EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MENTORING IN ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREER TRANSITION OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to explore the role of mentoring (inside and outside organizations) in the career transition of employees to entrepreneurship. Semi-structured interviews were used for primary data collection from ten entrepreneurs who shared their experiences in switching from a corporate organization to a new venture in Lahore, Pakistan. All interviews of participants were analyzed through Nvivo 11 plus software. Mentoring relationship within and outside the organizational context was helpful in the transition of these individuals from corporate employees to entrepreneurs. The implications of this study indicate that having mentors play a vital role to switch from employment to entrepreneurship. Thus, government sponsoring initiatives to encourage new venture development should consider the importance of mentoring for promoting entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Developmental Relationships, Mentors, Entrepreneurship, Venture Development.

JEL Classification: Z000

Introduction

Small business owners have been marked economically useful advantageous round the world and governments encouraged the new ventures through removing the hurdles in their way in order to enhance the economic growth rate of the countries (Olaleye & Adeyanju, 2012). Governmental organizations and (NGO) are established in order to facilitate the promotion of new venture. Entrepreneurship related to education programs has been granted with $3.5 by European commission to bring reform in the performance of entrepreneurs. While improving the entrepreneurship sector is the ongoing objective for all countries, it is even more important in the case of developing countries (Moosa & Sajid, 2010). These countries have more prominent and ineffective entrepreneurship mechanism. They are often characterized by economic instability, deficiency of resources and inadequate infrastructure. All factors that are obstruction in the career transition, mentoring and in

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developmental relationships for the new venture (Klyver & Terjesen, 2007).

Information on the number of entrepreneurs working in developing countries, such as Pakistan, is not readily available. But in the developed country like the U.K positive outcome from mentoring of individuals is very high (Kelley, Bosma, & Amoros, 2011). It is expected that it will increase further. Therefore, it is the clear need to examine the ways to improve the career transition in entrepreneurship providing mentoring to protégées for the betterment of business. It is argued that the protégées are looking for mentoring to seek motivation for networking to start out their own venture.

The research of academia has explored such steps through which persons’ job in different time periods within the organization before the transition to entrepreneurship (Carroll & Mosakowski, 1987). While employees working in the corporation, learn effective skills and are engaged in networking that might be important to their skills to begin and become successful in entrepreneurial venture (Ensher, Grant, & Marelich, 2002). Different studies have also explored the mechanism how different governments of countries gave vital role to the new venture development of businesses (Elam & Terjesen, 2010).

In spite of using Pakistani government sponsorship for mentoring programs and entrepreneurship research, rare studies have been conducted on the career mentoring of small business owners in Pakistan. This study provides the incitement for the present research that seeks to apply the career transition theory in exploring the importance of mentoring in a career transition to entrepreneurship in Pakistan.

Literature Review

History and Evolution

Although the practice of mentoring exists since centuries, this profession has got popularity in the last four decades. The word mentor, borrowed from tradition and Homer’s Odyssey, has Greek origin (Sommer, Markopoulos, & Goggins, 2013). While leaving for Trojan War, Odysseus appointed a person whose name was ‘Mentor’ for the education of his son. Athena goddess, speaking through ‘Mentor’ blessed him with heavenly qualities and they both mutually guide the young son Telemachus (Sommer, 2013). So, mentoring through the centuries is being used to represent an affiliation in which one person guides, nurtures, educates, develops, and provides protection to other persons who are less in these qualities (Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, 2011).

The research work on the subject of mentoring was initiated by Levinson (1978) in his book named “The Seasons of a Man’s Life”. Afterward, the decisive and influential work in the subject of mentoring was carried out by Kram (1983) based upon the Levinson work. With the start of work on this subject, several scholars have worked to sort out the ways to make mentoring better, efficient,
effective to optimize the mentoring programs for entrepreneurs. 110 million people worldwide in 2010 have actively commenced different businesses with 140 million people carrying out businesses that have short life (Kelley et al., 2011).

