Full Length Research Paper

The perceived capabilities and willingness of South African small business owners to act as business mentors

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In this paper, it was determined whether South African small business owners have the capabilities to act as business mentors to potential or inexperienced entrepreneurs. Secondly, the willingness of South African small business owners to act as business mentors was determined. The literature study revealed that in order to perform the role of a successful business mentor requires particular personal, relational and professional capabilities. Willingness to act as a business mentor is influenced by a number of factors that need to be considered when deciding to perform such a role. The purpose of this paper was to provide an opportunity for interested groups to utilise small business owners as a source of business mentors to assist and guide inexperienced entrepreneurs through the difficult process of starting and growing a business. A measuring instrument was developed to field the perceptions of eighty respondents regarding their business mentoring capabilities and willingness to mentor. Factor analysis was conducted and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. The relationships between the respondents' rating of their mentoring capabilities (personal, relational and professional) and: their willingness to act as mentor; their previous engagement as a mentee; and their previous engagement as a mentor was determined.

Key words: Business mentors and mentees, capabilities and willingness to mentor.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa faces many economic, political and social challenges in its new democracy. One of the biggest challenges is that of growing unemployment, with a massive shortage of skilled and educated young people (Herrington et al., 2009: 12). The current unemployment rate for South Africa is 25.2% (Department of Statistics, 2012: vi).

Herrington et al. (2009: 12) further indicate that such unemployed and unemployable young people place a heavy burden on a limited government budget. The authors emphasise entrepreneurial and small business development as a means to create more business start-

ups. The poor success rate of business start-ups in South Africa relative to that of other countries underlines the need to support such entrepreneurs and to mentor entrepreneurs through the difficult process of starting and growing a business (Herrington et al., 2009: 62). Ladzani and Netswera (2009: 236) agree and state that one of the main factors contributing to the low success rate of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa is the under-development and under-utilisation of business support services. Business mentoring is seen as one of the most important and effective business support services.

In terms of policy, the South African government regards SMMEs as vital role players in economic growth and development and job creation in this country [Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), 1995: 3]. The success of any SMME is directly related to the quality of

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the entrepreneur who starts and runs such a business.

The DTI regards business mentoring, in conjunction with training, as of extreme importance for small business owners to acquire relevant business skills, technical skills and vocational skills (DTI, 1995: 35-37). This study relates to the objectives set by the global entrepreneurship monitor report (Kelley et al., 2012: 8) which states the following: the need to identify factors that encourage entrepreneurship and make a contribution to stimulating entrepreneurship. Swanepoel et al. (2010: 75) concur that the very poor rate of SMME success in South Africa requires, *inter alia*, business mentoring to ensure successful business in South Africa and the realisation of government endeavours to reduce poverty and enhance employment. In order to assist emerging entrepreneurs to develop and run an SMME effectively, business mentors need to possess particular capabilities and the willingness to perform the role of business mentors.

Large numbers of South African business owners lack the ability to develop their businesses from start-up firms to established firms (Herrington et al., 2009: 148). The authors further suggest that business mentoring should focus on the formal sector, as small businesses in this sector create significantly more jobs and revenue than those in the informal sector.

Different authors indicate the capabilities needed to be business mentors (Moore et al., 2008: 21; Hisrich et al., 2008: 62). In the literature study of this paper, the capabilities of good business mentors were compiled into a profile and measured with regard to small business owners to determine whether they have these capabilities. It was, however, expected that even though small business owners might possess such capabilities, they might not be willing to act as business mentors for various reasons.

In light of the fact that business mentoring can play an important role in developing SMMEs, the question arises: To what extent do small business owners have the necessary capabilities and willingness to assist start-up entrepreneurs to make a success of their businesses? Furthermore, some reasons why South African small business owners are not willing to perform the role of business mentors for developing SMMEs are listed. Primary research was conducted to determine whether a group of small business owners had such capabilities and assess their willingness to act as business mentors. These capabilities were grouped into personal, relational and professional capabilities. The account of this is followed by analysis of collected data and related conclusions and recommendations.

Problem investigated

The South African government regards SMMEs as vital role players in economic growth and development, job creation and equity in the country (DTI, 1995: 3). The

success of any SMME is directly related to the quality of the entrepreneur who starts and runs such a business. The successful development and management of SMMEs form an integral part of the job creation goals set by the South African government (Swanepoel et al., 2010: 59; Ladzani and Netswera, 2009: 225).

