

The Development of a Mentoring Program
for the Local Public Health Agency

by

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Abstract

Mentoring programs have many advantages for the agency, mentor, and protégé. The focus of this project is a Local Public Health Agency [LPHA; pseudonym] that is experiencing the attrition of many top executives. The purpose of this project was to develop a plan for implementation of a formal, organization-wide mentorship program for the LPHA. Appreciative Inquiry is recommended as an organizational development (OD) tool to design the mentorship program. Appreciative Inquiry is a positive approach to organizational development that seeks out success stories to build a positive future reality. In addition, organizational readiness is assessed to determine the extent which the agency is ready to implement a new program. A program planning framework is described as a means to develop the mentoring program. The framework provides step-by-step guidance for program development to ensure important steps are not overlooked that could jeopardize the success of the program. Finally, Adaptive Mentorship® is recommended as a framework for designing the mentoring program. Adaptive Mentorship is based on the premise that the mentor adapts his or her mentoring behaviour to match that developmental level of the protégé.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Autobiographical Sketch

After finishing a baccalaureate degree in nursing, I developed an interest in occupational health and, as a result, completed a Diploma in Occupational Health Nursing several years later. Having worked at two local agencies as an occupational health nurse (OHN), I was hired by a Local Public Health Agency [pseudonym] (henceforth, used interchangeably with LPHA acronym) as a Public Health Nurse to work on the Communicable Disease Team. In January 2011, I accepted the position of Occupational Health Nurse and Training & Development Specialist, which combined both of my interests in health and safety and adult education into one.

I became interested in mentorship when, several years ago, a nursing manager agreed to informally mentor me in the ways of management. The agency did not have a formal mentoring program but the manager knew of my interest in administration and was eager to share her knowledge. We met every couple of weeks for unstructured mentoring meetings that usually lasted an hour to 90 minutes. I found these experiences very helpful in preparing me for subsequent interviews in the nursing profession. My interest in mentoring continued to grow with my work in the public health sector, especially as I noticed more and more that there was a need for the sharing of talent and knowledge. One of the ways this need can be addressed is by developing an organization-wide mentorship program.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a plan for implementation of a formal, organization-wide mentorship program for the Local Public Health Agency. The following research questions guided this purpose:

1. What would the process of developing the mentorship program entail through the use of Appreciate Inquiry as the organizational development approach?
2. What is the organizational readiness of the Local Public Health Agency to implement a formal organization-wide mentorship program?
3. What are the potential benefits and challenges of implementing a formal organization-wide mentorship program?

Context

The LPHA is committed to the investment of time and resources to the development of its employees and is fully supportive of exploring the idea of mentorship as an organizational development (OD) tool. The LPHA is an accredited public health agency located in a mid-size urban center in south-eastern Ontario. It employs over 250 regulated and unregulated health professionals and a number of support staff and volunteers who deliver public health services to the people of the catchment area. The underlying goal of the LPHA's services and programs—from immunization, healthy weights, nutritious eating, food safety, raising healthy babies and children, sexual health, tobacco use reduction, and many other public health areas—is to promote and protect the health of the more than 180,000 residents in the area (LPHA website, 2014).

Rationale for Program Development

The LPHA is a health care organization committed to the health of the community and to the professional growth of its employees. One of the 2012-2016 Strategic Directions for the agency is to develop an organizational framework to support employee development and learning in a way that is consistent with the agency's values. The agency has five core values: excellence, integrity, respect, collaboration, and fairness; as stated in a core value statement in the Strategic Plan 2012-2016, "We foster a culture of continuous learning to support employee

growth and organizational development” (LPHA, 2012). A mentoring program would provide both an opportunity for organizational development and employee growth. Scandura and Williams (2003) defined mentorship as a relationship between a more experienced person and a new hire or less experienced person in the organization and is shown to serve several functions that improve employees’ growth and advancement in their career (Kram, 1988). The LPHA is experiencing the attrition of several senior managers through retirement, many of whom have worked for the agency for over 30 years. A mentoring program could provide a development opportunity for employees who are interested in senior management. Through this mechanism, valuable knowledge would be preserved and passed along to the next line of senior managers.

It is not enough to decide upon a mentoring program. An organization will need to choose whether it wants to implement a formal or informal mentorship program. Zachary (2012) explains that formal mentoring programs are often associated with businesses and schools and follow a prescribed structure. These programs have specific goals and outcomes with program expectations for all parties clearly spelled out ahead of time. In contrast, informal mentoring programs tend to be unstructured and naturally occurring, and can take the form of casual conversations and information sharing but can also include structured relationships. Informal mentoring relationships have a less structured pace and timeline than formal mentoring programs. A mentorship program for the LPHA would be situated within the training and development office and overseen by the Human Resources department. It has been decided that a formal mentoring program will be developed for this project, because the agency will be experiencing the attrition of several senior managers in the next couple of years without a succession management plan. A mentorship program would fill this gap for the agency and can also be a retention tool for existing employees.

An organization that incorporates mentoring into its OD strategies indicates to its employees that it is committed to helping them achieve success in undertaking new and challenging roles. OD has been an evolving field since the 1950's and encompasses a broad range of practice categories including, but not limited to, change leadership, organizational structure, reward systems, training and development, teams and teamwork, and organizational performance (Burke, 2008). Margulies and Raia (1978) defined OD as a process of assessment and planned change aimed at improving the effectiveness of the organization through the use of specific strategies and techniques.

OD is about change in the organization. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an organizational change method that can be used as a lens to view mentorship. In contrast to many other OD tools that concentrate on problem-based solutions, AI focuses on the positive experiences within the agency (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). AI involves an inquiry process of discovering the best of the organization; imagining what could be and talking about the future in positive terms (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). By using this approach, the LPHA should uncover valuable information related to individuals' past mentoring experiences and gain further insight into employees' expectations of a mentoring program.

To be successful, suggested organizational change methods should be a planned program that involves the entire system; the top of the organization is aware and committed to the program; it is related to the organization's mission; it is a long-term effort; activities are action oriented; and it focuses on changing attitudes and behaviour (Beckhard, 2006). The LPHA has already met some of these criteria by integrating a commitment to OD into its strategic plan, which also shows buy-in from senior management.

Defining Key Terms

The following definitions are instrumental for this project:

Mentorship. Is the relationship between someone with more experience or expertise in a certain area with someone who is novice and has less experience (Scandura & Williams, 2003).

Protégé. The protégé is someone who seeks out a mentor due to a desire to advance his or her career or is new to a position. The protégé is usually less experienced than the mentor and lacks the influence that the mentor has within the organization (Scandura & Williams, 2003).

Mentor. A person in the work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and who is willing to offer direction and support to others to advance their careers (Scandura & Williams, 2003).

Appreciative Inquiry. Is a type of action research that is used as a tool in organizational development. It focuses on the capacities of the agency instead of its shortcomings to be the catalyst of change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Organizational Readiness for Change. Is an attitude that is influenced by what is being changed, how the change is being made, the circumstances in which the change is occurring, and individual characteristics of the people being asked to change. It reflects the extent to which individuals are inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to change the way things currently are (Holt, Armenakis, Harris, & Feild, 2007).

Overview of the Project

This project consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the rationale, purpose and context of the project and definition of key terms. Chapter 2 describes the literature review and expands on the project context. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of Appreciative Inquiry. Chapter 4 outlines program development. Chapter 5 discusses the implications for practice.

