

A CASE STUDY OF A MENTORING PROGRAMME AT BAHRAIN POLYTECHNIC

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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## Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except when explicitly defined in the acknowledgements) nor material substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Signed: 

Date: 22 November 2012

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## **A CASE STUDY OF A MENTORING PROGRAMME AT BAHRAIN POLYTECHNIC**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study looks at the mentoring experiences of sixteen participants actively involved in a mentoring programme at Bahrain Polytechnic, a newly established tertiary educational provider in the Kingdom of Bahrain. A mentoring programme was an integral part of student support services and its purpose was to provide academic support and personal development to students throughout their study at the Polytechnic. A case study was selected as the research design, divided into two phases. The participants were eight mentors and eight students (mentees), selected on the basis of their active engagement in the mentoring process. Results indicated that students found the process helpful to their academic and personal development. They found the programme particularly supportive during the unrest in February/March 2011, when the Polytechnic was closed for five weeks. Mentors were able to provide support and reassurance to their students during this period, through texting, emails and telephone contact. Limitations of the study pertain to the fact it was conducted during an extraordinary semester. It is recommended that a larger study be conducted in a normal semester to further assess the value of the programme.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Introduction**

#### **Background**

The following thesis focuses on the implementation of a student mentoring programme at Bahrain Polytechnic, a newly established tertiary institution in the Kingdom of Bahrain. For the purpose of this research a mentoring programme is one that focuses on the building of relationships to provide pastoral care. Bahrain Polytechnic PAD document (2009) outlines its commitment to mentoring by stating:

Bahrain Polytechnic recognizes the value of early intervention and support of students to ensure they have as best as possible opportunity to succeed. Student mentoring is intended to create strong links between staff and students in order to provide pastoral care so that this success may occur (p.2).

A literature review was conducted of worldwide mentoring programmes including Middle Eastern initiatives. The research design of a Case Study will be described followed by a document analysis together with findings from interviews with eight mentors and eight mentees over a two and a half year period. A discussion will be offered linking the findings with current literature. Finally, a conclusion will be offered with future recommendations.

In recent years, education in Bahrain has undergone extensive reform. The educational reforms taking place are part of Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 (Bahrain Economic Development Board, (BEDB), 2008). Within Bahrain's medium to high wage labour market Bahrainis have not been employers' preferred choice. Currently Bahrainis do not have the required skills to meet labour market demands; hence an interim solution has been the employment of expatriates within the private sector (Salman & Coutts, 2010). The BEDB attribute the skills gap to the education system not providing young people with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful and desired in the labour market. In order for Bahrainis to become more desirable to employers it is necessary to raise the standards and performance of vocational institutes and universities. The establishment of a polytechnic is a significant aspect of educational reform taking place in Bahrain's tertiary education sector. In 2007 Polytechnics International New Zealand

(PINZ), won the bid for establishing Bahrain Polytechnic. A contributing factor in PINZ's successful bid was the pledge to implement a student mentoring programme for all students throughout their study (PINZ, 2007).

When Bahrain Polytechnic opened its doors in September 2008, 222 students were enrolled in Foundation Studies. In the subsequent four years students could choose an internationally recognized training programme from Business Studies, Information Technology, Engineering and Freight & Logistics Management (at a later stage Design became a programme option). Programme delivery would focus on providing learning opportunities, would provide students with problem solving and critical thinking skills, for the application of new knowledge in real life situations. To ensure polytechnic graduates meet the needs of the labour market, academic programmes and the methodology of their delivery have been developed with businesses, industries and professions (Salman & Coutts, 2010).

### **The Study and its Context**

Throughout the world, tertiary institutions are committed to offering student mentoring programmes with the objective of easing student transition to tertiary life (Johnson, 2002). Many students experience difficulty transitioning to a tertiary environment with having to meet academic standards as well as having to adapt to a new social environment (Scott, 2005). Students are faced with challenges, such as: new found independence, different teaching styles and the need to manage their time efficiently as well as develop autonomy and independent learning behaviours. At the same time students are faced with having to define their goals and consider career choices, that will help prepare them for young adulthood.

A student mentoring programme that is implemented by staff can be beneficial in students' transition to a tertiary environment. Mentors can act as role models in the mentoring process, guiding the student through their personal and academic learning. If students feel supported through student services and academic staff, academic and social/emotional problems are likely to be addressed early and strategies can be implemented; hence supporting academic success and social integration. If academic success and social integration are achieved, students will feel good about their choices and are more likely to continue studying.

The CEO of Bahrain Polytechnic, John Scott favoured a mentoring programme as a key student service (J. Scott, personal communication, February 1, 2011). His long history in New Zealand's educational environment at secondary and tertiary level demonstrated to him how young people need mentors and role models in order to develop healthy independence from their parents. Scott followed the work of Mark McCrindle, who has worked in the area of mentoring and coaching in Australia. McCrindle believes having an effective adult mentor character is important in order to make successful transition to adulthood where tertiary education is a major feature. Scott also stated that young children are mentored through the primary and secondary stages of their education so it is important to continue this in tertiary education, even though logistically it is more complicated due to a less structured and more independent learning environment.

Scott stated he believes the role of the mentor is to focus on the development of a relationship, not to be a counsellor. He emphasizes that having an effective adult mentor is important to make a successful transition to adulthood. Furthermore, he sees the importance of having a strong mentoring system with the implementation of problem base learning (a recent initiative) in all programmes. Scott believes that problem base learning will result in less structure, while students will work in groups that involve on and off campus activities, while they complete their projects. There will be more need for mentors to maintain a relationship in order to develop accurate knowledge of students' progress throughout their study, as well as provide continuity (J. Scott personal communication, February 1, 2011).

Chris Coutts, Academic Director of Bahrain Polytechnic, was integral in setting up the mentoring programme and echoes much of John Scott's philosophy. In 2007, she focused her PhD studies on student dropout from state secondary girls' schools in New Zealand. Her research illustrates that students who dropped out of school had not developed a sense of belonging, demonstrated by good relationships with teachers and other students. The students also had some difficulty in trusting adults whom may have been able to help them with difficulties as they arose. Moreover her research highlighted these early school leavers did not necessarily have accurate self-awareness, lacked self confidence and were often unsuccessful when engaging in senior academic work. Coutts' research led her to firmly believe a mentoring programme was essential in the setting up of Bahrain Polytechnic. She proposed a mentoring programme would

enable students to make positive connections and create a sense of belonging to the polytechnic community. A sense of belonging would in turn help develop students' personal and academic learning as they became more engaged (C, Coutts, personal communication, January, 30, 2011).

So it was with these educational philosophies of John Scott and Chris Coutts that a mentoring programme be instigated at Bahrain Polytechnic, in order to offer student support, in both academic and personal development domains. The offering of a mentoring programme was also a contractual obligation to the BEDB (PINZ, 2007). The intention of the programme was to offer mentoring support throughout the students study through the development of strong links between students and staff, therefore assisting students in their various transitions, for example first year and work experience.

### **The Study from a Youth Development Perspective**

Both Scott's and Coutts' philosophy and support for the implementation of the mentoring programme are reflected in youth development principles. Urie Bronfenbrenner offers an ecological model that can be applied to youth development and therefore offers a rationale for a mentoring programme (Berk, 2001).

Salman and Coutts (2010) explain the students' mesosystem at Bahrain Polytechnic is one that "incorporates the linkages between the microcosmic settings of family, friends, work and Polytechnic in which the developing person is central" (p.6). The Bahrain Polytechnic is a new coeducational venture in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Ninety three per cent of its students have come from single sex government schools and have had to adapt to, not only a coeducational environment, but also to a learning environment with very different teaching styles and learning expectations than they previously experienced. Moreover parents have been very enthusiastic in wanting their children to attend the polytechnic demonstrated by accompanying them at enrolment. Furthermore parents have shown interest in their children's future through attendance at programme information evenings. Despite the interest and commitment parents have towards the Polytechnic, the values and beliefs the Polytechnic presents may seem to be conflicting with their own values and beliefs. Bahrain is a conservative Muslim society, so when young people attend a newly established coeducational environment,

such as Bahrain Polytechnic, parents and the communities are likely to show some ambivalence as it may seem in conflict with their values and beliefs.

At the beginning of the set up of the polytechnic project there were both Bahraini and expatriate staff. As different cultures have vastly different values and beliefs, the building of relationships between the Bahrainis and the expatriates was vital in order to help understand the students' cultural needs and beliefs. As many Bahraini staff employed at the Polytechnic live with similar cultural constructs to the students they were able to help expatriate staff to negotiate cultural understandings. If the cultural needs of the students are negotiated, their relationships with staff are more likely to be harmonious than discordant.

### **Research Problems and Hypothesis**

The thesis concentrates on finding a successful mentoring model for a polytechnic in a Middle Eastern context. Bahrain's Polytechnic mentoring programme was continually adapted to meet student pastoral care and academic needs. A further aim of the mentoring project was to identify at-risk students and to implement strategies to enhance student success. Mentoring is a new concept in educational environments in Bahrain and the challenge is to offer a model where students can develop close relationships with staff to enhance their academic and personal development.

### **Justification for Research**

Bahrain Polytechnic is a new venture within the context of the educational reforms taking place in Bahrain. Considerable resources have been invested in the Polytechnic's mentoring programme, where a large number of staff have been trained and involved with large cohorts of students. Research on the implementation of a mentoring programme may provide information on who make the best mentors, should mentoring be compulsory for all staff, and what are the changing needs of students as they progress through their study? If it is ascertained that mentoring has had a positive impact on retention and has benefited students who have been enrolled since the polytechnic began, it will be useful to Bahrain Polytechnic as high retention rates are always beneficial to educational institutes. Knowledge will be gained about best practice of mentoring and can be implemented in the future. High retention rates at Bahrain Polytechnic will benefit the community, as the student population remains stable and

prepare themselves for the workplace. It is also anticipated that through the exploration of the programme a clearer picture of a holistic and culturally appropriate model will be identified and contribute to youth development knowledge on how a mentoring programme should be implemented in a Middle Eastern context.

### **Myself as an Educator and Researcher**

Who I am as a researcher is very closely linked to who I am as an educator. In turn I see my role as an educator very much as a mentor. Prior to coming to Bahrain I was a learning support adviser, providing academic and learning support at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. Although my work involved a wide variety of skills, delivered in an array of settings, I was most passionate about one-to-one sessions with students.

This passion came from forming long term relationships with students, who over time developed confidence and began to achieve in their academic study. When I reflected on the progress students made I recognized I played a significant role by helping students reach their potential through interacting with them and being an appropriate role model. I would often place myself in their shoes, demonstrating empathy and disclosure of my own personal experiences so I could be of help to them. This kind of relationship does not happen overnight with a student; trust is an essential component of a close relationship as people have to disclose what they are uncomfortable about, what scares them and what their issues might be.

There are a myriad of issues that might stop a student progressing academically. It may be their past learning experiences, their difficulty in progressing to a higher level of education and keeping up with a high workload, problems with teaching staff or social or emotional problems that escalate in a new environment with changed expectations. Frequently young people try to develop independence from parents who commonly have high expectations of their children's academic performance. This can be a difficult period for young people as they want to spend more time with their peers and share ideas and experiences. Peer relationships are not always easy for all students; in numerous situations students can experience many of these issues and problems concurrently.

So it is with this background I came to Bahrain. I was employed at Bahrain Polytechnic as Student Mentor Coordinator and my brief was to set up a student mentoring programme. The challenge was to find a model that would be culturally appropriate to students at Polytechnic. To find such a model it is crucial to examine cultural and social factors of Bahraini society.

### **Outline of the Research**

A review of the Mentoring Programme in March 2010 resulted in a substantive change in the future direction of the mentoring system. The changes had implications for both tutorial staff and students resulting in compulsory participation in the mentoring process. If students did not attend the required number of sessions with their mentors per semester they would not receive their academic transcripts at the end of the semester. The researcher recognised two distinct phases in which research could be conducted. Phase one was from August 2008 to July 2010, when the mentoring system was voluntary for students and Phase two from August 2010 to July 2011 during which time participation in the mentoring system was compulsory. These periods enabled the researcher to explore the experiences of mentors and students who were actively involved in the mentoring system over the three years. A case study evolved as the most appropriate, as it is conducted in context using naturalistic methods.

The case study in the thesis is the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic. In order to build the case study the researcher has

- Reviewed current international literature on faculty/student mentoring in tertiary educational settings.
- Conducted an document analysis of the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic included within the literature review
- Interviewed four mentors and four students from Phase One and Phase Two

Literature will be examined within the following themes: youth development theory, youth development strategies, mentoring as a youth development strategy and the concept of youth development in Bahrain. The thesis will explore issues, such as, trust,

cultural understanding, ethical concerns, boundaries, and training as factors that contribute towards making successful mentoring relationships.

A case study is “an investigation to answer particular research questions, using a range of evidence available in a specific case setting” (Coutts, 2007 p.139). The researcher believes this is an appropriate design for examining the student mentoring programme, as it will consider the context in which mentoring has taken place. Finding a culturally appropriate programme that would meet the needs of Bahraini students has always been a paramount concern for organisers of the programme.

Ethics application was sought from AUTEK, the research ethics committee that grants approval for research at Auckland University of Technology. However as the context of the research was conducted in Bahrain at Bahrain Polytechnic ethics approval was sought from the Research Committee at Bahrain Polytechnic, which was granted in June 2011. From the perspective of the researcher (who had been the Mentor Coordinator during the first two years), a reflective analysis of the first two years of the programme will be made. Naturalistic interviewing was conducted with students and staff from those involved in the first two years of the programme and those involved in Semester Two 2010-2011. The researcher completed her contract in August 2010. As she was not the coordinator during the second period that is being analyzed an objective view should be able to be presented.

### **Link between mentoring and the context of Bahrain**

The previous section on formal mentoring programmes has illustrated their importance in assisting students’ successful transition to tertiary study. Searching literature in Google Scholar and AUT databases show a dearth of literature on mentoring programmes in the Middle East. A Jordan mentoring programme was found titled *Woman-to-Woman*. This programme was examining the experiences of orphaned female youth and focused on mentoring experiences within the workplace. Also found in the literature search was an Israeli mentoring programme, *Perach* which focused on providing mentoring relationships for underprivileged children. Both results from the searches were excluded due to the fact they were not focused on mentoring programmes in the educational context of tertiary education.

Although the above examples are exceptions rather than norms it does not imply that mentoring is absent in Middle Eastern culture. The researcher, in her interactions with students in the classroom, recognises several examples of mentoring occurring in Bahraini culture; from family members and other significant people in their lives, such as religious elders. Family members especially parents have significant influence in their daughter and son's career choice and therefore the choice of programmes they study. In their personal life young people will often choose an uncle/aunt or a cousin to seek guidance from and discuss issues that are important to them. Opportunities to do so are frequent in Bahraini culture as family cohabit in an extended fashion with families often living in male parents' households. Finding ways to introduce mentoring programmes into the tertiary sector to support students' transition to study will need to take into account cultural values and mentoring can be a conduit between family and the new educational setting the young person engage in.

A background to Bahrain Polytechnic and the rationale for a mentoring programme has been described. The following case study of the Mentoring Programme will illustrate the experience of mentors and mentees who were actively involved in the mentoring programme, in the context of Bahrain Polytechnic, a newly established tertiary institution, aimed at reducing skills gaps and preparing students for industry in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Literature Review

### Introduction

Finding meaningful employment for the youth in the next few decades will be of concern for governments throughout the world. Many young people enter the tertiary environment in order to gain qualifications, in order to be competitive in the job market. However many students throughout the world are not achieving in a university setting and almost as many fail in their first two years of study. Throughout the world many tertiary institutions offer mentoring programmes as part of student support, to help ease students' transition to tertiary study. In the Middle Eastern country of The Kingdom of Bahrain, Bahrain Polytechnic a newly established institution offers a mentoring programme, to all students throughout their time of study at the Polytechnic. Formal mentoring programmes in education are new in Bahrain. The purpose of this literature review is to find what is already known on mentoring programmes in the Middle Eastern context and how they contribute towards Positive Youth Development (PYD).

### Source of Literature

The review draws upon mostly international literature on mentoring. The search strategy utilized was both automated and manual. Databases and e-journals were searched from Auckland University of Technology and Bahrain Polytechnic together with Google Scholar. Document analysis was obtained from documents relating to mentoring at Bahrain Polytechnic. Terms searched included youth development, positive youth development, mentoring, student transition, educational reforms, faculty mentoring. A specific researcher utilized was Urie Bronfenbrenner. Reference lists of primary studies that related to mentoring programmes, youth development, personal and academic development were searched in order to obtain suitable literature.

As formal mentoring programmes in education are relatively new, most of the literature searched and cited had been published since the year 2000 to provide current and relevant literature. The literature chosen for review related to youth development,

academic and personal development, at risk students, mentoring, student transition and student support. It was selected from education and social sciences and psychology domains. Literature relating to mentoring in business was excluded as it associated with students who have already graduated from tertiary settings. This chapter is structured into the following five sections, youth development theory, youth development strategies; focusing on mentoring programmes in tertiary settings, youth development in Bahrain, and the development of the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic.

### **Youth Development Theory**

The concepts of adolescence and youth have originated in the western world, through the process of industrialisation. The industrial revolution, which began in Britain in the 18th century, was a significant marker in the world's history and later spread through Europe and America. Industrialisation resulted in huge shifts from rural communities to cities which led to dramatic changes, economically and socially (Sanderson, 2007). Prior to this time, people and families worked on the land and therefore youth development is a recent concept that has occurred in economically developed countries.

Major advances in technology resulted in mass production, leading to new opportunities for a large percentage of the population. Labour laws and the emergence of trade unions helped improve working conditions, while advanced technology resulted in the need for a more educated workforce and less demand on physical labour. In Britain, for example, the government responded by funding mass education in which it became mandatory for children to attend school. Under the Elementary Education Act, 1870 it became compulsory for children from five to ten years to attend school. In 1900, the Higher Education Act recommended children attend school between ten and fifteen years and the introduction of the 1918 Education Act made it compulsory for children to attend school, until they were fourteen years of age. The industrial age labour laws and the mandatory education for children allowed the emergence of young people being recognised as individuals in their own right, with specific developmental needs (Sanderson, 2007).

The western world allows adulthood to happen gradually, in which adolescence is considered a period, when a young person develops from a child into an adult. The beginning of adolescence is commonly marked by the onset of puberty and the

beginning of secondary education. However in many western countries the ending of adolescence is becoming less clear. Terms 'adolescence' 'youth' and 'young adults' are becoming blurred, due to two key markers of growing up; employment and moving away from home are taking longer than before, merging into young adulthood (McLaren, 2002). She suggests that the age period twelve to twenty-five be considered as a seamless period that takes into account the development of both adolescence and early adulthood.

The growth and recognition of the social sciences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century contributed to understanding of human development in which youth development was recognized as a significant period. A significant contributor in the discipline of psychology in the early 1900s was an American named Granville Hall (Diehl, 1986). He founded the first experimental lab in psychology and offered a functionalist view, as did most of his contemporaries, during the era of end of the nineteenth century. Hall developed what became known as a recapitulation theory which explained human development, by proposing that all children from conception to maturity repeated all stages of development that the human race had passed through. In practice his method involved trained researchers and teachers asking children pertinent developmental questions, a method known as "topical syllabi". Although Hall's theory was not able to be supported with substantial data and quickly lost favour with his colleagues, he paved the way for the field of developmental psychology. In 1909 he formed The Children's Institute at Clark University, where he became interested in classroom teaching practice. He was responsible for bringing Sigmund Freud to America in 1909, a time when Freud presented several addresses in particular the "Five lectures upon Psychoanalysis" (Ibid.).

Further development occurred within the social sciences that contributed further to the understanding of human development. Erikson offered a psychosocial theory in the 1950s and Piaget presented a cognitive development theory. Social learning theory was developed by Bandura, who proposed that learning occurs in a social context through such concepts as modeling and imitation (Berk, 2001).

In the latter part of the 20th century, a more holistic framework was offered and has shaped positive youth development principles. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed a theory of ecology to explain human development, as he was strongly opposed to

traditional psychological research which he considered was being conducted in isolation to the child. He proposed it did not take into account how the child experiences and interprets his or her world (Brendtro, 2006). It was seen that psychologists, sociologists, educators and other specialists studied only certain aspects of child development without seeing the whole picture. Similarly Damon (2004) explained this approach, was one of young people, being seen as a 'problem to be fixed'. He maintained that the focus of deficits and negative issues, a part of a mental health model, was inherited from child psychoanalysts. Additionally the media and the justice system often portrayed young people in a negative way (ibid.).

Bronfenbrenner aimed to pull the strands of each of the social sciences together, believing that the formation of trusting relationships between adults and children was the most powerful force in positive youth development (Damon, 2004). He proposed that every child needs "at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her" (Brendtro, 2006, p.163). His original ecological systems model was a nest of interrelated systems, termed the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), with the child being seen at the centre. Phelan (2004) simplifies the systems as circles of influence.

The most immediate circle of influence (the microsystem) is the young person's family, school, peers and neighbourhood, including religious and cultural beliefs and values. Family, school and neighbourhood are considered to be the most influential factors in a young person's life, because of their proximity to where the young person spends most of their time (Coutts, 2007). Moreover bi-directional influences exist within the microsystem, in which the young person is influenced by the beliefs and values of parents, while on the other hand the young person will influence the values and beliefs of the parents (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Phelan, 2004). The interactions that occur within the microsystem, between teachers and parents, for example, affect the individual. Bronfenbrenner termed this layer the mesosystem, an extension of the microsystem, as it provides a connection between the structures the young person is placed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coutts, 2007; Phelan, 2004).

The outer layer is the exosystem, which is made up of environments that influence the developing person indirectly, such as, the parents' work place which is within the

individual's microsystem and is likely to impact on the individual (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The exosystem is the concrete representation of the macrosystem characteristics, such as, culture and public policy (Coutts, 2007). Lerner (2005) explains “the macrosystem influences the nature of interaction within all levels of the ecology of human development” (p14). This system is not context specific, but more generic in nature and involves cultural values, customs and laws (Berk, 2001) as well as macro institutions, such as governments and policy.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) extended his initial model of the nested systems to encompass change over time, which he termed the chronosystem. He suggested the chronosystem considers the changing nature of a person's environment over a period of time. Major events affecting an individual can be external, such as, a change in family structure occurring at a certain time or internal to the individual, such as physiological changes that occur with chronological development (Lerner, 2005). As a person matures they also may be able to recognize how changes will influence them; they may be more sensitive to changing events or they may become more resilient over time. He also added to his theory and central to the child, personal characteristics such as personality were key in the development. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory has paved the way for a positive youth development approach (Brendtro, 2006; Phelan, 2004).