At present SMMEs do not meet such requirements, as evidenced by the fact that between 30% and 80% of businesses fail within the first two years of commencement (Pretorius, 2009: 309; DTI, 2000: 3). Many of the emerging entrepreneurs lack the necessary know-how to develop and manage their SMMEs effectively. Business mentoring could provide learning opportunities that focus on developing managerial and entrepreneurial skills and the capability of an emerging entrepreneur to grow a long-term, sustainable business (Adams, 2009: 194). Watson (2004: 2) underscores this by indicating that business mentorship nurtures and supports novice entrepreneurs by providing assistance that is renowned for professional, social and moral support.

If small business owners are willing to act as business mentors and capable of doing so, and they do not yet act as such, this is a huge untapped resource that could and should be utilised in order to help emerging entrepreneurs to grow successful businesses. This might ensure a higher success rate of SMMEs, which in turn might assist in alleviating the unemployment problem and poor economic situation in South Africa.

Current research findings in South Africa have concentrated on knowledge requirements for entrepreneurs and small business support practitioners (Martin, 2008: 24), as well as the situational analysis of entrepreneurship mentors (Watson, 2004: 8-9). None of these studies have homed in on small business owners' judgement of their own capabilities and willingness to act as business mentors. Therefore the problem statement is: To what extent are small business owners in South Africa willing to act as business mentors to inexperienced entrepreneurs? And secondly, to what extent do small business owners in South Africa have the capabilities to act as business mentors?

Objectives of the study

Primary research objective

The primary objective of this research is to establish the willingness of South African small business owners to act as business mentors.

Secondary research objectives

As indicated, the literature study revealed that the capabilities of business mentors can be grouped into personal, relational and professional capabilities.

Therefore, as secondary objectives this study endeavours to prove the following:

- 1) Small business owners do have the personal capabilities needed to be good business mentors.
- 2) Small business owners do have the relational capabilities needed to be good business mentors.
- 3) Small business owners do have the professional capabilities needed to be good business mentors.

Hypotheses

The following null and alternative hypotheses are postulated:

H₁: South African small business owners do not have the willingness to act as business mentors.

H_{1A}: South African small business owners have the willingness to act as business mentors.

H₂: Small business owners do not have the personal capabilities needed to be good business mentors.

H_{2A}: Small business owners do have the personal capabilities needed to be good business mentors.

H₃: Small business owners do not have the relational capabilities needed to be good business mentors.

H_{3A}: Small business owners do have the relational capabilities needed to be good business mentors.

H₄: Small business owners do not have the professional capabilities needed to be good business mentors.

H_{4A}: Small business owners do have the professional capabilities needed to be good business mentors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the concepts under study in the literature review it is necessary to briefly define a few concepts.

Defining concepts

Definitions of the main terms used in this paper follow.

Small business and small business owners

When defining small businesses, both qualitative and quantitative criteria need to be taken into consideration, according to the National Small Business Amendment Act, no 29 of 2004. This Act (2004: 1043) defines an enterprise as a separate and distinct business entity, together with its branches or subsidiaries, if any, including co-operative enterprises, managed by one owner or more predominantly carried on in any sector or subsector of the economy mentioned in column 1 of the Schedule and classified as a micro-, a very small, a small or a medium enterprise by satisfying the criteria

mentioned in columns 3, 4 and 5 of the Schedule.

For the purposes of this paper, a small business will be regarded as one whose annual turnover does not exceed R10 million and which employs fewer than 50 employees.

Entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur

For the purposes of this paper, "entrepreneurship is the emergence and growth of new businesses.... Entrepreneurship is also the process that causes changes in the economic systems through innovations of individuals" (Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen, 2009:9). Making a profit that will serve a variety of needs is the basic motivation of entrepreneurial activities. Implementing the entrepreneurial process is essential for being a successful entrepreneur.

Business mentoring

Bettmann (2009: 1834) defines mentoring as a dynamic reciprocal relationship environment between an inexperienced mentee and an experienced business mentor, aimed at the development of the former. Business mentoring can be seen as a relationship between an experienced and inexperienced person, with the primary objective of supporting the personal and professional development of the junior person. The senior person coaches the junior in business skills to solidify self-confidence, and sponsors the junior by actively intervening in business situations in order to advance the professional qualities and opportunities of the junior (Robbins, 2001: 498).

Business mentor

Mincemoyer and Thomson (1998: 1) argue that a mentor can be regarded as a senior person of particular influence based on higher ranking with regard to experience and knowledge and who is committed to the professional advancement of less experienced persons. Osif (2008: 336) indicates that a mentor is a person with explicit applicable knowledge coupled with appropriate first-hand experience in a particular field of practice that a less experienced person would like to have. Generally it appears that a business mentor is a person who is willing to share his or her experiences, knowledge, know-how and skills, together with the solutions he or she has encountered in building a business and career successfully.

