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Mentoring: A Tool For Lifelong Learning In Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Lifelong learning is the concept that focuses on continuous learning throughout the lifespan of an individual. The role and importance of Lifelong Learning has increased in recent times due to several socio economic factors, the landscape of learning is fast changing. It has attracted lot of attention not only by educational institutes but also by corporate houses. The main objective of this paper is to discuss the concept of lifelong learning, to study the role of mentoring for lifelong learning in organizations. Further, this paper also tries to suggest some better outcomes of mentoring process in lifelong learning. This paper identifies mentoring as a tool for lifelong learning that helps the organizations in meeting the challenges of workforce development, change facilitation, motivational force, developing workplace relationships and employee satisfaction.

Introduction

World is continuously witnessing new concepts and trends, that emerges at an amazing speed putting up new challenges, which are difficult to understand and manage. World evolving as a knowledge economy is a mega trend that has shaken up individuals, societies, organizations and government all across the globe. For moving in pace with the developing knowledge economy, there is need for creating, applying, analyzing, and synthesizing knowledge and engaging in collaborative learning throughout the lifespan. Thus there is a demand that calls for a new model of education and training, a model of lifelong learning. It is being increasingly accepted that we have entered an information era or a knowledge society (Drucker, 1994). Only by continued learning through the lifespan will it be possible to maintain knowledge and skill currency (Candy et al. 1994).

Lifelong learning has emerged as of considerable interest as an international movement. If anything it has become the catch-cry of the new millennium (Cornford, 2002). As Bagnall (2000) has stated: 'It is now featured in practically every imaginable agenda for social change, educational policy preamble and mission statement'. Lifelong learning was first really seriously considered during the late sixties—early seventies (Faure 1972, Husen 1974). In the backdrop of continuous change and the growth of body of knowledge, the concept of lifelong learning developed as a tool to overcome the problems of uncertainty.

Lifelong learning is education for the knowledge economy. According to World Bank report (2003), Lifelong learning is becoming a necessity in many countries. It is more than just education and training beyond formal schooling. A lifelong learning framework encompasses learning throughout the lifecycle, from early childhood to retirement, and in different learning environments, formal, nonformal, and informal. Within this lifelong learning framework, formal education structures—primary, secondary, higher, vocational, and so on—are less important than learning and meeting learners' needs. It is essential to integrate learning programs better and to align different elements of the system. Learners should be able to enter and leave the system at different points. The learning system needs to include a multitude of players, such as learners, families, employers, providers, and the state.

With the emergence of new providers—private sector trainers, virtual universities, international providers, corporate uni-

versities, educational publishers, content brokers, and media companies—a new set of skills and knowledge is being continuously developing that is leading to a transition from learning into lifelong learning.

Lifelong Learning in India

In India, the importance of Lifelong Learning has been repeatedly stressed in several educational policies. According to the Report of the Education Commission (1964-66): education does not end with schooling but is a lifelong process; the National Policy on Education in India - 1986 (modified in 1992) considered Lifelong Education as the cherished goal of the educational process which presupposes universal literacy, provision of opportunities for youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice at the pace suited to them. It observes that the critical development issue is the continuous up gradation of skills so as to produce manpower resources of the kind and the number required by the society. With the formulation the Eleventh Five year Plan (2007-2012), the Government of India has put forward the idea of expanding the scope of the Continuing Education Program by developing it as Lifelong Education and Awareness Program (LEAP). This move is partly influenced by the global discourse on Lifelong Learning and partly due to the socio economic changes taking place within and outside the country.

Research objective:

Present paper aims to seek below mentioned objectives:

1. To discuss the concept of lifelong learning.
2. To understand the concepts of lifelong learning and lifelong education.
3. The study the role of mentoring for lifelong learning in organizations.
4. To suggest some useful measures for better outcomes of mentoring process for lifelong learning.

