Cross-gender Mentoring of Principals in Selected South African Schools

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ABSTRACT Many South African schools, especially secondary schools, are led by male principals although female school manager numbers are gradually growing. Current research is also beginning to show that there might not be any major (gender-based) differences between male and female school managers. This study reports on findings on cross-gender mentoring in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Ten female school leaders were mentors to a number of male protégés who were candidates in the Advanced Certificate in Education-School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML) programme. The article traces the dynamics involved in cross-gender mentoring and it also dispels some of the assumed positions. This was a generic qualitative study that employed observations, document analysis and interviews. The conclusions explicate that mentoring is influenced more by effectiveness of the mentors than by their gender. Moreover, certain qualities are important for any mentoring relationship to prosper.

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing Practice through Mentoring

Lewy (1987) states that in South Africa and a number of other countries there are no pre-service training institutes or courses for the training of principalship. Furthermore, he pointed out that those who appoint principals evaluate the candidates' success in teaching, expertise in matters of education, leadership and social skills. This is supported by Bush and Oduro (2006) who aver that throughout Africa there is no formal requirement for principals to be trained as managers. Their impact as successful classroom teachers is normally used as a yardstick. This therefore means that until recently (2007) there has been no formal qualification for principals in South Africa. In 2007, a qualification referred to as the Advanced Certificate in Education – School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML) was introduced as a part-time programme to be completed over two years in a very interactive and practical programme. Among other important aspects of this programme is to ensure that principals are mentored throughout their careers; mentoring is perceived as a crucial aspect of professional development in the programme.

Much research in South Africa has shown that in many dysfunctional, disadvantaged schools the problems experienced have more to do with the people at the helm. Many school managers need the support to be able to steer their schools to success. Bush (2007) points out that the quality of leadership makes a huge difference to school and learner outcomes. "In many parts of the world, including South Africa, there is recognition that schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners" (Bush 2007: 391). This explains the reason why there has been more focus on mentoring of school leaders and the need thereof in South Africa. Lumby and Coleman (2007) cite Coleman who contends that there is potentially a special place for mentoring and the use of role models in the development of members of the disadvantaged groups. Mentoring can be a complex process that is influenced by a number of factors such as time, matching the mentor and the protégé, competency and a number of other aspects. Yet, it remains crucial in supporting those from diverse backgrounds and in accessing leadership roles. Lumby and Coleman (2007: 68) also highlight the concept of 'reverse' mentoring where the mentor is younger, different gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Furthermore, they point out that the reverse mentor can make suggestions of what else the leaders should do to be more diverse role models. This article focuses on an aspect of diversity and that is, gender.

The article explores the interconnectedness amongst three concepts; leadership, gender and mentoring. Women capacity building has taken centre stage not only in the South African organisations but around the world. In South

Africa, the affirmative action policies are known for trying to redress past apartheid imbalances. Arguably, the most crucial step is to empower the society's women to be able to assume all work positions including the traditional male jobs. It is within this context that the question asked in this study is:

How do male protégés and female mentors perceive cross-gender mentoring?

Sub-question explored was:

- In which ways do the society's stereotypes negatively affect the mentoring of males by females?

Choosing a Male or Female Mentor

Traditionally, mentoring has been conducted by male mentors on male protégés. With male school managers in abundance, it was apparent that "appropriate mentors" would be male, given their experience and exposure to management. However, in today's workplaces, schools are beginning to experience a gradual increase in women middle managers. Hansman (1999) argues that mentoring has frequently been seen as the way in which women can overcome barriers to advancement within the workplace and research on mentors has earlier assumed that gender of either the mentor or the protégé does not affect the development of the mentoring relationship. However, Hansman also argues that more recent research reflects that mentoring relationships are frequently not available to women as they are to men; and if they are available are not as meaningful or helpful as they could be. It is also a critical commonplace that women have a responsibility beyond their careers; they have to look after children, build a home and a number of other important responsibilities. Ghosh and Haynes (2008: 33-34) contend:

The crux of the problem is the traditional upbringing of women in a male dominated society. Women are taught to think of their career aspirations to be secondary and to give family, priority over work. Though many women have successfully overcome such domestic constraints by developing, personal relationships that include sharing responsibilities, by remaining single or by having fewer children (Vertz 1985). The effect of societal stereotypes is also evident in the very few female mentor-male protégé mentoring relationships.