A new affirming approach to youth development has evolved in the last two decades. Benson and his colleagues at The Search Institute in United States of America have been key proponents in the development of youth development, according to Damon (2004), from which has emerged the term 'Positive Youth Development' (PYD). Central to PYD theory is that all young people possess the potential for positive development and need to be considered as a resource to nurture (King et al, 2005). PYD focuses on building strength and competencies in the young; it concerns “being productive rather than needing cure” (Damon, 2004) and recognises that young people are able to make significant contributions to society. He argues this approach is a radical shift in thinking when compared to youth being viewed as problems and alternatively considers development from three perspectives; the nature of the young people; how they interact with their communities; identity and moral perspective.

The literature identifies resiliency as a quality that contributes to building strength for young people. The concept of resiliency is outlined in studies conducted by Garmezy (Damon, 2004) illustrating young people's resistance to life's most severe stressors, as Moreover Werner's cross cultural study in Hawaii defined resiliency and reflected the same idea. She developed the term resiliency as "a quality that enables many young people to thrive in the face of adversity" (Damon, 2004, p. 16). This opinion is also shared by Clarke and Clarke (2003) where they propose that all children possess the potential to develop resiliency.

Werner conducted a longitudinal study of 698 children who were studied at the ages one year, two, ten, eighteen and thirty two years. Werner described thirty percent of the survivors of the study were identified as high risk, due to the factors, such as, being born into chronic poverty, prenatal stress, and living in family environments troubled by chronic disharmony and mental illness (Werner, 1995). Two thirds of the participants studied presented with four or more of such risks factors, by the age of two years and went on to experience serious negative events in their lives, such as delinquency and mental health issues. Significantly though a third of the participants, who had four or more risks factors present, went on to experience positive lives and were described as capable positive and compassionate adults (ibid.).

A number of factors existed within the group whom experienced positive lives. Werner (1995) outlines how mothers described their children as affectionate and easy to get on with, while elementary school teachers found these children to be effective communicators with effective problem solving skills. At adolescence, they emerged as autonomous, high self efficacy levels as well as, and outgoing while also able to display warmth and empathy. Within the family the adolescents experienced successful relationships and were able to develop positive relationship with a competent and emotionally stable adult (p.83). Resilient children seem to be able to readily seek these relationships with Werner identifying there was a difference between males and females; the resilient boys had an active compassionate male in their household, who offered structure but warmth. Differently the resilient girls tended to come from household where they might have been encouraged to develop independence and take some risks. The role model in this case could be a grandmother, older sister or mother.

From a community aspect the protective factors present came from members in the community who offered support and responded to issues, as they arose in young person's life, peers, and influential teachers were also other common sources of support. Werner alerts us to the fact, that after completing high school the resilient adolescents removed themselves from their community and "sought environments they found more compatible" (Werner, 1995, p. 84). However Werner states that more research needs to be conducted with more systematic evaluations of programmes in the community that will further protect vulnerable children despite difficult environmental factors such as chronic poverty.

Yet in many communities there are other guidelines, cultural values and norms in which resiliency may not be a good fit. Resiliency does not readily fit in collective societies, where the focus may not be on single individuals; where the focus is on families and communities, rather than one person. While resilience has contributed widely to understanding aspects of youth development in the sense that negative events can be turned around, it does not address directly the negative events that are undesirable in societies. It is difficult to understand how, events such as poverty and major disharmony in families is at all desirable in communities. In summary resilience can assist in an individual journey through life events, but presents limitations when considering aspects interwoven in some cultures. Resilience may have further limitations as it describes responses to negative events, and does not necessarily provide a basis for a universal model of youth development according to Damon (2004).

Damon (2004) claims a more solid foundation is the framework of external and internal developmental assets for adolescents (Ibid, 2004; The Search Institute, 2007) External assets include 'support', 'empowerment', 'boundaries and expectations' and 'constructive use of time', meanwhile internal assets include 'commitment to learning', 'positive values', 'social competencies' and positive identity'. This assets framework focuses on the potential within youth to develop fully by building upon the strengths of individuals and families, neighbourhoods and communities. By building on young people's strengths and limitations enables the practice of youth development strategies to fully engage youth to become active members of their community and society (Damon, 2004). In the same way McLaren (2002) affirms youth development is

concerned with “what is needed for young people to grow into constructive autonomous individuals with a high level of well-being” (p. 21).

In PYD, the community where the young person is placed is the key to their development. It is intentionally holistic and considers the young person as a full partner in the community-child relation implying expectations of the developing person in the relationship with community, for example, school and neighbourhood in which the person lives. The Search Institute (2007) proposes two significant assets a child must acquire, to feel empowered. Firstly the young person needs to be recognized as a resource so needs to be given useful roles in their community. Secondly youth development is enhanced when a young person gives service to their community on a regular basis. At the same teachers and parents should have high expectations to encourage success in their children (ibid.), with McLaren (2002) identifying that if parents and teachers have low expectations children are likely to have low expectations of themselves.

The development of identity and morality both play a pivotal role in PYD, which “has taken seriously the role of moral and religious beliefs in shaping children’s identities” (Damon, 2004, p.21). Damon identifies internal assets such as empathy and caring are crucial to personal development. Furthermore the young person being part of a religious community is important as it helps in their development of morals. King et al. (2005), claim that religious faith and morals can be a protective factor from risk for the developing person and view moral identity as a crucial part of a young person’s identity formation.

### ***Conclusion of Youth Development Theory***

This section has examined the origins of youth development with mass education of youth being the first response governments made in the industrialized world in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. More recently in the latter part of 20<sup>th</sup> century Positive Youth Development (PYD), has become a focus with the recognition that young people have potential and a resource to develop as they are the adults of tomorrow’s world. Strategies to enhance youth development philosophies are happening throughout the developed world. A common strategy in the developed world in to foster and nurture positive youth development is mentoring.

## **Mentoring as a Youth Development Strategy**

The following section is concerned with youth development strategies implemented to enhance youth development. Mass education, career development and mentoring programmes are part of youth development practice that aims at implementing youth development principles and improving outcomes for youth. The focus of this section will describe the literature known on the topic of mentoring programmes. For the purpose of this discussion the focus will be faculty to student mentoring relationships and programmes within tertiary institutions.

The industrial revolutions that have occurred since the 1700s have had major consequences for major powers in the world throughout Great Britain, Europe and The United States. The events that occurred in The United States are typical examples of the changes resulting from the industrial revolution. People living on the land dropped dramatically until only two percent of the population were involved in agriculture. By 1960, the manufacturing share had risen to almost one-quarter and the agricultural share had dwindled to just eight percent (Blinder, 2008). Mass public education, which aimed at teaching great numbers of literate and numerate workers for the nation's factories, was seen as one of the key ingredients in the recipe that enabled The United States to the forefront of industrialization (ibid).

Education initiatives progressed through the decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the industrialised world. One example is the K12 system in The United States, educating children from five to eighteen years in preparation for the job market. It is unclear though what the labour market according to Children Now (2011) will require fifteen years on when a child begins school. Thus a need has been created for career development within education in order for young adults to recognise their strengths and suitability towards certain careers. The young person also needs to acquire skills and choose an appropriate study programme to meet the requirements of the labour market. As the manufacturing market has lesser demand for workers, due to technical advances and outsourcing, more young adults are being prepared for personal service occupations. Such occupations require a young person to assess and market themselves while focusing on the development of skills and performance (ibid.).

### ***History of Mentoring***

An increasingly popular strategy that is often implemented is that of mentoring programmes in business and education. Mentoring initially made its mark in The United States in the business environment in the 1970s. The aim was for new employees to benefit from a more experienced person in the workplace showing, guiding and supporting them in the development of their career (Career Teacher, 2011). More latterly mentoring has become very popular within educational environments. Peer mentoring has been established in schools, while in the tertiary sector faculty mentoring students in academic and personal development domains has become common place and recognized as being supportive to the transition young people are making (Penner, 2001). Furthermore it has become an intentional strategy in order to retain and nurture personal and academic development throughout students' studies.

Mentoring has a long history in many cultures and the Chinese culture is one where mentoring has served to pass on ancestors knowledge, attitudes and values to succeeding generations (Mee-Lee & Bush, 2003). There has been a move to implement formal mentoring programmes in Hong Kong demonstrating a worldwide trend towards mentoring as a strategy, to retain and support students in their studies. Two universities in Hong Kong have adopted mentoring programmes as a retention and enhancement strategy with a focus on increased academic achievement. In a large study conducted at Hong Kong Baptist University quantitative data was gathered from 456 students and 79 faculty members. The study focused on students' perspectives of effective mentoring and mentors' perspectives of the student-mentor relationship. Mee-Lee and Bush (2003) refer to Tao's insight into mentoring:

As a good mentor is a superb mentee, the excellent mentee is affine mentor. According to Tao the best relationship between a mentor and a mentee is like water, a natural element that ultimately changes the shape of whatever it touches. (p. 1).

While mentoring has a long history in business Mee-Lee and Bush (2003), maintain that it is becoming more commonplace in tertiary environments, in response to students not coping with transition as well as desired, displayed by behaviours such as poor time management, lack of preparation in an academic and personal sense associated with poor attachments to an institution reflected by statements that "no one cares". Similarly Gormely (2008); Benishek, Bieschke, Park and Slattery (2004) state mentoring activities

are now mandatory for tutorial staff, in many tertiary institutes and are seen as part of tutorial responsibilities.

In Mee-Lee and Bush's (2003) study it is described how The Hong Kong Baptist University has adopted a compulsory mentoring programme. It is mandatory for students and tutorial staff to participate in the programme. The aim of the programme is to help students make a successful transition from secondary to tertiary. Mentors assist students by providing academic advising and support, study skills, problem solving and personal development support sharing experiences and views on different issues and suggestions in problem solving and study skills. Being extended to all students, means that mentoring is accessible to those students likely to be in need of it, without singling them out (*ibid*). The study methodology for this research viewed current mentoring practices at Hong Kong Baptist University.

The findings from the Hong Kong study illustrated that the frequency and time of seven one hour sessions per year was satisfactory. The primary motivation of the mentees was to fulfill the university requirement of attendance with the benefits of creating a better relationship with university faculty staff. Meanwhile mentors wanted to assist students in their transition and they felt they got to know the students aspirations and were able to transfer their experiences (mentors) to their teaching. Similarly Boyd and Lintern (2005) and Gormely (2008) point out that while the primary aim of a mentoring programme is for students to make an easier transition and progress throughout their studies, there is much evidence to suggest the benefits of a mentor programme are mutually satisfying for mentor and student. Both mentors and mentees found no problem with having opposite sex mentor or mentee, however mentees said if there was the choice they would choose a mentor of the same sex. The desirable attributes of mentors were: they demonstrated understanding and sympathy, were accessible to students; had the ability to communicate well and enthusiasm. "[B]eing a good teacher" and "knows my subject" were the fifth attributes (Mee-Lee & Bush, 2003). On a similar note effective mentoring according to Johnson, (2008) is dependent on relationship building between student and mentor. A sustainable and trusting relationship is essential as it lays the foundation for full engagement in the mentoring process which leads on to the potential to enhance the student's personal and academic development (*ibid.*). In faculty relationships, when students and mentors are paired according to

programmes, mentoring is then contextualized and the mentor can recognize the student's strengths and challenges they face on a continuous basis resulting in timely responses to student issues (Mullen, 2008).

If effective human interactions and listening times are going to occur in mentoring relationships spaces need to be appropriate. PINZ (2007) inception report highlighted the number of hours a student spends at a tertiary institution. The people that are available to help students, tutors, mentors and student services need to be proximal for the student to access them.

Mentors need to provide opportunities for listening time with their mentees. Teaching and student spaces must be appropriate for mentoring and they provide opportunities for listening times and creating conversations. Listening times are vital for mentors to act as role models and provide leadership (Correll, 2008). Mentors who provide listening times, enable students to form their identity, to work out ideas and thinking as well as and recognise their strengths and direction (Herman & Mandell, 2004; Rahman, 2009). As human interactions provide the basis for trusting relationships, mentors need appropriate facilitative skills to allow students to express their identity and developmental needs within a safe place so they can issues affecting them (ibid).

Findings from the mentors related to lack of time and that mentoring not valued as teaching and research activities. Mentors stated they often lacked training in order to feel and develop competency with a lack of support from senior management. These were recognized as a significant problem (Mee-Lee & Bush, 2003). The implications resulting from the findings of their study were; for mentoring to be successful support must be given by senior management and the time given to the mentor had to be recognized as part of teaching responsibilities. It was seen that if mentoring was timetabled within students' curriculum the student contact could be easily recognizable. It was also seen that mentoring needed to be included in the orientation of new staff so they could easily recognize their responsibilities and training was seen as an essential component to good mentoring as mentoring skills did not come naturally to many staff. Also adding to a mentor's profile, would include a good reporting system to include notes from mentoring sessions including feedback from mentors and mentees (Mee-Lee & Bush, 2003).

Further recommendations included regular reviews and changes to the programme thus adding to its robustness and helping to promote it as significant institutional commitment. If this is the case then 'buy in' from mentors is adopted and creates visibility to the students that is intended to benefit according to Johnson (2008). When people are designated responsibilities for mentoring, it makes the process more robust with reporting responsibilities to justify the programme through quality and measurable instruments and to make changes as necessary. It needs to be monitored through committees with staff and student representation (ibid).

First year experience in tertiary is a time of major transition for young people. Career development, the forming of identity and achievement are key issues to a young person's development, who is in the process of transition from adolescence to early adulthood. Wilson (2010) proposes that young people face a major transition in the first year of tertiary education in all of domains and universities need to respond in a way that will engage them fully in their first year experience.

Her extensive work in the area of first year experience at Griffith University in Australia has led her to assert that there needs to be a sustainable approach to the development of first year experience. Within the practice of teaching at tertiary level Wilson (2010) affirms first year student have specific needs and is proposes that first year [experience] students are the responsibility of all staff. She believes that an understanding has been reached to provide a strategic approach to first year students in order to provide them a holistic learning experience. She posits that there is a need for rigorous evaluations of first year programmes in order to inform and influence decision makers. The development of leadership in the first year experience sector will also help the area grow and develop (ibid.)

First year advisers responding to students needs in first year, provide a non judgmental point of contact to address student concerns. Wilson (2010) informs us a first year advisor is allocated to cluster of related programmes and is responsible for first year school level transition, such a developing a degree level first year experience, leading and organising orientation together with monitoring and advising at risk students. Retention rates at Griffith University showed an increase in retention of thirteen percent in 2007 and in 2008 indicated that thirty percent of programmes nationally with

institutional data showed a gradual increase in all key indicators. Wilson describes the programme foundations for success was:

- Effective leadership: someone must lead within school nominated as person responsible for first year experience
- Facilitating capability development of strengths rather than remediation for both staff and students
- For staff developing their capability so a positive learning environment is present while for students concentrating on strengths and capabilities to be self managing

In practice Wilson (2010) points out that the message being relayed to the student is the university has 'a belief in you and we want you to succeed' and 'while we will challenge you, and support you, this cannot be done without your engagement'. Wilson proposes a university must create a sense of connectedness to help students develop a sense of capability and preparedness, while negotiating and clarifying expectations. Wilson also suggests a complementary suite of strategies in order to meet first year students 'needs. She states that all of the student population has the same needs, in which some groups of students will have different needs. The question that is raised often is what unused resources can we use of and the answer is students. A creative multi-faceted approach is required if universities are to respond effectively to student individual needs and Wilson proposes that mentoring and in the case of Griffith University, peer mentoring is one such strategy. She proposes that senior students can become partners in the first year process as a proactive intervention of support at the beginning of a semester. Students are feeling supported by persons that are relevant to them and at same time mentors are developing leadership skills.

Larson (2006) highlights the intrinsic motivation that youth possess can promote healthy youth development. He believes the positive growth of an individual is built in their motivational system that drives development. From the perspective of an advocate he proposes universities need to provide opportunities to develop a youth motivational system. His research has illustrated that young people's motivation will vary from time to time, even with highly motivated individuals, particularly when students do not have ownership about what they doing and events that are occurring for them. Larson

reminds us young people's motivational levels with increase and decrease according to other competing motivational systems there exist in person's life, for example, pleasure. There are environmental issues that young people have to encounter and learn to deal with, distractions, such as, peer pressure is common. He also claims many young people are faced with environmental issues, for example poverty, that can disrupt their intrinsic motivation. In spite of motivation youth may also not have self regulatory skills to organize their goals and reach their achievements and/or may not be able to sustain the effort. Mentors can help develop intrinsic motivation with Larson proposing that there are opportunities for mentors to cross all developmental domains of development domains.

While youth mentoring programmes have a prominent place in youth development the limitation of mentoring programmes must be recognised. Rhodes (2001) identifies how much youth development research, has alerted us to the benefits of having non parental adults present in one's life. Firstly she identifies Benson et al. research at the Research Institute can provide youth with appropriate role modeling. Moreover she identifies how earlier researchers work, such as, Werner, focus on resilience illustrated that 'significant other adult' in young person's life, provided protective factors for youth, especially for 'at risk' youth. However Rhodes raises a salient point when she identifies that many young people do not make connections with caring adults. In response to this situation volunteer youth mentoring is being offered as an intervention (Freedman as cited in Rhodes, 2001). Rhodes questions the effectiveness of some youth mentoring programmes in protecting youth, asking also, what are the factors that make mentoring programmes safe, effective and a sustainable intervention.

Although mentoring concepts are not new, Rhodes (2001) identifies that there has been prolific growth in the past fifteen years in United States of America. It is estimated that over five million American youth are involved in school-and community based volunteer mentoring programmes, with nearly half of those mentoring programmes were established in last five years of twentieth century with only eighteen percent being in operation for more than fifteen years. Rhodes adds evaluations of programs are essential. She acknowledges that Big Brothers and Big Sisters are a rigorous organization that screens and trains its members. However she points out such rigour is not present in all of programmes that have surfaced in recent years. She highlights her point in

stating since mentoring programmes vary considerably, it is difficult to draw definite conclusions regarding its overall effectiveness. Rhodes also considers Du Bois and his colleagues meta analysis conducted in 2002 of effectiveness of mentoring programmes for youth. Factors that increased the effectiveness of the programme were training structured activities, mentors and youth more frequent contact, the support and involvement of parents and the monitoring of overall programme and its implementation (ibid.).

One issue is raised by the length of the relationship is important to the effectiveness of mentoring programmes. Relationships according to Rhodes (2001) that endured longer than twelve months illustrated improvements in several domains of life academic, psychosocial and behavioural effects or outcomes. Rhodes highlights the infrastructure of mentoring programmes is improving dramatically and she points out the growing attention among researchers to positive youth development and the increased number of university community alliances bode well for future mentoring programmes evaluations.

Rhodes (2001) asserts that is crucial to consider the limitation of mentoring programmes, in that fact that they will not replace nurturing supportive families, as a basis to raising positive young people. For young people growing up, she posits that there are many contexts that can provide support. A cultural context is salient in spontaneous relationships within one's community she claims and is culturally appropriate, where an adolescent' aunts, teachers, clergy coaches may have advantages over structured programmes. Once formed such relationships are likely to be more continuous, than a structured intervention. Rhodes extends family support to the community as well as the formation of strong youth policy. It is necessary to concentrate on those structures, she believes and while there is a need for mentoring programmes they must be adequately implemented and evaluated (Ibid.).

### ***Cultural Understanding, Boundaries and Ethics***

Cultural understanding is salient in the development of effective mentoring relationships. Cultural competence and awareness and flexibility are essential when populations are diverse and a "one size fits all" will not work reports Benishek, Bieschke, Park and Slattery (2004). The student needs to be allowed to express their cultural

identity. Scholsser and Foley (2008) and Gormley (2008) maintain that understanding of boundary and ethical issues in mentoring relationships is developed from a multicultural context. They assert that cultural understanding is the key to solving many dilemmas occurring in mentor relationships.

Religion crosses into an ethical concern. Mentors cannot assume that people from similar backgrounds religiously will view their religion in same way other members do (Lewis, Schlosser & Foley, 2008). A study conducted by Smith and Orlinsky (2004) illustrated that 975 psychotherapists from North America and New Zealand found that 94% of participants have been raised in religious household with a high percentage being Christian. Thus religious values are likely to be present in cross cultural relationships. Crabtree and Sapp (2004) assert that when tutors are teaching cross culturally, there needs to be a cultural shift towards the teaching of host students (those students who are residents of the country). Host students needs must be at the centre.

Boundaries provide structure to a relationship describes Schlosser and Foley (2008), as they provide a set of roles in a process. The intensity of mentoring relationships and the very elements that make mentoring valuable, are also the elements that make mentoring boundaries possible to cross, as seen in studies by Barnett (2008); Gormley (2008); Johnson and Nelson (1999); Johnson, (2008); Schlosser and Foley (2008) and Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995). Furthermore it is always the responsibility of the professional to set the boundaries so the boundaries are explicit to the mentee (Johnson, 2008). Beneficence, non-maleficence, fidelity, autonomy, justice are concepts and help define boundaries and exist within professions' ethics codes. Schlosser and Foley (2008) discuss complexities of multiple relationships, making it salient to work out each of the multiple roles, so everyone is clear especially the mentee who is the most vulnerable party.

Boundaries also provide safety in mentoring relationships. As expressed by Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995) "proper boundaries provide a foundation for a mentoring relationship by fostering a sense of safety and the belief that the clinician will always act in the client's best interest" (p.500). Effective mentoring involves closeness and caring on the part of a mentor who invests emotional involvement resulting in a risk of boundaries being crossed (Johnson 2008). Schlosser & Foley (2008) identify both power boundaries

and mentor competencies are common potential ethical issues, arising in a mentoring relationship. Moreover there can be conflicting roles when mentors are both friends and teachers, due to the existence of multiple relationships (Barnett, 2008; Johnson & Nelson, 1999; Schlosser & Foley 2008).