Chapter 2: Project Context and Literature Review

This chapter expands on the context of the project and provides a review of the relevant literature as it relates to mentorship, organizational readiness, and Appreciative Inquiry as an organizational development approach.

Project Context

The LPHA is an accredited LPHA located in Eastern Ontario. It is guided in its work by the Ontario Public Health Standards that mandate the duties and protocols of all public health agencies in Ontario. There are four offices located throughout the LPHA's catchment area. The organizational structure consists of three tiers of management: the Medical Officer of Health and Associate Medical Officer of Health, both of whom oversee the agency; Program Directors who oversee one of the five program Divisions; and Program Managers who are responsible for planning, leading, organizing, and managing specific public health programs and services and the employees who deliver the programs and services. The program staff are made up of regulated and unregulated health care professionals that include: registered nurses, registered practical nurses, medical doctors, speech-language pathologists, dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, family resource workers, librarians, library technicians, parent support workers, public health inspectors, and many support and clerical staff.

Over the past 15 years, the LPHA's workforce has grown substantially, and with that growth has come a commitment on the part of the agency to provide development opportunities to employees. The LPHA believes that these opportunities should be offered to employees to help them grow and prepare for future job opportunities within the agency. Current opportunities for employees include areas of on-line, self-directed leadership and management development activities, as well as individual assessment tools that provide employees with a gauge of such

areas as work style and preference and areas they could develop or use to advance their careers. Linked with these development opportunities and tools are agency policies that support professional development through assistance in the form of tuition reimbursement for a course or paid time for up to 70 hours to attend class, do a practicum, or work on assignments. The LPHA also works closely with a local university's Masters of Public Health (MPH) Program. As a result, each year, the University waives the tuition fee for one qualified staff member to pursue an MPH degree.

Employee development is a priority at the LPHA; however, at the present time there is no mechanism for an employee to express an interest in other positions except through the formal application process when vacancies exist. Within the last three years, there has been the retirement of three Directors with another two scheduled to retire at the end of 2014. The vacancies present valuable growth opportunities for employees. Managers may have an interest in moving into senior management, and a front line staff may have an interest in becoming a manager. Yet, they may lack the knowledge and skills, and in some cases experience, necessary to be a successful applicant. Additionally, Public Health is a specialized field, and requires a different skill set for practitioners. New and current employees at the LPHA, no matter their position, have access to many experts in all the fields of Public Health yet we do not encourage employees to seek each other out and gain from each other's experiences. A mentoring program could fill this gap by creating an avenue that would connect practitioners who would not otherwise have the opportunity to work closely together.

Mentoring

Mentoring is usually defined as the relationship between someone with more experience or expertise in a certain area (mentor) and someone who is novice and has less experience

(protégé) (Scandura & Williams, 2003). A mentor in the work environment is usually a person who has advanced experience and knowledge and who is willing to offer direction and support to others to advance their careers. A protégé, on the other hand, is someone who seeks out a mentor due to a desire to advance his or her career or is new to a position. A protégé is usually less experienced than the mentor and lacks the influence that the mentor has within the organization (Scandura & Williams, 2003). Traditionally, mentoring has been a one-on-one relationship; however, it has recently been reconceptualised as a “multiple relationships” phenomenon where a protégé has a network of mentors, each providing different functions (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Higgins & Kram, 2001). The main mentoring functions identified in the literature are teaching, supporting, assisting, guiding, sponsoring, encouraging, counselling, and befriending. In mentoring, the primary focus is on passing on knowledge, skills and values. Bennetts (1995) suggests that the learning process is what distinguishes the mentoring relationship from other relationships. Lankau and Scandura (2002) emphasize that the personal learning of the protégé is the primary role of mentoring.

Benefits and Challenges of Mentoring

Mentoring is a relationship that occurs between two people in which a more experienced individual passes on valuable information to a less experienced person. The organization benefits from the development of mentoring relationships because protégés show higher levels of organizational commitment and intent to stay; this commitment is a large asset to the organization because it has already invested a lot of time and resources into this employee (Scandura & Williams, 2003; Prevosto, 2001). Another asset to having a mentoring program is that it can be seen as an incentive for staff recruitment, especially in health care organizations (Rohatinsky & Ferguson, 2014). Healthcare can be a frightening field, and if potential applicants

know there is a mentoring program, they may be more inclined to apply, knowing they will get the needed guidance and support to be a competent practitioner.

Although much of the literature contains information about the benefits of mentoring for the protégé, some studies do address the benefits for the mentor. Mentors report that being a mentor has helped them feel connected to the organization, more self-aware, and more self-confident, and that they feel a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment from mentoring (Brewer, 2012; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). Also, mentoring can help to strengthen relationships and build new ones and help to raise the professional reputation of the mentor (Woolnough, Davidson, & Fielden, 2006; Zachary 2005). Likewise, from my own perspective, there is a sense of pride in passing along one's knowledge to someone else. It was also an opportunity for personal growth and to develop my leadership skills.

The majority of the literature focuses on the benefits of mentoring for the protégé. Benefits for the protégé are endless: they have more satisfaction in their career and with their jobs, receive more recognition; experience increased salary growth and more promotions; get better compensation than their non-mentored colleagues; and have an increase in positive perception of competence (Allen, Eby, Lentz, Lima, & Poteet, 2004; Fagenson, 1989; Ronsten, Andersson, & Gustafsson, 2005; Scandura, 1992). Chao (1997) found that the advantages of being mentored have long lasting effects up to five years into the protégés' careers as compared to their non-mentored peers. My personal protégé experience provided me with confidence and introduced me to the ways of the agency that I would not have learned otherwise.

However, there are challenges associated with a mentoring relationship. Simon and Eby (2003) looked at negative mentoring experiences that included inappropriate delegation, tyranny, credit-taking, sabotage, overt deceit, intentional exclusion, neglect, self-absorption, mismatched

values, and sexual harassment to name a few. Their findings point to the issue, among other things, that abuse of the power relationship can exist between mentor and protégé. They also found varying severity in deviant workplace behaviour, which could include not returning a telephone call to belittling someone on front of others. Scandura (1998) found evidence of dysfunctional mentoring outcomes reported in the literature. Dysfunctional mentoring can only result in one of two outcomes, the termination of the relationship or the continuation of the relationship but with negative outcomes on the self-esteem and job satisfaction for the protégé and increased stress and anxiety for the mentor.

Mentoring Programs

When an organization wants to implement a mentoring program, the first step is to decide if it wants to adopt a formal or informal program. Informal programs are started by the mentor and protégé with little or no support from the agency, whereas formal programs are fully supported by the agency and guidelines, policies, and resources are invested to sustain the program (Finklestein & Poteet, 2007). Chao (2009) provides a concise summary of the differences between formal and informal mentorship programs. First, she describes that the intensity is higher in an informal relationship because those involved in the relationship want to be in it, and, as a result, it crosses all domains of the mentor's and protégé's lives, not just work. As well, there is a protective nature of the mentor for the protégé, which seems to be lacking in a formal relationship. Second, informal relationships are rarely labelled as mentoring and may not be seen as such by one or both people or outside observers; in formal programs, the appropriate language is used and applied to participants so it is clear to everyone. Third, formal programs tend to focus on organizational goals and employee development, whereas similar goals and potential personal development of the participants tend to drive informal mentoring relationships.

Finally, formal programs typically have a formal start and end date, whereas informal programs tend to evolve and dissipate naturally.