The famous business press is continuously showing that People worldwide are increasingly going to start their own businesses successfully using these new ventures (Week, 2010). Educational studies have also researched the practice of people of working for some periods in a corporate entity before quitting to launching their own business (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). During their time in the corporate entity, these people develop themselves by learning valuable skills, building their capacities, increasing their knowledge, building social networks, and nurturing themselves to increase their abilities to get success in the entrepreneurial life(Ensher et al., 2002). This increasing tendency of working as an entrepreneur rather than doing job in a corporate entity has been examined and recorded for men (Dobrev & Barnett, 2005).

Mentoring and Developmental Relationships

Conventionally mentoring has been described as an association of individuals in which an individual superior in some qualities and experience takes an individual less in qualities and experience under his wing to guide, develop, educate and nurture him in the socio-political settings of organizational environment (Singh et al., 2002).

Levinson (1978) wrote his research book entitled “The Seasons of a Man’s Life”. Kram (1983) to extend the research work to build up an influential work on mentoring. St-Jean and Audet (2013) said that researchers have explored and determined what sort mentoring effective and how the entrepreneurs to improved with these programs.

People, in the past, were working throughout their careers in just one or two organizations building more firm, deep and long term association with their organizations. They generally had been entering the organizations in their young ages and start of careers and at the end of their careers, they used to mentor the new entrants (Sullivan & Crocitto, 2007). The people under the wing of mentor showed encouraging results like higher salaries, career development, socialization, achievement of goals and overall welfare within the firm (Lander et al., 2001).

In traditional organizations, mentors provided guidance to the associated protégé’ in the political settings of the organization and protected them from the consequences of their work blunders (Perrewe & Nelson, 2004). Entrepreneurs also give importance to the mentors for their assistance to protégées within the organization (McGregor & Tweed, 2002). It reduces stress levels and enables a high level of efficiency in the sense of protection (Little, Nelson, Wallace, & Johnson, 2011). Bosma and Levie (2010) said that entrepreneurs have mentors in their organization, are vigilant to the creativity, innovation, and new business opportunities. Generally, best-practice company has
development programs along with mentoring section but mostly mentors’ impact on protégé’ outputs is not focused on these programs (Klofsten, Heydebreck, & Jones, 2010).

**Nature of Mentoring Relationship after the Transition**

Entrepreneurial environment is not much controlled and structured as the traditional organizational environments are. People switching from the traditional organizational environment may not feel comfortable due to their non-formal programs and absence of structured environment. However, knowledge of mentoring the entrepreneurs and possible gender discrimination in mentoring relationship is not common. Due to lack of theoretical knowledge about the entrepreneurs mentoring subject, researchers look forward to investigating the possible differences within and outside the boundaries of organizations. People may have more opportunities to build mentoring relationships within corporations than outside. Similarly, in our opinion, women are less likely to have mentoring relationships in their own small ventures.

While explaining the nature of these mentoring relationships, researchers suggest that people both inside the organization and outside the boundaries of organization (St-Jean & Audet, 2008) will get the encouragement, emotional support and learning from their mentors. However, people find the mentors, who can provide them support to manage working environment political settings. Emerging entrepreneurs try to look for the mentors who can provide support in building the relationships and networks to increase the profit of small venture(Ozgen & Baron, 2007).

**Types Of Developmental Relationship**

Globalization, technological advancements, and other dynamic changes have influenced the mentor-protégé’ association. Flatter and leaner corporate entities pay less attention to the job security of workers. Traditional mentoring association occurs within the one or two organizations, while people are now more active in switching their jobs to different organizations, markets, professions, and states (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

Although the mentoring relationship from corporations to the entrepreneurial working environment has not been studied largely, researchers conclude, that this relationship built within the boundaries of an organization and implemented largely by giving incentives and continuous appraisal in organizations will probably be terminated when an individual leaves the organization. While mentoring relationship built within the organization and implemented by mutual cooperation is expected to prolong even after one departs the organization.

**Research Objective**

To explore the low researched concept of mentoring of people starting new businesses.
Although theoretical work on mentoring and developmental associations is well documented (Gayle & Sullivan, 2005) there is little understanding about the way mentors can provide support to the people in starting their own small ventures (Bisk, 2002). So, to fill up the gap researchers focused on analyzing the role mentoring plays in a person’s switching from job to starting a new business.

