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MENTORING IN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SETTING  
- THE MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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Key words: entrepreneurship, mentoring, mentor

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# **MENTORING IN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SETTING**

## **- THE MENTORS' PERSPECTIVE**

**Ida Westanmo**

This paper discusses mentoring from the mentors' point of view in an entrepreneurial setting. The aim of the paper is to present why mentoring can be considered important for entrepreneurs who are mentors and under what circumstances mentoring is valuable for the mentor.

A pilot mentorprogramme was conducted among women entrepreneurs during 1998. A study was made in order to examine the mentors' perception of the programme.

Firstly mentoring and entrepreneurship in Finland are discussed briefly. Secondly the results of the study are presented. The results of the study show that mentoring can be valuable for the mentors both on a vocational and a personal level. However, it is important to choose the mentees of the programme on a rather strict basis. The results demonstrate a need to be careful in choosing mentees.

**Key words:** entrepreneurship, mentoring, mentor

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Finland entrepreneurship and mentoring were connected to each other in the public discussion 1998, when a mentorprogramme was organised for women entrepreneurs. The results were strikingly good for some of the mentor-mentee pairs, a fact that caught the newspapers' attention. As mentoring among entrepreneurs has not been researched before, and as it was recognised as a good possibility to help new entrepreneurs, the interest to make research on the area arose.

My professor Anne Kovalainen was involved in the project and she suggested that I could make my thesis on mentoring among entrepreneurs. I decided follow her advise, and to concentrate on the mentors' point of view.

This paper discusses entrepreneurship and mentoring, how they can be combined successfully so that the mentor gains as much as possible.

### ***The Area of Interest and the Aim of the Study***

The area of interest is to study mentoring in an entrepreneurial setting in order to research its usefulness to mentors. There is a need to do research in how mentoring among entrepreneurs can be conducted, as it is an area not previously researched.

The aim is to find a useful way to make entrepreneurship more effective in the start-up process. However, the aim of the paper is not to make research on how important mentoring is for the new entrepreneurs (the mentees), but to study the mentors' view on mentoring.

### ***Definitions***

Mentoring can be defined as an interpersonal relationship in which a senior or more experienced person helps a junior or inexperienced person. Mentoring means freestanding help from one person to another in doing significant transfer of knowledge, work or thinking. (Clutterbuck and Megginson 1995:13) In a good mentoring relation the mentor and the mentee are equal and the personal development is stressed. (Franzén et al. 1996) Mentorship is a process, where the mentor and mentee work together in order to find and develop the mentees' capacities. (Lillia 1997) Many has extended the mentoring concept to other forms of relationship, particularly peer relationship (Isabella and Kram 1985).

The mentor provides the mentee professional and personal growth by coaching, supporting and guiding the mentee (Mullen 1998; Arhén 1991). The mentor is sometimes called master, example, coach or manager. (Friedman 1987; Murray and Owen 1992)

The mentee is the person that gets help and guidance from the mentor, and is often called protégé or learner (Murray and Owen 1992). The term I prefer to use is "mentee".

Another definition that I want to clarify is formal and informal relationship. Formal mentorships usually is a result of an assignment initiated by a third part, while informal mentorships evolve spontaneously through a process of mutual attraction. The difference between them is that formal mentorships are generally of a shorter duration than informal mentorships. Informal mentorships often last between three to six years, while formal relationship typically last from six months to one year. (Kram 1983; Murray 1992, Zey 1985) The mentoring relationships I have studied are formal.

## THE ROLE OF MENTORING – A CURRENT DISCUSSION

Much has been written on mentoring in different organisational settings. However, nothing has been written on mentoring in an entrepreneurial setting. The research made on mentoring is also often concentrated on the mentee and not on the mentor.

In Finland the research made on mentoring is brief and based on large organisations. The main area of interest is the impact mentoring has on the individuals' career development. (Lempinen, 1998) The primary concerns of mentoring are effective career management and providing better learning (Clutterbuck 1995).

The majority of mentoring studies has focused on mentoring relations within organisational settings (Allen et al. 1999, Ragins 1997, Kram 1983). It is, however, also important to examine mentoring within other contexts. Different contexts may require a different type of mentee or mentor.

