

Mentoring in the Workplace: An Initial Review of Literature

Tomas Smith¹, Brooklyn Corbett^{1,2}, Stephanie MacMahon¹

¹ School of Education, The University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD, Australia
² School of Psychology, The University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD, Australia

Background

Mentoring is an ever-present facet of almost every workplace, however there is limited consensus on how workplace mentoring is defined and the aspects that create quality workplace mentoring practices. A recent study by MacMahon et al., (2024) into workplace training and learning on the mine site, found that “learning is social, situated and occurs on-the-job” amongst frontline workers. Mentors play a central role in the social learning of frontline workers as they assist greens in building site-specific knowledge and practices that are difficult to learn through explicit instruction (MacMahon et al., 2024). Quality workplace mentoring has the potential to significantly benefit the mining industry through the promotion of safer production (MacMahon et al., 2024). Current understanding of the dimensions of quality workplace mentoring are still poorly understood highlighting the need for further research in this area. These findings have informed the development of this initial review of literature which focuses on better understanding quality mentoring practices in the workplace.

Guiding Questions

How is workplace mentoring defined?

What are the dimensions of quality workplace mentoring?

Methods

This project was undertaken as part of the 2024 Winter Scholars program. During this program an initial review of literature was undertaken to gain a better understanding of workplace mentoring. The topics of “what is mentoring” and “how is mentoring defined” were explored as part of this initial literature review.

What are the Dimensions of Quality Mentoring?

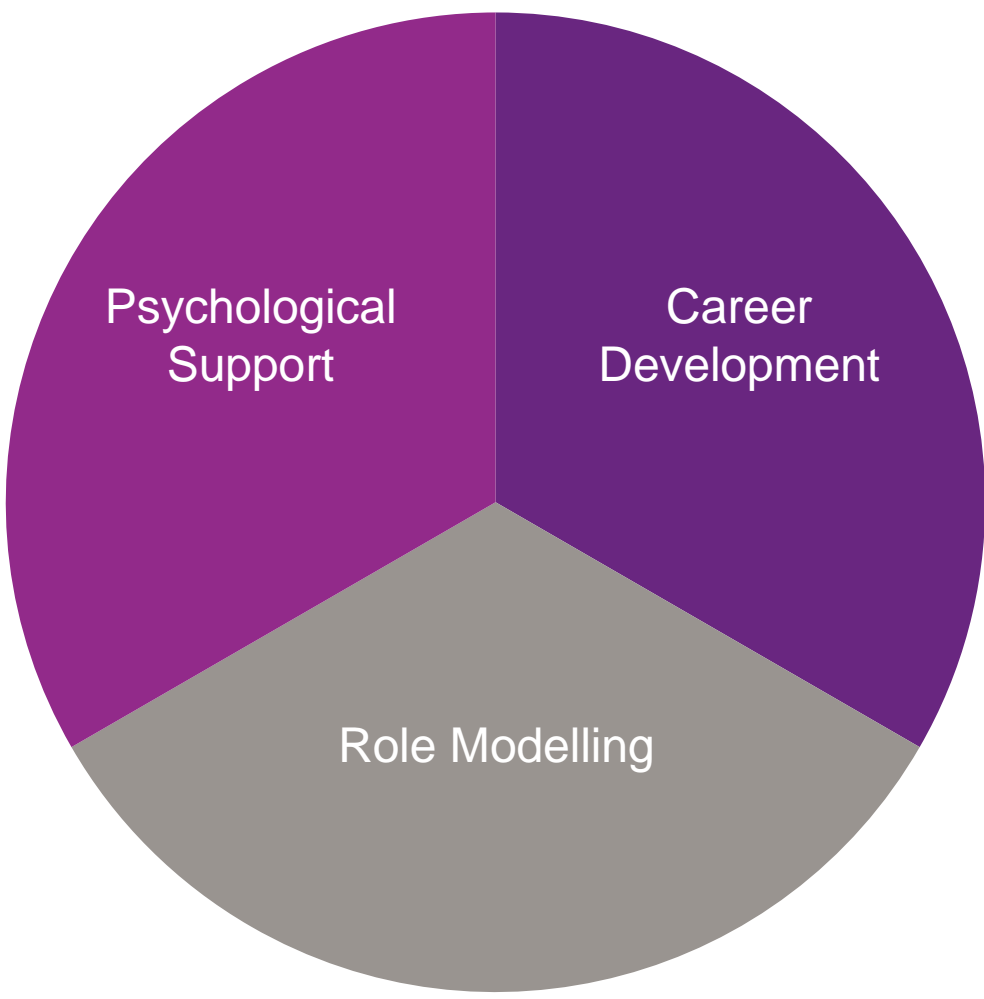
The strength of the relationship between a mentor and protégé is a key indicator of mentoring quality (Deng & Turner, 2015). Mentor quality can be linked with the individual characteristics mentors possess. Such characteristics can enhance and strengthen the mentoring relationship improving the development and learning of protégés (Hoffmeister et al., 2011).

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring differs greatly within the literature; however, it is often characterised as a relationship where a mentor shares their knowledge and experience with a protégé to assist with the protégés development (Opengart & Bierema, 2015).

Mentoring typically involves mentors providing protégées with formalised training, guidance and advice, to assist with personal growth and learning (Nunan et al., 2023).

Purpose of Mentoring



- Psychological Support**
 - How to navigate work related stress
 - A contact for mental health support
- Career Development**
 - Career planning and support
 - Leadership identification and coaching
- Role Modelling**
 - Shares knowledge and guides protégé learning
 - Builds positive relationships with other employees

Figure 2: The Purpose of Mentoring (Corney & Du Plessis, 2010; Kim et al., 2015)

Characteristics of a Quality Mentor	
1.	Good Listener
2.	Wiling to share negative information
3.	Comfortable around superiors
4.	Allows protégés to make mistakes
5.	Willing to provide constructive feedback to protégés
6.	Willing to share knowledge
7.	Possesses specific trade knowledge
8.	Has a vision for their protégé (goals)
9.	Is a role model
10.	Able to be objective and impartial

Figure 1: 10 Characteristics of a Quality Mentor (Hoffmeister et al., 2011)

Future Research

As mentoring in high-risk industries is relatively novel, further research is needed in 3 key areas:

- Definition:** Define what is a ‘good’ mentor and effective mentorship in a mining context
- Understanding:** Explore the relationship between tacit knowledge transmission and mentoring
- Mentor Benefit:** Uncover the benefit of mentoring for mentors

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