THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS INCUBATOR MENTORSHIP STRATEGIES ON BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, SUCCESSFUL AND ETHICAL SMALL BUSINESSES

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR A. NICOLAIDES

JANUARY 2022

DECLARATION

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I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at the University of South Africa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To undertake a study of this scale required the involvement of various individuals and organisations. These role-players contributed significantly to motivating, inspiring, and supporting me throughout the entire study period. Firstly, I would like to extend my appreciation to the University of South Africa for affording me this opportunity and providing the required academic and administrative support during this journey. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge the support provided by Professor Angelo Nicolaides, who always availed himself and was willing to read through all drafts and provide speedy responses in a professional and constructive manner.

A special note of thanks to those Business Incubators in the eThekwini metropolitan region, who granted research permission and facilitated the process of acquiring data for this research. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my employer, Ithala Development Finance Corporation Limited, for supporting me and affording me the required study leave when required.

My family members played a significant role too, through their support and patience during this journey. I extend special gratitude to my wife, Thiloshini Muthusamy, and children, Marissa, Mikaylen and Kaylea. In addition to my father Muthusamy Parasuraman, for his ongoing interest in the progress of my studies. I acknowledge my late mother, Soobathrie Parasuraman, who has always been an inspiration to me to persevere in life against all odds.

ABSTRACT

This study sought to understand the influence of various business incubator mentorship strategies on creating sustainable, successful, and ethical SMMEs. The study was conducted within business incubators in the eThekwini metropolitan region. Mentorship forms a vital part of the business incubation process, serving to make a positive impact on the success, sustainability, and ethical business practices of SMMEs. Despite the efforts made by business incubators, the failure rate of SMMEs remains very high, hence the need for this manner of exploratory study. The study was qualitative in nature and made use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with mentees within a business incubator setting, management of business incubators, and government officials to gain deep insight about their lived experiences of business incubator mentorship. The information gathered from the interviews was analysed through thematic analysis using Atlas.ti software.

In the main, the study revealed inconsistencies and challenges in the implementation of mentorship strategies in business incubators. There is a need for mentorship to be customised, based on the specific needs of certain categories such as women, youth, and rural entrepreneurs, therefore, entrepreneurs do not prefer a "one-size-fits-all" approach. There is greater need for the alignment of mentorship programmes to the needs of the entrepreneurs. In addition, participants believed that programmes ought to be structured and relevant and should offer a formal and informal (practical) component, so as to ensure balance. There is a great need for a suitable mentor reward system linked to mentee performance, to ensure that mentors remain committed, and that they remain in mentorship programmes for longer. More commitment is required from both mentees and mentors. Accessibility to business incubators was cited as a challenge. A conceptual framework illustrating the interconnectedness between the different variables is illustrated in chapter 5. There are some key recommendations for various stakeholders involved in business mentorship and if applied correctly, it could greatly assist in dealing with some of the challenges and ultimately contribute to lowering the failure rate of SMMEs.

Key terms: Mentorship strategies; business incubator; sustainable small businesses; ethical small businesses; successful small businesses; mentor; mentee; mentor

reward system; mentorship effectiveness; start-up; entrepreneurship; ethical business practices; small business failure; mentorship interventions; business support; business skills; entrepreneurial skills; critical success factors; performance measurement; business incubator challenges; misalignment of mentorship; mentorship capacity.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie probeer om die invloed van verskillende inkubator-mentorskapstrategieë in die sakewêreld te verstaan ten einde volhoubare, suksesvolle en etiese KMMO's te vestig. Die studie is onderneem in sake-inkubators in die eThekwini- metropolitaanse streek. Mentorskap maak 'n belangrike deel uit van die sake-inkubasieproses, wat bydra om 'n positiewe impak op die sukses, volhoubaarheid en etiese sakepraktyke van KMMO's te hê. Ondanks pogings deur sake-inkubators bly die mislukkingskoers van KMMO's baie hoog; daarom bestaan die behoefte aan hierdie soort verkennende studie. Die studie was kwalitatief van aard en het gebruik gemaak van semigestruktureerde onderhoude van aangesig tot aangesig met mentees in 'n sake-inkubator-omgewing, bestuur van sake-inkubators, en staatsdiensamptenare om insig te verwerf in hul geleefde ervarings van sake-inkubatormentorskap. Die inligting wat uit die onderhoude ingesamel is, is tematies ontleed deur gebruikmaking van Atlas.ti-sagteware.

Die studie het oor die algemeen inkonsekwenthede en uitdagings in die implementering van mentorskapstrategieë in sake-inkubators blootgelê. Die behoefte bestaan dat mentorskap doelgemaak moet word op grond van die spesifieke behoeftes van sekere kategorieë soos vroue, die jeug, en landelike entrepreneurs. Gevolglik verkies entrepreneurs nie 'n "een-grootte-pas-almal"-benadering nie. Daar is 'n groter behoefte aan die instelling van mentorskapprogramme volgens die entrepreneurs se behoeftes. Daarbenewens glo deelnemers dat programme gestruktureer moet word en relevant moet wees, en 'n formele en informele (praktiese) komponent moet bied om balans te verseker. Daar bestaan 'n groot behoefte aan 'n geskikte mentorbeloningstelsel wat aan mentee-werkverrigting gekoppel is, om te verseker dat mentors toegewyd bly, en dat hulle langer by mentorskapprogramme betrokke bly. Groter toewyding word van sowel mentees as mentors vereis. Toeganklikheid tot sake-inkubators word as 'n uitdaging beskou. 'n Konseptuele raamwerk wat die onderlinge verband tussen die verskillende veranderlikes illustreer, word in hoofstuk 5 gegee. Daar is enkele kernaanbevelings vir verskillende belanghebbendes wat by sakementorskap betrokke is en, indien dit korrek toegepas word, kan dit grootliks bydra tot die hantering van sommige uitdagings en uiteindelik die mislukkingskoers van KMMO's help verlaag.

Sleutelterme: Mentorskapstrategieë; sake-inkubator; volhoubare kleinsakeondernemings; etiese kleinsakeonderneming; suksesvolle kleinsakeondernemings; mentor; mentee; mentorbeloningstelsel; mentorskapdoeltreffendheid; beginbesigheid; entrepreneurskap; etiese sakepraktyke; mislukking van kleinsakeondernemings; mentorskap-ingrypings; ondernemingsteun; sakevaardighede; entrepreneursvaardighede; kritieke suksesfaktore; prestasiemeting; sake-inkubator-uitdagings; mentorskapwansporing; mentorskapkapasiteit.

OKUCASHUNIWE

Lolu cwaningo lufune ukuqonda umthelela wamasu okwelulekwa ahlukene wokufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi ekudaleni ama-SMME esimeme, aphumelelayo, nanesimilo. Ucwaningo lwenziwe ngaphakathi kokufukanyelwa kwamabhizinisi esifundeni seTheku. Umthelela nezeluleko ezinikwa ngumeluleki ziyingxenye ebalulekile yenqubo yokufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi, usiza ukwenza umthelela omuhle empumelelweni, ekusimameni, nasezinkambisweni zebhizinisi elinesimilo zama-SMME. Naphezu kwemizamo eyenziwa ngokufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi, izinga lokuhluleka kwama-SMME lisalokhu liphezulu kakhulu, yingakho kunesidingo salolu hlobo locwaningo lokuhlola. Lolu cwaningo belusezingeni eliphezulu ngokwendalo futhi lwasebenzisa izingxoxo zobuso nobuso ezingahlelekile nezenziwe endaweni yokwelulekwa kokufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi, ukuphathwa kokufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi, kanye nezikhulu zikahulumeni ukuze zithole ukuqonda okujulile mayelana nempilo yazo ekwelulekweni kokufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi. Ulwazi oluqoqwe ezingxoxweni lwahlaziywa ngendlela yokuhlaziya imininingwane esizingeni eliphezulu kusetshenziswa uhlelo lwekhompyutha i-Atlas.ti.

Ngokuyinhloko, ucwaningo luveze ukungahambisani nezinselelo ekusetshenzisweni kwamasu okwelulekwa ekufukanyelweni kwebhizinisi. Kunesidingo sokuthi ukwelulekwa kwenziwe ngendlela efanele, kuncike ezidingweni ezithile zezigaba ezithile njengabesifazane, intsha, nosomabhizinisi basemakhaya, ngakho-ke, osomabhizinisi abakhethi indlela "yokulingana konke". Kunesidingo esikhulu sokuhambisana kwezinhlelo zokwelulekwa ngokwezidingo zosomabhizinisi. Ukwengeza, ababambiqhaza babekholelwa ukuthi izinhlelo kufanele zakhiwe futhi zifaneleke futhi kufanele zinikeze ingxenye esemthethweni nengakahleleki (esebenzayo), ukuze kuqinisekiswe ukulingana.

Kunesidingo esikhulu sohlelo olufanele lokuklomelisa umeluleki oluxhumene nokusebenza kwabaqeqeshi, ukuze kuqinisekiswe ukuthi abeluleki bahlala bezinikele, nokuthi bahlala ezinhlelweni zokweluleka isikhathi eside. Ukuzinikela okwengeziwe kuyadingeka kubo bobabili abeluleki nabalulekwayo. Ukufinyeleleka kokufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi kuchazwe njengenselele. Uhlaka lomqondo olukhombisa ukuxhumana

phakathi kwezinhlobonhlobo ezahlukene luyakhonjiswa esahlukweni 5. Kuneziphakamiso ezithile ezibalulekile kubabambiqhaza abahlukene ababambe iqhaza ekuqeqesheni ibhizinisi futhi uma zisetshenziswa ngendlela efanele, zingasiza kakhulu ekubhekaneni nezinye zezinselele futhi ekugcineni zibe negalelo ekwehliseni izinga lokwehluleka kwama-SMMEs.

Amagama asemqoka: Amasu okwelulekwa; ukufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi; amabhizinisi amancane asimeme; amabhizinisi amancane anesimilo; amabhizinisi amancane aphumelelayo; umeluleki; olulekwayo; uhlelo lokuklonyeliswa komeluleki; ukusebenza kahle kokwelulekwa; ukuqalisa; ukuhweba; izinkambiso zebhizinisi elinesimilo; ukwehluleka kwebhizinisi elincane; ukungenelela kokwelulekwa; ukuxhaswa kwebhizinisi; amakhono ebhizinisi; amakhono okuhweba; izici ezibalulekile zempumelelo; isilinganiso sokusebenza; izinselela zokufukanyelwa kwebhizinisi; ukungahlelwa kahle kokwelulekwa; amandla okuqukatha ukwelulekwa.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APA-   American Psychological Association

BAC-   Business Advisory Centre

BER-   Bureau for Economic Research

BIs-   Business Incubators

CAQDAS-   Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

CDA-   Cooperatives Development Agency

CIDB-   Construction Industry Development Board

COMENSA- Coaches and Mentors of South Africa

COVID-19- Corona Virus strain of 2019

DSBD-   Department of Small Business Development

DFI-   Development Finance Institution

DTIC-   Department of Trade, Industry and Competition

EIP-   Enterprise Incubation Programme

EU-   European Union

GDP-   Gross Domestic Product

IDC-   Industrial Development Corporation

ILO-   International Labour Organisation

KI-   Karolinska Institute

MBA-   Master of Business Administration

MEC-   Member of the Executive Committee

NBIA-   American National Business Incubators Association

NVP-   New Venture Planning model

SAGE-   Surrender, Accept, Gift and Extending model

SEDA-   Small Enterprise Development Agency

SIYB-   Start and Improve Your Business

SME-   Small and Medium Enterprise

SMMEs-   Small, medium and micro-enterprises

UKZN-   University of KwaZulu-Natal

UNISA-   University of South Africa

DUT-   Durban University of Technology

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the background and context to this study, followed by the problem statement, aim of the study, research objectives, research questions, and significance of the study. It concludes with an overview of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

This study concentrated on the effectiveness of small business mentorship within Business Incubators (BIs). The study was undertaken in the eThekwini Metropolitan region. To address the high rate of unemployment in South Africa and to grow the economy, there is a need to develop and grow small businesses. Small businesses are commonly known by the acronym SMMEs and are regarded as a major contributor in any economy in respect of job creation, therefore, they need to be sustainable, successful, and conduct business in an ethical manner. Although mentorship programmes do exist in different forms, sponsored by various Government agencies, the private sector and through various business incubation programmes, SMMEs continue to fail at alarming rates in South Africa (Bushe, 2019:1). According to Lings (2014: 169-170), the failure rate is particularly high in the start-up and establishment phases of an enterprise.

According to the Small Enterprise Development Agency (2021: 2), the SMME sector has most recently suffered serious damage due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the report, this sector is fighting for survival, as some of the damage is permanent. The report further emphasises the importance of support for entrepreneurs, not only financial support, but of business support and mentorship, to adapt and innovate in the changing world, post COVID-19. BIs and DFIs focus mainly on supporting start-up and early-stage businesses (Ayatse, Kwahar and Iyortsuun, 2017). Mentorship forms an integral part of the incubation and business support package. Therefore, it is important to fully understand the status of mentorship and its effectiveness within the BI setting. According to Ayatse, Kwahar and Iyortsuun (2017: 1), the performance of

a business is greatly enhanced when a firm goes through a business incubation programme. This is mainly due to the handholding, nurturing, and mentorship process that forms an essential part of business incubation, according to Ayatse, Kwahar and Iyortsuun (2017).

Other studies conducted by Xiao and North (2017: 615) in China to investigate the effects of technical support and entrepreneurial mentoring in a technology incubator programme between 2009 and 2013 also support this view. Xiao and North argue that technical support and entrepreneurial mentoring from the technology incubator is relevant and contributes to a highly positive effect on businesses in the early years of establishment. Alzaghal and Mukthar (2017: 544) have indicated that, in developing countries, there has been little research done on a success factors model and framework for mentoring in a BI. Alzaghal and Mukthar have further suggested that additional research was needed around mentorship and BIs, given that the economic situation in developing countries is far more critical and challenging than in developed countries.

It then follows that there is a direct link between mentorship and business performance and sustainability. The more effective mentorship is, the greater the likelihood of increasing business performance and long-term sustainability (Alzaghal and Mukthar, 2017). This has necessitated further research to establish the status of mentorship and its effectiveness in BIs so as to identify factors that are critical for success; and then secondly to make recommendations to stakeholders as to how mentorship can be improved in BIs. This was done through a research-led review.

According to the Small Enterprise Development Agency (2021: 2), the number of SMMEs in South Africa declined by almost 11% from 2,65 million in 2019 (Quarter 3), to 2,36 million in 2020 (Quarter 3). According to this report, the majority of SMMEs, some 1,6 million, are recorded as informal, while approximately 654,000 reflect as formal businesses. Due to the volume of SMMEs, there would have been practical challenges to undertake countrywide research of SMMEs, particularly in the context of business incubation. To manage time, resources, travel, and work with manageable population and sample sizes, the BIs within the eThekwini metropolitan region was

chosen as the study population. Furthermore, the researcher resides within the eThekwini metropolitan area, and given the various restrictions under the COVID-19 pandemic as far as travel and contact is concerned, it made sense to conduct the study within the local area.

1.2 DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING SMMEs

This study was based on mentorship of SMMEs within the context of BIs, therefore, it was necessary to understand what an SMME means. There are various interpretations of an SMME, mainly due to the way an SMME is classified globally. In some parts of the world, such as the United Kingdom, Europe and certain parts of Asia, small businesses are categorised into small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In South Africa, they are referred to as SMMEs (National Small Business Act Number 102 of 1996). Therefore, it was important to understand the definition of an SMME from within the South African context. A good starting point was the National Small Business Act Number 102 of 1996.

According to (South African Government, 2018), the National Small Business Act Number 102 of 1996 defines a "small business" as a

> separate and distinct business entity, including cooperative enterprises and non-governmental organisations, managed by one owner or more which, including its branches or subsidiaries, if any, is predominantly carried on in any sector or subsector of the economy mentioned in the schedule and which can be classified as a micro-, a very small, a small or a medium enterprise by satisfying the criteria mentioned in columns.

The classification schedule referred to above was subsequently amended through the National Small Business Amendment Act Number 26 of 2003. According to the South African Government (2018), SMMEs are classified according to the Table 1.1 indicated below:

Table 1.1 Schedule of Classification-SMMEs.

Sector or subsector in accordance with the standard Industrial Classification	Size or class	The total fulltime equivalent of paid employees	Total turnover	Total gross asset value (fixed property excluded)
Agriculture	Medium	100	R5m	R5m
	Small	50	R3m	R3m
	Very Small	10	R0.50m	R0.50m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Mining and Quarrying	Medium	200	R39m	R23m
	Small	50	R10m	R6m
	Very Small	20	R4m	R2m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Manufacturing	Medium	200	R51m	R19m
	Small	50	R13m	R5m
	Very Small	20	R5m	R2m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Electricity, Gas and Water	Medium	200	R51m	R19m
	Small	50	R13m	R5m
	Very Small	20	R5.10m	R1.90m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Construction	Medium	200	R26m	R5m
	Small	50	R6m	R1m
	Very Small	20	R3m	R0.50m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Retail and Motor Trade and Repair Services	Medium	200	R39m	R6m
	Small	50	R19m	R3m
	Very Small	20	R4m	R0.60m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Wholesale Trade, Commercial Agents and Allied Services	Medium	200	R64m	R10m
	Small	50	R32m	R5m
	Very Small	20	R6m	R0.60m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Catering, Accommodation and other Trade	Medium	200	R13m	R3m
	Small	50	R6m	R1m
	Very Small	20	R5.10m	R1.90m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Transport, Storage and communications	Medium	200	R26m	R6m
	Small	50	R13m	R3m
	Very Small	20	R3m	R0.60m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Finance and Business Services	Medium	200	R26m	R5m
	Small	50	R13m	R3m
	Very Small	20	R3m	R0.50m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Community, Social and Personal Services	Medium	200	R13m	R6m
	Small	50	R6m	R3m
	Very Small	20	R1m	R0.60m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m

Source: Adapted from the National Small Business Amendment Act, 26 of 2003, Government Gazette (2003).

An SMME goes through various stages of development and growth (Fatoki, 2014:922). According to Fatoki (2014: 922), a new SMME goes through two phases, the first being the start-up phase, which lasts approximately three months. During this time, the SMME owner identifies markets, products and puts into place the structure of the business, including staff. Fatoki further describes the second phase as one which is larger, lasting between 3-42 months. This is regarded as the growth or establishment phase. During this phase, the SMME begins to trade and compete. Beyond 42 months, the SMME then becomes an established SMME. The start-up and establishment phases are critical, as this is when the highest failure rate of SMMEs occur, as pointed to in several studies worldwide (Fatoki, 2014).

1.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT: BACKGROUND

The South African government has been increasing its focus on SMMEs over the past few years, and in order to demonstrate the level of importance that SMMEs are given, a separate Ministry of Small Business Development was established in 2014. The purpose of the Ministry is to drive SMME development and growth in the country. It is widely acknowledged that SMMEs are regarded as key drivers for the creation of job opportunities, eradication of unemployment and reduction of poverty (OECD, 2019). Although SMMEs employ some 68% of the labour force, as stated by (SEDA, 2021: 17), and are the largest contributor to GDP, the factors leading to their success and failure are still little understood, and require further research and analysis. The aspect of high early-stage failure rate is concerning especially in the first 3½ years, which is regarded as the start-up or establishment phase (Bushe, 2019:1). According to Bushe (2019: 1), approximately 40% of SMMEs fail in their first year and of the rest, 60% fail in the second year, while 90% fail within the first ten years from commencement. Bushe argued that although there is major emphasis by government and the private sector on supporting SMMEs through the creation of business opportunities and funding programmes, these two aspects alone are clearly not adequate to ensure the sustainability of an SMME.

According to Herrington and Kew (2018: 25), the overall business discontinuance rate in South Africa, which is a measure of entrepreneurship sustainability, has increased

from 4.5% (2016) to 6.0% (2017). Herrington and Kew have further pointed out that 36% of businesses in South Africa closed during 2017, because they were not financially sustainable and profitable, while the new business ownership rate decreased from 4.1% (2013) to 3.3% (2017). According to Herrington and Kew (2018: 25), the lack of profitability could be attributed to poor business skills, weak ideas, and inefficient support structures. It then follows that mentorship interventions ought to be playing a significant role in reducing the number of business failures. The question that then arises is as to whether mentorship is focusing on the appropriate and relevant areas of skills development and knowledge that can lead to creating sustainable, successful, and ethical SMMEs. Secondly, there are several BIs throughout the country that have been in existence for more than a decade to deal with mentorship and business support for SMMEs, yet little success is evident (Hewitt and Janse van Rensburg, 2020: 1-9). These alarming statistics support the need for further research on SMME mentorship in the context of BIs, with focus on those SMMEs in the start-up and early-stage categories.

It would be of enormous benefit to the South African economy in terms of job creation and poverty alleviation if the failure rate of SMMEs could be lowered (Fatoki, 2014: 922-927). This would mean that a large portion of SMMEs would be able to develop, grow, provide employment opportunities, and make an overall meaningful contribution towards the South African economy. Several newly established businesses often become involved in procuring government tenders irregularly through corrupt activities, such as bribery to secure contracts (OECD, 2014). This trend is highly concerning when considering that SMMEs are meant to be providing a significant solution to unemployment and poverty eradication. Such corrupt practices from an early stage is a poor start to building ethical business practices. Ethical practices in any business are crucial for success, and this study argues that mentorship can play a significant role in this regard if one of the focus areas of mentorship is ethical business practices, particularly at the start-up or early stage.

Friedrich (2016: 3) reported on an academic study that was carried out to establish the areas that ought to receive focus in order to strengthen SMMEs in South Africa. Friedrich indicates that South African universities have not made much of a

contribution to small-scale businesses. Friedrich has further stated that more research was required in this area and an increased training initiative aimed at entrepreneurship and business performance was needed. This once again reinforces the need for further research to be done around mentorship and its effectiveness within the context of BIs. According to Business Mentors (2014: 1), mentorship in the context of the business environment is defined as a professional relationship where one person who is experienced and skilled (mentor) encourages and develops the skills, knowledge, and capacity of others (mentees) to maximise their business potential and increase performance. Therefore, in the context of this definition it follows that mentorship can play a significant role towards building successful and sustainable SMMEs. SMMEs are meant to be benefitting from such mentorship interventions in order to become sustainable, successful, and ethical.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem identified within a BI setting was the influence of various mentorship strategies on small business sustainability, success, and ethical business practices. According to Chebii, Bwisa and Sakwa (2016: 458), SMMEs constitute approximately 90% of all new businesses established globally. Although SMMEs play a significant role in the economy of any country, SMME research in the past has predominantly focused on access to funding and markets, while overlooking a potentially crucial aspect such as business mentorship, to possibly ensure SMME sustainability (Chebii, Bwisa and Sakwa, 2016: 458). The failure rate of SMMEs remains very high in South Africa, despite the efforts that are currently being made by Government and the private sector, through the establishment of BIs to provide mentorship to SMMEs (Bushe, 2019: 1). Mentorship forms an integral part of business incubation and is meant to have a significant influence on business sustainability, success and ethical practices, yet the failure rate of SMMEs remain very high.

Studies conducted in the field of entrepreneurial mentoring in Kenya by Chebii et al. (2016: 467) show that SMME mentorship needs greater input and policies from the side of government. According to the authors, in the absence of policies, there is a lack of direction for BIs. Women continue to be on the sidelines when it comes to women entrepreneurship and mentorship (Okeke-Uzodike and Ndinda, 2018: 147).

According to the Okeke-Uzodike and Ndinda (2018: 147), implementation challenges on the part of Government are a stumbling block in dealing with business mentorship programmes. This is mainly due to the unstructured and ineffective nature of programmes directed towards women, where the needs of women entrepreneurs have not been considered in the design of mentorship programmes, whether inside or outside a BI setting. Recent studies conducted by Kapinga et al. (2018: 1-14) in Tanzania, focusing on women entrepreneurs and BIs, pointed to the general lack of contextualisation in these incubators, with a lack of customised and relevant solutions.

Shittu (2017: 9) indicates a dearth of literature specifically addressing the mentoring of youth through incubation programmes in developing countries. Shittu further highlights that the suitability of what kind of mentoring works for whom is not clearly understood. According to Shittu, this unclear picture is a major constraint to policy and youth entrepreneurship. The issue of BI mentorship for youth is vital in developing countries, due to the high levels of unemployment and poverty. In South Africa, it is a strategic focus area of government, aiming to reduce the level of unemployment among the youth.

Rural entrepreneurship has been isolated over the years, and has lost impetus in academia (Agbenyegah and Dlamini, 2018: 47-160). According to the authors, the challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs are enormous, and very different to those faced by urban entrepreneurs. A simple example would be the education level and standard of living of a rural entrepreneur, as compared to an urban entrepreneur. There is a general of lack of understanding around rural entrepreneurship and a need for tailor-made initiatives in BIs in order to address rural entrepreneurs. (Agbenyegah and Dlamini, 2018: 47-160). There is no strategy evident from Government to deal with rural accessibility to mentorship in BIs, when considering that most mentorship takes place in formal settings in town and cities.

The measurement of mentorship effectiveness is an area that is lacking in SMME mentorship research. According to McCarthy (2014: 197), there is limited research that has been undertaken in measuring the effectiveness or success of mentorship programmes. Similar views were expressed by Cunningham (2016: 4). There is limited

literature on performance measurement of BI mentorship. To measure the success and effectiveness of business mentorship, it is critical to have clearly defined performance standards prior to commencement of the business mentorship programme.

Deepali, Jain and Chaudhary (2016: 135-152) maintain that mentors are regarded as volunteers, but that at the same time, their work is undermined. Although the role of mentors was seen as voluntary, in today's world mentors have become more professional and are keenly interested in financial reward. According to Deepali et al., past research focused on self-motivated mentors undertaking mentorship programmes without financial reward in mind. There is very limited research focusing on a reward system for mentors. Given the way mentorship has evolved over the years, it would make sense for a mentor reward system to be linked to the mentee performance and success, through a contractual arrangement. Mentors ought to be rewarded for the value that they add and the performance of the entrepreneur. Deepali et al. (2016:136) suggested that a new approach for mentoring was required, and indicated that more research was required in this area.

One of the key challenges facing South Africa is the high level of corruption in the realm of business (OECD, 2019). If SMMEs are to develop, grow, and become sustainable enterprises, business needs to be conducted in an ethical manner. One of the focus areas that is lacking in mentorship is ethical business practices.

Mentorship theory covered in this study (chapter two) articulates the need for both the mentor and mentee to be actively involved in a mentoring relationship, in order for positive outcomes to be achieved. Theory shows that the role of a mentor has evolved from being authoritarian and directive to a facilitation role. In addition, old paradigms of mentorship were time focused whereas new paradigms are based on goals (Zachary, 2000). It is crucial for the mentor and mentee to set goals at the beginning of the mentoring relationship and undertake a review throughout the relationship. Based on theory (Zachary, 2000), the style of mentorship intervention influences the success of the mentorship relationship. A mentorship relationship that adopts a directive-disengaged style is not beneficial. This type of mentorship style is prevalent in instances where mentors are volunteers and due to the absence of a mentor reward

system that is linked to the performance of the mentee, the mentor becomes disengaged and directive in the relationship. Mentorship theory suggests that a style that is based on low directivity and high involvement achieves the best outcomes (Zachary, 2000).

It is in this context that it is crucial for a mentorship strategy to be well-structured and relevant, such that it contributes to a reduction in the small business failure rate. To make a meaningful contribution to the limited existing body of knowledge on this subject, the researcher felt that it was important for this research to focus on understanding real experiences, perspectives and challenges relating to small business mentorship in the context of business incubation. Such insight would assist in understanding the extent to which mentorship in the context of business incubation contributes to the high failure rate of SMMEs.

The development and growth of SMMEs continues to remain high on the agenda of government. Therefore, making recommendations to institutions and government on the findings relating to a mentorship study is of great value and benefit. It assists such bodies to improve current mentorship strategies with the aim of reducing SMME failure rates, thereby promoting long-term sustainability and success. Secondly, through this study, it is expected that a contribution will be made to the gaps in current literature on this subject.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to gain an in depth understanding of the mentorship strategies used within a BI setting as follows:

1.5.1 to determine the role of mentorship programmes within the BIs and their contribution to the performance and sustainability of businesses;

1.5.2 to assess whether mentorship programmes are focusing on the appropriate and relevant development skills required to ensure business success, sustainability and ethical business practices of SMMEs;

1.5.3 to investigate whether contractual relationships exist between mentors and mentees, that contain measurable outputs and agreed timeframes;

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1.5.4 to establish whether the needs of entrepreneurs are considered when identifying mentorship interventions;

1.5.5 to evaluate international best practice in respect of mentorship practices applied in other parts of the world, including developing countries;

1.5.6 to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on SMME mentorship, given the limited research on a success factors framework for mentoring within a BI setting; and

1.5.7 to identify any gaps in current mentorship frameworks with a view to recommending specific mentorship interventions that could stimulate growth and sustainability of SMMEs.

The study comprised of both an empirical component and a literature review that was aimed at finally recommending suitable mentorship strategies to build successful, sustainable and ethical SMMEs.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the problem statement and aim of the study outlined above, the following primary and secondary objectives were formulated:

1.6.1 Primary objective

To investigate the effectiveness of mentorship strategies used by BIs in endeavouring to build sustainable, successful, and ethical SMMEs.

1.6.2 Secondary objectives

To ensure that the primary objective was addressed, the following secondary objectives were formulated:

1.6.2.1 to ascertain the extent to which mentorship challenges within BIs are contributory factors towards the high failure rate of SMMEs;

1.6.2.2 to explore the process used by BIs to match entrepreneurial skills and knowledge gaps to suitable, structured, and relevant mentorship programmes;

1.6.2.3   to ascertain the extent to which BIs evaluate the success of mentorship programmes, to produce measurable entrepreneurial performance;

1.6.2.4   to ascertain the extent to which BIs incentivise and reward mentors, to ensure commitment and performance;

1.6.2.5   to determine the criteria used by BIs to select mentees and mentors.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following were the research questions that arose:

1.7.1   To what extent are current mentorship challenges in BIs contributing to the high failure rate and closure of SMMEs?

1.7.2   What process do BIs apply in selecting suitable, structured, and relevant mentorship interventions that match existing skills and knowledge gaps of entrepreneurs?

1.7.3   How do BIs measure the success of mentorship programmes to ensure measurable entrepreneurial performance?

1.7.4   How do BIs incentivise and reward mentors, to ensure commitment and performance?

1.7.5   What criteria do BIs use to select mentees and mentors?

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The researcher considered this study to be academically important as it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on mentorship of SMMEs. Friedrich (2016: 3) argues that universities in South Africa have not meaningfully contributed to the benefit of SMMEs on the topic of mentorship, noting that more research was needed around training initiatives for entrepreneurs, and improving business performance. In line with this thinking, it is crucial that additional research is done around mentorship, given that it is considered a strategic driver in building successful and sustainable SMMEs. Therefore, it is important to fully understand the status of mentorship and its effectiveness within the BI setting. According to Ayatse, Kwahar and Iyortsuun (2017: 1), the operation and functioning of a business is greatly enriched when a firm goes through a business incubation programme. This is mainly due to the guiding,

protecting, nurturing, and mentorship process that forms an essential part of business incubation. Technical support and entrepreneurial mentoring from the technology incubator is relevant and contributes to a highly positive effect on businesses in the early years of establishment (Xiao and North, 2017). Alzaghal and Mukthar (2017: 544) have indicated that, in developing countries, there has been little research done on a success factors model and framework for mentoring in a BI.

Mentorship within the context of a BI is still developing in South Africa, where it is important to identify knowledge gaps and through the empirical study, provide essential information to the various stakeholders identified below.

For this reason, this study provides insights to management of BIs and mentees on the quality and standards of mentorship within a BI setting. Senior management structures of government agencies, policymakers, industry practitioners and financial institutions have an interest in studies that focus on SMMEs. The study would assist these stakeholders in understanding the lived experiences of mentees in a BI setting and secondly their preferences. Recommendations arising out of the research study can be adopted by such institutions. The findings of the study provide BIs, SMME consultants and development agencies with an opportunity to improve current mentorship strategies. The researcher believes that if recommended strategies are correctly implemented, this may contribute to decreasing the failure rate of SMMEs.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that BIs have a role to play in providing entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and training to become successful entrepreneurs. In doing so, BIs must ensure that mentorship programmes add value to the entrepreneur. This study has demonstrated that, although BIs have been in existence for some time now, there are still several gaps that need to be addressed as far as mentorship is concerned. This is articulated through the conceptual framework indicated in chapter five. The study has shown that improvements can be made in the following areas within a BI setting:

- Mentorship design and approach.
- Mentor selection criteria.
- Performance measurement standards.
- Mentor reward system linked to mentee performance.

- Alignment of entrepreneur needs to suitable programmes.

Through the sharing of this research, relevant stakeholders ought to be able to improve the mentorship offering in BIs, considering the recommendations that have been made above.

1.9 LOCATION OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted within the environment of BIs located in the eThekwini (Durban) Metropolitan Municipality of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. There are nine active BIs within the metropolitan area, however, the researcher was able to secure permission from six of them. These incubators house approximately 150 entrepreneurs on a collective basis at any given time, spread across different sectors of the economy. To conduct a countrywide research would have posed logistical challenges given the extremely large population of SMMEs (formal and informal) in South Africa, as indicated in the introduction. To manage resources, time, travel restrictions and work with convenient and manageable population and sample sizes under COVID-19 conditions, the BIs in the eThekwini area were chosen as the study population.

1.10 CHAPTER ORGANISATION

Chapter One - this is an introductory chapter that focuses on the background and context of the study, research problem, aim of the study, research objectives and significance of the study. Lastly, the chapter also provides a synopsis of each chapter.

Chapter Two - this chapter comprises a theoretical framework dealing with mentorship, including business mentorship, BI models, frameworks and concepts. In addition, this chapter comprises a detailed literature review. The chapter explores the concept of mentorship, the role of BIs as far as mentorship is concerned, government and private sector participation, global mentorship frameworks, and mentorship challenges in BIs. A review of various business management principles relating to mentorship and expert views extracted from various books, journals, and articles, including the study of global best practice is undertaken.

Chapter Three- this chapter focuses on the research design and methodology used in the empirical study. In addition, the sampling strategy, data collection instruments, construction of the research instrument, data quality assurance and trustworthiness are discussed.

Chapter Four- in this chapter, the findings of the study referred to in Chapter Three are presented, interpreted, and critically analysed and discussed. This was done using Atlas.ti software and thematic analysis. A discussion of the results of the empirical study in relation to the literature review is also covered in this chapter.

Chapter Five- this is the final chapter and presents the conceptual framework, conclusion, and confirmation as to whether the research questions have been answered and recommendations to policy and decision makers, based on the issues worthy of solution, literature review and empirical study. The chapter concludes by identifying focus areas for future research with reference to mentorship in the context of BIs.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out the basis for the study. SMMEs face many challenges that range from lack of financial resources to increasing regulatory requirements. The lack of structured and relevant mentorship in a BI setting exacerbates the challenges for SMMEs. Mentorship continues to remain an area that has not been given serious attention. SMMEs play a pivotal role in any economy, therefore, long term sustainability, success, and ethical practices are crucial. This study was able to provide the depth and insight into the aspect of mentorship as a strategy for small business success and sustainability. The next chapter focuses on a theoretical framework for mentorship, including a study of business mentorship frameworks, models, concepts and a detailed literature review on the topic.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW- MENTORSHIP AND CHALLENGES IN A BUSINESS INCUBATOR SETTING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This research concerns the influence of various types of mentorship strategies on the success, sustainability, and ethical business practices of SMMEs. This was the primary objective of the study. In this chapter, the theoretical framework in respect of mentorship is examined, particularly in the context of a BI setting. The end goal of this study is to enhance BI mentorship. To achieve this, it is necessary to start on a firm foundation by exploring various models, frameworks and concepts on mentorship, and in particular, business mentorship. In addition, this chapter focuses on a comprehensive literature review on mentorship in the context of BIs and associated challenges, aimed at addressing both the primary and secondary objectives in this study.

Business incubation in some parts of the world is an old practice (Mian, Lamine and Fayolle, 2016: 1), however, in South Africa it is still new and is often a medium through which mentorship of SMMEs takes place. The literature review undertaken in this chapter also contributed to the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 5 of the study.

2.2 MENTORSHIP MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS

2.2.1 The concept of mentorship

According to the Shandley (1989: 59-66), mentorship is regarded as an intentional process that involves the interaction between at least two individuals. It involves nurturing that is aimed at the growth and development of the protégé. Shandley expands further on this definition by indicating that mentorship is an insightful process through which the mentor passes on wisdom to the protégé. Shandley further states that the entire process must be supportive, protecting, guiding, encompassing an essential element of role modelling. The mentor is usually a person who is an

experienced individual, found in a company or educational institution. Thus, it can be said that mentorship is a professional relationship between the mentor and mentee working towards a common goal of upskilling the less experienced individual over a period.

Memon et al. (2014: 253) note that entrepreneurial mentoring in the context of business mentorship is viewed as an intervention to assist entrepreneurs to survive beyond start-up and establishment. In addition, it serves to assist them to escape having to compromise their own responsibilities, in a sustainable environment, instead of pursuing only profit.

Dawson (2014:137), on the other hand, maintains that years of research on mentoring was yet to converge on a single meaning of mentorship. A review of older literature on mentoring by Jacobi (1991: 505) supports the view that Dawson expressed. Jacobi criticised the lack of a common definition of mentoring, arguing that further research on mentoring was not possible without a clear and concise definition of mentoring. Merriam (1983: 161) also suggested that the concept of mentoring means different things to different people. According to Merriam, psychologists view mentorship as a relationship that contributes to the development of an adult in all aspects of life, whereas in the world of business, the focus is on how the mentor can improve the mentee's career. In the world of education and academia, the mentor is regarded as a teacher. Merriam concluded that future research was needed to clarify the concept of mentorship.

Follow up research on the work of Jacobi by Crisp and Cruz (2009: 525) found that little progress was made in research in recognising and applying a coherent definition and conceptualisation of mentoring. Jacobi further stated that in 1991, there were approximately 15 definitions of mentoring, while Crisp and Cruz indicated that this increased to more than 50 by 2007. Consequently, Dawson (2014: 137) argued that generating more definitions was not a solution to the problem, but instead, that effort should rather be placed on a design framework and mentoring model.

Van der Spuy (2019: 10) suggested that mentorship from the angle of a BI involves the activity of guiding various business events which may include initial business ideas

that can be enhanced, product development, finding resources, establishing sales and distribution networks and decision-making. These activities are guided by experienced business practitioners known as mentors.

