

Effective mentorship of new entry graduates in the construction industry: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Mentoring is vital for all young employees entering the workplace. Despite the growing research on both sets of individuals, mentors and protégés, mentoring from the perspective of the organizational remain comparatively under reported. It is important to significantly analyze the concept and to emphasize the distinct elements of effective mentoring of new entry graduates, in the construction industry. The aim of this paper is to look at the experiences and problems contributing to effective mentoring of young graduate's construction employees within construction companies. This study will examine how construction graduates employees are mentored, who is supposed to mentor them and how effective and crucial mentoring can be used to enhance performance in the construction industry, which has become very competitive and difficult. It will look at the important potential negative outcomes or problems in mentoring. The paper focuses on how organisations view mentoring. The study is mainly a literature review with a special focus on the human resource management and leadership, the data used in the report is generally qualitative, based on the content analysis, case studies and historical data that discusses formal mentoring internal to the workplace which sustain on and off job learning. The results revealed the organisation current circumstances and the issues that are important to the HR function. Mentoring is primarily used to transfer tacit knowledge from those close to retirement to younger employees, foster the personnel development and create well being at work. The study will indicate whether or not young graduates' construction workers are they being motored or not, are they involved in any form of mentoring, within their construction companies and that communication skills, knowledge sharing, and correcting mistakes or giving negative feedback are important for an effective mentor in the construction industry and also that mentoring is an important tool that can enhance career and personal growth when conducted effectively.

Keywords

Construction industry, Graduates Employees, Youth Mentoring, Human resource development.

1. Introduction

Mentoring nowadays is a key element within national and local strategies for working with graduates, especially those who are viewed as 'socially excluded' (Council for Scientific Institute of Research Built Environment (2008)). Few methodical evaluations of graduate's employees have taken place in UK to enable contrasts to be made between projects and with other forms of graduate's involvement. Hence, some groups of immature people are often constructed as a threat rather than as a resource for the future, meaning giving more information to the graduate, knowledge transfer in mentoring, they will know further than their mentors. Simultaneously concern about the vulnerability of graduates has led to exceptional levels of observation over some groups; this can be a black or white group. The construction industry is one of the major sectors which contributes to the economy of South Africa. It is for this reason that the industry has to keep up with producing the required quality; however the industry needs to be always filled with the people with enough skills to continue with the work. According to (Philips, 1983). The construction skills shortage has a negative impact on the construction industry. This impact affects the construction industry's performance and future developments of the construction industry. Mentoring is considered to be the oldest form of knowledge transfer (Brannen et al., al 1994).

Mentoring can also be used as a mechanism to communicate with those employees that are not open, in regard to their performance, to break down the ice in an employee. According to the Council for Scientific Institute of Research (Freedman, 1993), research report in South Africa, indicated that the absence of mentors and mentoring is an impediment to progress, advancement in the country in mentoring, meaning new development in the subject. The young person is constructed as in deficit – lacking skills, appropriate socialization, lacking appropriate parenting and subject to peer pressure.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this paper is to contribute to a broader understanding of effective mentoring of new entry graduates employees. Mentoring programs plays a vibrant role in the enhancement of careers for construction graduates and increasing the productivity of the construction industry. A significant percentage of the workforce, within the construction sector is nearing retirement age over the next ten years. These employees have acquired a tremendous amount of knowledge about how things work, how to get things done and who to go to when problems arise. Losing their expertise and experience could drastically reduce efficiency, resulting in costly mistakes, unexpected quality problems, or significant disruptions in services and/or performance. This will impinge on graduates greatly, as to how will they work and perform their functions in an organization, and they are fully prepared with theoretical knowledge from the University not physical experience to do the work, as they need this knowledge and experience. In addition, faster turnover among younger graduate's employees and more competitive recruiting and compensation packages add significantly to the growing concern about the organization's ability to sustain adequate levels of performance. Effective mentoring of graduates employees is an interesting addition to the HRD (Human Resource Development) literature because many of the characteristics of an organization's, habitual approaches to employee human resources can't be easily changed.

1.2 Objectives of the study

- ❖ To investigate the mentoring of young graduates construction workers within organizations, whether they are being mentored or not.

- ❖ To determine experiences and problems contributing to effective mentoring of young graduate's construction employees within construction companies.

1.3 Methodology

The study is mainly a literature review with a special focus on effective mentoring of graduates employees current situation and the prospects for the future. The data used in the report is mainly qualitative, based on the content analysis, case studies and historical data.