Strategies and guidelines help to define boundaries. Barnett (2008) points out, it is particularly important to identify clear boundaries when mentors are in multiple relationships. Barnett offers useful guidelines that can help protect parties involved, resulting in resolution of issues when they do arise. A critical issue for a mentor Barnett (2008) explains is his/her objectivity and judgment does not become impaired in the mentoring experience, whilst the critical issue for the mentee is he /she is not harmed or exploited. Barnett explains the complexity of a mentoring relationship cannot be solved by the mentor distancing themselves, but rather it is knowledge of what the boundaries are and how they might be crossed, that leads to resolution of issues as they might arise. He adds that mentoring should be neither full of rules and regulations nor laissez-faire. Rather ethical decision making will help guide the mentor to consider and work through arising issues and it is about how to negotiate appropriately, the multiple relationships a mentor may play, for example a mentor and an assessor. Similarly it is the informal interactions between faculty and students that may have the greatest impact on them as people and students, professionals (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001) explain. Also the way faculty members interact with students is likely to have strong impact on students' professional development and the values they gain regarding their boundaries and multiple relationships.

As mentors and students spend more time with one another the reward for the mentor is that he/she finds it gratifying and stimulating as they discuss issues regarding students' career plans their personal goals and discussing issues about their profession. Gormley (2008) informs us that effective mentoring will involve emotional involvement if mentors are truly caring and there is a risk of crossing boundaries. The issue at the same time for the mentee is the situation involves closeness making them vulnerable to dependency and trust and possible violations.

Power differentials are apparent in mentoring relationships. Barnett (2008) states that the simplest thing to do in the concerns over multiple relationships is to avoid the

relationships in the first place; however institutions throughout the world require academic staff to take many roles at the same time. Moreover the academic environment offers a number of protective factors because of the large structure an educational organization offers with more oversight, less isolation and a less intimate focus for professional interactions. As the student progresses through their study the power differential decreases between student and the mentor and students become more like peers of the tutor and the gap narrows. Age is another factor that in most mentor relationships the mentor is older than mentees and when a problem occurs in the relationship the student may not speak up or challenge the situation because of the age differential making the mentee more vulnerable (Gormley,2008).

Nevertheless institutional policies can protect vulnerable parties. Policies in regards to interactions with students and faculty staff will offer guidelines and prevent violations from happening, but that institutes must bear in mind that it is always the mentee that is more at risk (Barnett, 2008). Barnett reinforces that mentor relationships will be intense and boundaries come close to being crossed or are crossed and this is part of the nature of mentor relationships and that decision making models will help mentors to examine if they are likely to cross boundaries.

Decision making models can assist in the ethical dilemmas that arise in mentoring relationships (Johnson, 2002). A helpful concept is beneficence, that is the mentor needs to ask him/herself is it consistent with professional obligations, is it previously agreed autonomy to the parameters of the mentoring relationship and lastly am I treating my mentee similar to others. Johnson points out that though models are useful they do not provide all the answers, resulting in that mentors may decide to enter a particular relationship with one mentee and not another. If the issues are examined and there is an awareness of pitfalls, mentors can be proactive and recognize the signs of problems arising and respond to the situation. Comprehensive training will encourage the development of mentor competency and help define boundaries clearly within mentoring relationships (ibid.).

### ***Training***

Mentor training is essential for clarification of roles and competency. Specific mentor training however will offer a clear way to respond to challenges that arise in a

mentoring relationship. Mentor training according to Johnson (2002) helps identify the roles of the tutor and the mentor. It is necessary that the tutor's role is clearly respected and the tutor will often be the first point of contact when a student is having difficulty. The mentor may need to be involved when a situation is not resolved for the student. Mentors need to also know the properties of good mentoring and what mentoring is not to practice their role safely. Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995) iterate that it is essential for mentors to recognize their level of competence and seek help when needed, with Gormely (2008) pointing out that training and supervision help create boundaries for mentors, which they can make explicit to their mentees. Mentors are ethically bound to work within their competence levels. Supervision on a regular basis is part of good mentoring training and gives opportunities for mentors to self reflect on their competency as well as other colleagues to witness it (Smith & Fitzpatrick).

Appropriate mentoring training allows mentors to recognize their limitations in a mentoring relationship. The mentor should be alerted to when the student needs further assistance and/or when the mentor wants to limit his/her involvement. Mentor training will also teach mentors what to inform students about, what mentoring involves and the boundaries of the relationship. Mentors must advise students that when a situation becomes potentially unsafe, that is, when the student could be a danger to him/herself and to others. Relevant people within the organization will be notified and appropriate help will be sought for the student. Good mentoring training will provide regular dialogue for mentors to meet to enable them to find solutions and ways to respond to ethical concerns that are likely to be common in the teaching and learning environment (Mullen, 2008).

### ***Conclusion of Mentoring as Youth Development Strategy***

This section has outlined strategies that implement the theory of youth development. It has focused on how mentoring programmes in an educational setting can help a young person negotiate a major transition in their lives. It has discussed some factors that need to be present in mentoring programmes that help develop successful mentoring relationships.

## **The Context of Bahrain**

This section will look at the context of Bahrain and consider the practice of mentoring programmes in tertiary education in the Kingdom. Considering the context helps those implementing strategies to understand opportunities and challenges within their practice and organizations.

### ***The History of Economic Development in Bahrain***

The history of economic development in Bahrain has been exceedingly rapid since the discovery of oil in the 1930's. Up to that time Bahrain was a country that was steeped in tradition and culture and whose economy was based on pearling, fishing and trading. Life was centred on these industries with whole families being involved. It was believed a child would become educated through learning the Koran by the village Mullah and if the Koran was learnt then the child would have acquired complete knowledge of the Arabic language (Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development, 2010).

### ***The History of Education in Bahrain***

Bahrain's education system is currently under extensive reform (BEDB, 2011). "Historically Bahrain had a reputation for having one of the most advanced education systems in the Gulf" (Coutts & Leder, 2010, p. 1). The later decades of the 1900s saw the establishment of The Gulf Polytechnic, which produced high quality, work ready graduates for professional and applied areas. However the Gulf Polytechnic became more focused on developing academic programmes "leaving a significant gap in the provision of applied and professional education in Bahrain, which widened steadily over the next 25 years" (ibid, p.3). In Bahrain the post secondary school student population, attending applied universities and polytechnics are not aligned with other developed countries. Most developed countries have approximately eighty percent in applied university settings and polytechnics, whereas Bahrain has around twenty six percent. This has direct implications on the needs of the economy in particular the job market (ibid.).

To address the needs of the labour market a key initiative of the National Education Reforms was to re-establish a polytechnic in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Youth unemployment in the twenty first century is around twenty eight percent and with a population that is currently not meeting the demands, attributes and skills required by

the labour market there is a high dependency on expatriate labour (Coutts & Leder, 2010). There is a widening gap, becoming more apparent, between the current provision of education and the labour market requirements. As oil supplies diminish there is increased demand for diversification of products and skills. Currently two thirds of the jobs in Bahrain are filled by expatriates and as the youth population increases the situation will worsen. The eventual aim is to replace expatriates with qualified Bahrainis who will be qualified technical and applied professional graduates (ibid.).

### ***Youth in Bahrain***

Youth development has occurred in industrialized developed countries because of reduced reliance on child labour, resulting in governments responding with mass education of its young people. For Bahrain the concept of youth as a definite transition period from a young child to an adult is a recent event. The influence of family is a significant construct in a young person's life. The values and beliefs to the family are a major influence in a young person's life, particularly as young people remain living at home until married (Al Hajeri, Thurkair & Sarhan 2009). Religion is a significant feature within a young person's microsystem in which Islamic religion remains a constant influencing force. Decisions for young men and women to marry are influenced by family, even though formally arranged marriages are less common now according to Rashad, Osman and Roundi-Fahimi (2005). Madhavan (2012) alerts us to the fact, that even though arranged marriages are less common, it is unwise to allow young people to make completely independent decisions about who to marry as it is such an important event in their lives. Whilst we should give youngsters full freedom to accept or deny a recommended union, the probability of success will increase when elders are consulted.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems offer a model to examine the influences in the lives of young Bahrainis. As a young person enters a tertiary environment, the microsystem of family school and neighbourhood, culture and religious practice remain relevant; however the young person's microsystem has extended further. An educational setting is a place where a young person spends most of their time with other young people who are likely to have common goals. The student's environment has become more dynamic and as Santrock (2001) states "the student is not a passive recipient of the experiences in these settings, but someone who helps constructs the

settings" (p.79). Santrock's statement reflects the bidirectional influence that occurs at microcosmic level as the young person's environment broadens. The structures that affect a developing person in particular, are parents, school and his/her educational setting. Coutts (2007) points out that the connections between the structures can either be complementary or in conflict, for example, the educational environment and family.

The mesosystem is concerned with a series of relationships and the connection between teachers and parents and also between religion and neighbourhood are two relevant examples. In cross cultural situations, where expatriate staff are employed, the needs of the host students must be at the centre (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004). Cross cultural teaching also involves risk, where the teacher risks not understanding the students, as well as, the students not always understanding the teacher (Gabb, 2006). The values and beliefs of the cultures are vastly different making the building of relationships between the two groups vital in order to understand the students' cultural needs and beliefs (Crabtree & Sapp; Gabb).

Salman and Coutts (2010) explain the student's mesosystem at a tertiary setting as one that "incorporates the linkages between the microcosmic settings of family, friends, work and Polytechnic in which the developing person is central" (p.6). The Bahrain Polytechnic is an example of a new coeducational venture in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Ninety three per cent of the students have come from single sex government schools and have had to adapt to not only a coeducational environment, but also a dramatic shift from didactic learning to student centered learning (ibid.). A system such as a mentoring programme can bridge the gap between family and the institution, where the mentor can act as mediators between the institution and societal norms.

There are several structures in Bahrain that lay within a young person's ecosystem. The Economic Development Board, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Tamkeen are all structures that a young person does not come into direct contact with on a daily basis. However these structures affect the young person indirectly as they are established structures that are associated with new initiatives and education policy of which young people are part of. Salman and Coutts (2010) affirm that the policies and procedures of the above bodies enabled educational reform to occur and subsequently the establishment of Bahrain Polytechnic. These reforms occurred because of the

change in ideologies and values within educational structures, such as the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health being involved in policy making.

There is a significant relationship between the macrosystem, which is overarching in nature, and the microsystem in which young people live. Salman and Coutts describe the macrosystem as a structure that is comprised of "social values and political ideologies concretized in policies and practices" (2010, p.5). These ideologies are woven through not only socio-cultural systems, but also through other major facets of a nation's organisation, to include economic development, political influence educational system and employment opportunities. All of these structures affect the young developing person and are likely to affect their opportunities and outcomes in their lives (ibid.).

### ***Youth Strategies***

The development of formal mass education is one example of a youth development strategy instigated in Bahrain. As a nation Bahrain is recognising the need for diversification and wishing to align itself with other developed countries. Bahrain has initiated youth strategies in order to engage its young people and develop their potential (Bahrain's National Youth Policy, (UNDP), 2004). The Education Act states that all children are to attend school for 12 years (Nationmaster, 2012). This policy is very similar to mass education policies that occurred in developing countries during the industrial revolution (Sanderson, 2007).

There are only forty countries in the world to have established a youth development policy and Bahrain is one of the first Arab nations to do so (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2010). Bahrain formed a national youth strategy in 2004. The strategy was the efforts of two organisations, Government of Youth and Sport (GOYS,) and UNDP. The main problem the organisations addressed was the absence of a youth strategy. The groups also wanted young women to participate in the formation of the strategy and was achieved by radio call-ins and remote online surveys. The objectives of forming the strategy were:

- To building the imagination, energy, opinions and talents of all young Bahraini women and men through their active participation in all phases of formulation of the strategy
- To develop a coordinated and holistic national youth strategy leading to an action plan for 2005 to 2009
- To build the capacity of young people, youth practitioners and others formulating the strategy (UNDP, 2004).

In alignment with youth development principles Bahraini youth acted as partners in the process of collecting data and the views of sixteen thousand youth. The research took place over a nine month period across themes of education, health, employment, culture, information and communication technology, social security, environment, sports and leisure and civil and human rights. After this period an action plan was implemented, made up of five major strategy programmes to include the formulation of a national youth parliament, a national youth commission and a national youth development fund and inter-ministerial committee for youth affairs.

The Ministry of Social Development also plays an important part in Youth Development (Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development, 2011). One venture the ministry offers is 'The Children and Youngsters Club', aimed at eight to eighteen years olds, organises activities and programmes to enhance young people's physical, psychological, environmental and social needs, while also helping them to develop technical skills in areas of computing, scientific enquiry and innovation. There is a focus in developing creativity, acquiring scientific knowledge and participating in local and international meetings and exhibitions. The Ministry also helps young people through assisting families through welfare organizations as well as employment projects, such as, 'Productive Families', which produce locally made goods for both domestic and export markets (ibid.).

To continue progress in areas of youth development Bahrain as a nation needs to encourage youth participation in projects and strategies affecting youth (DFID/CSO Youth Working Group, 2010). If this does not occur youth are likely to become frustrated and feel socially excluded involving themselves in protest to bring about change. In several discussion documents on the Youth Strategy in Bahrain there is a

website link offered to view the progress in 2009 document, however the link is not operating. Meanwhile there is some criticism about the time it is taking to implement strategies, with some civil society groups in Bahrain criticizing the level of implementation of the action plan (ibid.). Progress documents on the implementation of the strategy are an important part of accountability and would contribute to the process of evaluation, hence documents outlining the success and progress need to be visible to stakeholders.

### ***Conclusion Youth Development in Bahrain***

This section has discussed that the concept of youth is relatively new to Bahrain, since the country's economic development in early part of twentieth century. The mass education that has resulted as a response to economic development is also relatively new when compared to many western countries whose economic development occurred much earlier.

### **Document Analysis of the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic**

The following discussion provides a document analysis of the development of the Mentoring Programme, during the years 2008-2011. This provides background information and provides relevant material, illustrating changes to structure and the implementation of the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic.

#### ***Background***

A number of documents informed the context in which the mentoring programme operated over the two and a half year period covered by this research. PINZ, a New Zealand company that was contracted to develop the polytechnic infrastructure, initially developed the mentoring programme in 2008. They identified that a mentoring system should be part of student support offered at Bahrain Polytechnic in order to ensure success in their studies. According to the Mentoring Review (2008-2010) all students met weekly with a "career coach" who would monitor progress, identify issues, and refer students to support services when necessary. At that time a condition of acceptance to Bahrain Polytechnic was introduced whereby students were required to sign an agreement to meet regularly with their assigned mentor and attend student support sessions when recommended (Ayo & Watt, 2010 p.3).

In spite of mentors believing in the philosophy it was difficult for staff to find the time and maintain commitment in a set up phase of the Polytechnic. Because of this the Mentor Coordinator and a curriculum specialist ensured an appropriate time allowance was included in tutor workload when preparing the Programme Approval Document (PAD, 2009b). Bahrain Polytechnic's Academic Board approved the PAD in May 2009. The aim of the programme was described as one that would create strong links between staff and students, so that students' success in their studies could occur through the provision of pastoral and academic support. The important principles of the programme were:

- To recognise each student as an individual to be valued, with strengths to offer and needs to be catered for
- To develop students into independent learners who understand that learning is a development of a series of steps rather than an information transfer
- To develop a relationship where students will feel comfortable to seek guidance and support where needed
- To ensure that successful relationships are enabled to continue for the student's entire academic life
- To develop mentoring leadership roles through progression to tiered steps of mentoring leadership of new students by experienced students

Subsequently a Student Services Director was appointed and the Mentoring Programme and associated activities were transferred from the oversight of the Academic Director, one of the original PINZ consultants. At this stage a number of changes were made to the programme. As a result the documents suggested there were two mentoring phases.

The research will be conducted in two phases in order to develop an understanding of the best model for a mentoring programme. Phase one will concern the period from September 2008 to July 2010. According to Bahrain Polytechnic (2009b) student participation was expected during that phase. If students were absent from timetabled sessions or did not make weekly contact as requested, a mentor would contact them to discuss non-attendance and how to meet participation requirements in the future. All academic staff were required to participate in mentoring unless their head of faculty

exempted them. At this time there were approximately one hundred and twenty academic staff in total. Due to many academic staff being involved in the development of new programmes during the set up stage of the Polytechnic in this time period eighty academic members were involved in mentoring, giving a very favourable ratio of one to ten, which may have been a factor in high retention rates reported by Salman and Coutts (2010).

### ***Phase One: First Year 2008-2009***

A monthly report was furnished to the Academic Director. Analysis of these showed that most academic and some allied staff were involved in mentoring with twenty two groups of ten students allocated to each. Most groups had both a Bahraini and non-Bahraini mentor, with a male/female tutor mix. A review was conducted of the mentoring programme (Ayo & Watt, 2009). Mentoring received a seventy five percent satisfaction rate in an institutional survey of student feedback but showed mixed perceptions of the programme's positive effect. That is, many did not feel it worthwhile, while others appreciated the efforts of individual tutors. Group meetings were less useful and more difficult to arrange due to a lack of appropriate spaces and attendance was low in most groups. Although mentors found it useful to discuss institutional issues they felt students were reluctant to discuss issues in a group context resulting in many mentors opting to meet with students one-to-one (ibid.).

The Mentoring Programme Review conducted in January 2009 indicated problems with the sustainability of the model used in Phase one as Bahrain Polytechnic staff and student numbers increased in semester two, 2009. Furthermore there were imbalances in expatriate numbers, as well as male and female staff resulting in a review of programme delivery.

Moreover students were not attending the timetabled meetings the Mentoring Coordinator reported. Feedback received from students and mentors showed students would not discuss problems in a group context and many students would not seek support from someone who was unfamiliar to them. At the same time mentors felt there was a conflict of interest in their roles, supporting the student, developing rapport and trust and then being in the authoritarian role of monitoring attendance, thus a

mentoring review committee was established in January 2009 to explore ways of engaging students more effectively as well as sustainability for future growth.

As a result of the review, the mentoring model was adapted to meet the development of the institution, while still maintaining the philosophy of each student having a mentor throughout his or her time of study at Bahrain Polytechnic. The change involved an experienced mentor being paired with a new staff member. Experienced mentors were to continue to mentor five current students as well as co-mentor ten new students. There was a significant involvement of mentors in the polytechnic orientation with team building activities, allowing for a development of building of relationships (Bahrain Polytechnic, 2009a). Following orientation there were only four timetabled mentoring meetings followed by one to one mentoring, where mentors set up a regular time to meet with new students individually and returning students every three weeks. However attendance remained low in timetabled group sessions, along with new and returning students not accessing mentors in significant numbers; mentors made attempts to contact students in a variety of ways such as notifying them via text messages and scheduling meetings on and off campus, and seeing them in class. However this was not successful in many cases and varied according to the relationship established in those early days (Ayo & Watt, 2010).

### ***Phase One: Second Year 2009-2010***

Following a year of operation and the appointment of a Director of Student Services, a mentoring review was conducted in July 2009 as “it was timely to ensure that mentoring provision was meeting its targets... appropriately shaped for the 2009/2010 year” (Ayo & Watt, 2009, p. 1). An email survey was conducted over a two-week period with twenty two responses from staff. Feedback was also sought from student council members in July 2009 at a meeting where eight members were present, a further seven staff contributed comments on an ad hoc basis to the Mentor Coordinator and/or Director of Student Services.

There was both positive and negative feedback received from the contributors. Positive comments showed:

- Staff and students appreciated the importance of mentoring given by the institution
- Attendance and attitude in classes improved significantly when mentoring relationships were working well

Mentors appreciated the time given to mentoring through timetabled sessions and having a phone allowance in order to contact students for meetings and discuss progress or check on how a student was progressing

The problem areas identified were:

- Some mentors were not meeting up with students at allocated times
- There were inappropriate spaces for informal meetings
- Information was not readily available about which groups students were in if tutors wanted to contact their mentor
- Some mentors did not feel they had the appropriate skills to mentor and staff required further training to really assist students. (Ayo & Watt, 2009).

A key change in the mentoring programme was that not all staff were involved in mentoring: rather a group of experienced and willing tutorial staff members who had been at Bahrain Polytechnic for at least six months became mentors. The Teaching and Learning Unit became involved in training of mentoring staff with the mentoring role appearing as an addendum to a Position Description and a time allocation to those involved staff. The Teaching and Learning Unit and the Mentor Coordinator trained mentors, using methods from the New Zealand Mentoring Centre and were a base for teaching sessions (Ayo & Watt, 2009; Bahrain Polytechnic, 2009c 2009).

However there remained problems with students being actively engaged in the mentoring process. According to The Mentoring Review 2008-2010 (Ayo & Watt, 2010) during semester one 2009-2010 the Mentor Coordinator received feedback from fifty mentors from training sessions, face-to-face and electronic meetings, indicating although new students' attendance was high in orientation sessions; their attendance

after that period began to decrease. Some examples of comments received from mentors/tutors were:

- Students were not responding to one-to-one mentoring in spite of mentor's efforts.
- Students were not willing to discuss problems with staff they did not know well or trust.
- It would be preferable if mentors mentored students they taught in classroom.

Thus Senior Management Team (SMT) initiated a review process in March 2010, with the objective of implementing a new system for semester one 2010-2011. The review prepared by the Director of Student Services and the Mentor Coordinator considered the original PINZ concept, the 2009 PAD document and 2010 and the Board of Trustees Profile document. These documents provided a history of the mentoring programme along with rationales for changes made to the programme since its implementation from September 2008 to March 2010 (Ayo & Watt, 2010).

Meanwhile the Mentoring Review 2008-2010 was in progress with the executive, in the transitional semester of semester two 2009-2010, it was decided that foundation students were mentored by their English tutors and new degree students by faculty tutors. The rationale for this change was that students would be more likely to access mentors and actively engage in the process of mentoring if students and mentors were in close contact with each other through classroom activities (Ayo & Watt, 2010).

