

**WOMEN-IN-RESEARCH  
MENTORING WORKSHOP**

**15 FEBRUARY 2000**

**Report submitted by:**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This workshop drew in women researchers from a cross section of HE institutions in South Africa, and included women researchers from science domains other than the human science research community whom the ex-CSD/DSSH has traditionally targeted as well as senior and less experienced researchers.

### **The purpose of this workshop was to:**

- ◆ Assess the need and interest for a South African based mentoring programme.
- ◆ Gather some input on the functioning of similar existing programmes.
- ◆ Link up with organisations, institutions and individuals with an interest in mentoring.
- ◆ Explore and make recommendations for W-i-R to decide on a format on how a national mentoring programme could operate.
- ◆ Discuss the possible roles and contribution of the W-i-R programme in a national mentoring initiative for women researchers/academics.

### **The participants at the workshop included:**

- ◆ Senior women researchers and academics, as their input and participation are vital to the success of the programme.
- ◆ Early career researchers, as they will be the ones to benefit from the programme. This discussion was very important, as we needed to establish what a mentoring programme want to accomplish.
- ◆ People who have experience of having launched other mentoring initiatives. This gave us the opportunity to draw on their experience and explore opportunities for collaboration across mentoring initiatives.
- ◆ Other interested organisations, institutions and individuals interested in this initiative.

### **Organisation /structure of the workshop:**

A document that served as background to the discussions and planning was forwarded to participants before the workshop. The document contained a discussion of the relevant issues pertaining to the design and functions of mentoring programmes. A draft proposal of a mentoring programme in 2000 was also forwarded to participants via email or fax.

Organisations and individuals with experience in launching and managing other mentoring initiatives were asked to present on the following:

- ◆ The design of their programme
- ◆ The management of their programme
- ◆ The mentoring process (frequency and format of meetings)
- ◆ Evaluation of the programme

Speakers in the morning session were asked to reflect on their own organisation's experiences in setting up and running mentorship/internship programmes.

A discussion of the NRF's W-i-R proposal was done in the afternoon.

Dr Mala Singh from the National Research Foundation (NRF) welcomed all participants to the workshop. In her address she said one of the Division for Social Sciences and Humanities (DSSH) activities is to support women researchers to enable them to achieve their full potential. Adding to President Mbeki's statement that this must be the "African century", Dr Singh noted her belief that the new century must also be the "Women's Century".

She noted that many who have been associated with the former CSD's programmes know that W-i-R was conceptualised early in the process of developing a new vision. W-i-R has been an innovative and successful flagship programme in the former CSD, and is likely to become a flagship programme for the NRF as well. Dr Singh expressed her appreciation to Sheila Tyeku, Natasha Primo and Karen van de Venter as well as to those in the research community. She also noted that there are NRF plans to include women researchers in all domains of science, but that these activities are dependent on increased inputs of human and financial resources.

In trying to go "beyond the welcoming formalities" Dr Singh turned to a dictionary for the origins of the concept of mentoring. "Mentor" was a male character in Homer's *Odyssey*, a wise old man who provided wise counsel to Telemachus, the son of Ulysses. The concept is thus taken from 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Greek mythology. Mentor was a wise old man, but he was also providing counsel to the son of the king. It was thus a hierarchical and authoritative relationship in terms of knowledge, but not in terms of power.

Dr Singh asked how could one take account of what Mentor did in trying to think of the proposed W-i-R mentorship programme? A key issue is the power relationship between mentors and mentees. How are we to think about what kind of power and authority relations come into play in this relationship? How can we think about the mentor/mentee relationship in a way, which brings in the authority of expertise without the power of hierarchy? The programme operates within a context in which the people mentors provide mentorship to be likely to become mentors themselves. The paradigm selected by the "first round" must thus be the most enabling, and the work located within the context of constructing democracy in this country.