2.2.2 Philosophy and history of mentorship

Mentorship certainly has a long history and has evolved over the years. According to Garvey, Stokes and Megginson (2018: 7), the first mention of mentoring in literature dates to approximately 3000 years ago. In this instance, it was mentioned in *The Odyssey,* where the mentor was regarded as an advisor and friend of Telemachus, Odysseus's son. Garvey et al. further point out that "men-" has Indo-European roots as the verb "to think", whereas the word "mentor" is an ancient Greek word, meaning advisor. Therefore, putting it all together would mean an advisor who thinks or applies his mind.

According to Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2014: 361), the word mentor was first used in English in a letter from Lord Chesterfield to his son in 1750. This later evolved into the word "mentoring" and was used by Fenelon between 1651 and 1715. Fenelon's work was primarily centred on learning and leadership development, and his work was widely read throughout Europe. This further led to the development of the Caraccioli mentoring process model, as noted by Cox et al. (2014: 362). This mentoring process model contains the following elements: observation, leading to toleration, leading to reprimand, leading to correction, leading to friendship, leading to awareness.

Although the concept of mentoring is as old as human society itself, according to Cox et al. (2014: 2), it has been gaining greater impetus in practice globally over the past 40 years or so across both the public and private sectors, including small and large enterprises. Clutterbuck et al. (2017:17) shared a similar view, indicating that the widespread emergence of mentorship programmes over the past 35 years drew attention from researchers and organisations, where mentoring has proven a critical tool for change across all aspects of business, sport, education and among disempowered people.

According to McCarthy (2014: 12), there are various approaches to mentoring in the workplace, respectively originating from psychology, sport, education and sociology. Ghosh (2012: 144), on the other hand, argues that although mentoring is deeply rooted in human resource development, it is a tool that can also be used in business. Ghosh further suggests that there are many similarities in the way support is provided by teacher mentors in education and mentors in business. Although this may be the case, there is little written about mentorship models that have evolved from business, and from the SMME sphere in particular. Hamlin and Sage (2011: 755) argue that although mentorship has a long history, much of what is known about mentoring is still regarded as anecdotal, and furthermore, based on best practice.

2.2.3 Mentoring versus coaching

There is often confusion with the terms mentoring and coaching, where both words are often used interchangeably. Given that this study is based on mentorship, it is important to discuss the difference between mentoring and coaching and any overlap that may exist. The concept of mentorship has been defined and explained in 2.2.1 above. According to Ives (2008: 103), the term coaching is described as a systematic approach that is designed to promote cognitive, behavioural or emotional development. Ives expands further on this definition by stating that coaching is individualised or tailor-made, where the coachee must have clearly stated goals. The aim of coaching is to encourage coachees to take charge of their life and remain accountable for the choices that are made. Lastly, coaching involves a collaborative relationship rather than one based on authority. Al Hilali, Al Mughairi, Kian and Karim (2020: 42) point out that coaching is more performance driven in the workplace and usually lasts for a shorter period. The focus is largely on providing guidance to a coachee on goals, in order to reach full potential. It is an internally organised practice aimed at benefitting the employee and the organisation (Al Hilali, Al Mughairi, Kian and Karim, 2020: 42). Mentorship as is evident from the explanation in 2.2.1 is more development driven and follows a more holistic approach. Mentorship is a longer-term relationship that focuses on sharing knowledge, skills and experience, to assist another individual to develop and grow. Mentorship is also regarded as a softer relationship as opposed to the training approach that coaching usually takes. According to Lancer, Clutterbuck and Megginson (2016: 5), mentoring and coaching

have differing implications in various parts of the world, and are often defined in particular ways in different contexts.

A common practice in the United States is to have a one-way process of learning, where the mentor is the sponsor and comes with experience from the same field in which mentoring is required (Lancer, Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2016: 5). On the other hand, in Europe, mentoring is more of a two-way process, and is focused on developmental mentoring and assisting the mentee to start developing their own high-quality level of thinking. According to Clutterbuck et al. (2017: 501), there is the concept of Ubuntu from an African perspective which is about the spirit of being human. The authors further state that in South Africa there is little that is practiced by way of Ubuntu, and it has not been sufficiently explored, whereas it is a culturally relevant approach. In addition, there has been little research that has been done in the field of Ubuntu coaching and mentoring. The authors suggest that a mentoring model should be holistic and based on Ubuntu to ensure that the mentoring aims, and processes are all-encompassing and culturally compatible in the South African context. According to Clutterbuck et al. (2017: 501), mentees and mentors may come from different cultures and backgrounds and the mentee-mentor relationship can be strengthened through the Ubuntu perspective. Ubuntu infuses the values of kindness, caring and humanness in a relationship. Although mentoring and coaching are regarded as distinct concepts, there is a link, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below:
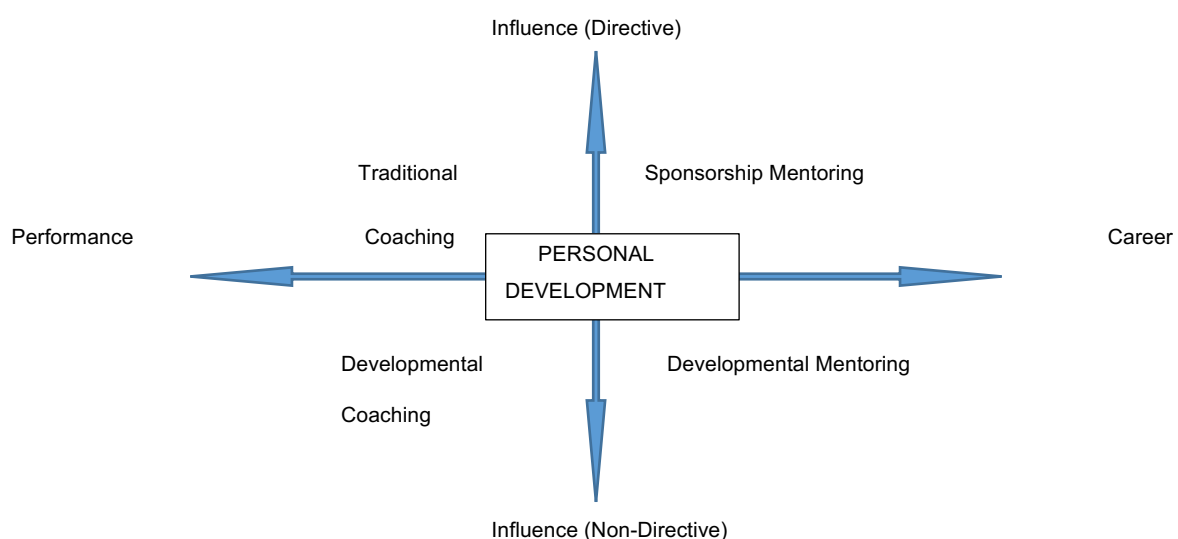
Figure 2.1 Link between developmental mentoring and developmental coaching. Adapted from Lancer, Clutterbuck & Megginson (2016).

In the above model, the mentor assists the mentee through experience and wisdom to develop their own wisdom and courage, rather than to simply impart knowledge. (Lancer, Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2016: 5). Coaching is seen as a process that is usually owned and directed by the coach, whereas developmental coaching is non-directive. In developmental coaching, the coach adopts more of an enquiring style, with a view to helping the coachee to develop their own thinking. Lancer et al. (2016: 6) further state that in the United Kingdom, there is greater similarity between developmental mentoring and developmental coaching than between developmental mentoring and sponsorship mentoring, or between developmental coaching and traditional coaching.

In both a developmental coaching and developmental mentoring situation, the coach remains in control, and uses experience to create robust questions (Lancer, Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2016: 5). Although the giving of advice is allowed, it is not done as the first resort, but only under certain circumstances. In the case of giving advice, this is usually about providing appropriate information that the trainee does not necessarily have. The trainee then uses this information to make more well-informed decisions.

Lancer et al. (2016: 6) further point out that sponsorship mentoring is hierarchical in nature, and that the mentor's authority and influence is very important. Under this type of mentoring scenario, learning takes place through a one-way process, from mentor to mentee, where the mentor is a sponsor, directly attempting to influence the progression of the mentee. The mentor also plays a hands-on role in assisting the mentee, and often provides advice.

Developmental mentoring, on the other hand, is very different, as both parties' value each other, thereby eliminating any power distance between the mentor and mentee (Lancer, Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2016). The mentor helps the mentee to develop and grow. Learning usually takes place in both directions. Lancer et al. (2016: 7) advocate that developmental mentoring and developmental coaching are powerful tools, as both focus on the aspirations of the individuals. They encourage mentees to believe in themselves and broaden their horizons. During conversations there is

substantial focus on the quality of the mentees thinking, and this further opens new perspectives for the mentee.

A similar view on the difference between mentorship and coaching is expressed by Gray, Garvey and Lane (2016: 27), indicating that mentorship concerns passing on experience and giving of advice, whereas coaching is non-directive. Gray et al., further point out that mentoring is usually voluntary from the mentor's side, whereas coaching is paid for. It can be argued that this approach has certainly changed over the years to the extent that mentors are now remunerated for services rendered as opposed to being voluntary mentors. Coaches, on the other hand, seem to be used predominantly in the workplace, and are therefore regarded as voluntary.

2.2.4 The meaning of sustainable in the context of business mentorship

According to Blowfield (2013: 7), sustainable is defined as a business approach that is geared towards creating long term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risks, while deriving benefits from economic, social and environmental development. It is an activity or process that can be kept going for the long term. Therefore, in the context of business mentorship, sustainable is regarded as building businesses that will continue into the future (long-term) as opposed to short-term survival, through quick fix solutions.

By building sustainable businesses through mentorship there is a positive effect on job creation, which in turn contributes to a reduction in unemployment and eradication of poverty. The relevance of **building sustainable businesses** is a consequence of the high failure rate of SMMEs globally.

2.2.5 Theoretical models and frameworks in mentorship

2.2.5.1 Earlier foundation of mentorship- Dyadic structure of mentor-protégé relationship

Although mentorship focus in the past has generally been on personal or career development, it forms the basis or foundation for entrepreneurial or business mentorship. According to Ragins and Kram (2007: 5), mentorship is a relationship that

is deeply rooted in the context of a career. In conducting research, it is evident that earlier theory mainly relates to mentorship in the context of a career in the workplace (career function) and personal growth or development of individuals (psychosocial function).

Ragins and Kram suggest that role-modelling may represent a third segment of mentoring. Ragins and Kram recognise four phases of the mentoring process (initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition), illustrated in Figure 2.2 below:

Initiation	Cultivation	Separation	Redefinition
Engagement phase, establishing identity and forging attachment	Active phase, role confirmation, information sharing, boundaries and self-disclosure	Ending phase, physical emotional separation and closure	Review of relationship and provide peer support
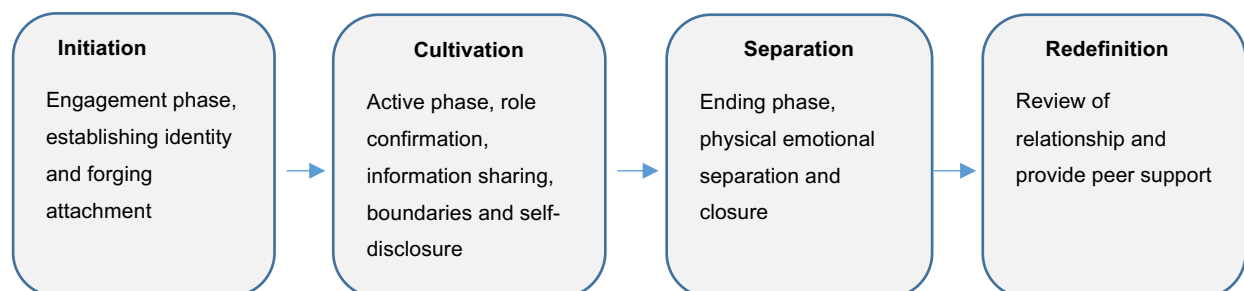
Figure 2.2 Stages of mentoring. Adapted from Memon, Rozan, Ismail, Uddin & Daud (2015).

During the initiation phase the mentor and mentee get to know each other and clarify expectations from each other. According to Memon, Rozan, Ismail, Uddin and Daud (2015: 2), the engagement is still at an informal level during the initiation phase with the absence of any third party dictating the terms of engagement between the mentor and mentee. There may still be a lack of trust at this stage until the mentor and mentee get to know each other and build rapport. Memon et al. (2015: 3) suggest that once the issue of trust is overcome, it paves the way for formalising the mentoring relationship.

According to Memon et al. (2015: 3), during the cultivation stage, the mentor provides support over a period by providing advice which is ultimately geared towards development and personal growth of the mentee. During this stage there is usually a contractual relationship between the parties which sets out the goals. In the separation stage the mentee starts to develop independence. According to Memon et al. (2015: 3), there could be various reasons for the separation phase, such as the mentee having nothing further to learn or redefining the goals on the mentee's side where the

mentor is no longer relevant. At the stage of redefinition, both parties review the relationship, and this may advance into peer support and friendship.

According to Peretomode and Ikoya (2019: 17), there are various theories, models and approaches to mentoring. Some of these include the developmental network, a social network model, or an action reflection model. Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy and Kram (2012: 210) indicate that mentorship research over the years has expanded from the conventional dyadic perspective of mentorship to now include developmental networks. The authors indicate that developmental networks involve a group of individuals (mentors) taking an interest in the mentees progress as opposed to a single mentor. A social network model of mentoring, on the other hand, involves collaboration among individuals or team members, thereby providing assistance to overcome barriers and challenges. Lastly, according to Peretomode and Ikoya (2019: 19), the action reflection model focuses on planned and formal mentor-mentee conferences, as opposed to an informal approach. The focus is on assisting the mentee to understand the principles and theory behind a practice, and to increase awareness, in terms of values, experience and knowledge.

Although the above model defines four stages of the mentoring process, the timelines attached to each stage are not specified. The mentoring process could be a short-term or long term one. The cultivation stage, however, does require a formal contractual relationship to be established, therefore, the terms of engagement and duration are to be agreed upon, between the mentor and mentee.

2.2.5.2 SAGE approach

Bell and Goldsmith (2013) also use a four-phase approach to mentoring known as SAGE. The first stage is all about surrender which deals with the removal of any power imbalance in the mentor and mentee relationship. The second stage is to accept, allowing for an environment that is safe and conducive to growth. Gift is the third stage and deals mainly with advice and feedback. The last stage is about extending, whereby the mentee is encouraged to become a self-directed learner. In both the dimensions of Raggins and Kram (2007) and Bell and Goldsmith (2013), there are similarities evident and common themes that emerge, such as advice, creating a

conducive environment, to provide support and ensuring that the mentees eventually become independent.

2.2.5.3 Learner- Centred Mentoring Paradigm

According to Zachary (2000: 1-29), mentoring is regarded as a collaborative relationship between the mentor and the mentee. The mentoring relationship requires a safe environment that honours the integrity of the mentee. Zachary further suggests that mentoring relationships need to be grounded in learning. Table 2.1 below provides a comparison of the old traditional paradigm of mentoring and the new collaborative paradigm:

Table 2.1 Learner-centred mentoring paradigm.

Mentoring Element	Old Paradigm	New Paradigm	Adult Learning Principle
Mentee role	Passive receiver	Active partner	Adults learn best when they are involved in diagnosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating their own learning.
Mentor role	Authority	Facilitator	The role of the facilitator is to create and maintain a supportive climate that promotes the conditions necessary for learning to take place.
Learning process	Mentor directed and responsible for the mentee's learning.	Self-directed with the mentee responsible for own learning.	Adult learners have a need to be self-directed.
Length of relationship	Calendar focus	Goal determined	Readiness for learning increases when there is a specific need to know.
Mentoring relationship	One life = one mentor; one mentor = one mentee.	Multiple mentors over a lifetime and multiple modalities for mentoring: individual, group and peer models.	Life's reservoir of experience is a primary learning resource: the life experiences of others enrich the learning process.
Setting	Face-to-face	Multiple and varied venues and opportunities.	Adult learners have an inherent need for immediacy of application.
Focus	Product oriented: Knowledge transfer and acquisition.	Process oriented: Critical reflection and application.	Adults respond best to learning when they are internally motivated to learn.

Source: Adapted from Zachary (2000).

In the old traditional paradigm, the mentoring relationship is one-way, with knowledge transmitted from the mentor to the mentee (Zachary, 2000: 1-29). The new paradigm

suggests a collaborative learning partnership where learning flows in both directions. Zachary further points out that in the old paradigm of mentoring, the mentor adopts an authoritarian role, and the mentee is expected to be passive and to receive and observe knowledge. In the new paradigm it is a mutual discovery process in which the mentor and mentee have something to bring to the relationship. Wisdom is not simply passed down, instead it is discovered and nurtured (Zachary, 2000: 1-29). This shift creates an environment where both the mentor and mentee learn together. The mentor and mentee work together to achieve specific goals that focus on developing the skills, knowledge, and abilities of the mentee. The mentee plays an active role in the learning process, sharing responsibility for the priorities and learning. Throughout the relationship, the mentor and mentee share responsibility and accountability for achieving the goals of the mentee.

The mentor acts as a facilitator in the new paradigm to promote and maintain a supportive climate for learning to take place. Face-to-face mentoring has evolved to multiple methods using varied venues. In addition, a single mentor approach has also evolved to the use of a multi-mentor approach. According to Zachary (2000: 1-29), strong relationships help to motivate, support, and inspire learning and development. Zachary suggests that the mentor and mentee should be open and trusting from the beginning of the mentoring relationship. In addition, it is vital to clarify and articulate goals at the beginning and review them throughout the mentoring relationship.

The learner-centred paradigm is in line with best practice of adult learning theories (Daloz, 1986). There is also a significant shift from a product-oriented model that was characterised by transfer of knowledge, to a process-oriented relationship, involving knowledge acquisition, application and reflection. According to Daloz (1986), these shifts require a change in mindset. There may be challenges for individuals who have been mentored or who mentored others in the more conventional model. A shift in roles will be required to make the most out of the mentoring experience.

2.2.5.4 The mentor intervention style and nature of relationship

According to St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119), the style of mentorship that is adopted influences the mentoring outcome. The mentorship intervention style and nature of relationship is illustrated in Figure 2.3 below:
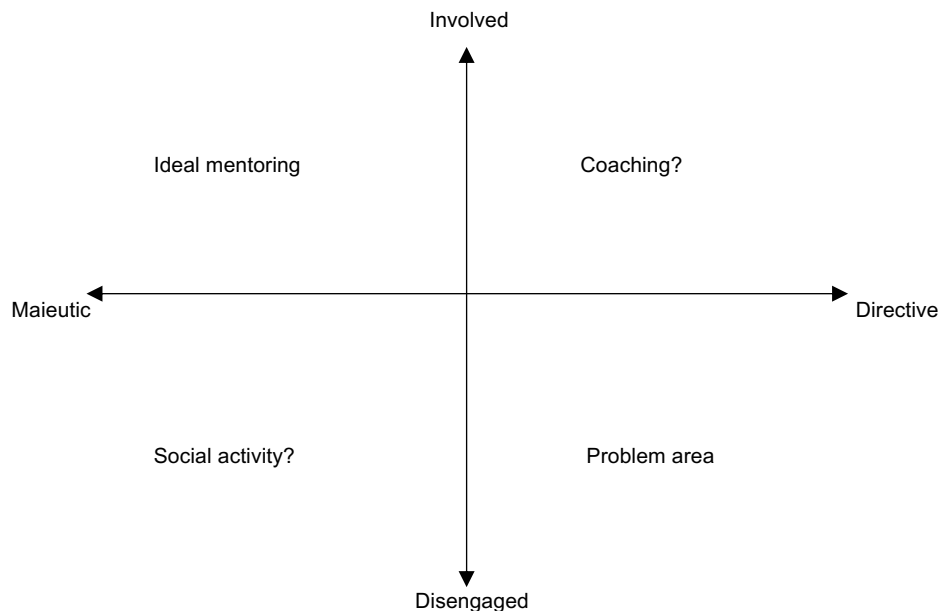
Figure 2.3 Mentor intervention styles and nature of relationship. Adapted from St-Jean and Audet (2013).

St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119) point out that a mentoring style that combines low directivity and a high level of involvement produces the best outcomes. In a situation where the mentor is highly directive and less involved in the mentoring relationship, inferior outcomes are produced. According to St-Jean and Audet, the above illustration is useful in understanding mentoring relationships, and combining the dimensions, suggests an intervention style.

According to St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119), a **maieutic-involved style** produces better results than a **directive-disengaged style**. In a maieutic style of mentoring, the mentor asks the mentee a number of questions. The purpose is to help mentees find their own answers to questions. This allows novice entrepreneurs to draw their own conclusions regarding events they experience (St-Jean and Audet, 2013: 96-119). Although the mentor is generally an experienced entrepreneur and could provide valuable advice to the new entrepreneur in a more directive manner, St-Jean and Audet are of the firm view that it is preferable for mentors to let mentees find their own

answers and work through their own experiences. It could be difficult for some mentors as they would want to share their own entrepreneurial experiences, however, it is imperative to get mentees to talk instead of the mentor providing examples of past experiences.

As far as the involvement dimension of the mentoring relationship is concerned there is a need for mentors to play an active role to ensure the progress of the mentee. The mentor must conduct regular follow-up meetings to track the progress of the mentee. There must be a proactive approach from the side of the mentor to provide oversight in the relationship. In the absence of significant mentor involvement in terms of energy and time, the relationship may be less fruitful (St-Jean and Audet, 2013: 96-119).

According to St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119) a **directive-disengaged style** is less beneficial than a **maieutic-involved style**. The **directive-involved style** does not generate results that are much different from the maieutic-involved style, with exception of learning with the mentor. Therefore, the directive type of mentoring relationship does not seem to significantly influence the outcomes of the relationship. This is mainly because several entrepreneurs have crucial matters and problems to deal with and would prefer receiving specific directives or instructions and solutions from the mentor. The maieutic-involved style has shown that it leads to the best mentor function deployment, except for the integration function. Integration refers to the act of introducing mentees to community members who can assist them to achieve their objectives. In such a situation, a **directive-involved** approach is beneficial.

The directive-disengaged approach is least beneficial for mentees (St-Jean and Audet, 2013: 96-119). St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119) suggest that this style could be toxic for the mentor and mentee. This could happen in a situation where mentors are volunteers. Such mentors are often disengaged and are often directive. According to St-Jean and Audet, mentoring may generate more positive outcomes where the mentor adopts a maieutic-involved style.

From the various styles of mentorship indicated by St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119), it is evident that there is a correlation between the approach that is adopted and the

mentorship outcomes. The style of mentorship can positively or negatively influence the relationship and mentorship outcomes. The **maieutic-involved style** is more advantageous in a mentorship relationship as it is less directive from the side of the mentor, thereby allowing more participation from the mentee. This style creates an environment where the mentees are encouraged to find the answers or solutions on their own.

2.2.5.5 New Venture Planning Generic Model (NVP) used in business mentorship

Kubberoed and Hagen (2015: 4059), at a conference on mentoring models for entrepreneurship held in Spain, reflected on the relevance of mentorship in entrepreneurship. Kubberoed and Hagen argued that there are those teachable aspects of entrepreneurship such as compiling a business plan, however, the less teachable parts such as attitude, communication, skills, and creativity are not aspects that could be easily taught in a classroom.

Kubberoed and Hagen further refer to a generic model for new venture planning (NVP) pedagogies, which is based on action learning and learning-by-doing. The NVP model allows students to be faced with real challenges, in which situation they are required to convert a business idea into an opportunity. This model also requires students to participate in external forums, such as competitions, and to present to investors and external partners for assessment. In this way, the pedagogy is aligned to real entrepreneurial learning, by linking the academic performance in the NVP course to the entrepreneurial project success. The NVP course comprises of four generic phases illustrated in Figure 2.4 below:

| **Introduction Phase:** Finding an idea, team formation | → | **Development Phase:** Exploring, testing the idea | → | **Preparatory Phase:** Execution Planning | → | **Final Phase:** Final external evaluation of business feasibility |
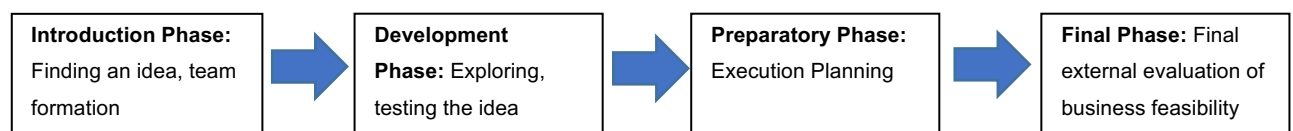
Fig.2.4 A generic model for New Venture Planning (NVP) course for business mentorship. Adapted from Kubberoed & Hagen (2015).

According to Kubberoed and Hagen (2015: 4060), students are required to solve real problems, and in attempting to do so have to go through trial and error to find workable solutions. This also allows them to achieve personal growth in the process. Mentoring

lies at the centre of the NVP model. Kubberoed and Hagen have emphasised that the NVP model requires a mentoring approach, as opposed to a teacher role, thus making use of entrepreneurs and specialists to increase team performance, and therefore improves chances of final project success. According to Kubberoed and Hagen (2015: 4061), there have been limited studies conducted to examine the phenomenon of entrepreneurial mentoring, specifically around entrepreneurship education.

The NVP model suggested by Kubberoed and Hagen (2015: 4061) contains a number of similarities to the **maieutic-involved style,** suggested by St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119). In both models there is a definite preference for the mentees to apply their own minds in developing ideas, exploring, and testing the ideas and conducting their own assessments. This is done through a trial-and-error approach, thereby contributing to personal development and growth of the mentee. Both models are less directive from the mentor side, encouraging mentees to find solutions on their own.

2.2.5.6 Two-dimensional Model (MERID) later adapted to business mentoring

According to Crasborn et al. (2011: 320-331), mentoring is regarded as a complex support process. The two core dimensions of this model are input, and directiveness. Although this model conceptualises mentor teacher roles in mentoring dialogues, it was subsequently adapted and used in business mentoring. Therefore, the researcher considered it necessary to articulate the working of this model. The model is illustrated in Figure 2.5 below:
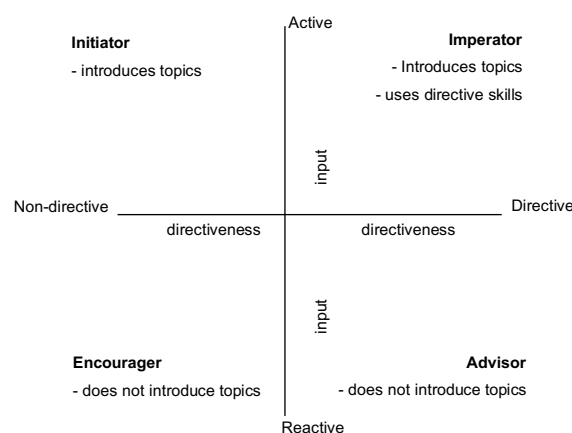
Fig. 2.5 Two-dimensional MERID model. Adapted from Crasborn et al. (2011).

According to Crasborn et al. (2011: 320-331), the vertical axis, which is the dimension input, refers to the extent to which topics are introduced into the dialogue by mentor teachers. There are two extremes of this activity, which can either be active or reactive. The horizontal axis, on the other hand, represents the dimension directiveness, and this mainly indicates the extent to which the mentor controls the direction of the dialogue. Once again there are two extremes, it can either be directive or non-directive.

According to Crasborn et al. (2011: 321), a mentor who exhibits a directive style usually talks the most in the dialogue. By combining the two dimensions on an *x* and *y* axis, it results in four different mentor roles namely initiator, imperator, advisor, and encourager. In the initiator role, which is the upper left quadrant, the mentor first introduces the topic. By using non-directive supervisory skills, such as asking open-ended questions, it encourages the student to further reflect on the topic. Imperator is reflected in the upper right quadrant. In this situation, the mentor introduces a topic, but uses direct supervisory skills, such as giving advice, to guide the dialogue.

Crasborn et al. (2011: 321), indicates that the advisor role is reflected in the lower right quadrant. In this instance, the mentor reacts to the topic introduced by the student. The mentor uses direct supervisory skills, by giving direct advice on what needs to be done. The encourager role is represented by the lower left quadrant. In this instance, the mentor reacts to the topic introduced by the student. The mentor uses non-directive supervisory skills to get the teacher to explore her concern.

The two- dimensional model (MERID) as articulated by Crasborn et al. (2011: 320-331), contains various similarities to the NVP model suggested by Kubberoed and Hagen (2015: 4061) and the **maieutic-involved style,** suggested by St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119). These models advocate for a less directive style from the mentor and greater involvement from the mentee. In this manner the mentee is able to explore, ask questions and engage in dialogue, which are all contributory factors towards learning and growth.

2.2.5.7 Mentoring model in entrepreneurial mentoring

Although the two-dimensional model (MERID) described under 2.2.5.6 is based on teacher education, it has demonstrated its relevance in how mentoring can be conceptualised. According to Kubberoed and Hagen (2015: 4065), using the two-dimensional conception (MERID from teacher education) has proven useful to analyse entrepreneurial mentoring.

There are two core dimensions that emerge in entrepreneurial mentoring, namely mentoring focus, represented by the vertical axis, and objective orientation represented by the horizontal axis (Kubberoed and Hagen, 2015: 4065). The mentoring focus (*y*-axis) ranges from expert centred, which focuses on active instruction from the expert to receptive learners. On the opposite end is a student-centered focus, whereby learners steer the course of action by interacting with the mentor. The horizontal axis presents orientation, where the one side represents process orientation, and the other represents goal orientation. Combining both dimensions creates four roles with each having its own mentoring strategy as illustrated in Figure 2.6 below:


```
                        ┌──────────────┐
                        │ Expert centred │
                        └──────────────┘
                               ▲
        Modelling                     Counselling
      "The role model"                 "The expert"

┌────────────────┐                          ┌──────────────┐
│ Process oriented │◄──────────────────────►│ Goal oriented │
└────────────────┘                          └──────────────┘

        Reflection                      Coaching
   "The learning facilitator"          "The coach"
                               ▼
                        ┌───────────────┐
                        │ Student centred │
                        └───────────────┘
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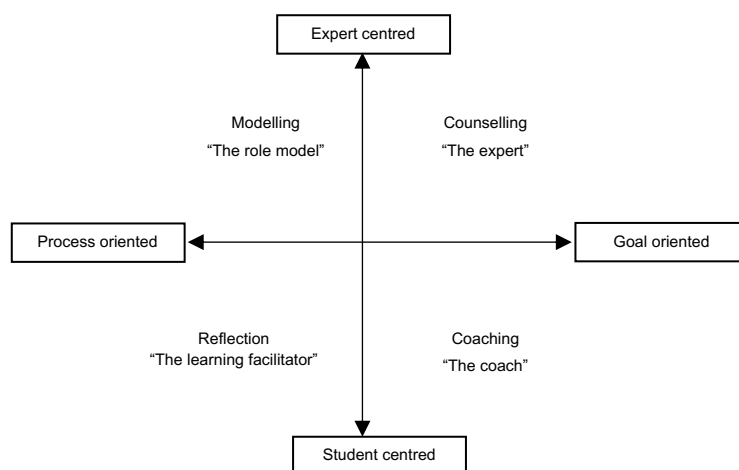
Fig. 2.6 Mentoring model in entrepreneurial mentoring. Adapted from Kubberhoed & Hagen (2015).

The top left quadrant is known as the "role model", where modelling refers to the demonstration of the skills of the entrepreneur. In this situation the entrepreneur's role model must set an expert example that can be followed by aspiring entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial role models are usually found among peers, external entrepreneurs,

other businesses, and former students (Kubberoed and Hagen, 2015: 4065). Learning by example is the dominant function of the role model. Support and inspiration for new entrepreneurs is another important function for the role model. The importance of having role models in business was also highlighted by Bosma et al. (2012: 410-424), who note that role models are important for entrepreneurial intention and have an influence in the start-up phase of a new business.

The upper right quadrant represents "the expert". In this situation, the expert makes use of counselling skills, by offering direct advice on what should be done in a certain situation. Furthermore, the mentees usually have questions with specific objectives for the mentor. This results in mentoring becoming goal-oriented towards managing tasks. According to St-Jean and Audet (2012: 119-140), entrepreneurs develop management knowledge through business mentoring from an expert. The expert mentors experience is regarded as an important source of concrete advice and, in addition, the know-how in terms of managing and developing a business.

The lower left quadrant is the "learning facilitator". In this situation, the facilitator sets up learning arenas, where the objective is for mentees to build on their strengths and use their resources to become self-directed learners. The mentor asks open-ended questions, thereby guiding the learning process. The mentees are responsible for their own actions and learning, and the facilitator does not work towards specific goals. Mentees must think carefully about the questions posed by the mentor and generate their own solutions. St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119) have stated that this type of mentoring strategy is considered superior to the more directive styles of mentoring in respect of entrepreneurial learning outcomes.

The lower right quadrant represents the coach. In this situation, learners, and the coach work together as a team towards a common goal. The mentees define their own goals and start working towards them, with the coach providing feedback on the tasks, to progress towards achieving the goals.

Based on this model, it is evident that mentoring needs to be designed in such a manner that the role of all stakeholders needs to be clearly articulated. This will help mentees achieve success. In this model there are also similarities to the two-

dimensional model (MERID) as articulated by Crasborn et al. (2011: 320-331), NVP model suggested by Kubberoed and Hagen (2015: 4061) and the **maieutic-involved style,** suggested by St-Jean and Audet (2013: 96-119). The focus is on creating an environment for self-directed learning for the mentee. The mentor acts as an expert and offers advice and counselling. The mentee regards the mentor as role model and learns from the examples set by the role model.

2.3 BUSINESS INCUBATOR MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS

2.3.1 The concept of business incubation

Like with the multiple definitions of mentorship alluded to earlier in this chapter, incubation and more particularly business incubation is accompanied by several definitions. According to Honig and Karlsson (2010: 719-731), business incubation is regarded as a business support process that fast-tracks the successful development of start-up and newly established companies, providing entrepreneurs with an array of targeted resources and services. Cullen, Calitz and Chandler (2014: 76-89) define BIs as a "business development tool to grow an entrepreneurial venture by facilitating a platform for businesses to build their foundation." Others, such as Allie-Edries and Mupela (2019: 72), refer to business incubation as a concept and practice, where success is promoted through the nurturing of a start-up enterprise. As is evident from the various definitions above, a Business Incubator (BI) is regarded as a facility that is established to nurture and grow a start-up enterprise in their early months or years. It provides space, hands-on management training, and management and technical support.

BIs have become an important topic globally. According to Lose, Nxopo, Maziriri and Madinga (2016: 130), BIs are regarded as a substantial tool in aiding the development of entrepreneurial firms, and promoting economic prosperity and growth in South Africa. Lose et al. have advocated that BIs arose as a prevalent strategy in the 1990s, at which time, most of the literature on this topic was generated. The authors also suggested that the current literature on BIs was limited. This was further confirmed by Cullen et al. (2014: 76-89), who indicate that limited research has been undertaken on the performance of BIs against international best standards.

Masutha and Rogerson (2014: 224), on the other hand, argued that the concept of business incubation has evolved over time and that most scholarly work on incubation recognises BIs as a strategic instrument to attain sustainable economic development. Masutha and Rogerson further point out that globally in terms of BI development, mentorship programmes remain a strong focus, aimed at supporting new start-ups to get going and this constitutes a core feature.

2.3.2 History and progression of business incubators

According to Mian, Lamine and Fayolle (2016: 1), BIs date back to the 1950s, when the first incubator was formed. Masutha and Rogerson (2014: 224) have indicated that BIs originated in Western Europe and North America. The number of BIs increased swiftly over the years. Over the past 20 years, it has started spreading into developing countries. According to Sharma, Shukla and Joshi (2019: 1-26), India and China were amongst the first developing countries to establish BIs.

Figure 2.7 below illustrates the evolution of BIs over the years. According to studies undertaken by Theodorapoulos, Kakabadse and McGowan (2014: 606), the focus in the first generation of BIs was on providing space and other shared facilities. This gradually improved in the 1990s to provide business support and advisory services. As is evident in figure 2.7 below, mentorship in BIs only started to gain attention in the third generation of incubators, from 2001 onwards. The third generation of BIs encompasses a wide range of services, which is a major shift from purely offering space and facilities in the first generation of incubators.