The outcome of the review was that mentoring as seen in Bahrain Polytechnic (2010) moved from a highly recommended programme to one of a compulsory nature for semester one 2010-2011. Students were required to meet with their mentor twice per semester, if this did not occur students' would not receive their academic transcripts. All academic teaching staff were required to mentor students unless exempt by their head of faculty. The polytechnic developed sufficiently, resulting in most academic staff being available to mentor.

### ***Phase Two 3<sup>rd</sup> year 2010-2011***

Phase two of the research concerns the period from September 2010 to July 2011. There was a substantive change in direction of the programme in this period. Student

requirements to participate were reduced to only attending two compulsory meetings per semester. However there were difficulties with student attendance in phase one and therefore a level of compulsion was introduced. If attendance did not occur students academic transcripts would not be released at the end of the semester. The requirement for all academic staff to participate continued and although there were more tutors involved in mentoring, the ratio of staff to students increased because student numbers continued to grow with each intake. This time period clearly represents a second phase in the research.

### ***Conclusion of Document Analysis of Mentoring programme at Bahrain Polytechnic***

This section has identified the development of the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic through the process of document analysis. It has illustrated the development of the programme from a set up stage to an implementation stage of the polytechnic as an educational provider. The researcher has identified two distinct phases of the Mentoring Programme in which there was a significant change in the direction from voluntary to compulsory attendance in the mentoring system.

The chapter has explored the theory of youth development. It has illustrated some strategies of youth development and highlighted that mentoring is a significant youth development strategy as a response to mass education. Additionally, the concept of youth development in Bahrain has been explored, illustrating the formation of youth development in the cultural context of Bahrain. The final section includes a document analysis of the formation of the development of the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic. This had lead the researcher to explore what is an appropriate model for implementing a mentoring programme at a polytechnic in a Middle Eastern context?

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Investigating Mentoring in a Higher Education Setting: Design and Conduct of the Case Study**

#### **Background**

The key question initiating this research thesis was: What is the best model for a mentoring programme at a polytechnic in a Middle Eastern context?

International research seems to suggest that while mentoring and pastoral support programmes are common features within many western tertiary institutions, such programmes are not common within the Middle Eastern tertiary environment. Moreover, students have not by and large, experienced mentoring relationships within the secondary school environment, although they may have experienced those of an informal nature, where such relationships have depended on individuals to establish, as in the case of teacher and student. Family is the foundation and the source of influence throughout an individual's lifetime, thus immediate family as well as aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins all play a part according to Al Hajeri et al. (2009). This practice helps to maintain the stability of family and cultural values as there are several opportunities to keep mentoring relationships constant through regular family contact which occurs frequently in Bahrain.

When PINZ presented its proposal to set up Bahrain Polytechnic to the EDB in 2007 the offering of a mentoring programme was a point of difference. To address the issue of what is the best model for implementing a mentoring programme in a Middle Eastern context this chapter explains why a case study was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of what factors could make student mentoring successful at Bahrain Polytechnic. Furthermore explanations of the method and the steps involved in the research process will be offered.

## **My Interest and Role as a Researcher**

Prior to accepting a contract at Bahrain Polytechnic, a significant part of my academic teaching background was in a learning development context at a large New Zealand university. My role was to assist students in the development of their academic study skills, both on a one-to-one basis and in classroom tutorials in conjunction with faculty. This role gave me insight into how personal and developmental issues can impact on students' academic development and success. Helping students develop learning relationships, organize their time effectively and develop critical thinking skills were some examples that fostered students' academic success. I was familiar with Tinto's extensive work on first year experience and how supporting first year students helps them to make a successful transition to tertiary study. At the same time I recognized learning and pastoral care needs were not limited to first year students, they merely changed as a student progressed through their chosen programme. In summary I have always seen that part of my role as an educator is to mentor students in their personal and academic development, I brought values and experiences from this role to my position as Mentoring Coordinator at Bahrain Polytechnic. The role eventually led me to my interest in exploring the possible benefits of an intentional mentoring programme offered to students throughout their study, as part of an institution's philosophy and services offered to students.

The circumstance suggested a case study as the most appropriate approach. I had insider experience, as I was employed as Mentor Coordinator to implement the programme for the first two years of the set up stage of the Polytechnic. This raised the problem of a possible conflict of interest as I was researching an area in which I was closely involved. When a researcher is closely involved it can be interpreted as a threat to internal validity due to possible researcher bias explains Snook (1999). In phase two, however, when I became a full-time student I was able to develop a more objective viewpoint, moving from an insider role to one of a full-time student did alleviate many concerns and introduced some degree of objectivity, being distanced then from the role of Mentor Coordinator.

## **Objectives and Research Questions**

Stake (1995) explains that research questions arise from a review of the literature and highlights research previously explored, leading to further insight and refining of the research question(s) by the researcher. Wiersma (2000) uses the analogy of a funnel, in which the researcher starts out with questions of a general nature. The general questions are a lead in to the researcher choosing a context, topics and sources of data in order to answer the research questions. Once the data collection and procedures within a particular context have commenced the research becomes more specific.

My research into international literature illustrated that mentoring programmes were an accepted part of western university culture, but not widely practiced within the Middle Eastern tertiary environments in a formal way. However, beginning with an overview of mentoring programmes that were already successfully implemented was a starting point that allowed me to develop understanding of issues and the problem within the specific context of Bahrain Polytechnic. Bahrain Polytechnic was established as part of the 2030 Education Reforms. Bahrain Polytechnic's offering of mentoring system was a key provision within student support services. However the question remains, what is the best model for the implementation of its mentoring programme. As recognized there is a dearth of literature on formal mentoring programmes in tertiary education in the Middle East, thus starting with mentoring literature and models that are present in the West is a beginning to understanding how they might be implemented in the Middle East; however, this is done with the understanding that a culturally appropriate model must be implemented in Bahrain and hence be accepted by students.

## **Research Study Methodology**

In order to address the research question of how best to implement a mentoring programme at a polytechnic in a Middle Eastern context, a qualitative approach, using a case study, was chosen in which the researcher listened to mentors and mentees stories of mentoring experiences.

A review of the programme in July 2010 resulted in changing the future direction of the mentoring programme. The mentoring system moved from a highly recommended system to one that became compulsory for students to participate. Hence I recognized

two distinct phases around which I could conduct my research - Phase one August 2008 - July 2010, and Phase two August 2010 - July 2011, as I was interested in exploring the experiences of mentors and mentees over the three years a case study evolved as the most appropriate, as it is conducted in context using naturalistic methods. Gilham (2000) believes a case can only be studied and understood in context.

The case study in the thesis is the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic. In order to build the case study the researcher has:

- Conducted a document analysis of the Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic
- Reviewed the current international literature on faculty/student mentoring in tertiary educational settings
- Conducted eight interviews in both Phase One and Phase two.

### **Case Study Design**

Yin (1994), views the case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.23). The offering of a mentoring programme was a new initiative in the context of education in Bahrain as part of the 2030 Education Reforms and I was seeking to understand some of the influencing factors that resulted in mentors and mentees being actively engaged in the mentoring process.

Stake (1995) explains that in a case study there are likely to be political, social, historical and personal issues regarding the subject(s) being studied, adding complexity to the case study. When tenders were presented to the BEBD in 2007, the mentoring programme, with its historical and political origins offered by PINZ served as a point of difference, helping them win the contract to set up Bahrain Polytechnic.

Social and personal issues also became evident in the implementation of the programme. Resources to staff the programme were a significant factor for me as a coordinator, due to many competing roles staff had to fill. Moreover some mentors were hesitant about boundaries in their mentoring roles, whilst others believed that students would find their own mentors informally and within classroom settings.

Meanwhile students were often ambivalent about accessing the programme. Such factors as highlighted gave rise to a wide range of questions and complexity to this case study.

### ***Procedures of Collecting Data***

Careful planning into the methods used to gather data is an important aspect of the research process. The researcher needs to decide on what tools he/she will use. Stake (1995) notes that the strength in the case study method is that it draws upon a range of sources that help to explain the complexity of the issue. Interviews, documentation, and observation are some of the tools that Stake reports are available to the researcher within the case study method. As previously described I choose to interview eight mentors and eight mentees who were actively engaged in the mentoring process Phase one participants were interviewed regarding their mentoring experiences in the first two years of the programme from 2008-2010. Phase two participants were interviewed concerning their mentoring experiences from 2010-2111. Within the literature review a wide range of mentoring documentation was examined looking for key developments and changes in order to provide students with mentoring support. Mentor and mentee behaviour and actions, feelings and concerns about their role in the programme are examples of some of the observations I made as mentor coordinator of the programme during the first two years of its implementation.

### ***Face-to-Face Interviews***

Face-to-face interviews were chosen as the best method to obtain the rich data. Questionnaires could have been one option, however in my experience of being a staff member at Bahrain Polytechnic and part of a set up project, staff and students have often been overwhelmed by the amount of surveys, questionnaires and reviews that are necessary as part of the establishment of the polytechnic. Also, due to the unrest in Bahrain, students and staff had an interrupted semester with a five-week closure during March and April. On reopening, programmes were restructured in order for students to complete their papers. When I talked to staff and students I noted a sense of urgency and many people were experiencing distress after the affects of the unrest. Because of this I was very aware I did not want to place people under any further stress and present them with “yet another piece of paper”.

I conducted two pilot interviews with one male and one female academic staff member to help me prepare for the interview process. This helped me revise the structure of questions into more participant friendly informal language along with familiarizing myself with the technology to record the interviews. Both participants were familiar with the mentoring system and one had been an active mentor during his three years of employment at Bahrain Polytechnic.

The face-to-face interview allowed a personal touch and a naturalistic approach was adopted where the interviewee took the lead in the discussion with the questions designed to be a guide only. This provided an opportunity to gain more insight and knowledge about the participants' experiences as the individuals were able to recount their personal story, discuss their feelings, and provide historical evidence over the time they had participated in the mentoring programme.

A further factor influencing the choice of the face-to-face interview was because English was not the first language of twelve of the sixteen participants. Face-to-face interviews allowed these participants to express their ideas more fully than a written format such as a questionnaire. The interview process allowed me to pick up on participants' body language, verbal cues as well as detect hesitancy and any apparent discomfort. It allowed a measure of warmth and personable atmosphere in order to gain the participants' story of their mentoring experience. There was also the added factor of the polytechnic being familiar to the participant as I believe this added to their sense of comfort. Effective active listening skills are required on part of the interviewer in order to follow the direction of the interview. A relaxed atmosphere was encouraged where a conversation about their experience of mentoring was the focus; this required me to listen carefully and look for themes in their discussion and pick up on cues that may be relevant, looking for emphasis, for example body language or eye contact.

It is important to validate the interviewee and value their contribution by listening carefully so they do not have to repeat themselves but rather, have the opportunity to add depth to their experience. Effective communication allows the researcher to develop rapport and connect with the interviewee.

Trust is an essential element in the process of an interview as persons being interviewed are not likely to talk about personal experience without this element. Audio taping the interviews are likely to cause the persons being interviewed to be somewhat nervous in regards to the recorder being present although it is usually the case they will forget they are being taped. The nature of face-to-face interviews is personal and in order for people to divulge their feelings and experiences they have to trust the interviewer.

The interviewer has to spend time considering factors such as physical environment in order to put interviewees at ease. My secondary supervisor told me to be aware of cafés, as “they are noisy places”, so I chose the polytechnic environment, as it is a place where I believe students feel comfortable. The interview room was situated in a well-utilized teaching block, in a staff only area but close to classrooms. The students and staff were familiar with the setting and could locate the room easily as it was central for all the participants in their business of teaching or studying. The environment was cheerful and comfortable and the participants were generally relaxed.

Due to the political unrest in Bahrain during February 2011, the Polytechnic was closed for five weeks. This closure naturally had implications for students and staff in order to complete the semester-scheduled classes. Accommodation throughout all programmes had to be made in order for students to pass assessments, and programmes scheduled classes later into the semester. There was a committed effort for all concerned “to get through the semester”. This made me very aware of peoples’ commitments and priorities and I was very careful not to intrude on participants’ time. All people contacted were very willing to participate, however students often changed their times with me and I accommodated their requests and reassured them that their study and assessments should be their first priority, eventually all participants were able make their appointments. I conveyed my thanks to everyone as I was very aware of the pressure they were under.

Stake (1995) reminds the researcher that he/she must be flexible and not threatened by unexpected changes, such as cancelled appointments or difficulty in obtaining office space. I had developed comprehensive knowledge of the mentoring system at Bahrain Polytechnic as the Mentor Coordinator responsible for the implementation of the programme. I also had researched mentoring models as part of my professional

development. During the course of the interviews I also had student participants reschedule. I anticipated this due to the fact that students had assessment deadlines to meet. I felt confident that they would provide me with their time provided I was flexible and I was able to complete sixteen interviews over a two week period.

### ***Connection between Case Study Design and Ecological Paradigm***

Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective was chosen to illustrate healthy youth development in this study and how a mentoring programme can assist a young person at a significant time in their life. Bronfenbrenner (1979), explains when a young person enters a tertiary setting their microsystem extends further and merges into their mesosystem, where the educational setting becomes highly significant in terms of the young person's future goals and direction. As a case study design occurs in context, I believed the design was connected to Bronfenbrenner's model, as I was able to explore how a mentoring programme was able to ease a young person's transition to the tertiary setting, the merging of systems as expressed by Bronfenbrenner. Clarke and Clarke (2003) meanwhile, state that having an adult role model other than a parent assists in the young person developing resilience. The other significant adult can help personal development and problem solving as well as acting as "a listening ear" for the younger person. This was a further factor that I believed provided a synergy between the paradigm and the case study, as I was interested in exploring role model behaviour of the mentor in the mentoring process and how this impacted on the students.

### ***Case Selection – the Who and What will be Studied***

Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) alert researchers to the fact that careful discrimination at point of selection helps erect boundaries around the case, implying that certain potential participants in research may be more desirable than others in a study. Wanting participants that would provide rich data, I deliberately went about selecting students and mentors who were actively engaged in the mentoring process. Eight mentors and eight mentees were therefore selected in order for me to develop an understanding of the participant's active engagement in a student-mentoring programme.

The mentor selection was made up of participants who were involved in the mentoring programme during the initial set up phase of Bahrain Polytechnic and relates to the

period September 2008 - July 2010. Four mentors were selected based on my knowledge as Mentor Coordinator that they were committed mentors, had students actively engaged in the programme and therefore would be able to provide an insight into the way mentoring was conducted during this time period. The selected mentors comprised two Bahrainis: a male and a female, and two expatriates: a male and a female. The aim was to ensure rich data, gender as well as both Bahraini and expatriate perspectives.

For student selection each mentor was asked to identify a number of female and male students who were actively engaged in the mentoring process. It was necessary that tutors were asked to nominate more than the numbers outlined in order to obtain the number and gender balance required for this study. The aim was to ensure rich data and gender perspectives of student mentoring experiences.

The second phase of mentor selection included a group of participants who were involved in the mentoring programme from September 2010 to the current time. The researcher requested the current Mentor Coordinator to identify four mentors based on his knowledge as Mentor Coordinator that they are committed mentors, have undergone mentoring training, attended mentoring meetings and have students actively engaged in the programme. The aim was to get the mentors to provide insight into the way mentoring was conducted in the last academic year (2010-2011). The mentors selected were two Bahrainis: a male and a female, and two expatriates: a male and a female. The aim was to ensure rich data, gender, and both Bahraini and expatriate perspectives.

Student selection followed that each mentor was asked to identify a number of female and male students who are actively engaged in the mentoring process. It was again necessary that tutors be asked to nominate more than the numbers outlined in order to obtain the numbers and gender balance required for this study. The aim was to ensure rich data and gender perspectives of student mentoring experiences.

### ***Methodological Issues***

Validity, reliability and representativeness are three criteria recognized within both quantitative and qualitative research to evaluate methods and techniques utilized to

gather data in order to meet the aims of the study. Stake (1995) highlights that the types of validity that need to be considered are construct, internal and external. Construct is concerned with design of the study and its organization, while internal validity is concerned with factors that may pose a threat to a study and finally external validity is concerned with how a study may be generalized beyond the immediate subject studied.

### ***Construct Validity***

Construct validity is concerned with having a carefully thought design for the study (Yin, 1994). I devised questions for mentors and mentees, consent forms, information sheets, a safety protocol as well as contacted the student counsellor to ensure, if necessary, appointments could be made by participants after interviews. Such constructs not only give the researcher help to develop competence in the conducting of their research, it also allows the participants to develop confidence in the researcher and the research process. Stake (1995) points out the person being studied, is in their natural setting and may feel threatened or unsure what the research may bring. I found the process of ringing participants first, then emailing consent forms and participation information sheet and giving the opportunity to have any questions prior to the commencement of the interview answered, made the procedures clearly defined and helped create a setting of trust and confidence for the interview.

### ***Internal Validity and Researcher Bias***

Burns (2000) describes that internal validity concerns a match between the interpretations of the data made by the researcher and actuality of what occurs in context. He claims researcher bias can be seen as a threat to internal validity as the researcher is believed to be too closely involved in the subject being studied with the researcher possibly being able to further their own interests. However Denzin and Lincoln (2000) add that value free research is virtually non-existent and that the solution to the issue of subjectivity can be alleviated by the researcher declaring their values within the study.

My commitment to mentoring, the belief that it enhances student experience as well as my own experiences as Mentor Coordinator are all values I brought to my research. Whilst I was employed at Bahrain Polytechnic I had insider information, however the

challenge of implementing a programme in a set up project allowed me little objectivity and ability to view issues from a distance. Moving to full time study did however provide me with more objectivity in the process of designing and conducting the research. The move from an insider to an outsider enabled me have the “best of both worlds”.

### ***External Validity and Generalization***

Stake (1995) reports that external validity is whether the case study can be generalized or not, beyond the immediate subject or experience being studied. He points out that selection is often purposeful with the object of sourcing rich data from the participants. The intention of this study was not to attempt to generalize the findings of a small sample of the participants against more than a thousand students and two hundred mentoring staff. Rather it attempted to illustrate that the mentoring process can be a significantly meaningful process for both mentor and mentee. Nonetheless, Stake (1995) alerts us to the fact that cross-case examination and within-case examination help the external validity process when considered along with the literature review. This led me to look at themes within each individual case and compared them to cases within each phase. I also compared themes between each phase. These examinations were compared with common findings in international literature.

### ***Reliability***

The criterion of reliability refers to the fact that a design allows the procedures to be well documented and can be repeated with the same results several times (Stake, 1995). In my research I documented the participant’s answers to the questions in the interview, asked very similar questions in each interview and documented the prompts I offered to elicit information about mentoring experiences. I recorded the interviews on audiotapes which were transcribed by the same person who was skilled at word processing. I feel confident that each interview was conducted in a very similar manner. I believe this research could be replicated in a sample larger than sixteen participants.

### ***Data Analysis***

The transcribing of interviews was a lengthy process but one which illuminated emerging themes from the data, I had collected through interviews. I noted throughout the sixteen interviews I conducted, the stories were individual, unique experiences. However there were common themes emerging after a few interviews. Transcribing

tapes from Bahraini participants was a little more difficult than the participants who speak English as their first language. I intentionally made comprehensive field notes so I could return to this data to confirm the transcribed notes. After examining the text I noted some similarities and began to code the data by marking the text with the use of coloured pens. When I had enough text marked with same colour, I mounted the text onto large sheets of paper, in other words I was putting texts into categories or files and I could begin to recognize emerging themes. I found the process of mounting the coded text helpful as I could manipulate the emerging themes, ask myself what was happening. As well I would also think is anything missing, is there anything that I expected not emerged yet?

Thematic analysis is a common technique used in qualitative research according to Howitt & Cramer (2010) and one where researchers often gloss over what they actually did, when conducting their research. The researcher is required to identify a limited number of themes that reflects the data within the text. Although themes may come readily to the researcher at the beginning of the examination of the text it will tend to be superficial and more analysis is required for the data to be in-depth interpretation of the phenomena. To help this process the researcher needs to acquire a thorough understanding of the text. I found this happened in my examination of the text. Themes appeared, quite readily to begin with, but as I viewed more data I found the ideas that may have been similar were presented in different ways and I had to check if they were in fact the same theme. Gibbs (2010a) explains that it is about making sense of the text the researcher is asking what going on here, and is looking for patterns. The researcher applies codes to the data, possibly every two or three lines of texts, but this differs with large text being more closely coded. It involves separating parts of the text into themes represented by codes. The researcher needs to look everywhere in the text a particular activity or concept occurs. At all stages of the analysis the researcher needs to be prepared to alter or modify analysis as she/he gathers and develop ideas further. Earlier coding may change, as a result, emphasizes Howitt and Cramer (2010). The objective is the object is to have, as close as fit as possible to the data in the text, without having numerous individual coding. Gibbs (2010a) refers to Alan Bryman's four stages of the coding process:

- Get an idea what the text is about while looking for major themes and asking what is going on here? Pick up common words while seeking ideas and making notes
- Marking the text, labelling the codes, highlighting, noting any analytical ideas
- Every occurrence of same phenomena is noted throughout the text; eliminate repetition when codes may be similar, beware that some codes will naturally go together. In the beginning there are numerous codes, however they will be reduced later.
- The researcher has to interpret and make sense of the data and ask what the key ideas are. That is the researcher is looking beyond the descriptive. Connections between relationships between codes, did they talk about one subject in another way. This is more difficult to do manually than if using computer software. The researcher is being active in the process and is questioning the relation of the codes to the research question (Gibbs, 2010a)

Gibbs (2010b) states it is the major thematic ideas the crucial themes that is going to explain what is going on in the text. He illustrates use of colour with highlighters and suggests additional techniques might need to be used, such as, looking for emphasis in words or participants saying the same thing, but in another way. At this stage the researcher can begin to relate one transcript to another transcript, seeking similarities and contrasts in language. The researcher can shorten phrases without altering the meaning. There is also a need to define codes so that when as researcher return to these and they have some meaning. He suggests that researchers code several sentence, perhaps a paragraph, at same time.

Gibbs (2010c) alerts us the point of codes is to try and retrieve data that been provided by the participants. The retrieval of all the text coded with the same label, all the passages about the same events, will assist the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. Gibbs (2010d) points out that coding is helped by what researcher already knows, what the questions were, what prevalent issues arose from the interview and what literature informs you, what do you expect to hear will also help you identify phenomena that you didn't perhaps expect to hear.