She informed participants that the NRF is in the middle of a strategic planning exercise that will propose a whole new suite of programmes to give identity to the organisation. Those responsible for the humanities and social sciences are committed to ensuring that the philosophy and paradigms, which inform our programmes, get factored into these discussions, even if the programmes themselves do not continue. W-i-R will be one of the programmes looked at closely, not only because of whom it is targeting, but also because of its innovative approach.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE WORKSHOP**

Following Dr Singh's welcoming address, Natasha Primo provided an overview of the rationale behind the establishment of the W-i-R programme, its main aims and objectives, and the activities that W-i-R is primarily involved with. She noted that W-i-R emerged because of concerns within the ex-CSD regarding the skewed research funding patterns within the social sciences, as was suggested by a 1996 CSD study of disbursements over the 1985-1995 period. The results highlighted the need for strategies to address the serious under-representation of black and women researchers among those who access public funds to generate and disseminate new knowledge. W-i-R is thus part of a larger ex-CSD/DSSH project to build a stronger, more representative research community within the human sciences. To this end, W-i-R pursues multiple strategies - including the establishment of strategic partnerships with relevant and appropriate (inter-) national organisations and individuals - that seek to address the under-representation of women among senior researchers, heads of departments, senior management and among those who access resources from funding agencies and organisations.

Natasha Primo further outlined the reasons underpinning W-i-R's interest in a national mentorship programme that is targeted at women researchers. Ms Primo noted that within the context of the W-i-R programme and its activities, the time is right to pursue a strategy - like a mentorship programme - that consciously and actively draws on the experiences and skills of senior women researchers in HEIs in order to develop research competence among less experienced academics and researchers. The limited capacity within the W-i-R programme, highlighted by the rapid expansion in the number of women-only research teams that would be supported by the W-i-R programme, demands strategic partnerships between the different groups with an interest in expanding women researchers/academics participation in knowledge generation and dissemination.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Sheila Tyeku chaired this session. Three presentations were made on different research capacity development initiatives that also include a mentorship component. The presentations were respectively on a programme run within Naledi, the Wits Department of Sociology's *Sociology of Work Programme* (SWOP), as well as a presentation on the evaluation of the mentorship and training aspects of a joint NRF and University of Michigan (USA) initiative to develop capacity within South Africa in large-scale survey analysis.

Ms Tyeku also wanted especially to acknowledge the presence of senior academic women. Some of the participants at the workshop are involved in mentoring and internship programmes. The Women-in-Research project sees all those attending as active participants in the projects in the longer term, not just as participants in a one-off workshop.

Presentations followed.

### **Presentation by Ravi Naidoo (NALEDI)**

The speaker recalled his reactions to the invitation to this workshop when he first received it, i.e. that he had thought that the women and work co-ordinator should be the one to give the

presentation, but he has also been very involved in the women and work programme and the setting up of the training programme. This workshop is Naledi's first interaction with the W-i-R programme – he hopes it won't be the last.

Ravi Naidoo made four points in relation to Naledi's *women in work* programme and the training programme for all researchers:

- Naledi created a core programme to introduce a focus on women- without this core focus there was a tendency for the impact of programmes to become diluted. The core focus helps to keep issues on the agenda, both in terms of training and of the research agenda itself.

A recent CGE report has highlighted women's under-representation in certain employment areas, and their over-representation in service areas.

Naledi promotes women's leadership within unions.

- Naledi has developed a separate core training programme for researchers, which caters mainly for in-house staff but also for others within the trade union constituency. A customised research-training programme is offered, with coverage ranging from methodologies and statistics down to issue-based training. Included is a special programme looking at how to look at gender in research; this programme is not just for women.
- The internship programme (supported by the NRF) works well when it is linked to actual research projects as research assistants.

It is important to have senior women who are researchers, but they do not necessarily have to be involved in women-related programmes.

- Naledi is not the only organisation addressing such issues. Naledi has links with similar organisations in other countries, and has tried to link up with a number of these programmes to develop joint programmes and projects.

#### *Observations:*

- Programmes of this type must be integrated with the activities of the rest of the organisation and not ghettoised.
- The funding environment for an organisation like Naledi has shifted from core funding to project funding, which is "harsher" with tightly defined goals. Senior staffs are under a lot of pressure, and it can be difficult to draw them into mentoring programmes. It is not possible to change the funding environment and to get around these constraints. Interns must be centrally involved in projects, and not add-ons to senior researchers' existing work.
- Organisations like Naledi fall outside the higher education system. There has been a problem dealing with organisations such as the NRF whose bias is towards tertiary institutions. A lot of research is happening outside universities. Naledi has been

trying to build joint programmes; for example the training programme is done jointly with Wits.