This shows how the societal roles can limit women's advancement in their chosen careers. There are many informal and formal debates where people argue that the enhancement of women mentors and mentees will raise equity dimension in organisations. If mentoring can benefit mentees in these relationships, one can assume that it will be crucial for the development of women in workplaces as well. Mentoring has always been suggested as one powerful tool to assist women in breaking the glass ceiling (Blake-Beard 2003). The glass ceiling refers to the unseen yet unbreakable barriers that keep women from rising to upper positions within the organisation. In literature mentoring has been captured as a process that benefits both the protégé and the mentor as highlighted above; but the glass ceiling has a potential of hampering it when it comes to professional development that includes mentoring. Williams and Locke (1999) contend that mentors can find internal satisfaction from knowing they have made a positive impact on another person-they might also receive recognition within the organisation from colleagues for successfully developing a protégé.

Choosing a male or a female mentor seems to matter, according to latest research. Glaser (2003) argues that it does and the mentees' choice should depend on what they are looking for in the mentoring relationship. Furthermore, Glaser highlights a number of qualities that female mentors might have; they appear to be better role models and they excel at offering personal support, counseling and role modeling. Women are also more committed in emphasizing personal growth and development rather than about promotions. Female mentors also tend to be more approachable and more willing to share their personal lives (Glaser 2003). Gehrke et al. (2006) argue that female mentors and mentees appeared to be more influenced than males, by feelings of personal gratification when deciding whether to become mentors. Stead and Elliott (2009) also contend that characteristics labeled feminine are now perceived as being more significant in encouraging organisational change including co-operation, openness and caring orientation. Some people would then argue that female mentors bring more to the mentoring relationship than male mentors do although other authors such as Butterfield and Grinnell (1999) are careful

in supporting this because they say that circumstances are complicated by organisational contexts.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative study and data was collected through observations, interviews and documentary analysis. Like all qualitative studies, the objective of the study was to capture the context and understand the broad operations and perceptions of women mentors. The researcher wanted to understand the phenomenon in its entirety as he interacted with the mentors in the field. Brink (2000: 119) points out that researchers who wish to explore the meaning and promote understanding of human experiences such as pain, grief, hope, caring and so on would find it difficult to quantify the data hence qualitative research methods would be more appropriate.

Ten female mentors were purposefully selected for this study in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. In addition to these 10 participants (mentors), there were also 50 male mentees who were interviewed in groups of five; there were subsequently ten focus groups of five each. The investigation was interested in how the mentoring relationship was experienced between male mentees and female mentors. Each of the 10 mentors had up to 11 mentees both male and female. However, for the purposes of the study, the researcher randomly selected male mentees from each mentor's total group. Each of the mentors was individually interviewed at the beginning of the study before the observation of mentoring contact sessions. Then there was one last interview after the observations of contact sessions. There were also two focus group interviews for each of the 10 groups of five. The interviews were intent on investigating closely how the participants saw the cross-gender mentoring. They were probed into talking at length about their experiences of the cross-gender mentoring. It was crucial for triangulation purposes to interview the mentees and see how they perceive the mentoring encounter.