```
┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐
│  1ˢᵗ Generation     │      │  2nd Generation     │      │  3rd Generation     │
│                     │      │                     │      │                     │
│  • Affordable Space │  →   │  • Affordable space │  →   │  • Affordable Space │
│  • Shared Facilities│      │  • Shared facilities│      │  • Shared Facilities│
│                     │      │  • A variety of     │      │  • A variety of     │
│                     │      │    support services │      │    support services │
│                     │      │  • Business advisory│      │  • Business advisory│
│                     │      │    services         │      │    services         │
│                     │      │  • Networking       │      │  • Networking       │
│                     │      │                     │      │  • Proactive support│
│                     │      │                     │      │  • Mentoring and    │
│                     │      │                     │      │    coaching         │
│                     │      │                     │      │  • Business         │
│                     │      │                     │      │    acceleration     │
│                     │      │                     │      │  • Network          │
│                     │      │                     │      │    development      │
└─────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘

   1980-1990                    1991-2000                  2001 onwards  ──────▶
```

Figure 2.7 Evolution of Business Incubators. Adapted from Theodorakopoulos, Kakabadse & McGowan (2014).

Mian et al. (2016) indicate that by 2012 there were approximately seven thousand BIs worldwide. Torun, Peconick, Sobreiro, Kimura and Pique (2018: 1-10) further suggest that the sharp increase in the number of BIs is attributable to the understanding that growth stimulates an economy. Business incubation programmes contribute to the growth of industry, which in turn contributes to the growth of the economy, as Torun et al. (2018) suggest. According to Torun et al. (2018), the increasing number of BIs are a reflection that they are good promoters of economic growth.

In some of the developing countries and in South Africa in particular, the concept of business incubation is still recent, and under developed. In some countries, BIs have evolved further, with the recent emergence of a fourth generation. Van der Spuy (2019: 5) notes that although the fourth generation of BIs are not fully developed, there are those incubators with a combination of first, second, and third generations, and some components of a fourth generation. These fourth-generation elements relate to the internationalisation of markets and co-incubation at an international level, while there is some focus on research and development.

2.3.3 Generic business incubator phases

As a starting point in understanding the BI process, Phan, Mian and Lamine (2016: 4) simplify this into a three-phase process, illustrated in Figure 2.8 below:

PHASE ONE

Pre-incubation and Idea

This is an earlier stage of interaction intended to assist aspiring entrepreneurs with refining their business idea.

PHASE TWO

Incubation

-Support stage commences

-Implementation of Business Plan

-Mentorship

-Provide Resources

PHASE THREE

Post- Incubation

-Consolidate and Grow

-Help with Financial Sustainability
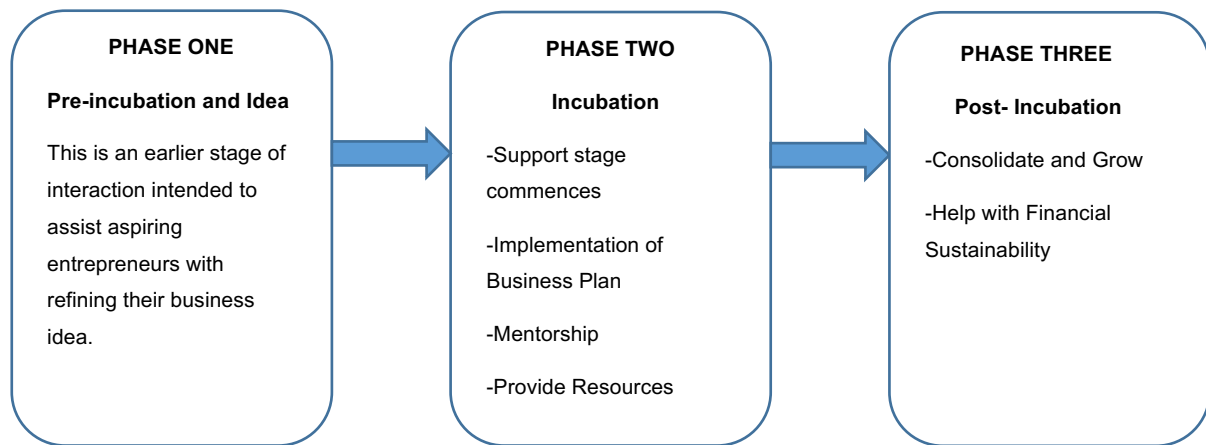
Figure 2.8 Generic business incubator phases. Adapted from Phan, Mian & Lamine (2016).

2.3.3.1 Pre-incubation

According to Allie-Edries and Mupela (2019: 76), the pre-incubation phase is a critical one, as it deals with identifying potential entrepreneurs through a screening and selection process. Although many authors differ on this subject in terms of criteria, there are two approaches that are generally considered. The first approach deals with the prior employment experience and technical expertise of the potential entrepreneur. The BI management must have the ability to judge capability (Allie-Edries and Mupela 2019: 76). The second approach focuses on the business idea. For the latter to be robustly considered, BI management ought to have deep knowledge and skills in order to evaluate the viability of ideas.

2.3.3.2 Incubation

This usually occurs in a centralised setting. Mentorship forms a key component of BI activities. According to Van der Spuy (2019: 1), the BI must be able to turn weak businesses into sustainable enterprises, that can continue on their own. Van der Spuy further points out that to achieve this level of success, the BI must be able to offer a full range of services, ranging from premises to skills development, training,

mentorship, and financial support. The framework in Figure 2.9 below illustrates the services offered in a typical BI:
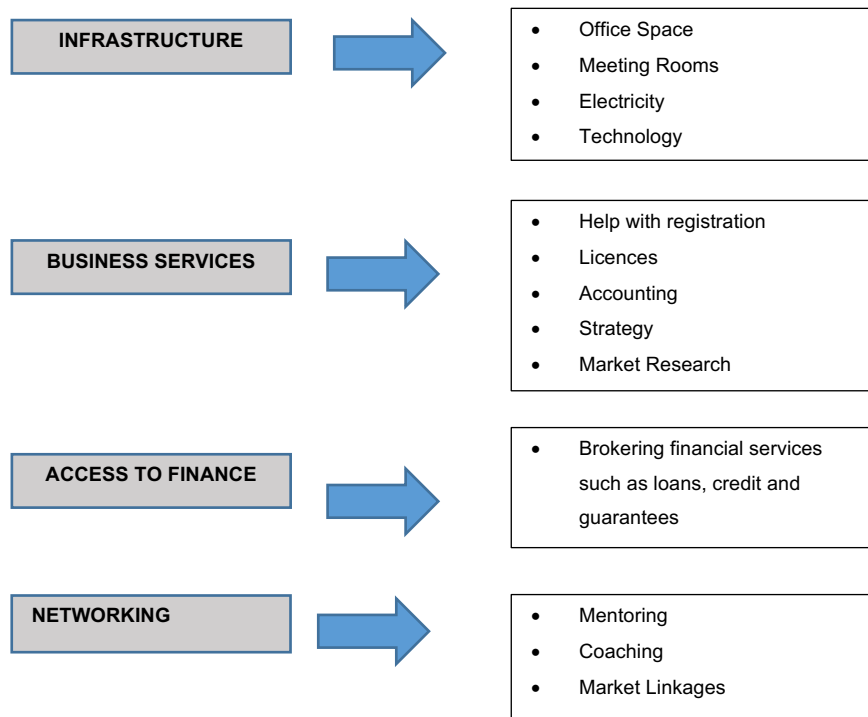
Figure 2.9 Services framework - provided during incubation. Adapted from Allie-Edries & Mupela (2019).

2.3.3.3 Post-incubation

According to Allie-Edries and Mupela (2019: 79), one of the key characteristics of a BI is the duration of incubation, which is meant to last for a limited period. After the period of business incubation, enterprises ought to be financially viable, and ultimately successful. The authors argue that although one of the main aims of a BI is to create new businesses, the survival rate of these new enterprises is considered more important. Allie-Edries and Mupela further point out that in some cases, contact is usually maintained with graduates of incubators, in order to provide support and after-care, however, in other instances contact comes to an end. In the absence of contact, there is no monitoring of success and survival.

2.4 POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.4.1 National Small Business Act and amendments thereto (South Africa)

The National Small Business Development Act Number 102 of 1996 came into effect on 27 November 1996. The main purpose of this act was to cater for the creation of an enterprise promotion agency, national small business council, and to provide for directives and standards for the promotion of SMME development in South Africa. The act was subsequently amended in 2003 (National Small Business Amendment Act Number 26 of 2003), to classify businesses (see Table 1.1), in terms of various categories such as standard industrial sector and sub-sectors, size or class, number of paid employees, annual turnover and gross asset value (excluding property).

Further amendments to the act were made in 2004 (National Small Business Amendment Act Number 29 of 2004). This amendment was to provide for the creation of the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the National Manufacturing Advisory Centre. No further changes were made to the act, save to say that with the establishment of a separate Ministry of Small Business Development in 2014, the responsibilities and administration relating to SMMEs was transferred to the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD).

2.4.2 Ministry of Small Business Development

Due to government's increased focus on SMME development and job creation, a separate Ministry of Small Business Development was formed in 2014. This is one of the newest national government departments. According to the Department of Small Business Development (2018), this Ministry is mandated to promote and develop entrepreneurship, SMMEs, and cooperatives. The mission of the Ministry is "the coordination, integration and mobilisation of efforts and resources towards the creation of an enabling environment for the growth and sustainability of small businesses and cooperatives."

According to the Small Business Development Ministry Annual Report (2017: 10), the Department aims to increase the number of SMMEs and cooperatives in the mainstream economy, through programmes that will assist new and existing SMMEs

to become more sustainable. The Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) states that it supported seven BIs in Limpopo, Eastern Cape, and Gauteng through incubation programmes across agriculture, tourism, construction, and the automotive industry in the 2017 financial year (DSBD, 2017).

According to the DSBD Annual Report (2017: 16), the Department concedes that there are several areas for improvement, one of which being under-performance in the Enterprise Incubation Programme (EIP). The EIP is one of the focus areas of the DSBD. Another area of under-performance relates to the Cooperatives Development Agency (CDA), aimed at supporting cooperatives with the much needed financial and non-financial support services. The CDA was, however, not established, due to the lack of budget allocation (2016/17 financial year).

One of the most important strategies that the DSBD wanted to embark upon was a business rescue strategy, which involves developing strategies to address the high failure rate of SMMEs, and finding ways to save viable SMMEs that are about to collapse. The DSBD attributes the under-achievement of this goal to the lack of adequate staff in the Department.

From the above performance analysis, it is evident that there is considerable work that lies ahead for this Ministry established in 2014. It is a step in the right direction to have created a separate SMME Ministry, given that SMMEs are a strategic focus area of government. The increased focus by government in dealing with key issues such as job creation and poverty alleviation means that this Ministry ought to ensure that SMMEs develop, grow, become sustainable, and conduct business in an ethical manner. SMME mentorship can be regarded as a crucial strategy in ensuring that the above outcomes are achieved.

2.5 THE HIGH FAILURE RATE OF SMMEs IN SOUTH AFRICA

The high failure rate of SMMEs in South Africa amounts to as much as 80% of businesses that fail in the first year, where of the rest, 60% fail in the second year, means that businesses are not being adequately nurtured or assisted (Ntshona 2012: 1). Ntshona points out that the high failure rate of SMMEs does not necessarily mean

that there are no opportunities, but instead that if SMMEs were to be carefully nurtured, this could give rise to great opportunities. Ntshona further cited the lack of training assistance as one of the key challenges facing SMMEs. In speaking about intensifying the fight against the SMME failure rate, Ntshona further argued that helping SMMEs to survive is crucial for the South African economy. This clearly points to the need to fully understand the underlying reasons for business failure and the role of mentorship, particularly in BIs.

Sadly, the SMME failure rates have not shown any real improvement in recent years. The views of Ntshona (2012: 1) are further supported by Smit and Watkins (2012: 34), indicating that the inherent characteristics of SMMEs afford enterprises the opportunity to absorb unskilled labour, and to nurture and develop entrepreneurial skills. However, such benefits do not appear to be forthcoming, due to the high failure rate of SMMEs in the South African economy. Smit and Watkins further suggested that based on studies conducted, SMME owners are unfamiliar with the risks affecting their business and that a designed and structured approach to managing risks was required.

According to Lifelong Learning Programme (2015: 3), which is an EU sponsored mentoring initiative for SMMEs, one of the main challenges in Europe is active ageing of the workforce, where SMMEs employ the largest portion of the active population in Europe. This means that there is a need to motivate older people to continue to work and for professional opportunities to be created for younger people. Retired people with experience in mentoring can be of great assistance in a mentorship programme.

It is widely accepted that South Africa experiences high levels of poverty, income equality, and unemployment. According to Fatoki (2014: 922), SMMEs ought to be playing a major role in creating jobs, contributing to the equitable distribution of income and economic growth. It then follows that the SMME sector cannot be sustained without the ongoing creation of new SMMEs. Research undertaken by Fatoki (2014: 926) has revealed that amongst the many reasons for SMME failure, factors such as lack of management experience, lack of functional skills, and poor attitude towards customers, stand out as reasons for SMME failure. Fatoki further pointed out that these factors are regarded as controllable and therefore expressed the need for personal development of new SMME owners in business management skills. In

addition, Fatoki was of the view that government agencies dealing with SMMEs need to focus on training of SMME owners in business management. Lastly, Fatoki suggested that new SMMEs should engage non-executives in the early stages to ensure that there is external expertise to guide in decisions.

Worku (2013: 67-84) conducted a study of SMMEs in and around the City of Tshwane, South Africa, with the aim of analysing factors that affect the long-term survival of SMMEs. The study was based on a sample of 349 businesses over a five-year period. Worku indicated that at the end of the five-year period, 188 of the 349 businesses were no longer viable, which amounts to 54 percent. Worku cited the lack of entrepreneurial skills, lack of support to newly established SMMEs, and the inability of operators to run newly established businesses, as the main reasons for failure. The study further revealed that businesses run by operators with entrepreneurial skills went on better than those that were run by operators without entrepreneurial skills. The study undertaken by Worku recommended increased focus on relevant training and mentorship programmes on the part of Government, in addition to a mechanism to regularly monitor and track the viability of newly established businesses.

The Small Enterprise Development Agency of South Africa known as SEDA (2013), indicated that the South African Government runs various initiatives to promote the development of SMMEs. Despite these initiatives, the failure rate of newly established SMMEs remains high. SEDA further reported that SMMEs across all sectors of the economy encounter a serious shortage of entrepreneurial and technical skills.

According to Okubena (2014: 1), the lack of managerial competencies, mainly due to a deficiency in relevant and appropriate skills, is often linked to small business failure. Approximately sixty percent of the labour force in South Africa are unskilled, and according to Okubena, this has a negative impact on the large number of SMMEs across the country. A study was undertaken in the Vanderbijlpark area of Gauteng Province to evaluate the importance of business skills and training for business success. Although the study was confined to the manufacturing sector, it revealed that small manufacturing firms are dependent on business skills for success, and that owners and managers need to make an effort to obtain the skills that they require.

Most of the respondents in the study indicated that they had not been trained in certain business skills. The study recommended that relevant business skills such as financial management, computer literacy, communication, networking, and entrepreneurship ought to be included in all training programmes, across all stages of the business cycle. The study also suggests that mentors should focus on incorporating competency areas in all levels for mentees undergoing training.

2.6 THE NEED FOR BUSINESS MENTORSHIP

The question that often arises is as to whether or not it proves to be necessary to have a mentor for your business. Burger (2017:1) states that an entrepreneur's life is an unpredictable and tough one, and that challenges, doubts and fears often arise; just as you solve one problem, you face another. Some of the benefits of a successful mentoring programme as Burger (2017:1) indicates, is as follows:

- it enhances strategic business initiatives;
- it improves productivity and increases revenue;
- it provides insights into alternative approaches to challenges and problems; and
- it enhances professional development.

Burger (2017:1) further states that having a mentor in a business is a priceless resource, however, in South Africa, finding a good mentor is just as difficult as accessing funding. If this assertion is anything to go by, it makes some account for the high failure rate of SMMEs in South Africa.

Lose and Tengeh (2016: 372) argue that, irrespective of the size of a business, potential entrepreneurs require comprehensive mentorship to succeed. Such mentorship ought to encompass technical, business management, and entrepreneurial skills. Lose and Tengeh further point out that the latter mentorship components are regarded as a significant part of a business incubation programme.

According to Sibanyoni (2016:1), a study conducted by Liberty Group Insurance Company also confirmed that SMMEs are in urgent need of mentorship. This greatly needed support would assist them in managing their operations better. The research conducted by Liberty Group was done with the intention of finding ways to support its

SMME client base to become sustainable. Sibanyoni further indicates that if SMMEs were not to be given support, this could result in more job losses. The research undertaken by Liberty Group was also triggered by the number of SMME clients making withdrawals from their Liberty investments due to their businesses closing. One of the main findings of this research was that entrepreneurs felt that they did not have all the required services to run their businesses, and that if they did, this would indeed assist them in focusing on running their businesses more efficiently.

Studies conducted by Birrell and Waters (2007: 33) within BIs also confirmed the importance of mentoring SMMEs in the establishment phase. The study found that psychosocial support formed an important part of the mentoring relationship. Birrell and Waters (2007: 42) state that in a normal course, mentoring theory would advocate that the incubator manager provides a greater degree of career-related support than psychosocial support. This is mainly due to the formal structure of the mentoring relationship. However, the reverse was found, mainly due to the proximity of the incubator managers to the mentees, which gave rise to a more informal mentoring relationship. The study further showed that the informal relationship promoted increased trust between the incubator manager and the mentee, enabling psychosocial support.

Memon et al. (2015: 1) stresses the importance of the mentor's role in entrepreneurial development and indicated that the mentor plays a very significant role in guiding the entrepreneur from business conception to product development and growth of the business. This view is shared by Chebii, Bwisa and Sakwa (2016: 458), indicating that entrepreneurial mentees benefit from the insight and skills of the masters. According to Chebii et al., mentorship that is aligned to the wisdom and skills of the mentor will assist in improving the capability of mentees, thereby boosting entrepreneurial outcomes.

According to Lee (2017: 6), an interesting observation made in recent research in the agriculture sector in KwaZulu-Natal is that the average age of a commercial farmer is 63 years and that their children do not generally follow their parents into farming. Instead, the children generally opt to enter the corporate world, as suggested by Lee. Reference was made to the need for mentorship and training of the children of farmers

so that they can take over from their parents so as to ensure sustainable food production for the nation. This has prompted the creation of the Future Farmers Foundation in KwaZulu-Natal, which focuses on mentorship programmes for the young, who want to become farmers.

Studies conducted by Zizile and Tendai (2018: 233) in East London revealed that entrepreneurial competencies have a bearing on the performance of women owned SMMEs. These competencies play a role in both the establishment and survival of SMMEs. The findings of this study reiterated the importance of skills development to improve business performance. Women entrepreneurs are recognised as key players in any economy, more so in developing economies. The South African government regards the development of women as one of its strategic focus areas, to the extent that a separate Ministry of Women was formed in 2016 in order to advance the socio-economic empowerment of women. Entrepreneurship undoubtedly plays a significant role in their economic advancement.

Le Guern (2014: 4) reports on a speech given by the then MEC for economic development in KwaZulu-Natal, Mr. Michael Mabuyakhulu at the KPMG Small Business Enterprise Week that was held in 2014. In his speech, the MEC reinforced the pivotal role played by SMMEs in the economy, noting that "If small businesses are to flourish and contribute to the economy, there needs to be support right from the conceptual stage, in the form of coaching, mentorship and incubation."

Similar sentiments have been echoed at the 2014 SMME colloquium held in Johannesburg (IOL, 2014). The former Minister of Small Business, Honourable Lindiwe Zulu strongly stressed the role of the newly established Small Business Ministry. According to the former Minister, the Ministry was established to focus on the economy and job creation, where the Minister emphasised the importance of relevant training and support programmes, for SMMEs to be successful.

Memon et al. (2015: 1) in conducting research on mentoring, highlight the importance of understanding the type of mentoring support needed for each entrepreneur, given that each entrepreneur is different. Research by Memon et al. proposed a conceptual framework for mentoring, which focuses on three key areas, namely:

- type of entrepreneur, such as technopreneur;
- decision-making, such as, is the entrepreneur a daredevil or lone ranger?
- entrepreneurial process, namely is the business at conception stage, growth phase, or at maturity?

The type of mentor to be assigned is dependent on the above three areas of focus. Mentors must know in advance what to expect before entering the mentoring relationship. According to Memon et al. (2015:8), this helps mentors in understanding the types of skills that are needed by entrepreneurs at each phase of the relationship, in terms of mentoring.

Epstein (2014:4) also shares a similar view to the above, and reinforced the need for supporting small businesses, by stating that many small businesses do not collapse due to a lack of innovation, but because they do not have access to skills development and training programmes, which is required to run a business.

One of the essential functions of any business, whether small or large, is financial management. According to Kirsten (2018: 1), financial management is regarded as an indispensable function for any SMME, but short-term financial management specifically for start-ups and established businesses is vital. Kirsten stated that many small business owners in South Africa do not have the necessary skills to perform a financial management function.

Kirsten stated that little research has been undertaken in this sphere to establish if such formal type of training has any bearing on the skills of small business owners, and their ability to make better informed decisions. A study undertaken by Kirsten uncovered that financial management training that is tailor-made enhances the short-term financial management skills of owners of SMMEs, thereby improving their self-efficacy. According to the study, the improvement in skills and self-efficacy contributed to better financial decision-making of small business owners, who were also more motivated to implement financial management practices.

Ayodeji and Adebayo (2015: 17) state that the demise of business organisations in Nigeria is on the rise. This trend is mainly due to the unethical business practices, high uncertainty, competition, unfavourable government policies, and the ignorance of the

role of mentoring in business development. Studies by Ayodeji and Adeboyo (2015: 34) further suggest that problems with mentorship are significantly reduced when both parties have clear expectations of the mentoring relationship. Ayodeji and Adeboyo further concluded that for mentorship to be successful, there is a need for proper planning, understanding, and implementation.

According to O. Brien and Hamburg (2014: 64), mentorship can also assist the mentee to become accepted and recognised in the community. These authors further highlighted the importance of mentors for first time SMME entrepreneurs, to assist them to assemble teams, develop plans, and attend to product development and marketing strategies. O. Brien and Hamburg further point out that these are all steps towards creating sustainability.

St-Jean and Mathieu (2015: 334) are of the view that mentorship ought to take place before the business is launched, and not when the business is in trouble. St-Jean and Mathieu further argue that in this way, it affords the mentee a chance to decide whether entrepreneurship is really the career choice, before formally launching the business. Although it may be argued that this approach constitutes adopting a negative stance towards entrepreneurship and the role of mentorship, it is also true that entrepreneurship is not for everyone. The approach that St-Jean and Mathieu (2015: 335) adopt examines mentorship as a tool, instead, that can be used to assist entrepreneurs in their career choices.

2.7 FORMAL VERSUS INFORMAL BUSINESS MENTORING

According to Seema and Sujatha (2014: 13), there are two types of mentoring, namely, formal or career development and informal mentoring. The formal type of mentoring is contractual in nature, specifying the terms, frequency of engagements and the goals to be achieved. Seema and Sujatha further point out that formal mentoring is focused on training and professional development.

Informal mentoring is seen as an older form of mentoring, where the mentee chooses the mentor. According to Seema and Sujatha (2014:14), the mentor becomes a role model for the mentee in informal mentoring. In addition, the relationship is based on

mutual consent between both parties. While formal mentoring can last anywhere from six months to one-year, informal mentoring, on the other hand, can be much longer, due to the unstructured and informal nature of the relationship.

Steinmann (2017: 10), on the other hand, argues that although informal mentoring has evolved and developed over the years, there is no solid proof of its value. Steinmann indicates that the main problem with informal mentoring is that its measurement has been put into question. This is based on a simple principle of "can only manage what you measure." It is within this context that Steinmann advocates that mentoring has advanced to become more structured, focusing on "return on relationship." This principle has given rise to more formalised programmes of mentorship.

Formal mentoring usually includes detailed guidelines and structure, and may last longer than a year. One of the key characteristics of formal mentoring is that there must be a matched relationship between the mentor and mentee, based on certain criteria agreed upon upfront. In addition, Steinmann maintains that there ought to be measurable outcomes. Unlike the matched relationship required for formal mentoring, in informal mentoring, the relationship can develop naturally, and there are no clear outcomes, or in some cases, it is informally defined. In addition, there is no structure, and the mentoring relationship could go on for years, as noted by Steinmann, as well as Seema and Sujatha (2014).

Shittu (2017: 8) states that there is little empirical evidence on the effect of formal versus informal mentoring, arguing that although informal and formal mentoring are not equally beneficial, anyone who engages in a mentoring relationship (formal or informal) stands to benefit from it. Steinmann has advocated a formal mentoring approach, given that it allows for measurement, but at the same time, has argued that formal mentoring results in less rapport or connection, as well as less interaction and communication. According to Steinmann, the informal mentoring approach is regarded as having greater impact and satisfaction, as the relationship is far less formal, and is mutually agreed to between the mentor and mentee.

Based on these studies, the formal mentoring approach is seen as more structured and focused, with goals and a timeframe. Sharafizad (2018: 82-103), on the other

hand, maintains that women prefer the informal mentoring approach, based on an entrepreneurship study that was conducted amongst women. This preference was mainly due to time constraints, family responsibilities, and the value gained from informal mentoring.

Mckevitt and Marshall (2014: 275) conducted some case studies in Ireland on small business mentoring relationships, where the aim was to understand the gaps between practice and theory of SMME mentoring. The study revealed a preference for informal mentoring and development, as opposed to structured formal mentorship programmes. The study further revealed a direct correlation between mentoring and opportunity recognition and continuity.

The preference for informal mentoring arising out of the study conducted by Mckevitt and Marshall (2014: 275) contrasts with the preference reported by Farley (2014: 4) on a study conducted in South Africa. The latter observation arises out of a Fetola legends survey conducted in 2013, focusing on participants in an incubation and mentorship programme funded in 2007. More than 80% of the respondents indicated that they had benefitted from a structured and formal mentorship programme, which resulted in improved financial controls, processes, systems, and sales.

Although these two separate studies indicate different preferences in terms of the mode of mentorship i.e., formal versus informal, it remains crucial for a mentorship relationship to be established and for the outcomes to be agreed upon between a mentor and mentee at the start of the mentoring engagement, which then maps the way forward.

2.8 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR BUSINESS MENTORSHIP

According to El Hallam and St-Jean (2016:1), organisations that support entrepreneurs, propose mentoring to support entrepreneurs, as opposed to traditional training. The authors argue that mentoring is designed around the needs of an individual, which makes it categorically unique.

According to Csillag, Csizmadia, Kerekes and Zaharie (2017: 102), business mentoring is a newly developed form of support services for businesses. A business mentor is therefore an individual who provides mentoring services to businesses or entrepreneurs. The authors argue that although mentorship is seen as important for growth and prosperity, the skills and competencies that a mentor ought to possess remain a point of confusion. Recent studies by Csillag et al. focus on the competencies a business mentor ought to have to be a good mentor. A study undertaken in Finland, Hungary and Romania revealed that mentors ought to possess a high level of self-awareness in order to identify and manage their own behaviour. The study further pointed out that the high level of self-awareness can assist mentors to be genuine about deliverables, show empathy, and a willingness to help.

Intuition and wisdom were also identified as some of those qualities that a mentor ought to have, which would greatly benefit the mentees (Csillag et al. 2017). This wisdom maybe related to strategy, technical, sales, or even financial management and problem-solving. In the study, communication, commitment, and relationship management also emanated as strong competencies, required from a business mentor. Csillag et al. recommend that further research ought to be undertaken around the skills and competencies required for mentoring.

Studies conducted by Chebii et al. (2016: 467) on entrepreneurial mentoring in Kenya, showed that older and successful entrepreneurs are considered better entrepreneurial mentors for young entrepreneurs between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. The study further revealed that the younger entrepreneurs found the need to use their mentorship services. This argument is supported by El Hallam and St-Jean (2016: 5), who indicate that in the context of entrepreneurship, the business experience of the mentor can have an influence on the outcome of mentorship. The writers further indicate that by having a mentor from the same industry as the mentee it could create more learning.

Although mentorship of SMMEs in South Africa is gaining momentum through government sponsored initiatives as well as some in the private sector, there needs to be a way of using business professionals who have the expertise to offer their services. Comins (2017: 2) recently articulated an initiative by UKZN academic Dr. Thea van

der Westhuizen to link students and business professionals with the aim of creating a network and building skills. Van der Westhuizen pointed out that, although government spends on entrepreneurial programmes and skills development, the youth are still not adequately empowered to set up and start new businesses. This also raises the further question as to whether mentorship and business support focuses on the appropriate and relevant development aspects.

According to Steinmann (2017: 4), a mentor must have a certain type of DNA, which means having a "heart" for other people, being generous and passionate. Mentors must be able to share life experiences, insight, provide guidance and disseminate knowledge to the mentee. According to Ayodeji and Adebayo (2015: 23), a good mentor is one who is prepared to be good role model, offer encouragement and lead by example. There must also be a willingness to share experiences and a desire to help and teach. Ayodeji and Adebayo maintained that it is important for a mentor to invest time and mental energy in the process of mentoring. Other studies conducted in BIs in Thailand, by Klaasa and Thawesaengskulthai (2018: 1181) also confirmed the importance of quality mentors in order for mentorship programmes to succeed.

At a SMME colloquium held in Johannesburg (IOL, 2014), the Minister of Small Business was recognising the importance of training and mentoring for SMMEs. The Minister indicated that SMMEs need professional and business-minded mentors, but also astute retired business owners. The Minister was clearly articulating the view that mentors with expertise and years of experience are better suited to mentorship programmes.

According to Chopra and Saint (2017:4), it is important to establish clear and firm ground rules at the outset of the mentoring relationship, as this will improve efficiency. Expectations on both sides must be clarified to avoid any misunderstanding at a later stage. Ayodeji and Adebayo (2015: 33) state that unrealistic expectations between the mentor and mentee can also lead to problems in the relationship, between the mentor and mentee. Son and Kim (2013: 311) emphasised the need for a sound relationship between the mentor and mentee and suggested that the quality of the relationship has a strong effect on the level of commitment and actions taken by the mentee on advice given by the mentor.

According to Ting, Feng and Qin (2017: 1410), entrepreneurial mentoring is generally considered an effective manner to train beginner entrepreneurs globally. Ting et al. argue that factors for success and effectiveness are not well understood in country-specific settings. Studies conducted by Ting et al. in China uncovered that the mentor's characteristics, more particularly intentions, had the greatest impact on the mentoring effect, even more so than the mentor's skills and quality. The interactive nature of the mentor and mentee relationship was also found to have a positive effect on the entrepreneurial mentoring. Although mentee factors were found to have little effect on the mentoring relationship, the ability of young entrepreneurs to absorb information was found to be weak.

Steinmann (2017: 4) also confirmed that the success of mentorship lies in the quality of the relationship. Bell and Goldsmith (2013) also shared a similar view, by further suggesting the removal of any power imbalance in the mentorship relationship. According to Ayodeji and Adebayo (2015: 33), a mentorship relationship cannot be healthy in a situation where the mentee is submissive, and the mentor is a manipulator and controls the mentee. A similar view was expressed by Son and Kim (2013: 311), indicating that a mentee may be reluctant to disagree with a mentor's advice, in such case where the mentor is of higher status than the mentee.

In a study conducted by Cull (2006: 19), which focused on investigating the factors that led to success in mentoring young entrepreneurs, relationships were cited as one of the key factors. Honesty in the mentor and mentee relationship was regarded as important. Equally important was communication, chemistry between the mentor and mentee, and recognition. Cull stated that the mentor must be competent and be able to support the mentee in various ways.

McCarthy (2014: 197) indicated that a mentoring relationship that includes trust is key to the whole process of mentorship. The personalities of both the mentor and mentee are also crucial in the pairing process. Son and Kim (2013: 311) also pointed out that trust is an essential element in a relationship between the mentor and mentee, and that mentees are more willing to take advice from the mentor if trust is in place. Steinmann (2017: 16) also advocated that, for mentoring to be successful, there must be common ground, as well as a high degree of trust and openness. The issue of trust

also arose as a key element in studies conducted by El Hallam and St-Jean (2016: 2). The more the entrepreneur can trust the mentor, the greater the potential for learning. Mertel (2010:186) emphasised the need for both the mentor and mentee to have a sense of shared values for the relationship to work. Steinmann (2017: 16), suggested that, for a mentoring relationship to be sustained, there must be structure and discipline. The structure allows for deep and meaningful mentoring conversations to take place.

According to Ayodeji and Adebayo (2015: 33), neglect of the mentee by the mentor can also cause the mentorship relationship to fail. According to Ayodeji and Adebayo, mentor and mentee conflict can often arise due to incompatibility between the parties. El Hallam and St-Jean (2016: 5) also identified the personality of both the mentor and mentee as one of the factors that affects the mentoring relationship.

According to Lifelong Learning Programme (2015: 7), a European Union (EU) sponsored initiative for SMME mentoring, it is important to ensure that the right mentor is matched to the mentee. Lifelong Learning Programme further pointed out that choosing your mentor carefully is very important, as the mentor needs to be someone who demonstrates commitment, enthusiasm, and takes the role seriously. It was further suggested that having a voluntary application process for mentors, coupled with good training can safely guarantee and ensure that you get the best mentor.

According to Cunningham (2016: 4), there are various ways to match mentors and mentees. It can be done through a questionnaire or interview process, where the parties indicate what they hope to offer or gain out of the relationship. Cunningham has stated that the better the match, the higher the chances are that the mentoring relationship would be of high quality. Cunningham further added that it is not only imperative to match people by industry, but by personality too, in order for the mentoring relationship to be successful.

According to Hall (2003: 24), mentors must be screened, and there must be a match of the mentor to the required criteria. In addition, there must be on-going training and frequent contact between the mentor and mentee. Cull (2006: 10) states that mentorship is at the risk of failing if there is a mismatch between the mentoring scheme

and the needs of the mentee. Cull states that this problem can be compounded if there is distance between the mentor and mentee.

Cull (2006: 19) also confirmed the importance of a match, by stating that a mismatch could cause uneasiness for the mentor, but at the same time, can be catastrophic for the mentee. On the other hand, Cox (2005: 403-414), advocates that the match between mentor and mentee can only be advanced from within the relationship, and that it cannot be expected earlier.

El Hallam and St-Jean (2016: 4) also stated that the mentor's functions are expected to have a positive impact on the mentees progress. Reference is made to the mentor's psychological function, from which the mentee gains emotional support. Through this support, feedback and encouragement, an opportunity is created for the mentee to confide in the mentor and through engagement, ask clarity seeking questions, thereby enhancing self-confidence of the mentee.

There are some common key themes that emerge from the various authors above who have written about the mentoring relationship. The issue of trust, compatibility, and personality match emerge strongly as success factors for a solid mentoring foundation. It is also important for the mentoring relationship to end on a good note. The mentoring relationship may come to an end due to the mentee achieving the required growth and development. In some instances, the relationship ends due to the mentor no longer being available, or becoming committed elsewhere. Palmer and McDowall (2010: 159) point out that it is important for the mentoring relationship to end well, although there may be feelings of loss or grief at the end.

Another predicament that arises is as to whether the mentorship relationship should be formal or informal. Cox (2005: 403-414) was of the view that in informal mentoring relationships, a rapport between the mentor and mentee is often created, which is a challenge on the other hand for organisers of formal mentoring programmes. Clutterbuck (2004: 16), on the other hand, was of the view that when people get together without clarity, purpose, and guidance about the mentoring role, it then becomes a trial-and-error matter. Clutterbuck further states that the quality of the mentoring relationships tends to be highly variable, and that the pairings often end up

in a mismatch. It is for this reason that Clutterbuck has suggested that a mentoring programme ought to incorporate both a formal and informal approach. Cameron, Tucker and Miller (2007: 7) argued that the location of the mentoring is a crucial aspect to consider. According to the authors, formal mentoring is regarded as having many benefits for the mentor and protégé. The authors further argued that mentorship is a product of high accomplishment and therefore promote the entrepreneurial location as the ideal environment for mentoring.

It should be noted that for mentorship to work successfully, there needs to be a combined effort of several role players. This was reinforced by Chance (2017: 6), who indicated that in addition to increasing the level of entrepreneurial activity, there needs to be a real effort between government, civil society, and the private sector to increase the success of emerging entrepreneurs. Chance further stated that one such way of increasing the success of emerging entrepreneurs is through a mentorship programme.

In recent studies conducted by Paver, Rothmann, Van den Broeck and De Witte (2019: 8), relating to interventions to assist the unemployed in South African townships, it emerged that the lack of collaboration was a serious challenge. The study revealed that, although government is engaged in various entrepreneurship initiatives to address unemployment, there is general lack of guidance from higher spheres of government. This lack of collaboration results in a failure to achieve outcomes. The findings of this study further revealed that in most instances, stakeholders had limited knowledge of the various programmes. For mentorship to succeed, there is a need for strong collaboration among all stakeholders.

2.9 THE ROLE OF BUSINESS INCUBATORS IN MENTORSHIP

Baraldi and Havenvid (2016: 53) identified seven areas that are important for business incubation, namely:

- time (the longer the incubation period, the better the support);
- place (the environment must offer space and logistical support);
- sources (specialist or generalist incubator and selection rules);
- resources (finance, competence, space, and mentors);

- control and governance (profit versus non-profit);
- activities and services (business support, mentorship, and financing) and
- outcomes (performance of the incubated firms).

Baraldi and Havenvid indicated that business incubation plays a strategic role in value creation, therefore, they need to adopt a more strategic perspective rather than focusing on operational aspects only. These strategic drivers as identified by Baraldi and Havenvid (2016: 64), are the following:

- value chain positioning, which emphasises the importance of value creation for both the mentee and external stakeholders;
- risk taking/time perspective, where most incubators pay attention to creating value by ensuring that businesses survive the start-up phase and in doing so, they take low risks and have a short-term time span;
- revenue model, which defines ways in which the BI sources cash flows for carrying out its activities and achieving its outcomes;
- governance and control, which defines internal controls of the BI in ensuring strict controls over budget, finance, and accountability to stakeholders;
- internationalisation, namely, to be able to source financial resources internationally, gain international presence through embracing a broader group of international stakeholders; and
- cooperation/competition, which creates value, the BI must interact with external networks and stakeholders, some of whom control key resources. The BI could also end up in competition with cooperation partners.

These strategic drivers were formulated out of a case study relating to the Karolinska institute (KI). Although they relate to a medical institute, the strategic drivers could easily be applied to any type of BI.

One of the most important trends in the BI environment in India is the move towards sector-specific and partnership driven incubators (Govardhan and Jeyakumaran, 2018: 890). According to a study conducted by Govardhan and Jeyakumaran (2018: 890), such partnerships provide mature mentorships to start-ups, which in turn could contribute towards further growth of quality products.

South Africa has adopted business incubation as one medium for elevating the SMME economy. A business incubation programme offers mentorship, business and technical support services, space, infrastructure, shared services, and market linkages, to accelerate the growth of emerging and small start-up business enterprises into financially and operationally independent enterprises.

According to Patwa (2019: 1), the rate of success ought to increase when start-ups are afforded the opportunity to be incubated. This is based on the strong mentorship component that business incubation attracts. Patwa further states that by making use of seasoned veterans in the BI mentorship process, this enhances the outcome. Ilieva-Koleva (2015: 458) indicate that BIs play a crucial role in preparing a business to start. In a way, BIs are defined as the mentors in the conceptual phase of enterprises. According to Lose and Tengeh (2016: 376), business incubation is a development strategy mainly aimed at accelerating formation, development, survival, and growth of enterprises by providing clients with a wide range of business assistance, including mentorship. It is widely accepted that there is great interest globally to increase the survival rate of SMMEs, given their important role in economic growth, employment creation, and poverty reduction. This has led to a growing interest in BIs and their perceived role in the survival of start-ups.

Van der Spuy (2019: 1), also confirmed the importance of BIs as a stimulus for SMME development in any economy. BIs are meant to assist with the acceleration of start-up enterprises, facilitate development and growth of SMMEs. Van der Spuy further argued that through the process of incubation, entrepreneurs graduate, thereby becoming empowered to take charge of sustainable and profitable business ventures.