Much of the literature is in favour of informal mentoring approaches (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Hezlett & Gibson, 2005; Ragins & Cotton, 1999) stating more advantages for the protégé such as more career support and advancement and greater satisfaction felt by the mentor because the relationship is not forced. However, Murray (2001) states informal programs lack the tangible indicators that can be tracked in formal mentoring relationships. Informal mentoring programs lack goals, relationships are not tracked, and nothing is linked to the developmental goals of the mentor and protégé; as well, there is not any structured support, and there is little or no follow-up.

In today's budget-conscious workplaces, accountability for programs often needs to be proven with written documents, policies, and procedures, and a formal program provides the proof of program effectiveness or liability. The LPHA has an interest in tracking and providing data on the programs we offer to our staff to ensure they are effective. A formal mentorship program has that advantage. Murray (2001) outlines several more advantages to formal mentorship programs, for example, increased productivity for the agency through performance planning and teamwork. Mentors and protégés could work together on projects; or the leadership opportunity provided by being a mentor may help someone achieve a performance goal. Another advantage is protégés get relevant practice of needed skills. This advantage can be especially true if organizations have in-house subject-matter experts that who would like to mentor. Using in-house subject-matter experts can be very cost effective, because the agency does not need to rent rooms and hire trainers, and there is not any extra time away from the job except for that allotted to spend time with the mentor. Also, mentoring programs show a commitment to

employee development and therefore can improve recruitment efforts (Murray, 2001). A mentoring program can increase organizational communication and understanding especially if the mentor and protégé work in different areas (Murray, 2001); increasing organizational communication and understanding is relevant for the LPHA as we have three branch offices and they have reported feeling isolated at times. Mentoring programs help to retain intellectual capital and maintain motivation of more seasoned employees because, through mentoring, they can rethink philosophies and pass on their knowledge that may be otherwise lost (Murray, 2001). Finally, mentoring can lead to an improvement in strategic and succession planning because it provides a tangible way to move employees into higher-level jobs (Murray, 2001) The last two points are significant to the LPHA because, as mentioned earlier, there will be a large turnover in senior management due to attrition and with that potentially valuable knowledge will be lost or forgotten.

However, whether the mentor and protégé relationship is shaped by a formal or informal program, there are those who feel a high quality relationship can result regardless of the means (Allen & Eby, 2003; Hezlett & Gibson, 2005). Zachary (2012) suggests that, in today's workplaces, mentoring programs can have many configurations and do not necessarily have to be in the traditional format. Some alternatives could include younger colleagues mentoring older ones, virtual or distance mentoring opportunities, or mentoring done in groups. Today's workplaces expect flexibility and like to explore innovative ways of doing things. Innovative mentoring approaches may need to be explored to meet the needs of the entire agency.

Components of a Successful Mentorship Program

Rohatinsky and Ferguson (2014) in their study with managers in healthcare organizations identify three main concepts that help to create a culture of mentoring: (a) organizational context;

(b) managers' perceptions of mentoring, and; (c) mentorship support initiatives. Organizational context plays a large role in how successful the managers thought they could be with a mentoring program. Managers felt that commitment had to be shown from the very top and, and that mentorship statements needed to be incorporated into the agency's vision, mission and values. The Managers' perceptions of mentoring were also an important concept because they had valuable feedback about how the program could be run and any barriers that could arise. If a program is to be successful, constructive feedback needs to be received from participants so program improvements or changes can be made. The managers in the study identified mentorship support initiatives that helped them to encourage and support a mentoring culture, such as, discussing mentoring with their staff on a regular basis, providing mentorship education, ensuring a good fit between mentor and protégé, and recognizing staff that had been involved in the mentoring process.

A forum on mentorship held in Saskatchewan in 2010 attracted 83 professionals from various backgrounds who also came to similar conclusions (Ralph & Walker, 2011). Discussions from the delegates, many of whom had real-life mentoring experience, also identified some common factors that needed to be in place for a mentorship program to be successful. Such factors include physical and financial support, recognition of the mentorship program, professional development for the mentor on mentoring principles, and professional development for effective communication between partners. The LPHA already has some of these key points in place. A commitment to staff development is written into the mission and the values of the agency; a manager's input is always sought regarding program implementation; and employees are recognized yearly for their contributions to the agency. It is a positive correlation that may help with the success of a mentorship program.

However, several barriers can exist to the successful implementation of a mentorship program. These can include competing priorities; minimal support from managers; issues related to the use of resources; lack of time; problems arranging mentor schedules; and lack of training for mentors (Rohatinsky & Ferguson, 2007). Barriers identified by the delegates at the 2010 mentorship forum also included a competitive work culture and the creation of a power imbalance if the mentor was asked to formally evaluate the performance of the mentee (Ralph & Walker, 2011).

Mentoring Functions

Kram (1988) identifies two categories of mentoring functions: career functions and psychosocial functions. Career functions “are those aspects of the relationship that enhance learning the ropes and preparing for advancement in an organization” (p. 22). Career functions include: sponsorship that involves nominating people for special assignments or promotions; exposure-and-visibility by being assigned projects that allow lower-level employees to develop relationships with key figures in the organization that can help advance their career; coaching that involves providing advice; help navigating through the corporate culture and political process of business; protection that involves taking credit and blame for controversial situations and intervening in situations where the protégé has not developed experience; and challenging assignments that develop technical and job-related skills to support learning. Several studies show that being mentored has a positive effect on career advancement. Protégés report being promoted more often, having more opportunities, and receiving more career support than non-mentored individuals (Chao et al., 1992; Fagenson, 1989; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Scandura, 1992).

Psychosocial functions “are those aspects of a relationship that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity and effectiveness in a professional role” (Kram, 1988, p. 22). Psychosocial functions include: role modelling in which the mentor shares with the protégé his or her attitudes, values, and behaviours in hopes that the protégé will imitate; acceptance-and-confirmation provides support and encouragement to protégés as they gain experience and take on new challenges; counselling allows the protégé to share concerns and talk openly about anxieties and fears; and friendship, which is the social interaction at work and sometimes non-work-related functions. The mentor controls the boundaries of the relationship because it is difficult to be a person’s boss and friend without the potential for hurt feelings or awkward exchanges. Studies support that protégés report more organizational socialization, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment than non-mentored individuals (Fagenson, 1989; Waters, 2004).

Portner (2008) proposes that the mentor has four major functions: relating, assessing, coaching, and guiding. He feels these functions draw on the unique group of skills already possessed by the mentor. Relating refers to the mentor’s ability to develop and maintain a relationship with the protégé based on trust, respect, and professionalism; assessing refers to the mentor’s ability to determine the needs of the protégé and make mentoring decisions based on the needs; coaching allows the mentor to share his or her experiences and provide guidance to the protégé as well as serve as a role model; finally guiding helps the protégé develop critical thinking skills and independent decision-making ability.

Understanding the functions of a mentoring relationship can help to guide the development of a mentoring program. These functions can also be used as measures for

evaluation and data collection to assess the effectiveness and participants' satisfaction with the program.

Pairing of the Mentor and Protégé

Pairing in mentorship is of utmost importance for the success of the program. Allen, Eby and Lentz (2006) found that non-voluntary participation in a mentoring program may hinder the person's willingness to mentor others in the future. Conversely, voluntary participation and having input into the pairing process is an important program characteristic therefore increasing the likelihood of success of the program. Other suggestions include providing the protégé with a tool to rate nominated mentors based on skills, behaviours, and interests (Murray, 2001). Engstrom (2004) suggests compatibility in personality traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness should be considered when pairing mentors and protégés. Murray (2001) also recommends allowing the protégé to spend time with the mentor candidates but cautioned against forcing matches between pairs that do not like or respect each other. Allen (2004) found that, when it comes to mentors selecting protégés, willingness to learn may be a characteristic preferred by mentors even if the protégé lacked ability.