During observations the researcher was focusing on the conversations and quality of communication as well as documents exchanged between the mentors and their mentees. The first part of the study included observations of the various mentoring contact sessions. Each group observed had its own number of mentees because these sessions were determined by a preplanned programme determined by the mentor and the mentee. However, none of the sessions observed exceeded a total of 11 mentees. Moreover, in each session the researcher concentrated on the selected five mentees. During the course of the study each mentor was observed at least two times while in session with the mentees. The observation schedule included a number of aspects such as:

- Dialogue between each mentor and her mentees
- The quality of communication
- The non-verbal aspects of the communication
- Power dynamics
- Apparent influences of gender in the relationships

The study was conducted over twelve weeks from mid 2009 to the beginning of 2010. Many of the mentees were completing their ACE-SML qualification. The ACE-SML is a practice based qualification meant to develop school managers over two years part-time. One of the requirements of the programme was for the candidates to have mentors who will ideally nurture the candidates to develop professionally. The set of questions asked to the mentors wanted to understand how they perceived their mentoring relationship. Documents analysed included notes exchanged by the mentors, as well as their progress reports. Table 1 spells out the mentors' characteristics:

Table 1 is useful to see the participants' characteristics at a glance. After the completion of data the researcher used coding to tease out certain themes. This facilitated the process of analysing the research results. The observation items were also sorted under common categories.

There were five basic questions posed to the mentors and then the researcher probed further from their responses. The questions for the mentors were:

1. How do you see your role as mentor in this programme?
2. As a woman mentor, what kind of challenges have you encountered in the mentoring of male teachers?
3. Do you mentor male teachers differently from female teachers?
4. How do you prepare for a mentoring session?

Table 1: The mentors' characteristics

Ethnic group	Age	Work experience (school teaching)	Highest qualification	Current occupation
1.BA	56	30 years	BA Hons	District official
2. BA	49	10 years	PhD	Lecturer
3.I	67	36 years	Teachers' diploma	Retired
4.C	51	27 years	BA and teachers' diploma	School principal
5. W	63	30 years	BCom	Entrepreneur
6. BA	53	24 years	PPed	School principal
7. BA	58	27 years	BEdHons	District official
8.BA	68	29 years	Teachers' certificate	Retired
9.I	58	20 years	BAHons and prof. diploma	Lecturer
10.W	54	22 years	MA and prof. diploma	Lecturer

5. Has your initial role as a mentor in this programme changed from the current role you have assumed?

The mentees were only asked one question and the researcher probed from there. The basic question posed was; How has your mentoring experience under Ms. X been since you started in this programme?

THE FINDINGS

Literature reviewed above clearly shows that mentoring relationship is crucial in today's organisations and schools are no exception. It is similar to but not the same as coaching; for as with peer coaching, there must be a relationship of trust and respect as well as adequate time for the mentor to get to know the mentee well (Craig et al. 1998). In this study it was clear that conscientious teachers would grab the opportunity for development if they see it translating to the learners' performance and school success. At a time when many schools suffer from being lukewarm in performance and experiencing dysfunctionality, school managers who care would want panaceas that would rescue them from district officials' and provincial offices' reproach. Many school managers usually point out that they never received any form of preparation before they became principals and heads of department. For many the experience of being a school manager is a job they learn "on the job" through trial and error. As a result many would appreciate any kind of assistance towards professional development, and mentoring is one such assistance as evident in this study.

The Mentors' Experience

The mentors were openly enjoying their role. They stated that "many of their protégés did not underestimate their capabilities as professionals". The mentors also felt so rewarded to see the protégés' appreciation of what they could achieve as they mentored them. Appreciation, positive feedback, respect and trust were among the topmost qualities that the mentors underscored as being crucial in driving the mentoring relationship with the male protégés. They also stated that they could pick it up when the males "protected their terrains as men, when they became conscious of their maleness". However, they "found this natural and said it did not in any way interfere negatively with the mentoring process." Two of these mentors said initially, they had few mentees who appeared problematic; they frequently asked "unnecessary" questions, they seemed to undermine the mentoring process. However, these mentors stated that the mentors' own stereotypes might have influenced their judgments and some of these "trouble makers" became the best of protégés for they enhanced debates during the sessions. The mentors also posited that when they started the mentoring process they did not know what to expect; one mentor for example had always worked in primary schools with female staff throughout her life. She then did not know what to expect from working with "high school males" in professional situations. She proclaims that it was the best for she not only learnt about the male colleagues but she learnt more about herself as well.

