain Reserve.

Mentoring to support a transition from learning to work is common in many institutions. There is often a weak link between learning in higher education and the real world of work. Mentoring is highly effective in providing new entrants with an introduction to the authentic work contexts. It similarly has the potential to support new entrants in exploring the field and finding their personal niche.

Jeff's experience with Charl exposed '... opportunities for myself in this conservation field ... the experience has influenced my choice of career ...'.

In accompanying Lesley to as many meetings as possible through her internship at Flower Valley Conservation Trust exposed Neo to the field of conservation, one she had not been familiar with before entering into the internship. She was also, through the programme of rotation exposed to conservation and communications in different organizational contexts. Neo says '... I was very naïve about the sector ... I had visions of bright lights and television journalism, but ... this experience has shaped my career in conservation ...'.

Mentoring for career development is shaped by a future's perspective, focusing on the job to come and the longer term career development of an individual.

Roy recognized Sabelo's keen interest in engaging communities in conservation initiatives. He supported Sabelo's participation in the Rhodes University / Gold Fields Certificate Course in Environmental Education. Through regular discussions Roy guided and supported Sabelo in developing a vision for involving the surrounding communities in conservation initiatives at the reserve and unlocking opportunity to implement his ideas and develop in this direction.

Mentoring for strengthened practice seems to be increasing in scope and appear to develop in response to the need for support in changing conservation practices.

In CapeNature, the peer learning network was initiated to strengthen the practice of conservation stewardship and support new and developing individuals in finding their way into the field of conservation stewardship.

In the City of Cape Town, the peer learning group facilitated by Paula was initiated to strengthen conservation practices at the interface with complex socio-economic spaces in the urban context of Cape Town. Also established out of need, through sharing and learning young conservators feel they grew in strengthened community based conservation practices.

Mentoring for career progression, succession planning and talent management are common practices in organizations. Individuals seen to have high potential are identified for accelerated career progression (vertical mobility) at times being groomed through succession planning in the event of retirement or departure of a more experienced individual. These approaches are normally prompted in the interest of strengthening the institution of the future.

Zishaam was seen to have a particular strong area of expertise in information technology, which corresponded to the need of the research centre. He was mentored in this field of expertise to meet the growing need of the organization.

Showing strength is the area of land use planning, Jeff's internship led him into a contract position with SANBI as the Land Use Planning Programme Co-ordinator of the C.A.P.E. Programme, from where he was seconded to the

Department of Economic Affairs and Development Planning, to support land use planners in taking into consideration biodiversity priorities in development decisions made. In a relatively short space of time Jeff was appointed to the position of National Environmental Assessment Manager at SANBI.

In summary

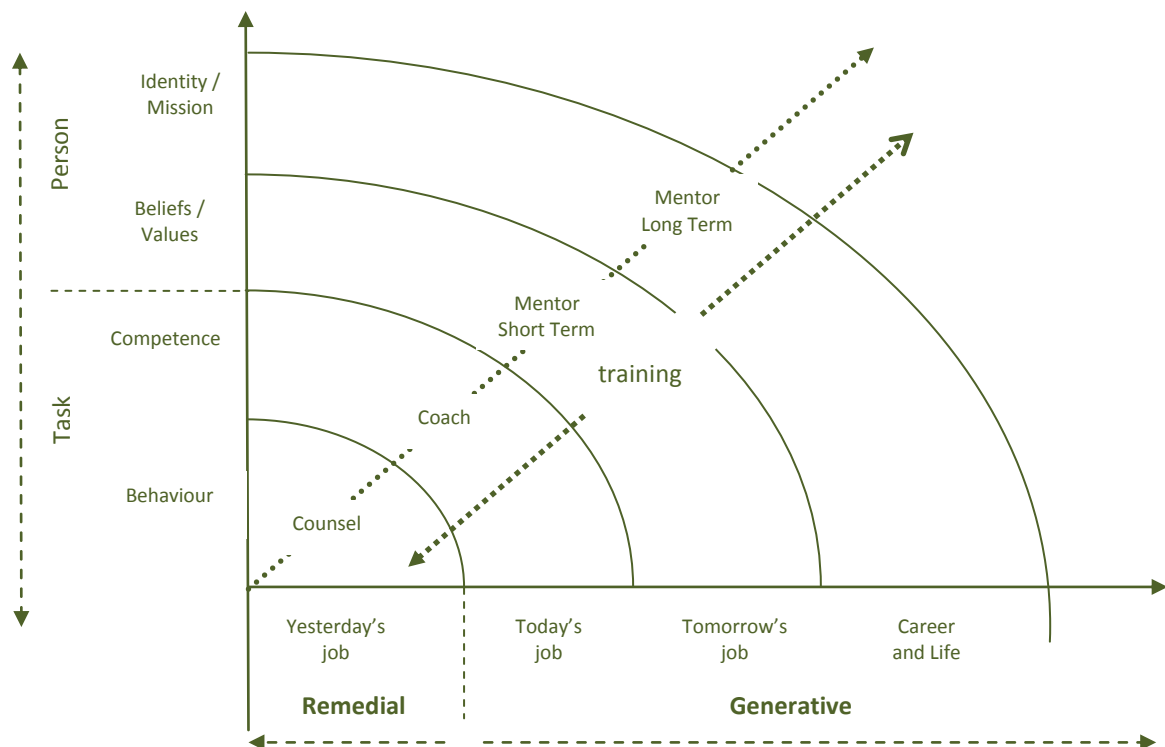
As reflected above, mentoring has various specific purposes in the bigger context of supporting development and growth. It is critical to define this purpose and the above section might provide you with a framework to defining this purpose. You might however also like to add to this of purposes of mentoring.

Either way, it is critical to clearly define the purpose of mentoring as this comes to define the approach used in supporting the development of the intern.

4. Approaches to mentoring

Questions are often asked about the difference in mentoring, coaching, counseling and training and what is appropriate to use and when. Mentoring can be seen as a collective of all of these approaches used to address different needs at different times in the mentoring interaction.

The diagram below shows a continuum of mentoring over the long term with specific interventions of counseling, coaching and training at different times to address specific needs in the pathway of growth and development. This is not meant to suggest a time line or a linear relationship between these interventions, that starts with counseling and coaching and moves on to training and mentoring but rather aims to show the focus of interventions across the longer term mentoring interaction. Coaching, for example, might be appropriate during an induction into the mentoring relationship, but can also be revisited as circumstances in the job changes and the need arises, even in the longer term.



Counseling

involves reflection on a job already done and draws on insights gained to improve practice. The focus in counseling is on behavior and / or competence displayed in yesterday's job. Counseling is generally seen as remedial in nature, but could also be approached as a proactive way

of improving practice.

Ben's approach in working with the Stewardship professionals in CapeNature was to accompany and observe their engagement with landowners on site visits. After these visits he would engage them in reflexive conversations on the strengths and limitations of their interactions and explore ways in which to improve these interactions in future. This is an example of counseling in the broader mentoring context.

Coaching

focuses on the current job and is more instructive in nature. It generally focuses on competence required in today's job and could take the form of demonstration, modeling, explaining expected levels of competence required for the job.

Ronel's approach with Neo in Flower Valley Conservation Trust was to assess and provide critical comment on communication pieces written, prior to its release. Ronel provided guidance on ways in which Neo could improve her writing from a communications perspective. This is a way of coaching in the broader context of mentoring.

Mentoring short term

has its focus on a more immediate goal of preparing an individual for tomorrow's job. Whereas counseling and coaching focuses more on the task at hand, mentoring goes broader to focus on the person and their development as well. Mentoring in the short term draws on reflection on past work (counseling) and existing competence and extends to include a focus on values and beliefs that would better prepare the mentee for taking up a particular position. Short term mentoring would be more definitive in terms of its intention.

Jeff was initially mentored by Charl in the Botanical Society (BotSoc) in strengthened land-use planning and decision-making. After Jeff's internship he was appointed to SANBI's C.A.P.E. Bioregional Programme as the Land-Use Programme Advisor. Shortly after he was seconded from SANBI to the Western Cape Department of Economic Affairs and Development Planning where he worked to guide and support Land-Use Planners in development decisions. This mentorship was very directly focused on Land Use Planning and preparation to follow a particular career stream. It included teaching, informal training, coaching and counseling at various periods during the full mentoring

interaction.

**Mentoring
long term**

With a futures focus, mentoring in the long term is framed within the career and life of the individual. Mentoring is towards grounding the individual in experience that would allow growth and development within a particular career field.

Post the mentoring interaction with BotSoc, Jeff continued to interact with Charl on a less formal basis. Through the mentoring interaction the reading with which Charl ‘... swamped ...’ Jeff ‘... tremendously increased my knowledge of the field ...’. Though not necessarily intentional, Charl was preparing Jeff for a longer term career in land-use planning. Four years after his internship with BotSoc Jeff was appointed to National Environmental Management Co-ordinator in SANBI and notes that the BotSoc internship played a significant role in defining his longer term career path.