Before pairing can take place, an organization would need to know who their mentors are. How do people become mentors? To ensure mentors and protégés are paired along similar interests and dimensions, Finkelstein and Poteet (2007) state that several factors have to be considered when choosing mentors, such as, experience and expertise, knowledge, skills, and abilities. Likewise, Darwin (2004) states that certain personality characteristics, such as nurturance, authenticity, and approachability, predispose some people to become mentors.

The research supports similarities, certain personality characteristics, and high levels of psychosocial support in fostering successful high-quality mentor-protégé relationships (Allen &

Eby, 2003; Darwin, 2004; Engstrom, 2004; Waters, 2003). The successful pairing of mentors with protégés can create challenges for the organization. Garvey (2004) suggests ways to avoid matching challenges. The first step is to ensure that the participants understand that, if things are not working out, they can discontinue the relationship; next, it is important that the mentor and protégé understand what mentoring is and how much of their time they will be volunteering before they commit to the relationship.

Quality of the Mentor and Protégé Relationship

The quality of the mentor-protégé relationship is an area that is receiving more attention in the literature. Allen and Eby (2003) identify that perceived similarities between the mentor and protégé lead to more reports of learning and higher quality relationships. Likewise, several personality dimensions are linked to perceived mentoring success. For example, protégés perceive more success if their mentor is similar to them in extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Engstrom, 2004). Waters (2004) found that protégé-mentor agreements about the kind of psychosocial support that is expected to be provided during the relationship leads to greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment. An agreement can help clarify roles and responsibilities and reduce uncertainty in the relationship.

High quality mentoring relationships are ideal; however, it can be difficult to measure quality (Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). Some indicators of quality include measures of the effectiveness of the relationship; participants' levels of satisfaction with the relationship; perceptions of whether the mentor was used effectively; and whether or not both mentor and protégé benefitted from the relationship (Allen, 2004). Another possible quality measure is mentor training and development skills. Mentors who are skilled in developing, training, and coaching others would be ideal, along with highly developed knowledge of communication and

listening skills. Finally, high-quality relationships can be fostered by mentors who have the time and energy to commit to their protégé. It would be difficult to develop a quality relationship if the mentor resented the time taken to develop the protégé.

Organizational Readiness for Change

Determining whether or not the LPHA is ready to adopt a formal mentorship program is an important first step in program planning. Holt and colleagues (2007) define readiness for change as an attitude that is influenced by what is being changed, how the change is being made, the circumstances in which the change is occurring, and individual characteristics of the people being asked to change. Additionally, it reflects the extent to which individuals are inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to change the way things currently are (Holt et al., 2007). The LPHA has been experiencing a lot of changes in the way that internal and external services are delivered and administered, including the development and implementation of new policies and procedures. In my experience it becomes evident quite quickly who is in favour of the change and who is not. Those in favour generally have positive feedback and suggestions and accept the change, whereas those not in favour talk negatively of the change and try to get others to see it negatively, and even may resist it by continuing to follow prior practices even when directed not to. It seems as if certain people are just more accepting of change.

Wanberg and Banas (2000) found that resilience, defined as self-esteem, optimism, and perceived control, is related to a higher level of change acceptance. Interestingly, however, acceptance of change does not automatically mean a positive view of the change just a higher likelihood of accommodating it. Still, findings suggest if employees participate in the change it is seen as more beneficial. This result suggests that, to be successful, a planned change program

needs to target those who identify as having resilient characteristics and have them involved in the planning process. As a result, they may sway those that are more openly resistive.

On the other hand, those with lower levels of change acceptance experience less job satisfaction, more irritation at work, and increased intentions to quit. To counteract the resistance, Wanberg and Banas (2000) suggest ensuring sufficient training is provided and steps taken to improve the employees' confidence in accommodating the change. Other factors shown to have an effect on readiness relate to employees' motivation and the organizations' capability to support the change. These factors include but are not limited to the personal attributes of the leaders and employees, current organizational climate, and adequate agency resources to implement the change (Lehman, Greener, & Simpson, 2002; Weiner, Amik, & Lee, 2008). Lehman et al. (2002) state that these factors are interrelated and do not occur independently each other. If the employees are not ready for the change, the program may not get started or stall due to lack of buy-in; likewise if the motivation to change is there but resources are lacking, the project is unlikely to move forward.

Lack of readiness for change could halt or delay any program implementation at the LPHA; therefore, it is important to assess how ready the agency is to move forward with a mentorship program. The literature states that there are many tools out there to measure readiness; the difficulty becomes which one to choose (Holt et al., 2007; Weiner, 2009; Weiner et al., 2008). Holt et al. (2007) in their review of 40 current measuring tools found that most tools measure readiness from one of four categories: the change content, the change process, the organization context, and the attributes of the employees. Additionally, the literature stresses the importance of developing a psychometrically robust instrument to measure readiness (Holt et al., 2007; Weiner, 2009; Weiner et al., 2008). We are fortunate at the LPHA to have research and

evaluation professionals who would be able to assist in the development of an instrument as well as test for validity and reliability. Areas identified as having low levels of readiness could then be the target of a focused intervention to try to increase readiness. Weiner et al. (2008) suggest that increasing readiness can be accomplished by building support for the change, checking for gaps in infrastructure, and dedicating additional resources to the change. Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) have several recommendations for increasing readiness, some of which include: understanding the underlying cause of the resistance and design your readiness interventions around that; be aware of organizational contextual factors and communicate these to the employees; and try to influence the beliefs and attitudes with the messages given to employees.

Organizational Development (OD)

OD is an organizational change approach that uses action research methodology and humanistic value systems to develop interventions that are generally aimed at changing the organization's culture (Burke, 2002). Beckhard (2006) identifies several conditions that warrant a planned OD intervention such as the need to change managerial strategy or structures and roles; the need to improve the climate, culture, motivation, or inter-group collaboration; or the need for adapting to a merger or a new environment. The process of OD generally includes: (a) data collection through interviews, questionnaires, and/or observation with stakeholders; (b) synthesis of data into themes and reporting back to the stakeholders; (c) discussion of what the themes mean and interventions aimed at solving the problem; and (d) following through with the intervention(s) (Burke, 2002).

There are many approaches to OD interventions. Large group interventions provide an opportunity for the entire system, or a representative sample of the entire system, to contribute to

the planning of the OD intervention (Austin & Bartunek, 2006). The groups meet over a couple of days and generally are formally structured and include several phases and stages of planning. Another intervention for improving an organization is introducing learning in a positive way. Organizations that use this intervention are referred to as learning organizations (Austin & Bartunek, 2006). Senge (1990) states the key to a successful learning organization is developing high levels of personal mastery, which requires working on personal growth and learning. It is believed providing employees with the support and encouragement to develop these skills will build them up personally, thereby, the organization will also benefit (Senge, 1990). Finally, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an OD intervention that focuses on the positive and is “designed to value, prize and honor” (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006, p. 224). The implementation of AI follows a four-step process (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006):

Step 1: Discovery. This involves employees interviewing each other with a series of positive questions to get at the positive core of the organization.

Step 2: Dream. As dialogue occurs among the individuals, ideas begin to develop and a dream begins to form.