Many researchers have described mentoring as a way to help the mentee move upward in the organisation. It has also been stated that mentoring relationships involves two kinds of influence, one internal that focuses on the interpersonal influence and one external that involves the development of power in organisations. (Ragins 1997)

Mentoring in an organisation differs from mentoring in an entrepreneurial setting. The aims of the mentorship differ, as does the basis on which to select the mentees and mentors. In an organisational surrounding, there are a lot of factors connected to the organisational culture or co-workers and supervisors. These factors might have an impact on the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. The situation in a small company is very different, as there are usually no or few co-workers, and in a small firm there is not an external influence involving the development of power like in a big organisation.

Mentoring might be a strategy that makes the start-up process for entrepreneurs in Finland more effective than it is today. The mentor is crucial for mentoring and if the mentor does not gain from being a mentor, the mentor-activity is not likely to survive. Therefore it is important to find a way to organise a mentor-programme that makes the process worth while for both the mentee and the mentor.

It is self-evident that the situation in an entrepreneurial setting where women are mentoring women is different and that a lot of the research done on the area of mentoring is irrelevant for this case.

I have studied the mentees are female entrepreneurs who have just founded or are about to found a company of their own. The mentors are women who are or have been entrepreneurs themselves (with one exception).

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE FINNISH SOCIETY**

The definition of entrepreneurship is quite open and varying. Entrepreneurship has been defined as everything between decision making in a company to all activity conducted by an individual. However, by entrepreneurship is usually meant self-employment and the start-up process of a new company. (Kovalainen 1995:57-58).

Entrepreneurs can be seen as the first among equals in the process to foster welfare. By creating the own welfare, the entrepreneurs are contributing to the welfare of others, which means positive social consequences. (Morrison 1998)

Traditionally Finland does not have a culture that strongly supports entrepreneurs. The society has been rather neutral towards the phenomenon. The interest of entrepreneurship awoke during the recession in the Finnish economy in the early 1990:s. Self-employment and entrepreneurship came in focus when cures against depression and a high level of unemployment were sought. (Kovalainen 1995:3, Koskinen and Virtanen 1998: 142-143)

The interest for women entrepreneurs has arisen because of their increased number. By the end of the 1980-ties almost 30 % of all entrepreneurs were women. (Kovalainen 1995:17)

Since the end of the 1980-ties the number of women entrepreneurs has not increased. Year 1998 33% (105 000 persons) of the entrepreneurs were women. However, this number includes also unpaid family members (if female), so the number does not show the real percent of women entrepreneurs. (Statistics Finland 1999)

During the 1990:s the central aim by the decision-makers in Finnish politics has been to improve the real competitiveness of small companies by intensifying the activities in the sector of small and middle-sized companies. The main goal of today is to create possibilities for full employment and to create new working possibilities. (Koskinen and Virtanen 1998:142-143)

The mentorprogramme this study is based upon is one attempt to make the possibilities better for entrepreneurial companies to survive.

## **MENTORING AMONG ENTREPRENEURS**

In this chapter I try to give a trustworthy picture of the criteria that can be set on a mentor and a mentee in an entrepreneurial setting. I explain why the entrepreneurs who took part of the programme decided to become a mentor and what costs and benefits mentoring had for the mentor. In addition I describe the development of a mentoring relation. The findings in this chapter are based upon my thesis. (Westanmo 1999)

### ***Background to the study- how the pilot mentorprogramme started***

"Naisyrittäjyyskeskus" means the Central for Women Entrepreneurs. Naisyrittäjyyskeskus was founded in 1996. The aim of the central is to create activities that would help women entrepreneurs to found and get started with a new business. (Hälvä, 1999)

In year 1998 a mentorprogramme was conducted in order to help women entrepreneurs to build networks and to get help and support with the start-up process of a new business. With the aid of a mentor the entrepreneur would gain better self-confidence and courage when it comes to making decisions, motivation to develop the company and an increased network. The Ministry of Labour financed the programme. (Hälvä 1999)

The aim of the programme is to help new entrepreneurs, the mentees, but the benefits for the mentors are also important to register. This paper is based upon a study conducted in order to find out the benefits of the programme for the mentor.