Rhett mentored Natalie for a period of 1 year at CapeNature’s Goukamma Nature Reserve. He says ‘... Natalie had to learn how to use a chainsaw which was not really needed for her immediate work ... she was exposed to specific work tasks which she had to learn as well as other things which I considered a part of her holistic development as a nature conservator ...’.

Roy describes the mentoring relationship as focused ‘... beyond the professional to the personal as well ... look at the person’s career as a whole and where they are headed , not just at the job at hand ...’.

Rhett says that ‘... mentoring continues with students long after they have qualified and moved on in their careers ...’. Natalie talks of her mentoring with Rhett as ‘... not focusing on a particular field but acquiring a broader knowledge on all conservation issues ...’.

Training

generally teaches a specific skill and improves levels of proficiency in an area of work. Much training takes place off site and is often decontextualized resulting in a disjuncture between what is taught and learnt and its application in the workplace. Mentoring becomes critical in supporting an application of training in the real work context.

In relation to the diagram above, training can take place at any point along the central axis, as a part of counseling, coaching, preparing a mentee for the next level of advancement in their career or to support growth within a particular career path.

Training like mentoring is traditionally approached from a point of deficiency. It too can be approached more proactively and seen as a way of strengthening and growing existing competence, rather than only responding to a lack of competence amongst professionals.

The environmental education course that Sabelo participated in has a strong workplace-based learning orientation. It provided the space for him to develop a programme for involving surrounding communities in conserving the Harmony Flats. He was supported in the course by presenters who provided theoretical perspectives to guide the development of his ideas and open his thinking to new and different ways of working with people in conservation. He was further supported by his course tutor, Sindiswa, who provided him with critical comment and guidance as his ideas developed and were implemented through the course assignment work. In the work context, Roy as his manager / mentor was instrumental in supporting Sabelo to implement his developing ideas with the communities he worked with.

In summary

Mentoring at any point in time encompasses some or all of the above. This is usually defined by the experience and orientation of the mentor, the mentee's development needs and aspirations, the key work areas, the institutional mandates, strategies and programmes, opportunities available for development, amongst many other factors that shape a mentoring interaction.

Ideally a development plan will take these various learning interventions into consideration to support the holistic growth of a mentee. Integrating a suite of strategies also introduces variety into the mentoring interaction and allows the mentee to learn different things in different ways and potentially in different contexts too.

5. Mentors and Mentees

Mentoring is based on relationships and interactions between two or more people. Whereas there are no specific criteria for creating a good mentoring relationship, some personal attributes, values, beliefs and competences does make for more effective mentoring interactions.

The mentor

Through a review of different mentoring interactions in the C.A.P.E. Capacity Development Programme, interviewees note the following key personal and professional attributes of their mentors to which they ascribe the effectiveness of the interaction.

subject / content expertise and experience

In the work context, mentoring focuses on the professional development of individuals. This makes subject / content expertise and experience critical in an effective mentoring interaction. All mentees who have had a positive mentoring experience see their mentors as role models from whom they can learn a lot. The expertise and experience of the mentor similarly instills confidence in the mentee and makes for more effective learning.

Sabelo says that ‘... I was always confident with the guidance I received from Sindiswa ...’ in their interactions around the development and implementation of a community-based training programme.

Jeff similarly notes that Charl is ‘... an expert in his field ... much of my viewpoints have been shaped by Charl ...’.

Deon says that Rhett ‘... has a lot of experience and this is important in learning ...’.

Natalie notes the most significant thing in her mentoring process as ‘... having the opportunity to learn from someone who has been in the conservation field for many years ...’.

availability

All mentees note the significance in the availability of their mentors to guide, comment on and support ideas and actions. This is described by all mentees as an open door approach that helped them to access their mentors when needed.

In extremely busy schedules, typical of our work environments, some mentors arranged regular and frequent meeting times to allow this availability.

Sabelo says, ' ... Roy was always available to listen, give guidance and support'.

Patricia, mentored by Deon in the Lemietberg Nature Reserve says that Deon is '... a very good listener and in spite of his very busy schedule he gives his full attention to help others ...'.

Charl and Jeff met weekly on a Monday, with specific tasks and activities defined and reflection on the week that provided for availability in a more structured way.

space to think and try out new things

Positive mentoring interactions appear to be shaped by mentors giving mentees the space to grow with their own ideas and ways of doing things. Mentors use the term 'throwing them in at the deep end', while maintaining a close enough presence to provide a safety net. Mentees appear to have great appreciation for this approach.

Luzanne says that she encouraged Sven to think critically and share his opinions. She also allowed him the space to '... swim in the deep end ... to learn ... and experience things for himself'.

Deon had Rhett as a mentor for 6 years and says '... he threw me in at the deep end but provided a support net if I so required ... he did not micro-manage ...'.

Jeff says Charl '... allowed me room to grow and explore ... after 6 weeks of close mentoring he gave me space to explore on my own ...'.

Roy says that he allowed Sabelo the 'flexibility and openness to engage with me ... and the latitude to experiment ... allow people the freedom to push boundaries ... free to engage with something even if contrary to mainstream ... '. Sabelo '... has been allowed the freedom to express himself and experiment his ideas with some guidance ... not force my own views down on him ... my role was to provide a safety net as he innovates and tries out new things ...'.

Deon says that '... Rhett gave me the space to grow and experience new things ... '.

recognized for making a real and valuable contribution

Many mentees speak positively of being recognized for making a real and meaningful contribution to the work of the organization.

Jeff says '... I was surprised at how much I was asked for my opinion and that I was trusted for it'.

Neo says that she '... had no experience and was trusted to do things ... my friends from tech. experienced mentoring very negatively, saying they were given insignificant and unnecessary tasks ... I was given the space to do real things as required and made a contribution to the institution ...' and '... what I brought to the job mattered ... too ...'.

Deon and Natalie both note the value in '... being treated like a staff member ...'. Deon says '...Rhett did not make me feel like a student but allowed me to feel like a colleague ... this was really valuable as it gave me the freedom and space to explore and also to share my thinking and ideas about things ...'.

safe space for reflection

For many mentees it seemed significant for them to discuss with their mentors in an ongoing way and reflect on their work to explore better ways of doing their work. Meetings for review and assessment of activities and further development seem to be a useful way to build structured time for reflection and development of ideas and practice.

Sindiswa feels that Sabelo's ideas were sometimes too big and vague and that through '... a safe space for disagreement and debate ...' she was able to help him '... tone down his big ideas and focus on what he wanted to do practically ...'.

The weekly meeting between Jeff and Charl was for planning and reviewing.

The young conservators in the City of Cape Town initially met weekly which has over time been reduced to once every 2 months. Through the process they were '... encouraged not to be afraid ... to make mistakes ... and to learn from these ... the case study methodology is based on a phased level of support and is reduced as the conservators grow in skills and experience ... '.

good listener

Most mentees list one of the key attributes of their mentors as being the availability to listen and advise.

Sabelo says of Roy: '... he is a good listener, supportive ...'.

Paula says in her role of mentoring the City of Cape Town's young conservators she was required to make a '... real effort to listen and not to judge ... we brought a lot of ourselves to the process ...'.

support and exposure

Some mentees note the significance of having support in the form of resources and time to do and try out different things. This includes providing exposure to understand the sector, institutions and practices in which they work.

During her internship with Flower Valley Conservation Trust, Neo attended all meetings with Lesley to provide her with exposure to the Biodiversity sector, institutions, role players and initiatives. Neo says that this experience shaped her career choice and she '... will stay in conservation even though communications in this context is quite difficult ...'.

Sabelo says that '... Roy provided support for doing the course work and implementing the programme ... making resources available and time to do the course ... '.

Professionalism

All mentees note the professionalism of their mentors as most significant. These mentors have become key role models in their careers who lead by example.

Sven says that Luzanne '... sets a good example of how one needs to work together ...'.

Rhett says that he '... tr[ies] to teach by example ... I lead by being that example ...'.

Neo says her mentors '... professionally all ... knew their field ... were all highly professional, highly dedicated and cared about me as well as the job at hand ... what I brought to the job mattered ...'.

the mentee

Mentors interviewed were unanimous in their views of what made the mentoring interaction a positive experience for themselves and their mentees. These include:

committed to learning

Mentoring requires an equal commitment from the mentee to learning and being guided by the mentor.

Jeff thinks the effectiveness of his mentoring interaction was the result of '... dual commitment from mentee and mentor to the process of learning and mutual respect ...'.

Sally who mentored Gaynor at the Gold Fields Environmental Education Centre at Kirstenbosch describes her as having '... a hunger for knowledge ... easy to work with and prepared to learn ... quick of mind ... eagerness, initiative and ability to commit ...'.

Paula describes the nature conservators of the City of Cape Town as bringing '... an incredible ability to engage and their own work ... honesty, openness, laughter ... they came to all meetings ...'.

an openness to learning

Openness to learning is a common feature that all mentors recognize makes for good interaction and significant growth

and development in the mentoring interaction.

Charl describes Jeff as having an '... eagerness to learn ...the capacity to learn quickly ... an easy student ... positive and open to learning ...'.