2. Literature review findings

Skills shortage in the construction has been termed as one of the major setbacks of the construction industry. The government and other construction firms utilize mentoring programs which are used to train construction graduates. Many construction graduates participate in mentoring programs but don't acquire the required skills for them to start their careers even after completing the duration of this mentoring programs. The construction industry is one of the major sectors which contribute to the economy of South Africa. It is for this reason that the industry has to keep up with producing the required quality; however the industry needs to be always filled with the people with enough skills to continue with the work. According to (Philips, 1983) the construction skills shortage has a negative impact on the construction industry. This impacts affects the construction industry's performance and future developments of the construction industry. Mentoring is considered to be the oldest form of knowledge transfer (Brannen et al., 1994).

Mentoring is usually a formal or informal relationship between two people a senior mentor (usually outside the protégé's chain of supervision) and a junior protégé. Mentoring has been identified as an important influence in professional development in both the public and private sector in large and medium sized organizations. Mentoring as a form of strategic human resource management is an interesting addition to the HRD literature because it provides a mechanism of change for individual employees, within construction organizations. Having a powerful human resource development (HRD) organization is a worthwhile asset of companies, and an enterprise's efficiency is closely connected to human capital's managerial and developmental systems (Latagana, Dinu & Stoica, 2010). Human capitals play an important role in order to success an organization. Mentoring is about skill development and specialized knowledge transfer. Mentoring can also be used as a mechanism to communicate with those employees that are not open, in regard to their performance, to break down the ice in an employee. According to the Council for Scientific Institute of Research (Freedman, 1993), research report in South Africa, indicated that the absence of mentors and mentoring is an impediment to progress, advancement in the country in mentoring, meaning new development in the subject. The young person is constructed as in deficit – lacking skills, appropriate socialization, lacking appropriate parenting and subject to peer pressure.

Mentoring has been used for centuries as a way of helping younger protégés to advance, and, according to Darwin (2000) mentoring is presently at the forefront of strategies to improve workplace learning. Workplace mentoring is the most critical factor in worksite learning. Within the government and the private sector, mentoring is often a component of different types of development, including graduates career development and training programs in large and medium sized organizations. The major function of mentoring within these programs is to promote the protégé's development in specific areas and to facilitate successful completion of the program. While these mentoring relationships can produce positive developmental and organizational outcomes, both mentoring programs and relationships sometimes fail due to a diversity of causes and problems, for example lack of participation, no leadership involvement, poor planning, unrealistic expectations, and unclear goals. Today mentoring is commonly used in professional

and managerial learning, but is relatively new as a means of supporting low paid trainees and apprentices doing certificate level qualifications.

Mentoring in the construction industry is a key element in construction work (Rogers, 2007). Few methodical evaluations of graduate's employees have taken place in UK to enable contrasts to be made between projects and with other forms of graduate's involvement. Hence, some groups of immature people are often constructed as a threat rather than as a resource for the future, meaning giving more information to the graduate, knowledge transfer in mentoring, they will know further than their mentors. Simultaneously concern about the vulnerability of graduates has led to exceptional levels of observation over some groups, this can be a black or white group.

2.1 Mentoring of graduates employees in the construction industry

More and more organizations are creating formal mentoring programs for various reasons. From increased morale to increased organizational productivity and career development, the benefits of an organization that actively supports mentoring are many. However, successful mentoring programs do not just happen. Organizations must first make a strong business case to establish why the organization should dedicate the time, attention and resources required to make a formal mentoring process work. According to a discussion document on restoring skills, compiled by the cidb(Construction Industry Development Board) along with the public works in South Africa the construction industry has experienced a major shortage of skills. The document further suggested that the cidb and the public works will create a document that will be used by construction firms to enhance the skills of their employees. According to the skills development summit in South Africa , there will be an establishment of new ways which will help in solving the shortage of skills in the construction industry. Mentoring is a key element in construction work (Ringen et al., 1995b). For example, it is very common on construction jobsites to have experienced workers, who oversee and mentor less experienced workers. However, the relationship between a mentor and his/her protégée' in the construction industry may be different from the mentoring relationships typically observed in other industries, due to constantly changing work environment and crews, diverse and rapid tasks, and the short-term relationships that protégé's have with their mentors (Brotman et al., 1998) .