Step 3: Design. The dream becomes the goal and because everyone had a say, in theory, each one should be motivated to work towards attaining the dream.

Step 4: Destiny. This final stage is when the process is ‘given away’ to everyone in hopes that the transformation experienced during the AI process will keep the momentum going.

AI has been shown to be effective as a team intervention, and is credited as having been the method used successfully by many hospitals, universities, and even by the Dalai Lama (Bushe, 1998; Bushe & Coetzer, 1995; Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006). However, Bushe and

colleagues (Bushe & Coetzer, 1995; Bushe & Kassam, 2005) found that using AI could produce anxiety in people who are uncomfortable disclosing during the inquiry process. This discomfort can be lessened by ensuring that it is made clear from the beginning of the process that ideas are shared in a safe and non-judgmental environment. The LPHA has gone through a similar process to AI where we asked employees to come and share what their values were and what they thought the agency values should be. Many expressed their discomfort in sharing their ideas if they were at the same table as a manager. Once they were reassured that the point of the exercise was to share in a safe environment, they were more willing to open up. Another criticism of AI from Bushe and Kassam (2005) is that it does not produce the transformational benefits it claims to produce and that one may want to consider other change methods. AI is described in more detail in Chapter 3: Methodology.

Summary

The research shows that a mentoring program can have many advantages for the agency, the mentor, and the protégé. Given that the LPHA is experiencing the attrition of many top executives, a mentoring program is being recommended as a means to address the gap that will be created. The OD approach of AI will be used to solicit feedback from the employees about the components of the mentorship program. Before the program is implemented, organizational readiness will be assessed to see if the agency is ready to implement a mentorship program.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter contains a description of AI as the OD approach in the creation of an organizational wide mentorship program at the LPHA. AI was chosen as the OD method for this public health agency because it focuses on the capacities of the agency instead of treating the agency as a problem to be solved (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). I have personal experience from our successful AI-type exercise in developing the agency's values. From those sessions, the working group was able to develop the five core values of the agency: excellence, integrity, respect, collaboration, and fairness. Therefore, based on that success, the more formalized structure of an AI approach would likely produce great feedback about a mentoring program.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciate Inquiry (AI) was first introduced by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) as an alternative to other forms of action research used in OD. AI focuses on the capacities of the agency in terms of appreciating the best it has to offer and visioning the best of what could be; compared to problem-based OD approaches that focus on identifying problems, analysing causes, and treating the agency as a problem to be solved (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). AI theory is centered on five principles (i) the constructionist principle that views organization and human knowledge as connected and stresses the importance of viewing the organization as a living entity; (ii) the principle of simultaneity that believes inquiry and change happen together and are not separate events; (iii) the poetic principle that states the organization's past, present, and future are all important sources of learning; (iv) the anticipatory principle encourages collective positive imagery to move the organization toward change; (v) the positive principle that believes successful change is dependent on asking positive questions (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

Cooperrider and Sekerka (2006) use a model to explain how positive organizational change takes place when using methods such as AI. Assuming all organizations are centres of relatedness, positive organizational change moves through three stages: elevation of inquiry, to fusion of strengths, to activation of energy. Elevation of inquiry theorizes that, when people share positive stories in an appreciative way, they are motivated to work together to find the best in the whole system. This search moves through the agency like a web, connecting the levels and elevating the positive connections (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006). The excitement generated from the elevation and relatedness move the positive change further into a fusion of strengths that connects organizational members even more and moves them closer to the positive vision. Activation of energy is characterized by an “emergence of innovation, challenge, change, and breakthrough” (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006, p. 236).

In addition to the model mentioned above, Bushe (2001) offers three additional theories for how AI creates organizational change. First, he discusses using the organization’s inner dialogue as a focus for change. The inner dialogue of an organization occurs among employees in unofficial settings such as at breaks, in hallways, and in small social groups and is created from stories that circulate around the organization. He theorizes that, if you change the stories, by inserting new stories circulating through these inner dialogues, you will change the organization. These new stories are carefully crafted positive scenarios that come out of the interviews integral to the AI process. Next, he describes using AI for resolving paradoxical dilemmas (Bushe, 2001). Paradoxical dilemmas occur when a team has job requirements or procedures that are mutually incompatible. For example, a policy may state that a client will have an appointment booked within two weeks of being referred to a clinic but in reality staffing levels only allow for a four-week turnaround time. These dilemmas create unconscious issues

that are not discussed and are never resolved. AI could be used to create new images for the team so it could move past this dilemma. Finally, Bushe (2001) describes the appreciative process that creates change by focusing on what you want to change rather than focusing on the problems. This process involves tracking, which is when individuals are constantly looking for what they want more of and, fanning, which is ‘any action that amplifies, encourages, and helps you to get more of whatever you are looking for (Bushe, 2001, p. 6).

Building on already existing capacities and appreciating what others have to offer is already at the core of the agency’s culture. The agency is currently focusing on employee engagement and just recently had an employee recognition half-day event. The guest speaker for the day was the expert who stressed that recognition needs to occur frequently, in fact daily. It was an uplifting, positive event that brought everyone together to celebrate the best of the last year, at the same time giving us the future vision of seeking out opportunities daily to provide heartfelt recognition. I see strong parallels between this type of event and AI, and consider AI an appropriate methodology for the LPHA in the pursuit of a mentoring program.

The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle

AI starts with the premise that there is a positive core at the heart of every organization and, through the process of discovery, dream, and design, that core can be tapped to reveal greatness (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Narrative dialogue in the form of structured interviews focusing on the strengths and abilities of the agency are the foundation of the AI process. The process then leads the stakeholders through a series of activities that takes these positive stories and crafts a vision of a positive future. The final step is to make that vision a reality. The process is called the 4-D Cycle and is guided by the ‘affirmative topic choice’ (p. 25), which is at the centre of the cycle. Choosing the affirmative topic choice and each phase of

the 4-D Cycle, *Discovery*, *Dream*, *Design*, and *Destiny*, is described below (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Affirmative Topic Choice. This is the starting place and most important step of the AI process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The affirmative topic choice is woven into every phase of the 4-D Cycle and is unique to each AI intervention. The following is involved in choosing the AI topic: (a) includes a cross-section of people from throughout the organization, (b) develops from the preliminary interviews of the organization, and (c) challenges people to turn deficits into affirmative topics for the AI process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Discovery. During the discovery phase, as many stakeholders as possible are interviewed. The main focus of this phase is to collect as many positive stories as possible pertaining to the affirmative topic choice. This phase is important because, during the sharing of positive stories, connections are made and the wisdom of the agency broadens with it (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Bushe (1995) states that there are behaviours that distinguish those who are good at AI interviewing and those who are not. These behaviours include being able to let go of personal assumptions, probing superficial answers given by interviewees, and questioning the obvious but in a self-disclosing way. It is important that interviewers are trained to interview appreciatively because it is in the appreciating of each other that “hope grows and community expands” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 8).

The discovery phase for the LPHA will centre on the affirmative topic choice of mentorship. During this phase, all employees will have the opportunity to be interviewed appreciatively for their positive past experiences with mentoring. Interviews can be done either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Since there is not a formal mentorship program in place

within the agency, there may need to be reliance on stories of informal mentoring, preceptoring, and external experiences of mentoring relationships.