Interestingly, almost all the mentors stated that they found it easier to mentor males than females. Amongst the reasons given was that women protégés were more likely to be more competitive with their female mentors. The mentors postulated that when the mentees compete with their mentors there might be challenges; this might stall the progress of the relationship. Surprisingly, the mentors stated that

they did not see this among their male protégés. All the mentors were themselves never mentored before, yet they said that there was much that they had gleaned from the current experience. In the ACE-SML programme all of them did not mentor males only although the study was only interested in cross-gender mentoring. However, it was useful to note that 8 of the mentors said that given a choice, they would like to mentor male protégés after their experiences with the protégés in the study. The mentors appreciated that "basically managers are not essentially different. This experience really shows that our work places can be productive." They concurred that male and female staff is propelled by same goals in the work place "although society makes people to see things differently". It was also interesting to note that even ethnicity did not have much influence on the mentoring process. Ethnicity was not part of the study but the researcher noted that ethnicity did not seem to be a huge determinant of the mentoring relationship. Of the 10 mentors 5 were Black Africans, two Indians, one Coloured and two Whites. The mentees were 90 percent Black Africans. However, the best mentor for the mentees was a white mentor who was very popular with her protégés. Many of her protégés stated that it was easy to be dependent upon her because "she seemed to have a roadmap of how people can lead their schools to success". However, it could be interesting in another study to investigate other dynamics linked to ethnicity in mentoring relationships.

Below, the focus is on the mentees' responses. As highlighted above, it was important for the purposes of this study to see how the mentees perceived the process. This was also important for triangulation purposes.

The Mentees' Experiences

Almost all the 50 mentees showed much trust to their mentors. This was evident as the mentees asked for answers and guidance from their mentors during the sessions. There were only three mentors whose sessions were not as fruitful because each time they did not seem prepared for the sessions and they could hardly answer the mentees' questions. The 15 participants, who were under the guidance of the three mentors, voiced out their concerns about the preparedness of these three. The majority of the mentees stated that they did not see the reasons why these

mentors were selected to guide them because although they had "the right academic qualifications" and experience; this did not show in the actual practice. They felt that "something was lacking in their mentoring sessions". Common comments among these 15 mentees were: "She, (Ms. Dalie) does seem prepared all the time".

"For me it has nothing to do with her gender, she knows we all respect her. But she is not up to the task, she just cannot guide us."

"She needs more training as a mentor. The only time I find her valuable is when she guides us through our class assignments."

"She lacks the necessary enthusiasm. I sometimes feel that she might be daunted by mentoring male principals but I also doubt that that is a factor."

Two of these mentees were openly not as zealous as others; they displayed much indifference to the system of education in general and this was evident in their utterances as they constantly highlighted "what will not work". Moreover, with these three mentors, the mentees tended to embrace some form of apathy not only to school management but to the ACE-SML programme as well. It was however, significant that none of the mentees attributed the mentors' ennui to gender; all concurred that it was their incompetence as mentors that was to blame.