### **Questions to Ravi Naidoo**

*How long is the training programme? Does each intern have a particular mentor?*

The training programme takes place every year, with a core component. The programme is split into basic and more advanced components. The programme itself is run over a couple of months, but related project work runs for the rest of the year. Interns join Naledi for a year, after which it is decided whether they will be given a position in Naledi or a partner institution (or not).

*What percentage of researchers are women?*

About half, with more senior researchers being women. There is, however, a problem when trying to find highly qualified black women.

*How is the power relationship between mentor and mentee addressed within Naledi? Is it looked at explicitly?*

It requires considerable effort on the part of the mentor, and often mentors regard mentees as people there to do the dirty work.

*Does Naledi work with trade unions within the higher education sector?*

Naledi works with trade unions generally. If a new researcher at a particular tertiary institution wants to be part of the training programme that would be fine, but as a rule there is not much interaction with university staff unions.

*At the end of the year Naledi evaluates whether each intern will get a job with Naledi. How is this decided?*

The NRF has criteria for the evaluation on internships. In addition to this there are a number of opportunities for evaluation. At the beginning of the programme interns are assisted to list their skills for self-evaluation purposes. After a while the level of accuracy of this self-evaluation becomes clearer, and whether enough effort is being put into training. It may still be difficult to place people in employment, however, and placement depends on the availability of post.

*Developmental programmes like affirmative action often focus on people who are already in some measure advantaged. Working with trade unions, how do you bring on board others – for example women with no higher education qualifications?*

In terms of NRF requirements, interns are required to have a minimum of an honours degree. In the trade union environment people do often pick up skills but don't have certificates. If a person without certification has worked their way up to certain types of union position they could still take part in the training programme. However, conducting research really does require a certain level of formal training, and being required to undertake research without sufficient background can be disempowering.

*How successful are the internships?*

Sheila Tyeku responded that the DSSH Internships are run according to specific and strict criteria.

**Presentation by Khayaat Fakier - Sociology of Work Unit, Univ. of Witwatersrand (SWOP)**

According to Ms Fakier, five points were important in a programme of this nature: mentoring; co-ordination and administration; research; funding; institutional environment and organisational culture.

In 1997 SWOP was invited by the then CSD to participate in research capacity development activities.

It was agreed that the goals of the programme would be:

- To develop research skills to benefit the interns
- To involve interns in ongoing research projects
- To encourage and assist interns to undertake their own research and write a presentation.

Although not all expectations have been met SWOP is currently working on them. Several lessons were learnt from the programme.

*Mentoring*

- A key lesson learned has been the centrality of mentoring for the success of internships. Each SWOP intern is allocated to a researcher for supervision. This relationship tended to evolve into a mentorship role beyond the single research project for which the supervisor was allocated.
- Mentoring is an interactive relationship, involving the transfer of research and intellectual skills on one-to-one bases. Mentoring also means more than supervising a single higher degree project.
- Most SWOP researchers are also full-time staff members of the Wits Sociology Department. Mentoring is in addition to their normal duties, and is not recognised by the university for promotion purposes.
- Not everyone can be an effective mentor, and not all mentoring relationships are fruitful – for example mentees may not be given their own intellectual space. Being a mentor requires intellectual leadership, sensitivity to cultural diversity, and communication, among other skills. Mentors need to be established, competent scholars who will not feel threatened. They act as coaches by pointing interns in the direction of new sources of knowledge. A good mentor is an effective guide.
- Mentors must be sensitive to cultural diversity in South Africa, and committed to addressing the urgent need to develop a new generation of South African black intellectuals.

- Mentors must understand the codes of their own disciplines, have a respect for independent thought and creativity, and of independence in terms of new ideas and approaches.

#### *Co-ordination and administration*

Co-ordination and administration are essential, and a manager/co-ordinator is essential. Beside administrative tasks, the person in this position must provide intellectual leadership. This means an increased load for the person involved, but the stated goals of the internships cannot be achieved without this.