Sabelo reflects on his own role in the mentoring interaction and notes that he brought in his '... own ideas ... however open to learning ... allowed people to provide critical inputs and take these into consideration as I went along ...'.

Melodie describes Zishaam as being '... easy to manage ... wants to learn ... enthusiastic ...'.

Gaynor describes herself in the mentoring interaction as having an '... openness to ideas and experiences ... willingness to give and not just to receive ...'.

Enthusiasm and energy

Enthusiasm and energy are also key features, sometimes called by different names, cited by mentors that made their interactions with mentees a positive one.

Roy describes Sabelo as bringing into the mentoring relationship '... energy, enthusiasm, willingness to try out different ideas ... comes across very positive and enthusiastic ... he came into the job with a particular interest in extension and training ...' and used the opportunity to develop further in this field.

flexibility

Mentees are sometimes required to work with more than one mentor, making it necessary to adapt their interactions from one to the other. They might be required to engage with a range of different tasks, different in nature and through interaction with a number of different people in a unit or department, across units and departments and possibly across institutions. Flexibility and adaptability are key features that might support their interactions at multiple levels as they learn and grow.

Neo says she brought into the relationship flexibility. '... I was naïve about the sector which made me eager and open to learn ... very keen to learn ... I really wanted it to work ... was grateful for the opportunity and wanted to make the best of the opportunity'. Lesley reiterates this noting that '... her strength is her adaptability ... she was a city girl who moved to the small town of Bredasdorp and made the most of the opportunity ...'

In summary

Mentoring irrespective of the form it takes is about individual's interactions. Inevitably personalities of these individuals come into the mentoring interaction as well. These personal attributes might provide some insight into the expectations that both mentors and mentees have and might shape either engagement in the mentoring interaction. It also provides a framework for shaping better mentors and mentees in professional spaces.

6. Forms of mentoring

Most of us will agree that our mentoring needs far outweigh our institutional capacity to meet these needs, severely tipping the scale at the best of times. This requires us to be more creative about how we mentor to support professional growth and development and strengthening practices and institutions. Whereas the traditional approach to one-on-one mentoring is ideal, circumstances might require alternative approaches, such as group mentoring, peer mentoring, mentoring in a network of mentors, contracted mentors, mentoring supported through structured learning, amongst many other innovations in the field.

Before turning to the various forms of mentoring, we reflect briefly on some of the factors likely to shape approaches used. These factors include:

- The purpose of the mentoring interaction (see part 3);
- Availability of mentors inside and outside the organization, field and / or sector;
- Background and experience of mentors inside and outside the organization, field and / or sector;
- Professional development needs of mentees, individually and collectively;
- Professional requirements in the field of work, relative to institutional mandates, sector trends, etc.;
- Relationships to other institutions, fields and sectors.

This provides a list of some considerations shaping the mentoring interaction. You might have some additional considerations that might shape mentoring in your particular work context. It is useful to reflect on these prior to considering a form of mentoring that might work best for you and your colleagues as mentors and some of the mentees with whom you work.

One-on-one mentoring

Mentors and mentees in a one-on-one mentoring relationship enjoy the luxury of focus and individual attention. This approach to mentoring appears to be more common in smaller institutions, like some of our NGO partners where smaller staff complements make this possible. Examples of this approach to mentoring are evident in Luzanne and Sven's case, Jeff and Charl and Gaynor and Sally, amongst others. In most of our bigger institutions this approach seems

less feasible, given larger staff complements, the scope of need and available mentoring capacity.

Key features of the one-one-one mentoring interaction include:

- Mentoring could be focused on a specific and key work area like land-use planning decision making or environmental education in the school context.

Jeff says '... the exposure at Botsoc has influenced my choice of career ... I completely changed my career path ...'.

Gaynor says '... I gained practical work experience ... decided to study in the field of environmental education ...'.

Luzanne '... together with Sven ... developed a plan which focused on what he needed ... his expectations ... what I need to expose him to and what he wanted to learn ...'.

- Ongoing, regular and frequent engagements are possible around this key work area;

Jeff and Charl '... had a planning and review meeting every Monday ...'.

Gaynor says '... we had weekly planning and I had to balance my work and studies ...'.

- It allows the mentor and mentee to get to know each other really well over time.

Charl says '... this relationship was a highlight for me ... a mentor must be aware of the student's background and history ... the approach attended to the personal relationship before the professional relationship ...'.

Gaynor and Sally '... developed a relationship during the first year that she was an AEO ...'.

Sven describes Luzanne as a '... very calm and collected person ...' who '... connects at a personal level ...'.

- Interactions could be specifically focused on the career development of individuals;

Sally '... as a mentor ... plans mentoring based on the needs of the individual intern ...'. Gaynor reiterates this personal focus in *'... I had one-on-one mentoring attention and it was good ...'.*

Sven says that he and Luzanne '... co-designed my tasks as she was not really sure what exactly I required for my own growth ... I had to co-develop it to ensure that my own needs are met in this internship ...'.

- Strategies can be easily adapted relative to the specific developmental needs of the mentee and the availability of the mentor. Charl says:

'... where the mentoring falls flat is where things are rigidly established ... I continually revised how to relate to Jeff ... the approach never gave Jeff any reason to feel alienated ... '.

Luzanne says that after Sven had been with them for 6 months '... we changed his KPAs so that he is also involved in conservation practices ...'.

- Mentees could be assigned specific tasks, through for example homework assignments with the space for review and critical comment from which to learn and grow;

Gaynor '... had opportunities to prepare for lessons and to teach it ... '.

Some of the tasks given to Jeff included writing proceedings of meetings and workshops, organizing information and statistical data and co-presenting a paper. He received specific homework tasks supporting learning and growth, a lot structured around the volumes of reading he was given.

- Close interactions allow for close monitoring and assessment of tasks, development and growth.

Regular weekly meetings between Jeff and Charl helped to reflect on and assess work activities of the past week and plan learning opportunities for the following week. .

- The effectiveness of the mentoring interaction is highly dependent on the personalities of the mentor and mentee and how these work together.
- The mentor has the potential for 'reinventing' or 'cloning' themselves, without critical input from others.
- At an institutional level this form of mentoring can be resource intensive, using mentoring capacity for the benefit of only one individual.

Network of mentors

In some multi-disciplinary fields, multiple mentors are required to support the development of mentees. For example, Biodiversity Information Management requires professionals with proficiency and competence in Information Technology as well as Biodiversity Conservation. Few universities allow for undergraduate studies that integrate these disciplines. Environmental Education is another field that requires competence in 2 distinct disciplines, one being

environmental management and conservation and the other education, training and development. Some universities respond to this need, but only at a post-graduate level. Students training in communications are rarely exposed to environment and conservation in their undergraduate studies. In the changing context of environment and conservation, most professionals are required to work in social spaces, not often a focus of pre-service training. In these and other cases a network of mentors might be required to address the multi-disciplinary needs of mentees, their practice and institutional needs.

Key features of interacting with a network of mentors include:

- The mentee benefits from a range of diverse expertise, all contributing to his / her broader career development.

Neo says '... each mentor brought their own experience ... all different and together they were good ... professionally all of them knew their field and were able to guide me ... all highly professional , highly dedicated and cared about me as well as the job at hand ...'. Though '... Ronel was not based at Flower Valley, she helped me a lot with my writing and professional etiquette ...'.

- Each mentor with their area of expertise and position enable development in specific complementary spaces of work and learning.

For Sabelo '... all 3 people were bringing something from a different perspective ... each played a different role ... Sindiswa was specific to the course and programme development ... Roy provided the support for doing the course work and implementation ... complementary support worked well together in improving and implementing good practice ... '. Roy described his '... role as a line manager ... to enable what he needed to do at an institutional level ...'.

- Interaction with the network of mentors needs to be focused and set up to provide for the various development needs of the mentee.

Neo's interaction with the 3 mentors were clearly defined, such as Lesley providing an orientation to the sector, roleplayers and programmes as a whole, Ronel focused on the techniques of effective communication and Roger providing an orientation to and learning about Flower Valley's operations.

Sabelo's interactions were clearly defined with Roy, as mentor and enabler in the workspace and Sindiswa as mentor in the course context. Clear reference is made to the value realized from these interactions. This interaction was however less clearly defined in terms of his interactions with Bongani where the focus was more general and open ended.

- Because a network of mentors is seldom found in the same organizational or physical space, mentees could sometimes struggle with accessibility to their respective mentors.

Ronel comments on the time constraints that limited her engagement with Neo. Because she worked for Flower Valley Conservation Trust on a contractual basis and was based in Somerset West while Neo was based in Bredasdorp, she '... didn't have much time ... '. Neo '... needed a lot more guidance, which I was not able to provide in the given time space ...' Their interactions were predominantly through electronic communication and '... monthly meetings for reporting, planning and reflection ...'.