Importance of Lifelong Learning

The role and importance of Lifelong Learning has increased in recent times due to several socio economic factors. In a technology driven knowledge based competitive economy; the landscape of learning is fast changing across the globe. The growing world economy, tremendous expansion of Information Communication Technology, developing innovations and the rapid globalization have brought in a lot of uncertainty which has further lead to the development of drastic changes

in the work environment. To work in such a new work environment, the organizations need to develop their workforce to make them globally competitive. The country's economic performance depends critically on access to and the adoption of new technology and improving the skills of the labour force.

Developing of Lifelong learning concept

The term 'lifelong learning' originated in the early 20th century, and John Dewey is called the author of this term. Lifelong learning is centred on individual's ability to take an active role in democratic society. Education as a learning process is influenced by the growth of the individual and society. Both society and individual are interlinked. Informal education is as important for lifelong learning as formal. The key to lifelong learning is developing active learning, enabling the individual to reflect and change throughout life. In other words, lifelong learning is centred on development of the individual, who in turn influences society (Carter, 2008).

Principles of Lifelong Learning

The concept of lifelong education appeared in 1972 after Edgar Faure's Report "Learning to Be" for UNESCO. This report was a leading conception for the reform in education. The Faure's Report used four principles for the lifelong education architecture (Faure, et al., 1972): vertical integration (education should occur throughout one's life), horizontal integration (acceptance of non-formal and formal education), the democratization of education (more widespread involvement of learners) and learning society (restructuring of educational system).

Objectives of Lifelong Learning

In the 'Lifelong learning for all' OECD (1996) there are three fundamental objectives that are useful for lifelong learning framework (OECD, 1996):

- personal development
- social cohesion
- economic growth

Lifelong learning is seen as means of maintaining social stability. Technologies are rapidly developing and people are required to be active 'lifelong learners' to fit the needs of the market place. Both formal and informal learning are valuable, but informal learning may be recognized only if it meets employers' requirements. So, the purpose of lifelong learning is to empower individual through greater choice and employment opportunities and at the same time to increase productivity and economic growth.

Lifelong learning and lifelong education

Boshier (2000), argues that lifelong learning and lifelong education are not the same. Lifelong learning is based on the notion of the individual learner as a consumer. It is seen as individual activity learning that depends entirely on personal motivation. So, lifelong learning is more individual-oriented.

On the other hand, education is a provided service. It requires that someone is responsible for providing resources, developing policies, etc. And it doesn't matter who will be in the role of provider – government or institution, or someone else. Some researchers even believe lifelong education as for citizenship.

According to the report of European Commission (2000) lifelong learning consist of all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

Tuijnman & Boström (2002) agree that the emphasis on 'learning' rather than 'education' is highly significant. It moves focus from the structures and institutions on the individual. Learners are the centre of the learning 'system' and the realization of lifelong learning depend on their motivation.

According to Tuijnman & Boström (2002) and Longworth, (2003): lifelong learning is understood in terms of purposeful learning activities as:

- formal learning (education and training institutions)
- non-formal learning (activities in civil society organizations and groups)
- informal learning (not intentional, an accompaniment to everyday life)

According to Jarvis (2004) lifelong learning is: a. forms of continuing education (is recognized as post-initial education which can be both full-time and part-time), b. recurrent education (conventional post-compulsory education, on-the-job training, adult education) and c. community education (it embraces all the forms of education in the community)

Mentoring

Organizations in the quest for moving towards a knowledge society are opting for lifelong learning. As a result, there is a need for the development of workforce having inclination for lifelong learning, has emerged as one of the biggest challenge for the business organizations. In such a scenario, Mentoring is seen as a successful tool for lifelong learning. The practice of mentoring is acknowledged and embraced by major business corporations, schools and universities, foundations, and associations as a formal component of career and human resource development (Gerstein, 1985).

Mentoring has a multi-faceted dimension, not limited only to the education industry but also includes all other aspects of human development process (Brahimoh,2008).As a result, business houses in their quest for lifelong learning are adopting the practice of mentoring. Serrat (2009) has cited that mentoring and coaching are both part of learning and development. Both are an approach to management and a set of skills to nurture staff and deliver results.