The programme aims towards the successful completion of an independent research project. Interns are encouraged to select a topic which will become their MA Thesis topic. Interns are allocated a supervisor on the basis of their chosen topic.

Interns are expected to be involved in other related activities, such as attending research seminars and performing some administrative duties.

The unit organises training courses in specific areas. Training in (funding) proposal writing is seen as critical for all researchers.

#### *Funding*

Financial support is crucial. The amount awarded by the NRF are not substantial, but do enable researchers to conduct research effectively. Neither co-ordinators nor interns are remunerated.

#### *Organisational culture*

Exposing interns to the organisational culture is important. Interns must feel at ease within the intellectual research culture, especially within a context of cultural and racial diversity. There is a need for explicit clarity of procedures.

In 1997 four industrial sociology students were interns. All have now completed 1<sup>st</sup> class MA's, one has a Fulbright Scholarship, and the others are employed.

In 1999 – 4 industrial sociology honours students participated. They are about to complete and all will be going on to master's studies.

#### **Presentation by Dr Heston Phillips, South African Data Archive (of the NRF)**

South African participation in the University of Michigan summer training programme started in 1997 and ran for three years over the summers. The programme was initiated by Research Capacity Development to address a deficit in qualified individuals to conduct empirical research. The University of Michigan was contracted to train participants in quantitative methods and the analysis of data. Participants attended regular courses within the University of Michigan summer programme. At the end students were expected to present a paper/project using SADA data. Annual mid-year meetings took place in South

Africa. The University of Michigan provided resources for the scholars in South Africa: computers, modems, Internet access etc. Participants were also assigned mentors.

In the course of his evaluation, Dr Phillips looked at a number of issues around mentoring. In-depth interviews with all participants were conducted, which touched on mentoring among other aspects of the programme. Participants were asked, for example, to what extent mentors were sufficiently informed about mentees' academic background, whether they provided good advice, how they would describe the relationship, what the exact role of the mentors was, – and not advised – on, and how much the mentors knew about South Africa.

Core questions to mentors focussed on gaps or inadequacies in the training and preparation of students, how mentors understood the relationship, mentors' expectations, what acquaintance mentors had with South Africa prior to the programme, and how integrated the students were in the university community.

Students could have both South African and U.S. mentors. The evaluation process is not complete, so these are only preliminary findings. In all 17 Scholars participated and there were several mentors.

A significant need for mentoring was expressed. Mentoring includes advising but goes beyond “which course to take at the University of Michigan”. The South African scholars looked for mentoring beyond advising and wanted in-depth instruction on a number of topics not dealt with in class (there was a seminar for this type of thing, but people also wanted this from mentors).

There were issues about the information disseminated about the programme. Scholars came from varied background, and their levels of preparedness (and quantitative skills) varied greatly. This presented a dilemma.

Varied backgrounds per se should not mean that the programme collapses, but the University of Michigan was not really prepared to deal with this level of diversity. Rather, all participants were treated the same, and were expected to take a uniform and logical sequence of modules. The University of Michigan was not able to distinguish between degrees from historically disadvantaged and advantaged institutions. It was expected that if you come into a graduate class you would have a good mathematical background, as the social sciences in the U.S. are highly quantitative. The evaluation suggested that better pre-diagnosis would have been useful.

Some aspects contributed to good mentoring. Students with a strong quantitative background tended to get a better deal.

Some mentors were praised for providing perspectives for students, especially when they were writing research projects, as was instilling confidence in handling statistical procedures

for students with poor quantitative backgrounds. The advice given by the mentors was seen as very practical.

At least two students said that securing other professional opportunities was important.

There was also a need of “identify” with a mentor – at least initially. All mentors but one were white, and the students all black, initially went to the non-white mentor.