It is useful to place codes into lists and develop a hierarchy of codes as suggested by Gibbs (2010e). He emphasizes these need to be kept separate from the text to avoid confusion. The lists might include a label/name of the code and the date. Defining the code is a major purpose and making notes about the code what you want to do with it. Hierarchy provides researcher with the ability to allow you to make sub themes.

Following this stage the researcher attempts to identify themes which integrate sizeable sets of codings. This process is trial and error and the researcher needs to be flexible so he/she can define each theme in enough detail to illustrate clearly to others the meanings of the themes. Furthermore it is important that the researcher provide examples to clearly illustrate the analysis he/she has made. In the writing up stage, Howitt and Cramer (2010) note the researcher should be prepared to rethink and redo parts of the analysis in the actual writing up while at the same time they point out it is acceptable that numbers of participants can be noted in the analysis of a theme. For example a percentage or number may be used as it can illustrate the possible prevalence of the theme (Gibbs 2010a; Howitt & Cramer).

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Ethical approval to conduct this research was given by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) and Bahrain Polytechnic Research Committee. However, since the research was being conducted at the Polytechnic and I, as the researcher, no longer worked at the Polytechnic, certain safeguards needed to be put into place to protect the participants and Bahrain Polytechnic as an institution.

Bahrain Polytechnic Research Committee approved the research once the AUTEC approval was given. The Research Committee requested regular reports as to the progress towards completion with a copy to Student Services Director who was the director with oversight of the mentoring programme. This implied that if changes to the proposal were to be made, or potential ethical issues arose, these could have been identified to the Polytechnic's Research Committee.

The Research Committee also took into account that an executive director and Chairperson of Research Committee had been appointed as a secondary supervisor to oversee any aspects that arose out of the local context. One major consideration from a

local context perspective was the political unrest in Bahrain during the earlier part of 2011 as the polytechnic was closed for five weeks. When it reopened I was in frequent contact with my secondary supervisor in order to assess how staff and students were feeling and coping with a reorganized semester. I was very aware that although my research had the potential to be of value to Bahrain Polytechnic because of the information gleaned from the study, the primary benefit was to me personally as I was in the process of completing a postgraduate qualification. I wanted people to be in “a good space” and therefore, did not wish to cause them any stress due to my request for participation.

As part of my ethics approval from AUTEK I was required to submit a safety protocol outlining the safety measures I would undertake to keep participants and myself safe, given the political unrest that had occurred around that time. Conducting research at Bahrain Polytechnic helped participants feel comfortable as it was their place but it was also prudent to do so as the security provided by the Polytechnic enabled student and work life “to return to normal” after the unrest in Bahrain. As part of the requirements for AUTEK the Polytechnic counsellor was notified of the interview schedules.

Participants were advised in information sheets that the Polytechnic Counsellor was aware of the interviews and they were able to make an appointment if they felt any concerns after reflecting on their mentoring experience. AUTEK were made aware that I was in frequent contact with my primary and secondary supervisors, and also that I had lived in Bahrain for three years and was aware of the situation within the country. Moreover, my supervisors had met in New Zealand to discuss the role each of them had in assisting and supervising my research and remained in contact with each other regularly. This helped my primary supervisor understand the situation in Bahrain and the affect it could have on my study at times.

A case study design approach has been described offering a rationale for choosing this particular design. The researcher had to take into account the political unrest occurring around this time to ensure safety for the interviewees and herself. She has also taken into account of participants’ time as this was an extraordinary semester. The closure of the polytechnic and its subsequent reopening implied the researcher had to be aware of the situation and be particularly sensitive and flexible in arranging meetings and with

participants' feelings and reactions during interviews. Despite these challenges the researcher was able to conduct sixteen interviews within a two week period.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Findings of Participants Mentoring Experience**

A case study approach allowed for an investigation into the effectiveness of a mentoring programme with the context of an educational institute, Bahrain Polytechnic. The ecological framework adopted to organize the research placed the student at the centre, surrounded by a dynamic environment in which the relationship of a mentor was seen as critical to continuing student success at Polytechnic. Interview evidence was gathered from the participating staff and students, to gain the perspectives of those involved in the polytechnic's mentoring programme between 2008 and 2011. Documentary analysis, as outlined in the literature review, provided information about the social and political context in which Bahrain Polytechnic implemented its mentoring programme. This chapter is only a presentation of the findings, a discussion of the findings linking it to current literature and identifying any gaps will be provided in the next chapter.

#### **The Context: Bahrain Polytechnic**

Bahrain Polytechnic was established in 2008 to address skills gaps present in Bahrain's work force. A mentoring programme at Bahrain Polytechnic was seen as a key initiative in fostering the social and academic success of polytechnic students. The philosophy of the Mentoring Programme has remained consistent, during the last two and half years (September 2008-2011). However aspects of its delivery have been adapted. As described in the literature review two distinct phases developed with the programme moving from highly recommended system for students to access to as system with a level of compulsion and consequences for students non attendance. As the two year set up stage of the Polytechnic concluded all academic/tutorial staff were also available to fulfill mentoring roles and therefore were required to become actively engaged in the mentoring process.

## **Participants from Bahrain Polytechnic**

A cameo of each person interviewed is offered to provide the reader with a glimpse of the interviewees and their mentoring experiences. There were sixteen participants, eight mentors and eight students. Documentary analysis provided in the literature review has demonstrated two phases with different models of mentoring in operation during each phase.

The first four mentors were selected on the basis of their level of engagement: they were identified by the Mentoring Coordinator as "fully engaged, enthusiastic mentors" active in the set up stage of the programme and the Polytechnic.

### **Phase One Participants**

#### ***Cameo mentor # 1***

Mentor one, an expatriate male was a foundation tutor during the 2008-2009 academic years. He volunteered for mentoring in the first year Bahrain Polytechnic was set up as he believed *mentoring* as a teaching responsibility as well as an avenue to establish student support.

#### ***Cameo mentor # 2***

Mentor two, a female expatriate an English tutor, a learning support specialist believed everyone who teaches should be involved in mentoring. Students need help to be successful and knowing that tutors and the institution care is the key.

#### ***Cameo mentor # 3***

Mentor three, a Bahraini male tutor involved in the programme from its inception to the current time wanted to help in the classroom where boys and girls were together and to work with expatriates to help them to establish a relationship with students.

#### ***Cameo mentor # 4***

Mentor four, a female Bahraini tutor considered a mentor to be a helper and a guide and believed it was part of her teaching role to be a mentor to help students integrate into the university setting. The mentoring relationship helped students find solutions to issues causing them concern.

The following four cameos are two male and two female students, selected from a list of names recommended by the mentors in phase one. These students (mentees) were identified by their mentors as being actively engaged in the mentoring process and hence were able to provide rich data. Recognizing it is a very small sample of students; identifying factors have been removed as much as possible.

***Cameo student # 1***

Student one is a founding female student who has engaged in the mentoring process since starting at the polytechnic. She stated *“I have had two mentors since I started Polytechnic and I keep in regular contact with both of them. One mentor was helpful in explaining the expectations of the Polytechnic; the second was very supportive during the unrest when the Polytechnic was closed down.*

***Cameo student # 2***

Student two is a young female student currently in the second year of her degree programme and offered the following thoughts. *“I think the programme is good because it means we are important enough to have a mentor, someone who has been assigned to look after us.*

***Cameo student # 3***

Student three is a male and a founding student who told me *“my mentor is like a mother to me, she is my polytechnic mother. She helps motivate me and directs, guides me to reach my dream, a dream that is shared by my parents, especially my mother. [My mentor] helps me believe in myself, when talking with her I trust myself.”*

***Cameo student # 4***

Student four a young male first year degree student stated he had developed strong relationships with two mentors. His current mentor he described as *“by stating ...”a brother to me and I talk to him about my feelings and how to manage my life”*. His first mentor he stated *“ I knew she really cared when she rang me up when I was asleep and told me wake up come to class this is important for you.*

The following cameos describe four mentors in phase two. The current Mentor Coordinator provided the researcher with a list of mentors whom he recognized as actively involved and engaged with students in the mentoring process. I then selected two male and two female participants from this list, the following cameos describe those participants.

***Cameo mentor # 5***

Mentor five is an expatriate male, new to the polytechnic and to teaching. He demonstrated enthusiasm in his commitment to the programme. *“I found the intensive training we received on induction to the polytechnic very helpful and it has enabled me to guide students. I see my role is to provide a right path for the student and make appropriate referrals.*

***Cameo mentor # 6***

Mentor six, a Bahraini male involved in the mentoring programme from the set up stage “I see my role as a mentor as someone that guides indirectly. I have some concerns at times with working out the difference between being a helper and a counsellor. I watched my expatriate colleague... I learnt from her how to facilitate difficulties with students.

***Cameo mentor #7***

Mentor seven an expatriate female tutor who said: “I enjoy mentoring. I find it particularly effective when students are engaged in the process. The students who are actively engaged benefit socially and academically.

***Cameo mentor # 8***

Mentor eight a Bahraini female tutor who has mentored for three years, stated “I believe that mentoring is a responsibility a tutor has, because most students have issues or problems. I tell students I don’t want to just hear the difficulties and the problems you might have, I also want to hear the good stories. One difficulty I have is student absenteeism,... I am not sure what they expect us to do.”

The following cameos are from students in phase two of the research project. The students were recommended by mentors from phase two as students who were actively engaged in the mentoring process. As with phase one, recognizing it is a very small sample of students identifying factors have been removed as much as possible.

***Cameo student # 5***

Student five is a vivacious Bahraini female in the second year of her degree. “I have been actively involved in the programme since studying at polytechnic. I believe that it is here to help us by motivating and encouraging us. It helps me stay focused. I believe also it is good thing because it means we students are important enough to have a mentor who helps us.”

***Cameo student # 6***

Student six is a young female Bahraini student also in the degree programme. “I have been active in the programme since being at Polytechnic and it is one of the best programmes that the polytechnic has to offer, as it makes me feel special. I believe the mentoring system is there to help me. I met my current mentor at orientation and I liked her straight away, maybe it was that she came close and looked us in the eye.”

***Cameo student # 7***

Student seven is a very enthusiastic young man who believes “mentoring is a good service that polytechnic offers. I don’t think everyone needs mentoring but I go because it is useful to use everything that polytechnic has to offer. I would go whether my mentor teaches me or not, but it is easier when your mentor teaches you because that way you get to see your mentor several times a day and he is available to seek out if you need them.”

***Cameo student # 8***

Student eight is a male student and is currently studying in the degree programme and voiced: “I believe that mentoring is an excellent programme. I engage in the process and being involved in the programme has helped me stay at Polytechnic. This was particularly the case when the unrest in Bahrain occurred. I simply couldn’t concentrate on both, my study and the unrest. Accessing the mentoring programme and counselling services has definitely helped me with issues that were affecting my study.”

## Themes

When analyzing the interview data common themes emerged, the researcher could clearly recognize common themes that belonged to both mentor and student participants. Those themes were:

- Support and reassurance
- Confidence, self esteem and empowerment
- Relationship building and trust
- “My mentor is like one of my family”
- Someone who cares and takes a special interest.
- A motivator and a guide
- Mentoring is more effective if mentors are students’ tutors

Themes that emerged from data analyzed from mentor participants were:

- Responsibilities and accountabilities. This theme emerge to a small extent from student participants but was a dominant theme emerging from mentor participants
- Training

Each of these themes will be explored in further detail using selected parts of participant’s stories to explain the experiences of both mentors and students over the two phases of mentoring.

## Support and Reassurance

In all student and mentor stories a theme of support and reassurance became evident. Student one describes her ideas:

*Both my mentors and I keep in contact. My first mentor I see...I drop into his office whenever I am in his building. I got to know my first mentor well and he/she always wanted to see us face to face so that he/she knew we were doing ok. Mentors can help you with specific student issue, for example they can go to student services and help explain absences. They knew the correct procedures*

*especially when the polytechnic was new. I didn't like being in a group at the beginning of mentoring programme, people don't want to give information in front of others. So we would go and see our mentor ... in their office*

She referred to the unrest in Bahrain as a particularly difficult time for her and she described the support she received while the polytechnic was closed as a highlight in her mentoring experience:

*I was very concerned. My mentor now, helped me stay calm when the polytechnic was closed. I was thinking of studying at another place. I contacted the mentor a lot, who kept reassuring me that polytechnic, would reopen. I am still here and I was thinking of going outside of Bahrain!!!*

Student one's ideas of a mentor role being one of support and reassurance are echoed in several of students' stories as expressed by student eight:

*I couldn't do both, continue my studies and deal with the unrest, it was just too much. I had to deal with issues of being concerned about what was going on in Bahrain personally, so I could continue with my studies. My mentor helped me with that process and kept reassuring me that it was "normal" to feel the way I was ; that it was important to go and see the counsellor to help deal with some of my issues. Once I did that with her support; I was able to get on with my studies and I have done well. My mentor made me think of what opportunities I had by continuing to study at the polytechnic. If I left I may have had to begin at the beginning at another institution.*

Meanwhile student five reflected similar feelings:

*My mentor helps me and reassures me, she guides me which helps me feel good. During the polytechnic closure we made contact two or three times; she helped in many ways.*

*In contrast student six commented about the closure during the unrest and felt direct contact with her mentor was not necessary*

*I did not need to contact my mentor as I was receiving the information of what was going to happen through emails and texts from polytechnic.*

Mentors also saw they had a role in providing support and reassurance, mentor one stating:

*Mentors can help students with academic stuff and support them in their learning, but not directly in their academic learning but just in general support and direction, towards what they might need, for example, putting them in the right direction for academic support or counselling and it's about acting as an advocate for them and maybe a support person for them if they got into trouble with, over plagiarism or something like that. If they felt they were treated unfairly, helping them through the bureaucracy...One student I mentored, I suggested a few techniques he might be able to use in terms of issues he was having at home he needed to sort himself out for a bit.*

Mentor two discussed independent learning:

*It is scary for students, independent learning. Students are afraid to confide in their tutors sometimes. Having a mentor helps students to know when to ask for help.*

Mentor five discussed how he supported students by taking them directly to Student Services:

*I think as a teacher, you are a mentor anyway and this is just an extension of that. The mentoring programme, allows students the opportunity to approach a teacher in the event that they have problems, or in event that they have some misunderstanding of what is required of them. The majority of problems revolve around absenteeism. If they have a problem with a teacher I normally approach Student Services. I have a talk to the student and say this is the issue and how can we get it resolved. I'll get the student to come and sit down and see them. They can then explore the issue in depth and talk to whoever they need to talk to and resolve it. They normally come to me as a last resort if they are having trouble with a teacher. Sometimes they might explain their point of view and it is not*

*getting across to the teacher, they come to me. I have students in my classes with high absenteeism they also have high absenteeism in other classes, so I talk it through with them, take them to Student Services. The student often doesn't comprehend what the teacher is teaching or doesn't comprehend what the teacher wants. So rather than sit in class and look dumb and evade it the student doesn't turn up. For some their absences lessen, while for others they play the 20% so they will maximize their time off.*

Mentor seven identified some elements of mentoring relationship in terms of reassurance and support:

*Mentoring is a reporting system for the students where they have got a person, a face that they know and that they can approach for even the most basic of problems. A support system geared towards a particular individual that they know. The students that engage with it the most are the ones that feel comfortable with their mentor.*

Mentor eight said she wanted to hear good stories as well:

*Mentoring is about guidance and support, about who I am to the students and how I can help with issues and concerns. It is about hearing good stories and good assignment results. It is about giving and taking.*

### **Confidence, Self Esteem and Empowerment**

Several students spoke of how the development of close relationships with a mentor helped develop their self esteem. Student three discussed how one of his earlier mentors helped him developed belief in himself:

*[My mentor] helped me in so many ways she advised me and organized a change in my classes three times; she was very serious about helping me. She helped me to depend on myself, believe in myself. She helped me reach my dreams to graduate which is my mother's dream too. Before that if I have a problem I asked my friends or I just ignored the problem. She always talks about the advantages and disadvantages of something, when I am talking to her, I trust myself. I believe I can do anything as she helps me believe in myself. It is also fun at the*

*same time. The mentoring programme has helped me keep on studying by giving me choices. The choice I made was study is important, as after holiday I become lazy and I had to chose; be lazy or study.*

In support of Student three's experience, Student four described his one and half years in Foundation Studies:

*She helped me in the degree I am in now. Before the degree I was tired. I talked to my father about that because before the degree I was one and half years in Foundation [Studies]. When I passed I felt good because she helped me a lot really; she was so good she never said I am dumb, she just helped.*

While Student seven added:

*The mentor helps you to better yourself improve your self-esteem and at the same time be a friend to the student. ...if a mentor can be friendly the student can relate and share information with their tutor.*

He also added when you become engaged in the mentoring process it can be empowering:

*I actually don't have any problems in my personal or university life. I have mentoring meetings with my mentor, who is my tutor; I have had some tough assignments so I talked to him about them and he helps me. If I had a personal problem I would have no problem in going to the mentor and discussing with him to see if he would have a solution as he would give me ideas or choices to help me find a solution to my problem and then I could learn from this experience. If you have personal problems it is best that you go and see someone you know as you have that connection. I trust if had a problem that was outside his field he would refer me on to someone who could help me.*

Mentor two identified the development of self-advocacy as important:

*I am not a counsellor as a mentor. I think my role as a mentor is to make suggestions and help students develop self-advocacy so they can represent themselves. It is about helping students take charge.*

While Mentor five felt positive behaviour should be rewarded:

*It is also a way of reinforcing positive behaviour as well. The ones that are performing need to be recognized for their good behaviour. It's always good to pat someone on the back, "you're doing a great job keep it up". I am a new teacher, I've never taught before. I came to the polytechnic green as, but it's the way I treated my employees when I was manager and it's just a continuation of that.*

Mentor eight considered positive feedback an important feature in mentoring:

*It's about giving students feedback, not solving issues for them. I ask other tutors how students are going. I communicate that back to the student.*

### **Relationship Building and Trust**

Student eight considered trust to be an essential element in the mentoring relationship:

*A mentor is someone you can trust. I go and I see my mentor and the counsellor often. It is a good experience to have both mentoring and counselling. We don't have it in the schools. Trust is a very important part, to have that relationship. If your mentor sees you regularly, she sees what you need without you asking for anything – the trust is there because the relationship develops with you going to see them. It requires effort on your part to build a relationship so the trust happens. The personality of the mentor can help build up trust too. When I met up with my mentor she knew when I needed to see the counsellor.*

Other students echoed that developing a relationship to build trust with a mentor was essential to have a successful mentoring experience. Student one identified trust as significant:

*I don't think it matters whether they teach us or not. I have one mentor who didn't teach me and one who did. It is about trust, it is important; you get to know your mentor and you learn to trust them and they respond to your issues, personal issues.*

Similarly student five commented:

*She taught me last semester but not this semester, I know her and trust her – it's all about trust and I am comfortable with her.*

Meanwhile mentor six emphasized building a relationship so trust can develop was paramount:

*Absolutely!! Trust is so important. It gets to the stage that students actually approach you about personal problems. Part of the growing up process sometimes they don't have access to role models outside and you know when they start approaching you about that you are succeeding in your mentor work.*

*If the girls approach me I put them onto a female teacher... I never actually go into depth with them, but you know that they think enough of you to approach you. Normally I know things have resolved with a change in behaviour...You know they go from being very sad girls to very happy girls, you notice that in the classroom.*

*If it is the guys we sit down and talk about it and learn what their expectations are and what they are trying to work through. You bring up children of your own the issues things don't change because you are in a different country they have the same issues as kids have in New Zealand, Australia or the UK.*

*I think the highlight has been when a student came to me and I had talked about my personal experiences of how I had been a long-term smoker; a heavy smoker and I gave up. He came up to me two weeks later and said he had given up smoking. Wow! That to me emphasized the rapport I had with him and his classmates and that just made me feel really good.*

*The lowest point for me was my student who had a high absenteeism rate and couldn't pass the exams. He was an intelligent boy, street smart but wouldn't do anything. I sat him down with the student (named,) got his mother in but still he wouldn't do anything. It was disappointing because "he's a likeable guy" but he just didn't want to do anything. I am not his mentor now unfortunately.*

*I often bang into the students around the around campus they stop you and tell you what has been happening; tell you they have passed an exam. I have a good following with the boys, yes we started off boxing at the gym, boys were all coming over to the gym and I had two girls come and box as well.*

Mentor six described how she established a relationship and trust with students:

*I like to offer some guidance towards solutions, guide their thoughts and consequences; guide the mentees to where they should be. The way I develop trust is in the first five minutes when meeting them I try to be reassuring, not interrogating, then I get them to talk about themselves and the issue. It is about trust and developing confidence. It is serious and confidential. I get permission from my mentee before referring them on if it is required. If mentees safety is concerned I use the referral system to share the problem for advice.*

Mentor seven believed you didn't have anything if there was no relationship and trust:

*A relationship with the student is one of the key factors. A mentor can be assigned 10-11 mentees - you can end up with double that amount on an ongoing basis with other issues and that they're not your designated mentee because the student tends to approach a person they are most comfortable with and genuine. In this region the students are very reluctant to disclose anything about themselves; they see it as a weakness, so if they are going to disclose anything, it would have to be someone that they are comfortable with. You have to be an open type of person if you expect the student to be comfortable with you and to trust you. Trust is important especially when the student has a serious issue. The student wants to see that the mentor is pro-active.*

### **“My Mentor is Like One of My Family”**

Student four, a founding student explained he has had two significant mentors who have acted like family members to him:

*My mentor is like a second father to me. I can go to him and explain my feelings to him, even my situation. He accepts anything I say about everything; about what is happening; about what is my life here, not just my study. I talk to my*

*mentor about my feelings, how to manage my life, manage my time, things that are wrong in my life and things... so he gives me advice. When he gives me advice he helps me, listens to me, he said to me: What do you want to do? He gives us choices. It was useful advice because the result was yeah more time to study; what he told me was two things. One thing it is not good for me to go every day to the gym and the other thing you can have more time for your study and things like that.*

Student three told me:

*Miss...helped me in so many ways she helps like a mother. She was like family at polytechnic and helped me in keeping going and not to give up. First time at polytechnic I had a mentor I think, but I did not go to see him, I ignored my mentor many times; but with my mentor that I had last semester if I have a problem I ask her.*

Mentor three felt the relationship he developed with his female mentees was one of a father:

*Mentoring is about getting closer to the students, they have just come from school and they lack information. The students are young and fresh, this is the first time the boys and girls are in the classroom together. We talk about family issues as well as rules and regulations. I think it is essential that the boys learn to respect the girls. The classroom is working well; there is good synergy in the classroom, between the boys and girls. I see my role very much like a father especially with the girls because of what I have just explained. The father/daughter relationship has been very helpful I think. One really good thing we did we went out somewhere talked about food and colour away from polytechnic things. I think that mentoring has an impact on retention of our students as it creates a family atmosphere, it is better face-to-face and we can help students change their majors if necessary, which helps them stay at polytechnic of course.*

When asked if mentoring had an impact on retention Mentor eight replied:

*Yes it is about guidance, someone taking care on a regular basis another mother!*

### **A Mentor is Someone That Cares and Takes a Special Interest**

Student six made contact with her mentor at orientation and immediately was impressed with her caring attitude:

*From the first day I met my mentor I liked her. I felt comfortable with her; she was able to break the ice. It was not a social day; she made it so; individually she talked to us. We were able to put name to a face and so was she with us. Maybe it was that she came close and looked us in the eye.*

*She is always there to listen to problems that you might have. She has helped my friend. There needs to be trust and I can contact her after class or email her if I want to see her. The highlight has been that I didn't have clue about mentoring but when I met my mentor she made me very comfortable. I can't say there has been a low point, we have been informed throughout. The course is one of the best programmes, because it makes me feel special!*

Student four who had spent 18 months in Foundation Studies spoke of the personal qualities his mentor possessed:

*I was in the Individual Support Programme (ISP). My teacher was my mentor. I was in the programme because of my English. Yes my math's is not a problem, but English is hard. She cared too much, she even helped us when we sleeping. She rang me and said "come to class now, wake up and come to polytechnic this is important". She is, I don't know, so unique, I have never seen a tutor like her, she can understand every student in that class she even help us too much to go to the degree because we studied in the Foundation. Yes you know she understand students, you know even when she is not their tutor. I go to her about everything.*

Mentor two believed that caring aspect had a definite impact on student retention:

*Mentoring shows that we care. Mentoring is a key imitative at Bahrain Polytechnic, in the polytechnic vision it is a key. It is student focused and making one to one contact, a highlight was when I was teaching one of my boys and he said thank you for caring, you helped us get into the degree. It's also about a*

*cultural shift. With recent events in Bahrain students have been distressed; it has been a hard time. Emotions have been running high. I hope mentoring stays on.*

Meanwhile, mentor six commented about a highlight in his mentoring experience:

*A first year mentee came to me frustrated. His tutor told him he was not creative, this made him disappointed in himself. I listened and talked to him, explained to him there are various ways to be creative. Talked to him about examples and he left with a positive attitude about himself. While a low point is when first year students don't turn up for meetings, they don't understand the concept of mentoring, you want to take an interest in them but it doesn't happen.*

Mentor seven felt the following in regards to taking a special interest in students when faced with a major problem:

*We are assigned mentees at the outset of the semester and we continue to be assigned mentees. For teaching staff it is compulsory to be a mentor. From the compulsory point of view you try and operate to meet the requirements. Mentors should be first point of call. Students that come to me are genuinely stressed or struggling about something. You are a familiar face who they can sit down and have chat with someone who doesn't have an agenda with them. It is nice when you have a student who is genuinely 100% struggling. One of my mentees who I also teach asked for a mentoring session after class one day, so we met for a cuppa. I queried why he wasn't looking the best because he is always smiling and he said he couldn't sleep, eat and he felt so stressed. I met with him on several occasions and also referred him to the counsellor In a few weeks he was his bright and cheery self again. He needed someone to talk to and he never would have gone to the counsellor on his own.*

Mentor four felt while caring was an essential component in the mentoring process there needed to be clear boundaries for mentors:

*To a degree I think pastoral care is very important, but mentors aren't counsellors they are not trained as counsellors they need to recognize the need for*

*counsellors and know who those contact people are and where to find them; make sure the mentee gets it.*

*I don't mind being a mentor and getting involved in personal issues that maybe affecting a student's academic performance. But I don't think we have the right skills, but at the same time we have the responsibility to look into other areas affecting the students' academic achievements. So I don't know what the boundary is at and what stage we should we just say sorry, I cannot deal with this and refer the student to someone else.*

*So far I haven't had this happen, but I thought of the possibility of that happening and I thought that I might not know what to do in that case for example, if I find a student is maybe having a serious personal or family related problem I wouldn't know what to do.*

### **A Motivator and a Guide**

Student five believed her mentor helped provide motivation and helped her to remain focused:

*She has been able to motivate me, keep me focused and helps me with problems. She gives me course advice and guides me on what to do and what not to do. She helps me out with reports and study plans. If you can't see your grades then she will help. She emails me to come and see her and remind us about things. It is good getting a message; it is not a bad thing, because she is not my teacher this semester; 10 to 15 minutes with your mentor it is not a big thing meeting up with her. She reassures me and makes me feel good.*

Mentor one considered part of his role as mentor was someone that listens but also helps motivate student towards achievement:

*One guy just regularly drops in and chews the fat and I know him now; I know his foibles and he is struggling along academically so I continue to remind him of what he needs to do and. At the beginning of the semesters I ask him who his tutors are and I tell him that I will be asking them on how he is going that he can't be ... He likes that he kind of sees me a motivator. I don't think he gets a lot*

*of direction from home so it is in a form, semi-parenting role I guess. With bureaucratic problems I also found that I was able to help students out. With their choices in subjects they might be told that they could only do a particular subject but in fact there are some options. They trusted me in that I would follow it up in confidence.*

Mentor seven commented on guidance in the following way:

*The student does not know who to approach, so the mentor is the first point of call for guidance, support, advice and referral. A mentor will need to be an approachable person. Mentors need to give advice and guidance, to refer students on if unable to help them yourself and they need to introduce the student to that person. It is also about giving positive feedback to mentees who have done well in their subject, class or assignments.*

### **Mentoring is more Effective if Mentors are the Students' Tutors**

Another common theme emerging from the data was mentoring was more effective if mentors taught students in the classroom environment. This is reflected in the following statements made by student two:

*Mentoring is most effective when your mentor is your teacher. If you were able to choose your mentor, then expressing personal problems would be easier. If I had a problem I would talk to the tutor themselves or maybe go to the mentor. I would go to my tutor, as my mentor does not teach me. Maybe I could go to the counsellor if I had a personal problem and it affected my studies, then I would talk to my mentor, as it would put me on the safe side and he would also like me to consider contacting him about issues about my studies.*

In support of student two other students said that a tutor being your mentor is easier and more effective. Student four placed his ideas in a percentage format:

*Eighty percent of the time it is better to have your tutor in the same major, [the rest of the time] it doesn't matter; it really depends on the person.*

Meanwhile, student three was clear that his mentor being his tutor was helpful:

*I did not ask anyone about my mentor so I ignored the mentor many times. Now with my mentor, who taught me last semester and I asked for help when I had problems.*

Student eight made a statement in regards to academic issues:

*I meet with my mentor many times, for example group assignments we mostly all have the same mentor*

However, two other students said it made little difference to them if their mentor was one of their tutors as seen in student one's statement:

*It doesn't make any difference whether they teach you or not.*

Student seven viewed the issue from two perspectives:

*It is very easy to see my mentor as I see him many times in the day as he teaches me but I go and see my mentor whether he teaches me or not. I am a very sociable person.*

Mentor two was concerned about her current mentor contact. Due to a new role at the polytechnic she did not have daily classroom contact with students as she previously had:

*When I was teaching on [Named] course worked with my mentees very closely and it was easy of course to have contact with them. This semester 7/12 of my mentees are not coming. They are not responding to my contacting them, this situation is a low point. I am uncomfortable with it being compulsory and the students not being able to get their transcripts.*

Mentor three added:

*Mentors should be those who are teaching them, same class, every semester because you can see them, contact them. A low point in mentoring is when I contact students and they don't come and see me, they ignore my contact and that makes me feel not important.*

Mentor six was finding that teaching and mentoring the same students worked well for both the students and him as a tutor/mentor:

*I actually have 16 students that I mentor and I deliberately worked it that way so it was my class last semester. I have just been fortunate that I have the same class this semester. It works well because after two semesters I have a real insight into how the students, who the clowns are, who are the shy ones, ones that are a little bit scared of exams. So you have a real in depth understanding of the students.*

Mentor six explained his role in the following way:

*Most of the time my role is to pick up on issues the students are not aware of. I advise about absences deal with them and I have a conversation with the student and find out what is wrong, leading and guiding them, seeing how I can help. It is good when they are outspoken, harder when they are passive.*

### **Responsibilities and Accountabilities**

In interviews with students it became clear they felt they had a personal responsibility in the mentoring relationship and that it was a “two way thing”. All students responded to the question when asked about their responsibilities as a student, involved in a mentoring programme. One student did not know that his/her academic transcript would not be issued if they did not see their mentor twice per semester. As highlighted earlier in the chapter responsibilities and accountabilities was discussed in more depth by mentors that students.

The following discussion highlights students’ point of view:

Student five stated:

*It is my responsibility as a student to catch up with my mentor by emailing her; a friend’s mentor had not contacted her I told her to email her.*

Meanwhile, student six commented that:

*If I have a problem it is my responsibility to tell the truth and keep to the facts. I am meant to see my mentor twice a semester; I am not aware of what happens if you don't, if I want to see her more I can.*

Student seven was clear in his response when he said:

*I have to go twice semester if you don't you don't receive your transcripts.*

Student four believed he needed to listen to advice given by his mentors and evaluate it:

*When they give me advice I have to listen and think what mentors mean to me. The thing is they help me in my life, things like that. They help me out, force me to do something; if I don't do it they will be disappointed after that. So he helps you and you want to accept his advice so ...yes of course even though he is older than me but also he has more experience than me.*

Student four's ideas about students having responsibility to consider advice given by mentors is a consistent theme reflected in other students' statements with student one commenting:

*We have a responsibility to deal with a problem with them (mentors.) They want to see our face.*

While student two commented:

*If there is a problem a personal problem that was affecting my studies I would need to go and see the mentor as it would put me on the safe side and he would also like me to consider contacting him about issues on my studies.*

The following discussion reflects mentors' ideas and discussion concerning their responsibilities and accountabilities. As a researcher I expected more information to be gleaned from mentors than students. This was due to the fact that as Mentor Coordinator I was familiar with wider responsibilities that were entailed in mentors roles and duties, that it is was an expected role within their job description and they had

certain responsibilities, such as reporting, notifying, and referral in order to maintain student welfare and safety at risk students and the promotion of academic success.

Mentor four talked about responsibilities in terms of referral:

*If a student comes to me and I don't know what to do; if I was trying to refer a student to someone who may help but I don't think we have the proper type of help. You know I don't think we have a proper system in place; it is a very informal kind of referral system. No, no, there is not very clear accountability as far as keeping records, when you saw the students yes but not what was the quality of the encounter with the student? For example "when I told (Named) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May this happened.....*

Mentor five was clear about his responsibilities and responded:

*Like everyone else we were nominated (laugh). It's compulsory for academics and I see it as an extension of my job. I have to conduct two interviews a semester and which I check up how they are doing and then report back to Student Services and they will report back that transcript can be released in the first two weeks and after the mid semester exam I see my students. But I also talk to them when they get their ten percent absenteeism, so every little hitch they have I know about, so I grab them; I get all the promises in the world!!*

*I think it is individuals [both students and mentors] that don't take fully on board the programme so the students don't benefit fully from it. Students and tutors! We can have students in our group and mentors send out messages to the students and the students don't bother replying to it and then we have mentors who don't bother to send out the message.*

*So I think you have to obtain the buy in from both sides. It is much easier to get student cooperation regards mentoring when you teach those students. There are tutors who have students who are not even in their classes they may not be even be in same levels as the tutors are teaching at so they may have certificate students or level five or six different, than what tutor is teaching at and they may not be in the same programme, so that makes it very difficult.*

*I think the students feel that they haven't got a problem there is no need for them to have a mentor and the mentors feel if the students have a problem they will come... the expectation is that they will come to them. Of course if the student has a problem they don't like publicizing it.*

Mentor six was concerned about responsibility and accountability in the sense:

*The trouble with mentoring is that the mentors shoulder the responsibility and you can get blamed. I watched my partner facilitate and elicit info and I learnt from her. I volunteered; it is part of my role as a tutor. My responsibility now that it is compulsory is no different. I know I need to meet with mentees re issues in class and meet with the tutor, if a tutor has concern with a mentee. I contact them [the students] by email or phone them, it is quite straightforward.*

*Mentoring is a new concept in Bahrain, it does not exist in schools or other universities, students are not aware of it. It is good that the polytechnic has taken the lead in this concept; I think others will learn from this once they see the results.*

Mentor eight was concerned about the issues such as absenteeism:

*I have been a mentor for three years now and I see it as a part of my role as tutor. I contact students by email and then see them, but it is a two way process. In the past I did not have that much contact with students. It is better now that it is twice a semester. I am involved at the beginning of the semester and if the mentee does not meet with mentor twice a semester the student does not get their transcript. But last semester we had many students who were not going to get their transcripts!*

Mentor seven described the following low point in of her mentoring experience:

*It is the kids, you know, that they are struggling in their subject and you give them the support system that is available to them and they won't use it. You can only follow up on it so many times and they have to be somewhat responsible*

*themselves. You got to have a two-way engagement between mentee and mentor.*

*Students that are not tutored by their mentors find it hard to connect with them especially if they don't see them on day-to-day basis and that can cause a negative reaction in the student. The students believe that their mentor would not be able to know the subject that they may have a problem with, so they will not go to them for advice.*

*For some students the programme is effective, but for some it is something they see that they have to do. They don't necessarily engage with the mentor too much. If it is seen to be a personal incentive and that it is not driven academically, it is not something that they necessarily feel that they need to engage in.*

*Privacy is a big issue. We don't have designated office space to meet with mentees at the moment; we are currently in an open plan office space with 50 other tutors. The nature of students here is that they don't seek help until it is usually past the deadline of getting it sorted; for example attendance, assignments.*

*[The] mentoring programme can highlight the immaturity of the student as they don't realize the consequences if they don't attend to their problem. The quality of the scheme can get watered down because everyone has to do it; you need to have a visible presence – more continuity. Clashes of timetables for the mentor and mentees to get together for a meeting especially if mentor does not teach the mentee can be very difficult.*

## **Training**

Training was a specific theme discussed by mentors only. Mentor four felt strongly that training needed to be specific to the context in which the programme is delivered:

*Training from New Zealand Mentoring Centre gave us an overall view of what mentoring is about, but we have to contextualize what we are doing. We have a specific context here in Bahrain with students who have different backgrounds,*

*different cultural and educational background and how much use is it when someone who comes from abroad, who doesn't know the students and to say this is what you should do; they don't take into consideration of the constraints of what they are working under.*

*At this time [of unrest], or it could be any other time when, you know, things social or whatever, impact on student achievement. It is very sensitive and people have to know what is happening, they have to be familiar with how the student feels about it and what is involved in all this. Otherwise they will be providing wrong guidance, which could be worse – it could make everything worse.*

*When we had the unrest we had the same situation. It was one size fits all – it has to be more contextualized; it has to be driven by reality and what is happening in our country. There are so many variables in this context and how it affects student behaviour. Things change from time to time and if we don't consider the new factors then it is really a waste of time to have a programme that is based on the needs of other students... that is not contextual enough.*

*The mentoring team have tried to talk to us about what the students needs are at the moment and how to address those needs but tutors are not very proactive at attending those meetings because... some might go and some don't.*

*So my low point in mentoring is I think the lack of structure, the lack of clear guidance and expectations and outcomes and without, I mean as long as we don't have a full understanding of anything we do at the Polytechnic... It's very hard to know, very hard to know. You know, it's like anything, any project - we have to implement it then it's hard to tell if it has any effect on retention of students. There are so many things that decide whether a student will continue with us or not. So how does the mentoring part ... relate to that? No, it is just I think whatever when we implement there is no proper systems, not professional enough. It is a waste of resources, a waste of time and without that clear structure we might as well not do it.*

Mentor eight had this to say about training:

*We had some pretty in depth training when we first arrived. We were in Gulf Hotel working through mentoring and Elli and what the poly expectations were and not to get too personally involved, where to go when we needed something, where did we go when we needed to refer the students? At this stage they are implementing it this September, so it will become a part of our programme. I think the students will be able to see a graphic picture of where their strengths and weaknesses are. We can work on their weaknesses and develop their strengths.*

Mentor seven discussed the limitations of training in the event of the difficulties in Bahrain during 2011:

*At the start of semester you are given a run through of what your responsibilities are. Mentoring sessions/workshops of how to encourage students to help themselves and so on.... Not everybody who is designated as a mentor is a mentor, at the beginning; they develop the skills to become a mentor. It is something that you have to have an aptitude for and you need to have more training.*

*It would be good to have peer mentors for mentors so they can develop their mentoring skills. Previous semesters your role as a mentor was primarily academic, but currently it has become a personal role and in that it has required a whole other level of expertise and knowledge and much more commitment. Trust and [relationships are] a major issue with students. Also to have outside support from people who would be able to help both mentors and students.*

Mentor eight talked a little about training and unrest:

*We had Elli (Effective Life Long Learning Inventory) sessions and role plays. ELLI has seven dimensions of learning and the students answer an in depth questionnaire on learning and then a graph is made of how students are at achieving these dimensions. We had workshops on mentoring and how to deal with issues, how to communicate helpfully. After Poly[tech] reopened mentors to*

*mentees had to be neutral; it was difficult, we emailed mentees to welcome them back and the focus was on returning to normal.*

*While it is a great chance to build up trust, we are responsible for absence warnings every week, but what can we do? What is our role with non-attendance – do we encourage them to attend and contact the student's tutor? We document it but what else can we do – I do email them about their absenteeism. Students need to be responsible about their absenteeism and the consequences that entails.*

*Also I want to add; we need more training at the beginning and the middle, to hear from mentors, get suggestions and take care of mentors, find out what are the issues and improve the system, so we can promote to students that mentoring is a very good system.*

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a thematic analysis of a Mentoring Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic over a period from 2008-2010. These themes have emerged from data collected from interviews of eight mentors and eight mentees experiences who were actively engaged in the mentoring process. An analysis of the meaning of this data and emerging themes together will be considered in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## The Mentoring Relationship

The themes evident from the Case Study at Bahrain Polytechnic were support and reassurance, confidence, self esteem and empowerment, relationship building and trust, “my mentor is like one of my family”, someone who cares and takes a special interest, a motivator and a guide, mentoring is more effective if mentors are students’ tutors, responsibilities and accountabilities and training. These themes will be analyzed and their congruence with mentoring literature will be identified. The discussion will also highlight the significance of the mentoring relationship in exceptional circumstances during the unrest in Bahrain in 2011.

Mentoring in the context of a tertiary institution is a new concept to Bahrain. When Bahrain Polytechnic implemented its mentoring programme it presented both opportunities and challenges. Drop out studies (Coutts, 2007) and resilience literature (Boyd & Lintern, 2005; Clarke & Clarke, 2003), highlight the significance of a caring adult relationship outside of family adds a protective factor to the young person during their transition to adulthood. The findings from the Case Study of a mentoring programme at Bahrain Polytechnic are compared to similar research. Despite the differing cultural context the following discussion highlights similarities when compared to literature. However it offers considerations that are applicable in educational institutions within the Middle East region in the implementation of a mentoring programme. The ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner will be applied to themes identified within the findings, where appropriate.

### Relationship Building and Trust

In common with the findings from other similar studies conducted by Benishek, Bieschke, Park and Slattery (2004); Correll (2008); Rahman (2009) the findings in the previous chapter well illustrated that building of a sustainable relationship and trust was seen as essential by both mentors and students alike as the foundation for full

engagement in the mentoring process, contributing to a student's academic and personal development. The study also illustrated the educational setting played a significant role in fostering effective mentoring relationships, through the implementation of student centered learning and the institutional commitment to a mentoring system. But what are the contributions of each of the partners, mentors, students and the institution in relationship building and trust that builds commitment to effective mentoring?

### **The Nature of the Relationship at Bahrain Polytechnic**

When PINZ won the contract set up Bahrain Polytechnic it had committed to implement a student mentoring programme. The aim of the programme was intended to create links between staff and students in the provision of pastoral and academic support. If it is acknowledged that a young person leaving school is a critical period for the young person, resilient research carried out by Clarke and Clarke (2003) highlight one highly significant protective factor is the presence of a caring adult outside of family. A tertiary environment is a context where academic and personal development challenges are present and hence the offering of student support is widely accepted practice (Boyd & Lintern, 2005). One institution that purports the notion that students benefit from a mentoring programme system is echoed in statements made by New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSWDET) (2005):

Resilience research confirms the presence of a caring adult in their life is important in assisting students to overcome adversity and achieve at school. Effective mentoring seeks to provide such a presence by establishing a trusting relationship between student and mentor that focuses on the needs of a student, models and fosters caring and supportive relationships to increase self confidence awareness and management of behavior and considers other interventions that may be place (p. 3).

At Bahrain Polytechnic the relationship between mentor and student was a carefully constructed relationship with goals, plans and expected outcomes (Bahrain Polytechnic 2009b). The two-year set up stage required the Mentoring programme to be adapted to meet student needs and the increasing growth in students and staff. In the first semester a male/female Bahraini and a male/female expatriate tutor were assigned to small groups in order to obtain a gender and cultural mix. All mentors received training

conducted by the Professional Development Unit and the Mentor Coordinator of the Polytechnic. Prior to the opening of the Polytechnic, training sessions involved anticipating the needs and issues facing the prospective students.