Mentoring relationships and formal mentoring programs have received accumulative attention in HRD and related literature over the past several years. Studies examining mentoring involvement have showed that up to two-thirds of employees have engaged in some type of mentoring relationship and that mentoring functions may be especially beneficial for employees because of the greater barriers they often face . Participation in formal mentoring programs has a variety of benefits for participants (Wanberg et al., 2003). Two of the most emphasized developmental benefits have been psychosocial and career advancement (Kram, 1985). In spite of increasing activity, few empirical studies have been performed examining outcomes of formal mentoring programs (Wanberg et al., 2003). Because of the substantial investment of time and energy on the part of organizations and mentoring participants, a better understanding of the presence or absence of formal mentoring program benefits would be an important contribution (Ragins et al., 2000).

2.2 Experiences and problems contributing to effective mentoring of graduate's construction employees

Although the benefits of mentoring stated in the literature, this does not prevent the possibility that mentoring relationships experience problems or negative outcomes, (Scandura ,1998). Initial research on social-psychological and interpersonal relationships notes that hostile incidents are common and often a

neglected aspect of all relationships (Eby et al., 2000), these ranges from minor episodes, such as arguing, to serious incidents, such as physical or psychological abuse (Marshall,1994). In there study on negative mentoring experience revealed that protégés experience: Dissimilar personality and habits, mismatch within the dyad, self-absorption, work style, distancing behaviour, manipulative behaviour, inappropriate delegation of duty, intentional exclusion, credit taking, politicking, that is, self-promotion, technical income- petence, lack of mentor expertise, that is, interpersonal incompetency, sabotage of any efforts, general dys- functional, that is, bad attitude, personal problems and deception (Eby et al., 2000) . The authors advocated the need for further research in the area of negative mentoring in individual disciplines which might be different from one industry to another.

Problems or negative outcomes were rare between mentors and new knowledge workers, apart from dissimilar personality and habits which was seen as a problem or negative outcome indicating that this problem occurred fairly many times. General dysfunctional, that is, bad attitudes, personal problems for example, alcohol abuse, family problems etc. and deception, that is, not being truthful were never a problem to the new knowledge workers as there tendency was towards occasionally and never occurring (Agumba and Fester, 2010) . As per the finding it can be noted that if mentoring functions are adequately achieved then problems or negative outcomes are rarely experienced. Studies conducted by (Eby et al., 2000) and (Ragins et al., 2000) on dysfunctional mentoring relation- ships are not fully supported by this finding. The problems or negative variables in a mentoring relationship were obtained from related literature review, indicated (Nkado and Mbachu, 2002), that new knowledge workers occasionally experienced problems during mentoring. Dissimilar personality and habits, was seen as the main problem as it fell in the mean band between 2.60 - 3.40 indicating that it happens fairly many times. General dysfunctional, that is, bad attitudes, personal problems for example, alcohol abuse, family problems etc. and deception, that is, not being truthful were never a problem to the new knowledge workers as they fell in the mean band between 1.00 - 1.80.

3. Conclusion

The results from the current study indicate that communication skills, knowledge sharing, and correcting mistakes/giving negative feedback are important for an effective mentor in the construction industry. Retaining organizational knowledge in the face of changing workforce demographics is a complex challenge that requires simultaneously confronting the problems created by an aging workforce, a shrinking talent pool and increasingly restless employees. The results from this study can be used to augment current mentoring research and provide a starting point for mentor-assisted development in construction. This study is primarily the authors' description of the extensive learning and development process for graduate engineers that has been developed and embedded within Kentz Engineers and Constructors and other construction companies. However, some evaluative conclusions can reasonably be drawn. These are:

- In global engineering and construction skills shortages are real and the largest constraint on growth in the sector .Companies are competing for skills and within this context those seeking to be
- “Preferred employers” are investing in learning and development and the infrastructure to support career development. Engineering graduates are in a strong position when choosing employers.

Some of the best business decisions are made in times of scarcity when the value of resources becomes fully understood. Investment in the development of graduate engineers. All mentoring processes will remain works-in-progress if they are to remain relevant to changing business needs. It is to be hoped that the experiences related will resonate with others, and that lessons learned may have more general

application, although every organization will have its own unique needs and circumstances. Among these lessons are that mentoring has lasting benefits, but that formal programme can fail to reflect this? An organization-wide mentoring process needs to balance the needs for uniformity with flexibility, needs to foster accountability, and needs to be refined in the light of practical realities. Above all it needs people who are committed to stick with the process in order to ensure its success.

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