Generally, the mentees were pleased with their mentors and many protégés stating that they had learnt much from the relationships. They did not see any tensions or constrained power dynamics for they had told themselves that "they wanted to learn from the mentoring process". The majority of the participants also displayed much trust to their mentees as they shared various challenges they were exposed to in their workplaces. There were a number of times where the mentors would see one or two mentees at a time and this was a time of focusing on specific schools and listen to specific problems in the various schools. Some mentees though, stated that they sometimes found it difficult to talk about certain "male issues" to a female mentor. When asked about what these "male issues" entailed; three mentees explained that it was sometimes awkward to raise issues against problematic women staff when your mentor is female. Some said that it would be easy to talk about several "side issues" were it male mentors and this also includes private life and its impact on school management and lead-

ership. Only one of these three mentors pointed out that the issue of gender was crucial in the mentoring relationship. She stated that some male protégés were always seeing a female rather than a mentor. However, all other mentors did not seem to be hindered by the gender issue. The majority showed the necessary professionalism and confidence. In fact, one mentor contended that gender in mentoring was not in any way an obstacle. What matters is the vision and will to succeed in the relationships and this applies to male and female mentors.

The mentees also highlighted that there was always respect from the protégés although they sometimes could not "reveal" everything to the mentor and this only because of the "social male-female dynamic". They felt almost uncomfortable when they had to talk about direct issues of gender within the relationship. For an example, one of the questions was; do you sometimes feel that you are being mentored by a female and you have to be conscious of this fact all the time? It was clear that a number of mentees were uncomfortable in answering this question. Even those who had earlier stated that there were no problems at all with cross gender mentoring, they stated that frequently they felt they did not want to share everything especially those things that are attached to being male in the society. A number of them highlighted subjects they were not entirely comfortable to share with their mentors. Many of these included situations where there was a potential of gender clashes at the schools. Women and opportunities in the work place; sexual discrimination; women abuse at the workplace; bullying of women in the work place; reserving certain tasks for male colleagues are among the tasks that the protégés appeared to avoid when they discussed with their mentors. Ironically, even some who professed that they could share leadership in their schools with their colleagues pointed out that sometimes they could rather not trust women with certain chores at school. A subject like the latter was not openly shared with the mentors.

Yet, almost all reiterated that professionalism was always a priority and "effective managers are effective managers" and are not prejudiced by gender. It was also interesting to hear many protégés stating that with their (female) mentors "there was openness and friendliness", characteristics that they feel are vital for any mentoring relationship. The mentees rated these attributes as among the most important in a mentoring relationship; in fact they stated that "it is important to be accepted by your mentor despite your inadequacies as a manager or leader". The majority of these mentees maintained that these attributes might not be necessarily present among male mentors. The protégées shared many of the goals that their mentors had. They highlighted aspects such as professional development, personal accomplishment, self-actualisation as among the most important goals that they wanted to gain from the mentoring relationship. The mentors also added that they also felt contented to see the mentees gradually changing for the better.

Observations were supported by a number of interviewees' assertions; both the mentors and the protégés. Many protégées averred that they had confidence in their mentors' capabilities and that they were ready to learn from the experience of other professionals irrespective of their gender. The protégés also showed that they were in mentoring not only because they were compelled into this relationship by the ACE-SML programme they were registered in, but they were in it through a commitment, by seeing that they could learn so much within such a relationship. Some concurred that some of their mentors did not have all the answers but were pivotal in their development. Many also contended that they admired mentors who confessed when they did not know and respected them even more for their honesty, "because none of us will know everything". As one mentee stated that he was happy "to teach my mentor much about assessment, for she knew less about it. She is the best mentor I could get but she tells you when she is not sure. She tells you that she will go and research, ask and come back with the answers".

Below, the findings are discussed. The researcher teased out a number of themes from the findings. The findings are discussed under two important themes:
• Matching the mentor and the mentee
• Diversity concerns: what's gender got to do with professional development?

DISCUSSION

Matching the Mentor and the Mentee

Mentor choice is very crucial in ensuring that the mentor-mentee relationship is worthwhile

and meaningful. It is effective mentorship than gender that seems to matter in cross-gender relationships. Whilst there is not much research done in South Africa on this phenomenon, through this study it is clear that mentors who are not suitable will stall professional development, and this has implications not only for the mentees, but for their school as well. The three mentors who were not effective in the study were not effective because of their characteristics of inadequacy for the mentoring relationship and not because of their gender. Therefore, this means that finding a suitable and compatible mentor for a protégé is crucial for any successful mentoring relationship. Daresh and Arrowsmith (2003) posit that finding a mentor is the single most powerful thing that a school principal can do to enhance personal survival and effectiveness in any school. Yet in some of the cases in the study, it was clear that some mentors were not suitable to their mentees. However, what was more appeasing from the study was that suitability of the mentors had nothing to do with gender, age or racial background. An effective mentor tends to be effective to either gender and to a mentee of any age.