Secondly, this research provides the understanding of entrepreneurship in respect of careers theory. Several studies have been conducted on personality traits (Rauch & Frese, 2007) that affect the decision of people becoming entrepreneurs but a few studies have researched the process through which people switch out of corporations to start their own ventures. So, this paper also adds to career studies by analyzing patterns in developmental associations during the transition process of quitting a job and becoming a self-governed and self-regulated business person.

Research Questions

Q1. How the focus of the mentoring association is altered after career transition from corporate sector to entrepreneurship in Pakistan?
Q2. What is the importance of mentoring in the career transition of an individual?
Q3. What kind of developmental associations will be present in corporate and entrepreneurial contexts of Pakistan?
Q4. Are entrepreneurs engaged in multiple mentoring relationships in Pakistan?

Proposition 1: The relationship focuses positively linked with career transition of individual.
Proposition 2: Developmental relationships are required in the career transition.
Proposition 3: Work experience is positively linked with the decision of career transition.
Proposition 4: Multiple relationships with entrepreneur are positively linked with career transition.

Concept Map
Methodology

The aim of this study is to examine the phenomena of career transition with the role of mentoring in-depth and in context of a collectivist nation like Pakistan. Interpretivism paradigm is used along with the inductive approach due to a context-dependent phenomenon (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2012).

The research was conducted in Lahore, Pakistan on entrepreneur because people from different cities came to Lahore for job and due to a lot of opportunities start their own business therefore, Lahore represents the population across Pakistan. The population of interest for the under research study is entrepreneur who has done career transition in the past. Snowball sampling was used which is recommended for this kind of studies (Creswell, 2003). We found our 10 study participants through multiple strategies including using MBA alumni and local entrepreneur networks (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). Creswell (1998) suggested that interviews between 5 to 25 are acceptable for this kind of researches.

Semi-structured interviews were used in order to gain an in-depth insight into career transition to entrepreneurship. This is the appropriate method to collect this type of data that allowed participants to express their views freely. It is in accordance with the ontological assumption that states, there is no single reality and the perceptions, thoughts, and understanding of people shape it and epistemological assumption that the knowledge is subjective and the way to obtain is to talk to people and interact with them (Bryman & Bell, 2012; Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

All interviews of the participants were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim independently to develop an overview of each participant’s responses. Interview data from the participant was analyzed through the process of Nvivo 11 plus software to produce the definition categories to explore the interrelationships between different aspects. Additionally constant comparative thematic analysis will be analyzed to generate the main idea about the mentoring of the protégées in career transition to entrepreneur (Loftland, 1995).

Table 1

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<th>Interpretation and Discussion</th>
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<td><strong>Matrix Coding Query</strong></td>
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(Table Continued...)
Mentoring And Developmental Relationship

This theme explains how the individuals are counseled by the experience people within and outside the organization during their career of employment. In this theme, researchers determine the importance of mentoring in the career transition of a person from corporate employees to entrepreneur whether the focus of the relationship change after the protégées make career transition.

Mentoring has different meanings in both environments. In the context of entrepreneurship,
an individual received both emotional and task support. While, in the context of corporations, an individual received both emotional and task support from mentoring associations, including help in navigating the workplace politics. It is more important to discuss how their mentor assisted their employees to get key network instead of discussing how they assisted them. Employees worked with their mentors that helped them in making networking such as “He links me into people when I need it.” (R1) and

“He knows all the players” (R1).

Moreover, the junior entrepreneurs described how senior entrepreneurs served like a mentor. For instance, R4 explained, how much her mentor assisted her in the startup of new business, by saying

“He is one of the big investment entrepreneurs… He has been very successful in setting up businesses. He is basically a professional entrepreneur. That is his career. He was my colleague’s friend. But when I wanted to go out on my own, he would say that he knew many people who had started businesses. Now that I have the business he helps me seek new opportunities and think about growing it” (R4)

In the same vain other, respondents said that,

“He was my university friend…He left sooner than me…he started his own firm and currently running his own two firms…He motivates me to start business…He lent me some money for business…He is one whom I can trust” (R5)

