



# EFFECTS OF MENTORING ON SOCIALIZATION OF GRADUATE EMPLOYEES IN THE BUILDING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

MORENA WILLIAM NKOMO<sup>1</sup> and WELLINGTON DIDIBHUKU THWALA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Construction and Quantity Surveying, University of Johannesburg,  
Johannesburg, South Africa*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa*

Introducing graduates into the organization, thereby establishing the organizational culture and values is often underestimated for improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency, especially in a different work-force context such as South Africa. Mentoring is experiencing resurgence because business leaders not only recognize the benefits of transferring knowledge among graduates. The study describes better practices that organizations can use to address the threat of lost knowledge caused by changing labor force demographics. The study was mainly a literature review, qualitative with a special focus on the effects of mentoring on socialization of graduates within organizations. The data used in the report was mainly qualitative, based on the content analysis, and historical data. The findings indicate mentoring is a central part of socialization process and is crucial for socializing graduates into the organization. The study indicated knowledge transfer supports employees in improving their skill sets which increases their marketability and the potential for them to pursue career opportunities. The early success of the inventiveness provides useful lessons for the construction industry and executives who recognize that knowledge retention, socialization and mentoring of graduates are critical for supporting future organizational performance. This, mentoring relationships may assist organizations in simultaneously promoting effective knowledge transfer and commitment. That assists in the retention of key knowledge workers. Future research in this area is recommended to better understand how mentoring relationships may benefit organizations.

*Keywords:* Skills development, Construction industry, Human resource.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Joining a company as a new employee, certainly, results in a degree of “culture shock” that can be very confusing if not mitigated through mentoring and orientation strategies that are intended to draw the individual out in order to add value to them as an employee and, subsequently, to the organization. In high-turnover businesses this even more serious because putting the process ahead of the individual will so often lead to discouraging to the point where they resign or are dismissed from the position which costs the company a great deal of money in terms of having to recruit and train a completely new individual employee. The increased number of job changes

shortens the life cycle of an employee, putting companies at greater risk of organizational knowledge loss.

Organizational socialization refers to the mechanism through which new employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to become effective organizational members and insiders (Bauer and Erdogan 2011). Research has demonstrated that these socialization techniques lead to positive outcomes for new employees such as higher job satisfaction, better job performance, greater organizational commitment, and reduction in occupational stress and intent to quit (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003).

Organizations today face a dilemma regarding the retention of key knowledge workers. Knowledge transfer amongst employees is crucial for organizational productivity. Turnover is a critical human resource issue in all sectors of the economy. Turnover affects productivity, product and service quality, and profitability. To minimize the impact of workforce turnover, companies need a proactive strategy for knowledge retention and transfer. Regardless of economic conditions, employee turnover happens. The financial impact of workforce mobility is well documented. Mentoring is considered to be the oldest form of knowledge transfer (Stephenson 1998). This requires organizations and researchers to focus more closely on processes such as mentoring that can support effective knowledge transfer and retention of critical knowledge workers. Conversely, if organizations do invest in knowledge transfer they risk increasing the marketability and job mobility of their employees which could potentially harm retention (Rousseau and Shperling 2004). Job mobility has increased in past decades because similarities in processes and technology mean that knowledge is less idiosyncratic to a particular organization and thus is more transferable (Rousseau and Shperling 2004). Mentorship has demonstrated importance in the socialization of new employees Major *et al.* (1995). Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993) discovered that newcomers with mentors become more knowledgeable about the organization than did newcomers without mentors. Mentors can help newcomers better manage their expectations and feel comfortable with their new environment through advice-giving and social support Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993).

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring programs in organizations can be helpful in improving performance and transferring knowledge, and lead to higher job satisfaction and retention of employees, resulting in higher business productivity. In the workplace, relationships naturally develop between co-workers, clients, supervisors, and subordinates. Relationships at work can be both productive and unproductive, filled with animosity or admiration, and can foster friendships that go beyond the workplace lasting long into other careers and employers. One type of relationship that can be very beneficial in the workplace, even advancing an individual's career, is the mentoring relationship. The mentoring relationship between a mentor - a more experienced employee - and mentee can provide both parties benefits offering support and knowledge in performing a job, increased admiration in the office, and navigating the politics of an organization.