It is then very clear that not all mentors will be effective. This also calls for careful selection of mentors. In the study some participants listed the qualities of a good mentor. Fletcher (2000) argues that some teachers cannot and should not be selected to become mentors. The case of Ms. Dalie illustrates that not everybody will be an effective mentor. Fletcher (2000) also highlights that it may be true that every teacher is potentially a mentor, but not all teachers can necessarily be effective mentors. The mentors in the schools were all (by their admission) not trained for an adequate period. Some mentors might not be suitable for mentoring because they were not well prepared. Fletcher (2000: 9) aptly argues:

Mentors need to be prepared for their role. Can they be spared to attend mentor development sessions in school and, where available, at the higher education institutions? It is unrealistic to expect a teacher to become an expert mentor in one short training session. There should be a network of support in school for the new mentor…

The mentors in the study did not get enough support from the service providers; the participating institutions. All were trained for three Saturdays before they were allocated mentees. The Wallace Foundation (2007) underscores the flaw of not holding mentors accountable and not training them seriously. This Foundation's report highlights the need for a serious commitment to the training of mentors. Among the necessary skills that mentor need, are understanding of goal setting, active listening and conflict management. Moreover, high quality training for mentors also prepares them to provide and receive feedback that encourages self-reflection, is not judgemental, and aims at moving the mentee from dependence to independence (The Wallace Foundation 2007). Jazzar and Algozzine (2007) emphasise the need to use effective criteria in selecting mentors. These writers state that these criteria should include communication skills, knowledge of politics, positive attitude and attributes, professional competence and trustworthiness. Many mentors in this study, by admission of the protégés possessed many of these qualities. A number of protégés for example, appreciated having mentors from different ethnic backgrounds who understood the dynamics in historically Black African schools. Many historically Black African schools are still disadvantaged usually operating with few resources. The mentees respected a mentor who understood the history and politics of their schools.

Villani (2006) states that the mentor training may be one of the most effective approaches as to professional development for the process of promoting reflection evoke self-reflection. Villani (2006: 22) states that a good mentor has the following qualities:

- positively disposed to serve colleagues' growth;
- culturally competent and proficient;
- secure enough to value the different and evolving leadership styles of new principals;
- committed to promoting a new principal's reflection;
- generous and willing to share resources and ideas;
- lifelong learners and
- an effective communicator.

While mentors in the study did not have all these qualities, some effective ones showed some of these qualities. The protégés highlighted that the effective mentors were good communicators, were keen to see them grow professionally and wanted to see their teachers and children achieve success. The challenge in the mentoring programme in the study though, was that mentors

did not have an ongoing training programme. Jazzar and Algazzine (2007) argue that mention training must be ongoing thus meeting the ever-changing needs of schools. This is arguably true considering the extra challenges posed by the cross-gender mentoring and the next section focuses on the intricacies of cross-gender mentoring.

Diversity Concerns: What's Gender Got to Do with Professional Development?