Dream. The dream phase builds on the discovery phase by sharing and building upon the stories to construct a future vision. In this phase, everyone is brought together and the stories shared and dreams begin to form. Cooperrider and Sekerka (2006) state that, during this process, positive feedback loops occur and dreams take shape. As the wealth of information from the previous phase is shared, a cumulative effect begins to occur where each piece of appreciative data creates more and more energy to move the vision forward. Cooperrider and colleagues (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) state that the dream usually contains three elements: (a) a vision for a better world, (b) a powerful purpose, and (c) a compelling statement of strategic intent. Bushe (1995) stresses the importance of using detailed accounts of the stories and using direct quotes from the interviews to ensure that the passion is not lost in the translation of the interview material.

The dream phase for the LPHA can occur at the “Town Hall” meetings that are scheduled regularly and are usually used to provide interesting program updates. Insights, direct quotes, and details of the most interesting stories gathered during the discovery phase can be presented. From this phase of AI, a positive future state of mentorship at the LPHA should be revealed.

Design. The design phase concentrates on making the vision a reality. Using the positive momentum and excitement that have been generated from the previous phases, the goal of this phase is to connect the best of what is to the best of what could be. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) state that the one aspect that differentiates AI from other strategic or planning methods is “images of the future emerge out of grounded examples from an organization’s positive past” (p.

35). Benchmarking data can also be used to supplement this phase (Cooperrider, 1996; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

The design phase for the LPHA can consist of reviewing other mentoring programs from other public health agencies for benchmarking data, along with Human Resources metrics or Best Practice Guidelines for mentorship program development. These supplemental data will be combined with the results of the dreaming phase to shape the mentoring program and take it from design to reality.

Destiny. This phase is characterized by the eventual exchanging of the old organizational paradigms for the new. The positive feelings, stories, and traditions create a catalyst for a cumulative effect of more positive changes, all working in the direction of the desired vision (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). Ideally, in this phase, the momentum generated up to this point is in everyone's heart and as a result everyone is empowering each other to "connect, co-operate, and co-create" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 13). The destiny phase for the LPHA will ideally culminate in the development of an agency-wide mentorship program.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is important to clarify all of the roles and responsibilities of those involved before starting the AI process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Those in leadership roles obviously have a very important role to play in the process, and they participate equally. It is important that leaders are present to hear the positive stories and feel the energy. It is suggested that a leadership advisory team be formed that consists of three to six leaders who are committed to the AI process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The next important role is that of an AI Consultant who can support the process in the following ways:

- introduce AI to the organization and train people in interviewing techniques and facilitating AI sessions;
- design the project flow through the 4-D Cycle and provide recommendations at various stages;
- facilitate AI activities; and
- look for opportunities to give the process back to the agency and support agency members in making it their own (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 46).

An AI Consultant must also be energetic, positive, and inquisitive, and be able to bring out the best in people (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Another role is that of the core team, which is made up of people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and agency responsibilities. This team plans, designs, and oversees the entire AI process and monitors the outcome (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Finally, the role of the participants is “to be students of organizational life” (p. 49).

Summary

AI will be used as the OD approach for the development of an organizational wide mentorship program. AI is a positive OD approach that focuses on what is the best that the agency has to offer. The basis of AI is moving the agency through a series of four cycles of discovering, dreaming, designing, and determining organizational destiny in which members of the organization envision a positive future state. The LPHA appears to be an appropriate organizational candidate to implement an AI process as it is committed to engaging its employees at various levels.

Chapter 4: Mentorship Program Implementation Plan

This chapter outlines the plan for the mentorship program implementation using a program planning framework. A theoretical framework of mentorship is also presented, and LPHA's readiness for program implementation is discussed.

A program planning framework will be used in the creation of an agency wide mentorship program (LPHA, 2011). The framework outlines key stages in program planning and decision-making and is recommended for use in the development of new programs. The framework is comprised of four major sections (a) pre-planning, (b) situational assessment, (c) synthesis and discussion, and (d) program development. It is described in more detail below.

Program Planning Framework

Pre-Planning

This is the first stage of program planning and is characterized by discussing and documenting how the project aligns with organizational priorities, what is already known about the issue, and which internal stakeholders could be involved in the project. Fortunately, the creation of a mentorship program is aligned with two of the eight LPHA's Strategic Directions for 2011-2016. Over the course of the next few years, the agency will focus on enhancing internal collaborations within departments and teams, as well as, strengthening relationships throughout the agency and developing an organizational learning framework to support employee development and learning.

Situational Assessment

The second stage of program planning is a process in which additional information is gathered to ensure the program is evidence-based and meets the needs of the intended target group. There are three steps to the situational assessment: (a) assessment of the need to be

addressed by the program, (b) a review of potential strategies and evidence of their effectiveness, and (c) assessment of the local context.

Assessment of need. Assessment of need can help answer valuable questions such as what is the need being addressed by a mentoring program and what are the characteristics of the target population? The LPHA is experiencing the attrition of several senior managers through retirement, many of whom have worked for the agency for over 30 years. A mentoring program would provide a development opportunity for employees who are interested in senior management. Through this mechanism, valuable knowledge would be preserved and passed along to the next line of senior managers. The target population for a mentoring program would be all LPHA employees.

Review of potential strategies and evidence of effectiveness. The purpose of this step is to identify strategies, interventions, or programs that will meet the need(s) identified in the previous step. This review is usually done through an extensive literature search and review. Chapter 2 of this project fulfils this requirement and provides the evidence for why a mentoring program is appropriate for the LPHA.

Assessment of context. The opinions of stakeholders are very important in the development of a new program because they are the ones potentially using the program. It is recommended that a stakeholder analysis be performed to understand their behaviour, intentions, and interests in the program. Input from stakeholders can contain valuable information about the planning, implementation, and future evaluation of a program. AI, as described in Chapter 3 of this project, will be used as the method to solicit feedback from stakeholders.

Synthesis and Discussion

This stage of program planning provides an opportunity to summarize all of the data and evidence that have been gathered. Once the data have been compiled, they are used as discussion points in meetings with internal stakeholders to discuss options for the program. The following questions are suggested to stimulate the discussion:

- How does our current approach differ from the evidence?
- To what extent is the evidence suggest that we change our current approach?
- Is the evidence strong, credible, and consistent?
- What ideas should we adapt to the LPHA context? How? Pros and cons?
- What would be involved in changing our approach?

The goal of this step in the planning process is to arrive at a decision regarding the program.

Program Development

The final stage of program planning consists of four steps: (a) the program logic model, (b) the work plan, (c) anticipating future evaluation needs, and (d) allocation of resources for program implementation.

Program logic model. A logic model is a diagram depicting what the program is supposed to do, with whom and why. It also describes the causal relationships between activities and the outcomes that are helpful when explaining the program to others. The logic model should be reviewed often and can be revised as many times as necessary.

Work plan. A work plan can be helpful to identify what needs to be done, by whom, and with what resources. The purpose of the work plan is to monitor progress of program implementation.

Anticipating future evaluation needs. Program evaluation is used to determine whether a program is meeting its desired goals and provides a means for decision makers to make quality improvements to programs. Evaluation considerations should take place at the same time as program planning. This scheduling allows for the creation of solid definitions and measurable outcome activities, which will make the task of evaluation much easier.

Allocation of resources for program implementation. Before a program can go forward, it must be determined if there are enough resources to support the program. Resources for program planning could include financial, material, and human. Determining all of the resources ahead of time is also useful for the decision makers to determine if the necessary supports can be provided to support the program once it is implemented.