The mentees were chosen on the basis of an application and an interview. The mentors were chosen among the entrepreneurs who belonged to Naisyrittäjyyskeskus and by asking them if they knew suitable persons for the project. The persons chosen were called and told about the mentorprogramme. Only one of the mentors had any experience of mentoring. The others knew nothing or what they had learnt from newspapers.

**Method**

Because the research is of an explorative nature I chose to use a method that would allow me to find unexpected data. I used a qualitative method and gathered data by interviewing. I made eight deep-interviews with women entrepreneurs who had taken part in the mentorprogramme organised by Naisyrittäjäyyskeskus. Each interview took approximately one hour. I taped the interviews and wrote them down word for word. The answers were then analysed by coding and interpreting the answers. The results of the analyse is presented in this chapter.

***Results of the study***

First criteria that can be set upon the mentor and mentee are discussed. Then it is presented why the mentors decided to become a mentor. After that I analyse what costs and benefits mentoring had for the entrepreneurs. Finally the mentoring process is described in terms of the phases of mentoring.

**Criteria on the Mentee**

A noticeable difference between the situation in an organisation and this mentorprogramme is that in a mentorprogramme conducted in an organisation the mentees are well known. The colleagues and supervisors know the mentee, and the mentee is chosen on the basis of good performance (Franzén et al. 1996). In this programme the mentees were chosen from an application and an interview and not on references. As nobody knows the mentee there is a difficulty in pairing the mentees and the mentors. It is also difficult to be sure that the mentee has the right qualifications, but there are certain issues that are very important if the mentoring is to succeed.

According to Mullen (1998) the mentees that are perceived as competent by their mentors are more likely to receive both vocational and psychosocial mentoring, results that are supported by this study.

It is important that the mentee wants to learn. Without the mentees personal responsibility and engagement the relation will not develop (Allen et al. 1997a; Franzén 1996). In the case I studied the mentors' perception of the mentee and the mentees' wish



to learn was vital for the development of the relationship. The mentorship was not likely to succeed if the mentor believed that the mentee was not willing enough to learn.

The mentor expects the mentee to really want to be an entrepreneur, and to be willing to work hard in order to become one. All the mentors had worked very hard to reach their goals. Several mentors pointed out that they were not joining the mentorprogramme to do the mentees work.

Another issue that was important to the mentors was that their mentee were good at their profession. The mentor must have trust for the mentee's skills.

Several mentors pointed out that the mentee has to be able to receive what the mentor has to give. The mentor cannot give more then the mentee is ready to receive.

### **Criteria on the Mentor**

Pullins et al. (1996) have identified a number of factors that influences a persons willingness and ability to mentor. The key factors they found were high levels of job experience, job satisfaction and interpersonal competence. They also found, not surprisingly, that interpersonal competence was important for the ability to mentor. Another finding was that role ambiguity and being unsure how to perform a job was negatively related to both willingness and ability. (Pullins et al. 1996)

All the mentors had a high degree of job experience (in this case job experience means experience of entrepreneurship). The mentors also seemed satisfied with their current situation either as entrepreneur or as employee, but I did not research this, or their interpersonal competence, in particular.

Because the mentoring occurs in an entrepreneurial surrounding it is preferable if the mentor has experience of being an entrepreneur. This is not a must, however, if the mentor instead has expert branch-knowledge in the area the mentee wants to start a business in.

The results show that the mentor has a network, because the mentee gains a lot from being presented to persons the mentor knows could be useful to the mentee.

The mentor must also have time for the mentee. It is preferable that the mentor is available whenever the mentee might need to get in touch with the mentor. The availability of the mentor and the mentor's willingness to help the mentee when needed reflects in how trust and openness in the relation is developed.

If the relationship is to succeed, not only the mentee but also the mentor needs to be engaged and motivated. A good mentor is willing to concentrate on the mentee.

The relationship between the mentor and the mentee is built upon trust from both sides. Therefore it is difficult to set any definite rules on what criteria one can set on the mentor or on the mentee. It is the criteria they set upon each other that is important, and that the chemistry between them works.