Sindiswa and Sabelo were based in different physical locations and '... there were often informal interactions during course sessions ... comments made on assignments ... phone calls to discuss comments ... always healthy debates ... during social meetings we would also talk around work ...'. Sindiswa however feels that '... time available was one of the biggest constraints ... if we worked for the same organization it might have been easier ... working in the same environment, an intern can learn by watching the mentor do things ... would have been more ongoing engagement rather than occasionally ... '. She felt '... the need to set up more structured interactions to meet regularly ... '.

- Interns working with a network of mentors require high levels of flexibility and adaptability as they work with different individuals and personalities.

Neo '... worked with 5 different individuals as mentors and had to deal with 5 different personalities ...' which she found to be the most significant part of her development, but also the most challenging ...'. Each of her mentors also worked in very different contexts, so it took a lot of effort to adapt each time she engaged with a different mentor, but she says that this '...was good in terms of my own development and exposure to different people doing different things ... I have learnt to adapt quickly... and to act quickly in my work ...'.

Group mentoring

Constraints in mentoring capacity are best approach through group mentoring, where one mentor is assigned to a group of mentees. Examples of group mentoring are evident in the case of the young conservators in the City of Cape Town and the group of Conservation Stewardship professionals in CapeNature. The central focus of group mentoring is often professional practice for institutional strengthening. Career development of individuals becomes a secondary intention of group mentoring.

Key features of group mentoring include:

- Effective group mentoring would require specific focus on a group of professionals and their practice. It might be approached to improve practice at an institutional level, and similarly support the career development of a group of professionals. It is however, unlikely to focus primarily on the individual.

In the case of the stewardship professionals in CapeNature, Ben's mentoring was to strengthen the capacity of professionals as they worked in the agricultural landscape. He focused on observing professionals in their interactions with landowners and made critical inputs to assist them in planning follow up interactions.

In the case of the urban conservators in the City of Cape Town, the focus was similarly on their engagements with surrounding urban communities and involving these communities in the conservation objectives of the reserves managed by the City. Case studies were developed and deliberated around this specific area of work towards improving these engagements.

- Through focusing on the community of practitioners either in or across institutions, group mentoring has the potential to develop a strengthened team of professionals, practice and ultimately the institution within which they work. Approaches to group mentoring also has the potential to establish expanding learning units in institutions that enable ongoing learning, growing and strengthening together.

Kerry says that the stewardship group '... turned into a network of learning ...' that '... has encouraged the formation of other groupings in the organization ...'. It also encouraged staff outside of stewardship to participate in these deliberations, such as '... reserve managers also wanted to come to the gatherings ...'. It also led to the development of a strong team whose skills and experience '... are in high demand ...'.

Lewine says of the conservators experience in the City of Cape Town '... the peer learning project focused on us as conservators ... the community aspects which were different and scary ... case studies ... poses ... questions ... dealt with in group discussions ... the process allows me to walk away with options for solutions.'

Luzanne says '... this has allowed us at the reserve to reflect and add what is missing in our work ... we have the space to evaluate our work and see gaps and ways to move forward ... creates a space for development ...'.

Adele says '... we see this programme as a benefit ... we were taught to look at things differently ...'.

- Because a single mentor is working with a group of mentors, this approach to mentoring can be resource and time intensive.

In CapeNature, Ben worked with 15 stewardship professionals, all located in different geographic areas across the Western Cape. The biggest challenge in this arrangement of group mentoring is that due to time constraints within the 9 month contractual mentoring agreement, Ben struggled to get to all of them on a regular basis. Many resorted to simply calling on Ben when they needed to. Christina says ‘... the interaction ... was on an ad hoc basis and at my request ...’. This group mentoring was however coupled to support through the stewardship course and the peer learning network. As a collective Christine feels that ‘... the three processes provided different perspectives looking at things from different angles ...’.

In the case of the urban conservators in the City of Cape Town, Paula’s job focused on capacity development in the urban context, which meant greater availability to work with the conservators. As opposed to Ben’s approach of working on a one-on-one basis with the 15 professionals, Paula worked with the conservators through a structured programme facilitated on a regular basis. The case study methodology also enabled working together as a group.

- Working with a group of individuals requires a high level of flexibility and adaptability on the part of the mentor, given the multiple personalities and varying levels of experience of the group. This places emphasis on the character of the mentor and the ensuing relationship that develops between the mentor and group of mentees.

Adri and Johan describe Ben as ‘... an open person ... approachable ... available when you needed him ...’, which might be a very necessary requirement in working across a group of mentees with different personalities, levels of experience and needs.

The City of Cape Town conservators all talk highly of the safe space provided for in their group mentoring sessions. Their comments also suggest a great measure of trust in Paula and Tanya as facilitators and in each other. In Adele’s words ‘... always felt supported and was therefore able to explore and challenge my perceived limitations ... I knew I would always have guidance should something go wrong ...’.

Peer mentoring

Constraints to mentoring capacity could also be addressed through peer mentoring processes. Peer mentoring allows colleagues to learn, grow and develop through interactions with each other. These interactions can be formally constituted, such as in the case of the peer learning sessions amongst conservators in CapeNature and City of Cape Town or less formally constituted through strong interpersonal relationships amongst staff members as in the case of the education staff with whom Gaynor worked at the Gold Fields Education Center or the 75 colleagues in the Boland Management Area of CapeNature. Peer mentoring, like group

mentoring, is more focused on developing and strengthening communities of practice in and across institutions.

Key features of peer mentoring include:

- Peers participate on an equal footing, sharing and learning through deliberations around practice.

Arnelle says that ‘... the topics for the sessions are decided on by the group and a committee eventually makes the final decisions after having received all suggestions ...’. In this way it would respond to the specific needs of individuals participating in the group.

In the Boland Management Area, when Hermien joined CapeNature, she worked with ‘... Garth and Arnelle ... both strong individuals ... Hermien worked to support them and learnt the ropes through this ...’, suggesting development through collegial interactions.

Gaynor also experienced peer mentoring in her position as an intern at the Gold Fields Environmental Education Centre, noting ‘... I worked with other staff ... I was able to go to anyone for help ... the staff were interested in helping me ... Roleen and Benjamin ...’.

- Peer learning processes can be confined to the levels of experience of peers in the group. This could be limiting if one is exploring new and innovative approaches to work. Peer learning is best organized around a clear structure and process of facilitation to stretch exposure beyond current practices.

In the CapeNature stewardship peer learning network technical experts were invited to make inputs ‘... we also include critical technical information which we know must be made available to the ... staff ...’.

The Stewardship and Extension course also introduced new ways of thinking about and implementing aspects related to stewardship, Christina says ‘... I found learning the skill of how to dissect a particular situation useful ... I could analyze the situation and make better decisions as a result of what I learned in the course ...’.

In the Boland Area, the usual management meetings became spaces for reflecting, learning and growing in practice. This appears to have provided the structure for learning together across the group of professionals in the area.

- Peer mentoring allows for a pool of complementary competence to be shared amongst peers in a learning space.

The conservators in the City of Cape Town note that they brought a lot of themselves into the process and ‘... we got to know each other ...’. They describe each other as ‘... Luzanne is the thinker and person with ideas ... Lewine is the practical one who brought this skill to the group ... she is also the mediator and we could all learn this skill ... Charline is very organized and we could learn this from her ... Sabelo is a go between and he plays this role ...’.

- Peer learning is highly reliant on extensive participation of all individuals to stimulate thinking, learning and developing new ideas of working.

Arnelle says ‘... the fact that not everyone comes to the meetings is what has not worked that well ... we then have fewer people to share knowledge and experiences and the gatherings are not that rich anymore ...’.

- Peer learning amplifies the significance of group dynamics amongst peers.

Amongst the City of Cape Town’s conservators ... we learnt the skill of understanding yourself and others and the trust allowed us to share ...’.

Paula says ‘... we brought a lot of ourselves to the process ...’. It took ‘... real effort to listen and not judge ...’.

Training

In many cases training complemented the mentoring interactions. Sabelo for example participated in an environmental education course, drawing some support from the course presenters and tutors. Gaynor participated in a learnership programme, also supported through structured learning during this programme. Some of the participants in the stewardship group and peer learning processes participated in the Stewardship and Extension Course. In addition, many of the mentors in these cases participated in the mentors training. Some of the key aspects of support offered through the range of courses include:

- Training provides for structured learning and development, particularly in a context of workplace-based learning that has specific outputs relevant to the day to day work of participants.

Sabelo says ‘... my job entails working with schools and communities around the nature reserve, therefore the course has major relevance to my daily work ...’. Sabelo’s mentoring interactions with both Sindiswa and Roy was focused on his assignment work through the course, since this was towards developing and growing out the programme in the Harmony Flats Nature Reserve context.

Ben says that the mentoring course ‘... was very much hands on and practical with clear task focused approach ... gave me practical tools to implement and the theoretical guidance on how to design a mentoring plan for each mentor ...’

Lesley says ‘...I found the programme to be a real eye-opener ... I’ve always been interested in capacity building ... this programme has given me a way to organise myself better to plan and deliver a more appropriate approach depending on whether training, coaching, etc. is needed.’

- A course brings individuals into safe spaces with colleagues, from their own institution and others, within which to explore new and innovative ways of thinking about and implementing work practices.