Dodgson (1986) defined a mentor as someone who is a trusted and experienced counsellor who can influence the career development of an associate in a warm, caring and helpful relationship. According to Zey (1990) a mentor is a person who oversees the career and development of another person, usually a junior, through teaching, counselling, providing psychological support, protecting and at times promoting or sponsoring. The mentor may perform any or all of the above functions during the mentor relationship.

As per Buell (2004), Mentoring is often divided into two types:

Informal mentoring relationships develop on their own, such as when a person approaches a possible mentor and that person agrees to form a mentoring relationship. Research shows that a vast majority of workplace learning is through informal means (Fox, 1997; Marsick and Watkins, 1990; So-rohan, 1993).

Formal mentoring relationships refers to assigned relationships, in which the organization oversees and guides the mentoring program in order to promote employee development. Mentoring is a structured, sustained process for supporting professional learners through significant career transitions. Mentoring is useful to a practitioner, at the beginning of her/his career, at times of significant career change or in response to specific, significant challenges (Curee, 2005).

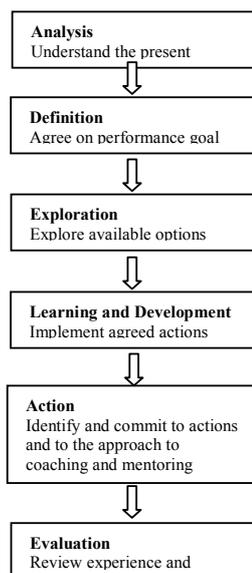
Limitations on formal mentoring programs include the small number of mentoring relationships they can support and accommodate may lead to dissatisfaction with the relationship and negative feelings of those not involved with the program (DeSimone, Werner, Harris, 2002). As far as the mentor and protégé relationship, Chao, Walz, and Gardner (1992) found that protégés in informal relationships received more career-related advice and had better career outcomes, while Tepper (1995) found no difference.

Zey (1995) reported that informal mentor relationships have formed the basis for many corporate success stories. While Gaskill discussed the success of formal mentoring programs, she stated that "these programs are not viewed as a replacement for informal, spontaneous mentoring relationships." In spite of such success stories, "many companies and organizations are turning to the formalized mentoring program because the mentoring takes place faster than during the informal process. The time (six months to a year) needed in informal mentoring for the mentor and mentee to bond is eliminated. Once the two have been selected and matched, mentoring begins right away. If the match is unsuccessful and the two will not be able to work it out, then the participants switch to other mentoring partners.

Historically and traditionally a mentoring relationship has been an informal process. It is usually a chance relationship based on common goals and interests. The mentor enters a person's life at a time when changes are imminent, helps the person through changes, and then either departs, or develops a lasting friendship with the person.

Eaton and Johnson (2001) proposed a six step model for developing a structured coaching and mentoring program. The cycle starts with analysis phase (in which the mentor explores the situation) and ends with the evaluation phase in which feedback and reflections are collected from the mentee. The authors propose that the cycle's last stage should form a platform for the initiation of another, with a view to long term learning and development. This study hits out at the role of mentoring in lifelong learning.

Structured Coaching and Mentoring



Source: Adapted from John Eaton and Roy Johnson. 2001.

Role of mentoring in lifelong learning for business organization

This paper tries to analyse the role of mentoring, as a tool for lifelong learning in the context of business organizations.

Developing workforce

As already discussed, in the times of ever changing business environment, there is a need to develop workforce that is capable of meeting the challenges of the fast changing business environment. High-performance, contemporary organizations know that a company is only as good as its employees. They place strong emphasis on personal attributes in selecting and developing staff. Organizations constantly try to update the skills and knowledge of their employee that may or may

not be related to work. Clutterbuck (2004) focused on subject Specialist Mentoring and pointed that it an intentional helping activity which requires a mixture of a task-oriented focus and supporting activities. Enhanced skill and knowledge leads to increased efficiency along with personal and professional development making the workforce capable of handling the complex situations thus benefiting the organizations in the long run. Mentoring also creates positive attitudes through clarifying the doubt and issues that disturb the employee. Positive attitude modifies behaviour and develop leadership required to perform demanding jobs.