### **The Decision to Become a Mentor**

Why is a person prepared to sacrifice her time and energies in order to support and assist another person for no apparent tangible reward? Also the situation of an entrepreneur helping another entrepreneur to succeed is rather paradoxical. It is easy to imagine that the entrepreneur who becomes a mentor would not want to help a current or future competitor. Still the results showed that mentoring was rewarding for the mentors both on a personal and a vocational level.

Allen et al. (1997a) came to the conclusion that individual reasons for a person to become a mentor were related to a wish to increase another person's welfare (which includes a wish to transfer knowledge). Individual reasons were also related to a wish to improve the own competence and to feel the gratitude of the mentee.

The results of my study support Allen et al.'s suggestion. In this case the mentors' decision to become a mentor was either of self-interest or for the benefit of someone else. The decisions based upon self-interest were to get new contacts, new experience, and to satisfy one's curiosity. The mentors often wanted to feel the gratitude of the mentee. The wish to help others also had an impact on the mentors' decision to become a mentor. The mentor wanted to help a new entrepreneur to found and succeed with a company, and they wanted to help a person to become an entrepreneur.

When Gibb analysed the mentors' decision to become a mentor he came to the conclusion that the existence of pro-social virtuous behaviour can be explained by two theories; one is the theory of social exchange, the other is the theory of communitarianism. (Gibb 1999)

*The theory of social change* assumes that we are rational calculators and that we develop pro-social relationships even though they involve costs to ourselves, because

we realise that they also have benefits for ourselves. As long as the benefits exceed the costs we will engage in pro-social helping behaviour with others. (Gibb 1999)

*The theory of communitarianism* assumes that people will help others without any expectation of benefit for themselves because they belong to the same community and helping behaviour is the norm. (Gibb 1999)

Both the theory of social change and the theory of communitarianism explain why the entrepreneurs that were asked to participate in the mentorprogramme as a mentor decided to become mentors in the first place. They mentioned several reasons for becoming a mentor that can be traced to either the theory of social change or the theory of communitarianism.

The theory of communitarianism was supported by the fact that most mentors wanted to become a mentor because they wanted to help a young person to become an entrepreneur. The persons who said they wanted to become a mentor because they wanted to get new contacts and new experience and to satisfy their curiosity, on the other hand, supported the theory of social change.

Motives for the entrepreneurs to become a mentor were that they wanted to develop or a genuine interest in helping the younger capacities to proceed. The latter motive might be psychologically explainable; psychologist Erik Erikson has pointed out that middle-aged persons want to leave a piece of themselves to the next generation. (Erikson according to Murray and Owen 1992)

The mentors in this programme decided to become a mentor before they had met their mentee. What the mentee is like has an impact on the mentors' decision as the mentoring relation is of a dyad nature (a relationship between two persons). Therefore I have divided the decision to become a mentor into two parts. Firstly the mentor decides to become a mentor, and secondly, after the mentee and the mentor have met, the mentor decides to engage as a mentor.

**The decision to engage as a mentor** came at a later stage, when the mentor had met the mentee and they had had a chance to get to know each other. The important issues at this stage are that the mentor has belief in the mentees' ability to become an entrepreneur, and that the mentor notices that the mentee is motivated and willing to work hard to reach the goal.

Mentors who perceive their protégés as competent are more willing to invest the time and effort needed to serve both vocational and psychosocial functions. (Mullen 1998; Allen et al. 1997b) In the programme I studied it was of vital importance how the mentor perceived the mentee. If the mentor did not perceive the mentee as competent, it was hard for her to engage in the relation.

In an entrepreneurial setting there are different things than in an organisational setting that makes the mentor perceive the mentee as competent. In the situation I studied the most important things were that the mentee was motivated and willing to work hard, that the mentee had an understanding of what it really means to become an entrepreneur and that the mentee is good at her profession.

According to Allen et al. (1997a) the relationship is stimulated if the mentor feels that the mentee needs her, a statement that was supported by this study. The mentor wants to feel that the mentee needs her and is more engaged if she believes that she has something relevant to give the mentee.

