

MENTORING IN AGRICULTURE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO ITS OCCURRENCE AND FORM

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This paper reports on a phenomenological study of mentoring in agriculture aimed at defining and investigating the mentor/protégé relationship; the incidence of mentoring among farm managers, and the potential benefits and pitfalls for the stakeholders. The study focused on a sample of farm managers (N=352), in thirty-four English counties. Characteristics that defined the mentoring relationships were their dyadic, unstructured, active and stable nature. The substantial minority of respondents who had not experienced mentoring cited lack of opportunity or awareness.

Benefits accrued to the careers and psychosocial development of the protégés, and to the mentors. The prevalence of employers and line-managers as mentors was revealed by the study, as was the importance of discussion groups, and professional bodies, in meeting some mentoring needs. Recommendations focus on a strategy for the wider adoption of mentoring in the industry.

Key words Mentor, protégé, farm manager, career, continuing professional development, benefits.

Introduction.

The changing agricultural scene over the last decade, and the prospect of continuing upheaval in the next, have reinforced the need for skilled leaders. This necessity to achieve and sustain 'a high standard of farm management [practice]' is not new, however, and was the first basic aim of the Farm Management Association, formed in 1965 and later to develop into today's Institute of Agricultural Management (IAgrM) (Giles, 1999: 1-3). This aim remains fundamentally unchanged today. As part of a policy of providing continuing professional development for its members, the IAgrM made moves in 2004 to pilot and develop a mentoring awareness scheme among agricultural graduates. This nascent interest on the part of the Institute, finds resonance in the observations of Clutterbuck and Megginson (1999: 10-11) who have sought to explain the rising interest in mentoring to which they ascribe:

- Maintaining a sense of balance on a multitude of complex issues, where it makes a great deal of sense to seek the perspective of an unbiased, trustworthy individual whose judgement is valued
- The increasing difficulty of achieving a work/home balance
- The manager's need for continuous performance improvement
- Flatter hierarchies which, amongst other things, make the jump from one level of management to another increasingly difficult.

This paper reports on research undertaken to both inform and underpin that development.

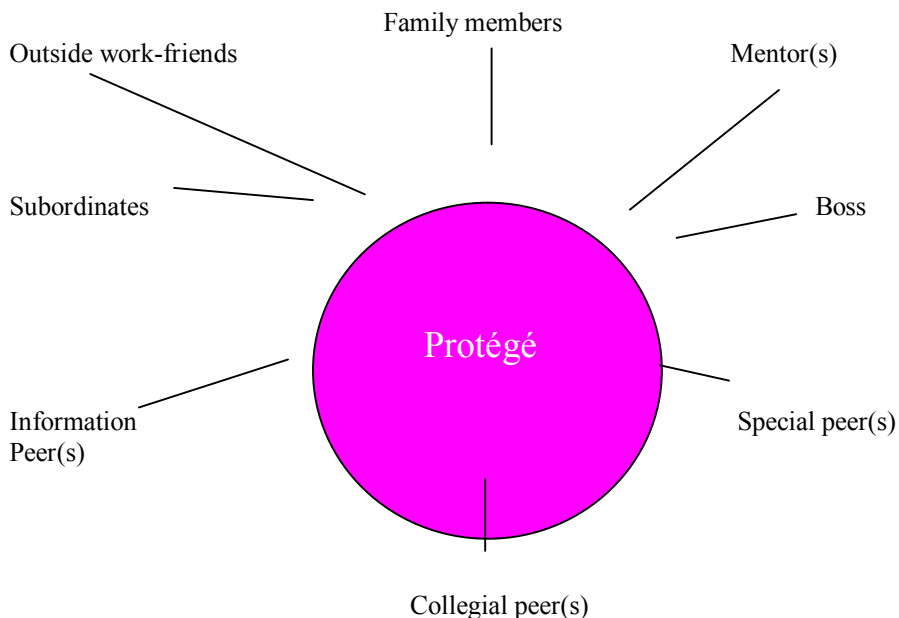
What is mentoring?