“Meeting with people with company flag ultimately converted into strong bonding...these relationships ultimately help you in your own business” (R7)

“Relationships which build in the organization for job performance… these changed when you left out the organization… outside the organization which you make with you own interaction with people remain in the entrepreneurial context”(R10)

It was found during the analysis of the interviews that mentoring is the key factor in the career transition of the protégés. The focus of relationship does not change with outside mentors, but in case of the mentoring within the organization’s focus of relationship changed. According to our respondent researchers can conclude that, when the individuals left out the organization, they lost all relationship structure within the firm. The findings of this study has supported the previous literature that is recommended when individuals left the organizational boundaries, it becomes tough for them to maintain and develop mentoring associations (Sullivan, 1999). Organizations focused on developmental associations by promoting culture of mentoring programs and rewards developmental
associations. Therefore, people leave their organization because they have not programs and structure within organization that is proactive in developing and maintain mentoring associations.

**Multiple Mentoring Relationships With Entrepreneur**

Three research questions have asked the mentoring associations involved in the entrepreneurs. On the Nvivo analysis, we found second influential factor that motivates the protégées to become an entrepreneur. The entrepreneurs stated that seeking mentors are founded on networks by educational settings (former professors), social networks (e.g. friends and family) and new business contacts (fellow entrepreneurs). Three entrepreneurs indicated that they reconnected with professors and also their relationship is transformed into mentor-protégée.

“I am in connection with my university professor ... He is expert in the financial investment” (R2)

Similarly added by other respondents

“He is my university professor ... He is already in connection with a lot of entrepreneurs... He has helped many entrepreneurs for starting their business... He also helped me to start my own business... He provided me business connections” (R10)

“He is my college teacher... I discussed all my business issues as well as my personal issues... He always guides me... He is the person on whom I can trust” (R8)

Additionally, experiencing the expertise of professors, entrepreneurs also found the knowledge of other business owners.

“My close friend was key support. His father was a financial advisor. He knows how to run the business” (R7)

“He is my best childhood friend. He has done C.A. He was genius in the accounting because his father was also auditor. He worked with his father for many years, currently running his own audit firm. I meet him approximately daily. He helped me so much in my business” (R3)

On the responses, we can conclude that the protégées are engaged in multiple mentoring relationships. Some of our respondents also said that they faced difficulties in finding mentors. Some of our respondents also recognized that limited developmental help could harm their prospects of business. They indicated the need to develop and find such relationships of mentoring. The results are similar to study of Terjesen and Sullivan (2011) conducted in UK.
Work Experience

This theme explains how the individuals work experience play a role in the transition.

“When you become shuttlecock then you start your own business” (R5)

Similarly added by other respondents,

“Yes, experience matter in switching toward your own business...when you become experienced...you do for yourself, what you were doing for employer” (R2)

“Yes, I learned many things during my job...which I am applying in my own business” (R5)

It can be concluded from the results of the respondents that the work experience also plays role in the career transition to entrepreneurship. Individuals switch from job to their own venture when they became capable enough to handle business problems. The results of my study are similar to study of Mainiero and Sullivan (2006).

Conclusion and Limitations

The objectives of this study were to fill the gap of literature by exploring the mentorship of entrepreneurs in the process of a career transition from job to becoming an entrepreneur. In the entrepreneurial environment, finding mentors is problematic. In conclusion, this study contributes to the entrepreneurial literature by describing an under-study topic and offered few implications for those who have taken interest in starting their businesses. Our study has offered interviews of both protégées and mentors for getting in-depth results. This study is an exploratory in nature that can help the future researches how person switch from the context of corporate to entrepreneurship and also force more studies should be conducted to have various process of mentoring in the development of other career transitions.

This research has suffered a few limitations typical to qualitative studies. Firstly, only one partner is interviewed in mentorship of entrepreneurs. Various respondents are matched with (Ensher et al., 2002) that is small relatively. The future studies must be performed on large sample empirically from both mentors and entrepreneurs.

Lastly, the findings are linked with the context of entrepreneurship that can not be generalized in other contexts. Further researches are required to know the relationship of mentoring that can be transferred from one place to other and on various industries.
References