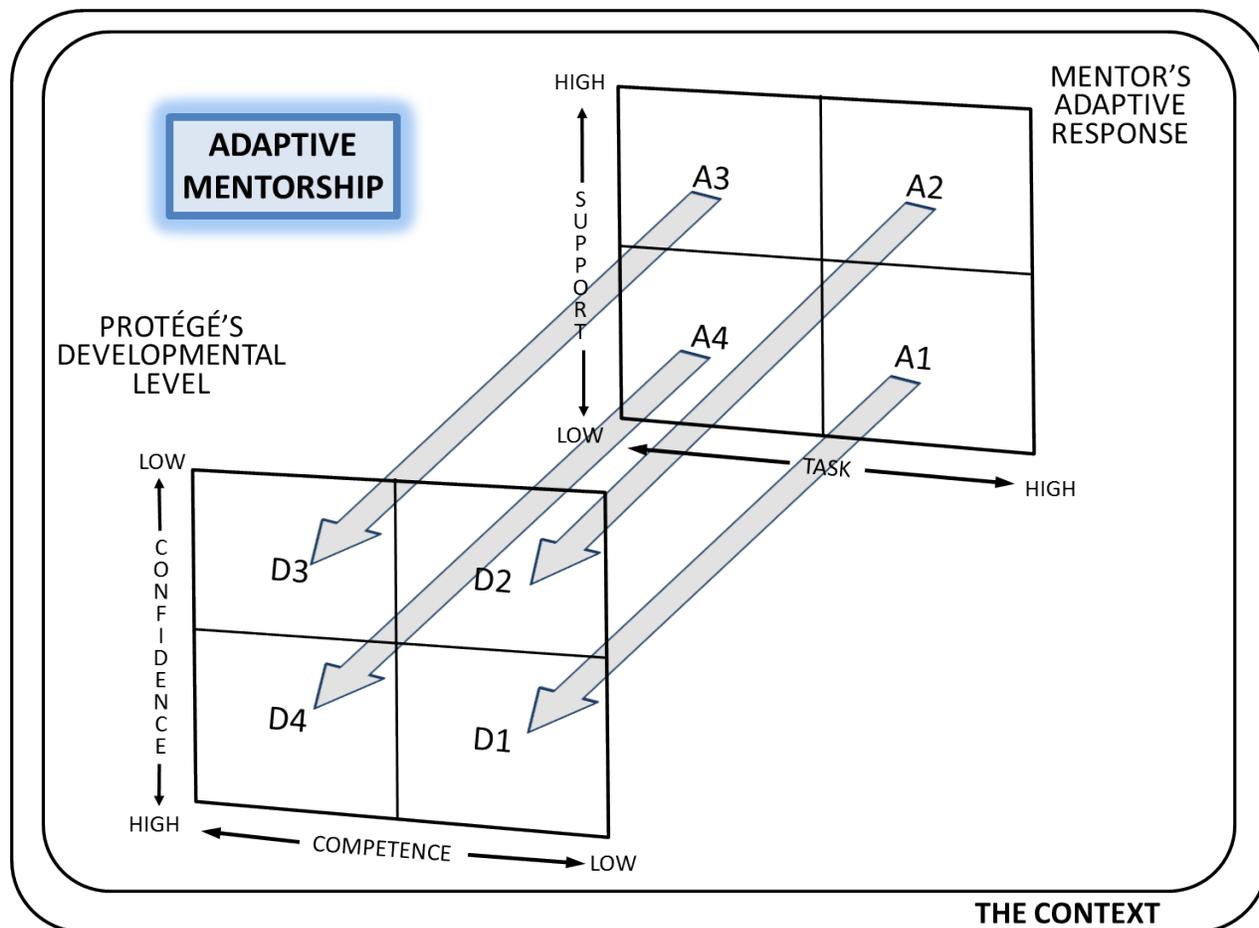
A Theoretical Model to Frame a Workplace Mentoring Program

Although there are many frameworks to choose from for mentoring programs, I have decided to highlight the Adaptive Mentorship (AM) model developed by Ralph and Walker (2010). This model is based on situational leadership that is founded on the premise that different leadership situations require different leadership responses (Northouse, 2010). The response the leader offers is based on an assessment of the followers' needs and on a supportive and directive dimension. For example, a subordinate may need more support and less direction, and the leader would adjust this or her behaviour accordingly.

The AM model (Figure 1) works on the same premise as situational leadership and is based on the protégés' developmental level. Many factors in the mentorship environment cannot be changed; however, the participants can control their own behaviour. Mentors can modify their actions on two dimensions "...their 'task' response (i.e., the degree of specific direction given to their protégé regarding the technical, mechanical, or procedural aspect of the latter's

performance in the task in question) and their 'support' response (i.e., the degree of 'human' or psycho/social/emotional encouragement they provide regarding the protégé's learning)" (Ralph, 2011, p. 295).

Figure 1



Adaptive Mentorship © (Used with permission from Ralph & Walker, 2010).

The protégé can control his or her personal task-specific developmental level. This developmental level also consists of two dimensions "... a protégé's 'competence' level (i.e., the actual technical ability to perform the task or skill set in question) and his/her 'confidence' level (i.e., the degree of self-assurance, composure, psychological comfort, and feelings of security

and /or safety in performing the task in question).” (Ralph, 2011, pp. 295-296). Ralph (2011) emphasises that there is a broad range of possible mentor-protégé combinations along the four continuums. To date the AM model has been used in many professions, including nursing, and has been shown to be beneficial for guiding the mentor’s leadership responses and has helped to conceptualize the mentorship process (Ralph, 2011).

There is a grid for both the mentor’s adaptive response and the protégé’s developmental level. Once the developmental level on the protégé’s grid (D1 through D4) is known, the corresponding grid on the mentor’s grid (A1 through A4) indicates the adaptive response of the mentor.

Application of the Adaptive Mentorship Model

The Adaptive Mentorship Model consists of three phases that the mentor and protégé go through:

1. Ascertain protégé developmental level. First the pair determines the existing developmental level of the protégé to perform the specific competency, skill set, or task being practised at the time. A protégé’s developmental level can be determined in three ways: (a) by the mentor’s formal and informal observations of the protégé’s actual performance of the skill set/task, (b) by the pair’s informal conversations about the specific progress in it, and (c) by the protégé’s answers to the mentor’s direct questions about his/her mastery of that skill set. The levels of a protégé’s development are task-specific and changeable overtime, represent different competencies, and encompass temporary indicators of a protégés professional progress (pp. 296-297).
2. Match mentor’s response. After determining the protégé’s task-specific level of performance, the mentor must appropriately adapt his/her mentorship response to

correspond to the existing developmental level of the protégé regarding the skill set in question: A1 matches with D1, A2 with D2, and so on. This matching process represents the essence of Adaptive Mentorship (p. 297). The key is to correctly match the mentor's response with the protégé's developmental level. The response must be inverse in magnitude to the protégé's developmental level.

3. Monitor protégé's development. The mentorship pair continually and mutually monitors the protégé's ongoing level of development in each professional category, while the mentor accordingly synchronizes his/her adaptive response to match, in inverse proportions, the protégé's changing level(s) (p. 298).

AM is a relatively new model of mentorship; however, to date it has been successfully used within EAL students' writing development (Khoii, 2011) and within the graduate research assistantship mentorship triad (Godden, Tregunna, & Kutsyuruba, 2014). Furthermore, it has been suggested as a model to use with health professional students to assess their developmental needs (Jennings & Couture, 2011; Hawrysh, 2011).