According to Ismail (2018: 8), several governments in Africa introduced various forms of entrepreneurship support and incubation programmes. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) also introduced "Start and Improve Your Business", known as (SIYB) in Africa. In addition to finance and grants offered by the SIYB, training is a key feature of the programme. Ismail reported that a review of an SIYB programme in Uganda revealed there was a 54% increase in profits, six to nine months after the programme. SMMEs seek relief in BIs due to the various challenges experienced on the outside. It is important for BIs to understand the motivation behind the

entrepreneur's involvement in the programme. According to Lose and Tengeh (2016: 372), limited skills constitute one of the reasons that push a potential entrepreneur to a BI. For entrepreneurs to be successful, they need to have expertise and skills in the industry they are entering. In a recent study conducted by Lose and Tengeh (2016: 375), it emerged that most entrepreneurs in BIs (60.7%) joined the business incubation programme to obtain multiple skills. The majority indicated their concern over the lack of business skills.

In South Africa, the concept of BIs started approximately 20 years ago, although in other parts of the world, incubators have been around for several decades. According to Bose and Kiran (2014: 65), BIs exist to guide start-up firms through a growth path and at the same time promote innovation and entrepreneurship. Bose and Kiran further advocate that this is done through the creation of a supportive environment for entrepreneurs, noting that, according to the American National Business Incubation Association (NBIA), business incubation is classified into five categories, namely:

- mixed use;
- technology;
- manufacturing;
- service; and
- other.

The authors further argued that it is important for any BI to develop and deliver successful enterprises that become financially viable, sustainable, and free-standing. In the process of all this the BI must also contribute towards the creation of jobs.

According to Ogutu and Kihonge (2016: 231), BIs are regarded as the tool that would arrest the high failure rate of SMMEs. Ogutu and Kihonge maintain that the survival rate of businesses that are well incubated are as high as 70 percent. It then follows that if the success rate is higher, the more positive the effect is on economic development and job creation. Ogutu and Kihonge define BIs as an environment that is conducive for the nurturing of start-ups and new ventures, with the aim of creating sustainable and profitable enterprises. This is done through training, mentorship, and support services.

The whole process of business incubation is thus a model that is aimed at building entrepreneurial capacity. Ogutu and Kihonge further argued that studies in Brazil have shown that BIs have been relatively successful, mainly due to the benchmarking for excellence and the focus on specific industries. In addition, evaluation of mentees progress takes place, working towards financial viability and sustainability three years after establishment.

Studies by Ogutu and Kihonge (2016: 239) uncovered that there is a strong correlation between the degree of economic development and the number of BIs found in a country. The writers further argued that BIs need to be adopted as a policy for entrepreneurship development, given its potential of paying economic dividends. Ogutu and Kihonge propose that future research ought to focus on studies of business survival over time, subsequent to the business incubation process. In addition, there is a need to compare best practices of BIs in different regions to determine their impact on entrepreneurship development.

According to Ayatse, Kwahar and Iyortsuun (2017:1), new businesses and established ones conduct business with the aim of being successful, however, the possibility of failure is always present. The authors note that this has given rise to efforts to reduce business failure through forming institutions that are strong enough to assist businesses in succeeding. Ayatse et al. (2017) refer to the concept of business incubation that many governments across the world have introduced to help businesses endure.

A study was conducted by Ayatse et al. (2017), to establish the role played by BIs on the success of a business. This study strongly favoured the argument that a business incubation process supports entrepreneurial feeling and attitude, venture creation, economic growth, and development. A further contribution of the study was to note that the incubation process helped businesses survive well after incubation. This was based on the business assistance, advisory services, marketing, and financial mentoring offered during the incubation process.

Mulolli, Islami and Skenderi (2017: 659) also confirm the importance of BIs for economic growth. According to Mulolli et al., BIs enable start-up entrepreneurs to gain

access to mentorship, technical support, and other support services. Studies by Mulolli et al., conducted in Kosovo, reveal that the success of SMME development can be attributed to the role of BIs. This has also contributed to the overall economic growth in Kosovo. According to Mulolli et al., more work needs to be done in the field of strategic plans for BIs and increasing institutional responsibility for incubators.

It is good practice to benchmark against international standards in order to determine whether there are any deficiencies in local frameworks. As a highly developed economy, the United States government invests considerably in programmes such as business incubation. According to Harper-Anderson and Lewis (2018: 60), business incubation has become a popular and preferred tool amongst policymakers, with the aim of promoting strong and sustainable regional economies in the United States. Harper-Anderson and Lewis further suggest that it is important to maximise returns on BIs, given the money and time invested, where it becomes necessary to understand which variables of incubator programmes have the greatest impact on incubator success.

Harper-Anderson and Lewis (2018: 61) reported that, by 2012, there were more than 1250 BIs in the United States alone, with more than 85% receiving public funding. The writers also pointed out that the performance of BIs across regions has been inconsistent. According to Harper-Anderson and Lewis, researchers in the United States have mostly focused on identifying locational attributes that enhance BI success, as opposed to research that focuses on attributes that may lead to success in any location.

A study undertaken by Harper-Anderson and Lewis (2018: 72) revealed that there is a strong relationship between incubator attributes and programme outcomes. In addition, Harper-Anderson and Lewis argue that it is important for policymakers and decisionmakers who want to maximise return on investment in BIs, to fully understand the regional economic environment. Based on the understanding of the regional economic environment, it would make it easier for policymakers to develop policies that would best strengthen their regions capability for incubation.

Studies carried out by Bose and Kiran (2014: 68) also supported the need for strong attributes, consistent with those suggested by Harper-Anderson and Lewis (2018: 72). Although the study undertaken by Bose and Kiran concentrated on incubation in the agricultural sector, the key focus remained the same, which was an attempt to establish the factors that make incubators work. The study strengthens the argument that strong attributes, such as having qualified and experienced incubator managers, technology expertise, strong value chain, financial resources, and marketing will contribute towards survival, growth, and profitability.

2.10 FACTORS IMPEDING MENTORSHIP IN BUSINESS INCUBATORS

2.10.1 Lack of support systems

Lose and Tengeh (2016: 372) maintained that although it is widely accepted that entrepreneurship is a great contributor to an economy, the support systems in place to ensure success are lacking. Notwithstanding the ambitious intentions of BIs, very few SMMEs graduate from these programmes. There is still a lack of support systems, tracking mechanisms and proper monitoring systems to deal with mentorship in an incubator setting. Litheko and Potgieter (2020: 1) argue that one of the greatest ways to address unemployment is to encourage and foster small business development. The writers further indicated that although there is support from organisations in South Africa, there are still constraints and obstacles, mainly due to the low levels of knowledge and insufficient business and management skills of owners.

2.10.2 Government strategy

According to Lebambo (2019: 1), the South African government introduced various business support institutions such as BIs, together with policies aimed at developing entrepreneurship, to deal with the issues of unemployment, inequality, and poverty. Due to the limited understanding of the complexities of different communities, initiatives have failed. Government has not been very successful in terms of rural BIs, to elevate the lives of rural entrepreneurs. Lebambo points out that the lack of business skills and the equal lack of industry mentors poses a challenge for rural entrepreneurs. In a recent study conducted by Lebambo (2019: 15), it emerged that rural

entrepreneurs are subjected to a one-size-fits-all approach, and there is a lack of policy to deal with rural entrepreneurship. Tengeh and Choto (2015: 154) also support this view that there needs to be adequate support from government and other community stakeholders for such BIs to succeed.

In recent years, there has been an increased focus by the South African government on female entrepreneurship, however, according to Le Guern (2017: 7), many women start businesses and make attempts to grow, but fail at some stage mainly due to a lack of direction or focus, and in some cases, motivation. A number of these women entrepreneurs end up losing hope and giving up because they do not have the skills and ability to take the business to the next level.

Okeke-Uzodike and Ndinda (2018: 147) indicate that although it is generally recognised that women play a crucial role in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, their participation in entrepreneurial activities remains marginalised in government policy in South Africa. A study undertaken in KwaZulu-Natal on the review of women entrepreneurship uncovered some very concerning perceptions about support programmes and mentorship. Okeke-Uzodike and Ndinda point out that although there are support and business incubation mentorship programmes for women, the women participants in the study questioned the effectiveness of such programmes. The participants indicated that there were many challenges with the implementation of mentorship programmes, such as lack of experienced mentors and service providers, as well as a lack of skilled and experienced business advisors. In addition, there were budget issues on the side of government agencies responsible for mentorship programmes.

2.10.3 Funding and rewarding mentors

According to Khurana (2017: 1), the overall success rate of start-ups coming out of BIs are lower than the already appalling rate of start-ups in general. The financial position of most BIs is such that they cannot afford top-quality mentors. Studies undertaken by Mulolli, Islami and Skenderi (2017: 663) also pointed to the issue of financial support for BIs in developing countries. According to these studies, funding is received on an ad-hoc basis, which then poses challenges to roll-out programmes.

Mentorship is meant to be a crucial service that BIs offer, yet it is regarded as the weakest link. Bishop (2019:1) also stated that in some BI programmes, mentors do receive a funding allocation, whereas in other incubator settings mentors are expected to work as volunteers. Bishop further argued that the extent to which mentors support entrepreneurs in BIs varies, where some are committed, while others offer an ad-hoc service. The varying level of commitment can be attributed to the issue of remuneration or reward a mentor receives versus those who are volunteers.

Deepali, Jain and Chaudhary (2016:135), in another study, focused on the feasibility of financial rewards for mentors. Mentors are considered to be individuals who are willing to sacrifice their time to benefit others in return for no remuneration. At the same time, their value is undermined, according to Deepali et al. (2016:135). The findings of this study revealed that there is a definite need to reexamine mentor reward models, given that mentors are more professional in today's business environment, and intent on financial rewards for the long-term. This draws a link between mentor growth and growth of mentees.

2.10.4 Skills of business incubator management and staff

Although some studies in Brazil show that BIs have been successful, Ogutu and Kihonge (2016: 233) indicate that studies in South Africa on the other hand revealed that business incubation require strong BI Managers and funds to succeed. Studies by Ogutu and Kihonge further suggest that BI Managers lack skills in key areas such as bookkeeping, marketing, business plan development, and network linkages (to link entrepreneurs to markets). Tengeh and Choto (2015: 154) also confirm that BIs face competency issues, which results in their inability to service entrepreneurs.

Lose and Tengeh (2016: 370), also supported this view, stating that it is important for BIs to have personnel with the right skills. In some cases, it may also entail re-skilling of BI staff. This should include BI Managers. Lose and Tengeh (2016: 370), further argue that one of the reasons cited for SMMEs failing to develop and grow is due to management of most BIs lacking the necessary skills to provide entrepreneurial development. This has resulted in several BIs closing.

Hughes (2015: 32) has stated that in mentoring of agriculture, it is vital to assist new farmers to prosper, but that mentoring itself is a talent that must be learnt. According to Hughes, if a mentor wants to grow and develop the skills of another individual, there is a need for a professional attitude towards mentoring, together with certain competencies. This was also confirmed by El Hallam and St-Jean (2016:5), who indicated that it is important for a mentor to be trained before pairing. In addition, the writers emphasised the importance of mentors receiving continuous training for them to be effective and relevant.

In support of the findings of the above study, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), also raised similar concerns on government mentorship and support programmes. DTI (2011) pointed out that there is a concern over the lack of skills in implementing government support programmes. The DTI further indicated that some of the government agencies dealing with support programmes employ staff who are poorly skilled and inadequately qualified. This results in implementation challenges.

The use of experienced mentors was also identified to be a crucial factor in a study conducted in Kenya, by Brooks, Donovan and Johnson (2018: 196). The study concentrated on inexperienced female micro-entrepreneurs in a Kenyan slum going through an incubation programme. Beside the study pointing out that participants benefitted from experienced mentors, participants also preferred mentors from the same community. The study further uncovered that mentorship offered by experienced entrepreneurs from the same community contributed to a twenty percent increase in profit of the mentees.

According to Chopra and Saint (2017: 2), good mentoring is a discipline and is often characterised by trust, good communication, shared values, and respect. Chopra and Saint further argue that there is limited guidance on how to be a good mentor, even though mentoring is recognised as an important enabler.

2.10.5 Structure and relevance of offering

According to Lose and Tengeh (2016: 376), although government should direct more funds to BIs, there is also room for BIs to enhance its offering to ensure structure and relevance. This view was also supported by Khurana (2017: 1), indicating that mentors

are generally sincere about assisting potential entrepreneurs, however, in the absence of organised deliverables and arrangements, the relationship tends to be shallow or momentary.

Recent studies conducted in India, indicate that business incubation lacks structured mentoring. According to Govardhan and Jeyakumaran (2018: 890), the lack of a structured form of mentoring in BIs is cause for concern. In addition, there is a mismatch between the expectations of start-ups from the incubators and the incubator programmes. Other studies conducted in India by Bagchi and Chatterjee (2017: 35-46) concur with the views expressed by Govardhan and Jeyakumaran. Bagchi and Chatterjee further emphasised the importance of promoting entrepreneurship through the handholding incubation process. Although the Indian government increased its focus on incubation services, the study revealed that there was great improvement needed in mentoring support, accounting, and assistance to access markets. According to Bagchi and Chatterjee, in many cases, the focus on incubators is misplaced, resulting in greater priority to certain services with low importance.

A recent study was conducted in Tanzania, focusing on the contribution made by business and technology incubators to women entrepreneurs. According to Kapinga, Montero, Mwandosya and Mbise (2018: 1-14), the women participants in this study argued that the incubators offered them inadequate support, where, although training, access to market information and networks were provided as part of the incubation process, the incubation was found to be lacking in other key areas. The participants in the study were generally disappointed in the services offered by the incubators. According to Kapinga et al. (2018), there was a general lack of contextualisation in these incubators, and the true needs of the entrepreneurs were not addressed. Participants in the study expressed the need for customised and relevant solutions.

Kapinga et al. also identified the high demand for incubation versus capacity of the incubators, to a be further challenge. Although this research was confined to women entrepreneurs, it pointed to certain gaps in the way mentorship takes place within incubators, adding to the need for further research in this area. The outcome of this research also confirmed the need for further research to focus on understanding the needs of the entrepreneurs before the mentorship programme can commence.

Kapinga et al. suggest that further research should also focus on strategies to curtail the challenges of incubation interventions.

According to the results of a study undertaken by Agbenyegah and Dlamini (2018: 47-60), there is a need for tailor made initiatives, to address the specific incubation and mentorship needs of rural entrepreneurs. Due to rural areas differing in their attitude towards entrepreneurial activities, the study identified a need for tailor-made solutions. There is also a need for government agencies to generate strategies to deal with the high failure of rural entrepreneurs. Agbenyegah and Dlamini (2018) propose that rural entrepreneurs undergo specific entrepreneurship programmes, including mentorship programmes by community role models.

2.10.6 Lack of performance measurement

Due to the amount of time that is invested in BI mentorship and the personal commitment that mentors need to demonstrate, it is essential for the success of mentorship to be measured. McCarthy (2014: 197) states that the mentoring process can be evaluated for effectiveness using evaluation sheets (like that used in a training environment), measuring return on investment, and conducting pre- and post-measurements.

Similar views are advocated for by Cunningham (2016: 4), who indicates the need for qualitative and quantitative measures to determine the effectiveness of a mentorship programme. Cunningham maintains that if a mentorship programme is executed correctly, it has several benefits for the mentor and mentee. It also depends on how much time the parties are willing to put into the mentoring relationship. There is little research done in the field of mentorship measurement. This is one of the most critical areas through which the level of success of mentorship can be ascertained, yet little by way of research has been undertaken.

Recent studies conducted by Mukata, Ladzani and Visser (2018: 81) in Namibia indicate that the success and usefulness of business support programmes remains unclear, despite the comprehensive services offered. The failure rate of businesses in Namibia continued to increase together with the high unemployment rate. Although

the study revealed that some respondents benefitted from the training through increased sales and profits, there were also differences when the analysis was done according to towns. Results found in one town did not necessarily apply to another. The study recommended that the training programmes ought to be linked to mentoring and technical outcomes, which are measurable.

Studies conducted in Pakistan by Li, Ahmed, Qalati, Khan and Naz (2020: 3), also indicated that the assessment of performance in a BI is a difficult process. This is mainly due to the absence of a single norm or standard for evaluation. The authors further indicated that it is even more challenging to assess performance in developing countries than it is to do so in developed countries, and that government needs to increase efforts to assess BI performance.

A review on the benchmarking of business incubation was undertaken by Torun et al. (2018: 1-10). This study focused on understanding the level of knowledge about benchmarks for BI assessment. A key finding of this study was that there is no uniform framework for performance evaluation of BIs. Furthermore, there is no consistent set of benchmarks, due to numerous constraints, such as the assortment of incubator types, regions, goals, and stakeholders. The authors indicate that having a benchmarking and assessment framework would assist managers of BIs to compare their methods and degree of success with other BIs. Bakkali, Messeghem and Sammut (2014: 1) also expressed a view consistent to that expressed by Torun et al. (2018) and Bakkali et al. (2014), articulating the view that incubators are typified by extensive variety and substantial disparity in terms of performance.

2.10.7 Commitment from entrepreneurs

Although mentorship challenges are mainly experienced by the entrepreneurs, mentees also pose a challenge to mentors. According to Ayodeji and Adebayo (2015: 24), a mentee must be open-minded, motivated, and committed to expanding knowledge. BIs in developing countries go through several challenges to mentor entrepreneurs, therefore, it is important to recruit only goal-driven entrepreneurs, so as to ensure a smooth incubation and timeous exit. Studies conducted in BIs in Thailand by Klaasa and Thawesaengskulthai (2018: 1181) also confirm that the success of any programme depends largely on passion and commitment of the

entrepreneur. In a recent study conducted in Zimbabwe by Nani (2018: 21), it emerged that one of the problems experienced by BIs was the lack of screening of potential entrepreneurs. Nani maintained that there ought to be a selection committee of professionals dealing with the screening of applicants and their business ideas prior to admission into any business incubation programme.

Tengeh and Choto (2015: 154) point to the risk that BIs face when investing substantial resources in programmes, whereas entrepreneurs could be uninterested and uncommitted. Tengeh and Choto further expressed the view that entrepreneurs must have the desire and willingness to succeed. The willingness of entrepreneurs to succeed and their level of commitment does have an impact on the mentorship experience gained in the incubator. A study carried out in the United States revealed that women entrepreneurs were the fastest growing segment as of 2014, according to Laukhuf and Malone (2015:70). This study was carried out to gather information from women entrepreneurs on how they viewed mentorship as a factor in their lives. According to Laukhuf and Malone (2015:71), most women who participated in the study recognised that a mentoring relationship was required for entrepreneurial success. Participants also reported positive results in the performance of their companies, based on their mentorship experiences. This highlights the importance of commitment.

In a developing country such as Pakistan, the government acknowledged the need for economic development of SMMEs to the extent that investments have been made in initiatives such as BIs (Arshad, Ahmad, Ali, Khan and Arshad, 2020: 1494). Sadly, there was a lack of interest and commitment from mentees. According to Arshad, Ahmad, Ali, Khan and Arshad (2020: 1494), the usage was poor. This is concerning, especially when a government invests in such initiatives and the participation is poor. Arshad et al. further argue that notwithstanding the resources invested in BIs by both the private and public sector, their impact on SMMEs is not well documented.

2.10.8 Differences in private and public incubator offering

Studies by Masutha and Rogerson (2014: 223) also supported the argument that a BI is a critical tool for the survival of start-up SMMEs. Masutha and Rogerson maintain

that, although South Africa has strengthened its focus in terms of business incubation, there are still challenges faced by state and private incubators. Masutha and Rogerson (2014: 237) reveal that there are differences in the way public and private incubators operate, where the main objective of public incubators is to widen economic involvement, by generating employment opportunities and to transfer skills. The focus of private sector incubators is on growing the SMME into assets of value, with the aim of maximising profitability and turnover.

In South Africa, public incubators fall under the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), while private incubators fall under their parent companies. Public incubators remain flexible in terms of their selection criteria of entrepreneurs, whereas private incubators are more strict and rigid (Masutha and Rogerson, 2014: 237). A significant difference based on the study conducted by Masutha and Rogerson is that private incubators focus on medium sized businesses, with the potential to grow into assets of value. The public sector incubators, on the other hand focus on all SMMEs, irrespective of size. There are, however, common challenges faced by public and private incubators, which include high dropout rates, lack of entrepreneurial discipline and determination from mentees and non-compliance (Masutha and Rogerson, 2014: 237).

2.10.9 Accessibility

In South Africa, most BIs are mainly concentrated in urban areas which creates accessibility challenges for people from rural areas. To date there has been very little investment in business incubation programmes designed for rural communities. According to Agbenyegah and Dlamini (2018: 47-60), rural entrepreneurship has been isolated over the years and has also lost impetus in academia. Although rural entrepreneurship plays a significant role in marginalised communities, the challenges they face are huge and very different to urban entrepreneurship. Studies conducted by Agbenyegah and Dlamini showed that the role of government and provincial authorities needed to be increased, with a focus on entrepreneurial education, training, and skills interventions, including incubation programmes.

The challenges relating to the lack of training and mentorship in rural areas have also been confirmed by Bounds and Zinyemba (2018: 59-70), whose study on rural farmers involved in poultry farming reveals that hands-on training, technical support, and business management from experienced farmers in the industry could be offered in rural areas. This would assist the rural farmers in dealing with their day-to-day business problems. By having BIs in rural areas, entrepreneurs could be mentored, with a view to upskilling them.

Other studies conducted by Baah-Mintah, Owusu-Adjei and Koomson (2018:143-151), also emphasised the importance of training, mentorship, and advisory services for rural entrepreneurs. The study showed that the Business Advisory Centre (BAC) in rural parts of Ghana offering business support and mentorship services played a significant role with its programmes in reducing poverty among rural entrepreneurs. The support and mentorship programmes offered by the BAC resulted in improved outputs, income, and savings to such an extent that the study proposed that the BAC intensify its programmes, due to the positive effect.

2.10.10 Needs and circumstances of entrepreneurs

One of the factors affecting the success of mentorship in a BI is the inability to take the needs of potential entrepreneurs into account. According to Tengeh and Choto (2015: 153), some BIs take the approach to consider what programmes they can offer instead of considering what entrepreneurs truly need. This in turn leads to failure, in the sense that the BI fails to equip the entrepreneur with the necessary skills required to survive.

Studies conducted by Karadzic, Drobnjak and Reyhani (2015: 13) indicate that the issue of mentorship challenges within the context of youth entrepreneurship is not unique to Africa, but also constitutes a problem in most European countries. In European countries it has become challenging for youth to find employment, and for this reason, entrepreneurship has become a second option. Karadzic et al. state that youth entrepreneurship is a subject that is high on the policy agenda of many European countries, where in Montenegro, the authors showed that youth need entrepreneurial training and support and believe that government needs to do more in

improving non-formal education for youth entrepreneurs through incubation programmes.

Similar studies have been conducted by Brixiova, Ncube and Bicaba (2014: 11), in Swaziland, where it was found that the lack of entrepreneurial skills among the youth in Swaziland contributed to a reduction in the effectiveness of youth start-ups. According to Brixiova et al., the need for non-financial support was considered more important than subsidies from government. Studies conducted in Pakistan by Sher et al. (2017: 943) also confirm that youth lacked entrepreneurial skills. Based on the findings of this study, Sher et al. suggest that mentorship ought to be provided by existing entrepreneurs and experts.

Globally, it is evident that there is a major gap in promoting entrepreneurship among youth in a BI setting. Although governments of several countries regard youth entrepreneurship as a strategic focus area, there is a gap in terms of the skills, support, training, and mentorship interventions available. If the youth are required to make a significant contribution to the development of the economy of a given country, it is essential that such gaps are addressed in order to be closed.

According to Sharafizad (2018: 82), there has been limited research that investigates small business owners who are women, in terms of their learning practices and preferences. A study was undertaken by Sharafizad to establish whether women entrepreneurs preferred informal learning to formal training, and secondly to understand the role played by mentoring in the learning process. The study uncovered that women entrepreneurs had a clear inclination for informal training. Participants in the study revealed that they used their own production experience and intelligence to start their businesses. There was a low uptake of formal training based on personal preferences of participants, time, and resource constraints. The study sample also pointed out that the women entrepreneurs mainly relied on their own network of contacts to assist them in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge. A very small portion of the participants in the study had mentors. Sharafizad (2018: 82) suggested that more work needed to be done regarding offering affordable and flexible informal training aimed at women entrepreneurs. Sharafizad further indicated that these informal programmes need to incorporate mentorship, by engaging with industry

experts and partners, to appoint industry instructors in order to provide mentoring support.

Starting a new busines is quite a major undertaking and intimidating task, however, for a woman, it comes with additional challenges, such as attending to family responsibilities, and dealing with societal issues, such as gender stereotyping (Sharafizad, 2018: 82). According to Sharafizad (2018: 82), there are many characteristics that describe a successful entrepreneur, such as self-confidence, ambition, aggressiveness, and competitiveness. Women are often seen as lacking in these traits for entrepreneurial success. Sharafizad (2018: 86) forwards that an industry-focused support system of informal mentorship would assist in addressing some of these gaps.

2.11 GAPS IDENTIFIED IN RESEARCH

According to Chebii, Bwisa and Sakwa (2016: 458), SMMEs constitute approximately 90% of all new businesses established globally. Although SMMEs play a significant role in the economy of any country, SMME research in the past has predominantly focused on access to funding and markets, while overlooking a potentially crucial aspect such as business mentorship, to possibly ensure SMME sustainability. There are several gaps in BI mentorship, and these are summarised below:

2.11.1 Lack of government policy and interventions

In developing countries, there is a need for stronger government input and policies when dealing with SMME mentorship. This is one of the gaps identified in research conducted in entrepreneurial mentoring in Kenya by Chebii et al. (2016: 467). Chebii et al. further suggest that there ought to be clearly documented policies and procedures that deal with mentorship. In South Africa, the Small Business Ministry was established in 2014, but limited progress has been made in formulating policies and strategies that deal with SMME mentorship, including mentorship within BIs. This is an area that requires focus, as there will be no strategic direction from the side of government, in the absence of documented mentorship policies and procedures for SMMEs.

The incubation of women in South Africa continues to remain overlooked in government policy (Okeke-Uzodike and Ndinda, 2018: 147). The authors identify implementation challenges on the part of Government to be a stumbling block in dealing with business mentorship programmes. This is mainly due to the unstructured and ineffective nature of programmes directed towards women, where the needs of women entrepreneurs have not been considered in the design of mentorship programmes, whether inside or outside a BI setting.

2.11.2 Single versus multi-mentorship approach for business incubators

To date, most of the research on mentorship in BIs focuses on the use of a single mentor approach, while there is limited research on a multi-mentor approach. The latter approach involves the engagement of multiple mentors with each start-up, with each mentor being a subject matter expert in his or her own field. This approach also allows mentors to engage with each other about the start-up, with a view to finding solutions. In a BI setting, the use of a single mentor could lend itself to a "classroom-like" approach, where entrepreneurs are taught theory that can have limited positive value. There is also limited research on formal versus informal mentoring from a BI perspective. Based on the literature review conducted, in some studies, mentees have expressed their concern about not being given mentorship options, based on their circumstances, needs, and location. In addition, there is limited research on the success rate of SMMEs mentored through an informal approach, versus those mentored formally.

2.11.3 Customisation versus "one-size-fits-all" approach

In the literature review that has been covered in this chapter, there are several BIs, where the mentees undergoing mentorship in an incubator are solely women, youth, or rural participants (Sharafizad, 2018: 82). The BIs in these various studies do not differentiate in the approach taken, where a "one size for all" approach has been adopted. This is regarded as a serious flaw in the way mentorship is implemented in BIs, as it does not take into consideration that women, youth, and rural participants may all have different circumstances and needs. For example, it is evident from the studies conducted above that the development of women entrepreneurs is lacking in most countries. Hewitt and Janse van Rensburg (2020: 1) note that a one-size-fits-all

approach to business incubator support has come under critique. The study showed that BIs often see themselves in a position of strength, as opposed to a partnership with the entrepreneur. According to Hewitt and Janse van Rensburg, BIs must be able to demonstrate their value-add to prospective entrepreneurs. There should be differentiation in the offering in order to eliminate problems associated with a one-size-fits-all approach.

Recent studies conducted by Kapinga et al. (2018: 1-14) in Tanzania, focusing on women entrepreneurs and BIs, pointed to the general lack of contextualisation in these incubators, with a lack of customised and relevant solutions. Sharafizad (2018: 82) also indicated that most women are forced to deal with family responsibilities and gender stereotyping, which may lead them to prefer a more informal approach to mentoring.

Similarly, and based on the literature covered, there is a lack of a clearly defined framework that addresses BI mentorship of youth entrepreneurs (Shittu, 2017). The mentorship of youth in a BI setting has received little attention, although youth entrepreneurship is an area of focus globally. The issue of BI mentorship for youth is vital in developing countries, due to the high levels of unemployment and poverty. In South Africa, it is a strategic focus area of government, aiming to reduce the level of unemployment among the youth. Literature in the context of mentorship for youth entrepreneurs through business incubation, however, remains scarce. Shittu (2017: 9) indicates a dearth of literature specifically addressing the mentoring of youth through incubation programmes in developing countries. Shittu further highlights that the suitability of what kind of mentoring works for whom is not clearly understood. According to Shittu, this unclear picture is a major constraint to policy and youth entrepreneurship. One of the future areas of research that Shittu suggests is to explore group mentorship in the context of youth.

Based on the literature that has been covered, there is hardly a differentiation that has been made between urban and rural programmes for entrepreneurs and the way this is handled in a BI setting, from a mentorship perspective (Agbenyegah and Dlamini, 2018: 47-160). The challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs are enormous, and very different to those faced by urban entrepreneurs. A simple example would be the

education level and standard of living of a rural entrepreneur, as compared to an urban entrepreneur. Rural entrepreneurship has been isolated over the years, and has lost impetus in academia (Agbenyegah and Dlamini, 2018: 47-160). There is a general of lack of understanding around rural entrepreneurship and a need for tailor-made initiatives in BIs in order to address rural entrepreneurs. There is no strategy evident from Government to deal with rural accessibility to mentorship in BIs, when considering that most mentorship takes place in formal settings in town and cities.

Rootman, Venter and Matabooe (2017:10) point out that small business mentoring in South Africa is an under-researched area, and that there are numerous opportunities for future research on mentoring of small business owner-managers. This conclusion arose out of study concluded in 2017 examining non-relational conditions for black small business owner-managers in South Africa. Although this study was confined to black small business owner-managers alone, it nevertheless pointed out various gaps in terms of rural accessibility to mentorship, mentorship resources, capacity, and awareness (Rootman et al., 2017: 6). The rural population continues to remain prominent in South Africa, where mentorship and entrepreneurship are factors that need to be addressed.

2.11.4 Business incubator mentorship lacks focus on ethical business practices

One of the key challenges facing South Africa is the high level of corruption in the realm of business (OECD, 2014). Several businesses, both large and small, end up closing voluntarily, or are forced to close, when it is discovered that they have engaged in unethical practices for financial gain. It is often publicised in media where several SMMEs have been implicated in wide-scale scandals relating to tender irregularities and fraud. Research on mentorship of SMMEs thus far have largely focused on areas relating to business skills, financial acumen, and management upskilling. Literature is scarce in a critical area, namely ethical business practice. If SMMEs are to develop, grow, and become sustainable enterprises, business needs to be conducted in an ethical manner. One of the focus areas that is lacking in mentorship is ethical business practices.

2.11.5 Lack of a success factors framework

BIs play a pivotal role for SMMEs, whereas little research has been done on a success factors framework for mentoring in a BI. This was identified as major gap in literature by Alzaghal and Mukthar (2017: 544-565), in research conducted in developing countries. The economic situation in developing countries is far more critical and challenging than in developed countries, where it is important for mentorship to succeed in order to create sustainable businesses and long-term employment.
Studies conducted in other developing countries, such as India, also point to a lack of structured mentoring within BIs, according to Govardhan and Jeyakumaran (2018: 890). According to the authors, this is major gap, and cause for concern, which is further compounded by a general mismatch between the expectations from start-ups and actual incubator programmes.

According to Masutha and Rogerson (2014: 223), there are significant differences in the way in which public and private incubators operate in terms of their criteria. Although these differences exist, there are also common challenges such as entrepreneurial discipline, high dropout rates, and a lack of determination from entrepreneurs. Mentorship lacks focus on motivating and retaining entrepreneurs to the point of success.

A study was undertaken by Lose et al. (2016: 132), focusing mainly on identifying and unpacking existing literature on BIs in South Africa. The study was undertaken to offer direction for future research. The research revealed that there is limited literature available on business incubation studies undertaken in South Africa. Lose et al. (2016: 138) further indicate that greater research was required in order to understand factors that hinder entrepreneurial behaviour in BIs. Furthermore, the authors suggest that future research focuses on an appropriate business framework for South African BIs. Lose et al. also suggest that it is important for future research to focus on gaining insight into how business incubation programmes can constructively influence and create new business ventures.

In other studies, conducted in Kenya in respect of the business incubation process as an instrument used for mentorship, it emerged that entrepreneurs see business

incubation as an important process and value it highly (Meru and Struwig 2015:15). In contrast to this, the authors indicate that actual services received are far from what might be expected, where participants in the study were of the view that incubation is not of the same standard as is to be found in other parts of the world. Meru and Struwig (2015:15-16) further suggest that future research ought to focus on in-depth analysis of the scope, nature and interactions between entrepreneurs and the incubator and the role of stakeholders, so as to fully understand the impact of business incubation.

2.11.6 Entrepreneurial Behaviour, Performance and Effectiveness Gap

The measurement of mentorship effectiveness is an area that is lacking in SMME mentorship research. According to McCarthy (2014: 197), there is limited research that has been undertaken in measuring the effectiveness or success of mentorship programmes. Similar views were expressed by Cunningham (2016: 4). There is limited literature on performance measurement of BI mentorship. To measure the success and effectiveness of business mentorship, it is critical to have clearly defined performance standards prior to commencement of the business mentorship programme.

Friedrich (2016:1) states that the research undertaken in Africa on small business failure up to now has largely focused on the business and the environment, and very little on the entrepreneur. The extraordinary professor at the University of Western Cape believed that there was a need for more research on entrepreneurial behaviour, performance, and effectiveness, where, due to the lack of research in these areas, government continues to spend money in a trial-and-error fashion. The initiative of the entrepreneur, ability to set goals, strategic planning and innovativeness are also factors that strongly influence the success of entrepreneurs, according to Friedrich (2016:2).

Friedrich further argues that state universities in South Africa have not contributed much to benefit small entrepreneurs, and that there needed to be increased focus on entrepreneurs, in terms of improving their business performance. In analysing Friedrich's comments, there is a definite need for more focus on the business owner

and the development of critical strategic skills for the entrepreneur. Such development of strategic skills can be obtained through expert mentorship.

According to Shah, Othman and Mansor (2016: 2), the importance of SMEs is on the minds of academics, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers, whereas there is a general lack of literature on the effects of mentoring on SMEs. Shah et al. (2016: 2) further suggest that most researchers have focused on larger organisations in the past and not necessarily on SMEs. The concept of mentoring has not been sufficiently explored, due to the lack of consultants, advisers, and knowledge, therefore, more research was required in this area (Shah et al., 2016: 10).

According to Deepali, Jain and Chaudhary (2017: 99), mentoring is essential for the survival of a business, yet the topic of mentors is under-researched in terms of their profile, style, and effectiveness. It leaves the mentees uninformed about their future mentors and this in turn results in a gap in the process of bringing the mentor and mentee together, as suggested by Deepali et al. (2017: 99). This contributes to a less cordial relationship at the starting point, with a lower possibility of entrepreneurial success. Interestingly, the study that was undertaken in India revealed that entrepreneurs preferred mentors from academia, rather than from industry. Such findings allow policy makers and government agencies to incorporate such entrepreneurial needs into an entrepreneurial development framework and policy. The typology and suitability of mentors requires further exploration, considering the limited extant research.

According to Robb, Valerio and Parton (2014: 44), governments globally have shown a keen interest in interventions that drive entrepreneurial success. The research based on case studies conducted in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique reached mixed conclusions as to whether entrepreneurial success can be taught, and even the content of what is being taught, is not clearly understood. However, there were some clear themes emanating out of this African research, according to Robb et al. (2014:45). These themes were as follows:

- stakeholders were of the strong view that business acumen and an entrepreneurial mindset are essential for succeeding in business and that there are few programmes that address this need; and

- expression of a great need for more business community mentorship.

2.11.7 Lack of properly defined rewards system

One of the objectives in this study was to establish the approach adopted by BIs to incentivise and reward mentors. Deepali, Jain and Chaudhary (2016: 135-152) maintain that mentors are regarded as volunteers, but that at the same time, their work is undermined. Although the role of mentors was seen as voluntary, in today's world mentors have become more professional and are keenly interested in financial reward. According to Deepali et al., past research focused on self-motivated mentors undertaking mentorship programmes without financial reward in mind.

