

# Preface

The spark for this edited volume was ignited during an intriguing conversation I had with a friend, the CEO of a multinational company. I was discussing with him the classical four stages of informal mentoring (initiation, cultivation, separation and then redefinition), and how in the last stage of the relationship the dynamics between the mentor and protégé are said to undergo a transformation, with both of them evolving into peers (Kram 1983).

My friend laughed and said, “Do you honestly believe that even if a protégé outshines the mentor, that they will develop a peer relationship as equals? In India—once a boss, always a boss.” This refrain was from someone who had outshone more than one mentor.

He had a point. Given the high power–distance equation in India, coupled with a more paternalistic culture in which the mentor is often revered as a parental figure, the mentoring relationship possibly evolves differently when compared to existing Western models.

I studied formal mentoring programmes for my doctorate, programmes which are growing in leaps and bounds in India (Ramaswami and Dreher 2010). It became increasingly evident to me that while organizations in India were often drawing from existing Western models, these models

were based on assumptions that were more befitting Western countries. Mentoring is said to be a development process marked by critical feedback in which the protégé is expected to be adequately socialized into the given culture of an organization/institution (McDowall-Long 2004). As such, this process assumes the importance of individuality, which characterizes many low power–distance countries in the West.

However, India is known to be a country with one of the highest power–distance equations, as per Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory (1983). It is a country where there is a greater acceptance of an unequal power distribution, and in which hierarchy is expected and respected. Within this framework the mentor is seen through a more paternalistic lens by the protégé. As such, the protégé respects the authority and wisdom the mentor epitomizes, and is often in awe of him as a father figure.

The backdrop to this is the centuries-old mentoring tradition in India, known as the *guru–shishya* (teacher–disciple) tradition, which also involved a teaching–learning process. Here a protégé was not prized for his questioning approach to an authority figure, but rather for an implicit and unswerving faith that what he was being taught on the path of self-discovery was the truth, based on a relationship of absolute trust and obedience to the guru.

This paternalistic trend was also apparent in the ancient Greek tradition of mentoring, in which King Odysseus entrusted the nurturing and learning of his son to the goddess Athena. Athena, disguised as a man, and known as Mentor, thus took on the role of a surrogate parent in the king’s absence (Hayes 2005).

In modern Western models the mentor is not so much perceived as a father figure, but rather as someone whom the protégé can emulate and hopes to equal one day. Even so, there are a few odd references in the literature to the mentor as a parent; Clutterbuck says, “Good mentors have empathy, experience and excellence. They must act as surrogate parents, combining authority and friendship, counsel and commitment,” (2014, p. 47).

It is both interesting and imperative to explore how mentoring models are emerging in a country that oscillates between rich, ancient spiritual traditions and the force of westernization. In this land of paradoxes—of *mandirs* (temples) and McDonald’s—while some

contradictions do apparently seamlessly coexist, does it necessarily mean that all can? Are Western models of mentoring being superimposed, adapted or do they coexist within a framework of juxtaposed values?

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This edited volume is divided into three themes, namely: mentoring the next generation; exploring formal and informal mentoring models; and case studies and perspectives. Many questions are explored, including whether there is a tussle between a traditional society, which is also high on uncertainty avoidance, and one in which millennials are trying to exert greater independence within the mentoring relationship? In terms of mentoring models, does a top-down approach work or does a more collaborative, bottom-up approach lead to better mentoring outcomes?

Apart from these questions, this edited volume also explores perceptions. Who is the ideal mentor for the protégé, and ideal protégé for the mentor? What is the most viable type of mentoring for the older and younger generations?

In Part I Dr. Archana Kumar and Dr. Mridula Seth explore how peer mentoring can be effective in developing life skills for marginalized youth. They focus their research on three institutions in Delhi that practice youth peer mentor programmes, and draw conclusions about what factors contribute to the success of the programmes.

Dr. Shaji Kurian and Sanjay Padode assess how mentorship is perceived by corporate mentors and student protégés at an upcoming business school in Bangalore (a school that has received awards for its programme in which MBA students are mentored by senior corporate personnel). They find both similarities and significant differences in perceptions of mentorship between two generations.

The perceptions of Gen Y protégés in a start-up company consisting largely of millennials, has been investigated by Priya Kumar and Sachin Kumar. The company in which the interviews took place is more lateral than hierarchical, full of young employees and is in fast-growth mode. They found that protégés had a high expectation of the mentoring process, and also a desire to move away from classical mentoring models to new models with multiple mentors.

In Part II Annu Mathew conducts a qualitative study on the protégé's perspective, and raises the interesting question of whether firms that

encourage informal mentoring relationships positively impact the formation of mentoring networks. The author suggests that it is informal mentoring that may serve to mitigate the effect of the high power–distance equation in India.

Dr. Anirudh Agrawal explores venture capitalist and investee enterprise mentoring within the Indian start-up ecosystem, using interviews and secondary data from three venture capital firms. Apart from suggesting variables that lead to greater success, this study proposes an antecedent, action and outcome model of venture capital enabled entrepreneurial mentoring in India. This is an important study given that mentoring of start-up companies is a fairly new phenomenon in India.

Dr. Lorianne D. Mitchell makes an interesting cross-cultural comparison of India with Brazil, Russia and China (BRIC countries), examining differing perceptions of what makes an effective mentor.

In Part III Nalini Srinivasan delves deeply into the case study of a social venture in the northeast of India, which began as a mode of curtailing human trafficking, and transformed into a movement to ensure that hundreds of woman artisans became financially secure. Mentoring became the natural mode of development for these women in the process of maximizing financial returns for them and the shareholders.

Sujeev Shakya and Dr Anne Randerson recount how Sujeev's organization has been successfully practising a collaborative form of mentoring (rather than a top-down approach) in Nepal, which, like India, is known to be a high power–distance society. In fact, this has proved so successful that he has replicated this model to his other global offices in Bhutan, Cambodia and Rwanda.

Supplementing the academic chapters are narratives from two seasoned mentoring experts about peculiar challenges they face. Rajiv Gupta writes about dealing with possible mentor over-involvement and protégé dependency; while Ajay Goyal provides examples of the stigma associated with working proactively with a coach.

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Global leadership research has so far been driven by Western scholars, and scholarship in the realm of mentorship is no exception. In the last 15 years papers on mentorship in some of the top management

journals have been from the West, and largely North American centric (Chandler et al. 2011). Only recently have some studies on mentoring begun to emerge from countries such as China (Wang et al. 2009) and India (Haynes and Ghosh 2012).

India provides a particularly rich landscape for studying mentoring as it is an important country in South Asia, which in turn is a fast-growing region that is attracting considerable interest among academics and among business leaders as an emerging strategic growth market (Khilji and Rowley 2013). It is hoped that a contextual interpretation can contribute both to a greater insight into the mentoring models in India, and to our understanding of the mentoring phenomenon as a whole.

In an attempt to heed the call for more research on mentoring relationships across cultures (Chandler et al. 2011), this volume possibly raises more questions than it answers. But raising questions, questioning answers and negotiating paradoxes is a fundamental part of creative thinking, which De Bono describes as parallel thinking:

“The static judgement/box habits of traditional thinking can deal only with the past and with stable situations. For dealing with changing situations the methods, attitudes and processes of parallel thinking are possibly more appropriate. There is a need to work forwards from a field of parallel possibilities in order to ‘design’ action,” (1994, p. 220).

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