Business mentee

A mentee, also termed as protégé, is a person who has a limited background in a specific field of knowledge or

discipline, coupled with limited experience in a specific field of practice and, therefore, limited professional expertise. Such limitations and inexperience may apply to business in general or to a specific type of business or career (Audet et al., 2006:5). Mentees, who may be of any gender, race or culture, are usually people of relatively younger age and in junior positions in organisations or those who have limited professional stature (Lankau et al., 2005: 257). Barrett (2006: 617) indicates that business mentees are people who participate in the mentoring process with the distinct motivation of improving their business skills. Business mentees appear to have a greater need for power and achievement (Clutterbuck, 2005: 6).

Willingness

Bergh (2004: 429) states that willingness implies the agreement to be involved in work. He also emphasises that it indicates a person's work orientation that relates to efficacy with regard to professional socialisation and achievements in performance. Willingness equates to being agreeable to cooperate (Robbins et al., 2006:88). Roythorne-Jacobs (2004: 204) corroborate this by stating that willingness implies agreeableness and cooperation.

For the purpose of this paper, willingness indicates a preparedness and commitment to perform the role of a business mentor. Willingness is demonstrated by being available and approachable to assist and support a start-up mentee in developing personal and professional capacities and enhancing business success.

Capability

Capability reflects the capacity to perform a specific role on the basis of career maturity, which implies that a person has acquired the required knowledge, know-how, abilities and applicable attributes to perform specific responsibilities associated with a particular position (Bergh, 2004: 429). Robbins et al. (2006:47) state that capability indicates an individual's capacity to do and complete the responsibilities associated with a specific task. The distinct meaning of capability thus refers to what a person can do. Capability in this paper refers to the skills and competency needed in order to be a good or effective business mentor.

Business mentoring capabilities

An intensive literature review revealed that different authors put forward many different capabilities as necessary for business mentoring. Sambunjak et al. (2009: 75) classify desired characteristics of mentors in three groups. The three groups are personal, relational

and professional capabilities; these capabilities are summarised in Table 1.

Personal capabilities refer to an individual's cognitive and behavioural competencies, implying the knowledge base and skills a person possesses as the basis for dealing with reality (Albertyn, 2004: 378). According to Sambunjak et al. (2009: 75), personal capabilities include understanding, patience, honesty, responsiveness, trustworthiness, non-judgemental attitude, reliability, and being an active listener and motivator.

Bettmann (2009: 1834) believes in the importance of relational capabilities and having interpersonal skills as an integral part of the capabilities needed by a business mentor. He also indicates that the success of the business mentoring relationship directly relates to the interest of the business mentor in serving as such. Interpersonal skills related to effective listening and empathy appear to be some of the strongest capabilities that a business mentor should possess. Building and maintaining a positive motivational and empowering working relationship will facilitate mentee growth in relationship building. Within the context of this paper it is important to understand that personal capabilities, interpersonal skills, and relational capabilities are closely interwoven and cannot be absolutely separated. With regard to the relational capabilities of a good business mentor, commitment to such a business mentoring relationship and availability to maintain this relationship is important (Clutterbuck, 2005: 4).

Sambunjak et al. (2009: 75) regard professional capabilities of the business mentor as the mentor being senior and well-respected, and knowledgeable and experienced in the business context. Sufficient skills related to the specific business of the mentee are very important (Bettmann, 2009: 1834). In this regard, the business mentor needs to set the example as a role model for the mentee. Acting as a role model also applies to the wide range of capabilities of the business mentor which need to be imparted to the mentee during the mentoring process. Hegarty and Styles (2008: 22) specify that being a role model for the business mentee implies the demonstration of appropriate professional behaviour. Mentees master applicable attitudes, behaviours, values, and roles by emulating, observing and imitating the examples that their business mentors set (Audet et al., 2006: 56).

Willingness to act as business mentor

Willingness to act as a business mentor refers to a positive approach towards the business mentoring of an inexperienced mentee with a view to assisting and guiding the latter on the way to becoming a mature, effective business owner. Table 2 refers to the various factors that can play a role in the decision of an experienced business owner to take up the role and

Table 1. Summary of business mentor capabilities.