Comments made by participants in the Stewardship and Extension course as to the value it provided, include providing ‘... opportunities to share and learn in non-threatening space ...’.

In summary

Mentoring need not be one or the other of these different forms. In many cases a combination of approaches are possible. The combination also has the potential to strengthen mentoring support to individuals, for their practices and towards strengthening institutions within which they work.

Gaynor was assigned a designated mentor in Sally, but also drew support from the broader group of colleagues like Roleen and Benjamin with whom she worked at the Gold Fields Environmental Education Centre at Kirstenbosch. She derived added support in development around her work in environmental education through participation in the learnership.

The stewardship professionals in CapeNature benefitted from one-on-one mentoring through the assignment of Ben to some of them, group mentoring through a facilitated peer learning process co-ordinated by Kerry, peer learning processes as they engaged with one another both formerly in the peer learning sessions and informally through constantly drawing on inputs from each other and for some through the course within which they participated.

Sabelo benefitted from participation in a course, one-on-one mentoring in the workplace supported by Roy, inputs from Sindiswa as a tutor, group mentoring through participation in the peer learning group facilitated through Paula and peer learning as relationships amongst the conservators at the City of Cape Town developed.

Despite the many resource constraints to mentoring at an institutional level, these different forms of mentoring provide a range of options for combination to minimize the impacts of limited resources.

7. Levels of mentoring?

Many of us as mentors work with individuals at different levels in the organization. This could be mentoring students on a work shadow programme for a short time. It could be working with new graduates fresh off the pre-service production line. It could be working with an experienced professional guiding them in the direction of a promotion either in or outside of the institution. In this section we explore mentoring at different levels of career development and suggest that the level at which we are mentoring defines the focus for growth and development.

	Mentee	Mentoring purpose	Suggested focus
Pre-service	School Learners	Expose learners to career streams in the environmental and conservation sector, to promote an interest.	Focus on details of a range of career streams in the sector and requirements for entry into these.
	Interns (undergraduates)	Support for curriculum requirements of experiential learning while providing exposure to career options in the sector.	Opportunities for learning and support to fulfill curriculum requirements and provide details of key work areas in specific careers.
In-service	Young Professionals (graduates)	An orientation to the sector, institutions, various related career fields and the details of a specific career or range of related career interests.	Induction and orientation to both the sector, the institution as well as the details of a specific or range of related career interests.
	Junior Professionals	Preparing individuals for career development.	Competence requirements to develop towards and within a specific career path.
	Mid career professionals	Strengthen all round capacity for entry into senior management, related mid management position or specialization.	Competence requirements at senior, related middle management level or position of specialization.
	Senior Management	Strengthening management at senior and strategic organizational level.	Competence for strategic management of an organization.

Mentoring the school learner

Learners during high school participate in job shadow programmes to broadly explore career options in the sector and requirements for entry into these careers. Job shadow programmes could thus be viewed as career guidance opportunities. Learners from Grade 10 to Grade 12 have the option of a job shadow programme as part of their Life Orientation curriculum requirements. At this stage, learners are quite focused on the requirements for accessing a broad sweep of career paths. Mentoring interactions with the school learner might be most valuable in focusing on the information that these learners are seeking in taking the next step out of school towards their chosen career. Some questions worth exploring with school learners might include:

- *What are the various career streams available in the sector as a whole? Most learners are unlikely at this stage to have made a specific decision about an exact career path into which they plan to enter.*
- *What subjects are required and at what level of performance? This might include prerequisites for entry into a learning pathway or simply a subject that will make practical sense in the field of work. Economic and Management Sciences might be a valuable contribution to a career in eco-tourism for example.*
- *What learning pathway do I need to follow? Various professionals in your organization might have entered into the same careers through alternate learning pathways. One might have got into reserve management through a National Diploma in Game Ranch Management or Nature Conservation. Another might have entered through a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany, Zoology or Environmental Management. These options might be worth exploring when hosting learners on a job shadow programme.*
- *What are the key work areas in various career streams and how am I personally suited to this? It might be useful to expose school learners to the 'nuts and bolts' of various careers to inform decisions made.*
- *Additional questions that learners might have include those around career pathing and development opportunities, salary scales at different levels, institutions of work, availability and conditions of bursaries, amongst others.*

Hosting learners through a job shadow programme has a significant amount of potential to attract new entrants into careers in the field. 2 schools leavers in the C.A.P.E. Capacity Development Programme decided to pursue a learning pathway in Environmental and Water Sciences as a result of their interactions during a job shadow programme.

These interactions could be structured around key work areas in the institution and discussions to provide the information needed for learners to make informed decisions regarding subject choices and performance, learning pathways and possible careers.

Mentoring the undergraduate intern

Undergraduates from various institutions of higher learning are required to undertake work integrated learning towards completing their national diploma or degree courses. These work integrated learning processes are often supported by a work related or research project to be undertaken. Engaging these students in mentoring interactions should primarily be guided by the specified curriculum requirements for work integrated learning. These mentoring interactions however also provide an opportunity for giving students an orientation to the world of work and exploring various career options in the sector. Some of the more specific elements of career options that students might benefit from include:

- *What are the various career options that could be pursued with the area of qualification? Having been exposed, albeit at a theoretical level to the field, students might have some ideas of the potential careers they could pursue in the sector. They might need some opportunity to explore the field in its totality.*
- *What are the key work areas within each career field? The work integrated learning requirement allows opportunities for students to explore various career fields in depth and the practicalities of the job.*
- *What are the key competences required in each of these work areas. The mentoring interaction also provides opportunity to start development in these key areas of competence.*
- *What are the career pathing and development opportunities in each? A mentor who knows the field well might be able to guide and support an undergraduate intern in researching career pathing and development options in a particular institution as well as the sector.*

Neo, at the time of her internship with Flower Valley Conservation Trust was an undergraduate student for work integrated learning. She comments positively on her exposure to the sector through her internship and found it significant in shaping her career. Mentoring undergraduate interns also provide a key opportunity for attracting students into particular careers in the field.

Mentoring the young graduate

One of the biggest constraints in higher learning is its limited link to the real world of work. Introducing the young graduate into the field through structured and effective mentoring

interactions can go a long way in supporting them in making the transition from the learning to the work context. In the C.A.P.E. Capacity Development Programme to attract and retain new entrants into careers in conservation, a young professionals' programme was developed to support work with young graduates. Arguing for an 18 month to 2 year internship period, this programme proposes 3 phases of orientation as follows:

- *A period of induction into the sector, institution and job function, recommended over a period of 3 months. Many young professionals are found not to have an adequate and grounded perspective on the sector as they emerge from higher learning, which might in turn shape their practice in the real work context. This induction has the potential to address this. An induction into the sector might include for example, an exploration of the legislative framework shaping conservation, both globally and nationally. It might also include an analysis of the various institutional partners working together in the sector and their respective mandates, the latter possibly explored in relation in the host institution's mandate and / or area of work within which the young professional is placed. An induction into the institution could focus on the institutional mandate, organizational structure and functioning and interactions across various units, directorates and departments. This induction should also focus on the job function into which the young professional has been placed, preferably done in relation to the former 2 levels of induction suggested above. This could be facilitated through a research based task culminating in a report. Complementary processes of induction could be participation in sector and / or organizational meetings and events through which to develop a grounded understanding of the field.*
- *Young graduates rarely have a complete sense of the scope of career fields and options within them. Suggested as a rotational programme, this 6 month period allows the young professional to gain in depth insight into the various career fields and options in a sector. A young professional entering CapeNature might for example work on a month to month rotational basis with Field Rangers, Reserve Manager, Community Conservator, Conservation Services Officer and Scientific Services to experience each career field and options within them. A young professional joining the WWF Living Waters Unit might work in the same way in a fisheries programme, a marine protected areas programme, a water neutral programme, an integrated catchment management programme, a wetlands programme, etc. A task based approach, discussed in section 8 is also a useful approach to mentoring in this rotational programme, allowing a mentee to engage in depth with the details of each career field.*
- *The balance of the internship can be focused on orienting the young professional to the key performance areas of a chosen career field. During this period a clear development plan should be negotiated between the mentor and the young professional with regular assessments. This period could also be complemented by participation in specific professional development programmes.*

Mentoring the young professional provides a good opportunity for supporting the new entrant in developing a sound and grounded view of the work undertaken in the sector. Some entrants have struggled to find their way into the sector in the absence of effective mentoring. Some new entrants have even been lost to the sector as a result of less positive first engagements in the sector. A mentor at this level has the potential to support a new entrant in finding his / her career niche in the broad scope of the sector.

Mentoring the junior professional

The junior professional has in all likelihood been in the sector, possibly the institution or even the job function for some time. The focus in mentoring the junior professional continues to be on supporting him / her to find his / her longer term career niche. Added and important foci at this level of mentoring are strengthening certain identified areas of capacity and career development and growth.