Mentoring is not a new concept, as demonstrated by the story of the eponymous Mentor to Telemachus, the son of Odysseus in Greek mythology,

who tutored, imparted wisdom and acted in loco parentis (i.e. nurturing, caring). Seeking a modern-day definition, Levinson et al (1978: 97, 98) opine that 'no word currently in use is adequate to convey the nature of the relationship we have here', and that, 'mentoring is defined not in terms of formal rôles, but in terms of the character of the relationship and the functions it serves'. Caruso (1992: 82) suggests that 'mentoring occurs when a protégé, in need of help, expends effort to obtain such help and receives assistance'. Garvey (1999: 3) sees mentoring as, 'essentially a learning and development relationship between two people'.

This emphasis on a one-to-one relationship between two people, termed a 'dyad', is echoed by Clutterbuck (1992: 3) who defines mentoring as 'a process in which one person (mentor) is responsible for overseeing the career and development of another person (protégé) outside the normal manager/subordinate relationship'. Caruso (1992: 127), on the other hand, suggests that 'exclusive one-to-one relationships are rare', and Philip (1997: 11) widened the scope by defining it as, 'a process within a relationship or set of relationships which embodies elements of trust, reciprocity, challenge, support and control and which has the potential to empower the partners'. Philip thereby acknowledged the possibility of a multiplicity of mentors. This is developed further by Kram (1985: 148-149) as a 'relationship constellation' (Figure 1) where a range of relationships can provide the career and psychosocial functions that support development at every stage (Table 1). Such a constellation is not static; change over time and events may disrupt and re-shape the relationships.

Figure 1. The relationship constellation (after Kram 1985: 149).



Notes

1. An 'information peer' is a common occurrence based on information sharing with some social interaction: it is characterised by low levels of self-disclosure, and trust.
2. A 'collegial peer' has primary functions of career strategizing and providing job-related feedback, with some overlap with the information and friendship functions of information and special peers respectively.
3. A 'special peer' is rare and the most intimate of the peer relationships, characterised by self-disclosure offering intimacy and confirmation. According to Kram and Isabella (1985: 120), a special peer relationship 'offers a chance to express one's personal and professional dilemmas, vulnerabilities and individuality'.

Table 1: Mentoring functions (after Kram 1988: 162)

Sponsorship. 'Opening doors'. Having connections that will support the protégés career advancement.

Coaching. Teaching "the ropes". Giving relevant positive and negative feedback to improve the protégé's performance.

Protection. Providing support in different situations. Taking responsibility for mistakes outside the protégé's control. Acting as a buffer.

Exposure. Creating opportunities for the protégé to demonstrate competence. Enhancing visibility through attendance at meetings/events.

Challenging. Delegating assignments, creating opportunities that will stretch the protégé's knowledge and skills in order to enhance development in preparation for anticipated career moves.

Rôle modelling. Demonstrating behaviour, skills, attitudes worthy of emulation that aid the protégé in achieving competence, confidence and a professional identity.

Counselling⁴. Providing a forum for addressing central development concerns. Tendering advice and guidance, and a "sounding board".

Acceptance and confirmation. Providing ongoing support, respect and admiration, which strengthen self-confidence and self-image.

Friendship. Mutual caring and intimacy that involves reflection of experiences outside the work setting.

MacLennan (1995: 6) claimed that 'a mentor can be unwitting, or even unwilling, but still a successful mentor', when a person selects a rôle model at a distance without the mentor being aware. Most authorities distinguish between coaching and mentoring, and assign different rôles to each (see, for instance, Parsloe, 1999: 36; Caldwell and Carter, 1993: 13; Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995: 16; Garvey, 1999: 25). Table 2 highlights the differences.

Garvey (1999: 3), and Clutterbuck and Sweeney (1998: 1113-1114) identify two forms of mentoring; Formal (planned) and Informal (natural): see Table 3. Clutterbuck and Sweeney see informal mentoring as engendering favouritism, and formal as helping something to actually happen, raising quality; inclusive of minorities and legitimising help across boundaries such as cross-gender mentoring. Kram and Bragar (1991a: 10) consider that formal mentoring programmes should declare themselves as seeking coaching

Table 2: Coaching and mentoring compared. Source: Clutterbuck and Sweeney (1998: 1109).