Capability	Brief explanation of the capability	Source
Personal capability		
Ability to inspire people	Motivate, instil sense of purpose, desire to succeed, positive attitude, client orientation	Swanepoel et al. (2010: 66) and Lamm and Harder (2010: 3)
Ability to begin where mentee is	Enter mentee's world, understand experiences and challenges, culture and language	Audet et al. (2006: 4) and Sambunjak et al. (2009: 75)
Empathy	Appreciate feelings, experiences and frustrations, be non-judgemental	Audet et al. (2006: 4), Gehrke (1988: 194), Lamm and Harder (2010: 3) and Clutterbuck (2005: 4)
Belief in mentee	Create confidence, see bigger picture	Thompson and Downing (2007:537)
Effective, active listening skills	Hear and understand the 'language' of mentee	Audet et al. (2006: 4) and Clutterbuck (2005: 4)
Reflection and teaching by giving feedback	Use analytical, systematic and conceptual thinking and gain perspective thereby; use problem-solving	Freedman (2009: 173)
Credibility, trustworthiness and integrity	Adhere to personal moral values	Benn and Brennand (2008: 2), Sullivan (2000: 171) and Lamm and Harder (2010: 3)
Communication skills	Congruently understand language of mentee and ensure congruency of own language	Dalley and Hamilton (2000: 10), Terrion and Leonard (2007: 156), Erasmus et al. (2006: 248) and Pinho et al. (2005: 21)
Supportiveness	Recognise progress of mentee, give recognition and share in achievements	Thompson and Downing (2007: 537), Benn and Brennand (2008: 2) and Benard (1998: 2)
Selflessness	Put other's interests before one's own	Bettmann (2009: 1834) and Clutterbuck (2005: 4)
Relational capability		
Accessibility	Be approachable and make time available	Derrida (2009: 2) and Sambunjak et al. (2009: 5)
Ability to build long-term relationship	Create and maintain a workable, practicable relationship over time	Rickard and Rickard (2009: 767), Barrett (2006: 615) and Erdem and Janset (2008: 4)
Interpersonal skills	Work and liaise with other people in an easy, acceptable manner for the purpose of building a relationship	Gibb (2000:16) and Hegarty and Styles (2008: 24)
Commitment	Dedicate oneself on a long-term basis in order to achieve personal and professional goals	Clutterbuck (2005: 4) and Bettmann (2009: 1834)

Table 1.Contd.

Professional capability		
Business experience	Be a practical 'how-to', expert in field of business	Sambunjak et al. (2009: 75) and Audet et al. (2006: 11)
Business knowledge	Communicate perspectives on the what, where, when, why, who and how of developing a business	Hisrich et al. (2008: 62)
Ability to see opportunities and challenges	Understand the risks in the entrepreneurial process and generate solutions	Benn and Brennard (2008: 2)
Training skills	Facilitate mentee learning	Barrett (2006: 23), Gibb (2000: 16), Bozeman and Feeney (2008: 475) and Audet et al. (2006: 5)
Goal setting and planning skills	Elicit feasible objectives and foresee ways of achieving them	Clutterbuck (2005: 5)
Problem-solving abilities	Generate solutions in relation to obstacles and challenges in the entrepreneurial process	Watson (2004:154) and Lamm and Harder (2010: 3)
Decision making	Come to applicable valid conclusions related to specific challenges	Sullivan (2000:167)
Ability to be a role model	Set a clear example of professional conduct	Hegarty and Styles (2008: 2), Erdem and Janset (2008: 4), Derrida (2009: 2), Robbins et al. (2006: 56), Barrett (2006:23) and Hisrich et al. (2008: 62)
Ability to evaluate	Assess mentee achievements in mastering learning objectives and outcomes	Audet et al. (2006: 5)
Strategic vision	Appraise current business affairs in the light of future threats with a view to ensuring success	Dracup and Bryan-Brown (2004: 450)
Risk-taking abilities	Judge the threats within a given business opportunity and make effective, realistic decisions for achieving success	Dracup and Bryan-Brown (2004: 450)
Creativity	Generate innovative ways of utilising opportunities and resources for advantageous business successes	Dracup and Bryan-Brown (2004: 450)
Leadership	Provide positive and appreciative direction with regard to performing professional responsibilities	Clutterbuck (1999: 76) and Erdem and Janset (2008: 4)

Source: Own compilation.

Table 2. Factors influencing willingness to act as a business mentor.

Factor	Short description	Source
Demographic similarity	Geographical distance	Lankau et al. (2005: 262)
Deep-level similarity	Emotional congruency	Lankau et al. (2005: 262)
Functional similarity	Undertaking similar tasks/responsibilities	Lankau et al. (2005: 262)
Limited loyalty to a particular employer	Not bound by organisational structures	Lankau et al. (2005: 262)
Interpersonal attraction	Liking and cohesion	Lankau et al. (2005: 262)
Previous experience of mentoring	Having been previously involved as mentor	Ghislieri et al. (2009: 207-209)
Self-directed individual	Internal locus of control	Ghislieri et al. (2009: 207-209)
Gender	Male persons more likely to mentor	Ghislieri et al. (2009: 207-209)
Benefits for mentors	Rewards, building stature, self-efficacy etc.	Ghislieri et al. (2009: 207-209)
Mentee interpersonal competence	Effective social skills	Pinho et al. (2005: 21)
Mentee subordination	Mentee willingness to accept authority	Pinho et al. (2005: 21)
Mentor personal and professional interest	Self-improvement	Pinho et al. (2005: 21) and Sambunjak et al. (2009:75)

Source: Own compilation.

responsibilities of business mentoring (Ghislieri et al. 2009: 216-217; Lankau et al., 2005: 264).