There is very limited research focusing on a reward system for mentors. Given the way mentorship has evolved over the years, it would make sense for a mentor reward system to be linked to the mentee performance and success, through a contractual arrangement. Mentors ought to be rewarded for the value that they add and the performance of the entrepreneur. Deepali et al. (2016:136) suggested that a new approach for mentoring was required, and indicated that more research was required in this sphere of rewards for mentors. This is a definite gap, requiring further research.

2.11.8 Ethical and legitimacy issues in mentorship

Mentorship is not regulated by any law, which means that it gives rise to ethical issues, particularly in respect of the conduct of the mentor (Chopra and Saint, 2017: 6). The mentor needs to act in the best interest of the mentee. There is an apparent lacuna in the research when it comes to the ethical aspects of mentoring.

In working towards a goal of upskilling the mentee, it is important for the mentor to uphold professional and high ethical standards. Often, situations can arise, where the mentor is side-tracked, or fails to act in the best interest of the mentee, thus giving rise to unethical conduct on the part of the mentor. Chopra and Saint (2017: 6) argue that it is quite easy for a mentor to exercise power improperly, given the dominant position

in the mentoring relationship. This can be deemed malpractice, according to Chopra and Saint, which often gives rise to negative consequences for both the mentee and mentor.

In South Africa, Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) is a body that helps to promote ethical conduct amongst mentors and coaches. COMENSA does have a code of ethics and conduct for mentors and coaches. According to (COMENSA, 2018) their code of ethics and conduct provides for disciplinary processes, in instances in which a mentor breaches the code.

In dealing with some of the ethical issues of mentorship, it is important that this starts with the mentors doing a frank self-assessment of their own capability, willingness, and commitment to help the mentee. According to McCarthy (2014: 179), if a mentor does not have the expertise, the ethical thing to do is to refer the mentee to someone who is more appropriately skilled, possessing the necessary expertise. It would not be ethical for the mentor to misrepresent himself or herself as having the requisite skills and expertise. By doing so, this has the potential to cause harm to the mentee, as the mentor will not be able to correctly execute the mentorship programme. It will also lead to a bad start to the mentoring relationship if trust is broken so early on in the process.

It is also important, as part of ethical conduct for the mentor, to display loyalty and confidentiality when dealing with the affairs of the mentee. Often, there is a written contract in place between the mentor and mentee, which covers aspects such as loyalty and confidentiality. McCarthy (2014: 184) points out that it is important for the contract to clearly stipulate the rights of the parties, particularly articulating the consequences, in cases where the rights of one party have been infringed by the other.

Ayodeji and Adebayo (2015: 33) also refer to the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA recommends that the mentor ought to assume a helping role, and not cause harm to the mentee. In addition, the mentor must act with responsibility and integrity, and achieve what has been agreed upon. Lastly, it is necessary to respect people's rights, dignity and be free and fair.

Studies concluded by Mckevitt and Marshall (2014: 276) have indicated that although small business mentoring is an under-researched topic, future research ought to focus on the legitimacy of small business mentoring. Mckevitt and Marshall further suggested that SMMEs require a great degree of legitimacy from a variety of external participants.

2.11.9 From a mentor's perspective

Chopra and Saint (2017: 3) have argued that mentorship is time-consuming for the mentor, where having the wrong mentee can be painful. There is very little literature that examines mentorship challenges from the perspective of a mentor. Most studies to date focus on the challenges experienced by mentees. Chopra and Saint proposed that mentees ought to be tested on a few small tasks at the start of the mentoring relationship, to establish their level of interest and commitment, prior to incubating them. These small tasks could be in their area of expertise where, if no feedback is forthcoming, then the mentor ought to think carefully about choosing such a mentee. It is evident that the lack of entrepreneur commitment could pose a serious challenge to the success of any mentorship programme.

2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a theoretical framework on mentorship, including business mentorship, and some of the models applied globally. In addition, this chapter also focused on BI frameworks and how mentorship fits into the business incubation function. In addition, this chapter provided a detailed literature review for business mentorship. The literature review demonstrated the significance of SMME mentorship and the critical need thereof. In addition, the role played by BIs in SMME mentorship has been extensively examined, together with the challenges encountered by BIs in dealing with business mentorship. Through this literature study, it was evident that there is a contextual gap in literature on the subject of SMME mentorship. Although literature exists on the topic of SMME mentorship, it remains limited. It was envisaged that, through this research study, a contribution will be made to the limited knowledge that exists. In particular, the following gaps on mentorship were identified in the literature:

- government policies and framework to deal with BI mentorship;

- understanding the dynamics of dealing with a differentiated BI mentorship approach for different types of entrepreneurs;

- analysing the needs of an entrepreneur before formulating a mentorship plan;

- mentorship and business support to focus on the appropriate and relevant mentorship aspects;

- BI admission criteria and exit rules;

- the profile, suitability, and skills of BI staff, including management;

- mentorship approach (Single Mentor versus Multi-Mentor, and Informal versus Formal mentorship);

- evaluating business performance against the mentorship programme (measurement of success);

- linking the mentee performance and growth to financial rewards for the mentor through a contractual agreement; and

- ethical business practices as a focus area of SMME mentorship.

Although the Ministry of Small Business was formed in 2014, there is limited progress in terms of formulating clear guidelines in respect of mentorship programmes for SMMEs in BIs, based on what has been reviewed thus far. The role of mentorship is crucial, in nurturing SMMEs to greater heights, where greater focus is required. The next chapter focuses on the research methodology that was adopted in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the theoretical framework, literature review and identifying the gaps in literature in respect of SMME mentorship. These gaps also form part of the problem statement indicated in chapter one. This chapter discusses the research methodology adopted, in order to gain deeper insight on mentorship from the SMME participants in this study. In considering the research design and methodology to be followed , it was necessary to revisit the aim and objectives of this study as part of the planning process. The research methodology requires careful planning, organisation, execution, and analysis, therefore, the design and methods used are discussed hereunder.

The steps that were followed in gathering the required data for this study are discussed first. In a research study of this nature, it should be noted that it was not possible to reach the entire population of SMMEs within BIs in South Africa. This was mainly due to time and cost implications, the number of BIs spread across the country, and the COVID-19 alert level restrictions in place at the time. For this reason, it became important to choose participants who would represent the entire population. These participants are referred to as the sample.

The basis on which a region and metropolitan area was chosen is discussed below. This chapter further discusses the basis on which a sample was chosen. There are various approaches to sampling, where this chapter explains some of the approaches and then the justification for the approach that was used in this study. In addition, this chapter focuses on the research instruments that were used to gather the required data for the study and the techniques applied to ensure quality assurance. Lastly, in research, one can be confronted with ethical issues in dealing with information. This chapter discusses any ethical issues applicable and steps that were taken to mitigate such risk.

Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 19) refer to research as having a purposive focus, which is aimed at improving something in an organisation. In line with this thinking, the research on SMME mentorship presented here concerns itself with finding solutions to improve mentorship in a BI setting, so that it can lead to greater success, sustainability, ethical practices, and reduced failure rates of SMMEs.

3.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall **primary objective** of this study was to establish the effectiveness of mentorship strategies used by BIs in endeavouring to build successful, sustainable and ethical small businesses. This is supported by the secondary objectives as stated in chapter one.

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions receive focus:

3.3.1   To what extent are current mentorship challenges in BIs contributing to the high failure rate and closure of SMMEs?

3.3.2   What process do BIs apply in selecting suitable, structured, and relevant mentorship interventions that match existing skills and knowledge gaps of entrepreneurs?

3.3.3   How do BIs measure the success of mentorship programmes to ensure measurable entrepreneurial performance?

3.3.4   How do BIs incentivise and reward mentors, to ensure commitment and performance?

3.3.5   What criteria do BIs use to select mentees and mentors?

3.4 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND PARADIGM

3.4.1 Overview

In conducting research, there is a need to follow a guiding philosophy, which informs the research strategy to be adopted. According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018: 29), a research paradigm guides a researcher, as it serves as a thinking framework, based on the beliefs in terms of how the world is viewed or perceived. Therefore, it becomes

important to understand the research paradigm that was applied as it can significantly influence how a researcher goes about undertaking a study.

3.4.2 Epistemological perspective and constructivism paradigm

In considering the two fundamental beliefs of ontology, epistemology, and based on the research objectives listed above, the researcher followed an epistemological belief supported by an interpretivism (constructivism) research paradigm. This approach was followed mainly because the researcher sought to focus on understanding the phenomena and the reality behind the details of the mentorship situation within BIs. The epistemology belief supported by an interpretivism (constructivism) research paradigm afforded the researcher the opportunity to procure knowledge about the lived experiences of participants in a particular situation.

As suggested by Wahyuni (2012: 71), interpretivist researchers prefer to interact and engage in dialogue with study participants. For this reason, such researchers prefer working with qualitative data, as it provides the richness of description. It then follows that such an approach was going to be easily supported by a qualitative research methodology, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. In addition, the study followed an inductive approach building from limited knowledge on the subject and working towards a more complete view of mentorship. According to Gray (2017: 17), an inductive approach first concerns the collection of data, after which the data is analysed in order to establish what themes and patterns emerge. Through this process of induction, the researcher was able to establish consistencies, and then construct inferences and principles.

3.5 EXPLORATORY STUDY

In exploratory research, questions are typically formulated when not much is known about a particular phenomenon. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 43), exploratory research is used when existing research results are unclear or suffer from limitations. Van Zyl (2014:12) also confirms that this approach is usually pursued in instances where there is vagueness or uncertainty about the subject matter. According to Van Zyl, exploratory research does not follow a formal approach, but rather, relies on a qualitative approach, such as informal discussions, interviews, focus groups, and

case studies, in order to gather data. Research starts off at a very broad level initially, and then becomes narrower as it proceeds. The researcher was of the view that an exploratory approach was relevant in this instance, given that the topic of mentorship, specifically in the context of a BI setting is an under-researched area, with many unanswered questions.

There was a definite need to explore this topic in greater depth. This approach would allow the researcher to create a profile of the problem or phenomenon and then understand the characteristics and information about it. It was determined to be important for the researcher to understand the mentorship experience from the perspective of an entrepreneur and other stakeholders involved in mentorship. This provides an opportunity to increase current knowledge on the usefulness and effectiveness of mentorship strategies. It further allows the researcher to think methodically about the factors in a given situation. The use of this approach ensured that the research objectives and questions related to this study were comprehensively answered.

3.6 PHENOMENOLOGICAL DESIGN

In considering the various options available, and based on the philosophy and paradigm that was adopted, the researcher was of the view that the phenomenological approach was the most appropriate for this study. According to Astalin (2013: 119), phenomena is described as events, experiences, situations, or concepts. It is commonly used in exploratory research, using interviews and questionnaires as the mode of collecting data. The author further indicated that sometimes, there is a lack of understanding of phenomena, because it is not clearly described or explained.

A phenomenological design seeks to close any gaps in information that may arise, by obtaining the necessary understanding, explanation, and clarification. Shah and Al-Bargi (2013: 258) state that phenomenology weighs up the experiences of different participants, and zooms in on what all individuals have in common. To obtain a complete understanding of mentorship in a BI setting, it was critical to understand the mentorship experiences of existing mentees, management of BIs, and relevant government officials responsible for business incubation and SMME development.

In considering the approach to be taken, it was necessary to consult the aim and objectives of the study. The problem is best suited to a phenomenological design as it concerns several individuals' shared or common experiences of a phenomenon. A phenomenological design allows the researcher to engage with multiple participants and obtain as much information as possible about experiences and perspectives, through an interview process, as part of finding meaning and to articulate such meaning in entrepreneurs lived experiences of mentorship. It is important for the researcher to develop this deeper understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny, so as to develop a better practice and to make recommendations to stakeholders as far as the improvements to mentorship is concerned.

3.7 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

The researcher followed a **qualitative approach** to this study, due to what the study sought to understand. Qualitative research is undertaken when a problem or issue needs to be explored, where individuals are then empowered to share their stories and lived experiences. According to Goundar (2012), the scientific justification for using qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research is mainly as because qualitative research is associated with qualitative phenomena. Goundar further states that such a study is non-numerical, descriptive and uses words instead of numbers. The main aim is to obtain an understanding of feelings, meaning and to describe a situation. According to Goundar, qualitative studies are more appropriate when dealing with a smaller focused sample. Gaining insight into the hearts and minds of people is best acquired through the use of smaller, targeted samples (Goundar, 2012). In addition to the highly targeted and focused approach that a qualitative study is aligned to, it provides for flexibility and is designed to be completed quickly. The use of a qualitative methodology allows for a comprehensive interrogation of the problem in a study of this nature.

According to Creswell (2014: 32), the process of qualitative research involves emerging questions in the participants location. The analysis of data builds from the details to themes, with the researcher making an interpretation of the meanings. It is accepted that in a qualitative study a researcher may follow a flexible research approach where research questions may start of somewhat vague and as we learn

more about the settings and participants, decisions are made about the additional data to collect. An important difference is that a qualitative methodology offers a researcher the opportunity to examine people and settings holistically, as these are not reduced to variables, but are viewed as a whole. Therefore, the qualitative researcher studies people in the situation or context in which they find themselves.

According to Nassaji (2015: 129), one of the fundamental characteristics of a qualitative study is that it allows for naturalistic data to be obtained in the natural setting of the participant. This study sought to understand the mentorship experience from the perspective of an entrepreneur in a BI setting. The study also sought to understand SMME mentorship from the perspective of management of BIs, and government officials. Secondly, it was equally important for the researcher to probe for further clarity from participants. Due to the broad and open-ended nature of the qualitative approach it allowed the participants to raise issues that affect them through the medium of an interview.

In this study, it was important to understand how various stakeholders interpreted, constructed, and made meaning from their experiences, and for the researcher to understand the distinct nature of the problem and its impact. These answers would not have been easily obtained through a closed-ended quantitative approach. Furthermore, the researcher sought to address issues of reality, and these are matters that cannot be simply quantified. This is the case with a quantitative study, which deals with numerical representativity. Therefore, the qualitative approach was considered most appropriate, as it is designed in such a manner that it allows for the depth or richness in terms of information required for a study of this nature.

In choosing a qualitative approach, the researcher was fully aware of the time that was going to be required to conduct interviews personally, especially under COVID-19 restrictions. Interviews were conducted at mutually convenient times, through appointments, in order to manage the time of the researcher and the participants. Secondly, the researcher was also mindful of the time-consuming process of data analysis to reduce large amounts of data to themes or categories. The researcher was satisfied that the data analysis process was managed within reasonable timelines.

3.8 TIME HORIZONS

In conducting research, an important consideration is as to whether the researcher is conducting a once-off study, or whether there is a need to repeat the study. In carrying out this research, the researcher was always mindful of the time factor as well as COVID-19 restrictions. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 104) a study can be undertaken just once over days or weeks, in order to answer the research question. These are called **one-shot** or **cross-sectional studies**.

In some cases, the researcher may elect to study a phenomena or people at more than one time to answer the research question. This will mean that data is gathered at two different points in time. Such a study is referred to as **longitudinal**. According to Sekaran and Bougie, if such a study is well planned it can help to identify the cause-and-effect relationship. Generally longitudinal studies would require more time and will result in additional costs. To manage costs, time, and resources, a cross-sectional (one-shot) approach was adopted in this study.

3.9 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

In research it is important to define the targeted population upfront. The initial intention was to conduct a study on mentorship of SMMEs within the province of KwaZulu-Natal, however, the population and sample size would have led to many practical challenges. In view of this, and to work with a manageable population and sample, the researcher preferred to limit the research to the mentees of locals BIs, the management of such establishments, and the government officials responsible for SMMEs, BIs and business support programmes, in the eThekwini metropolitan region. The population from whom data was sought is divided into three groups, as illustrated in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: Grouping of research participants.

Group	Description	Location
Group 1	Mentees from BIs	6 BI Establishments within the eThekwini metropolitan region
Group 2	BI Management	6 BI Establishments within the eThekwini metropolitan region
Group 3	Government officials responsible for BIs and SMME development	Local and Provincial Government

Source: Original.

The main reason for choosing the above groups of participants was that they represented the various stakeholders who could provide valuable and rich information in this study. In this regard, the participants from the above establishments were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria as outlined under 3.10.3.

3.10 SAMPLING STRATEGY

Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 235) describe sampling as a process of selecting the right individuals, objects or events representing the targeted population. In research it is not always practically possible for everyone to be tested in the population. The only other choice is to select a sample. A good sampling strategy and technique is very important so that the selected group can represent the entire population.

In the context of qualitative research, Gentles et al. (2015: 1775) define sampling as the selection of data sources from which data is gathered to address the research objectives. Probability sampling is a suitable strategy for quantitative studies and was therefore ruled out as an option for this study, due to the qualitative approach that was to be followed.

3.10.1 Use of non-probability sampling strategy

In non-probability sampling, the chances of choosing any one participant from the population is not known. According to Van Zyl (2014: 102), one must then assume that members of the sample do not have an independent and equal chance of being chosen. In addition, randomisation is not relevant. Due to the very nature of non-

probability sampling, it is widely used in qualitative research. The main idea in this research on mentorship was to identify the participants or sites that was going to best assist the researcher in answering the research questions. Therefore, the sampling strategy that was adopted in this research is non-probability sampling. This was the only way to obtain comprehensive data for this study.

3.10.2 Use of snowball sampling technique with purposive criteria

Although it is known that generalisability poses a challenge when using non-probability sampling, there are also advantages. Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 247) have argued that within the ambit of non-probability sampling, there are some reliable techniques which provide very valuable information about the population. In a qualitative study there are various non-probability sampling techniques that can be pursued such as convenience, purposive, quota, and snowball. The choice of data gathering method in research is crucial, as it serves to provide a better understanding of a problem. Therefore, it is important that the way in which data is obtained, and from whom, is done with sound judgement.

It is widely accepted that researchers in qualitative research focus on small samples. The participants in such research are generally selected because they can provide rich descriptions and are willing to articulate their experiences in a way that will enrich the researcher's understanding. This type of information cannot be easily obtained through a quantitative study. In considering all the various sampling strategies and techniques, reference had to be made again to the aims, objectives, and research questions related to this study.

Dusek, Yurova and Ruppel (2015: 279) have stated that the snowball technique is increasing in popularity. It is a technique that is undertaken whereby one qualified participant shares an invitation with other similar subjects who meet the criteria for the target population. Usually, a participant who meets the criteria is contacted by the researcher, and a relationship is therein developed. Once the researcher is satisfied with the responses obtained from the participant, a referral is then sought from the participant. As the sample grows, sufficient data is gathered, which is then beneficial for the research. This is a technique that could prove useful in a population that is

difficult to reach. It is also useful in qualitative research, as the researcher can establish upfront whether the subject meets the qualifying criteria. It can be challenging to use in a quantitative study, as the researcher may not be able to verify whether the participant meets all the qualifying criteria.

The researcher considered the various available options and was of the firm belief that the use of a **non-probability sampling strategy** using **snowball sampling with purposive criteria** was the most appropriate option for a study of this nature.

The justification for using this approach was that firstly this is a qualitative study, which lends itself to the use of such a sampling approach in a simple manner. Secondly, the researcher was able to establish whether the individuals met the qualifying criteria to be included in the study. In using purposive criteria, it becomes crucial to identify and stipulate the predetermined criteria of participants upfront, so as to ensure that the correct participants are attracted. In the eThekwini metropolitan region, there are nine established and active BIs (mix of public and private), providing incubation services across the different sectors.

The sample in this study originated from mentees of BIs, management of these establishments, and government officials responsible for SMMEs, business incubation, and business support programmes. In applying snowball sampling, using purposive criteria, the researcher first contacted senior management of all BIs and government, through the UNISA permission request letter, seeking permission to interview mentees, management of these establishments, and government officials. The permission letter stated the eligible criteria for participation in the interview. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria stated in the permission letter, the BI management then provided a schedule of participants who could be interviewed. Participants who met the criteria were then contacted for the purpose of conducting the interview. Once the researcher completed the interview, a referral was sought from the participant, to expand the sample, until the point of saturation was reached, where no new information was found to be emerging.

3.10.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

In this study, snowball sampling using purposive criteria was used on the following basis:

- Only participants from the eThekwini metropolitan area were eligible to participate in the study (including mentees, management of BIs and government officials).
- To participate in the study, the participant must have been undergoing or have undergone business mentorship for at least 12 months in a BI setting in the eThekwini area. This served to ensure that rich data is obtained from the sample, which was to provide greater depth and meaning during the analysis stage, based on their lived experience of business mentorship.
- The criteria did not discriminate against gender, race, and socioeconomic standing, to ensure that it cuts across a wide spectrum of individuals, however, the 12-month business mentorship experience requirement indicated that the above still applied.
- For management of BIs, the participant needed to be in a management role or higher in a BI.
- Management of BIs participating in the interviews needed to have at least three years' experience in business mentorship so as to ensure that rich data was obtained, based on experience.
- The government officials needed to be in a role dealing with SMME support for at least three years to ensure that rich data is obtained.

From the research objectives and questions above, some answers were going to be required from participants with current or prior experience of mentorship in a BI. At the same time, some answers were going to be required from management officials of these establishments, and lastly, from government officials. Therefore, the questions that were asked of the three categories of participants were clearly separated, as exhibited in Appendices 1 to 3.

3.11 SAMPLE SIZE

According to Goundar (2012), in qualitative studies, dealing with smaller focused samples is more appropriate. Goundar further states that gaining deep insight into the minds and hearts of people is best acquired through the use of smaller and targeted

samples. Gentles et al. (2015: 1782) also maintain that in a qualitative study a smaller sample is used, unlike in quantitative studies, where large samples are required to generate statistically precise estimates. According to Gentles et al. (2015: 1782), the overall purpose of sampling in qualitative research is to obtain information that is useful for understanding the depth, complexity, context, or variation relating to a phenomenon, rather than to be representative of entire populations. According to the authors, the common criterion for determining when an adequate sample size has been attained, is saturation. In addition to saturation, the intensity of the contact is crucial for the researcher. The intensity is measured by the length of time it takes for an event to occur and how often a participant should be contacted.

Gentles et al. further point out that in a qualitative study, it is not possible to specify the sample size upfront until the point of saturation is reached. The point of saturation is reached when there is no new information or insights that emerge. It is also an indication at that point that sufficient data has been collected. In this study, based on SMME mentorship within the context of BIs, the sample size emerged once the point of saturation was reached in each of the three categories. In similar studies conducted by Lose (2019), the sample size for BI managers was 9 against a population of 51 business incubators nationally, however, as far as this study is concerned, the researcher had to consider that interviews were going to be conducted with not only the incubator managers, but incubatees and government officals. These three categories of participants are spread across six establishments. The estimated targeted sample size was 40-50 individuals based on the net population of participants in each category, after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This was to cater for depth of information from each incubator.

Tables 3.2 -3.4 below indicate the population of each of the categories of participants, the net population after the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and lastly the saturation point of the interviews conducted:

Group 1- Mentees

Table 3.2: List of mentees per establishment and the saturation point of interviews.

Establishment	Population	Net population after applying inclusion/exclusion criteria	Saturation points of interviews
A	20	12	4
B	25	23	4
C	23	18	5
D	10	7	3
E	30	21	4
F	26	22	4
Total	**134**	**103**	**24**

Source: Original

Group 2- Incubator management

Table 3.3: List of incubator management per establishment and the saturation point of interviews.

Establishment	Population	Net population after applying inclusion/exclusion criteria	Saturation points of interviews
A	4	4	3
B	3	3	2
C	4	4	2
D	2	2	2
E	3	2	2
F	3	2	2
Total	**19**	**17**	**13**

Source: Original

Group 3- Government officials

Table 3.4: Local and Provincial Government officials dealing with SMME support, incubation, and business support.

Role	Population	Net population after applying inclusion/exclusion criteria	Saturation points of interviews
Local Government Officials	4	3	2
Provincial Government Officials	6	4	2
Total	**10**	**7**	**4**

Source: Original

3.12   DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

3.12.1 Use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews (one-on-one)

During the initial stages of research planning, consideration was given to the use of focus groups as a possible research method, however, focus groups would have been required to meet on several occasions. In addition, there are various stakeholders in

this study from whom data was going to be required, such as mentees, management of incubators, and government officials. Therefore, there would have been a need for multiple focus groups. This method was not suitable, due to the costs involved and time constraints. Interview as a mode of collecting data was the second option and a more appropriate channel, as it allows the researcher to establish rapport with the interviewee, provide clarity to questions, and clear any doubts that arise. The main advantage of interviews is that these provide valuable and rich information from the context of stakeholders. Such information then becomes useful during the analysis stage. Interviews provide an opportunity for mutual discovery, understanding, explanation and reflection. It allows the researcher to access information and learn about phenomena, which is otherwise difficult or impossible to observe. In an interview, the researcher needs to understand the constructs that interviewees use as the basis for their beliefs and opinions about a particular situation.

Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 111) defines an interview as a purposeful and guided conversation between two or more people. Interviews can be conducted on a group basis or individually, and may be structured or unstructured. Interviews are regarded as a non-experimental approach to collection of primary data, and constitute a widely used data collection method in business research.

According to Nys and Bailly (2018: 6), a semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of research. This type of interview does not take the standardised approach. A semi-structured approach combines a set of open questions with the opportunity for the researcher to probe more for particular themes and responses. The use of open-ended questions is important to initiate discussion. Harding (2018: 65) has argued that a semi-structured interview provides some guidance and structure to an interview. In using this approach, the researcher has a guide to follow, covering the various topics. Harding further suggests that the data analysis on a semi-structured interview is likely to be easier based on the comments from the participants on the relevant topics.

The researcher considered all the various types of interviews and other methods such as focus groups and participant observation, and concluded that **semi-structured face-to-face interviews (one-on-one)** was the most suitable method to collect data,

using open-ended questions. An unstructured interview does not have a set list of questions to ask in sequence, and due to the volume of information that may be generated from an unstructured interview, it may be time consuming to analyse. The rationale for using the semi-structured interviews was that the researcher was looking for a deep understanding regarding the situation of mentorship within BIs from various stakeholders. The semi-structured method of interviewing would allow the researcher to probe further so as to allow for more depth of information, as opposed to a structured interview, with a set list of questions that do not allow for any flexibility. Although the semi-structured face-to-face interview is organised around a set of pre-determined open-ended questions, this allows for other questions to emerge from the dialogue. The researcher used one-one interviews as opposed to group interviews, as the individual in-depth interview allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the problem, whereas in a group interview situation, people may feel uncomfortable to talk openly in public.

3.13 CONSTRUCTION OF THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

The construction of the interview guide is crucial to ensuring that the information to be obtained from the participant is relevant to the study. For this reason, it was important for interview guide to be designed in a structured way, so as ensure that the questions were appropriate and relevant to the study. According to Nys and Bailly (2018: 6), one of the first steps for a semi-structured interview is to conceive an interview framework, listing the main themes to discuss or questions to ask. As a researcher, it is important to know what type of information you intend to get. In the case of this study on mentorship, the research questions and objectives proved to be useful in determining the main themes for the interview. Sub-questions then arose out of the main questions.

There were three sets of interview questions compiled. The first set of questions were compiled for mentees within the BI environment. The second set of questions were compiled for management of BIs while the third set of questions were compiled for government officials dealing with SMMEs, incubation and business support. The first part of the interview questions in respect of this study contained a demographic section, although the participants were not required to disclose their names. This was so as to ensure anonymity of the participant.

The second part of the interview consisted of questions related to the topic of the research, and provided an opportunity for the participants to elaborate where necessary and provide as much information as possible on their experiences, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and feelings, without holding back. This was made possible by using open-ended questions, which then allowed the researcher to probe further where clarity was required. The researcher used simple and easy to understand questions that avoided jargon and abstract concepts. In doing so, the researcher was confident that it promoted open-ended answers and allowed respondents to talk freely and reflect on a particular experience. The list of interview questions is attached as Appendices 1 to 3.

3.14   ADMINISTRATION OF THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

The study was conducted within the eThekwini metropolitan region. There are nine active BIs represented in the eThekwini metropolitan area. The BIs are spread across different sectors of the economy such as manufacturing, construction, agriculture, tourism, and other services. Access to the participants was through the permission letter that was addressed to the institution concerned. The researcher sent letters to all the establishments in order to attract a response from both mentees and management, as participants in the interviews. Upon the institution granting permission, the participants were then approached, and once the participant agreed an appointment was subsequently scheduled at a mutually convenient time. During the data collection process, the interviews were conducted at the natural settings of the participants. This was in the form of a face-to-face interview at the site where the participants experience the problem. This was done in accordance with all COVID-19 protocols.

The researcher was personally involved in conducting the interviews. Although this process proved to be time-consuming, the researcher was fully aware from the outset that this important task could not be delegated to any other person. Interviews were conducted in English. The participants were afforded the opportunity to communicate in another language if they wished, however, the researcher established the language preference upfront when the appointment was made, so that the services of an interpreter could be obtained as required. There was, however, no request made by

any of the participants for an interpreter. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim so as to avoid the possibility of misquoting the participants. At the start of the interview, the background to the mentorship research and the ethical aspects relating to the study were explained to the participant.

3.15   DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is core to sound qualitative research. It is essential for the researcher to describe, analyse, interpret, and uncover meaning when dealing with qualitative research. The researcher made use of Atlas.ti software for the analysis of data that was collected in this study. According to Friese (2019: 1), the aim of computer-assisted data analysis is to discover patterns and relations. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis involves preparing the data, coding the data, and then using relevant software to sort and structure the data. Qualitative data collected in this study was in the form of words. Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 358) identify interview notes, transcripts, and recordings as part of qualitative data that will be used for analysis purposes. The main aim of qualitative data is to conduct a detailed analysis aimed at drawing valid inferences from the data collected.

According to Creswell (2014: 234), in a qualitative approach, researchers build their patterns and themes from bottom up. This is done through an inductive process, where the researcher works back and forth between the themes and data until a detailed set of themes is established. Qualitative research also involves developing a holistic account of the problem and may therefore require the reporting of multiple perspectives and sketching a larger picture that emerges. Creswell (2014: 245) further indicates that in qualitative research the idea is to aggregate all the information into five to seven main themes. Before any themes emerge, the data first needs to be coded and categorised.

3.15.1 Use of thematic analysis

In considering both thematic and content analysis for this qualitative study, the researcher followed a thematic analysis approach. The rationale for preferring this method was that it is a flexible, yet step-by-step structured way of dealing with the

extraction of meanings, concepts, themes, patterns, and sense-making. It also allows for explicit and latent meanings to be drawn from the information arising out of the interviews.

According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017: 2), thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that is used for organising, analysing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set. Through this process of thematic analysis, themes or patterns from the qualitative data were identified. It is regarded as a useful method for assessing the perceptions of different research participants and can demonstrate similarities and differences. It is a useful tool in summarising key features of large data. Nowell et al. (2017: 3) outline a six-phase approach to conducting thematic analysis, namely:

- **Phase 1** - a process by which the researcher gets to know the data (familiarisation with data set);
- **Phase 2** - generating initial codes, which allows the researcher to simplify and focus on specific characteristics;
- **Phase 3**- searching for themes, this stage involves the sorting of coded data into themes;
- **Phase 4** - refining and checking to establish whether a coherent pattern is forming;
- **Phase 5** - defining and naming themes and writing a detailed story about each of the themes; and
- **Phase 6** - a final write-up of the report on thematic analysis. This is the final activity in qualitative data analysis and forms the essence of the analysis. Drawing conclusions refers to the point at which the research questions are answered. During this step, the researcher identifies what the various themes stand for. In addition, the researcher reflects on the explanations for observed patterns and relationships and then make distinctions and comparisons.

According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3352), there are two levels of themes that arise out of thematic analysis. The first level is a semantic theme, where the researcher does not look beyond what the participant expressed in the interview (surface meaning). At a latent level, the researcher looks beyond the surface meaning and starts to identify and examine underlying ideas and conceptualisations, that inform the

semantic content. For research of this nature, thematic analysis could not be concluded at a superficial level. The researcher aimed to examine the data beyond semantic theme. Themes were developed and the relationships between them explored to ensure that it gave the researcher the ability to contrast, evaluate and integrate findings.

3.16   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 13) describe ethics in research as a code of conduct that deals with conduct and behaviour during the research process. Every researcher must act in good faith towards all parties, and pay attention to what the results indicate.

At the beginning of the interview, participants were informed of the following:

- purpose of the interview and the right of the participant to withdraw at any time;
- permission to record the interview; and
- confidentiality and anonymity of the participant.

This study did not involve any physical experiments, therefore there was no physical harm done to any of the participants. At the end of the interview session, the researcher made it a point to have a short feedback session with the participant so as to ensure that the participant did not experience any psychological harm or emotional distress arising from the interview.

In terms of the maintenance of privacy and confidentiality, use was made of a participant number when dealing with the analysis of data instead of the participant's name. Similarly, in dealing with organisations, reference was made to Establishment A or B, as opposed to the name. In this way the anonymity of individuals and organisations was foregrounded.

Participation in the study was purely on a voluntary basis and no person or organisation was forced to participate against their will. Every participant had the right and opportunity to withdraw at any time. Every participant in the study completed the required form consenting to their demographic information and research outcomes being processed anonymously into a study report. To maintain confidentiality, all the

information supplied by participants was held in the strictest of confidence and controlled by the researcher only. In addition, the information was used for its intended purpose only.

It was also important for the participants to benefit out of the results of the study. The specific mentorship strategies and focus areas are to be shared with participants at a suitable time soon, in order that it benefits them. All ethical processes as defined by the University of South Africa standards were adhered to.