There was also an identifiable pattern of “missing” factors:

- Lack of advice
- Changing mentors
- Lack of support
- Mentors not being available for comment
- Communicating by e-mail was a different cultural experiences (students were given e-mail access at home, but this seemed a foreign experience to many)
- Mentors not giving comments
- Too little supervision
- Mentors not chasing after
- Structurally based conflicts of interests: it could be difficult for U.S. mentors to act when their work conflicted with students needs, lack of incentives.  
Sometimes they had no substantive interest in students’ work, and students were also reluctant to change their area.
- Lack of expertise about South Africa sometimes meant that students didn’t trust their mentors.
- Conflicting expectations: Students and mentors had very different expectations. Needs vary and this was a “one size fits all’ approach.
- Some students were reluctant to expose their own “naivete”. Mentors are also judges of the students’ work.

Another issue was how does one mentor someone who works in a non-academic environment? How can one sustain the capacity developed in such cases?

## **DISCUSSION:**

The issues that were discussed are reflected thematically in the following section.

### *Supervision vs. Mentoring*

One participant was interested in the link between supervision and mentoring. At university level a student who wants you to do things e.g. read their work may approach you. Staff may be prepared to talk to them but not do more than that because this type of activity is not recognised for promotion etc. Senior people are reluctant to mentor without due recognition. External examiners may also block students because of old grudges.

Another issue is that if mentors and supervisors are the same person there is an unequal power relationship.

At Govan Mbeki Research Resource Centre (GMRRRC) postgraduate students are drawn from a range of disciplines, but are supervised within their departments. GMRRRC sees mentoring as part of their jobs. Supervision is a “highly authoritarian sort of thing”, which mentorship should not be.

In one extreme case a young woman attached to GMRRRC was working in the field broadly but not directly relevant to GMRRRC’s areas of expertise. With the supervision in her department she encountered a series of completely frivolous objections to what she was trying to do, and a highly male authoritarian reaction to her intelligence and creativity. She approached Sean for mentoring, and he eventually advised her to go elsewhere.

There is a difficulty in expecting supervisors to be mentors. Mentoring is essentially accompanying. Mentees are asking people to take them along the same road they have been along successfully. Supervision and mentorship should be separated. Mentors could help mentees in surviving their supervisors.

It can be difficult to work out when mentoring is too much, too little or just right. Some students need a lot of support, others need intellectual space. One must also take gender into account, not only power relationships. Supervision and mentorship are closely linked. Mentees should be in a position to confide in mentors to extend to which they feel comfortable. Supervisors should also be mentors - A supervisor needs to be a mentor but a mentor does not have to be a supervisor.

From out of the discussion on the above issue it seemed as if senior academics and researchers are reluctant to mentor without recognition of some sort. The issue of the mentor and supervisor being the same person was also raised. It was felt that if they were the same person that an unequal power relationship will occur. Some participants felt that mentoring should be part of a supervisor’s job, others felt that it should be separated but closely linked.

### *Incentives*

Potential mentors may have good intentions but have other commitments and there is no incentive – perhaps some sort of time allowance could be made.

The essence of a mentorship programme is voluntary, and complementary or parallel to supervision. If a conflict of interest arises between students and supervisors some resource is available; with mentors it is less easy. Incentives for mentorship are thus needed.

Although potential mentors might be willing to be part of a mentoring programme, other commitments and time constraints could inhibit them to take part. A suggestion was made that some time allowance should be brought in to ensure that potential mentors could participate voluntarily.

### *What is mentorship?*

What does mentorship mean? At one level it is conceptually quite broad, about a relationship. For mentorship to be operationalized requires a range of activities that is also quite broad.

Some supervision activities, by definition involve mentoring. It was felt that Women-in-Research needs more focussed discussion in terms of the goals we have set for ourselves. Among the lessons learned is that programmes may be planned without sufficient research on operationalization. For discussion purposes it may be useful to separate conceptualisation and operationalization.

The need to look at the mentoring of staff members was also raised. We need to think about what the ultimate purpose of this is. It doesn't matter whether researchers are junior or senior; all need support in one way or another. Mentoring is a way of getting support and reflecting on performance. Within the Farmers' Support Group they have internships (10 days to a year) assistance for individuals to reflect on their work, and (external) job assessment. The supervisor does the last two, but this is not satisfactory. As a manager you have a mentor from outside rather than inside.