Ghislieri et al. (2009: 207-209) used seven scales to measure mentoring variables: willingness to mentor, perceived drawbacks to mentoring, organisational support for mentoring, mentoring functions, mentoring benefits, mentoring costs and personal characteristics perceived as necessary for a mentor. They presented the following results:

- 1) Male persons are more willing to mentor.
- 2) Executives are more willing to mentor than manual workers, office workers and supervisors.
- 3) Differences in educational levels do not play a role in willingness to mentor.
- 4) Non-executives list more drawbacks to mentoring than executives, as do less well-educated persons in comparison with more highly educated persons.

5) People who have had previous experience as a mentor are more willing to mentor and list fewer drawbacks to mentoring.

6) Positive innate and acquired personal characteristics and past mentoring satisfaction are positively related to willingness to mentor.

7) Willingness to mentor relates to mentoring benefits, mentoring costs, mentoring functions, self-efficacy, ambition and self-determination, and sensitivity to control by others.

Pinho et al. (2005: 21) indicate that willingness to mentor is influenced by the mentor's perceptions about the mentee's interpersonal competence and willingness to accept authority. Similarity with regard to personal and professional interest and expectations also play a role in willingness to mentor (Sambunjak et al., 2009: 75; Pinho et al., 2005: 21). Table 2 provides a summary of the factors that influence an individual to act as a

business mentor.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

Quantitative research was conducted by collecting data from a self-developed measuring instrument which was distributed to small business owners. This ties in with the findings of Allen et al. (2008: 248, 353), in their study on the state of research on mentoring, that such an approach is the most prevalent (89.9%). The study did not apply a standardised measuring instrument, as such instruments pertaining to the profiling of the capabilities or willingness of small business owners to act as business mentors did not exist (Ghislieri et al., 2009: 210).

The respondents had to rate their capabilities and willingness to act as business mentors on a three-point Likert-rating scale. Open-ended unforced choice rating scale measures were few. The measurement scales include nominal, ordinal and ratio types of scale (Cooper and Schindler, 2008: 282-286). Additionally, factor

analysis was executed to determine the validity of the different Likert scale items used throughout the measuring instrument. Cronbach alpha values were determined to provide the reliability coefficients calculated for the final factors of the Likert scales used in the measuring instrument. The ANOVA was used to determine possible differences between perceptions of the sample with regard to personal, relational and professional capabilities.

Research population

Cooper and Schindler (2008: 374) define a research population as all the elements (South African small business owners in this study) about which a researcher intends to make inferences. Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch (2000: 10) elicit a population to be the 'totality of entities'. The questionnaire was distributed to 90 small business owners from all industries, of which 80 returned the completed measuring instrument. This represents 89% response rate. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used because the total population (which would have been all small business owners) was not available and accessible (Cooper and Schindler, 2008: 397). Such sampling implies that findings do not *ipso facto* apply to all small business owners in a particular society. A snowballing and referral technique was used to mine the network for the research (Pellisier, 2007: 32).

Sampling selection and size

Eighty South African small business owners in the Gauteng Province were included in the sample. As indicated in the National Small Business Amendment Act (2004: 1043) a small business implied an annual turnover of less than R10 million with less than 50 employees.

FINDINGS

Demographic information

The demographic composition of the eighty small business owners in this study comprised 48 (60%) male and 32 (40%) female respondents. This represents a respondent ratio between females and males of 1:1.5. The global entrepreneurship monitor (GEM) report (Kelley et al., 2012:22) indicates that the ratio of females to males involved in entrepreneurial ventures is 1:1.6. The ages of the respondents ranged from 21 to 70 years, with the average age being 43 years. This finding relates favourably to the group of 35 to 44 years old who contribute mostly to entrepreneurship in South Africa (Kelley et al., 2012: 23). Five (6.25%) black respondents participated in this study. Only one respondent (1.25%) came from the Indian race, while 73 (91.25%) came from the white (Caucasian) community and the Chinese group was represented by one respondent (1.25%).