Generally, school leadership mentoring in South Africa is a new concept, even more so the idea of women mentoring men. However, this reflects the gradually changing dynamics of the workplace. In the study, apart from cross-gender relationship in mentoring, it was also interesting to observe the issues around cross-ethnic mentoring although the latter was not explored for the purposes of this study. There was the looming background of societal and cultural effigies; mentoring can also be perceived as an aspect influenced by power. The role of the mentor is very influential, as they tend to assume an overseer position. Hansman (2002: 45) argues:

Mentoring relationships can be characterised as socially constructed power relationships that are designed to advantage certain groups while disadvantaging other groups. For instance mentors can be considered "superior" by virtue of their phenomenal knowledge and their main task could be seen as passing on to or "filling up" their protégés with this knowledge. The power mentors have and exercise within mentoring relationships can be helpful or hurtful. Indeed, the biggest paradox surrounding mentoring relationships is that although mentors seek to "empower" their protégés, the relationships themselves are entrenched with power issues.

Therefore, here we see that even cross-gender mentoring will be influenced by power dynamics. In this particular study, women mentors had more power than their protégés. Moreover, in the study the protégés appeared to respect and understand this power. There were unstated and apparent rules that guided the mentoring relationship. Many mentors in the study understood their power but also knew that the relationship accorded them time to learn from the relationship. However, the mentors' gender did not appear to affect the mentoring relationships. Williams and Locke (1999) con-

tend that either gender has a trivial influence of behavior or female managers over time reject the feminine stereotype and adapt to the male dominated culture in organisations. Furthermore, these writers state that even when male and female differences manifest themselves, they create a female advantage. They say that the traditional "feminine qualities" are more in line with contemporary organisations which value sharing information, collective decision making empowering others and resolving conflict in non-confrontational ways (Williams and Locke 1999).

Lumby and Coleman (2007: 54) underscore gender as an aspect of diversity. They find this crucial in raising various issues linked to leadership and diversity. They also contend:

In terms of paving the way for leading for diversity, feminism and to an extent research and writing about racism have shown us that there is more than one way in which to view the world, and that it is not compulsory for power to be in the hands of white, male, middle class majority. Feminism has also indicated that there may be alternative modes of working rather than the stereotypically accepted 'male' model.

As witnessed in this study, the gradual change in schools as organisations is changing the traditional role of women in society. The male participants have shown how obstacles that thwarted women's chances of ascending the glass ceiling are being shoved aside. For the male protégés in this study what they saw in their mentors were professionals rather than women. Yet, the social experiences discussed in the next section show that there are still aspects from society that affect the cross-gender mentoring. Lumby and Coleman (2007) aver that even when the situation can be seen to be improving; there are still a number of social experiences that can inhibit women's progress as effective mentors of leaders.

CONCLUSION

This study's findings show that it is the mentors' professional effectiveness and not gender that determines their acceptability in cross-gender mentoring. Whilst the society will continue affecting the perceptions of being male and being female setting rules of what is "culturally acceptable", the gradual transformation in management is dispelling some of the myths. There are still challenges and obstacles to be

overcome but the traditional views will eventually fade as women take their rightful positions in a "man's world" of management and leadership. The women mentors in the study showed that the changing organisation will require skills of both empowered men and women. Moreover, it supports the argument that women can be as equally empowered as well as empowering, and empowered organisations will support this changing landscape of transformation in management. As organisations change with women at the helm, programme that includes mentoring should reflect this changing organisational dynamic. All conscientious employees will support resourceful, empowered colleagues despite their ethnicity, gender, class and social orientation. In this study we have seen that it might be challenging to avert certain societal stereotypes but all effective mentors will rise above such obstacles as they try to excel in the mentoring relationships. Cross-gender relationships in mentoring could be the missing link in introducing novice teachers in schools. Male and female personalities might complement in mentoring relationships and skills learnt in such relationships might be the key to successful teaching careers. Below are the recommendations formulated after the study's completion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After the conclusion of this study the researcher drew the following recommendations:

- All teachers, especially those who manage schools should be mentored to improve their management practice;
- While gender should not matter much in mentoring, cross gender mentoring can enrich the experiences of both the mentor and mentee;
- The correct match, not gender, should determine the mentor-mentee match; and
- More research needs to be conducted in mentoring as this is a fairly new area in South African education.

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