According to Ragins and Scandura earlier experience of mentoring, either as mentee or mentor, have an impact on the mentors' expectations of what it means to be a mentor. The expectations of mentoring, of persons who have earlier experience of mentoring, are more realistic and often more positive than the expectations of persons who does not have earlier experience from mentoring. (Ragins and Scandura 1999)

Only one of the entrepreneurs had any earlier experience of mentoring, so in this case earlier experience was not a determinant factor.

### **Costs and benefits of Mentoring**

The fact that both the mentee and the mentor benefit from the relationship makes it vital and relevant and both the mentors and the mentees interpersonal skills influence the provision of mentoring functions. (Isabella and Kram 1985)

Chao (1997) showed consistent differences between mentored and non-mentored individuals. The majority of research examining mentoring outcomes has focused on comparing mentored with non-mentored individuals and recently researchers have begun to examine mentoring outcomes and functions (Allen et al. 1999).

Although there has been a lack of attention to the outcomes associated with being a mentor and it is generally assumed that mentees receive more benefits from mentoring

than mentors do, the mentors may receive several benefits from mentoring. (Ragins and Scandura 1994). The composition of the relationship may influence the mentor outcomes, which may be divided in diversity outcomes, intrinsic outcomes and organisational outcomes. (Ragins 1997)

Diversitive outcomes are possible in heterogeneous groups, were the mentorpair consists of diverse individuals. The group I have examined consisted of female entrepreneurs and was homogenous.

Mentors may receive three types of intrinsic rewards from the relationship. One reward is that the mentor feels intrinsic satisfaction and fulfilment of helping a younger adult to develop. Another reward is that the mentee keeps the mentor up-to date on trends and technological advancements. This, combined with the mentees' youthful and creative energy, provide the mentor with job rejuvenation that might have a positive impact on the mentors job performance and job satisfaction.

The final reward is related to the co-workers view on the mentor, as the mentees job performance is perceived as a direct reflection of the mentors' competency and ability. The organisational outcomes are a result of the intrinsic rewards that the mentor gets. (Ragins 1997)

Of these three outcomes the diversified outcomes are not relevant for this case, as the mentorpairs consisting of two female entrepreneurs are not diversified. The intrinsic outcomes, however, were supported in this study. I have divided them into personal and vocational outcomes. In this case the entrepreneurs own company may benefit from the intrinsic outcomes that the mentor gains. I have discussed these outcomes under the headline "Vocational Outcomes".

Other findings suggest that the mentor gain on a psychological level. The mentor feels satisfaction from providing a younger generation with knowledge and from having productive use of his or her gathered knowledge and wisdom. (Erikson 1963 according to Ragins and Scandura 1999, Kram 1983) This is something that was supported also in my study.

I have divided the findings of this study into personal, vocational and negative outcomes.

## Personal Outcomes

The person-related outcomes rely on the quality of the interpersonal bond between the mentee and the mentor, and the degree of trust that exists within the relationship. Factors that influence the psychosocial bonding include mutual liking, respect, exclusivity, counselling skill and the desire for intimacy. (Kram 1998)

Outcomes related to personal issues were that the mentor

- a) got a new view of other people
  - b) got energy from mentoring the mentee
  - c) got satisfaction from being a mentor
  - d) was able to reflect her own entrepreneurship through the mentorship.
- a) Several mentors mentioned that they got a new attitude towards others through mentoring. According to themselves, they had become more open for other individuals.

“I have become interested in what ways one has to act in order to get as much as possible out of people. I try to treat new persons I meet in an open way, and I am more interested in people than before. Every person is a possibility, and you cannot know in advance what is to follow a new relationship. My attitude towards new people has changed. This is new for me and something that the mentor-programme gave.“

The reason for the entrepreneurs to feel that they have changed is probably that mentoring was a completely new situation for them. Also the situation of being part of a bigger group (all the members of the mentorprogramme) and of guiding a younger person was new and very rewarding for many of them as an entrepreneur often works alone and very independently.

- b) Some of the mentors mentioned that they got from meeting with the mentee, because the mentee was creative and young and had fresh, new ideas, and because they felt their own ideas would continue to live through the mentee. Other mentors said they got energy from the meetings with all the participants of the mentorprogramme because there were so many different people with different views and ideas on different matters.