There is a particular need for the mentoring of women staff in sexist institutions. At most campuses white males occupy most (all?) positions of power and act as gatekeepers. Mentoring also needs to be located within specific areas for example new literacy studies and writing development. Training is needed for mentors and supervisors in order to provide feedback.

Particularly with regard to Heston's presentation: some of the issues raised are generic and a problem even when not dealing with overseas. Supervision means taking people up to a qualification, not to being researchers. How do we teach people the ropes of being an academic?

Why do we do mentoring? Ultimately for personal- and independent growth. Too much mentorship will suppress this. What is a mentor – a bosom pal? A critical friend? Some descriptions of supervisors have seen them as extremely judgmental. There should be a spectrum.

Mentorship entails a very broad range of activities. Supervision always involves mentorship and we need to think about what the ultimate purpose of a mentoring programme should be. Mentorship differs from supervision in the sense that supervision takes people up to a qualification, not necessarily to being researchers. Mentoring could teach people the ropes of being an academic.

### *Mentoring Relationship*

There is also space for mentoring in cases where levels of technical expertise may not be that different, but the mentor may be able to pass on counsel about “undocumented” things like how to behave in committees. Many of us learn through forming mentoring relationships.

Several people have commented on the fact that mentorship can be of different types. The relationship between mentorship and supervision is different, but to leave a flawed model of supervision untouched and put in a parallel structure of mentorship is wrong. Mentorship covers many things, including personal growth, and some sort of similarity between mentors and mentees is essential with respect to personal growth. “Patronage” can be another aspect of mentorship; there may be an unequal power relationship, which gives mentees access to opportunities.

A lot of thinking has been devoted to judging the outcomes of the mentoring process. Entering characteristics of mentees and mentors should also be looked at. Don't set yourselves up for failure by targeting the wrong participants.

Referring to the example of good mentorship occurring when the mentee fitted the assumptions of the mentor and there was close identification between mentors and mentees. There is sometimes a false assumption that people who looks like us will be the most appropriate mentors. In the most successful relationships mentors also learned from mentees.

One should also take into account that there is space for mentoring where levels of technical expertise may not be different. In such relationships counsel could be passed on about undocumented things for example how to behave in committees. Mentorship should take into account the similarity between mentors and mentees and entering characteristics of mentors and mentees should be carefully considered.

#### *Evaluation*

Evaluating mentorship programmes is often internal to the programme itself, which can make it difficult to compare programmes.

#### *Gender issues*

We need to reflect on gender issues. In practice most mentors may be male. In the current proposal W-I-R is thinking of mentors as being both men and women. The mentorship programme would also not just include people who are studying for higher degrees.

#### *Networks*

Mentoring is not just a one on one relationship. One should also consider mentoring networks, for e.g. groups of postgraduates and groups of staff meeting, and students mentoring each other as part of these groups.

Some participants were part of a group mentoring process around writing for publication. The process generally worked well, but some dropped out. The success of group mentoring depends on what you are mentoring for. There is certainly space for this type of approach with mentoring for research.

One should not supplement what is already happening at supervision level. Refereeing should be made more visible. Another way to get around networking is by using the computer. The ‘anonymity’ can promote networking.

Mentoring should not only be seen as a one on one relationship. Networks and groupmentoring should also be considered as options. The suggestion was made to mentor around specific topic for example writing for publication. The use of the computer, email and Internet should also be promoted.

#### *Who should mentor?*

There has been a focus on senior academics as mentors – should we exclude others? Early career mentees don't necessarily need mentors in very senior positions.

#### *How should we mentor?*

Some perspectives are different coming from the sciences. In that "culture" women are often told that if they seek mentoring they are wimps. Senior women say that they didn't need any help to make it to the top etc. It is important to have an outlet for sympathy! One should not set up a parallel system to supervision or collegiality. If all of those things fail then a GMRRRC-type solution is useful. Why not harness the power of the Internet for mentorship? You don't even need to know people. An electronic discussion board would be useful.

Every junior staff member should be assigned a mentor. If juniors could be exposed to the business of being an academic things could be different. For example Wits are now using mentorship as a tool for developing a pool of people to change the racial and/or gender composition of the department.