Traditional approaches to career development are to support upward mobility, commonly referred to as career progression. Career development could however also be horizontal mobility, into a related career stream on the same job gradient. For example, Arnelle developed extensive experience in the position of Nature Conservator in the reserve management career stream. She moved into Conservation Services, in a parallel career stream of off reserve conservation. Dian feels that her experience in these 2 parallel career streams has provided the grounding for her work in Conservation Stewardship, where she is considered to be one of the strongest professionals in the field. Career development could also be in depth specialization in a particular career stream, very common in scientific research and services.

Some key considerations in mentoring the junior professional include:

- *What are the interests and strengths of the professional and which career pathway would best suit this interest and strength? Zishaam, for example showed a particular interest and skill in information management and was supported to strengthen in this career field in the Cape Research Centre, also responding to the institutions needs. This is also a critically scarce skill in the sector as a whole. Roy recognized Sabelo's interest in working with communities and supported his exploration of this as a programme focus in his work. Deon recognized Patricia's interest in community conservation and supported her career development in this direction. Patricia has subsequently left CapeNature for a position as a Community Conservation Officer with the Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve.*

- *What are the career aspirations of the individual? A useful approach might be to expose the young professional to a range of development opportunities that provide the depth of insight and experiences to attain these aspirations.*
- *What competences would stand the individual in good stead in a more senior position in this pathway? It might then be useful to provide opportunities through which these particular competences could be developed.*
- *What are the career development opportunities and in which organizations are these available? At this point the mentor might need to confront the brutal reality that the junior might not stay on at the host institution, but be ready to spread their wings into different work contexts. This mentoring effort has then been a contribution to the sector rather than only to the individual institution.*

Junior professionals are in the space where they show their potential to grow and develop in various ways in their career. Mentoring at this point critical shapes the further career development of junior professionals to realize their potential and interests.

Mentoring the mid-career professional

Mid-career professionals could essentially be seen as having found their career niche. Mentoring is traditionally not considered or offered at this particular level of career development. There are however certain contexts at this level where mentoring could be significant to support the strengthening of competence of individuals, the practices with which they engage and lead and ultimately the organizational performance. These include:

- *Moving into new key performance areas: Mid-career professionals might have significant experience in key work areas. Moving into an evolving practice might however require support to grow into these new key work areas. Arnelle for example, had extensive experience as a nature conservator when she joined the Stewardship team at CapeNature. As a new and evolving practice within CapeNature all stewardship professionals required support to strengthen certain areas of work, such as negotiating with landowners in an agricultural context. The mentorship of Ben was brought in to specifically respond to this need.*
- *Moving into new work contexts: When a mid-career professional moves into a new work context, this might require some mentoring to orientate the incumbent into a new institutional and / functional context.*
- *Preparation for succession into senior management: A mid-career professional might be identified as having the potential for progression into senior management in an organization. This might be coupled to the imminent opening up of a position at senior management level, due to for example, retirement. An individual*

might then be mentored to prepare them for the take up of a senior management position in preparation for succession.

- *Strengthening particular areas of competence required: Mid-career professionals might be challenged within a particular area of work and require mentoring to support the strengthening of capacity relative to this new area of work. This is evident in the case of the CapeNature Stewardship professionals as well as in the case of the City of Cape Town's conservators, all of who have a significant amount of experience in conservation but required some support to strengthen their practices of engaging communities.*

Mentoring at this level is more likely to focus on strengthening existing practice than on developing new areas of competence. In many ways mentoring might be considered less complex at this level since it draws on an existing level of experience for development into new directions.

Mentoring the senior manager

Mentoring at the senior management level is often referred to as executive coaching and takes the form of one on one mentoring around specific areas of competence. Senior managers might be seen to require support in specific performance areas and an executive coach might be appointed to support the individual in this area for improvement and strengthening.

Though a traditional approach to coaching at the senior management level, other approaches might similarly be valuable in this context. For example, ...

The Mentoring Support Programme offered through the C.A.P.E. Capacity Development Programme is perhaps an example of peer and group mentoring amongst, in some cases senior managers of institutions. In the City of Cape Town and CapeNature a significant group of senior managers participated in this programme. Drawing on extensive experience they collectively explored ways of improving mentoring practices across institutions. Through take home assignments groups in particular institutions collaborated around improved mentoring practices within their institutional context. For both of these institutions, group participation in the Mentoring Support Programme shaped the development of mentorship programmes in their respective institutions.

In summary

As noted above, mentoring individuals at various levels of career development and growth requires a different focus. It then becomes imperative for the mentor to get to know the interests, strengths, areas of development and career aspirations of the individuals with whom they work, so as to respond appropriately to developmental needs.

8. Mentoring for effective workplace –based learning

Many mentors are often overwhelmed at the prospect of starting on the journey of mentoring and working to support the development of an assigned mentee. Most mentors on the C.A.P.E. Mentors Support Programme came into the programme with a vast amount of experience in working with mentees and junior staff in their organisations. Sharing these experiences were invaluable to all who participated in this programme. Many commented on the value of the mentors' support programme as providing them with a structure to strengthen the work they do as mentors. In Lesley and Ben's words, respectively:

I found the programme to be a real eye-opener actually! ... I've always been interested in capacity building but realise now [that] I use a 'one size fit all approach' ... this programme has given me a way to organise myself better to plan and deliver a more appropriate approach depending on whether training, coaching, etc. is needed;

It surely builds competence of the mentor himself and provides excellent, real tools to do the job ... aspects that I found to be significant include: role of the mentor, setting up of mentorship relationship, designing mentoring tasks ... yes, I was able to apply my learning ... going through all the steps with 15 conservation extension officers I am contracted in to mentor ... currently setting up / executing mentoring tasks ...'.

In this next section we offer a practical guide to structuring the mentoring interaction. This includes:

- establishing a working relationship to **identify the mentoring needs** of both the mentor and mentee;
- **agreeing to the most appropriate approach** to mentoring with various options provided for in section 6;
- adopting **a task based approach to mentoring** through developing tasks appropriate to the development needs of the mentee as well as being of value of the organization;
- **supporting the development of the mentee** as he / she works through the task;
- **assessing the development of the mentee**, both formatively and summatively.

In drawing on these suggestions to support your work as a mentor, we urge you to also draw on your own experience and contextualize approaches as it suits your own professional context and the personalities with whom you work.

8.1 Clarifying the mentoring needs

From an assessment of mentoring interactions we have found that many mentors focus primarily on what is required for the job at hand and the needs of the institution. Whereas there is much merit in this approach, given that experienced professionals generally know what is needed in the work context, there is however also a flip side to the coin of mentoring. Mentees enter into the workspace with their own experiences, visions, ideas and career aspirations which too need to be accommodated for in the mentoring interaction.

Mentors all note the significance and value in getting to know the mentee, both professionally and personally as this shapes the nature of the interaction and support the development of the mentee.

Rhett's approach to working with Natalie and Deon was to expose them to '... specific tasks ... as well as other things which I considered part of their holistic development as nature conservators ... they develop professional and life skills ...'.

Roy says that Sabelo '... came into the job with wide ranging experience and quite a bit of skill ... what he does lack is confidence to run with his ideas ... one gets a feel with people ... Sabelo came in with a particular interest in extension and community training ... in line with his job function of managing the reserve ... we had initial discussions about his ideas and he would go off and do what he needed ... my job was to enable what he needed to do at an institutional level ...'.

As Zishaam settled into the Cape Research Centre of SANParks Melodi says that '... I recognized that his expertise is in IT ... critical for the organization ...' at this point the initial focus of his internship shifted from scientific field work to supporting this function through IT.

Neo moved from Pretoria to Bredasdorp. In this context it was '... difficult for her to find direction ... '. Recognizing the constraints in the small town context of Bredasdorp for her development as a trained journalist, Lesley felt she needed greater exposure to public relations and communications and so developed and implemented a rotational programme through which Neo would be exposed to this broader field in which she was interested in pursuing a career.

These examples all reflect a response to the interest and strengths of the intern as well as responding to the needs and mandates in the institution. This all hinges on getting to know the mentee in the institutional context, the background, experiences and strengths they bring into the work space, career interest and aspirations they have and professional development needs they have.

Some suggested approaches to getting to know the mentee include:

Developing a personal mission statement

In writing a personal mission statement, the mentee could make explicit their career vision and aspirations, the competence required and the means to acquiring these. This could provide a valuable guide to enabling development towards this career vision and competence required at various levels of development. It could also provide a useful framework for assessing development of the mentee. Some guiding questions to developing this personal mission statement might include:

- where would I like to be in 20 years in my career? ... it might be useful to break this up into 3 to 5 year periods that indicate a career development pathway, with very specific details including what position they envisage for themselves, in what organization or type of organization, with what professional attributes, for example, in 20 years I would like to be the Executive Director for Conservation in South African National Parks with a vision for consolidating and expanding the national parks of South Africa and involving adjacent and other communities in conservation actions towards this end;
- what current background, experience, strengths and interests would support this journey through my career?
- what competences – knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – would support me in my growth?
- how could I acquire these?
- what further help do I need to develop on this journey?