- c) The most important issue for many of the mentors was that as a mentor they had had a chance to help a younger person to found and develop a company

“Mentoring left me with a nice feeling of having helped a company to get started. There is in the world at least one company in whose development I have taken active part.”

Some of the mentors mentioned they felt satisfaction from knowing they had done their best. It was rewarding for the mentor to notice that the mentee appreciated what the mentor had done for the mentee.

“As a mentor one experiences the appreciation of the mentee as something positive. It is very rewarding. The need to listen and understand lays perhaps in the human nature. Through mentoring your way of thinking changes. And your network increases. You have to realise that it is rewarding that you and your mentee come from different groups of age, background and culture. You learn from mentoring that there are different ways to react on things.”

- d) Another function that mentoring had for some of the mentors was that they felt they had a chance to go through their own experiences. They found it rewarding to think back on their earlier doings and experiences. For these mentors mentoring reflected their own experiences.

“On a personal lever I went through my own entrepreneurship and I realised that I have experienced a lot of things that I have perhaps not appreciated enough earlier. I have had a lot of problems on they way, but still I have always found a good way to solve the problems. I came to the conclusion that I have experienced a lot and that I have managed fine through many difficult situations. It is a nice feeling to notice you have succeeded.”

In an entrepreneurial setting it is good for the mentor to have a chance to stop and work through their situation. Often they work so hard that they do not have a chance to do this in their ordinary life.

### **Vocational outcomes**

For mentors the relationship is an opportunity to make productive use of knowledge, work experience and expertise in middle age and to learn in new ways (Burke and McKeen 1997). Individuals, who have served as mentors have reported increased

competence, increased feelings of confidence in their own abilities, and esteem among peers due to participating in mentoring relationships. (Isabella and Kram 1985)

Among entrepreneurs mentoring has unique possibilities due to the special nature of entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur often works alone and it might be hard for them to find alternative relationships that would work equally good as a mentorrelationship. A mentorprogramme will provide the entrepreneur with someone to discuss important vocational matters with. Networking is important for an entrepreneur and through the mentorprogramme the entrepreneur will get many new contacts.

Many mentors mentioned that they saw with new eyes on their own company and work. The mentee had new ideas and a fresh view that had an impact on the mentors' view.

On a vocational level the mentor might get valuable and updated information from the mentee. Mentors have reported that their competence has increased, that they have become more certain of their own knowledge and that their status among peers has become better because they take part in a mentoring relation. (Isabella and Kram 1985)

The mentors made several new contacts among the participants of the mentorprogramme, and thus their network was increased. Networking is extremely important for entrepreneurs, and was a highly positive outcome of mentoring for the mentor.

### **Negative outcomes**

There is little research on what negative impact mentoring might have for the mentor. Halatin and Knotts have observed that the mentorship takes a lot of time and energy, which can be perceived negatively by the mentor. (Halatin and Knotts according to Ragins and Scandura 1999)

In this study the negative functions were clearly related to stress and frustration as a result of mentoring taking more time and energy than the mentor was willing to give. All the mentors were active persons with a lot of responsibility, and several mentioned that mentoring was an extra factor of stress for them.

If the relationship with the mentee was good, and the mentor believed in the mentee, the positive sides of mentoring made it worth it for the mentor. The frustration over the loss of time and stress mentoring caused was a lot more noticeable in the cases where the mentor was not satisfied with the mentee.



When the mentor did not believe in the mentee's possibility to become an entrepreneur, frustration occurred. The mentor also became frustrated if the mentee was not active enough. In those cases where the process did not develop the mentor felt frustration and stress, because they believed there was no use spending time on the mentee if the mentee was not able to receive and adapt the help that the mentor was giving.