Reading the culture of an organisation is very important for success, but this can mean conforming, which may undermine the goals of (especially gender focussed) mentoring and transforming organisational culture. Do you mentor for success in the existing framework, or aim to transform it?

There are different perspectives of mentoring in the social sciences and in the natural sciences, but every junior researcher/academic should get the opportunity to be mentored on how to go about the business of being an academic.

### **A DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL MENTORING PROGRAMME**

In the afternoon session, Karen van de Venter of the NRF's W-i-R programme presented an outline of the draft ideas about how a national mentoring programme could be structured and made operational. The details in this proposal are captured in the document that was circulated to participants before the workshop and will not be repeated here.

Natasha Primo of the NRF's Women-in-Research Programme facilitated the discussion.

#### *Budget*

It is crucial that we know what the budget is that's available. This is a pilot project and we still don't know what the budget will be. Some questions of implementation have been raised which we are not yet ready to consider. This workshop is intended to raise questions about who and how to select

### *Measuring success within a mentoring programme*

It was felt that the proposal is too ambitious for a pilot project and also not measurable in a six-month period. It needs to be quantifiable and also to have qualitative input. Mentoring may assume a life of its own and the outcomes will be forgotten. This starts a whole process of meetings and re-meetings, talking about mentoring rather than focussing on supporting research.

The proposal contains many ideas, some of which are more feasible than others. We need to prioritise what we are able to do and what is measurable. In six months all you will have measured is the relationship. Thus far the benefits cited for mentors could all be met in other ways; there must be incentives for mentors.

It was felt that the proposal is too ambitious for a pilot project and not measurable in a six-month period. One should not fall into the trap of endless meetings rather than supporting research.

### *Incentives*

A useful way to with no resources is to focus on what the incentives could be to get people involved. For example with a good supervisor relationship mentors are not needed. Improve the quality of postgraduate supervision – build mentorship into the system; this area needs real exploration. The other possibility is as follows: women researchers need information about how to work the system. How do you help women to manage the institution and find their way around? This could be linked to the employment equity act, which might unleash certain resources. Look for material conditions, which allow us to hook the functions off mentoring with other areas.

The list of benefits for mentors is not in balance with the costs. Many can be derived in other ways. It is difficult to get people to become mentors to groupings/individuals outside the realm of their primary responsibility.

The proposal can be seen as a way into talking about equity issues, it can provide a starting point. Women-in-Research may be too optimistic about the types of energies, which still reside within individuals.

The presentation may have been premature in some areas. Possibly there will be no carrots but the equity act will be a stick. If we were to launch mentorship programmes, which are intended to be sustainable, we would have to link to institutional obligations. We will target women in the programme that will feel a need. In terms of senior researcher' lack of availability there needs to be additional thinking about how to address that constraint. Incentives are cheaper to provide than resources.

W-i-R resources are too limited. We are negotiating writing workshops for women researchers with Agenda. One incentive could be an award for mentors that the mentor can access for research-related activities.

It is mandatory for people at technikons to teach +/- 30 hours a week. An incentive relating to time would help.

The focus should be on what the incentives could be to get people involved. To unleash certain resources the possibility of linking a mentoring programme to the employment equity act should be considered. It could also be a way to provide a starting point for a mentoring programme.

#### *Focus areas*

Early on in the Women-in-Research programme there was a women and publication workshop – this seems a good area to focus on. Mentorship in this area is feasible and do-able. It offers a reward because publication is a source of earnings. If the W-i-R mentorship programme has to choose a priority area this is the area to choose. There may be space for developing more focussed mentorship within the award categories, but for a new mentorship programme this is the area to start with. We should work with issues that are already there. The proposal as it stands is too structured and constrained. It shouldn't be implemented regionally but rather institutionally. She asked what had happened about past databases listing established databases.

One should set a limited goal around publication, which is where the block is for many. Another area is supervision; perhaps mentorship grants could be attached to supervision grants. There is a supervision pilot initiative. The mentorship initiative as conceptualised isn't seen as targeting postgraduate students. There is a need to focus the programme more to make it more do-able.

A publication grant has been introduced – not for women but for first time researchers. We can learn from the textbook initiative. One part of the target audience is women with W-i-R grants. Start with these two concrete areas.