Further, research has witnessed, the failure of various training methods to generate a force of multitasking workforce. In such a scenario, there lies a wider scope for mentoring, as a tool for lifelong learning. This has been supported by the work of Metros and Yang (2006), who suggest that an organization needs a strong foundation of mentoring to build and retain a healthy workforce that can react quickly to change and can develop, adapt, and regenerate itself over time. Mentor/protégé relationships were the earliest forms of learning and professional development (Farren, 2006).

Unlike conventional training, mentoring concentrate on the person, not the subject; it draw out rather than put in; it develops rather than impose; it reflects rather than direct; it is continuous—not one-time—event (Serrat, 2009). Formal training courses try to transfer skills and knowledge; but employees do not utilize their full potential for learning unless and until there is dedicated mentor that inspires, energizes and facilitates lifelong learning. Thus through need focussed one to one interaction mentoring develop the workforce.

Another focus of mentoring for upliftment of the workforce is competency development. Maynard and Furlong (1995) have described mentoring as a competency-based method of learning. Palermo and Louise McCall (2008) in their research in the area of Public health nutrition found that competence is an important component of workforce development. The present Study also provided the evidence to support the development of mentoring as a tool to promote competency. Mentoring must be considered as part of a multi strategy approach to competency development and needs to be incorporated into future policy and planning for workforce development.

Also according to sector focus group (2008) mentoring and coaching techniques are a form of supportive and empowering tools that assist people who are not so comfortable with a qualifications approach to reach required levels of competence. Slow learners often shy out from increasing their competency level, but with the help of constant mentoring they develop a level of confidence that promotes their inclination towards such developments.

According to European Union the key competencies:

- 1) Communication in the mother tongue;
- 2) Communication in foreign languages;
- 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- 4) Digital competence;
- 5) Learning to learn;
- 6) Social and civic competences;
- 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- 8) Cultural awareness and expression.

Facilitating change

Constant change is a reality that the learning organizations of today have to face. The change is seen in almost all components of the business environment, be it socio – cultural, economic, technological, legal, political. To survive, the organizations have to accommodate and adapt to these changes. Adapting the change does not come easy for the organizations; there is always a resistance to change (Watson, Goodwin, 1971).

To learn the organizations have to change. Learning is effective through interactions and mentoring is a technique based on continuous interaction. The learning process is initiated through these interactions. The mentoring process acts a valuable change agent that enables the mentee's mind to think innovatively. The change thus brought in help transforming the business practices. This is supported by the study conducted by Bartlett and Elliott(2008), who view social engagements appropriate for valuable change and learning. Mentor helps another person through an important transition such as coping with a new situation like a new job or a major change in personal circumstances or in career development or personal growth. As per the research conducted by Jones & Jowett(1997), mentoring schemes are introduced in the organizations to support organizational change and to help individuals cope with transitions such as moving into a new job or role.

According to McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007), at the organisational level, an executive mentoring programme can:

- support and accelerate personal and organisational change
- Make change work by sustaining commitment to corporate vision in a critical mass of senior managers.
- Help manage the downside risk of change management and maintain performance during periods of rapid change.
- Improve business performance by creating personal stretch goals in line with corporate objectives.
- Removes obstacles to successful change management by predicting and managing personal and organisational regression.
- Increase organisational awareness through providing a flow of valid operational data for senior managers.
- Promote balance and provide a stable base during periods of major organisational and career change.

Motivational force

Motivation is a term that refers to a process that elicits, controls, and sustains certain behaviours. In the new millennium, good coaching and mentoring schemes are deemed a highly effective way to help people, through talking, increase self-direction, self-esteem, efficacy, and accomplishments. The mentoring process typically has positive effects for both organizations and individuals. Formal mentoring is related to greater motivation, more commitment and better performance on the part of the mentees (Orpen, 1997).