You might need to guide the mentee in developing this personal mission statement. This could be a useful induction task for the mentee and could be coupled to exploring the sector as a whole. You might support them in undertaking a small scale research project of all the role players in a sector, for example, who they are, the mandates of these role players and various functions and programmes that support this mandate. This could easily be undertaken as a desk top study, towards informing the development of their personal mission statement. It also then supports the development of an understanding of the field and the various career pathways and options in a particular sector.

The following form might help in discussions and development of this personal mission statement.

In 20 years time, I would like to be ...					
Pacing my career development path	Strengths, experience, attributes and interests to support these stages	What more do I need?	How could I acquire what I need?	When can I undertake this development initiative?	What else do I need at this stage?
I am starting on my career path with a 2 year internship at CapeNature in the field of Reserve Management.					
I would like to then find a position as a Nature Conservator in another organization to expand my experience and stay in this position for 3 years to gain grounded experience.					
I would then like to move to another institution to focus on community conservation in a junior management position for 5 years.					
I would like to spend the next 5 years in a middle management position guiding the work and development of community conservation professionals.					
Etc.					

In keeping with the idea of a personal mission statement you might suggest that the mentee write this detail up in an essay form for further discussion. Submission of this mission statement could be used as the culmination of the induction process and the task that defines and structures this process. The table above can then be developed over time, for example during 3

months of induction, form the framework for ongoing discussions between mentor and mentee during this induction period and be submitted as a task that concludes this period.

A needs or 'NICE' analysis

A needs analysis is useful to identify the developmental needs of the mentee. It is useful though to also frame these needs in the context of the strengths, interests and attributes that the mentee brings into the work space. In the C.A.P.E. Mentors Support Programme participants experimented with a workplace-based learning task that helped them to get to know the mentee / mentees with whom they worked. Through this task, they made use of a tool we came to refer to as a NICE analysis to better understand the needs, interests, competences and expectations of the mentees they worked with.

- What are my development **needs**? It might be useful to focus the mentee on both current, medium term as well as long term career development needs. It is also useful to not only focus on needs in terms of deficiency, but also areas of current competence that might be strengthened through mentoring support.
- What are my **interests** and attributes? These might similarly expand beyond only the professional context, to include the mentees personal interests and attributes. For example, a highly sociable individual might struggle in a career path that inhibits or does not allow extensive social interaction.
- What are the **competences** and strengths that I bring to the work space? Establishing current strengths and competences provides a good framework for further development. These too might include strengths and competences in both the professional and personal realm.
- What are my **expectations**? It is useful very early in the mentoring interaction to clarify expectations of the mentor and the mentee, levels and roles of responsibility of each and interactions between the 2 or more individuals involved. These discussions could similarly focus on the career development expectations, expectations within the institution and job related expectations.

Deidre says that the NICE analysis worked well in her first meeting with 2 mentees, even though she had known both for a while in that it '... provided the opportunity to get a more in depth view of what their personal views, needs and concerns are ...'.

The following form provides a useful template for engaging in these discussions.

Discussion Focus	Immediate Term	Medium Term	Long Term
What are my career development needs in the ...?			
What are my interests and personal attributes that might support career development in the ...?			
What competences and strengths do I bring into the workspace immediately and which will best serve my career in the medium and long term?			
What are my career development expectations in the ...?			
What are my expectations of the mentoring interaction in the ...?			

As suggested with the personal mission statement, these discussions could similarly form part of the induction discussions between the mentor and mentee over a period of approximately 2 or 3 months.

Conduct a 'first' meeting

In the C.A.P.E. Mentors' Support Programme participants were encouraged to conduct a 'first' meeting with the mentees with who they would be or are working. Though many of them had already started work with mentees, the intention of this meeting was to identify areas of development for the mentee, explores ways in which best to respond to these needs and to clarify the mentoring interaction.

The objectives of this first meeting articulated by Deidre included: to establish and discuss expectations; establish what the needs are; set clear boundaries; define roles and responsibilities of both parties; set clear, realistic and achievable goals – these goals were defined for a period of 3 months for review as they went along.

As part of '... a process of orientation and introduction ...' Gabbi included '... an orientation workshop ... to give participants ...' in the mentoring programme '... a broad overview of where the mentorship's position in the project is ...'. In further planning to respond to mentees needs Gabbi together with another mentor undertook site visits, to assess '... what each teacher and site required from the mentorship programme ...'. At this time they also discussed the expectations of mentees and the capacity of the mentors and organization to meet these. Regular meetings were then convened at the start of each school term to reflect on progress, emerging needs and approaches to addressing them.

Ben's first interaction with the 15 mentees he worked with in CapeNature, was an individual one-on-one meeting, which he used to collect '... background information ...' for all mentees. These meetings were held in the office space of the mentees which also provided him with an '... opportunity to observe the office arrangements ... in order to get a sense of organization and functional planning ...'. Following his own introduction to the mentees which included both personal and professional aspects, he explored various aspects with the mentees including: academic qualifications; career history; involvement in stewardship; challenges encountered; his / her future in stewardship; mentoring needs and expectations; interests, general concerns.

These introductory processes need not be undertaken individually. A collection of these appropriate to the context could provide a useful framework for induction and orientation of a mentee into the workspace.

8.2 Developing an appropriate mentoring approach

One is unlikely to find a tried and tested mentoring approach that works in one context as effectively as in another. Organizations are different in their make-up, cultures and consequent interactions. Job functions are different, require different ways of engagement and different approaches to addressing developmental needs. And possibly the most challenging is the

difference in personalities that engage in mentoring interactions. To accommodate for this level of diversity in mentoring interactions it is useful to define the mentoring approach relative to the organization, the job function and the personalities involved. Section 6 provides some useful forms of mentoring from one-on-one interactions to group and peer mentoring and mentoring with a network of mentors that might be useful to define the approach to mentoring.

More specifically however, it is useful to consider the following in defining the mentoring interaction:

- The mandate of the institution;
- The policy and practice, either formal or informal, of mentoring in the institution;
- The work practices in the institution as well as more broadly in the field – it is also useful to consider a futures perspective in considering work practices, for example, changing work practices currently and in the future;
- The placement of the intern – where in the institution they are placed, for example, within which programme, unit and job function and the diverse group of staff with whom they are likely to work;
- The availability of mentors inside and outside of the programme, unit and / or institution, considering that all required expertise might not necessarily reside in the actual programme, unit and / or institution, such as for example in Ben's case;
- The background and experience of both the mentor and mentee and others in the programme, unit and institution;
- The needs, interests and attributes, competence and strengths and expectations of the mentee and in some cases the mentor as well.

Amongst other considerations these might be a useful guide to defining the mentoring interaction that suits the organization, the programme / unit, the job function and the various personalities in the workspace, including the mentor and mentee.

In defining this mentoring interaction, we encourage you to think beyond traditional approaches of one on one mentoring. You might consider a programme that brings mentees across the organization into a networking forum to share learning, challenges and opportunities. You might also offer support to the mentors through a networking forum to explore more

effective ways of supporting the people they work with. Though common practice, we do have the space to explore new and innovative ways of supporting the development of individuals through mentoring.

8.3 Developing a task and agreeing on outputs and time frames

Some mentoring interactions could be abstract, if focusing purely on the individual development of the mentee and not locate this interaction in the broader institutional context. Mentees could then very well develop theoretically rather than through grounded experience. Informal research around mentoring also reflect that many mentees are left to their own devices, to find their own way or given menial tasks that bears little or no relevance to their career aspirations. A common task cited is photocopying and making the early morning coffee. This does little to grow professionals for our institutions and sector.

All mentees in the C.A.P.E. Capacity Development Programme reflect the significance of engaging in real work and making a contribution to the institution's work. In this programme a task based approach was encouraged to enable the development of the mentee. Task based so as not to completely overwhelm the mentee, by providing them with growth opportunities within small, manageable, measurable and time bound tasks. This also then supports them in making a real contribution to the work of the organization without being completely swamped by the enormity of the job in environment and conservation.

Mentors were encouraged to design tasks that specifically respond the developmental needs of the mentees with whom they worked. This task then also provides a streamlined framework for assessing the development of the mentee within interim period during the full mentoring interaction.

At Flower Valley, one of Neo's first tasks was to support the organization of an Open Day. She was tasked with the development of an invitation to key stakeholders inviting them to this open day, what might be considered a small task, but a sizeable bit to get her into the swing of contributing to the overall organization of the event.

One of the reasons that Lesley developed the rotational programme was in response to Neo's limited exposure, particularly to the media in Bredasdorp. During her one month rotation stint at the C.A.P.E. Co-ordinating Unit her task was to support the hosting of a media event. Neo's specific task in this bigger assignment was to identify, liaise with and secure participation of key media individuals in the event. The month with the Unit culminated with the hosting of the event which she attended with other staff from the unit. This provided her with a discrete and measurable task that could be assessed with the actual hosting of the event.

Gaynor became particularly interested in teaching environmental education programmes when school learners visited the centre. Facilitated by the learnership programme in which she participated, she developed a lesson plan for visiting learners in the garden. She was then able to teach this lesson in the garden and similar to Neo assess its usefulness in the field.