### **The Phases of Mentoring**

Despite the fact that the relations vary in length a dynamic mentor-relation usually passes through the following phases: initiation phase, cultivation phase, separation phase and re-definition phase. (Nakari et al. 1998; Kram 1983)

The relationship begins during the initiation phase. In the cultivation phase the mentor and the mentee starts meeting regularly. During this phase the possible psychosocial and vocational functions occur. In the separation phase the nature of the relationship changes because of external factors or because of psychosocial changes for either the mentor or the mentee or for both. In the re-definition phase the relation gets a new form that differs significantly from the earlier form. Alternatively the relation ceases completely. (Kram 1983)

**The initiation phase** is the first phase, the time period when the mentorship forms (Kram 1983). According to Kram the initiation phase takes six to seven months, but in this case the whole programme takes one year and accordingly the initiation phase is shorter and lasted approximately during two to three meetings. In the initiation phase the mentor and mentee get their perception of the other part. Together they build a base for the relationship to start from.

All the relations begun in the initiation phase, none of the mentors had met their mentees before they participated in the mentorprogramme. The mentoring relationship was meant to last one year. Some of the mentors joined the mentorprogramme after the programme had begun, and in these cases the mentoring relationship was a bit shorter.

During the initiation phase the mentee and the mentor have to come to the conclusion that they respect and appreciate each other. The mentors' first impression of the mentee is very important. The mentor has to believe in the mentees capability to become an entrepreneur. The mentor also has to notice that the mentee is motivated and active. The mentee has to realise hard work is needed for her to become an entrepreneur.

The first impression is made during the first meeting between the mentee and the mentor.

If the mentor does not respect the mentee, the mentor fails to engage as a mentor. In other, more successful cases, the initiation phase led to that the mentor respected the mentee and that the mentor did engage as a mentor.

In order to save both the mentee's and the mentors' time, the mentor has to put an end to the relation at an early stage if she does not accept the mentee.

In the initiation phase the mentoring pairs have to plan the forthcoming process. All the pairs wrote a contract in which they noted what they expected of each other and what they expect the process to give them. They also set a date for the end of the process. In addition to this, some of the pairs made plans for what they wanted to go through during the meetings.

If the mentorship matures into a mentorship it then progresses into the **cultivation phase**. The cultivation phase is the phase when the mentorship functions are maximised. In this phase the mentorship partners learn more about each other's capabilities. (Kram 1983)

According to Kram (1983) the cultivation phase lasts from two to five years, in this case the cultivation phase lasted from six to eight months.

In the cultivation phase the mentee learn from the mentor. In this study the mentorship partners were working with how the mentee was to become an entrepreneur, or with how the mentee could improve her product, ways of working and how she could develop the company. What the pairs went through was due on the situation of the mentee and what the mentee needed. Some of the mentorship partners also discussed personal issues.

The initiation phase had a direct impact on the cultivation phase. If the initiation phase went well, also the cultivation phase developed nicely. It was important for the successful development of the cultivation phase, that the pair had planned the process in the initiation phase.

One of the mentoring pairs was very successful and they reached several visible results during the year. The reason for their success was a combination of a talented mentee and a motivated, engaged and experienced mentor. The following description is an example of what the mentor and the mentee went through during the cultivation phase.

"One thing I tried to help her with was selling. Her weakest point was to get in touch with the customer, set an appointment and sell herself and her products. We made a test so that I was the big Customer and she was supposed to sell her products to me, but we only giggled. But I have been in this branch for very long, and I called three of my own customers that during the years have become really good friends of mine. I told them I had a mentee that was very good, but that she needed practise in selling he products. So she trained on these persons. [...] She has been with me everywhere. She has been at my factory and knows my personnel and she has been with me at meetings with other entrepreneurs. She has also participated in my private parties and she has met my kids. I have also combined her with my former mentee. In this way we have tried to widen her network."

The development in the cultivation phase was most successful for those pairs, who considered both personal and vocational issues in their work. Their relation was deeper and more rewarding than it was for the pairs that only concentrated on vocational issues.

The third phase, **the separation phase**, involves a structural and psychological separation between the mentor and the mentee as Kram has described it. This happens when the functions provided by the mentor decrease and the mentee gets more independent. According to Kram the separation phase may last between six and twenty-four months and is a time of confusion, anxiety and loss. The end of the separation phase occurs when both parts realise that the relation is no longer needed. (Kram 1983)

In this case the separation phase was triggered by the fact that the programme was to end. The separation did not happen because the functions provided by the mentor decreased or because the mentee became more independent. It happened because both partners had come to an understanding in the beginning of the programme when they had decided when the relation was to end. It was an expected and understandable and in that way easy ending of the relation. This is one of the biggest differences between formal mentorprograms and informal mentoring.