3.17 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out under COVID-19 alert level 1 conditions. This was a limitation to some extent, as the interviews took place at a slower pace than was initially envisaged. The researcher was also required to ask several COVID-19 screening questions before physically meeting with the participant, to ensure the safety of both the researcher and the participant. As far as the interviews were concerned, it ought to be noted that one of the risks that a researcher runs is that not all participants may have been equally articulate or perceptive. The researcher did, however, mitigate this risk by ensuring that he approached the interview as an equal, to make the interview as comfortable as possible for the participant. Based on the active engagement that took place between the researcher and all participants, the researcher was comfortable that the participants were sharing information openly, honestly, and freely.

3.18   QUALITY CONTROL AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA

According to Van der Spuy (2019: 7), there needs to be a high degree of trustworthiness in dealing with qualitative research. This was further supported by Mostert, Niemann and Kotze (2017: 7), indicating that for qualitative research to be considered trustworthy, it must be dependable, transferable, confirmable, and credible. To ensure effective quality assurance of the data that was used in this study, the researcher ensured that the following aspects were addressed:

3.18.1 Credibility- Use of site triangulation

Data flowed from different sources, arising from interviews with mentees, management of BIs and government officials. This process is illustrated in figure 3.1 below:
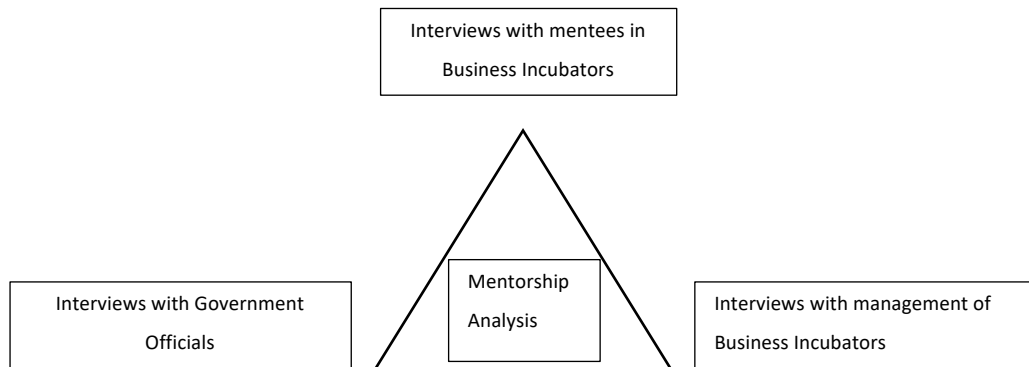
Fig 3.1 Triangulation of data. Source: Original

The use of site triangulation proved to enhance credibility as it included mentees from multiple BIs, management from multiple BIs, and lastly, government officials. The use of these multiple sources of data ensured that the themes that were identified were not unique to one incubator. Furthermore, the data comprised of information from both public and private sector incubators. The data from these sources were then carefully examined to ascertain whether there were consistent themes, and how these may have correlated to one another. Creswell (2014: 251) indicates that where themes emerge due to converging different sources of data, such a process can be regarded as one that increases the level of reliance that can be placed on the data that has been obtained.

3.18.2 Dependability

According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017: 2), dependability in qualitative research can be achieved by ensuring that the research process is clearly documented, logical and traceable. To ensure dependability the researcher ensured that the research process and design was documented at length, including a comprehensive explanation of the methods applied. The operational aspects relating to the gathering of data have been documented in detail.

3.18.3 Member Checking to ensure Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of results is crucial in qualitative studies. The researcher made certain that sufficient time was spent with each interview to ensure that all aspects relating to the research questions were covered in detail. In doing so, in depth understanding of the phenomena was obtained. This assisted in increasing the trustworthiness of the findings. In addition, the researcher ensured that at the end of each interview a brief review was undertaken with the participant on the information provided. Although time consuming, it proved important for the researcher to take the final themes and analysis back to the various participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. This was done through a follow-up telephonic interview, so that participants could comment on the findings. This approach assisted the researcher in enhancing the dependability of the study. Furthermore, the researcher was actively involved in examining the quality of the data before the process of analysis could take place. The researcher checked what kind of data was collected, and what was missing, if at all, to ensure completeness and dependability before the analysis could begin.

3.18.4 Transferability

The researcher made every effort to provide a detailed report on the settings, findings, and perspectives in a detailed manner, such that the reader's mind is shifted to the actual setting. Such an experience contributes to the experience being felt by the reader, through a shared experience. According to Creswell (2014: 251), through this process, the results become richer and more realistic.

3.18.5 Confirmability

Through the use of data from multiple sources (literature study and empirical) its confirmability was enhanced. According to Mostert et al. (2017: 7) confirmability is enhanced by strongly linking the themes from the empirical findings to the themes derived from the literature review. In this study, the themes emerging from the interviews with mentees, incubator management, and government officials were linked to the literature that has already been covered (see Chapter 4).

3.18.6 Reflexivity

Creswell (2014: 234) stated that in a qualitative study, researchers must be able to articulate how their own personal background, culture and experiences hold the potential for shaping their interpretation. This includes the themes that the researcher advances and the meaning ascribed to data. In this study, the researcher ensured that open and honest self-reflection was stated. The researcher further ensured that negative and discrepant information was brought to light, irrespective of degree. This is usually information that is contradictory to the themes that are emerging. In doing so, the researcher believed that all information from the interviews was comprehensively considered to present a true, realistic, and valid account of information.

3.19 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research methodology applied in this study. It further outlined the various factors that the researcher considered in approaching research of this nature. This chapter explained the research design, process of gathering data through semi-structured interviews, and the rationale for using certain instruments. In addition, the chapter articulated the approach that was taken in analysing the qualitative information from the interviews, and steps taken to ensure quality assurance in dealing with qualitative data. The next chapter presents the findings, analysis and discussion relating to the empirical study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION- QUALITATIVE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, focus was placed on the chosen research methodology. The rationale for pursuing a qualitative study and the detailed approach that was followed was explained. In addition, the steps taken to ensure the quality control, credibility, and trustworthiness of data collected through interviews were also outlined. In this chapter, the focus is on the results, analysis, and discussion in respect of the interviews conducted. The data collected from the interviews was critically analysed through a thematic analysis approach. Through this process of thematic analysis, the dominant themes or patterns that emerged from the qualitative data are discussed in greater depth below. In addition, this chapter provides a discussion on the correlation of the empirical results with literature covered.

4.2 CATEGORIES OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

In total, 41 interviews were conducted in the eThekwini metropolitan region. Participants interviewed included 24 mentees, 13 business incubation managers, and 4 government officials. Each participant contributed in varying capacity to the coding process, which was used to generate the references. References indicate the number of quotations generated from each transcript (participants in this case). The references were obtained using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software (Table 4.1). As shown in Table 4.1, Government Official 2 contributed most of the insights to the study, when compared to other participants. Table 4.1 also shows that Participant 1 from Establishment B contributed the least insight to the study.

Table 4.1: Categories of participants in the study

Participants	Number of quotations
Group 1- Mentees	
Participant 1 Establishment A	20
Participant 2 Establishment A	19
Participant 3 Establishment A	15

Participant 4 Establishment A	18
Participant 1 Establishment B	13
Participant 2 Establishment B	17
Participant 3 Establishment B	21
Participant 4 Establishment B	20
Participant 1 Establishment C	20
Participant 2 Establishment C	20
Participant 3 Establishment C	20
Participant 4 Establishment C	19
Participant 5 Establishment C	17
Participant 1 Establishment D	20
Participant 2 Establishment D	14
Participant 3 Establishment D	18
Participant 1 Establishment E	18
Participant 2 Establishment E	19
Participant 3 Establishment E	16
Participant 4 Establishment E	18
Participant 1 Establishment F	17
Participant 2 Establishment F	18
Participant 3 Establishment F	17
Participant 4 Establishment F	18
Group 2- Incubator Management	
Establishment A Manager 1	21
Establishment A Manager 2	19
Establishment A Manager 3	19
Establishment B Manager 1	14
Establishment B Manager 2	16
Establishment C Manager 1	16
Establishment C Manager 2	16
Establishment D Manager 1	18

Establishment D Manager 2	17
Establishment E Manager 1	16
Establishment E Manager 2	17
Establishment F Manager 1	16
Establishment F Manager 2	15
Group 3- Government Officials	
Interview with Government Official 1	22
Interview with Government Official 2	25
Interview with Government Official 3	22
Interview with Government Official 4	21

Source: Original

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

4.3.1 Data cleaning process

The recorded interviews (41) were transcribed verbatim so as to avoid the possibility of misquoting the participants. The cleaning process and preparation of the interviews for coding included a thorough review of the transcripts. Thereafter, both the researcher and the coders (Qualitative data analyst) discarded the typographical errors and missing words. At the preliminary reading stage, relevant paragraphs were highlighted in order to ease the data analysis process.

4.3.2 Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) Atlas.ti

Electronic coding using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) Atlas.ti version 8 software was applied to code and analyse all the information provided by the participants. The rationale for using a CAQDAS was that the software acts like a "container" that keeps all the data, codes, memos and findings from the same project in a single environment. This helps to manage, extract, compare and explore the data within the texts to ease and facilitate the analysis process (Ngalande & Mkwinda, 2014). Furthermore, the software assists in building networks and relationships, resulting in creating a graphical view of the data (Ngalande & Mkwinda, 2014). Although the software allows organising transcript data in preparation

for analysis, it does not analyse the data as the analytic part remains the responsibility of the researcher.

4.3.3 Coding process

The coding process of the study was guided and framed by the research questions and objectives of the study. Table 4.2 below illustrates an example of the coding process; how codes and themes were created. Based on the information from the transcripts, two codes - **Misalignment of mentorship programmes to entrepreneurial needs,** and **Mentor and mentee disparities** – were respectively assigned in order to give the meaning of the information in the transcripts. Therefore, these are regarded as factors impeding mentorship in a business incubation setting.

Table 4.2: Coding process examples

Theme	code	Information from the transcript
Factors impeding mentorship in a business incubation setting	Misalignment of mentorship programmes to entrepreneurial needs	*'Programmes are not clearly defined or structured according to needs and gaps identified. Programmes are very general and do not really focus on relevant and core issues relating to business mentorship.'* (Government Official 1)
	Mentor and Mentee disparities	*'There are a number of disagreements between mentors and mentees, therefore it has largely been unsuccessful to date.'* (Establishment A, Manager 2)

Source: Original

4.4 MAIN THEMES

The main themes that emerged from the data analysis process are presented in Table 4.3 below. Table 4.3 highlights the number of quotations for each theme. From the table below, the most discussed theme is '**Factors impeding mentorship in a business incubation setting'** with 255 quotations. This is followed by **'Influence of mentorship strategies on SMME development'** and **'Criteria used for selecting mentors'** with 91 and 87 quotations, respectively. The challenges faced by SMMEs

before business incubation mentorship programmes was the least discussed theme, with 31 number of quotations.

Table 4.3: Main themes that emerged

Main Themes	Government officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Total Quotations
Criteria used for selecting SMMEs	9	16	13	38
Criteria used for selecting mentors	17	42	28	87
Challenges faced by SMMEs before business incubation mentorship programmes	1	30	0	31
Factors impeding mentorship in business incubation	38	134	83	255
Perceptions on government policy and strategies towards mentorship programmes	4	28	18	50
Influence of mentorship strategies on SMME development	7	58	26	91
Mentorship design	9	32	19	60
Factors enabling successful business incubation	5	24	33	62
Totals	**90**	**364**	**220**	**674**

Source: Original

The themes that have emerged in this study have been aligned to the research questions that were set out in this study, as follows:

4.4.1 Research Question 1: What criteria do BIs use to select mentees and mentors?

Themes 1 and 2 below relate to research question 1.

4.4.1.1 Theme 1: Criteria used for selecting SMMEs

From the coding process, participants highlighted the varying criteria used to enrol mentees onto the mentorship programme within BIs. They commented on the required business documentation, exit rules, number of years of business existence, and the industry grading requirement. Figure 4.1 and Table 4.4 below illustrate the analysis and cross tabulation of this theme, respectively. All participant contributions included henceforth have been cited verbatim.
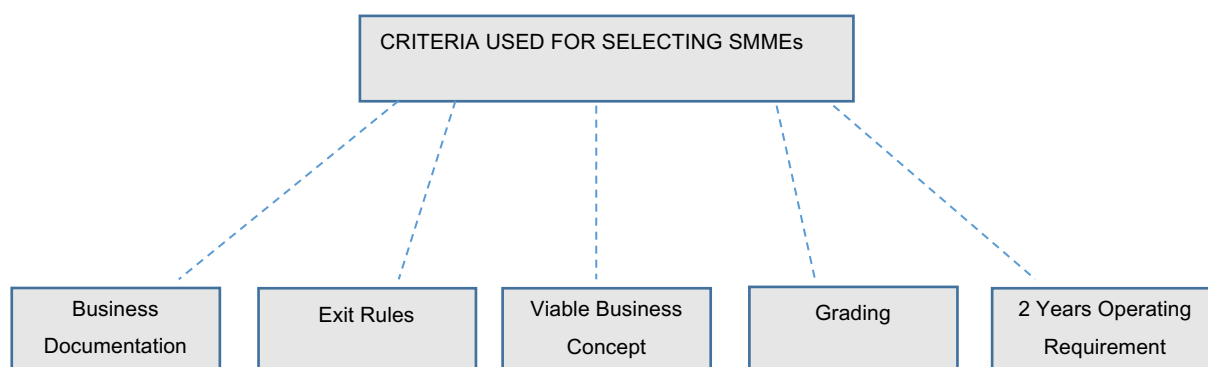
Figure 4.1: Illustration of criteria used for selecting SMMEs. Source: Original

Table 4.4: Cross-tabulation analysis for criteria used for selecting SMMEs

Theme 1: Criteria used to select SMMEs	Government Officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Total Quotations
2 years' operating requirement	4	5	2	11
Business documentation	0	8	3	11
Exit rules	5	0	4	9
Industry grading requirement	0	3	2	5
Viable business concept	0	0	2	2
Total Quotations	**9**	**16**	**13**	**38**

Source: Original

Incubation selection criteria denote the strategies, methods, procedures, and guidelines that BIs employ in identifying, admitting entry, and selecting mentees worthy of inclusion in incubation programmes and occupying incubator premises. Participants in the study emphasised the stringent requirements in respect of **business documentation** that is required upfront. Two of the Managers from Establishment C mentioned that entrepreneurs should have updated financial records. For instance, Manager 2 from Establishment C indicated that a mentee must '*have records and be compliant with the South African Revenue Service and must have maintained financial records for at least 24 months*.' Manager 2 from Establishment D indicated that the criteria is based on the BEE status of the business. Mentees also shared same sentiments as the managers above. Participant 1 from Establishment C shared that a potential mentee needs to be registered and have all business related documents in place before the Establishment would accept the application. Similarly, Participant 2 from Establishment B buttressed on the importance of the required documents, in that an

application of a mentee is rejected should there be a single missing document, as indicated below:

> A formal application was made using a form and they checked that I met the minimum grading for the industry. In addition, I also had to submit my company documents and tax registration proof. The incubator is very strict about ensuring that all documents are submitted. If one document is not there, you will be rejected. (Participant 2, Establishment B)

Some participants in the study mentioned that the **business should be in existence for a period of at least two years** to be accepted in the incubation process. The excerpts below are consistent with this response:

'Must be operating for at least 24 months to qualify for entry onto a mentorship programme.' (Establishment C, Manager 1)

'Some entrepreneurs are required to have two years plus experience before they can join the incubator programme.' (Government Official 1)

'The criteria for joining is strict. I had to be operating for two years and show proof of my company registration documents.' (Participant 3, Establishment C)

Some of the incubator managers mentioned that the mentees need to have **a viable business concept.** In this regard, Manager 2 from Establishment A concurred, as indicated below:

> Where there is definitely a viable business concept, but the applicant lacks technical skills, a mentor would be placed to 'handhold' the entrepreneur for a period of 12-18 months to ensure that there is transfer of skills during that period. The criteria for exit is that the entrepreneur must sign off on the mentorship that they can now operate on their own and at least start to demonstrate profitable results.

In some sectors, a grading system (Grade 1 to 4) exists as a methodology to screen and identify mentees during the application process, and some of the participants in the study mentioned that incubators only accept entrepreneurs who fall into a minimum of **Grade 1**. Grade 1 entrepreneurs are those applicants who are already earning some profit, and are self-sufficient.

'Entry criteria is strict; we only take from Grade 1. We also have to balance the percentage of women, youth and men.' (Establishment B, Manager 2)

'You must also have a minimum grading 1.' (Participant 3, Establishment B)

'A minimum grading of 1 to join the programme.' (Participant 4, Establishment B)

In some instances there are rules for exiting the incubation programme, just as there rules in respect of entrance. **Exit criteria** denote the outcomes of the incubation

process, whether the entrepreneur is ready for graduation. Manager 2 from Establishment D pointed out that the incubation process is terminated if there is no progress made by the mentee.

'Exit rules are based on non-performance in a 24-month period, then the mentorship arrangement is terminated.' (Establishment D, Manager 2)

Other participants indicated that the duration for an incubation programme is three years, as indicated below:

'Some have a maximum term of three years while others are 18 months.' (Government Official 2)

*'The programme is for three years, and mentees must exit after three years.' (*Establishment B, Manager 2*)*

'The exit rule can be 1-3 years based on the progress made.' (Establishment A, Manager 3)

In contrast, few of the participants in the study also highlighted that there are no exit rules specified and mentees can exit whenever they may feel it to be necessary, as indicated below:

'As far as exiting the incubator is concerned, people exit as and when they please.' (Government Official 4)

'There are no exit rules at present. We are currently looking into that so that clients must be able to exit at a particular point in time.' (Establishment A, Manager 1)

4.4.1.2 Theme 2: Criteria for selecting mentors

When the research participants were asked about the criteria used for selecting mentors in BI programmes, the majority of mentees mentioned experience – but more specifically industry expertise – as a crucial element. Incubator managers stated that mentors are sourced externally most of the time for their programmes, while government officials stated there is no specific criteria set by the national office to be used for selecting mentors. Figure 4.2 and Table 4.5 below illustrate the analysis and cross tabulation of this theme respectively:
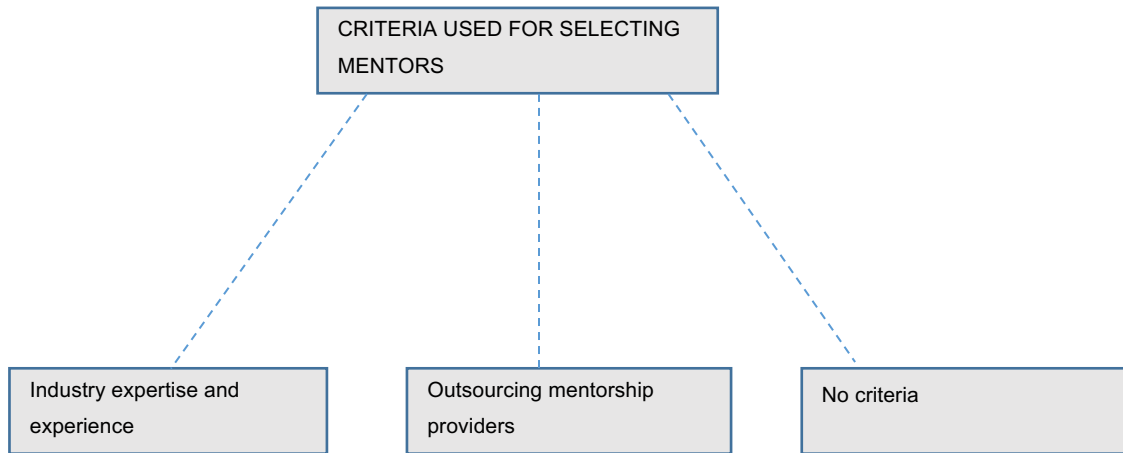
Figure 4.2: Criteria used for selecting mentors. Source: Original

Table 4.5: Cross-tabulation analysis for criteria used for selecting mentors

Theme 2: Criteria for selecting mentors	Government Officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Quotations
Industry expertise and experience	5	25	21	51
No criteria	11	14	2	27
Outsourcing mentorship providers	1	3	5	9
Total Quotations	**17**	**42**	**28**	**87**

Source: Original

The success rate of start-ups within BI programmes is also often influenced by the standard and or quality of mentorship they receive. The study engaged with incubator managers to gain a better understanding of the factors considered when selecting mentors. One manager asserted that there is **no standard criteria** in place guiding the selection of mentors. He further stated that it sometimes depends on the business size, and its capacity.

Financial capacity will enable a BI to employ highly skilled mentors and to be able to offer more than one mentor to entrepreneurs, to diversify the knowledge they receive and tailor the mentorship programme to their needs. However, less resourceful incubator programmes will most likely not afford highly skilled and experienced mentors and can only afford to allocate one mentor per entrepreneur. The manager declared that:

It is dependent on the size of the business. Mentors are chosen based on their skills set and their ability to apply their skills to the relevant department within a business. However, there is no documented criteria on mentor selection. (Establishment D, Manager 2)

Government officials also added that:

'The majority of mentors are drawn from the outside. There is no clearly defined criteria or policy which states how and from where mentors should be sourced.' (Government Official 4)

'There are no clearly defined rules used for selecting mentors. Mentors appear to be taken from anywhere. Ideally mentors should come industry, with practical experience.' (Government Official 1)

The **"no criteria" selection of mentors** by BIs could either work for the best or compromise the quality of mentorship. An engagement with government officials on their views regarding the absence of standardised selection criteria of mentors took place where Government Official 2 substantiated that indeed, the benchmark for selecting mentors does not exist. The official further argued that mentors with specific or specialised skill sets for each industry are few and far between. When the scarcity of mentor skills and experience is accompanied by the scarcity of the availability of human capacity of mentors, a crisis is imminent. This eventually influences the quality of mentorship provided by BIs, as it creates difficulties as far as making provision for more than one mentor per mentee and allocating mentors that directly address their needs, as indicated by an official below:

There is no documented process for selecting mentors. Mentors are drawn from everywhere, as and when the need arises. There is a high demand for mentors and those with specific technical skills are hard to find because most are in full time employment. (Government Official 2)

From the engagement with the participants, an ideal mentor should be academically qualified with industry experience to an expert level preferably. Incubator managers, government officials and incubator mentees all expressed the predominance of **industry experience and expertise** when compared to solely academic knowledge. They highlighted the importance of balancing these skills when mentors are selected as it is what they would like to see in mentorship progammes. Participants commented as follows:

'A mentor must come from industry with experience and know-how. This is of greater benefit.' (Participant 4, Establishment B)

Definitely industry experts who must have qualifications in the construction and built environment. In addition, they must have industry experience. If there is a need for some reason to outsource mentorship, then that is allowed, but only to cover specialised industry experts. (Establishment B, Manager 1)

'It must definitely be experts from industry who have practical hands-on experience in this field. This will allow for a better process of mentorship and skills transfer.' (Government Official 1)

BI managers and government officials further stated that mentors are generally **sub-contracted from external agencies and other partnerships,** as indicated below:

' We make use of all external service providers and partnerships with other agencies such as SEDA.' (Establishment D, Manager 1)

The appointment of mentors is outsourced through a supply chain management process, whereby mentors tender and are then awarded a contract after a bid adjudication process. The experience that is required is well articulated in the advertisement that goes out to attract the right mentors. Single mentors are used. (Establishment C, Manager 1)

'The majority of mentors are drawn from the outside. There is no clearly defined criteria or policy which states how and from where mentors should be sourced.' (Government Official 4)

Sub-contracting of mentors has been mentioned earlier in the study as a negative contributing factor, as the nature of employment in this agreement prevents the mentor from benefits such as **performance rewards**. It was argued that in the case where it could be made possible for mentors to get rewards based on their mentee performance, then there would be higher levels of success rate of SMMEs, as commitment and efforts from mentors would be consistent. Nature of employment determining the level of dedication demonstrated by mentors are the views expressed by participants as indicated below:

I am not aware if the mentor is incentivised and rewarded, in line with performance, however, I do believe that the mentors should be adequately rewarded and incentivised to ensure that they work with me towards my success. In this way, the mentor will remain committed to my success. (Participant 1, Establishment A)

There is no incentive system that is linked to performance. So, currently there is nothing like that in place, except a contracted rate that the incubator pays the mentor. (Participant 1, Establishment B)

> Not at all. The mentor gets paid as per the contracted rate he/she has with the incubator. There are no other rewards or incentives that is linked to performance. (Participant 2, Establishment B)

> According to the knowledge that I have, there are no incentives that are paid to the mentor. The mentors are paid according to a rate that is stated in their contract. There is no incentive linked to my performance. (Participant 4, Establishment B)

These views suggest that, as much as all participants see the need for an industry experienced mentor, this does not change their need for a multi-mentor strategy. In short, mentees expect and prefer a multi-mentor approach in a mixed formal-and informal mentorship programme to maximise efficiency and reduce the number of failed SMMEs.

4.4.2 Research Questions 2 & 3:
To what extent are current mentorship challenges in BIs contributing to the high failure rate and closure of SMMEs?
How do BIs incentivise and reward mentors, to ensure commitment and performance?

Themes 3 to 5 relate to research questions 2 and 3.

4.4.2.1 Theme 3: Challenges faced by SMMEs before the incubation process

Figure 4.3 illustrates the major challenges faced by SMMEs before participating in business incubation mentorship programmes in the eThekwini Municipality. Majority of participants who engaged with this question were mentees. They identified the lack financial management, marketing, sufficient business development and legal skills as major challenges that they faced, before participating in mentorship programmes. Figure 4.3 and Table 4.6 below illustrate the analysis and cross tabulation of this theme respectively.
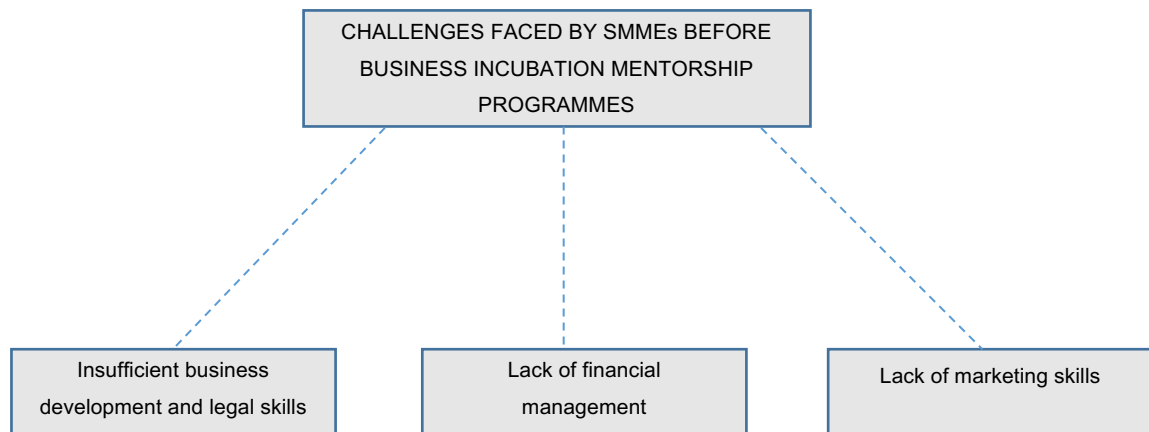
Figure 4.3: Challenges faced by SMMEs before business incubation mentorship programmes. Source: Original

Table 4.6: Cross-tabulation analysis for challenges faced by SMMEs before business incubation mentorship programmes

Theme 3: Challenges faced by SMMEs before business incubation mentorship programmes	Government officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Quotations
Insufficient business development and legal skills	1	8	0	9
Lack of financial management	0	12	0	12
Lack of marketing skills	0	10	0	10
Total Quotations	**1**	**30**	**0**	**31**

Source: Original

To gain insight into the expectations that mentees had from the mentorship programmes, the researcher asked the mentees to identify areas of challenge they experienced before joining BIs. This was to clarify whether or not the mentorship offered within the business incubation addresses most of the needs and gaps identified by the mentees.

The obstacles that SMMEs face when venturing into entrepreneurship include but are not limited to **insufficient development and legal skills**. One mentee asserted that he did not have any prior experience in developing a business plan, and lacked knowledge in understanding legal aspects relating to entrepreneurship. In most cases, failure to have a standardised business plan and relevant legal business documents have been the main reason some of the businesses did not make it to incubator programmes. This illustrates that in certain instances, there is some level of exclusivity

to the admission into incubator programmes, as some require these documents as an entrance requirement.

This further acts as a barrier to participating in business development activities such as having access to funding opportunities, due to the challenges attached to application specifications. Participant 1 from Establishment F stated that:

'My specific challenges were in creating a business plan to apply for funding.'

In addition, Participant 1, Establishment A asserted:

'I did not have any knowledge about legal aspects of setting up a business. I did not have any business background or knowledge, as the field that I studied was unrelated to business.'

Mentees further declared that before joining the incubator programmes, they **lacked organisational financial management.** According to Participant 2 from Establishment B, putting a price to a service or product has always been a challenge, accompanied by a lack of understanding of the market and ways of accessing it, as indicated below:

'I did not understand anything about finances and furthermore when it came to pricing of quotes and projects and accessing the market, I had difficulty with this and always had to get help from other people.'

Participants indicated that not only did they struggle with pricing and costing, but their challenges also included a lack of capacity to keep up with business bookkeeping standards. In most cases, this also served as a restriction for them to engage or participate in certain incubator programmes, as failure to abide to some financial documental standards automatically eliminates their acceptance and participation into the programmmes.

To evidence this, Participant 2 from Establishment B commented that:

'I also lacked in bookkeeping and financial skills.'

Furthermore, another factor that presented as a stumbling block when developing a business plan for the mentees, has been the **insufficiency of marketing skills and knowledge**. The survival and growth of SMMEs is often threatened by the difficulty SMMEs face in penetrating the market. Mentees have expressed that, firstly, they struggle with identifying and accessing their market. They further face the challenge

of competing with well-known and large scale industry, and find it difficult to develop marketing strategies to make themselves known amongst these big names in the market. The inability to access clientele strongly influences their survival in the market. The participants expressed that:

'Access to markets and securing contracts was my main challenge.' (Participant 2, Establishment F)

'My challenges were gaining access to the markets, as it is dominated by the big players in this industry.' (Participant 1, Establishment D)

'My main challenge was to market my products. I could do the manufacturing but getting the buyers was problem.' (Participant 2, Establishment E)

4.4.2.2 Theme 4: Factors impeding mentorship in business incubation

From the coding process, participants pinpointed a host of barriers that hinder the success of mentorship programmes in business incubation in the eThekwini region. These barriers include lack of performance, insufficient mentor capacity, lack of funding and reward for mentors, inadequate implementation of organisation strategies, lack of training on business ethics, low levels of commitment by mentors and mentees, mentor and mentee disparities, and misalignment of mentorship with entrepreneur needs. Figure 4.4 and Table 4.7 below illustrate the analysis and cross-tabulation of this theme, respectively:
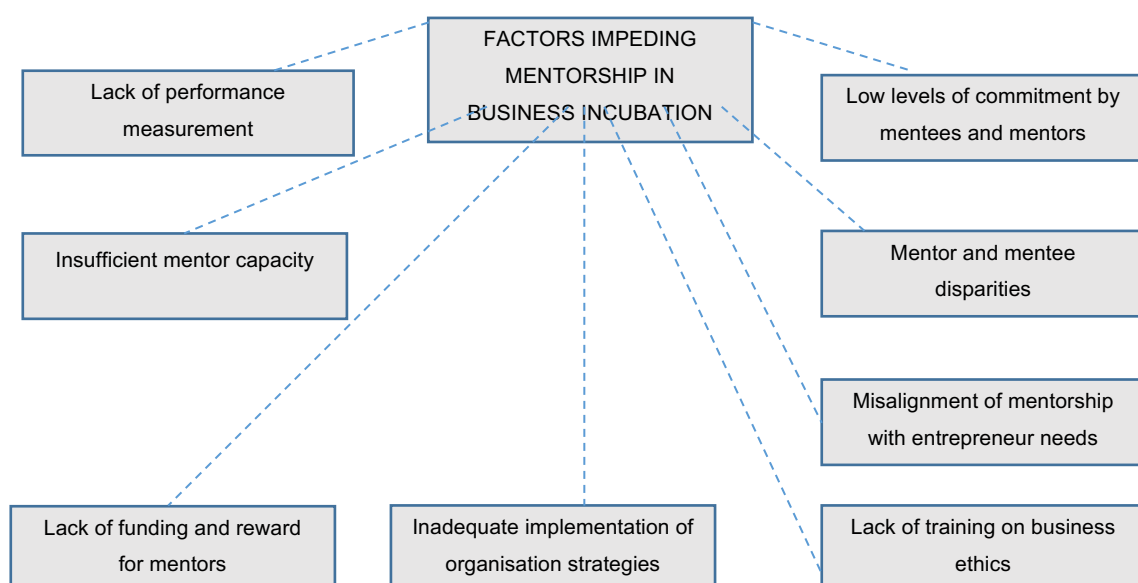

Figure 4.4: Factors impeding mentorship in business incubation. Source: Original

Table 4.7: Cross-tabulation analysis on factors impeding mentorship in business incubation

Theme 4: Factors impeding mentorship in business incubation	Government Officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Quotations
Inadequate implementation of organisation strategies	4	0	9	13
Insufficient mentor capacity	1	3	1	5
Lack of funding and reward for mentors	7	20	20	47
Lack of performance measurement	4	15	7	26
Lack of training on business ethics	4	21	11	36
Low levels of commitment by mentors and mentees	9	15	19	43
Mentor and mentee disparities	2	5	9	16
Misalignment of mentorship with entrepreneur needs	7	55	7	69
Total Quotations	**38**	**134**	**83**	**255**

Source: Original

One of the key impeding factors mentioned by the participants is the **misalignment of mentorship with entrepreneur needs**. Participants who took part in the study felt that the mentorship programme offered in the BIs did not really speak to the needs of the entrepreneurs. Manager 1 from Establishment A acknowledged that mentorship is one of the important interventions required to assist new entrepreneurs venturing into business. He also mentioned that it can take anything from 1-3 years for a business to fail, if there is no proper support. The mentors are there to assist in the hand-holding process. Some incubation managers felt that mentorship is not focusing on the appropriate and relevant aspects of skills development. This was echoed by the Manager 2 from Establishment D, who indicated that:

> Not entirely, as most entrepreneurs lack the ability to find suitable markets or to market the product or service to the marketplace. They also lack entrepreneurial skills. Mentorship should therefore pay specific attention to marketing skills and entrepreneurial skills relating to selling, finance and business management.

Sharing same views with the participant cited above, Manager 3 from Establishment A mentioned that mentorship focuses mainly on theory rather than practice. Manager 2 from Establishment C also highlighted another factor that the mentorship programmes often overlooked. He stated that:

> In principle, mentorship focuses on the right aspects, but in terms of implementation, somewhere it misses the mark. There also seems to be lesser focus on the people part and

there it loses its impact. The implementation part seems to be all over the place, and not well co-ordinated.

In addition, some of the government officials added that the mentorship programmes are too generic in that they do not cater for the needs of the entrepreneur. The following excerpts from the interview with some government officials affirms this:

> Programmes are not clearly defined or structured, according to needs and gaps identified. Programmes are very general in nature and do not really focus on relevant and core issues relating to business mentorship. (Government Official 1)

> The majority of the programmes are very broad with focus on finance, marketing and management. Programmes ought to be designed around the needs of the entrepreneur and the gaps identified. (Government Official 2)

Government officials 3 and 4 also shared insight on the lack of structure of the mentorship programmes. Government Official 3 went further to say that:

'These incubators are just going on for the sake of staying open. There is clearly no defined programme or structured and relevant programmes.' (Government Official 3)

Government Official 4 mentioned lack of consistency due to lack of structure in the programmes.

Convergent views persisted from all the entrepreneurs regarding the effectiveness of the mentorship programmes. Entrepreneurs who took part in this study felt that, due to poorly structured mentorship programmes, they have been given inadequate support through these programmes. In providing an illustration that succinctly captures this point, the following quotations were gathered from the interviews, with the mentees stating:

> It is not well organised at present. It is poorly structured. The programmes and workshops are organised on an ad-hoc basis and that too at short notice. The programmes are not structured to individual needs and gaps. Everything is just general. If you request for assistance, you must wait days and during that time you are passed from one person to the next. Things do not get resolved speedily, as there is no urgency. (Participant 2, Establishment C)

> Things are not very structured, in terms of a programme. Training is mainly in a classroom set up and feels too formal. It has not really assisted me in my specific gaps and challenges. (Participant 1, Establishment D)

> Not all programmes are well developed and structured. Some have their own standard programmes and do not consider the mentees own needs, challenges and gaps. Therefore, it can end up being irrelevant to a particular mentee. (Participant 1, Establishment F)

It can be argued that for a mentorship process to succeed, the mentees need to display the desire to learn, be teachable, and show enthusiasm to the mentorship programme. **Low levels of commitment from both the mentees and the mentors** were found in this current study to be one of the factors fuelling the failure of business incubation mentorship programmes in the eThekwini region. Participants highlighted the issue of mentorship drop-outs from both mentors and mentees. For instance, mentees acknowledged that in many instances they do not finish the mentorship programmes. Mentees indicated:

> Lack of commitment from entrepreneurs is one of the challenges and the entrepreneurs end up not completing the programme. Entrepreneurs do not end up acquiring all of the relevant skills and then end up failing in business quite early. (Participant 2, Establishment B)

'The drop-out rate is also very high, as many mentees do not complete the programme. This definitely contributes to the high failure rate of SMMEs.' (Participant 1, Establishment F)

'The other challenge is that mentees give up and do not stay until the end of the programme. This means that they do not get the full benefit of the programme.' (Participant 4, Establishment B)

According to the managers of the incubators, some of the causes of the dropouts of the entrepreneurs from the mentorship programmes is that the mentees believe that they know better and do not really need the help and experience of the mentors, as expressed below:

> Other challenges relate to commitment levels from mentees, they do not accept guidance provided by the mentor. Frequent disagreements between the mentor and mentee occur. Sometimes mentees are of the view that they know everything and cannot be taught, guided or supported. These mentees then end up terminating the services of the mentor. (Establishment A, Manager 1)

> Some are committed while others are not. Some do not attend the required workshops and training. One of the challenges is listening to the mentor. Some of the mentees do not like to listen to the mentor, which then creates problems between the mentee and the mentor. (Establishment B, Manager 1)

Other incubation managers contended that the mentors look for other fruitful opportunities and then leave the programme before it finishes as indicated below:

There are challenges from both sides. Not all mentees complete the mentorship programme, some leave before the programme ends. Perseverance until the end is a challenge. Mentors also look for more lucrative contracts and leave. (Establishment E, Manager 2)

Similarly, government officials also hinted that the mentors drop out of the mentorship programmes for better opportunities, as pointed out below:

*'It is difficult to get any greater commitment out of them as there are no incentives or rewards for mentors, for anything outstanding that they accomplish.' (*Government Official 3)

'It often happens that mentors move on because of better opportunities elsewhere.' (Government Official 4)

Considering the above, it is no surprise that a **lack of funding and rewards** for mentors is linked to a low level of commitment of the mentors and poor outcomes of the mentorship programmes. Regarding funding, mentees expressed that one of the major challenges that also contributes to the failure of SMMEs is the inaccessibility of funding. As a result, the incubation programmes are shortened and other incubators close, due to lack of funding. This point was aptly illustrated by the following mentees:

'There is a general lack of funding, meaning that the programmes must be shortened, or lesser time is spent on practical aspects.' (Participant 2, Establishment E)

'Incubators are not taken seriously when budgeting is done by government departments, therefore incubators themselves run into financial problems and end up closing.' (Participant 3, Establishment B)

Even though the reward system has been used by many organisations as a means of motivating employees to drive effective performance, this is not the reality for mentors in the BIs. This viewpoint was substantiated by comments made by some of the participants in the study. They revealed that:

'The amount paid to the mentor might not be enough, so they often lose interest in the mentee.' (Establishment A, Manager 1)

'It is difficult to get any greater commitment out of them as there are no incentives or rewards for mentors for anything outstanding that they accomplish.' (Government Official 3)

Most of the participants highlighted the absence of a link between mentor rewards and the performance of mentees. For instance, Participant 3 from Establishment F commented that:

'There are no other incentives paid to the mentor other than a fixed rate. To my knowledge, I am not aware of any performance that is linked to the mentor's reward.'

Another factor contributing to the failure of SMMEs is related to the **insufficient mentor capacity.** Some of the participants in the study mentioned that there is lack of capacity of qualified and skilled mentors. This was expressed as follows:

'Although there is a strategic plan in place for mentorship and business support, human capacity is a serious challenge.' (Establishment A, Manager 1)

'There is a high demand for mentors and those with specific technical skills are hard to find because most are in full time employment.' (Government Official 2)

> There are not enough skilled and qualified mentors and there is not enough mentorship taking place, which is the reason for the high failure rate of businesses. It should become mandatory for all MBA graduates and doctoral students to mentor an entrepreneur for at least one year, as part of their practical component to their studies. (Participant 1, Establishment A)

Mentor and Mentee conflicts were also found from the data analysis process, as one of the factors hindering the success of mentorship in the business incubation process. Some of the participants highlighted that disagreements between the mentors and mentees are also linked to the low levels of commitment of both mentors and mentees. This viewpoint aptly corresponds with the excerpts below:

> Disputes and disagreements between the mentor and mentee often result in one of them giving up, or abandoning the programme. This contributes to the increase in the drop-out rate, which ultimately impacts on the high failure rate. Mentees also lose interest and drop out on their own. (Government Official 1)

'There are a number of disagreements between mentors and mentees, therefore it has largely been unsuccessful to date.' (Establishment A, Manager 2)

'This ends up in a dispute. In addition, people do not end up staying until the end of the programme. This contributes to the high failure rate.' (Participant 1, Establishment D)

Government officials and incubation managers were asked of the known strategies that the incubators have in place for mentoring. Most of the participants shared insight on the **inadequate implementation of incubator strategies.** For instance, the Government officials indicated that all the incubators are required to have strategies at hand on how they plan to offer support to the entrepreneurs, however, these

strategies are not implemented effectively. For instance, Government Official 1 shared that:

> From a Government perspective there are policies and strategic plans of business incubation and mentorship of SMMEs, however, many incubators have not translated these policies into strategic plans at business incubator level. Therefore, the implementation part lacks consistency, giving rise to trial and error. (Government Official 4)

Government Official 2 contended that the incubators do receive the funds from government as a form of support for them to be able to implement the incubation programmes efficiently, however, funds are sometimes misused. In this regard, Government Official 2 explained that:

'The other key challenge is that Government sets aside a budget for mentorship and incubation, and incubators fail to utilise these funds effectively for the programmes.'

Most participants commented on the **lack of training on business ethics** as another factor contributing to the poor outcomes of mentorship programmes and failure of SMMEs. Some incubator management did acknowledge that this is lacking as a crucial part of the incubation programme. In this regard, Manager 2 from Establishment A shared:

> I have not come across any mentorship programme that has focused on ethics in business. It is an extremely important aspect, which is lacking, hence, so many businesses engage in corrupt activities from the early stages, which eventually leads to their demise. Considering the number of corporate scandals recently, business ethics becomes a crucial aspect.

Similarly, Government Official 2 also indicated that:

*'None of the mentorship programmes so far have **ethical aspects to doing business** as part of the programme. It would be good to have this, given the high level of corruption in our country.'*

Furthermore, most of the mentees shared how the provision of training on business ethics would have been beneficial to their businesses. Participant 2 from Establishment C stated:

'The programme has not covered this aspect. It would be beneficial to be mentored on these aspects because ethical aspects of business dealings are very important.'

When mentees were asked about performance measurements utilised by mentorship programmes, the majority stated that there were no measurement strategies in place at the time of enrolment into the incubator programmes. This means that mentorship

programmes do not clearly define what is expected of the mentees over a specific period. To substantiate this point, Participant 2 from Establishment C stated that:

'There are no performance indicators in place. You just join and keep going and work towards upskilling yourself.'

A Business Incubator Manager added that:

> There is no proper performance measurement, plans, or criteria in place. This still needs to be designed and put in place. For now, we just rely on quarterly reports from the mentor. (Establishment A, Manager 3)