Sabelo similarly developed a training programme for community leaders through the environmental education course in which he participated, a work area that he was keen to move into and that Roy thought would be a useful focus for the Harmony Flats Conservation Site. Sabelo too, as part of the course requirements implemented the training programme with a small group of community leaders and was therefore able to assess its usefulness and value in the work context.

Zishaam would accompany field researchers into the field. On return he would do a debrief with Melodie and develop IT processes to support data collection, processing, management and making the findings accessible to others. So he responded to specific tasks as they were required.

Gabbi recognized her mentee's need for support in planning learning interventions. Gabbi sat together with her mentee to undertake planning for the term. The mentee was then tasked with translating this term plan into weekly plans.

Ben's broader task for Hermien was to design a strategy for approaching, negotiating and convincing the owner of a farm to subscribe a portion of his site to a contract conservation site. This broader task was broken up into sizeable chunks, for example the first task focused on planning for an initial meeting with the landowner.

Some questions that might guide the development of the task include:

- What are the developmental needs of the mentee?
- What are the interests, existing competences and strengths of the mentee?
- What are the job requirements within which the mentee is placed?
- What measurable task can best respond to development need and also respond to the job and institutional requirements?
- How would this task respond to the development needs and institutional and job requirements?
- What competences does the mentee already have to support them in this task?

- What can be added to comfortably stretch the mentee beyond their comfort zone?
- What knowledge and skills could be developed through the task? This can include knowledge and skills relative to the field, the organization as a whole, the unit / programme / directorate, the job function and the individual's career.

Tasks assigned to mentees should have specific outcomes which provide the basis for assessing development. Outcomes of the task need to be clearly defined and communicated to the mentee as this provides them with a roadmap towards completing the task. It might be useful to define with the mentee clear actions towards completion of the task. Clear documentation of the task might also be useful for mentees as a reference as they go along.

Outcomes of the task should be clearly articulated and should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound.

8.4 Supporting development of tasks

Ideally the task assigned to the mentee is one that provides him / her with the opportunity to grow. Most mentees say they valued this space to explore new and innovative ways of doing things, but also valued the 'safety net' provided by their mentor. This 'safety net' was provided for by mentors in various ways, including:

- Regular planning meetings and follow up reflective meetings at interim periods to assess progress, advise and guide;

Most mentors and mentees reflect the value of regular meetings with their mentors at interim intervals.

For some, these meetings were ad hoc and when required, such as in the case of Roy and Sabelo, who see each other each day and had no structured interactions. Sabelo '... would drop by when I needed to ...'. Gaynor's interactions with colleagues were also in part unstructured, where she '... was able to go to anyone for help ...'.

For others meetings were more structured, as in the case of Jeff and Charl's weekly meetings. This was then restructured as Charl provided Jeff with more space to grow individually. Melodie and Zishaam also held regular meeting related to Zishaam's tasks at hand. Neo had monthly meetings with her network of mentors on a monthly basis.

- Supporting participation in training and short courses that address development needs;

As in the case of Gaynor, Sabelo and the stewardship staff of CapeNature, their participation was supported in professional development programmes that supported the work they do in their respective institutions. You might however recognize a developmental need of a more specific nature, such as presentation skills, report writing, amongst others and support mentees in their participation in a related skills development programme.

Ben provided training for the mentors with whom he worked in Extension Theory to support the work they do in stewardship extension.

- Meeting with others in professional networks to inform the task at hand;

Many mentees were encouraged to participate in conferences related to the work and tasks they were doing. For example Neo's participation in various meetings together with Lesley. Other examples include participation in the stewardship Peer Learning Forums, the monthly meetings convened in the Boland Area of CapeNature and the regular interactions amongst urban conservators in the City of Cape Town.

- Guidance towards useful information resources that might inform the work being done;

An example is the volumes of readings that Charl gave Jeff to read around land use planning. Another example is reflected in Roy and Sabelo's case where Roy would refer Sabelo to key people who could help him in exploring the field of community conservation.

These are just some of the ways in which mentees can be supported through the work related tasks with which they engage. You are encouraged to add to this list of creative ways of supporting mentees.

8.5 Assessing development towards the outputs

It is critical to assess the development of mentees through specific tasks and provide them with regular, clear, constructive and timeous feedback. The specific outcomes defined for a task could provide a framework for assessing the mentees progress towards and appropriate completion of an assigned task.

Assessment need not necessarily only be done at the end of a task (summative), but could also inform the development of the task (formative). The latter has the potential to significantly improve the quality of the end product and also instill greater confidence in the mentor is his / her ability.

Assessment could take place in various ways. It could be through verbal report backs in regular meetings. These could also be done through written reports, presentations, assessment of events, such as workshops, training, etc and / or through observation.

Gabbi's mentee developed weekly plans that she could review and assess relative the quarterly plans that Gabbi herself participated in.

Ben assessed Hermien through a written planning report of her engagement with the landowner and through observation when accompanying her on the site visit to the landowner.

Sabelo was assessed in the context of the environmental education course and based on the educational principles reflected in the programme, the practical aspects of running the programme and his own reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

Feedback following the assessment is critical and should ideally be approached in a developmental way. Most psychologists would say that individuals are more receptive to constructive critique if their efforts are acknowledged upfront. Most mentees with a commitment to learning through the mentoring interaction are likely to put much effort into the task they are assigned. Since these individuals are on a journey of learning, they do have the luxury of doing things less effectively and these become the points at which constructive critique could strengthen the individual both personally and professionally. As noted before feedback should be regular and timeous so as to aid the development of the mentee as well as make constructive inputs into the job being undertaken.

In summary

Lesley says that the most significant thing for her in participating in the mentors support programme was the realization that a one size fits all approach is less effective and working with mentees. Given the difference in professional contexts, differences in needs, differences in personalities, etc. one can only deduce that mentoring interactions need to be customized to the contexts and personalities involved.

This section provides only some ideas of strategies that might help you in the work you do with mentees. You are however encouraged to customize these to your own institutional needs, your own needs and circumstances as a mentor and the needs and personality of the mentee with whom you work.

9. Concluding remarks on mentoring

Mentoring is a tried and tested approach to supporting development of individuals, practices and institutions. However as time evolves and consequently our interactions and practices in the workspace change it might be necessary to revisit our traditional practices and reorient these towards approaches more applicable to our current day contexts. All of what is contained in this source book does not suggest throwing the baby out with the bathwater. But rather encourages you to draw on what you have in terms of professional and mentoring experience and use these suggestions as lenses for reflection and improvement of your interactions with mentees in the workspace.

As we conclude the discussion on mentoring, 2 aspects are worth brief mention:

Institutionalising mentoring

Most mentors desire the institutionalization of mentoring, to recognize their significant effort in supporting the development of individuals, practices and ultimately the institution. For many this would mean an inclusion of mentoring as a key performance area considered in their own performance assessments. This issue has been debated at length in the mentors support programme and remains unresolved. The following key points might support you in engaging this debate further:

- Most managers of people in organizations whether in a junior, middle to senior management position have at least one key performance area that focuses on the development of people. Mentoring individuals forms part of this and as such does not become an additional task to existing key performance areas;
- Through supporting the growth and development of individuals with whom you work ultimately translates into strengthened practices that form a part of your own management key performance areas as a supervisor, manager and / or mentor. It therefore makes good sense to support the development of individuals who contribute to your own management areas.
- Informal research across a sample of associated institutions has shown that mentoring in institutions is highly prominent and effective, irrespective of whether these processes are formalized or not. In fact, research reflects that the informal mentoring processes were more effective than formalized processes, since individuals, both mentors and mentees reacting negatively to the 'requirement' of mentoring or being mentored.

- Participation in the mentoring support programme provided the impetus in 3 institutions for developing and setting up formalized and structured mentoring programmes. Responses to these formalized processes were not as positive in one of the 2 organisations and this seems to validate the point noted before. Mentoring is best left as an elective rather than a prescription in organisations.

Developing a culture of learning

Having perhaps argued against the formalization of mentoring, mentoring has the capacity to contribute to cultivating and developing a culture of learning in the organization. In the C.A.P.E. programme as more and more mentors participated in the support programme, particularly in bigger groups from individual institutions, the scope of mentoring increased and conversations about better supporting young professionals through mentoring intensified. This is evident in:

- Nelson Mandela Bay Metro's Environmental Management Branch developed a focus on mentoring for inclusion in their most recent operational plan;
- In the City of Cape Town, mentoring interactions between senior management (as mentors) and middle managers (as mentees) led to middle managers replicating these interactions with junior staff with who they worked;
- In CapeNature as more and more managers participated in the mentoring support programme a resolution was passed at an executive management level to develop and implement a structured mentoring programme, with a dedicated co-ordinator;
- In many institutions and programmes there is evidence of a steady flow of mentees on a year to year basis, evidence of a growing groundswell of mentoring both within institutions as well as in the sector as a whole.

Though mentoring requires a reorientation in terms of approach to suit our particular professional contexts and the staff with whom we work, it continues to be a significant way of attracting, retaining and enabling and sustaining the growth of new entrants to the field of environment.