A good area to focus is writing for publication. It offers a reward. The focus area for implementation should also be institutions and not regions.

#### *Level of implementation*

At the level being talked about an institutional decision is implied. This has to be linked with institutions' other policies. A carrot for institutions is required as well.

There are two different target groups – the higher degree group and the MA and PhD group. The higher degree group needs it more. Can't it be built into the course structures?

How departments structure a higher degree programme falls outside the mandate for W-i-R.

Research is new in technikons and there is a lot of pressure. Researchers and academics at technikons feel they are grappling in the dark through being unfamiliar with a research culture. Mentoring programmes could help this. There is a need for institutional links, though.

With junior academics mentoring really needs to be institutionalised. Younger academics at Vista are not doing research, and senior researchers will not mentor them. This must be required from the top. Organisational culture is also important. Some sort of reward (in study/time leave?) is necessary.

A mentoring programme should be linked with institution's other policies. One should consider building it into the course structures for postgraduate students. The technicians are mostly new to research and a mentoring program could help establishing a research culture.

### *Links*

There is a need to link this to other programmes, for e.g. the employment equity act. The Women's National Coalition is developing modules for faculties – is there any relationship?

### *Resources*

This is important, but there are resources constraints. W-i-R will need a budget and staff to begin to address this meaningfully.

The point of a network of mentors seems to have something going for it. Particularly at technicians this make a lot of sense. Make supervisors good mentors, rather than setting up parallel structures. This can address the shortage of appropriate.

### *Women-in-Research suggested approach - overmanaged?*

Mentoring relationships exist on a voluntary basis, at a personal level. The W-i-R proposal suggests intervening in existing relationships and the proposal seems to be overmanaged. W-i-R's role could be to discuss, disseminate, and fund. If no funding is available it is not your role to interfere.

### *Outcomes*

What do W-i-R envisaged the outcome of the proposed mentoring programme should be? Do you want people to be mentored towards leadership situations? Or just more women involved in research?

One of the reasons we want to do this is that we have not had great success in getting senior women to participate. We are interested in the outcomes but will support the process.

The role of W-i-R is to build research capacity in Women-in-Research. This is just an additional tool, and is focussed on research, not mentoring women in other walks of life. The only way this can be measured is when more women have published or disseminated their research in other ways.

A lot of people mentor without knowing it and vice versa. This process must not be an end in itself. We do think it must be structured around particular outcomes and only until the outcomes have been achieved. In refining the document some of our own assumptions must be made explicit. We have to refine the document and get it back for further comment.

## **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following issues arose from the presentations and discussions:

- ❖ The difficulty of comparing different mentoring programmes across contexts.
- ❖ The nature and purposes of mentoring.
- ❖ The need to institutionalise mentoring at the regional level and within the NRF/W-i-R programme rather than merely setting up a parallel system.
- ❖ The need to pilot and evaluate for one year, a limited mentoring programme in three selected regions within existing research facilitation structures in relation to negotiated outcomes.
- ❖ The need to establish regional mentoring networks through the Internet and to develop the W-i-R database including online publications of relevant materials.
- ❖ The need to clarify the inter-relationship between mentoring and supervision.

It was agreed that W-i-R should look at the following that a national mentoring programme requires:

- ❖ Conceptualising and operationalising processes.
- ❖ Intellectual leadership.
- ❖ Co-ordination with explicit roles.
- ❖ Explicit procedures and administrative and logistical support
- ❖ Acknowledgement across higher education institutions for promotion purposes/
- ❖ Outcomes that can be realised.
- ❖ Academic Development practitioners and postgraduate supervisors.

## **CLOSURE**

Natasha Primo closed the workshop and thanked everybody for their time and inputs. W-i-R will work on the proposal and develop it further to incorporate all the inputs and to shape it to fit the needs of Women-in-Research.

**Report submitted by:**

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

CSD	Centre for Science Development
DSSH	Division for Social Sciences and Humanities
W-i-R	Women-in-Research
NRF	National Research Foundation
NALEDI	National Labour and Economic Development Institute
SWOP	Sociology of Work Unit
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
GMRRCC	Govan Mbeki Research Resource Centre