The unavailability of performance measurements makes it difficult to determine the level of commitment conveyed by the mentee in the programme as there are no measures to track progress on agreed standards and enforce accountability through the submission of quarterly reports. Manager 1 from Establishment D reported:

> This is currently not functioning effectively as there are a number of challenges in getting reports from mentees, either monthly or quarterly. It then becomes difficult to track performance against any agreed outcomes or the business plan. The mentees do not co-operate with the mentors, to provide the required information that can be used for assessing performance.

Additionally, Government Official 2 stated there is a challenge given the absence of standardised performance measurements in BI mentorship programmes, hence the inability to track the level of actual progress achieved in the programmes, as indicated below:

> There are no set performance standards that are established in most of the incubators to measure and track the success of business incubator mentorship. This is a fundamental area that is lacking. It is very important to set standards at the beginning and then track these as the mentorship progresses, to see if mentorship is yielding results or not.

Under these conditions, some BI mentorship programmes do have systems of performance measurements in place, while others do not. In cases where there are systems in place, they are prone to inconsistency and poor implementation as they are performed on an ad-hoc basis, due to the nature of their existence. Mentees commented that:

> There are no performance indicators that have been agreed upon. We just continue to work towards something. The mentor simply provides quarterly reports on what progress is being made but it is not tracked against a target. (Participant 1, Establishment C)

> No, this was not done. Performance is not tracked in any way. The programme is for three years and that is the agreement with the incubator. So, there is no performance tracking, one must just complete the programme. (Participant 3, Establishment E)

The absence of a standardised performance measurement system in mentorship programmes also means the lack of accountability measures. It makes it possible to have mentees participate in a programme for three years with little to no efficient execution. Mentees are also not directed and impelled to perform by any targets, hence it is highly likely that there could be a huge performance difference of mentees in the same programme.

Business incubator management must see the importance of developing mentorship programmes that directly addresses the needs of the entrepreneur. Women, youth, and rural participants are an example of entrepreneurs who require **tailor-made mentorship programmes**, that will take into consideration the context of rural entrepreneurship and the challenges that comes with it when compared to urban accessibility. Solutions designed to address challenges faced by entrepreneurs in urban areas should not be employed for the same purposes in rural areas under the impression that they will generate the same results.

To substantiate this view, Manager 1 from Establishment A argued that:

> There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach for mentorship. The level of understanding and maturity of mentees differ widely, e.g. youth, rural, and women. Their decision-making abilities also differ. Mentorship must be tailor-made to suit these gaps.

Women and young people in rural areas are more accustomed to issues such as illiteracy, poor education, insufficient time to handle their entrepreneur challenges, due to other societal roles expected of them, as women in rural areas and might be more accustomed to household duties. When asked if mentorship programmes should be customised for women, youth, and rural entrepreneurs in a BI setting, Manager 2 from Establishment A argued that:

> Yes, it should be customised to each individual's own circumstances and level of education and skills. Many entrepreneurs do not have the time to entirely sit in the formal classroom setting, as they are trying to make a living, so there should definitely be customisation. Even considering those in rural areas who have different challenges which are not the same as urban entrepreneurs.

Government Official 2 further highlighted that the needs of rural entrepreneurs differ from the needs of urban entrepreneurs, this is in addition to the other challenges that they encounter. This calls for the design of solutions and strategies that are carefully considered to align with their circumstances, as indicated below:

> It should be customised to cater to the specific needs of youth, women, and rural entrepreneurs. This is mainly because they all have their own unique circumstances, based on education, backgrounds, and standards.

Mentees emphasised that the generalised approach used by BI mentorship programmes will further perpetuate inefficiency, as start-up entrepreneurs face diverse contextual challenges. Participant 1 from Establishment D stated that:

> A lot more needs to be done by the government and incubators themselves to ensure that programmes and content is more appropriate and relevant for the skills gap of start-up entrepreneurs. Programmes are very general in nature.

> It should be customised because all these groups have their own unique challenges and problems. Having one standard approach may not be suitable for these groupings. (Participant 3, Establishment F)

4.4.2.3 Theme 5: Perceptions on Government Policy and Strategies toward Mentorship Programmes

Figure 4.5 and Table 4.8 below illustrate the responses of the participants on their perceptions on government policy and strategies towards mentorship programmes in the eThekwini Municipality, respectively. Incubator managers and mentees identified lack of funding towards implementation of government policies, misuse of State resources (corruption), incompetent State officials, insufficiency of properly planned polices towards SMME programmes, and lastly, unrealistic mentorship targets as factors that hurdle government initiatives towards the development of SMME programmes.
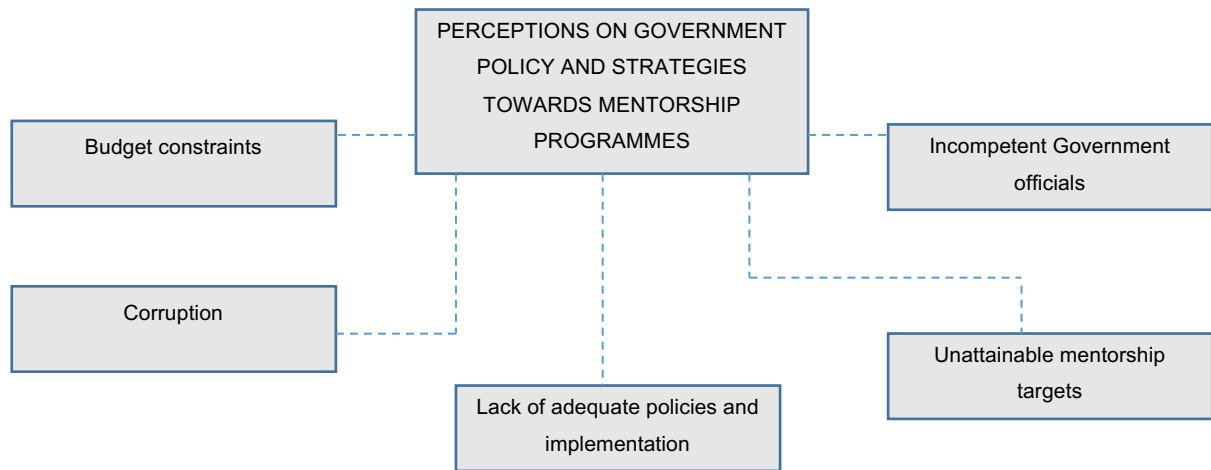
Figure 4.5: Perceptions on government policy and strategies towards mentorship programmes. Source: Original

Table 4.8: Cross-tabulation analysis of Perceptions on Government policy and strategies towards mentorship Programmes

Theme 5: Perceptions on government policy and strategies towards mentorship	Government Officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Quotations
Budget constraints	0	4	5	9
Corruption	0	0	1	1
Incompetent Government officials	0	1	1	2
Lack of adequate policies and implementation	4	23	10	37
Unattainable mentorship targets	0	0	1	1
Total Quotations	**4**	**28**	**18**	**50**

Source: Original

Policies and strategies developed by Government serve to provide structured solutions to the challenges faced by entrepreneurs with the aim of halting and or, addressing the high levels of SMME failure. Following an engagement with incubator managers and mentees, the study discovered that these participants are highly dissatisfied with the **poor and inconsistent implementation of polices,** which fails to address the challenges faced by SMMEs in the eThekwini municipality region. Participants stressed that poor and inefficient implementation of policies directed to the issues of incubator programmes have contributed to the failure of these programmes. They further stated that there are underlining factors that perpetuate the lack of implementation. Manager 1 from Establishment A stated that government policies addressing the needs of SMMEs exist, however, they are not effective, mainly due to a lack of execution, as indicated below:

'Policies are there, and papers have been written, but the implementation is seriously lacking.'

Manager 1, from Establishment F elaborated:

'Although policies and strategies exist, the implementation side of things are not good. Mentorship in incubators fail, because of financial problems and lack of commitment from policy makers.'

The beneficiaries of business incubation further declared that existing government policies do not align with their needs. This leads to the failure of policies to address diverse business incubator necessities. In cases like these, it is more likely that implementation will still not guarantee efficiency and effectiveness as desired. They argue that constraints to implementation may be perpetuated by some factors that include, but are not limited to **lack of funding** and other resources required to successfully implement these policies. In this regard, Participant 2 from Establishment B asserted:

> The policies and strategies need more work as they are not robust enough in dealing with all the challenges. There is too little funding, high demand and not enough incubators for everyone. These policies and strategies do not address all these problems.

In addition, incubator managers asserted that constraints towards policy implementation are also driven by **undersupply of funding from government,** which automatically cripples the implementation process. To substantiate the above argument, one participant indicated that:

> There are policies and strategies but there are implementation challenges, due to funds. There is always a shortage of funds, to implement mentorship properly. Due to this, only a limited number of entrepreneurs can be accepted each year, so the impact is not being made to reduce the failure rate. (Establishment B, Manager 1)

Moreover, one participant singled-out how entrepreneurial programmes become strained by **corrupt state officials**. The misuse of State funds and other resources, accompanied by **incompetency of state employees** in carrying out structured implementation has negatively impacted the development of SMMEs, as indicated by the participant below:

> My view is that as much as Government is trying to encourage and develop these SMMEs, the major flaw is that their intention is not brought to fruition, due to the high levels of corruption within the system. The funds set aside to assist these businesses are misappropriated and this then stifles the growth of the SMME sector. (Establishment D, Manager 2)

4.4.3 Research Question 4: What process do BIs apply in selecting suitable, structured, and relevant mentorship interventions that match existing skills and knowledge gaps of entrepreneurs?

Themes 6 and 7 relate to research question 4.

4.4.3.1 Theme 6: The influence of mentorship strategies on SMMEs development

Figure 4.6 below illustrates the mentorship strategies and how the nature of mentorship relationship styles can determine the success and failures of mentorship programmes, mentioned by the mentees, incubator management and government officials. Table 4.9 illustrates the cross-tabulation of this theme:
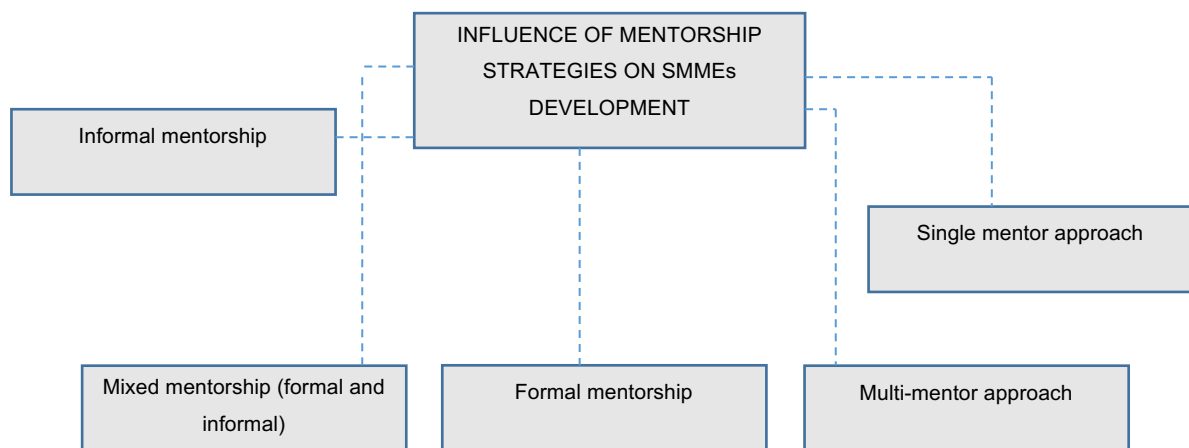
Figure 4.6 Influence of mentorship strategies on SMME development. Source: Original

Table 4.9: Cross-tabulation analysis of the influence of mentorship strategies on SMME development

Theme 6: Influence of mentorship strategies on SMMEs development	Government Officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Quotations
Formal mentorship	0	13	1	14
Informal mentorship	0	4	1	5
Mixed-formal and Informal mentorship	0	19	0	19
Multi-mentor approach	7	17	24	48
Single mentor approach	0	5	0	5
Total Quotations	**7**	**58**	**26**	**91**

Source: Original

The researcher engaged with mentees, incubator managers, and government officials to gain insight on their comprehension about the influence that mentorship strategies have on the development of SMMEs. Participants mentioned single mentor and multi-mentor approach, and their positive and negative impact. They further singled out how the nature or relationship of mentorship structures can determine the successes or failures of mentorship programmes. The study further engaged the participants on their opinions on the nature of programme structures ranging from formal, informal, and mixed mentorship.

Incubator beneficiaries partake in incubator programmes with expectations of acquiring solutions and guidance directed towards solving their entrepreneurial challenges. Participants stated that diversification of knowledge and expertise from their mentors is what they mainly seek in mentorship arrangements. As a result, they shared that a **single mentor approach** fails to fulfil and address their challenges. To substantiate this position, Participant 4 from Establishment A maintained that a single mentor will not be able to provide the variety of knowledge and expertise required in all business development aspects as indicated below:

'It is not ideal, as the single mentor is not a specialist in all areas. My mentor is more of a specialist in the product that I am selling, but does not have the expertise in financial management or in marketing.'

Similarly, mentees in single-mentorship programmes further stated:

> He does not know everything as he is not a specialist in all fields. He seems to be more of a marketing person and does not have any detailed experience in accounting or other aspects of management. Therefore, I can say that I have not really gained much out of the programme.

However, the majority of the mentees argued that a **multi-mentor approach** dispenses knowledge, diversity and ensures that mentorship programmes align and address at a larger scale, the needs of the entrepreneurs. To substantiate the inconvenience of single-mentor approach and the efficiency of multi-mentor approach, Participant 1 from Establishment A argued that:

> I have a single mentor. In my opinion, this approach is not a good one, as I find that the mentor is not a specialist in all areas, and he often has to refer to other mentors before he can give me an answer on something. That also takes up time. There should be different mentors who are subject matter experts covering different topics.

In parallel with Participant 1, Participant 2 from Establishment B further stated:

'Multiple mentors. It is better to have multiple mentors, as one mentor cannot be a specialist on all topics. It will end up being too general.'

When incubator managers and Government officials were asked about a preferable mentor approach as a result of efficiency, the majority stated that a **single mentor** approach had not yielded much positive results as it is a one-size-fits-all approach, whereas the challenges that entrepreneurs experience differ, therefore, it calls for a shift to a **multi-mentor approach**. Incubator managers argued that:

'A single mentor approach in the past has not proven to be successful. A multi-mentor approach is more appropriate as it draws on skills from mentors with different skills.' (Establishment A, Manager 2)

In addition, government officials upheld that:

'A multi-mentor approach is more suitable, as it allows for knowledge and expertise to be shared from different kinds of experts.' (Government Official 4)

Participants were further engaged on the impact that the mentorship relationship (formal or informal) has on the outcomes of mentorship programmes. The majority of mentees have been in a **formal mentoring** arrangement. Their responses explain their experience in this regard. Although there is a preference for standardised, organised and structured programmes that make use of clear performance and expectation measures to drive performance, there is also a strong belief that there ought to be a balance between formal and informal mentorship. Participant 1 from Establishment C stated that:

'Twice a year there are formal engagements with the mentor. In addition, there are workshops and short seminars.'

'It seems to be more informal, as you make contact with the mentor when you want to engage on something. You get invited to some workshops and courses and nothing more than that.' (Participant 2, Establishment C)

Manager 1 from Establishment B commented:

'Formal mentorship with a structured mentorship programme works better, as there are outcomes and deliverables, and everyone works towards a programme.'

However, mentees criticised the less practical aspect of this mentorship style as the majority of the time is spent on class-theory-based learning, and secondly, there are limitations encountered between the mentor and mentee in this mentoring relationship.

To substantiate this point, Participant 4 from Establishment B argued that many lectures and workshops are attended, and that there is very little or no practical aspect that forms part of the programme, as indicated below:

'I would say it is mainly classroom based. Many lectures and workshops are hosted. There is very little or no practical aspect that forms part of the programme.'

Incubator managers and mentees additionally stated that **informal mentorship** allows for a greater timespan of relationships between the mentor and mentee. This expands the duration of the accessibility of the mentor to the mentee. Not only are sustainable relationships of knowledge built, but the growth of the mentee becomes more sustainable. To support this view, incubator manager 2 from Establishment D asserted that:

> Formal mentorship is merely short-term and therefore my preference lies in informal mentorship, whereby the relationship continues over a longer duration. It must be noted that informal mentorship would be more advantageous to the entrepreneur, due to the nature of the contact. It can also allow for better measurement of progress.

Moreover, Participant 1 from Establishment A stated that the informal approach focuses on the practical aspects of the business, to demonstrate relatable content when compared to a formal approach, which is more theory based, as expressed below:

> It is informal, as it is based more on discussions. There is no classroom approach. It should be informal and practical, as it becomes difficult to discuss and explore problems in a classroom set up. An informal approach is more beneficial, as it is hands-on.

Both formal and informal mentorship styles have their shortcomings, as much as they have benefits. The participants made several recommendations for the application of a **mixed-formal-informal** mentorship style or relationship between the mentor and mentee, to achieve the most efficient results from mentorship programmes. They argued that this approach will likely evenly dispense a balance of both mentorship techniques. When participants were asked about their views on formal and informal mentorship structures, mentees said they believed that mentorship in an incubator setting requires a mix of both formal and informal mentorship, for it to be a well-rounded programme, as indicated below:

'I believe that the mentorship in an incubator setting requires a mix of both formal and informal mentorship, for it to be a well-rounded programme.' (Participant 4, Establishment A)

'It is a bit of both [formal and informal]. Formal meeting or engagement twice a month. One site visit a month. There are some workshops that I get called to attend. It should be a balance of formal and informal.' (Participant 2, Establishment A)

'There should be a balance between formal and informal, some classroom and some practical. This is to ensure that the mentee gets maximum benefit from mentorship.' (Establishment F, Manager 1)

Only one participant pointed out the severe targets set by their national office for mentorship programmes. Given the restrictions mentioned above, it becomes close to impossible for mentorship programmes to be able to achieve all the targets, as indicated by the participant below:

'The incubation and mentorship targets given by National office are quite high and these are not negotiable.' (Establishment B, Manager 1)

4.4.3.2 Theme 7: Mentorship design

Participants made recommendations regarding ways to improve mentorship programmes in business incubation. They mentioned that there is a need for training of mentors, where the mentorship programme ought to focus on ethical aspects of doing business, the programmes should be tailored to the needs of the entrepreneur and focus on practical parts and that the Government should provide adequate funds to facilitate mentorship programmes. Figure 4.7 and Table 4.10 below illustrate the analysis and cross tabulation of this theme respectively.
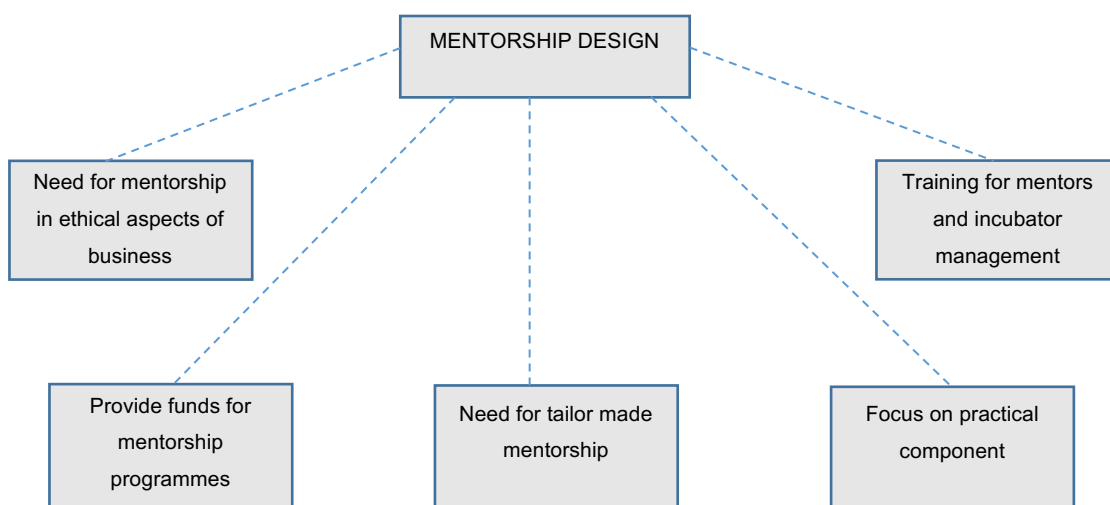

Figure 4.7: Mentorship design. Source: Original

Table 4.10: Cross-tabulation of analysis of Mentorship design

Theme 7: Mentorship design	Government Officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Quotations
Focus on practical component	1	2	3	6
Need for mentorship in ethical aspects of business	0	4	7	11
Need for tailormade mentorship	4	20	6	30
Provide funds for mentorship programmes	2	6	2	10
Training for mentors and incubator management	2	0	1	3
Total Quotations	**9**	**32**	**19**	**60**

Source: Original

Information extracted from the participants in the study indicate lack of practicality as one of the major reasons for the failure of the mentorship programme in the business incubation process. Therefore, participants recommended that mentorship programmes should **focus more on the practical part.** For example, Establishment A, Manager 3 highlighted that the mentorship programme focuses more on theory rather than on the practical side of running the business.

> To some extent it does not. Sometimes it becomes too theoretical and loses focus on the practical side of things, which is what mentorship supposed to be about. There needs to be more focus on practical hands-on activities to build core skills. (Establishment A, Manager 3)

Some mentees from Institution F indicated that the mentorship programme is satisfactory, however they felt that a lot still needs to be done, as the mentorship programme is more academic than practical. Government Official 4 also highlighted that:

'It should be balanced with some formal training on the financial side of things. For the more technical side, it requires hands-on practical mentorship.'

Participants also stated that there is a need for **training for mentors and incubation managers,** to ensure the effectiveness of mentorship programmes within BIs. The following government officials eloquently put forward:

'They are partly skilled and qualified. They do need more exposure and experience to become more versatile in dealing with business incubator mentorship.' (Government Official 2)

'More is required in terms of training and upskilling. They do have the basic skills, but more specialist and in-depth knowledge is required.' (Government Official 1)

Establishment C, Manager 1 commented that:

> Officials know that there is no mentor who has everything in terms of skills, qualifications and experience. One cannot be a jack of all trades. More training is required for those mentors to become more well-rounded. This also applies to management and staff of the incubators.

One of the mentees who took part in the study mentioned that the government is not paying much attention to ensure that mentorship programmes are well-structured. As a result, several participants argued that **provision of funds for mentorship programmes** could have a positive effect in terms mentorship outcomes, as the funds would help with mentor rewards.

For instance, one government official stated that:

> The government must be prepared to invest more because mentors do not come cheap. Mentors should also be rewarded better. These are some of the reasons that contribute to the failure rate of SMMEs. (Government Official 3)

BI mentorship needs to recognise the importance of developing programmes that directly addresses the needs of the entrepreneur. Women, youth, and rural participants are an example of entrepreneurs who require mentorship that is **tailor-made** that will take into account the context of rural entrepreneurship, as well as the challenges that comes with it when compared to urban accessibility. Solutions designed to address challenges faced by entrepreneurs in urban areas should not be employed for the same purposes in rural areas under the impression that they will generate the same results. To substantiate this view, Manager 1 from Establishment A argued that:

> There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach for mentorship. The level of understanding and maturity of mentees differ widely, e.g. youth, rural, and women. Their decision-making abilities also differ. Mentorship must be tailormade.

Women and young people in rural areas are more accustomed to issues such as illiteracy, poor education and insufficient time to handle their entrepreneur challenges due to other societal roles expected of them as women in rural areas such as household duties. When asked as to whether mentorship programmes should be customised for women, youth, and rural entrepreneurs in a BI setting, Manager 2 from Establishment A argued that:

> Yes, it should be customised to each individual's own circumstances and level of education and skills. Many entrepreneurs do not have the time to entirely sit in the formal classroom setting, as they are trying to make a living, so there should definitely be customisation. Those in rural areas have different challenges, which are not the same as that of urban entrepreneurs.

Government Official 2 further highlighted that the needs of rural entrepreneurs differ from the needs of urban entrepreneurs and that the challenges they come across are different. This calls for the design of solutions and strategies that are carefully considered so that they align with their circumstances, as indicated by the participant below:

> It should be customised to cater to the specific needs of youth, women, and rural entrepreneurs. This is mainly because they all have their own unique circumstances, based on education, backgrounds, and standards.

Mentees asserted that the generalised approach used by BI mentorship programmes will further perpetuate inefficiency, as start-up entrepreneurs face various circumstantial challenges. Participant 1 from Establishment D stated that:

> A lot more needs to be done by the government and incubators themselves to ensure that programmes and content is more appropriate and relevant for the skills gap of start-up entrepreneurs. Programmes are very general in nature.

> It should be customised because all these groups have their own unique challenges and problems. Having one standard approach may not be suitable for these groupings. (Participant 3, Establishment F)

4.4.4 Research Question 5: How do BIs measure the success of mentorship programmes to ensure measurable entrepreneurial performance?

4.4.4.1 Theme 8: Factors enabling successful incubation

A rise in the rate of business incubation failure has triggered a study of this nature to thoroughly investigate whether the mentorship offered within the business incubation serves its purpose. Figure 4.8 and Table 4.11 below illustrate the analysis and cross-tabulation of this theme, respectively.
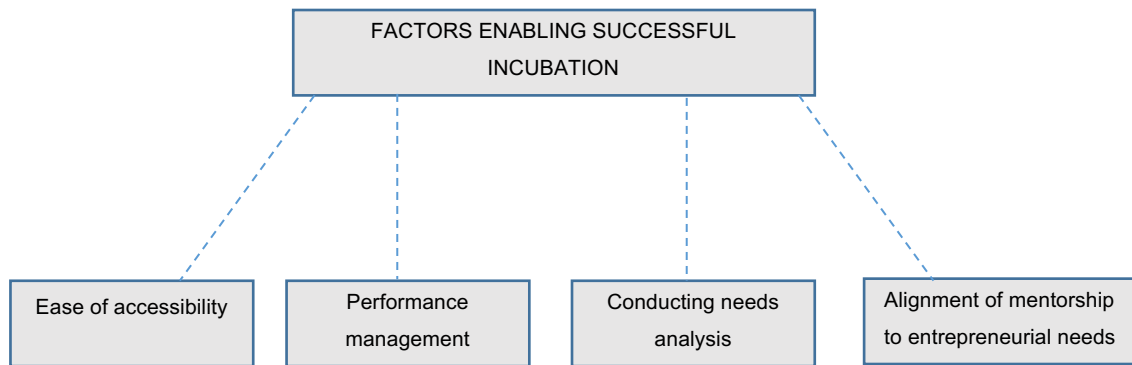
Figure 4.8: Factors enabling successful incubation. Source: Original

Table 4.11: Cross-tabulation of factors enabling successful incubation

Theme 8: Factors enabling successful incubation	Government Officials	Mentees	Incubation Managers	Quotations
Alignment of mentorship to entrepreneurial needs	1	0	8	9
Conducting needs analysis	4	16	19	39
Ease of accessibility	0	0	4	4
Performance management	0	8	2	10
Final Quotations	**5**	**24**	**33**	**62**

Source: Original

It is of utmost importance to firstly express the factors that enable the success of business incubation. Narratives on **conducting needs analysis** to identify the gaps and challenges of the entrepreneurs were common across all stakeholders who took part in the study. For instance, most of the participants contended that the needs analysis aids in ensuring that a proper mentorship programme is created for the enrichment of entrepreneurs, as indicated below:

> An interview is held with the individual to go through their existing skills, qualifications and experience. Through this process, gaps and challenges are identified, after which interventions can be put in place to deal with challenges and gaps. (Establishment C, Manager 1)

'An interview is conducted to ascertain current qualifications, skills and experience. This is then used to determine suitable interventions or programmes that the individual should undergo.' (Establishment D, Manager 2)

'This is mainly done through the application form process where the potential mentee will declare his or her areas of weakness, so the entrepreneur can be put onto the correct programme.' (Government Official 4)

A very brief interview was conducted to establish where I lacked skills. After the interview, I was informed that I will be accepted onto the programme and suitable interventions will be identified to bridge these gaps. (Participant 4, Establishment A)

'An interview was conducted, and notes were made to identify my gaps and challenges.' (Participant 3, Establishment F)

The participants in the study underpinned **alignment of mentorship to entrepreneurial needs,** as a stepping stone towards the success of the business incubation programme. For instance, when managers from Establishment B were asked whether or not the mentorship programme is aligned with the entrepreneurial needs, they agreed, and Establishment B, Manager 1 went further to say that:

'It does focus purely on construction. The mentorship is aimed at improving their CIDB grading, so that entrepreneurs are better skilled to take on bigger construction projects.'

Establishment D, Manager 1 also shared information in terms of how their incubation programme was focusing on relevant aspects of skills development. In this regard, the Manager explained that:

In our incubation programme, based on the sector that we operate in, our focus is on mentorship to create business and market linkages, know how to network and who to talk to, training in the classroom, how to conduct business and how to undertake pricing. It also focuses on how to make a profit and how to access a difficult market that is dominated by corporate entities.

Establishment E, Manager 1 indicated that there was still more that needed to be done, regardless of the efforts made to equip the entrepreneurs with the skills they lack, based on needs analysis, but the underlying issue is that a lot still needs to be done regardless:

'We do our best to focus on all relevant aspects based on the needs analysis. There is still a lot more that needs to be done though, in developing an entrepreneur fully for long-term success.'

Establishment E, Manager 2 indicated that the mentorship programme focuses on various aspects of business skills, but much more needs to be done to supplement the programmes and the focus thereof.

Government Official 2 mentioned that it is particularly important to set standards at the beginning and then track these as the mentorship progresses, to determine whether mentorship is yielding results or not. However, when the mentees were asked to

describe their mentorship experience within the business incubator in terms of addressing their gaps or challenges, their overall impression was that the mentorship programme is not aligned to their needs (and their views are expressed in the next section of the report).

After the gaps and challenges faced by the entrepreneurs are identified and a mentorship programme is developed to close those gaps, **performance measurement** is conducted, so as to measure whether the mentorship programme responds to the identified needs of each entrepreneur. Some of the incubation managers and mentees who participated in this study alluded to the submission of quarterly and monthly reports as means to record the outcomes of the mentorship and identify possible gaps that still needs to be covered in the mentorship programme. The quotations below correspond with this assertion:

> The client must produce quarterly reports and management information. This is then compared to the initial business support plan that was approved. This is done to establish if the gaps are being addressed. If there are still risks identified, further interventions will be put into place, to close the gap. (Establishment A, Manager 1)

> Mentors must submit monthly reports on progress attained, compared to programme targets set for business. This is used to assess the performance of the entrepreneur and put mechanisms in place to close the gaps. There are no performance measures that relate specifically to the mentorship programme. The performance targets relate to the business objectives of the entrepreneur. (Establishment A, Manager 2)

'On a quarterly basis, the mentor must provide a report to the incubator, for him to get paid. This seems to be more of a formality, more than anything else.' (Participant 2, Establishment C)

'At the end of the quarter you must write a report on how you are progressing.' (Participant 3, Establishment B)

In trying to improve the outcomes of business incubation, participants in the study mentioned that there is **ease of accessibility** for SMMEs to partake in the incubation process. The quotations below are from some of the incubation managers:

'We do not have a set of criteria for entry. If someone shows interest, we will try to assist them. The programme runs for three years. We believe in assisting those who are not empowered.' (Establishment F, Manager 2)

'We do not use criteria to assess the disempowered. We even consider someone who does not have matric, but shows interest. This programme is for three years, and candidates must exit after three years.' (Establishment F, Manager 1)

'No strict entrance criteria. Incubation is offered at all levels no matter where you are starting from. It is offered across all sectors of the economy.' (Establishment E, Manager 1)

4.5 CORRELATION OF EMPIRICAL RESULTS WITH LITERATURE REVIEW

In reconciling the results of the empirical study to the review of literature covered in chapter 2, it was necessary to revisit the research questions as indicated below:

4.5.1 To what extent are current mentorship challenges in BIs contributing to the high failure rate and closure of SMMEs?

The empirical study has shown that there are several challenges affecting the success of mentorship in a BI setting and these challenges have a negative impact on the success of a BI, which ultimately affects success of the SMME. The misalignment between the needs of the entrepreneur and the mentorship offering by the BI has featured strongly in the results, where several participants indicated that a needs analysis is not conducted upfront to enable suitable and relevant interventions to be offered. Participants have also criticised the lack of any mentorship or training on business ethics. This has also been confirmed through literature covered in this study. Studies conducted by Kapinga et al. (2018: 1-14) in Tanzania, focusing on women entrepreneurs and BIs, pointed to the general lack of contextualisation in these incubators, with a lack of customised and relevant solutions.

There is a definite correlation between the results of the empirical study and the literature review that has been undertaken. Hewitt and Janse van Rensburg (2020: 1) indicate that a one-size-fits-all approach to business incubator support has come under critique. According to Hewitt and Janse van Rensburg, BIs must be able to demonstrate their value-add to prospective entrepreneurs. There should be differentiation in the offering in order to eliminate problems associated with a one-size-fits-all approach.

Participants in the study have also criticised the inadequate implementation of BI strategies as one the factors affecting their success. According to participants there are strategies and plans, however, there is a general lack of implementation, partly due to funding issues and lack of support systems from government. These results are supported by literature (Lose and Tengeh, 2016: 372). The authors maintained that although entrepreneurship is regarded as a great contributor to an economy, the support systems in place to ensure success are lacking. There is still a lack of support systems, tracking mechanisms and proper monitoring systems to deal with mentorship in an incubator setting. Studies undertaken by Mulolli, Islami and Skenderi (2017: 663) also pointed to the issue of lack of financial support for BIs in developing countries. According to these studies, funding is received on an ad-hoc basis, which then poses challenges to roll-out programmes.

4.5.2 What process do BIs apply in selecting suitable, structured, and relevant mentorship interventions that match existing skills and knowledge gaps of entrepreneurs?

The majority of participants in the study were not satisfied with the suitability, structure and relevance of the mentorship offering in a BI setting. The offering was seen as generic with a lack of balance between formal and informal mentoring. In addition, participants favoured a multi-mentor approach versus a single mentor. This correlates to other studies conducted in other developing countries, such as India, which point to a lack of structured mentoring within BIs, according to Govardhan and Jeyakumaran (2018: 890). According to the results of a study undertaken by Agbenyegah and Dlamini (2018: 47-60), there is a need for tailor made initiatives, to address the specific incubation and mentorship needs of rural entrepreneurs. According to Lose and Tengeh (2016: 376), although government should direct more funds to BIs, there is also room for BIs to enhance its offering to ensure structure and relevance. This view was also supported by Khurana (2017: 1), indicating that mentors are generally sincere about assisting potential entrepreneurs, however, in the absence of organised deliverables and arrangements, the relationship tends to be shallow or momentary.

4.5.3 How do BIs measure the success of mentorship programmes to ensure measurable entrepreneurial performance?

In the main, participants have indicated that no performance targets or contracts are agreed upon at inception stage of the incubation relationship. There is a lack of performance measurement standards, which then makes performance tracking a challenging task for the BI. The literature covered in this study points to a challenge in terms of performance management and benchmarking. A review on the benchmarking of business incubation was undertaken by Torun et al. (2018: 1-10). This study focused on understanding the level of knowledge about benchmarks for BI assessment. A key finding of this study was that there is no uniform framework for performance evaluation of BIs. Furthermore, there is no consistent set of benchmarks, due to numerous constraints, such as the assortment of incubator types, regions, goals, and stakeholders. The authors indicate that having a benchmarking and assessment framework would assist managers of BIs to compare their methods and degree of success with other BIs.

Studies conducted in Pakistan by Li, Ahmed, Qalati, Khan and Naz (2020: 3), also indicated that the assessment of performance in a BI is a difficult process. This is mainly due to the absence of a single norm or standard for evaluation. The authors further indicated that it is even more challenging to assess performance in developing countries than it is to do so in developed countries, and that government needs to increase efforts to assess BI performance.

4.5.4 How do BIs incentivise and reward mentors, to ensure commitment and performance?

Participants in the study criticised the reward system for mentors, indicating that mentors are not rewarded adequately which gives rise to the lack of mentor commitment. Mentors are generally paid a fixed rate and there is no other incentive that links the performance of the mentee to mentor rewards. The literature review undertaken in this study confirms these gaps. Bishop (2019:1) stated that in some BI programmes, mentors do receive a funding allocation, whereas in other incubator settings, mentors are expected to work as volunteers. Bishop further argued that the extent to which mentors support entrepreneurs in BIs varies, where some are

committed, while others offer an ad-hoc service. Deepali, Jain and Chaudhary (2016:135), in another study, focused on the feasibility of financial rewards for mentors. According to Deepali, Jain and Chaudary, mentors are considered to be individuals who are willing to sacrifice their time to benefit others in return for no remuneration. At the same time, their value is undermined, according to Deepali et al. (2016:135). The findings of this study revealed that there is a definite need to reexamine mentor reward models, given that mentors are more professional in today's business environment, and intent on financial rewards for the long-term.

4.5.5 What criteria do BIs use to select mentees and mentors?

As far as the selection of mentors, the majority of participants in the study indicated that there is a lack of standard criteria for the selection of mentors. The majority of mentors are sourced externally due to the lack of industry specific expertise internally. Government officials also confirmed the lack of standard criteria for the selection of mentors. As far as the selection of mentees are concerned, most participants were of the view that the entrance criteria is stringent and is a barrier to entry. In addition, there are no clearly defined exit rules allowing mentees to leave at any time. In support of the results of the above study, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), also raised similar concerns on government mentorship and support programmes. DTI (2011) pointed out that there is a concern over the lack of skills in implementing government support programmes. The DTI further indicated that some of the government agencies dealing with support programmes employ staff who are poorly skilled and inadequately qualified.

The use of experienced mentors was also identified to be a crucial factor in a study conducted in Kenya, by Brooks, Donovan and Johnson (2018: 196). The study concentrated on inexperienced female micro-entrepreneurs in a Kenyan slum going through an incubation programme. Beside the study pointing out that participants benefitted from experienced mentors, participants also preferred mentors from the same community. The study further uncovered that mentorship offered by experienced entrepreneurs from the same community contributed to a twenty percent increase in profit of the mentees.

As far as the selection of mentees is concerned, it also emerged in recent studies conducted in Zimbabwe by Nani (2018: 21), that one of the problems experienced by BIs was the lack of screening of potential entrepreneurs. Nani maintained that there ought to be a selection committee of professionals dealing with the screening of applicants and their business ideas prior to admission into any business incubation programme. Tengeh and Choto (2015: 154) point to the risk that BIs face when investing substantial resources in programmes, whereas entrepreneurs could be uninterested and uncommitted. Tengeh and Choto further expressed the view that entrepreneurs must have the desire and willingness to succeed.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the results and discussion relating to the study. In summary, the findings revealed that the failure of BIs to align mentorship programmes with the needs of the entrepreneurial start-ups contributes to the disappointing failure rates of SMMEs. Participants revealed that they strongly believe that the absence of standardised procedures and systems in the mentorship programmes often creates chaos. With regards to institutional factors, participants mentioned how incubator mentorship programmes often fail to assist them achieve their goals. They highlighted the partial performance of needs analysis, which then leads to the programmes being misaligned to their needs. Moreover, participants revealed how dissatisfied they were with the mentors they were provided with through the programmes and marked the majority as being partially skilled and in some cases inexperienced. They further criticised the allocation of a one mentor per entrepreneur approach, which they deemed as impractical due to their needs for varied skilled expertise.

Incubator managers revealed that BI programmes suffer due to the shortcomings of government policies and insufficient provision of resources to implement policies that already exist. The majority argued that the failure of the government to develop and implement procedures that guide business incubator programmes often leads to insufficient accountability measures. The next chapter discusses a conceptual framework for this study, conclusion, contribution of the study, recommendations and focus areas for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

ISSUES WORTHY OF SOLUTION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 the results, analysis and discussion in relation to the literature were covered. Based on the literature review, results of the empirical study and the analysis that was undertaken, this chapter now focuses on the conceptual framework, issues worthy of solution, recommendations, conclusion, and suggested future areas of research on this topic. The chapter also provides an indication as to whether the research objectives were achieved and secondly whether the research questions were answered.

5.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the extensive literature review and empirical study that was undertaken, the conceptual framework that emerges is illustrated in Figure 5.1 below:

Strategic focus areas for BI mentorship

- Customisation
- Multi- Mentor Approach
- Performance Measurement
- Effective Implementation Plan
- Alignment of Mentorship Programmes to Entrepreneurial Needs
- Structured and Relevant Offering
- Mixed Mentorship (Formal and Informal)
- Mentor Reward System

Preceding Factors

Funding Challenges

Insufficient Business Skills

Insufficient Capacity

Accessibility

Government Policies

Corruption

Incompetent Officials

Business Incubator Mentorship Strategies

Outcomes

- Mentorship Success
- Business Incubator Success
- Successful Business Enterprises
- Sustainable Business Enterprises
- Ethical Business Practices
- Reduction in SMME Failure Rate

- Mentor and Mentee Commitment Levels
- Mentor Expertise level
- Mentor Selection Criteria
- Mentor and Mentee conflict

Mentor and Mentee factors impacting BI mentorship strategies

Figure 5.1: Conceptual framework for mentorship in a business incubator setting. Source: Original.

This conceptual framework presents various preceding factors, strategic focus areas for BI mentorship and, mentor and mentee factors impacting BI mentorship strategies that influence the final outcomes or consequences relating to this study that was undertaken. The interconnectedness of the relationships between these different variables are crucial in order to ensure success.

5.2.1 Preceding Factors

As far as the preceding factors are concerned, the issue of funding availability from the side of Government is an aspect consequential to the success of BIs. In government departments it is a common occurrence for funds to be reprioritised to other projects. The implementation strategies of BIs are often impacted by a lack of funding.

The majority of SMMEs lack business skills prior to joining a BI. In most cases, the entrepreneur has limited or no experience in developing a business plan or understanding legal and compliance matters relating to setting up a business, whereas some BIs require this level of understanding as a prerequisite.

The demand for mentorship is high, in contrast to the number of available spaces in BIs. A limited number of mentees can be accommodated each year, after a screening process has been applied. Accessibility is a challenge for the small or informal businesses who are required to comply with many formalities and regulatory matters, before they can be accepted.

The mismanagement of government funds and resources through corrupt practices is also a challenge that impacts BIs and their ability to deliver on their mandate. The combination of corruption, incompetent officials and lack of funds are factors that negatively affect the implementation of government policies and strategies. Government policies and strategies on their own remain inadequate and inconsistent, which affects the success of mentorship programmes. These inefficiencies have a direct impact on the strategies that BIs embark on.

5.2.2 Strategic Focus areas for BI mentorship