A key challenge facing the new students was moving from a didactic learning style to a student centered learning style, in which students were required to develop more independence and resiliency. The coeducational environment and an English language curriculum were recognized as additional challenges. Training also included an understanding of the essence of mentoring, strategies to respond to student issues and referral structures within the Polytechnic. Roles and boundaries of mentoring were identified and discussed, so mentors could practice within a safe level of competence enabling students to understand the mentors' role.

In the first semester of the Polytechnic's beginning, forty four tutorial staff became mentors. Many expatriate tutorial staff had come from educational environments that offered student support systems. In addition many expatriate staff came from New Zealand and had practiced in a bicultural environment in which Treaty of Waitangi has been written into educational philosophy and practice. However the context of implementing and practicing mentoring in Bahrain was culturally different. On the other hand formal mentoring systems were new to Bahrain and Bahraini tutors needed to further understand the philosophy of mentoring and its practical implementation. So while expatriate staff had mentoring knowledge and experience, Bahraini staff possessed cultural knowledge making it very much a "learning together" situation where both parties could learn from each other and support students' transition and academic personal development.

Supervision provided by the Mentor Coordinator and senior staff involving weekly meetings, focusing on a theme for weekly mentoring sessions with students. Stress management, classroom dynamics, policies, complaints procedure were some examples of the themes. Each session involved mentor/student group discussions together with the opportunity for students to talk or organize meetings with mentors one to one (Ayo & Watt, 2010). However mentor and student feedback reflected that student group sessions were difficult to develop student engagement and one to one contact would improve student response and commitment.

The mentoring model continued to be adapted each semester in order to increase student response while finding a sustainable model considering available resources and future growth. However student response to mentors efforts remained low resulting in the Senior Management Executive conducting a major review in March 2010. A key change in the direction of the Mentoring Programme was student and mentor contact changed from highly recommended frequent contact to where meetings became mandatory two to three times per semester. If contact was not made twice a semester academic transcripts were withheld with the student being required to meet with the Mentor Coordinator and their mentor. Further research needs to be conducted to look at the possible ramifications of a compulsory relationship between students and mentors as this factor was not clearly highlighted in the study as either harmful or beneficial to the relationship between the mentor and the student.

### **Factors inhibiting the relationship within the first two years**

Despite good intentions from mentors and the institution some factors inhibited this relationship from forming. Findings from Chapter Four highlighted the issues affecting the establishment of a sustainable relationship were:

- Not all tutors were mentors during the set up phase
- Mentors were assigned mentees from all programmes
- Inadequate private spaces
- Low student response

At the conclusion of the two-year set up phase the Polytechnic had developed a greater understanding of the factors that led to an effective and sustainable relationship between mentor and student. It was also timely to reflect if the mentoring programme was meeting its objectives and was in alignment with contractual arrangements the Polytechnic had made with the BEDB.

### **Institutional leadership and all tutorial staff having a mentoring role leads to a cohesive programme**

All the participants in the study reported the efforts of the institution to create formal relationships between mentors and students helped the students to develop trust with their mentors. The students highlighted that they appreciated the efforts of the

Polytechnic in implementing a mentoring programme as it made them feel valued in a growing institution. The personal attributes of the mentor such as a caring attitude, listening skills also helped in the development of a trusting relationship. Meanwhile mentors felt it was a tutorial obligation to mentor students as it was a concept they believed in with some noting that mentoring was a new concept to the region and it was a significant paradigm shift with the Polytechnic leading the way in both Bahrain and the wider Gulf region.

In the early part of the set up project all tutors were expected to be mentors; however the added responsibilities in a growing establishment resulted in not all tutorial staff being available to mentor. After the initial two-year set up period a mentoring review recognized that all tutorial staff needed to be involved to sustain the mentoring system creating wide visibility of the programme to Polytechnic students.

Despite not all mentors being available during the set up stage Bahrain Polytechnic has shown commitment to their mentoring programme from the conception of the Polytechnic to the current time. The appointment of Mentor Coordinators with reporting responsibilities to the Director of Student Services and Senior Management, the expectation all tutorial staff be mentors as part of their job descriptions, along with mentors receiving training and supervision all demonstrate the credence Bahrain Polytechnic gave to the mentoring programme. The leadership provided by the institution paved the way for mentors to establish effective mentoring relationships to enhance student academic and personal learning.

In the literature review evidence was shown by Gormley (2008), Benishek, Bieschke, Park and Slattery (2004) that mentoring programmes in which it is mandatory for tutorial staff to participate are common throughout tertiary institutions. Institutional commitment is necessary for staff to recognize their responsibilities to a student support programme, such as mentoring. An organizational climate that supports mentoring is important in the establishment of a programme as it encourages engagement from its staff. It is common in many western universities to have mentoring students included in academic job descriptions (Ibid).

The findings and literature discussed by Mee-Lee and Bush (2003); Johnson, (2008) are congruent in the fact that institutional leadership is crucial to helping mentors and students adopt a mentoring system. If an institution involves all tutorial staff it is demonstrating its commitment to the transition of its students to tertiary through being embedded within tutor roles and responsibilities. Mee-Lee and Bush's Hong Kong study illustrated that mentors were frustrated with lack of time and that their efforts at mentoring were not recognized by senior management as much as other tutorial roles. Meanwhile the competing demands made upon staff at Bahrain Polytechnic during a set up project and continuing development were not easy to manage. However if staff and management have a shared understanding of the aims of the mentoring system it can fulfill its contractual responsibilities and adhere to its original philosophy.

### **Programme Specific Mentors Assists the Development of the Mentoring Relationship**

The findings illustrated from mentors and students alike believed if students' tutors were also their mentors it helped to establish a cohesive relationship. Participants reported that the relationship was further developed when a mentor actually taught a mentee in a classroom setting. Classroom teaching enabled mentors to have a clearer understanding of both the student's personal development and academic development as well as a contextual understanding of their chosen programme of study.

Literature explored in relation to peer mentoring programmes clearly illustrate that programme specific mentors help contextualize and inform the mentor about students' experiences and reality. In faculty relationships when students and mentors are paired the mentor can recognize the student's strengths and the challenges they face on a continuous basis leading to proactive and timely response to student issues. Mee-Lee and Bush's study reflected that students gave more credence to mentors who knew their subject. Gormely (2008) proposes a conflict of interest can arise when a teacher is both a student's mentor and tutor. Boundaries may become blurred and there may be a power imbalance as the mentor/tutor knows students' personal issues while at the same time assessing them.

This was seen as a possible conflict of interest at Polytechnic and therefore the opposite was implemented where it was felt that students needed some objectivity in their

mentoring, so they would therefore be mentored by tutors who were not teachers. However the study reflected that many of the students' issues were academic whilst staff felt if you taught your mentees or were tutoring in the same programme as the student there was sense of reality and accessibility. In a culture and context in which mentoring and seeking assistance was not readily sought, some staff believed this was creating an unnecessary barrier to students. On reflection in my position of Mentor Coordinator I believe the programme's structure was too removed for the student and mentors. The structure did not lend itself to holding relevance for the students. Meanwhile mentors did not persist in contacting students when students did not respond to the repeated efforts of mentors at establishing contact with their mentees.

The findings and literature explored present similar themes. In a culture where seeking help is not readily a response utilized in problem solving academically and personally, a programme such as mentoring needs to be readily available to a student in order to provide access to assistance within a practicable time frame where the situation can be resolved. The possible conflicts of interest that staff and students may face can be managed if staff are alerted to the boundaries that may present in the mentoring relationship. Appropriate training and supervision will help avoid and resolve these conflicts. At the same time students need to be able to have redress through appropriate bodies if they perceive unfairness in their mentoring relationships with tutors.

### **Appropriate Spaces are Necessary for Relationship Building**

The literature review illustrated the importance of physical spaces as significant in the student's social interactions and effects on students' learning experiences. The architectural plan educational institutions adopt will often reflect the attitudes and values of that institution. Spaces that are proximal to students' reality will be likely to engage interactions between mentors and students when need arises.

The findings from this study illustrated the difficulty staff and students experienced in meeting each other in appropriate private spaces both formally and informally. Although students in the study did not refer to spaces as an issue, mentors commented that lack of privacy in open plan offices and the pressure on classroom space resulted in some mentoring moments being lost. Expatriate staff come from cultures that hold clear

concepts about confidentiality. Conversely Bahrain is a collective society and many issues revolving around privacy are interpreted differently. The mentor has witnessed this in the classroom setting on many occasions, where for example marks that are given for an assignment are not necessarily an individual matter. Students will often challenge a tutor on another student's assignment mark particularly when students were part of an audience, as in an oral presentation. Similarly, when the polytechnic first opened, students often share their work with others, with the belief that they were helping their friends. Therefore the concepts of confidentiality, honesty and privacy hold different values to the different cultures involved. It took time for students to recognize the rules that Bahrain Polytechnic operated under. The issues of privacy and confidentiality were included in mentor training, portraying to staff that mentees would be more likely to develop trust with their mentors if these issues were respected. Moreover difficulties such as timetabling issues in which students and mentors attended Polytechnic at opposite ends of the day create difficulty in purposeful interactions between the two parties.

The literature and the experience of mentors illustrates the need for spaces to be proximal private and comfortable in order for mentor and student interaction to occur within an appropriate time period. Institutions that have a commitment to student support need to remove barriers to communication between mentors and students in order to respond to issues close to the time when they are critical to the student. If physical barriers persist resolution to students' issues can be delayed or dissipated as other issues and events become more prevalent in a student's life resulting in mentoring times being lost. Findings from PINZ (2007) inception report highlighted the importance of appropriate spaces if interactions between mentors and students were to be beneficial, private, informal spaces that were proximal to the student were essential.

### **Listening Times and Creating Conversations**

There is evidence within the literature that listening times and having opportunities to meet with a mentor are vital to creating a relationship. Correll (2008) identifies that human interactions provide the basis for a trusting relationship. When social and emotional needs are addressed then transfer of knowledge from mentor to student can follow. Mentors who provide listening times enable students to form their identity and

work out their ideas and thinking along with being able to recognize their strengths and direction (Herman & Mandell, 2004; Rahman, 2009). It allows students to express their identity and developmental needs within a safe place to talk about issues affecting them. The study reflected that mentors were available to the students for a variety of needs. The participants saw just listening as an important aspect for all the students as it was a time students talked to their mentors concerning personal and academic issues. These ranged from just chatting and dropping into a mentors office for an informal chat to when the student had more pressing issues that were affecting their study. Mentors reported that they needed a range of facilitative skills that enabled them to assist the student in clarifying their issue and seeking a possible solution. This was apparent in stories participants told about the unrest and that listening was vital and a time when referrals were needed in particular to Health and Counselling.

However this study is limited in the number of participants interviewed who were actively engaged in the process and as illustrated in reports and reviews student response to mentoring was low. One contributing factor to this may have been a lack of clarity to the purpose of mentoring, what mentors and students discuss that will highlight issues a student has and how to resolve these. Finding a clear purpose for a mentoring conversation then would seem beneficial to continuing the momentum in a mentoring relationship. Furthermore the issue of trusting mentors who were from another culture could have been an issue. To add to the complexity of the cultural context the fact that many mentors were Bahraini possibly did not always engender trust for students. Bahrain is a very small community where students and their families are possibly known to the mentor and students could have been reluctant to share information that was of concern to them.

Assessments tools can help provide a framework for mentoring conversations (Crick, 2011). The University has used their ELLI tool to conduct student-centred conversations developing learning awareness change. ELLI has been used in several educational settings - primary, secondary - throughout the world. In 2009 Bahrain Polytechnic implemented ELLI as a learning assessment tool which assesses student learning strengths and challenges. The Polytechnic has now committed itself to ELLI with Bristol University and since September 2011 ELLI conversations will be included in mentoring

meetings at least once a year. ELLI learning dimensions also complement employability skills which have been embedded into programmes across the Polytechnic.

Although an ELLI profile is conducted only once a year the ELLI learning dimensions provide a common language within Polytechnic. This language can be implemented into any mentoring conversations in order to provide a purpose to meetings between a mentor and student. ELLI dimensions complement employability skills to enable students which are integrate into the Polytechnic curriculum and more recently mentoring.

### **Cultural Understanding**

Cultural understanding is critical in the development of a trusting relationship. Mentors from both Bahraini and expatriate from the study commented that students in the Gulf region do not disclose issues easily, they had to feel comfortable and an established relationship must exist before students will discuss personal issues. Students also needed time to understand that the interaction between the mentor and the student remained confidential. The student population at Bahrain Polytechnic is 99.6 Bahraini; however cultural diversity exists in Bahrain (Al Hajeri et al., 2009).

Literature is congruent with the findings as Benishek et al., (2004) claim that cultural competence and awareness are essential especially when populations are diverse and 'a one size fits all' will not work. Lewis, Schlosser and Foley (2008) recognize mentors cannot assume that people from similar religious backgrounds will view their religion in the same way that other members do.

In practice this results in mentors at Bahrain Polytechnic needing to be able to respond to individual needs of students, that is be student centered and not make assumptions about student reality. Cultural understanding is more complex when mentors are from another culture. Mentors must make explicit that they respect the values and beliefs of the student and have an understanding of the context in which the student is placed. The Polytechnic in its set up stage was equally staffed by Bahrainis and New Zealanders. As the Polytechnic grew and developed twenty different nationalities became involved in tutoring. It is obvious that these people come from different understandings and past experiences, both personally and academically. It is therefore not surprising that

mentors in this study reflected that students in the region take a long time to develop trust.

On the other hand it cannot be assumed that because a tutor is of the same culture trust is automatically earned. Students in the study commented that the development of the relationship, the demonstration that the mentor cared about them as individuals, the mentor's willingness to help and respond to their student issues was more important than the cultural identity of the mentor. Moreover because of mentoring being a new concept in Bahrain it was essential that students clearly understood the concept and the roles of the mentor and themselves within the mentoring relationship.

### **Boundaries and Training**

Johnson (2008) describes mentors as people who are truly caring and concerned for students and willing to invest emotional involvement. This closeness alerts mentors to the vulnerability of the student and how boundaries can be crossed. Mentors believed knowing boundaries and level of competence helped students develop trust in mentors. Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995) point out it is important that the mentor recognizes their level of competence and when to refer students on. When mentors are realistic about their levels of competence it allows the student to develop trust as proper boundaries provide a foundation for a mentoring relationship. This relationship should illustrate a sense of safety and the belief that the clinician will act in the client's best interests. The details of a mentoring relationship must be made explicit by the mentor, clarifying the relationship to the student to making explicit the mentor's roles and hence boundaries. Smith and Fitzpatrick claim it is the responsibility of the mentor to state and fix the boundaries. Gormley (2008) adds that training helps create boundaries by teaching mentors that some problems need to be shared, referred on to others providing a safety net to share the problem for the mentor providing a safety net for both the student and the mentor.

The mentors in the study expressed similar views to the literature findings in the fact that boundaries helped the mentoring relationship establish a level of safety. People expressed different levels of competence. Some expatriate staff felt training allowed them to put into practice skills they already possessed in a different cultural context.

They recognized that they also could play a role in working alongside Bahraini staff who were new to mentoring as well the training of new staff.

Meanwhile the findings suggested that Bahraini staff were developing an understanding of mentoring although they still found that it was not clear exactly the difference between mentoring and counselling, with the referral process not being clearly structured with little feedback about what happened to the student after the referral. They also recognized they had a role in ensuring that students meet with their mentor twice a semester but the expectations the Polytechnic placed upon mentors was not clear when students did not respond to mentors' contact efforts.

Some mentors felt training needed to be more contextual. The unrest in Bahrain being such a critical event some mentors felt they were out of their depth and assistance from outside of polytechnic could help students deal with emotional problems some were experiencing. The situation that was occurring in Bahrain was particularly to Bahrain as a nation adding to the complexity of the issue.

One contextual factor that is particular to the Middle East region and mentoring programmes was gender issues. Mentors recognized some issues were not appropriate to discuss with a student from the opposite sex although at times students did approach mentors with specific gender issues that were culturally inappropriate for the mentor to discuss in any depth. Mentors recognized training and supervision offered clear guidelines for male and female interaction in the mentoring relationships.

If mentoring is to be effective and mentor competence recognized with mentors acting as a conduit for referrals the institution must be supportive in the development of other services. That is a learning centre needs to be a place where students can be referred for academic issues, Moreover counselling services must be present in order for students to feel valued and safe, and staff to recognize there are boundaries so they will continue to mentor effectively and feel competent in their role that is part of tutoring without undue burden. It would also be apparent from this research that mentors have differing levels of competence within their mentoring roles. Institutions need to take this into account and that some mentors may require more training and supervision to develop appropriate skills to respond proactively to students' needs.

Trust has been described as an essential component in the creation of and commitment to a structured relationship between mentor and student furthered and enabled by the institution's commitment. Once trust has been established what else needs to be present and develop in this relationship between the mentor and the student so the student will continue to seek support through a system such as mentoring throughout their time of study?

### **A mentor is like a family member, takes a special interest**

The literature findings reflect that youth is a critical time for human development, where young people build on the experiences of their childhood and generate the foundation skills for adulthood (Berk, 2001; Clarke & Clarke, 2003; McLaren, 2002). The period when a young person is in development is also a critical stage for a wider society when young people test values and norms enhancing its capacity to adjust to a rapidly changing world.

Bahrain is a society that is centred upon family values as well as community culture and support (Al Hajeri et al., 2009). When a young person enters a tertiary environment in Bahrain, family remains a constant in his/her life with interconnectedness between the young person and family, religion, community cultural values and beliefs (ibid).

Throughout the world the move to tertiary education symbolizes growing independence for young people where it presents personal and academic challenges with drop out from tertiary education being as high as thirty three percent in students first year of study. In Bahrain of those entering the government institutions fifty percent fail within the first two years and leave as they do not have enough credits to continue to study (Salman and Coutts, 2010).

Resiliency research indicates that the presence of a caring adult who might be outside of family can provide a protective factor in a young person's life assisting them in their transition to adulthood. This need for a caring adult provided a rationale for the implementation of a mentoring system at Bahrain Polytechnic as part of a holistic approach to Student Services. However this is somewhat a western concept and careful consideration has to be given when adopting a philosophy and implementing into a different cultural context. It was also recognized that students studying at Polytechnic

would face challenges moving from the didactic learning to a student-centered environment. Problem solving, meaning making, creativity, developing new strategies for learning were some of the challenges facing students.

A consistent theme from student participants in the study likened their mentors to family members, a mother, father or brother. They referred to a close relationship with their mentor who took a special interest in them as individuals. In addition students have reported to the researcher in her role as a tutor that there are many members in a family that support you, it can be a grandparent a cousin or a church elder. Meanwhile all mentors in the study referred to the fact that some aspects of their mentoring role were like that of a parent.

A mentor can be is a person who can bridge the gap between family and the institution, as well as being a mediator between the institution and societal norms. Concerns voiced by parents through the Ministry of Education about the way the polytechnic facilitated students' learning is an example of how parents still see they have a role in their child's education and illustrates the interconnectedness of the young person's microsystem (student/family/Polytechnic) and macrosystem (culture in which students lives). Polytechnic also recognized parents have a significant influence on their child's career choice. The Polytechnic responded to both of these situations by involving and informing parents about student-centred problem-based learning and career information through information evenings being held each year.

The influence of family and culture on a young person's development within Middle Eastern culture is likely to be far greater than in western societies. There will be constant learning situations for the two cultures when working alongside each other. A western model of education in a non-Western cultural context, if to be successful, needs to address relevant issues in that cultural context when it is implementing programmes. Mentors need aware of their level of competence and many issues may not be appropriate for the mentor to involve themselves in. If family plays the role of nurturing and protecting the child, where there remains dependence on family along with a history of didactic learning experiences this is likely to make a future study encounter such as Polytechnic very challenging for many students, where learning is based on a

student centered learning model with Problem Based Learning a focus together with a curriculum conducted in English.

### **The development of resilience**

Crick (2011) applies the concept of resilience to the educational setting where a resilient learner deals with the frustrations and confusions they might encounter in learning. Resilience means the learner tries to work out solutions and is not seeking to be rescued. They do not depend on others for assistance with learning but being independent, trying to do creative problem solving and critical thinking and use learning relationships when needed.

However at Bahrain Polytechnic using ELLI profiling as an assessment tool, two hundred and twenty three first year degree students rated consistently low in the resilience dimension (Hammill, 2011). When discussing interventions with students they were encouraged to behave independently and look first if they could find a solution and use the dimensions of critical curiosity (problem solving) and critical thinking and then to use learning relationships they have to seek further help (Ibid)

Similarly students in the study reported that their mentors helped them to become more resilient through motivation and self-efficacy. Moreover mentors reported they had a role in developing student's resilience by discussing issues with them, clarifying events and using strategies that help teach the student self advocacy and to develop planning strategies to enable academic success.

The didactic learning experiences of past learning situations has not fully prepared the student for the level of resilience required in a student centred problem based learning environment. Mentoring conversations enable the student and mentor to discuss ELLI profiles and use of ELLI language in informal meetings with students to help develop resilience further to complement the student centred practice within classroom environments.

### **The Meaning of a Relationship in Exceptional Circumstances**

Support services can play a special role in times of national disasters or life changing events. In February 2011 unrest occurred in Bahrain resulting in the closure of Bahrain

Polytechnic to students for several weeks. All student participants spoke of the closure and the anxiety it caused them. Some were concerned about being able to continue their studies at Polytechnic and were considering studying abroad. Others commented how they were disturbed on return and it was difficult to concentrate on their studies. Students appreciated the support and reassurance given by their mentors during the closure. The Polytechnic's CEO instructed mentors to contact their mentees to provide support and reassurance, as well as provide updates, regarding the reopening of the Polytechnic was appreciated by students in the study and they felt informed and reassured.