AM is a model that provides flexibility and ensures that the protégé has the best experience and that his or her developmental goals are being met. It does not have to be a labour-intensive project and can be used on a short-term basis, as with student learning, or in longer term arrangements, as in a formal workplace mentorship program. This model would be a great fit for a mentorship program in a public health agency because the employees are a mix of diverse professions, and a mentoring program should have flexibility to meet the needs of the target audience.

Organizational Readiness for Change

In order for the implementation of the mentorship program to be successful the agency and the employees need to be ready to embrace the change. Holt and colleagues (2007) define readiness for change as an attitude that is influenced by what is being changed, how the change is being made, the circumstances in which the change is occurring and individual characteristics of the people being asked to change. As well, readiness reflects the extent to which individuals are inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to change the way things currently are (Holt et al., 2007).

Most readiness for change tools measure readiness from one of four categories: the change content, the change process, the organization context, and the attributes of the employees (Holt et al., 2007). To be effective at measuring change, Holt and colleagues (2007) suggest that readiness for change instruments should contain all four categories. I will be using these four categories as a lens to determine where the LPHA currently sits in regards to its' readiness for change.

Holt et al. (2007) state the importance of the change being framed in a way that aligns with agency goals and objectives. This alignment shows the employees that the change is important and that the agency is serious about the change. In theory, this process should create acceptance in employees who are engaged and committed to the agency's goals and objectives.

As mentioned previously, the development and implementation of a mentorship program is aligned with the following agency priorities: (a) collaboration within departments and teams, (b) strengthening internal relationships, and (c) the development of a learning framework to support employee learning and development. I believe that aligning new programs with agency

priorities shows thought and strategy were put into the new intuitive, which would create acceptance in the majority of the employees.

The change process refers to how the change is going to be implemented. To create acceptance, employees need to feel that the change is supported by agency leaders (Holt et al., 2007). Support would be in the form of open and clear communication about the change, participation in the change, and involvement in the planning stages. When leaders are seen supporting the change, this support adds confidence that the change will be positive and is in the agency's best interest.

All new initiatives at the LPHA are approved by senior leaders before implementation. The mentorship program would include participation from all employees, including senior leaders, so participation in the program is highly likely. As well, senior leaders will be involved in the AI process, which will create additional recognition of senior leader acceptance. However, the biggest risk to change acceptance at the LPHA is communication. The LPHA is currently reviewing its communication strategy. Communication is an area that has been identified as needing improvement. Missed, incorrect, or untimely communication about change can create resistance and be perceived as purposefully deceptive, which creates feelings of mistrust. In order for the implementation to be accepted, I am going to recommend strategic communication strategies to raise awareness, and hopefully excitement about the program. Strategies could include awareness raising activities at the all staff Town Hall meetings, and team and committee meetings; advertising through our existing internal communication tools; and a Q & A section about the program on the internal staff website.

Organizational context refers to the overall climate in the organization, which can include such things as the perceived need for the change and internal relationships (Holt et al., 2007). It

is difficult to determine when the program will be implemented and therefore what the climate will be like at that time. My prediction is that the upcoming vacancies created at the senior leader level will result in a reshuffling at all levels. This will create an atmosphere of uncertainty that could be a disadvantage to a new program. Staff may feel overwhelmed with all of the changes, and, as a result, this factor could hinder acceptance of the program. On the other hand, a mentorship program that could provide a staff member with an experienced mentor in a time of uncertainty may be an incentive for acceptance.

Employee attributes refers to the cognitive piece of readiness, which suggests that employees must have the ability and feel usefulness for the change (Holt et al., 2007). In my opinion, this will not be an issue. The employees at the LPHA have the abilities needed to participate in a mentorship program. Most will find it useful, especially if they are considering a different position within the agency.

Summary

A program planning framework will be used to guide the development of a formal mentorship program at a LPHA. The framework provides an outline of key steps to follow in the development of new programs. AM will be proposed as a theoretical model in which to frame the mentorship program. The AM model offers a theory in which the mentor adapts her or his behaviour based on the needs of the protégé and would be an appropriate fit for the LPHA.

Based on my own assessment,

I feel the LPHA will accept the change that will come with the implementation of a formal mentoring program.

Chapter 5: Implications for Practice

This chapter outlines my thoughts on the benefits and challenges to implementation and my reflections on graduate work.

Benefits and Challenges to Implementation

In addition to the broader benefits identified above for the agency, mentor, and protégé from a mentorship program, I envision further possible benefits of program implementation as well. For the agency, the program provides an opportunity to be a role model to other public health agencies in the province. To my knowledge at the time of this writing, there are few, if any, other public health agencies who have developed and implemented a formal mentorship program. Often public health agencies share resources or work collaboratively on projects, and I foresee this mentorship program development plan, as well as the subsequent program implementation, being a valuable, sharable resource. For the employees, I hope there will be a renewed commitment to their chosen profession, and an appreciation of the important jobs we all play, no matter what our profession. For myself, I will get more experience in program development, which would be helpful with my professional development and career trajectory.

In addition to the benefits, some challenges with implementation may arise. The first is ensuring that the satellite offices are included in all stages of development and implementation. This collaboration will need to be thought out in advance and a solution worked into each stage of the planning because it is important that all employees have access to the program. Another anticipated challenge is the administration of the program. Individuals already feel overworked so we will need to take that into consideration when developing the program to ensure that program administration does not become burdensome. If participants have to write detailed reports or complete complicated forms, this paperwork may deter participation. The final

anticipated challenge is ensuring that everyone sees this program as an opportunity for professional and personal development. As much as a mentorship program can break down “silos” in a workplace, it can in some ways create them because not everyone is going to feel that the program suits his or her needs. I hope that the appreciative enquiry process can serve as an avenue in which this disconnect can be addressed.

Reflections on Graduate Work

I started working part-time on my Masters of Education in July 2009. Throughout the past five years, I have learned a lot about life, myself, and the way I work. During the first four years of graduate work, I was very busy. Between my young son and family, working full-time, working as a clinical instructor at a local university, graduate studies, looking after ill family members, and trying to help my 85 year old great aunt with daily activities so she could stay in her apartment, I was a little overwhelmed at times. I realized I had to make some choices and streamline my life, which I did. I believe the work on this final project gave me the push I needed to finally prioritize and for that I am grateful.

This final project has been a roller coaster ride of emotion. I agonized over every paragraph I wrote, sometimes sitting for hours staring at the page, starting to write something then erasing it all. Other times, I was dedicating days to work but accomplishing nothing at all, not for lack of wanting to but just having a complete block or finding anything else that ‘had to’ be done except writing. Needless to say, my house is very well organized.

Now that I am at the point of project completion, I can appreciate the insights this process has given me. For example, I am a far better writer than I was when I started. I also have learned that if I break tasks down into smaller bits it does not seem as overwhelming. As well, I need assimilation time. I need to let the ideas and thoughts percolate and simmer in my mind,

sometimes for too long, unfortunately, before I feel ready to write. I found I was most successful when I wrote for a while then left it for several minutes and then went back to it. This strategy has proved to be a beneficial tactic in my professional life as well. I get more work done when I structure my work in this way.

Countless numbers of people were supportive of me and understood how difficult graduate work can be; however I expected life to stand still so that I could do my work in peace. That expectation was completely unrealistic. I have learned that only I am responsible for doing the things in my life that need to be done, and it is unfair to put that burden on anyone else. I would not change this experience because I believe I am a better person, personally and professionally, as a result of participating in this program.

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