For BI mentorship strategies to be successful and to yield the desired results or outcomes, customisation has been identified repeatedly in the study as one of the strategies that can contribute to positive outcomes of mentorship in a BI setting. In this regard a one-size-fits-all approach has been identified as problematic, as mentees come from different backgrounds, with varying levels of education. The challenges faced by women, youth, rural, and urban entrepreneurs differ. It is clear from the study that mentorship programmes need to be designed in such a way that it is tailor made for the different categories of entrepreneurs in a BI setting. This aspect has also emerged in the literature that has been covered in the study.

A second influencing factor is a "multi-mentor" approach. This approach has been identified as having greater benefits and value, in comparison to the use of a single mentor approach. The use of multiple mentors mean that mentees will be exposed to individuals who possess the right expertise and skills in different areas. The use of a single mentor has been a challenge for several participants, who expressed this as an area of concern.

Performance measurement is a definite positive contributor to mentorship success. The issue of performance measurement has been identified as a gap in the literature that has been covered. In addition, several participants in the study raised their concerns about the absence of formal performance measurement standards to track and monitor their mentorship progress. The setting of performance goals and targets at the start of the mentorship programme will assist both the mentor and mentee in working towards specific outcomes and milestones, which can be tracked throughout the mentorship journey. This also allows the mentor and mentee to meet at regular intervals and engage on milestones and to take corrective steps in instances where performance is not going in the right direction.

For any BI mentorship strategy to succeed, there must be an effective implementation plan that accompanies the strategy. This has been identified by most participants as an area that can greatly contribute to the success of mentorship. There can be several strategies, but without effective execution, it will render the strategy useless.

Mentorship programmes must be centred around the needs of the entrepreneurs, as opposed to offering generic programmes. This has emerged quite strongly in the study, where several participants felt that programmes are very general in nature, and lack industry-specific content. At the outset it is critical to undertake a needs analysis with the entrepreneur. This will provide an opportunity to establish the gaps and shortcomings of the entrepreneur. In doing so, mentorship interventions can be identified to bridge these gaps and shortcomings.

Closely linked with the needs analysis that is required is also the importance of identifying suitable and relevant mentorship interventions. Such interventions should be linked to the needs analysis that must be undertaken at inception. Secondly, the mentorship programme will contain some common elements, however, it should also be sector specific to ensure relevance. Most participants were of the view that ethical business practices should form part of the mentorship programme as it is relevant, given the high level of corruption and unethical practices in business today.

A balanced mentorship approach, offering a mixture of formal and informal interventions is widely preferred by most participants. Although the theoretical part is important as far as financial management and general management is concerned, the practical component of mentorship is equally important. It allows for the mentees to acquire practical hands-on experience.

One of the key aspects in mentorship relates to the reward system for mentors. From the study it is evident that a reward system that is linked to the mentee performance is greatly needed in BIs. This has been cited by several participants in the study. It can lead to greater commitment from mentors, and they may stay longer in the mentorship relationship. This could work on the basis that there is a fixed component, and then a variable component or incentive that is linked to the mentee performance. The main purpose here is to drive performance and achievement of goals.

5.2.3 Mentor and Mentee factors impacting BI mentorship strategies

The mentor and mentee commitment levels have a definite bearing on the success of mentorship strategies and the desired results. The lower the commitment levels, the higher the chance of failure of the mentorship strategies. Both the mentor and mentee must demonstrate strong commitment and perseverance to complete the programme. The chances of success are greater if the programme is completed, versus abandoning the programme along the way.

Mentors must have the required expertise so that a meaningful contribution can be made to the mentorship programme. There should be a balance between academic qualifications and technical expertise. The preference for this balance has emerged firmly in the study. Closely linked to mentor expertise is the issue of mentor selection criteria, which has also emerged as a challenge for participants in the study. In the absence of selection criteria, which defines the requirements for mentors, BIs may end up employing or contracting with mentors who are not well-rounded. This impacts on the success of the mentorship programme.

The issue of mentee and mentor conflict has emerged strongly in the study as an inhibitor to the success of mentorship. It is not one-sided though; conflict arises from both the mentee and mentor. In some instances, the mentee demonstrates an unwillingness to listen to the mentor, or follow the guidance provided. In other instances, there are mentors who show lack of interest or are unwilling to assist the mentee. This situation escalates very quickly to conflict between the two parties and the result is that the mentorship relationship is terminated, and the mentee fails to benefit from the mentorship programme that was on offer.

5.2.4 Outcomes

The consequences or outcomes of effective BI mentorship strategies is that it gives rise to the overall success of mentorship in a BI setting. This contributes to the success of the BI. It contributes to the creation of successful, sustainable, and ethical SMMEs. The goal is to reduce the failure rate of SMMEs. The reduction in this failure rate means that more people will be gainfully employed, a positive impact on the unemployment rate and this leads to lower poverty levels.

5.3 RESPONSES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

At the beginning of this study the researcher formulated various research questions, to which answers were sought. Below is an indication in terms of the realisation of this intent:

To what extent are current mentorship challenges in BIs contributing to the high failure rate and closure of SMMEs?

The study has certainly provided answers to this research question. In the study, participants raised several mentorship challenges that had an impact on their success. Factors such as budgetary constraints, incompetent officials, corruption, and insufficient capacity have a negative impact on mentorship which then influences the success rate of the BI. Other factors such as mentor and mentee disparity, mentor expertise, BI entrance criteria, and misalignment between entrepreneur needs and the mentorship offering compound the problem. All of these are cited as challenges that ultimately affect the success rate of entrepreneurs.

What process do BIs apply in selecting suitable, structured, and relevant mentorship interventions that match existing skills and knowledge gaps of entrepreneurs?

The study has provided the required answers to this question. The aspect of a needs assessment /analysis is undertaken inconsistently across BIs, as most offer generic mentorship programmes that are not necessarily aligned to the needs of the entrepreneur. This creates misalignment between the needs and the offering. In addition, there is a lack of structure to the programmes. It should be noted that a subject area relating to ethical business practices is not covered in any of the mentorship programmes.

What criteria do BIs apply in selecting mentors and mentees?

This is an area that has emerged strongly from the study. Some BIs make use of a single-mentor approach and such a mentor is expected to cover all subject areas. In other instances, a multi-mentor approach is used to draw on mentor expertise from varying subject areas. Through the study, it has emerged that there are no clear or

consistent criteria, suffice to say that BIs strive to appoint mentors with industry experience versus those from academia. On the other hand, there are those BIs that do have a set of criteria and then those where mentorship is outsourced to external service providers.

How do BIs measure the success of mentorship programmes to ensure measurable entrepreneurial performance?

The study has revealed that this practice is partially existent in some BIs, however, there are no clear standards to measure the success of mentorship programmes. In most cases, the success of mentorship programmes is not tracked in line with entrepreneurial performance.

How do BIs incentivise and reward mentors, to ensure commitment and performance?

Through the study it has been established that this is an area that is deeply lacking in terms of a reward system for mentors that is linked to the performance of the entrepreneur. Most mentors in a BI setting are paid a fixed or contractual rate, which is not linked to any performance standards of the entrepreneur.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The literature review undertaken in this study has showed the importance of SMME mentorship and the crucial role it plays in a BI setting. In addition, the literature review extensively covered the challenges faced by BIs as far as mentorship is concerned. Arising from the literature review several contextual gaps emerged. These gaps are articulated in greater detail towards the end of Chapter 2, however, as a summary these gaps relate to the following areas:

- There is a lack of clearly defined government policies to deal with business mentorship in the context of BIs;

- Lack of understanding exists as far as the unique circumstances of different groups of entrepreneurs, which may warrant a customised mentorship approach for each grouping;

- The absence of a connection between the mentee performance and growth to financial rewards for the mentor through a contractual agreement;

- Formulation of mentorship plans in accordance with the needs analysis outcome of the entrepreneur;

- The relevance and appropriateness of the business mentorship offering;

- Entrance and exit criteria for BIs;

- The profile of BI staff and mentors, as far as skills, qualifications and experience is concerned;

- Mentorship design (Single mentor versus multi-mentor and informal versus formal mentorship); and

- Evaluation of performance against the mentorship programme (measurement of success).

Under the research methodology section (Chapter 3), one of the aspects relating to quality assurance and trustworthiness is confirmability. In this study, confirmability was strongly augmented by correlating the themes from the empirical findings to the themes derived from the literature review. Chapter 4 dealt extensively with the main themes emerging from the empirical study, however, in summary the following broad themes emerged:

- Selection criteria for SMMEs;
- Selection criteria for mentors;
- Government policies and strategies towards mentorship;
- Challenges faced by SMMEs prior to business incubation;
- The influence of various mentorship strategies on the development of SMMEs;
- Factors impeding mentorship in a BI setting;
- Factors enabling successful business incubation; and
- Recommendations by participants.

In addition to the correlation of themes between the literature and empirical studies, there is a correlation of themes in the empirical study between the three groups of participants (Mentees, BI management, and Government officials). The correlation of these themes contributed to the enhancement of the credibility of the study and the findings. Based on the study, there are several inefficiencies as far as mentorship in a BI setting is concerned. Therefore, several improvements need to be made and this is dealt with in the sections below.

5.5 ISSUES WORTHY OF SOLUTION

There are a number of issues worthy of solution, and these are indicated below, followed with recommendations:

- **Suitable reward system for mentors**- this is lacking, and it has a negative impact on the commitment from the mentor, which then affects the mentorship relationship.

- **Performance tracking**- this is lacking as currently there is no performance tracking taking place. Performance deliverables are not set and agreed to between the parties at the start of the relationship.

- **Ethical business practices**- a very crucial and relevant subject matter does not form part of the mentorship offering and training.

- **Policy reviews and strategy alignment**- policies have not been reviewed for some time. There is a lack of BI strategy alignment to Government policies, whereas in some cases there is no clear BI strategy that has been formulated.

- **Selection criteria**- the selection criteria for both mentors and mentees are not clearly defined by the majority of BIs. This gives rise to inconsistent practices in terms of appointing mentors and selecting mentees.

- **Relevance and structure of programmes**- a needs analysis with new mentees to identify specific shortcoming and gaps is lacking, thus the generic

offering by BIs. This results in the relevance and structure of programmes not being aligned to the needs of the mentee.

- **Mentorship approach**- currently there is no balance between formal and informal mentorship. Secondly, there is a lack of customisation, based on the unique circumstances of the different categories of mentees, such as women, youth and rural entrepreneurs. The majority of BIs use a single mentor approach, whereas the single mentor may not be an expert in the various subject matters.

- **Funding**- this is an ongoing challenge for several BIs. In most cases funding is limited whereas the demand far exceeds the available financial resources. In some cases, budgets are cut or reallocated to other projects.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several stakeholders, such as Government, government agencies, BIs, DFIs, mentors and mentees, who all have an interest in this topic. Based on the outcome of this study, there are a number of recommendations for these various stakeholders, based on the issues worthy of solution indicated under 5.5 and if implemented correctly it could yield some benefits and contribute to the lowering of the failure rate of SMMEs. The key recommendations are as follows:

- BIs must investigate and design a suitable reward system for mentors. This reward system could encompass both a fixed and variable component. It could work on the basis that the fixed component is lower. However, the variable part of the reward should be higher, but linked to the performance of the entrepreneur. This is to ensure greater commitment from the mentor to stay longer in the mentorship relationship, and to work closely with the mentee to ensure that goals are met.

- BIs must design a performance management system that is able track the performance of mentees. At the beginning of the programme, performance deliverables must be set and agreed to, between the BI, mentor, and mentee. On a quarterly basis there should be a performance review discussion between the mentee, mentor, and BI to establish the level of progress towards the performance

deliverables. In the event of under achievement, corrective measures can be put in place to address such deviations.

- BIs ought to incorporate ethical business practices as part of the mentorship offering. The study has revealed that this is currently not on offer, whereas it is seen as relevant, given the high levels of corruption in business today. Doing business in an ethical manner will also contribute to success and long-term sustainability.

- Government must ensure that SMME development policies are reviewed regularly and that they are applied consistently across all provinces and BIs. Similarly, BIs must ensure that strategies are aligned to policies and secondly that strategies are implemented. Although policies exist, the implementation of strategies are regarded as a challenge.

- BIs must have clearly defined criteria for the selection of mentors. This should be a combination of academic qualifications and the desired number of years of experience required. This serves to ensure that the right level of talent is attracted to the BI.

- BIs must revisit the selection criteria for mentees. In some instances, the entrance criteria are considered too strict, whereas in some cases there is no documented entrance criteria. This gives rise to inconsistencies. Every BI must have entrance criteria that is documented, and the criteria should be fair, transparent, and not seen as a barrier to entry.

- BIs must always ensure that a needs analysis is undertaken with the potential mentee. The information gathered from the needs analysis must be used to identify suitable mentorship interventions that is structured, relevant and aligned to the needs of the entrepreneur. This approach will mitigate the risk of a generic offering.

- BIs must revisit the mentorship design as there are some areas that can yield positive results and benefits for both the mentee and the BI. One such area that must be explored further is the use of a multi-mentor approach as opposed to a single mentor. The study has revealed that there is a preference for a multi-mentor

approach, where mentors with expertise in different subject areas are used. The single mentor approach is not beneficial, as the mentor is not an expert in all subject areas. As part of revisiting the mentorship design, BIs should ensure that mentorship programmes aim for a balance between formal and informal interventions. This is to ensure that the mentorship programme is not imbalanced in terms of the theoretical and practical components. There should be a balance between the two.

▪ Government must ensure that it makes sufficient funds available for BIs and mentorship programmes. It is a common occurrence for government to reallocate funds to other departments or programmes. For BIs and mentorship to succeed government must be firmly committed to making this work.

5.7 FOCUS AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Based on the outcomes of this study there are certainly implications for future research. Future studies relating to BI mentorship ought to focus on the design of a reward system for mentors that is linked to the performance of the entrepreneur. Performance measurement within a BI setting is a discreet subject area that requires further study. The issue of performance measurement is crucial in establishing the progress of the entrepreneur towards goals or standards. Currently there is inconsistency in this sphere. Lastly, this study has also revealed that there is a great need for governance and control as far as the operation of BIs are concerned. Therefore, future studies should focus on the accountability, reporting, governance, and controls within BIs.

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MENTEES

A) DEMOGRAPHIC AND INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Pseudonym name of participant e.g.	Participant A
Nature of Business	
Age and gender of owner	
Educational qualifications of owner	
Annual turnover/sales (if applicable)	R
Number of employees	
In which year did you establish the business?	
Is the business part of a structured business incubation or mentorship programme ?	
Is the business still in existence? If, NO, when did it cease trading and what are the reasons?	

B) MAIN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (SEMI-STRUCTURED)

1. Before joining the business incubator, what were your specific challenges and areas requiring mentorship?
2. What criteria (if any) were applied in the selection process for mentorship and incubation?
3. Did the business incubator conduct a needs analysis and then match suitable interventions to the gaps identified ? Please elaborate on how this was done.
4. How would you describe your mentorship experience within the business incubator in terms of addressing your gaps or challenges as far as mentorship is concerned?
5. Do you have a single mentor or multiple mentors and how do you find this approach working?
6. Did the mentor and you agree on specific performance outcomes at the start of the mentorship programme and how is your performance tracked or measured? Give examples of some of the outcomes and how performance is tracked.

7. Do you know if your mentor is incentivised and rewarded in line with your performance and do you have an understanding of how it works?
8. How would you describe your mentor or mentors in terms of skills, experience and qualifications, based on what you have observed thus far?
9. Has the mentorship programme focused on ethical aspects to doing business, if so please elaborate?
10. Is your mentorship formal or informal and what is your view of formal and structured mentorship versus informal mentorship in an incubator setting?
11. Do you believe that mentors should be academics or industry experts? Please elaborate.
12. Do you think that business incubator mentorship programmes are well structured at present and do they focus on the appropriate and relevant aspects of skills development to run a business?
13. Do you think there should be customised mentorship programmes for women, youth and rural entrepreneurs in a business incubator setting, taking into account the varying circumstances of entrepreneurs? Please elaborate.
14. What do you think are the other challenges with SMME mentorship in business incubators and to what extent do they contribute to the high failure rate of SMMEs?
15. What is your view on government policy and strategy towards mentorship programmes for business incubators?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT OF BUSINESS INCUBATORS

Pseudonym Name: e.g. Manager 1	**Organisation:** e.g. Organisation A
Position:	**Date interviewed:**
1. Does the organisation have a strategic plan in place for mentoring, business support or incubation programmes to SMMEs, if so please elaborate?	
2. Can you elaborate on the skills, experience and qualifications of Business Incubator management and staff?	
3. What criteria do you apply in selecting SMMEs for mentorship programmes and then what are the exit rules that apply?	
4. Describe how you go about undertaking a needs analysis of the entrepreneur to identify the gaps and challenges of the entrepreneur?	
5. Do you believe that mentorship is focusing on the appropriate and relevant aspects of skills development, aligned to the needs of the entrepreneur? Kindly elaborate.	
6. How do you go about selecting suitable mentors and do you make use of a single mentor or multiple mentor approach for an entrepreneur? Please elaborate.	
7. What performance measures do you have in place to evaluate the progress of mentees against the agreed outcomes and their business plan? Please elaborate.	
8. Would you say that the financial rewards are adequate for mentors and are they linked to the business performance of the entrepreneur and if so, how does it work?	
9. What is your view on current levels of commitment from both the mentors and mentees in making mentorship work in a business incubator?	
10. What is your view on appointing mentors from academia versus experienced industry experts?	
11. What is your view on formal structured mentorship versus informal mentorship in a Business Incubator setting and can there be flexibility?	
12. Does any of your mentorship programmes focus on ethical aspects to doing business? Please elaborate.	

13. Do you think there should be customised mentorship programmes for women, youth and rural entrepreneurs in a business incubator setting, taking into account the varying circumstances of entrepreneurs? Please elaborate.
14. What do you think are some of the other challenges with regard to SMME mentorship and to what extent do they contribute to the high failure rate of SMMEs?
15. Finally, what is your view on government policy and strategy towards mentorship programmes for business incubators?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SMME OFFICIALS IN GOVERNMENT

Pseudonym Name: e.g. Manager 1	Provincial or Local?
Position:	Date interviewed:
1. Do you think that business incubators have a strategic plan in place for mentoring, business support or incubation programmes to SMMEs? If so, please elaborate.	
2. Do you think business incubator management and staff have adequate skills, experience and qualifications ? Please elaborate.	
3. What is your understanding of the criteria that is applied by business incubators in selecting SMMEs for mentorship programmes; and secondly, what are the exit rules that apply?	
4. Do you think business incubators are conducting an adequate needs analysis process to identify the gaps and challenges of the entrepreneur before on-boarding? Please elaborate.	
5. Do you believe that mentorship is focusing on the appropriate and relevant aspects of skills development, aligned to the needs of the entrepreneur? Kindly elaborate.	
6. What is your understanding of the process that is undertaken by business incubators to select suitable mentors and what is your view of a single mentor versus a multiple mentor approach for an entrepreneur? Please elaborate.	
7. What is your understanding of the performance measures that business incubators have in place to evaluate the progress of mentees against the agreed outcomes and their business plan? Please elaborate.	
8. Would you say that the financial rewards are adequate for mentors and are they linked to the business performance of the entrepreneur and if so, what is your understanding of the workings thereof?	
9. What is your view on current levels of commitment from both the mentors and mentees in making mentorship work in a Business Incubator?	
10. What is your view on appointing mentors from academia versus experienced industry experts?	

11. What is your view on formal structured mentorship versus informal mentorship in a Business Incubator setting and can there be flexibility?
12. Do any of the mentorship programmes focus on ethical aspects to doing business? Please elaborate.
13. Do you think there should be customised mentorship programmes for women, youth and rural entrepreneurs in a Business Incubator setting, taking into account the varying circumstances of entrepreneurs? Please elaborate.
14. What do you think are some of the other challenges with regard to SMME mentorship and to what extent do they contribute to the high failure rate of SMMEs?
15. Finally, what is your view on government policy and strategy towards mentorship programmes for business incubators?

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa PO Box 392 Unisa 0003 South Africa Cnr Janadel & Alexandra Avenue Midrand 1685 Tel: +27 11 652 0000 Fax: +27 11 652 0299 Email: sbl@unisa.ac.za Website: www.sblunisa.ac.za

Informed consent for participation in an academic research project

THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS INCUBATOR MENTORSHIP STRATEGIES ON BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, SUCCESSFUL AND ETHICAL SMALL BUSINESSES.

Dear Respondent

You are herewith invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Manogran Muthusamy a student in the Doctor of Business Leadership at UNISA's Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL). The attached **participation information sheet** sets out in detail the important information relating to this study.

The purpose of the study is to interrogate the influence of various types of Business Incubator mentorship strategies on building sustainable, successful and ethical small businesses. All your answers will be treated as confidential, and you will not be identified in any of the research reports emanating from this research. Use will be made of a participant number e.g. participant 1 as opposed to the name of the individual. In this way, you remain anonymous and the information you share is confidential.

Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may however choose not to participate and you may also withdraw from the study at any time without any explanation, negative consequences, costs or penalties.

Your participation does not involve any physical experiments. You will be required to participate in a semi-structured interview that could take between 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interview questions are aimed at obtaining your perspective and for you to share as much information as possible about your experience, challenges, gaps and opportunities, as far as SMME mentorship is concerned. A follow up interview will be conducted with you to confirm the accuracy of the information extracted from the interview. This follow up session will not exceed 30 minutes.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. No personal information or identifiers will be used in any publication. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

Please contact my supervisor, Professor Angelo Nicolaides through email nicola@unisa.ac.za or telephonically on 011-6520212 if you have any questions or comments regarding the study. Please sign below to indicate your willingness to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely

Manogran Muthusamy

I, _____ herewith give my consent to participate in the study. I have read the letter and understand my rights with regard to participating in the research.

_____   _____

Respondent's signature   **Date**

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa PO Box 392 Unisa 0003 South Africa Cnr Janadel & Alexandra Avenue Midrand 1685 Tel: +27 11 652 0000 Fax: +27 11 652 0299 Email: sbl@unisa.ac.za Website: www.sblunisa.ac.za

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

30 November 2020

Title: THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS INCUBATOR MENTORSHIP STRATEGIES ON BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, SUCCESSFUL AND ETHICAL SMALL BUSINESSES

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Manogran Muthusamy and I am doing research with Professor Angelo Nicolaides, a Professor in Business Ethics, Corporate Governance and Stakeholder Management in the Graduate School of Business Leadership towards a DBL (Doctor of Business Leadership) at the University of South Africa. We have funding from University of South Africa (UNISA) for research purposes. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The influence of Business Incubator Mentorship strategies on building sustainable, successful and ethical small businesses.

WHAT IS THE AIM/PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of this study is to interrogate the influence of various types of mentorship strategies on small business success, sustainability and ethical business practices within the Business Incubators. I am conducting this research to find out the following:

A) To what extent are current mentorship challenges in Business Incubators contributing to the high failure rate and closure of SMMEs?

B) What process do Business Incubators apply in selecting suitable, structured and relevant mentorship interventions that match existing skills and knowledge gaps of entrepreneurs?

C) How do Business Incubators measure the success of mentorship programmes to ensure entrepreneurial success?

D) What process do Business Incubators apply in selecting suitable mentors and mentees?

E) What strategies do Business Incubators and DFIs use to incentivise and reward mentors?

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Based on your knowledge and experience on mentorship, you have been identified as someone who will be able to make a meaningful contribution towards the objectives of this research. Participants have been identified through the process of referral. It is expected that there will be approximately 13-15 participants in the study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY /WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?

The study involves a semi-structured interview on SMME mentorship. The interview questions are aimed at obtaining your perspective and for you to share as much information as possible about your experience, challenges, gaps and opportunities, as far as SMME mentorship is concerned.

The duration of the interview is 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be done at your convenience and at your premises. A follow up interview will be conducted with you to confirm the accuracy of the information extracted from the interview. This follow up session will not exceed 30 minutes.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to

keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and under no obligation to provide any reason. There are no penalties or loss of benefit.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Through this research, information will be obtained on real experiences of individuals and it is anticipated that challenges, gaps and opportunities can be identified. This will assist in making recommendations to stakeholders involved in SMME mentorship on how mentorship can be enhanced, in a Business Incubator setting. Therefore, your contribution to this study has enormous benefits in improving the effectiveness of SMME mentorship.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Apart from the time that is required for the interview and follow up interview, there is no further action required on your part. You are not required to participate in any physical experiment. The interview will be personally conducted by the researcher. At the start of the interview, the researcher will confirm that you are comfortable to proceed. At the end of the interview, the researcher will also confirm that you are comfortable with the manner in which the interview proceeded.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your name and organisation will not be stated on any of the research documentation. To maintain confidentiality, you will be referred to as Participant A or B and Organisation 1 or 2. You will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reports. In this way, no one will be able to connect you or the organisation to the answers you give. The researcher and the Qualitative Data Analyst have access to the data. The Qualitative Data Analyst has signed a confidentiality agreement as far as the research is concerned. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including a transcriber, Qualitative Data Analyst, and members of the Research Ethics

Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles and conference presentation. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of 5 years in a locked cupboard at the residence of the researcher for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The researcher will destroy all hard copies after a period of 5 years. This will be done by shredding all the hard copies of interviews.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participation is purely on a voluntary basis, therefore there is no payment or incentive payable to any participant. The participant should not incur any costs in the study as you are not required to travel. The researcher will interview you at your premises and at your convenience.

ARE THERE ANY PHYSICAL EXPERIMENTS THAT MAY EXPOSE ME TO HARM, INJURY OR ADVERSE EFFECTS?

This study does not involve any physical experiments and as such you will not be exposed to any injury, harm or side-effects. An interview is to be conducted, you will be asked at the beginning of the interview if you are at ease and comfortable to proceed. At the end of the interview, you will again be asked if you were comfortable with the interview proceedings. You may stop the interview at any time if you are uncomfortable to proceed and no reason is required.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Economic and Management Sciences, UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Manogran Muthusamy through email 6772846@mylife.unisa.ac.za or telephonically on 0823049722. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher

about any aspect of this study, please contact Manogran Muthusamy using the contact details indicated above. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research

has been conducted, you may contact Professor Angelo Nicolaides through email nicola@unisa.ac.za or telephonically on 011-6520212.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study. Thank you.

Manogran Muthusamy

University of South Africa PO Box 392, Unisa 0003, South Africa
Cnr Janadel and Alexandra Avenues, Midrand, 1685, Tel: +27 11 652 0000, Fax: +27 11 652 9299
E-mail: sbl@unisa.ac.za Website: www.unisa.ac.za/sbl

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP
RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (GSBL CRERC)

03 November 2020

Ref #:   2020_SBL_DBL_021_FA
Name of applicant: Mr M Muthusamy
Student #:   6772846

Dear Mr Muthusamy

Decision: Ethics Approval

Student: Mr M Muthusamy, (6772846@mylife.unisa.ac.za , 082 304 9722)

Supervisor: Prof A Nicolaides, (nicola@unisa.ac.za , 011 652 0212)

Project Title: The influence of Business Incubator Mentorship strategies on building sustainable, successful and ethical small businesses in the eThekwini Metropolitan region.

Qualification: Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL)

Expiry Date: November 2022

Thank you for applying for research ethics clearance, SBL Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed your application in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Outcome of the SBL Research Committee:
Approval is granted for the duration of the Project

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee on the 29/10/2020.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:
1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached
2) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS LEADERSHIP
UNISA

principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

3) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee.

4) An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.

5) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Kind regards,

Prof R Ramphal
Chairperson: SBL Research Ethics Committee
011 – 652 0363 or ramphrr@unisa.ac.za

Prof P Msweli
Executive Dean (Acting): Graduate School of Business Leadership
011- 652 0256/mswelp@unisa.ac.za

KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

270 Jabu Ndlovu Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: +27 (33) 264 2515, Fax: 033 264 2680
Private Bag X 9152
Pietermaritzburg, 3200
www.kznded.gov.za

Dear Mr. Muthusamy

I, Mr Sihle Mkhize, the Acting Head of Department of the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs grant permission to collect data at this site for your research project titled: **THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS INCUBATOR MENTORSHIP STRATEGIES ON BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, SUCCESSFUL AND ETHICAL SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE ETHEKWINI METROPOLITAN REGION.**

I grant this permission as the authorised person to do so in this company and am aware of the following:-

1. The study is conducted as a UNISA researcher and remains the property of UNISA.
2. You cannot use the name of the company or individuals in your research project.
3. All data and information collected will be solely in the possession of the researcher.
4. I will require feedback of the research.
5. The research may be published in the public domain under the supervision of the supervisor, however, the name of the company and individuals will remain anonymous.

I wish you best of success in this research.
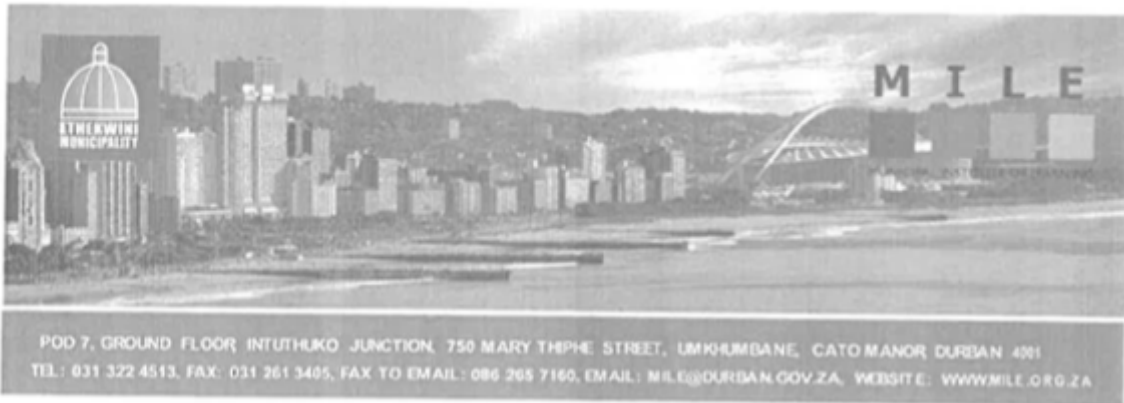
....
MR SIHLE MKHIZE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
Telephone: 033 -264 2515
Email: Sihle.Mkhize@kznedtea.gov.za

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

POD 7, GROUND FLOOR INTUTHUKO JUNCTION, 750 MARY THIPHE STREET, UMKHUMBANE, CATO MANOR DURBAN 4001
TEL: 031 322 4513, FAX: 031 261 3405, FAX TO EMAIL: 086 265 7160, EMAIL: MILE@DURBAN.GOV.ZA, WEBSITE: WWW.MILE.ORG.ZA

For attention:
Chair of Research Ethics Review Committee
Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL)
University of South Africa
City of Tshwane
0003

2 October 2020

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT TO M.MUTHUSAMY, STUDENT NO.0677-284-6 - GRANTING PERMISSION TO USE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY AS A STUDY SITE FOR A DOCTORAL RESEARCH

The Business Support Unit and Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE) in eThekwini Municipality, have considered a request from Manogran Muthusamy to use eThekwini Municipality as a research study site in fulfilment of a doctoral research in Business Leadership (D.BL). The study is entitled **"The Influence of Business Incubator Mentorship strategies on building sustainable, successful and ethical small business in eThekwini Metropolitan region."**

We wish to inform the committee of the **APPROVAL** of this request and hereby assure the student of our utmost cooperation towards achieving his research goals; the outcome which we believe will help this municipality improve on its services using the research outputs. The student is reminded of the conditions agreed to, the ethical considerations as well as the current COVID-19 related regulations as per the Disaster Management Act (2020) when conducting the research. In return, we stipulate as conditional that the student presents the preliminary results and recommendations of this study to the related unit/s to MILE and other related units within eThekwini Municipality as soon as possible.

Wishing the student all the best.

Mr Oswald Nzama
Head: Bus. Support, Markets & Durban Tourism
eThekwini Municipality

Dr. Collin Pillay
Program Manager:MILE
eThekwini Municipality

I MANOGRAN MUTHUSAMY hereby accept as conditional that I will comply fully as per the conditions stipulated above.

Signed: _____ Date: 5 October 2020

NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION INCUBATOR
IT: 163/09/80/N

PHYSICAL ADDRESS
199 Anton Lembede Street
23rd Floor Embassy Building, Suite 2305
Durban
4001

POSTAL ADDRESS
Postnet Suite 02
Private Bag X504
Northway, 4065

Tel.: (031) 368-1207 / 3678 / 6605
Fax: (031) 368-1208
Website: www.ncisa.org.za

17 September 2020

University of South Africa (UNISA)

Attention: Mano Muthusamy   Email: mmuthasamy@icloud.com

GRANTING OF INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

Dear Mr. Muthusamy

I, Ms Nonela Mxokozeli the {Head – Contractor Development and Training @ National Construction Incubator} grant permission to collect data at this site for your research project titled: **The influence of Business Incubator Mentorship strategies on building sustainable, successful and ethical small businesses in the eThekwini metropolitan region.**

I grant this permission as the authorised person to do so in this company and am aware of the following:-

1. The study is conducted as a UNISA researcher and remains the property of UNISA.
2. You cannot use the name of the company or individuals in your research project.
3. All data and information collected will be solely in the possession of the researcher.
4. I will require feedback of the research.
5. The research may be published in the public domain under the supervision of the supervisor, however, the name of the company and individuals will remain anonymous.

I hope this will mode NCI's road ahead in striving to be a Centre of Excellence in Construction Development and incubation in the near future.

NCI wishes you all the best in choosing such topic and will support you as best as we can.

Yours in development

Nonela Philile Mxokozeli

TO SIGN AND SEND BACK

I ....M . Nu Muthusamy........... commit to expectations as outlined by NCI during and after completion of the Research, using the agreed target audience and approach

Signature:	Date: 21/09/2020	Time: 9.00

ithala
DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED

Mr. M. Muthusamy
P.O. Box 28244
Malvern
4055

27 August 2020

Dear Mr. Muthusamy

GRANTING OF INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, **Pearl Sizeka Bengu the Group Chief Executive** of this company grant permission to collect data at this site for your research project titled: **The influence of Business Incubator Mentorship strategies on building sustainable, successful and ethical small businesses in the eThekwini metropolitan region.**

I grant this permission as the authorised person to do so in this company and am aware of the following:-

1. The study is conducted as a UNISA researcher and remains the property of UNISA.
2. You cannot use the name of the company or individuals in your research project.
3. All data and information collected will be solely in the possession of the researcher.
4. I will require feedback of the research.
5. The research may be published in the public domain under the supervision of the supervisor, however, the name of the company and individuals will remain anonymous.

I wish you best of success in this research.

MS P.S. BENGU
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Directors
Mr Moyer, R (Chairman)
Ms Mkhize, S (Deputy Chairman)
Ms Gina, SC
Ms Mganyeto, KG
Inkosi Mkhize, SN
Mr Ndlovu, SL
Ms Sibiya, PN
Ms Bengu, PS (Group Chief Executive)
Ms Mahamba, LS (Group Company Secretary)

ITHALA DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED

PO Box 2801
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TEMPLATE GRANTING OF INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

Dear Mr. Muthusamy

I, Nokulunga BP Shabangu, the Managing Director of this company grant permission to collect data at this site for your research project titled: **The influence of Business Incubator Mentorship strategies on building sustainable, successful and ethical small businesses in the eThekwini metropolitan region.**

I grant this permission as the authorised person to do so in this company and am aware of the following:-

1. The study is conducted as a UNISA researcher and remains the property of UNISA.

2. You cannot use the name of the company or individuals in your research project.

3. All data and information collected will be solely in the possession of the researcher.

4. I will require feedback of the research.

5. The research may be published in the public domain under the supervision of the supervisor, however, the name of the company and individuals will remain anonymous.

I wish you best of success in this research.

Signed

02. Dec. 2020

Nokulunga (Zola) BP Shabangu

Managing Director

071 675 2235

zola@igodaincubator.co.za

031 003 3477 - admin@igodaincubator.co.za - www.igodaincubator.com
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Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tromso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946

11th December 2020
Mr Manogran Muthusamy
c/o Graduate School of Business Leadership
University of South African

Dear Mr Muthusamy

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted **Full Permission** for you to conduct your research "The influence of Business Incubator Mentorship Strategies on building successful, sustainable and ethical small businesses in the eThekwini Metropolitan region" at the Durban University of Technology.

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings would be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely

_____
DR LINDA ZIKHONA LINGANISO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

GENEVIEVE WOOD

P.O. BOX 511 WITS 2050 | +525562308808

EDITING CERTIFICATE

LANGUAGE EDITING SERVICES

Date: 2021/9/27

This serves to confirm that the document entitled:

THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS INCUBATOR MENTORSHIP STRATEGIES ON   BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, SUCCESSFUL AND ETHICAL SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE ETHEKWINI METROPOLITAN REGION

by

MANOGRAN MUTHUSAMY

has been language edited on behalf of its author.

Genevieve Wood
PhD candidate
Wits University

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THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS INCUBATOR MENTORSHIP STRATEGIES ON
BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, SUCCESSFUL, AND ETHICAL SMALL BUSINESSES

by

MANOGRAN MUTHUSAMY

submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR A. NICOLAIDES

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