Mentoring is a very useful forum to inform students of directions and to convey messages. The mentoring system at Bahrain Polytechnic illustrated formalized institutional commitment that provided procedures to support students during the unrest in Bahrain. On the reopening of the Polytechnic the Mentor Coordinator held meetings for staff including all mentors on how to respond to students in the light of the recent events and predicting that many students were feeling anxious concerning the unrest and how students would need support and reassurance. Preparation was made by the Polytechnic for the return of students. Forums facilitated by the Mentor Coordinator and Polytechnic counsellor allowed staff to discuss their concerns and how best to support students to return to their normal educational activities. Reinforced procedures and services were put in place to ensure a physically and emotionally safe environment. Role-plays were conducted in these forums on how to respond to student issues concerning the unrest

Training is also relevant in exceptional circumstances and political unrest is an event that is almost impossible to prepare for in terms of predicting outcomes and students and staff feelings and emotions as a result. However an educational institute has a responsibility to respond when issues arise and give clear future direction. Contextualized training would involve dealing with specific issues that Bahraini students were facing in Bahrain. This seemed to be particularly relevant for some mentors in light of the unrest in Bahrain.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated the findings from the mentoring study and mentoring literature are largely congruent. Relationship and trust are pivotal to effective mentoring relationships in which the development of trust involves cultural understanding and respect of each other cultures. Mentor competence is essential for successful mentoring relationships and a crucial aspect of mentor competence is recognizing one's level of competence and when to know to refer to other support mechanisms with the institution. Institutions play a valuable role in their provision of services that support mentoring and staff need to see the institution is committed to mentor and recognizing the role of mentoring is as significant as other roles within their job description. Thus, if mentoring is visible and the institution gives such programmes credence students and mentors are more likely to engage in the process.

## CHAPTER SIX

**Conclusion**

Student Mentoring programmes in tertiary education are a new development in Bahrain's educational settings. In 2008 Bahrain Polytechnic, a new tertiary provider to Bahrain instigated a student Mentoring Programme as a key feature to support students in their transition to the tertiary environment. The research question that guided this research was: *What is the best model for the implementation of a student mentoring programme at a polytechnic in a Middle Eastern context?*

The theoretical framework chosen for the research was a case study which enabled narrative stories to emerge from the experiences of students and staff involved in a student mentoring programme from 2008-2011. The study involving sixteen participants was divided into two distinct phases of research.

In enquiring into what is the best model for implementation of a mentoring programme literature has shown that young people develop some resiliency if they are able to find an adult role model outside of their family. This person is often a bridge between adolescence and adulthood that allows the young person to develop independence from family. When Bahrain Polytechnic implemented a mentoring programme for all students it was creating an artificial situation where the intention was for students to develop a close relationship with a significant adult that would help the young person develop independence and increase resiliency.

Over a two year period the programme was adapted to increase student involvement and engagement. At the same time tutorial staff had difficulty in being fully engaged and committed to the programme due to commitments during the set up stage of the Polytechnic. After the two year set up stage the Mentoring Programme became compulsory for all students and tutorial staff. If students did not attend meetings their academic transcript would not be released. Meanwhile there was a greater expectation from Senior Management Team and Heads of Faculties that tutorial staff participate in

the Mentoring Programme. The programme has evolved further to include ELLI in mentoring conversations in order to give purpose and direction in the interactions between student and mentor.

The study has illustrated that building of a relationship between a mentor and student can ease the transition the student makes to the tertiary environment. When the mentor and the student make efforts 'to get to know each other well' trust develops and issues students are highlighted and solutions can be sought. It is this highlighting issues and the seeking of solutions facing the student that can help foster academic success and successful social transition to the tertiary environment and through increasing resiliency students can learn to persist with their studies.

There are three significant parties involved and closely entwined in the mentoring process, the student, the staff and the institution. The interconnectedness of the three parties can be recognized in the ecological approach adopted in order to conduct the research project. The student is placed at the centre with his/her system being family and education environment where the mentor sits, the exosystem and beyond the exosystem is the chronosystem, the institution which has a direct influence on the student's life, the educational institution. Clear identification of the roles and responsibilities that the student, the mentor and the institution have in the implementation of a mentoring programme will increase the chances of all parties to be fully engaged in the process.

### **The Student Perspective**

In the research study students expressed that mentors were a source of support by providing reassurance, motivation and guidance. Students also believed they became more confident and began to develop self belief enabling the development of effective decision making and self advocacy skills. Moreover students found engagement in the mentoring process more relevant if mentors were their tutors as they felt their mentors could understand the challenges they were facing and could be a source of academic support. The students were also able to recognize that mentors were taking a special interest in them as students and were concerned for their well being. This special interest was often expressed in terms she was like a mother or a father to me. So the

question arises in order to actively engage a student in the mentoring process what are the personal attributes and skills a mentor needs?

### **The Mentor Perspective**

The characteristics of a good mentor are likely to influence student participation and engagement in the mentoring process as well as affect the outcomes of interactions between student and mentor. From student stories and my personal experience as mentor coordinator and the document analysis of the programme over the last three years some personal attributes of an effective mentor needs are to be:

- Caring and empathetic
- Motivating and a guide
- An effective listener and facilitator
- Student centred and ready to recognize student reality
- Culturally sensitive

Meanwhile the skills an effective mentor needs to develop are:

- Accurate assessment/referral skills
- Knowledge of services available within and outside of an institution
- Cultural knowledge
- Knowledge of mentoring principles
- Commitment to ongoing professional development

Knowing students' needs are pivotal to the success of a mentoring programme, as such knowledge allows mentors to anticipate some of issues the student may face and be proactive and respond to student needs and issues in a timely manner. However the benefits of a mentoring programme have to be tangible in order for many students to become involved.

In order to answer the question students are likely to ask – *why do I need mentoring* - staff need to be explicit in their explanations of the purpose of the programme. Having knowledge of the students' programmes and being able to discuss students learning achievements can provide a basis for mentoring conversations. Students will relate to mentors if they see the programme has relevancy and that mentors have knowledge of

the students' experience. Mentoring often concerns academic issues and participants reported that mentors need to have an understanding of the chosen programme of study the student has taken. Furthermore a successful mentoring relationship can lay the grounding for the opportunity to increase students' resilience.

### **The Institution Perspective**

A robust and resilient mentoring programme requires full commitment on the part of the institution to enhance the success of the programme. The philosophy and the objectives of the programme need to be clearly expressed enabling its implementation to occur through a central student service. What structures need to be in place to help acceptance of the mentoring programme amongst the institution's staff and to enable engagement. Departments such as Human Resources need to meet regularly with Heads of Faculty and Mentoring teams to establish staffing needs in order to have the programme adequately resourced.

The Institution needs to portray to staff that mentoring is a significant tutor role and if implemented will work and improve academic success and retention of students and job descriptions for staff need to outline the tasks, skills and competencies involved in mentoring. Staff time spent on mentoring students must be allowed for within tutor workloads so that mentoring is valued and recognized by the institution.

An educational provider can further give credence to programmes such as mentoring in student and tutor spaces that are made available. Welcoming physical spaces will allow formal and informal conversations to happen between students and mentors. Ideally the spaces need to be accessible to students and staff, within spaces they occupy, whilst at the same time being private for both parties.

The institution must be committed to the training of mentors updating their professional mentoring skills and be committed to new developments and research into the area. They need to be willing to share their knowledge with other institutions, so that mentoring becomes a model within the Middle Eastern educational context. For tutors who are to mentor they need to be trained and feel confident in their role and be clear about boundaries while being ready to invest time and effort into a relationship

with a student. They need to have the attributes of a mentor that is likely to encourage a student to engage in the process.

In 2010 Bahrain Polytechnic adopted a learning tool known as ELLI. This tool provides a profile of students learning capacities across seven dimensions of learning as referred to in Chapter Five and is currently being implemented into mentoring conversations. In the research study students and mentors stated enthusiasm and engagement in the programme when mentors were students' tutors because mentoring has become contextual.

### **What Difference did the Study make to the Participants?**

All participants referred to the unrest during their interviews. The student participants discussed how the unrest was a very difficult time, with some students seeking support from their mentors while Polytechnic was closed, and others having difficulty refocusing on study after the unrest. Meanwhile mentors felt ill equipped at times to deal with the complexity of the problems related to the unrest. In each interview I tried to display empathy and recognition that it was a difficult time and I believe it gave the participants the opportunity to acknowledge the dissonance and discomfort the unrest caused.

The research provided rich data and highlighted the components of effective mentoring when students and mentors are actively engaged in the process. Such information is useful to Bahrain Polytechnic as it provides an understanding of the implementation of the programme during set up phase and beyond. The research provides a basis for a larger study and is also a platform for the Polytechnic to share its information and be seen as an innovator in terms of student mentoring in Bahrain and within the wider Gulf region.

### **Personal Reflection**

Conducting this research has been an interesting and illuminating journey. One significant factor for me personally was I was employed at the Bahrain Polytechnic during the first two set up years; Phase one of the project. The following Phase two I became a full time student to complete the thesis for my Masters of Philosophy. This allowed me both a subjective and objective view. In some ways I felt like I had the best of both worlds, in that Phase one was an informative, contextual period for me as

Mentor Coordinator at Bahrain Polytechnic, whereas Phase two, I was removed from the immediate setting when I could distance myself, enabling more objectivity.

Although the methodology chapter stated I wish to compare the two models of mentoring that were in place at Bahrain Polytechnic when I interviewed participants they seem less concerned about the first two years and the last year, that is, Phase one and Phase two. Rather they were more concerned about discussing mentoring in general and how they were engaged in the mentoring process. Some expressed concern about it being compulsory others were less concerned and saw it had advantages and disadvantages.

I enjoyed interviewing participants about a subject that I feel passionate about and a reason for my coming to Bahrain Polytechnic. When I interviewed mentors I could see some of the frustrations I felt when trying to establish student and mentor engagement. We have strong intuitive instincts as educators from a western perspective that students have problems in transition and adapting to new ways of learning. If students can establish a relationship with a person that is committed to developing an interest in them, we know that it is helpful. Academic study and personal life experience tells me that. I know also that coming to Bahrain teaching and working in a student service area was the most challenging part of my career. I was completely out of my comfort zone, but establishing relationships and making connections with people helped me become engaged in my work and social life in Bahrain.

The research question in the thesis is:

What is the best model for implementing a mentoring programme in a Middle Eastern context?

In order to answer the research question a case study was built around three components, interviews, documents analysis and current mentoring literature on faculty/student mentoring in tertiary settings. The document analysis has described the development of the programme from voluntary to compulsory for students and academic tutorial staff. It would appear the level of compulsion is a more suitable model for implementation of a mentoring programme in a Middle Eastern context for the following reasons:

- If all students are required to meet with their mentor at a minimum of five times a year then, then all students are mentored and in particular those who are 'at risk'
- The mentoring process enables a clear point of referral to other support mechanisms within the polytechnic
- If all academic tutorial staff are involved, it results in a more comprehensive robust mentoring system where mentors are active participants in the mentoring process
- Mentoring system can be mechanism where the institution can receive feedback from its student population
- The question the institution may need to consider is can the polytechnic sustain the mentoring system in its present structure with continual growth of the student population

The unrest that occurred in Bahrain during 2011 was personally a very unsettling time for me. Whilst a research project gave me a focus during the unrest I felt ambivalent at times as to how much of a priority it was. For me evacuation was an option. When the polytechnic closed this caused me further ambivalence and again thinking maybe this was not 'a happening thing'. Fortunately the Polytechnic reopened and I was able to conduct the interviews within a short timeframe before the semester was completed. I am very grateful for the participants' time and relayed this to them. Staff and students were under pressure to complete a semester that had been dramatically interrupted.

### **Further Research**

This study of the implementation of a mentoring programme at Bahrain Polytechnic has illustrated that mentoring relationships can be beneficial to all parties involved. The student is supported through various transitions they make in their personal and academic development. Mentors meanwhile recognize that whilst it is part to their tutoring responsibilities developing rapport with students and supporting them is a rewarding experience. Furthermore institutions can gain credence as an educational provider if it is easily recognizable they support student holistically. As with all research though there are limitations in this study. Firstly as it is a small study and secondly it was

conducted during an extraordinary period when political unrest was occurring in Bahrain. Therefore the following recommendations are made:

- Bahrain Polytechnic may wish to conduct a larger study involving students at all levels in all programmes in order to establish different levels of success within programmes and modify as necessary
- It would be beneficial to compare results of this larger study with the Hong Kong studies that are outlined in the thesis
- To develop a deeper context of Bahrain, compare the present study and future study with mentoring programmes at other tertiary institutions in Bahrain, for example, RCSI
- To look at the interest and needs in secondary schools for mentoring programmes
- To conduct a study on how to implement a peer mentoring programme, alongside tutor mentoring
- Investigate the needs of part time students
- Also investigate the needs of adult students
- And investigate how to integrate subjects related to learning within mentoring conversations and meetings

Bahrain Polytechnic is a new institution facing many challenges in a new set up stage and subsequent political unrest in the kingdom. This study has illustrated that mentoring support helped students through a difficult era in their academic lives. The study has illustrated several salient aspects to the mentoring relationship; trust, competence, cultural understandings are some examples. However this study as identified its limitations and a larger study in a stable period within the operation of a mentoring programme will further illustrate its benefits.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Mentor Participant Information Sheet

Mentor Participant Information Sheet



Date: 21 June 2011

Project Title: A case study of a student mentoring programme at Bahrain Polytechnic

An Invitation:

As part of my thesis for a Master's in Philosophy (Youth Development), I would like you to participate in this project.

Participation is voluntary and you can decline to participate without giving reason or being disadvantaged. You may also withdraw information at any time prior to July 1, when completion of data collection has occurred and anonymous data cannot be traced to be withdrawn. You are invited to participate, along with your other students and tutors involved in the mentoring programme. There is no advantage or disadvantage whether you decide to participate or not.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research will provide data for my thesis in Masters in Philosophy (Youth Development). The transition to university life is significant both socially and academically. Bahrain Polytechnic offers a mentoring programme to help students make this adjustment successfully. This project aims to gain a full understanding and description of your experience of the mentoring programme.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified as a mentor who has been actively involved in the mentoring programme.

What will you have to do as a participant?

If you accept this invitation you will be asked to participate in an interview which will last for 30-45 minutes. There are ten questions asking you to describe your experience of mentoring. See questions attached.

What are the discomforts and risks?

All interviews will be conducted at Bahrain Polytechnic in a well utilised area of the polytechnic, (such as a room within the Library and Learning Centre). My Bahraini based supervisor and the Bahrain Polytechnic counsellor will be made aware of the scheduled interviews.

Sometimes when people reflect on past experiences it can cause some emotional distress. The Bahrain Polytechnic counsellor will be made aware of the scheduled interviews.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If any questions cause you discomfort you do not have to answer them. If you encounter any emotional distress the Bahrain Polytechnic counsellor will be available to discuss any concerns you may experience.

What are the benefits?

Bahrain Polytechnic is committed to providing a comprehensive mentoring programme. Your views and experiences and suggestions for the future are highly valued. This way informed changes to improve the programme can be made in the future. A summary of the study will be available through The Director of Student Services. This research will also contribute to completing my Masters in Philosophy (Youth Development).

How will my privacy be protected?

As the researcher I will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no one who takes part in this study can be identified in the research report. However due the nature and size of the sample populations only limited confidentiality is possible.

As an added precaution you will have the opportunity to read your transcripts and drafts that involve you as a participant and if necessary I will discuss with my supervisors steps to ensure that you cannot be identified.

The interviews will be taped recorded and transcribed by a typist, who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Your transcript and tape will be kept in a locked cupboard at Bahrain Polytechnic until I no longer need your data. After that time they will be sent securely to Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand (the education institution I am obtaining my qualification from) to be held in safe secure storage for 6 years.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Your time is the cost of participating in this research. It is anticipated that the interview will take around 30- 45 minutes. If you choose to participate your time is very much appreciated as it is recognized as a staff member at Bahrain Polytechnic you have a very committed schedule.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have been given 3 days to consider this invitation. If you need more time and think you would like to participate you can contact me directly.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate you can reply by email and I will send you a consent form which you can bring along to the interview.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. Copies of this research will be placed manually and electronically in Bahrain Polytechnic Library and a copy will also be made available to students through the Director of Students Services.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor,

Secondary Supervisor:

Dr Chris Coutts

[chris.coutts@polytechnic.bh](mailto:chris.coutts@polytechnic.bh)

Phone 00973 365 3700.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz) , 921 9999 ext 8044

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

### **Researcher Contact Details:**

Lois Watt

[loisinhahrain@gmail.com](mailto:loisinhahrain@gmail.com)

Phone 00973 39075990

### **Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Primary Supervisor:

Dr Teorongonui Keelan.

[Josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz)

Phone 0064212456824

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21 June 2011  
AUTEK Reference number 11/119

Interview Questions for mentors

1. Can you explain your understanding of mentoring at Bahrain Polytechnic?
2. How did you become to be a mentor?
3. What was your role as a mentor?
4. What were your accountabilities as a mentor?
5. What training and support did you receive for this role?
6. Was this training useful?
7. Was the mentoring structure effective in achieving the aims of the programme?
8. Can you tell me about a highlight of your mentoring experience?
9. Can you tell me a low point about your mentoring experience?
10. Do you believe if mentoring had an impact on retaining students at Bahrain Polytechnic?

## Appendix B – Student Participant Information Sheet

Student Participant Information Sheet



Date: 3 July 2011

Project Title: A case study of a student mentoring programme at Bahrain Polytechnic

An Invitation:

As part of my thesis for a Master's in Philosophy (Youth Development), I would like you to participate in this project. Participation is voluntary and you can decline to participate without giving reason or being disadvantaged. You may also withdraw information at any time prior to July 10, when completion of data collection has occurred and anonymous data cannot be traced to be withdrawn. You are invited to participate, along with your other students and tutors involved in the mentoring programme. There is no advantage or disadvantage whether you decide to participate or not.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research will provide data for my thesis in Masters in Philosophy (Youth Development). The transition to university life is significant both socially and academically. Bahrain Polytechnic offers a mentoring programme to help students make this adjustment successfully. This project aims to gain a full understanding and description of your experience of the mentoring programme.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified by your mentor as a student who has been actively involved in the mentoring programme.

What will you have to do as a participant?

If you accept this invitation you will be asked to participate in an interview which will last for 30-45 minutes. There are ten questions asking you to describe your experience of mentoring. See questions attached.

What are the discomforts and risks?

All interviews will be conducted at Bahrain Polytechnic in a well utilised area of the polytechnic, (such as a room within the Library and Learning Centre). My Bahraini based supervisor and the Bahrain Polytechnic counsellor will be made aware of the scheduled interviews.

Sometimes when people reflect on past experiences it can cause some emotional distress. The Bahrain Polytechnic counsellor will be made aware of your interview time.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If any questions cause you discomfort you do not have to answer them. If you encounter any emotional distress the Bahrain Polytechnic counsellor will be available to discuss any concerns you may experience.

What are the benefits?

Bahrain Polytechnic is committed to providing a comprehensive mentoring programme. Your views and experiences and suggestions for the future are highly valued. This way informed changes to improve the programme can be made in the future. A summary of the study will be available through The Director of Student Services.

This research will also contribute to completing my Masters in Philosophy (Youth Development).

How will my privacy be protected?

As the researcher I will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no one who takes part in this study can be identified in the research report. However due the nature and size of the sample populations only limited confidentiality is possible.

As an added precaution you will have the opportunity to read your transcripts and drafts that involve you as a participant and if necessary I will discuss with my supervisors steps to ensure that you cannot be identified.

The interviews will be taped recorded and transcribed by a typist, who will sign a confidentiality agreement.

Your transcript and tape will be kept in a locked cupboard at Bahrain Polytechnic until I no longer need your the data. After that time they will be sent securely to Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand (the education institution I am obtaining my qualification from) to be held in safe secure storage for 6 years.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Your time is the cost of participating in this research. It is anticipated that the interview will take around 45 minutes. If you choose to participate your time is very much appreciated as it is recognized as a student at Bahrain Polytechnic you have a very committed schedule.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have been given 3 days to consider this invitation. If you need more time and think you would like to participate you can contact me directly.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate you can reply by email and I will send you a consent form which you can bring along to the interview.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. Copies of this research will be placed manually and electronically in Bahrain Polytechnic Library and a copy will also be made available to students through the Director of Students Services.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor,

Secondary Supervisor

Dr Chris Coutts

[chris.coutts@polytechnic.bh](mailto:chris.coutts@polytechnic.bh)

Phone 00973 3653700.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz) , 921 9999 ext 8044

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

### **Researcher Contact Details:**

Lois Watt

[loisinbahrain@gmail.com](mailto:loisinbahrain@gmail.com)

Phone 00973 39075990

### **Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Primary Supervisor:

Dr Teorongonui Keelan.

[Josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz)

Phone 0064212456824

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21 June 2011

AUTEK Reference number 11/119

### Interview questions for mentees

1. Can you explain your understanding of mentoring at Bahrain Polytechnic?
2. What did you think about how you were assigned to a mentor group?
3. What did your mentors offer to do for you?
4. Did you understand your responsibilities as student within the mentoring programme?
5. Do you think your mentor was able to help you or your group members with any issues you may have experienced?
6. If you did not discuss any concerns with your mentors can you explain why?
7. Can you comment on the structure of the programme?
8. Can you tell me about a highlight of your mentoring experience?
9. Can you tell me a low point about your mentoring experience?
10. Do you believe the mentoring programme had any impact on you continuing to study at Polytechnic?

## Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form



Project title: A case study of a student mentoring programme at Bahrain

Polytechnic

Project Supervisor: Teorongonui Keelan

Researcher: Lois Watt

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet **5 July 2011**
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, 10 July 2011 without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes   
No

Participant's Signature: .....

Participant's Name: .....

Participant's Contact Details

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21 June 2011  
AUTEC Reference number 11/119 Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

## Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement



Project title: A case study of a student-mentoring programme at Bahrain

Project Supervisor: Dr Teorongonui Keelan

Researcher: **Lois Watt**

- I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.
- I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber .....

Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details:

Dr Chris Coutts

Secondary supervisor

Bahrain Polytechnic Phone +973 36537000

## Appendix E: Safety Protocol

Safety Protocol



Project title: A case study of a student mentoring programme at Bahrain

Polytechnic

Project Supervisor: Teorongonui Keelan

Researcher: Lois Watt

- All interviews will take place at Bahrain Polytechnic
- My Bahraini based Supervisor will be made aware of scheduled interviews.
- I will carry a mobile phone with me at all times.

I live in Bahrain and have done so for the past three years.

I am well aware of the political situation in Bahrain and have sought advice from my supervisors with regard to the current situation and its impact on my research.

I am in regular email, text and phone contact with my New Zealand-based supervisor.