Cognitive research on learning suggests that "how people learn is more important than what people learn in the achievement of successful learning" (OECD 2001h). Mentoring, being need specific and often one to one, helps in quick and effective learning. Further, Mentors role as a motivator makes it a right tool that enables foster and effective lifelong learning. As there is study by Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) to support this. According to the research by the authors when the right tools and strategies are adopted and learners are motivated, most children can learn almost anything.

Motivation theory also supports mentoring through its emphasis on relationship-seeking and competence-seeking behaviour. Individuals value relationships because of inherent need for belongingness. Once relationships are established, employees desire competence in life's work (Maslow,1970). One way to achieve these goals is to establish a mentoring relationship.

At the heart of the mentoring process is the interaction that takes place between the mentor and the mentees. The better the interaction, the more likely it is that the mentor will provide effective support and appropriate assistance to mentees that will advance the careers of the latter in the organization.

Mentors being transformational rather than directional, democratic rather than dictatorial, flexible rather than coercive, and

forward looking rather than conservative leaders. All these will facilitate the growth of a mentee rather than for the mentors to pass on the lessons from their own experiences, for wholesale consumption by the mentee (Braimoh,2008).

Developing workplace relationships

Mentoring is a protected relationship in which learning and experimentation occur through analysis, examination, re-examination and reflection on practice, situations, problems, mistakes and successes (of both the mentors and the mentees) to identify learning opportunities and gaps. The mentoring relationship is a special relationship where two people make a real connection with each other. The relationships thus developed increases cooperation, coordination and collaboration. Thus mentoring helps developing relationships that boost the organizations effectiveness. The new organization tends to operate in a systemic nature where the individuals participate in a co-operative, coordinated and interconnected ways (Limerick & Cunnington, 1993).

Mentoring is a way for informal learning facilitates by helping establish or allowing supportive relationships to flourish, encouraging communities of practice to dialogue informally on work-related issues of concern, providing skill development in process and facilitation to support reflective practice, and developing a shared set of values which reinforce the organization's commitment to learning (Laiken, 2003).

Building relations helps develop the learning culture in the organizations thus fast tracking the learning of new recruits and slow learners. From a practice perspective, mentors play a key role in organizations as they ensure the transfer and continuation of knowledge and help prepare junior colleagues for further organizational responsibility (Kram & Hall, 1996). Moreover, high-quality and committed mentors are crucial to the success of formal mentoring programs within organizations (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006b; Allen & Poteet, 1999; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

Employee Satisfaction

Concept of internal marketing lies on the premise that employee satisfaction leads to the main objective of an organization i.e customer satisfaction. Mentoring focuses on workforce development that leads to their satisfaction. Facilitated mentoring schemes are introduced for a variety of reasons which include the following (Jones & Jowett, 1997):

- to identify potential more effectively
- to induct new staff more quickly
- to improve the retention of staff
- to encourage and support high flyers
- to encourage and support ethnic minority and disadvantaged groups
- to encourage and support women to break through the glass ceiling
- to support self development and work based learning programmes

Research has shown that the mentor relationship has become prevalent in the workplace and that it adds measurably to the success and satisfaction of people at work (Gerstein, 1985). Further turnover can be reduced when junior executives perceive a concern for their well-being and career development. Frustrations of being lost in the system are minimized as individuals are acclimated to the organization and company culture. Networks within the organization are enhanced through increased communication. A result of this intervention is realized through managerial succession and development, reduced turnover, and increased productivity. Career development, success, and advancement can be enhanced through the establishment of formal mentoring programs (Gaskil, 1993)

It has been analysed mentoring as a tool for lifelong learning, helps the organizations in developing the workforce, facilitat-

ing change, motivational force, developing workplace relationships and employee satisfaction. By acting as a tool for lifelong learning, mentoring helps the organisation in achieving the objectives of personnel development, social cohesion and economic growth (OECD, 1996).