The separation phase went smoothly for most of the pairs, but according to one of the mentors the separation phase was traumatic for her mentee, because the mentee was not ready to become independent yet. In this case the mentee felt anxiety and loss (according to her mentor). This mentoring pair became closer during the process than any other pair.

Many of the mentors felt relief when the programme was over, as the programme had demanded a lot of time and energy.

There were mentors who were ambivalent when the programme ended and thought of continuing as a mentor for the mentee, but still they decided not to.

"I was ambivalent when it ended. Somehow I wanted to continue, but we always met at my work between seven and eight and it was tough, particularly in the winter when I had travelled a lot. It was realistic to put an end to the relationship. I did not find enough time to continue."

However, when the mentors were asked if they would like to be mentors in the future, everybody said yes, if the circumstances were right.

**In the re-definition phase** the mentoring relation has ended. The relation is re-defined to a new sort of relation. According to Kram (1983) the mentorship partners evolve the relationship to one of mutual contact and support.

In this case the relationship evolved into friendship and mutual contact for some of the pairs. Most of the pairs decided to keep in contact, only one pair did not keep in touch. They keep in touch mostly by calling and writing e-mail, only a few couples meet in person regularly. Because the relationship has been built up under only a year, the contact between the mentor and the mentee is naturally not as deep as the contact Kram has described.

Issues treated during the cultivation phase correlate with whether or not the mentor and mentee decided to keep in contact after the formal part of the mentorprogramme was over. If the mentor and mentee had discussed only vocational issues during the meetings they did not have the same need to meet after the programme had ended. The couples who had also treated personal issues during the meetings were more likely to keep in contact afterwards.

When I compare the phases as Kram (1983) has described them, with the conclusions I came to after having interviewed the mentors, I find it clear that there are big differences due to the difference in length of the relation. The mentors and mentees that Kram had studied had a mentoring relationship that lasted during an average of five years. I studied only the mentors and the mentoring relationship lasted one year, at most. The biggest difference is that the feelings are not as strong in a shorter programme as in a longer one.

When the relationship is developmental active learning is likely to occur. Such a relationship is also likely to foster autonomy and independence. (Beech and Brockbank 1999)

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to examine mentoring in an entrepreneurial setting. In particular I have examined the mentors' view on mentoring. To act as a mentor is a way for entrepreneurs to widen their network and to develop both professionally and personally.

This was a pilot project, and the mentors worked with the mentee without financial reward. The results were good, and might have been so because this was a pilot-project, it was something new and interesting for the mentors. However, in the long run the mentors are to have also a financial reward to compensate their considerable input in both time and energy.

There is a need to create a structure for selecting suitable mentees and for combining them with the right mentor, that works in an entrepreneurial setting. To select the right persons is the basis for successful mentoring and will make the programme rewarding for both parts. Among entrepreneurs there are certain difficulties related to the selection-process that makes the situation different from the situation in an organisation.

This research was limited to examine women entrepreneurs who had acted as mentors for one year and to study what benefits and costs mentoring had for these mentors.

Future research could be concentrating on benefits and costs of mentoring among entrepreneurs, both for the mentee and the mentor. It would be interesting to research if mentoring is rewarding for all kinds of entrepreneurs. It would also be important to examine how the mentorprogramme in an entrepreneurial setting is to be conducted, in terms of the selection of mentors and mentees and the length of the programme.

Another issue regarding the benefit of mentoring for the mentor that could be investigated is whether the social status of being a mentor has an impact on the mentors' work. It would also be interesting to do research answering if the entrepreneur gains positive social status because s/he has acted as a mentor, and if the mentor receives positive feedback from the society? If yes, does the status of being a mentor lead to a positive start for the mentor in new projects and does the entrepreneur for instance get new customers more easily because s/he has acted as a mentor?

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