The relationship an employee has with his/her peers, colleagues and company has a significant impact on knowledge retention and transfer. A positive relationship facilitates knowledge sharing during all phases of an employee's life cycle; a negative relationship or lack of a relationship can impede knowledge sharing, especially at the point of exit. An unintended consequence of knowledge transfer via mentoring is the potential for increased job mobility for protégés and the resulting negative effect on organizational retention efforts, within construction companies. Recent findings from a longitudinal study suggest that mentoring fosters organizational retention in part because the emotional bond established between a mentor and a

protégé may contribute to higher levels of organizational commitment (Payne and Huffman 2005). Mentoring relationships may operate, thus, through a dual pathway to impact organizational retention, socialization by assisting in the transfer of organizational knowledge while simultaneously developing the high-quality interpersonal relationships that strengthen a protégé's commitment to an organization. While there is an expanded interest in predicting newcomer turnover at the selection process, research on this topic has generally focused on organizational socialization and how it is used to familiarize new employees with new roles and to retain these new organizational employees. Socialization is an ongoing process that sometimes lasts for a year. It represents a sense-making process that helps new employees adjust; a typical socialization process includes three phases (Noe 2005).

- *Anticipatory socialization:* This stage occurs before new employees join the organization, through interacting with representatives of the company (for example, recruiters and managers).
- *Encounter:* When new employees begin a new job, they start to learn about job tasks and receive training. Managers can exert their influence by helping new employees understand their roles and duties.
- *Settling in:* New employees begin to feel comfortable with their job demands and social relationships. They will be interested in the company's evaluation of their performance and in learning about potential career opportunities within the company.

### 3 DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Though viewed as a key aspect of mentoring (Stephenson 1998), knowledge transfer has been primarily examined at the interfirm level (Carr *et al.* 2006), at the interdepartmental level (Berta and Baker 2004), and at the team level (Gibson *et al.* 2007). Knowledge management articles highlight knowledge transfer as a key mechanism for organizational success, yet a gap exists between practice (Buckman 1998) and formal research (Grover and Davenport 2001). Little research in the knowledge management literature, however, has explicitly tested mentoring as a means by which knowledge is transferred among individual's employees. Mentoring encompasses coaching, sharing perspectives, and transferring knowledge and wisdom to the mentee(s). The mentor is not a supervisor but a person with whom the employee can communicate freely and honestly without concern about being evaluated. Knowledge transfer is defined as an exchange of organizational knowledge between a source and a recipient (Grover and Davenport 2001) in which the exchange consists of information and guidance about resources and relationships. A primary mode of knowledge transfer is the direct sharing of knowledge between individuals.

#### 3.1 Mentoring Saves Money, Retains Workers, Builds Leadership, and Growth Talent

Mentoring contributes to employee growth and tenure. In the long run, a well-organized and managed program can save the company thousands of rands.

- **Reduced turnover and recruiting costs.** Mentoring relationships can help retain talented people because they have a stronger commitment to the organization (Jacka and Quinn 2010). Talent remains much less likely to leave if they feel supported in their work and made aware, for example, of new opportunities that their mentor suggests.

- **Assistance in transferring knowledge from the retiring workforce to new workers.** Many mentoring relationships help younger employees learn from those who will retire soon. Pairing junior staff with more senior staff can reinvigorate the enthusiasm of senior employees as they transfer crucial knowledge to the next generation of workers. This reduces the loss of the tacit knowledge.

The purpose of knowledge transfer is to pass information from the more-experienced to the less-experienced employees so that the less-experienced employees can build the capabilities needed to assume future roles in the organization (DeLong 2004). Research at both the organizational and individual level of analysis support the notion that knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between mentoring and performance.

### 3.1.1 *Best practices in retention and knowledge transfer*

In order to address the threat of lost knowledge caused by changing workforce demographics. The heart of any knowledge-retention strategy is its knowledge sharing practices. There are many sorts of methods that contribute to knowledge capture, sharing and re-application: after-action reviews, communities of practice, face-to-face meetings, mentoring programs, expert referral services, training, video conferencing, interviews, written reports, etc. The question remains: which ones are most useful for addressing knowledge-retention problems?

A review of the HR literature suggests that sources on HR retention can be grouped into the following categories:

Based on the review of the literature, the list of retention practices that captures the main types of interventions discussed in the HR literature. They are as follows (Lochead and Stephens 2004):

**Competitive and Fair Compensation** is a fundamental starting point in most strategies to attract and retain employees. However, there is general agreement that compensation levels do not single-handedly guarantee employee retention. Common best practices include the use of industry surveys to benchmark and position wage and salary structures to be fair and competitive.

**Training, Professional Development, and Career Planning** are effective ways to enhance employee retention. Training constitutes a visible investment that the company makes in the worker, providing him or her with new skills, and greater competencies and confidence. Training often leads to work that is more intrinsically rewarding; training encourages workers to make longer term commitments to their workplace: it permits them to see a future with the company.