This study was limited to the geographical areas of Pretoria, Johannesburg, the Vaal Triangle, East Rand and West Rand areas. These areas form the core of the Gauteng Province, which make up the largest proportion of the South African population (Department of Statistics, 2011:2). The majority of the respondents (73 respondents or 91%) resided in the Pretoria area. Regarding the

period of ownership of a business, the majority, 55 respondents (68.75%), indicated that they had owned their businesses for 10 years or less. In total, 73 respondents (91.25%) had owned businesses for a period of up to 20 years. The businesses owned were classified in nine (9) different industry types. The majority, 30 respondents (37.5%), resorted in the 'services' group, followed by the 21 respondents (or 26.25%) whose businesses belonged to the 'retail' industry.

Data indicated that more than three-quarters, 63 respondents (78.75%) had had no experience with regard to being mentored as a mentee within a business context. Only 17 respondents (21.25%) had had experience in this regard. The majority, 53 respondents (66%) had no previous experience of acting as a business mentor, with the remaining 27 respondents (34%) having performed such role previously.

Information on respondents' capabilities

Respondents were asked to rate themselves according to their business mentor capabilities. The majority of the respondents rated themselves as 'good' in more than 63% of the total list of capabilities. The capability that received the highest rating of all was the relational capability of commitment, which was higher than 80%. The capability that received the lowest ranking (lower than 12%) was the relational capability of accessibility. In only seven (26%) of the total list of twenty-seven capabilities did the respondents rate their highest level of capability as 'average'. In three of the four of the listed relational capabilities, more than 66% of the respondents rated themselves as 'good.' The majority of respondents rated themselves as 'good' in ten of the thirteen professional capabilities that were structured.

In general, the majority of the respondents rated themselves fairly positively pertaining to most of the personal, relational and professional capabilities that are important for a business mentor to make a success of a business mentoring relationship.

Empirical results indicating the respondents' willingness to act as a business mentor

The majority, 46 respondents (57%) indicated an unwillingness to act as business mentors towards business mentees. The remaining 34 respondents (43%) indicated that they would be willing to act as business mentors. The 46 respondents (57%) who were unwilling to act as business mentor listed time constraints (76% respondents indicated this reason) as a reason for their unwillingness.

Frequency of interaction and contact play an important role in making a business mentoring relationship successful. Out of the 34 respondents (43%) who indicated willingness to act as business mentors, almost 80% (27 out of the 34) were willing to spend up to

5 h per week on business mentoring. It was clearly indicated in this study that an important aspect of business mentoring lies in the fact that it has to be in the form of a relationship. Most (almost 40%) of the respondents who were willing to act as business mentors were prepared to be involved for a period of up to six months.

The majority (90%) of the respondents (42 out of the 46 respondents) indicated that they would be willing to engage in cross-cultural business mentoring, while 88% (40 out of the 46) were in favour of cross-gender mentoring.

Confirmation of the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument

Factor analysis

Factor analysis using direct quartimin (oblique) rotation was performed in order to reduce the large number of variables pertaining to business mentoring capabilities to a smaller, more manageable set of factors. Loading of variables was done. The resulting eigen values which were greater, or equal to 1, were 8 in total. For the purpose of this paper, the highest three Eigen values were included as factors. The eigen value for factor one (1) is 8.07180, for factor two (2) it is 2.06408 and for factor three (3) it is 1.67112. Eigen values present an estimate of the total amount of variance which a factor explains. Factor 1 therefore explains 10% of the variance, factor 2 explains 33% and factor 3 explains 38%. The following three factors were found and were labelled as follows:

- Factor 1: Relational and professional capabilities
- Factor 2: Personal capabilities
- Factor 3: Business experience and knowledge

Cronbach alpha reliability values were calculated for the three factors. According to a study conducted by Athayde (2003: 10) regarding acceptable alpha scores, an acceptable score ranges from 0.600 to 0.999. For the purposes of this study, a Cronbach Alpha result of more than 0.6 was regarded as meaningful internal consistency. Table 3 shows the results in this regard as applied to the three factors earlier mentioned.

In order for the researchers' to achieve the stated research objectives, the relationship between the respondents' willingness to mentor, their previous engagement as a mentor or as a mentee and their mentoring capabilities was investigated.

Relationship between willingness to mentor, previous engagement as a mentor and mentee and mentoring capabilities

The preceding explanation gave the results of the factor

analysis in which three factors were compiled: relational and professional capabilities, personal capabilities and business experience and knowledge. For the purposes of this study, it was decided to perform inferential statistical techniques on the original three groups as identified in the literature study.