Developing workforce's skills, knowledge, attitude, behaviour and competencies leads not only to the personnel development of employees but helps the organization in enhancing its efficiency. Along with this mentoring further develops the employees as team players which helps in developing the spirit of social cohesiveness.

Mentoring also helps in facilitating change which leads to personnel development, social cohesion and economic growth as mentoring is a tool to overcome resistance to positive change. Employees become more flexible to new learning horizons thus facilitating lifelong learning in the organisation. Further development of motivational force and workplace relationships are a source of strong social cohesion in the organisation. The achievement of this objective through mentoring helps in building strong teams thus leading to strong bonded organisation.

Mentoring leads to high employees satisfaction which helps in motivating employees in achieving organisational objectives, thereby increasing its efficiency and further leading to economic growth. Also satisfied employees have positive attitude towards personnel development and social cohesion.

Conclusion

Through literature review has lead to conclude that lifelong learning is the concept that focuses on continuous learning throughout the lifespan of an individual. The role and importance of Lifelong Learning has increased in recent times due to several socio economic factors. In a technology driven knowledge based competitive economy; the landscape of learning is fast changing. Drift has to be made towards learner oriented approach, that needs focus on lifelong learning rather than lifelong education. It has attracted lot of attention not only by educational institutes but also by corporate houses.

In today's dynamic business environment organizations are adopting the concept of lifelong learning. Organizations in their quest for lifelong learning face a lot of challenges in the form of workforce development, change facilitation, increasing motivational level, developing workplace relationships and employee satisfaction. Mentoring as a tool of lifelong learning helps the organizations in meeting these challenges which successfully help in achieving the lifelong objectives: personnel development, social cohesion and economic growth.

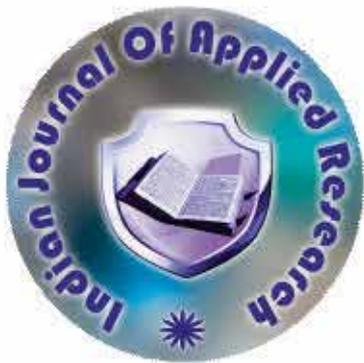
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Suggestions:

Mentoring process delivers immense benefits to the organizations that are moving in the direction of lifelong learning. Following are the suggestions coming out of this study:

- Countries need to respond to the needs of lifelong learning by creating education and training systems that equip people with the appropriate skills. To meet up this challenge, public sector as well as the private sector together has to establish a system that promotes skill development and innovation.
- Since 92.4% of India's workforce is in the unorganized sectors (National Sample Survey, 61st Round, 2004-5), they need regular upgrading of skills to compete in the globalized economy. Equipping the labour force with relevant skills implies the need for creating a variety of learning and training opportunities.
- Lifelong learning opportunities have to be available to all citizens on an ongoing basis. Lifelong learning also provides "second chance" to update basic skills and gives learning opportunities at more advanced levels. Skills such as technical /literacy, foreign language, mathematics, science, ICT skills, information processing, problem-solving, analytical skills/, interpersonal /teamwork, leadership, communication/, methodological /learning to learn, pursuing lifelong learning, coping with risk and change/ which should be developed to successfully involve learners.
- Make mentoring a lifelong activity in the organization. Mentoring is not one time activity rather it is an ongoing process. To generate better outcomes organizations need to develop long term vision regarding mentoring.
- Mentoring must be made mandatory in the organizations. Mentoring sessions must be held at continuous intervals and the new session should be based on the feedback of the last. Thus record must be kept regarding the progress made by the employees.
- Lifelong learning must encompass the whole of the organization thus all the employee must be covered by the mentoring process.
- Mentoring process must be supported by the top management as it leads to lifelong learning.
- Mentoring process must be a combination of formal as well as informal.
- Peer mentoring can be developed as a form of informal mentoring as employees feel more comfortable with their peers.
- Constant feedback must be collected from the mentee's as it forms bases for further development.
- Frequency of the mentoring sessions must be increased for slow learners and problematic employees.



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