**Knowledge Transfer – cross-training, coaching and mentoring, phased in retirement.** While employee retention practices seek to retain *workers*, knowledge transfer practices seek to retain *skills*, through both formal and informal exercises in information sharing and the building of collective knowledge. Mentoring and coaching, phased-in retirements, and cross training and job rotation, are types of knowledge transfer that overlap with training.

## 4 CONCLUSION

Retaining organizational knowledge in the face of changing workforce demographics is a complex challenge; knowledge transfer is a key mechanism for organizational success. Knowledge management literature has tested mentoring as a means by which knowledge is transferred among employees. Mentoring encompasses transferring knowledge and wisdom to

the mentee(s). Mentoring relationships help retain talented people because they have a stronger commitment to the organization. The heart of any knowledge-retention strategy is its knowledge sharing practices. Competitive and fair compensation is a fundamental starting point in most strategies to attract and retain employees. The most effective knowledge retention strategies will require a multifaceted approach and a long-term commitment on both the leadership of an organization and the employees. Knowledge transfer practices seek to retain *skills*. Organizations must understand the types of processes that facilitate effective knowledge transfer between individual employees, while simultaneously retaining knowledge in the organization so it can benefit the organization and employees. This study is one of the few empirical research efforts to shed light on this process. Results of this study suggest that a focus on mentoring simply as a vehicle to promote knowledge sharing may harm an organization. Attention must also be given to understanding the mentoring behavior's that foster a protégé's affective commitment so as to mitigate the potentially negative effect of knowledge transfer on retention.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, co supervisor, department of construction management and quantity surveying for the opportunity.

### References

- Bauer, T. N. and Erdogan., B., Organizational socialization: s The effective onboarding of new employees. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology, Vol 3: Maintaining, expanding, and contracting the organization*, APA Handbooks in Psychology (pp. 51–64). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association ,2011.
- Berta, W. B. and Baker, G. R., Factors that impact the transfer and retention of best practices for reducing error in hospitals. *Health Care Management Review*, 29(2) 90-97, 2000.
- Buckman, R. H., Knowledge sharing at Buckman Labs. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 19(1), 11-, 1998
- Carr, J. C., Pearson, A. W., West, M. J., and Boyar, S. L., Prior occupational experience, anticipatory socialization, and employee retention. *Journal of Management*, 32, 343–359, (2006).
- DeLong, D. W., *Lost knowledge: Confronting the threat of an aging workforce*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Gibson, C. B., Waller, M. J., Carpenter, M., and Conte, J., Antecedents, consequences, and moderators of time perspective heterogeneity for knowledge management in MNO teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28, 1005-1024, 2000.
- Grover, V. and Davenport, T. H., General perspectives on knowledge management: fostering a research agenda. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 18(1), 5-2, 2001
- Jacka, M. and Quinn, P., (2010) "Beware of the Hidden Costs of Staff Turnover," Absolute Recruitment Group. Retrieved from ([http://www.absoluteglobal.net/absolute/globalweb.nsf/\(\\$Content\)/article\\_staffturnover.html](http://www.absoluteglobal.net/absolute/globalweb.nsf/($Content)/article_staffturnover.html)) on 2016/04/03.
- Kammeyer-Mueller J. D., and Wanberg, C. R., Predictors and outcomes of proactivity in the socialization process. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 373–385, 2000.
- Lohead, C., and Stephens, A. Employee retention, labour turn over and knowledge transfer: case studies from the Canadian plastics Centre, Canada, 2004.
- Major, D. A., Kozlowski, S. W. J., Chao, G. T., and Gardner, P. D., A longitudinal investigation of newcomer expectations, early socialization outcomes, and the moderating effects of role development factors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80, 418–43, 1995.
- Noe, R. A., *Employee training and development*. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2005.
- Ostroff, C. and Kozlowski, S. W. J., The role of mentoring in the information gathering processes of newcomers during early organizational socialization. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 42, 170–183, 1993.
- Payne, S. C. and Huffman, A. H., A longitudinal examination of the influence of mentoring on organizational commitment and turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(1), 158-168, 2005.

Rousseau, D. M., and Shperling, Z. Ownership and the changing employment relationship: Why stylized notions of labor no longer generally apply--A reply to Zardkoohi and Paetzold. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(4), 562-569, 2004.

Stephenson, K., What knowledge tears apart, networks make whole. *Internal communication focus*. Retrieved from <http://www.netform.com/html/icf>. Pdf. April 14, 2014], 1998.