To investigate the relationship between the respondents' willingness to act as business mentors and their ratings of their business mentoring capabilities, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine whether the rating of respondents on their mentoring capabilities differed in terms of the variables: willingness to act as mentor, their previous experience as mentee and/or their previous experience as mentor. This area presents first the personal mentoring capabilities and the mentioned relationships; then the relational mentoring capabilities and the mentioned relationships and finally the professional capabilities and the mentioned relationships. The results of the relationship between the ratings of the respondents' personal mentoring capabilities and their willingness to act as business mentor and their previous experiences in a mentoring relationship (as mentor or mentee) are depicted in Table 4 (ANOVA) and Table 5 (mean and standard deviations).

The results show that the respondents who were willing to act as business mentors had a statistically significantly (on the 5% level) higher rating of their personal mentoring capabilities than the respondents who were not willing to act as business mentors. There were no significant differences between the respondents who had been mentored previously and those who had not. Similarly, respondents who had mentored before did not differ significantly from those who had not.

The results show that the respondents who were willing to act as business mentors rated themselves higher on personal mentoring capabilities than those who were unwilling to do so (mean scores indicate 2.58 versus 2.38). This may imply that the positive perceptions of their personal mentoring capabilities of the respondents who were willing to act as business mentors had a positive influence on their willingness to act as business mentors. By implication, it may also indicate that respondents who were unwilling to act as business mentors rated themselves lower on their personal mentoring capabilities.

The relationships between the rating of the respondents' relational mentoring capabilities and their willingness to act as business mentors and their previous experiences in a mentoring relationship (as mentor or mentee) are depicted in Table 6 (ANOVA) and Table 7 (mean and standard deviations).

Table 6 indicates that no statistically significant difference level (p-value of less than 0.05) was found regarding relational mentoring capabilities and willingness to act as business mentor. Likewise, no statistically significant difference level was indicated between respondents' rating of their relational mentoring capabilities

Table 3. Cronbach alpha results for business mentoring capabilities.

Factor	Description of factor	Cronbach alpha value
Factor 1	Relational and professional capabilities	0.8352
Factor 2	Personal capabilities	0.7348
Factor 3	Business experience and knowledge	0.7365

Table 4. Personal capabilities: Results of ANOVA.

Variable	DF	F Value	Pr > F
Would you be willing to act as a business mentor?	1	5.32	0.0238*
Have you ever been mentored by a business mentor (in a business context)?	1	0.50	0.4826
Have you ever performed the role of a business mentor before?	1	0.04	0.8459

*Significance on 5% level.

Table 5. Personal capabilities: Mean and standard deviations.

Variable	Personal capability	
Would you be willing to act as a business mentor?	Mean	Standard deviation
Yes	2.58	0.33
No	2.38	0.33
Have you ever been mentored by a business mentor?		
Yes	2.54	0.31
No	2.44	0.35
Have you ever performed the role of a business mentor before?		
Yes	2.53	0.34
No	2.43	0.35

and previous experience as a business mentor. Moreover, no statistically significant difference was found between respondents' rating of their relational mentoring capabilities and their previous experience as a business mentee ($p > 0.05$).

It was deduced that respondents' rating of their relational mentoring capabilities showed no relationship to their willingness to act as business mentors, or their previous experience as business mentors or business mentees.

The relationship between the rating of the respondents' professional mentoring capabilities and their willingness to act as business mentor and their previous experiences in a mentoring relationship (as mentor or mentee) is depicted in Table 8 (ANOVA) and Table 9 (mean and standard deviations).

The results show that the respondents who were willing to act as business mentors had a statistically significantly (on the 10% level) higher rating of their professional mentoring capabilities than the respondents who were not willing to act as business mentors. There were no significant differences between the respondents who had

been mentored previously and those who had not. Similarly, respondents who had mentored before did not differ significantly from those who had not.

The results further indicate that the respondents who were willing to act as business mentors rated themselves higher on professional mentoring capabilities than those who were unwilling to do so (the mean scores indicate, 2.62 versus 2.44). This may imply that the positive rating of their professional mentoring capabilities by the respondents who were willing to act as business mentors had a positive influence on their willingness to act as business mentors. By implication, it may also indicate that respondents who were unwilling to act as business mentors rated themselves lower on their professional mentoring capabilities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents considered that they possessed most of the personal, relational and professional capabilities needed

Table 6. Relational capabilities: Results of ANOVA.

Source	DF	F Value	Pr > F
V37 – Would you be willing to act as a business mentor?	1	1.80	0.1833
V8 – Have you ever been mentored by a business mentor (in a business context)?	1	0.29	0.5932
V9 – Have you ever performed the role of a business mentor before?	1	0.02	0.8952

Table 7. Relational capabilities: Mean and standard deviations.

Variable	Relational capability	
	Mean	Standard deviation
Would you be willing to act as a business mentor?		
Yes	2.66	0.31
No	2.54	0.40
Have you ever been mentored by a business mentor?		
Yes	2.65	0.39
No	2.58	0.36
Have you ever performed the role of a business mentor before?		
Yes	2.62	0.36
No	2.58	0.37

Table 8. Professional capabilities: Results of ANOVA.

Source	DF	F Value	Pr > F
V37 – Would you be willing to act as a business mentor?	1	3.91	0.0517*
V8 – Have you ever been mentored by a business mentor (in a business context)?	1	0.25	0.6155
V9 – Have you ever performed the role of a business mentor before?	1	0.20	0.6590

*Significance on 10% level.

Table 9. Professional capabilities: Mean and standard deviations.

Variable	Professional capability	
	Mean	Standard deviation
Would you be willing to act as a business mentor?		
Yes	2.62	0.27
No	2.44	0.41
Have you ever been mentored by a business mentor?		
Yes	2.58	0.26
No	2.49	0.39
Have you ever performed the role of a business mentor before?		
Yes	2.58	0.34
No	2.48	0.37

to act as business mentors. Despite the high perceptions regarding their business mentoring capabilities, only 43% of respondents indicated a willingness to act as business mentors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted (H_1 - South African small business owners do not have the

willingness to act as business mentors), and the alternative hypothesis rejected.

Based on the conducted tests and empirical results, the forth-flowing null hypotheses (H_2 , H_3 , and H_4) were rejected, and the alternative hypotheses (small business

owners do have the personal capabilities needed to be good business mentors, small business owners do have the relational capabilities needed to be good business mentors and small business owners do have the professional capabilities needed to be good business mentors) were accepted. Regarding the acceptance and rejection of the stated hypotheses, many relationships were tested between the respondents' willingness to act as business mentors, their various business mentoring capabilities and previous engagements as business mentors and/or mentees.

Conclusion

Generally it appears that, although the majority of South African small business owners who participated in this study did not see their way open to act as business mentors, mainly owing to lack of time, a substantial percentage (> 40%) were willing to do so for a period of at least six months, to the extent of up to five hours per week and within a cross-cultural and cross-gender context.

The ANOVA indicated on a 5% level of significance that the perceived personal capabilities of South African small business owners plays a role in their willingness to act as business mentors, and a statistically significant difference was obtained between the variables. Relational capabilities had no such effect. Regarding professional capabilities, the ANOVA showed on a 10% level of significance that such capabilities influenced the willingness to act as business mentors. Therefore, inferential statistics revealed a positive relationship between perceived business mentoring capabilities and willingness to act as business mentors.

No significant relationship was found between the perceived personal, relational and professional capabilities of South African small business owners and their previous experiences as a business mentor or business mentee.

Implications for managers / recommendations

As indicated by Herrington et al. (2009: 62), the poor success rate of business start-ups in South Africa relative to that of other countries means we need to develop policy interventions giving support to such entrepreneurs. Interventions should be aimed at mentoring entrepreneurs through the difficult process of starting and growing a business. In the researchers' opinion after conducting this study, South African small business owners is an untapped resource that should be utilised in order to encourage and support these entrepreneurs by business mentoring. Additionally, if the perceived rewards gained from acting as business mentors could somehow be increased, this might lead to more small business owners being willing to spend time with business

mentees.

LIMITATIONS RELATED TO THIS STUDY

Although this study meets all applicable criteria for scientific validated research, there are some meaningful limitations that reduce the application of the findings to a generalised context. Specific limitations relate to the following:

The relatively limited sample size indicated specific elements that should be considered when conducting research on business mentor capabilities and willingness to mentor. It identified issues such as race, gender, geographical area, types of business and more, that all contribute to creating a complete picture on the topic. A more complete sample would provide room for extensive factor analysis and other inferential statistical analyses, which would provide better scientific validation of findings and conclusions.

Data on proper representation of race, gender, geographical area, years of business experience, and types of business (industry), business turnover and nature of business mentoring experience would increase the variety of the results.

This study revealed very important elements pertaining to business mentoring capabilities and willingness to mentor that need to be accounted for in the development of small business owners. The quality of the study would have been more complete if it were possible to implement triangulation of measuring mentoring capabilities with additional measuring tools, such as standardised psychological tests. Such 360° measurement would provide greater insight into the quality of the mentoring capabilities of participating respondents. A combination of qualitative and quantitative study would have delivered more complete, extensive, thorough and probing results.

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