Coaching		Mentoring
Focus on task	↔	Focus on progress
Usually short-term	↔	Usually longer-term ⁶ (sometimes for life)
Explicit feedback	↔	Intuitive feedback
Develops skills	↔	Develops capabilities
Driven by coach	↔	Driven by protégé
Shows where you went wrong	↔	Helps you to work it out yourself

objectives, 'rather than perpetuate the myth that fully developed mentoring alliances can be expected'. Caruso (1992: 86) however, was less critical when he stated that 'planned mentoring programmes can be viewed as complementing natural mentoring activity or supplementing inadequate levels of natural mentoring'. Zey (1991: 62) introduced another consideration; 'An interesting aspect of the mentoring phenomenon is that the most influential mentors are often not even members of the protégé's organisation'.

Table 3: A comparison of formal and informal mentoring (after Caruso 1992: 88)

	Formal (planned)	Informal (natural)
Goal:	Organisational	Individual
Mentor:	One individual	One individual
Nature of the relationship:	Formal	Personal
Nature of interaction:	Ritualistic	Spontaneous
Nature of activity:	Task and process orientated	Substance orientated

Garvey (1999: 3) sees that, 'The challenge is to harness the best of the informal without making it too formal and subject to management control'. Whether formal or informal, mentoring is not, according to Holloway and Whyte (1994: 5), 'tutor/student, instructor/trainee, manager/employee or friend/friend'.

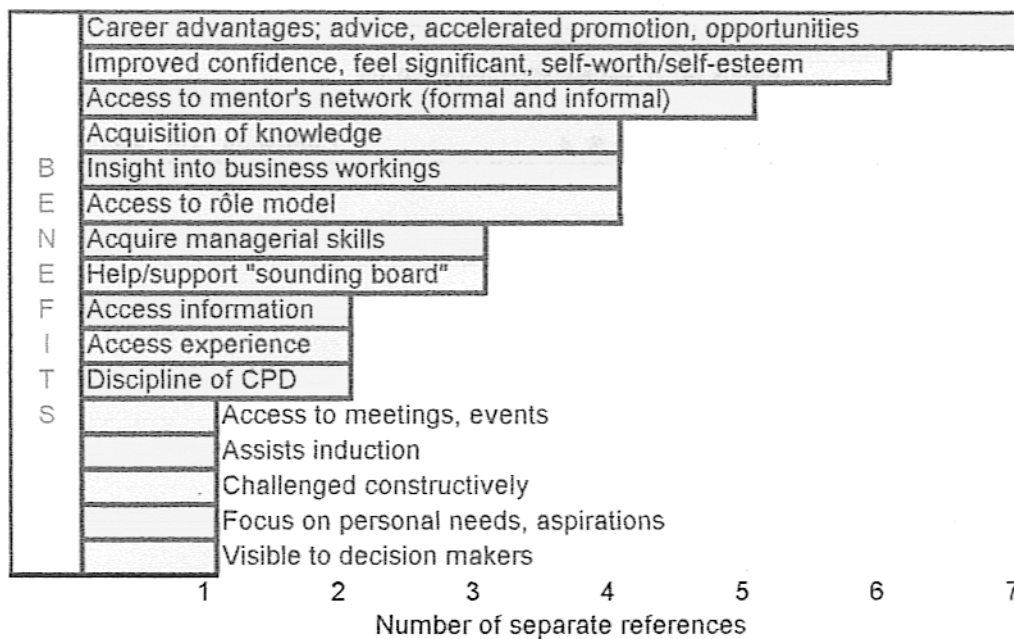
With such a multiplicity of viewpoints, clarity of definition is elusive. As one commentator suggests, 'with the passage of time and with the demands of the situations in which mentoring occurs, adaptations of the classical mentor-protégé dyad have proliferated in order to satisfy particular needs' Roberts (2000: 19). Another states that 'my experience of the process, tells me that there is no simple definition, but that there might be accepted practices that

inform the rôle', Morton (2003: 12). One outcome of this present study was to use the findings to propose a definition that is more appropriate to the English agricultural industry. This definition emerges during the discussion of the results.

Benefits and pitfalls for the stakeholders.

The benefits cited of engagement in a mentoring process are many and varied. In an attempt to make sense of these, Figures 2 to 4 separately list these benefits, for the protégé, mentor and the business respectively, by frequency of mention in various reference sources. These sources mainly relate to planned (formal) mentoring schemes in large organisations, rather than the conditions applying in English farming, but they nevertheless provide a reference point against which to compare and contrast the findings of this study.

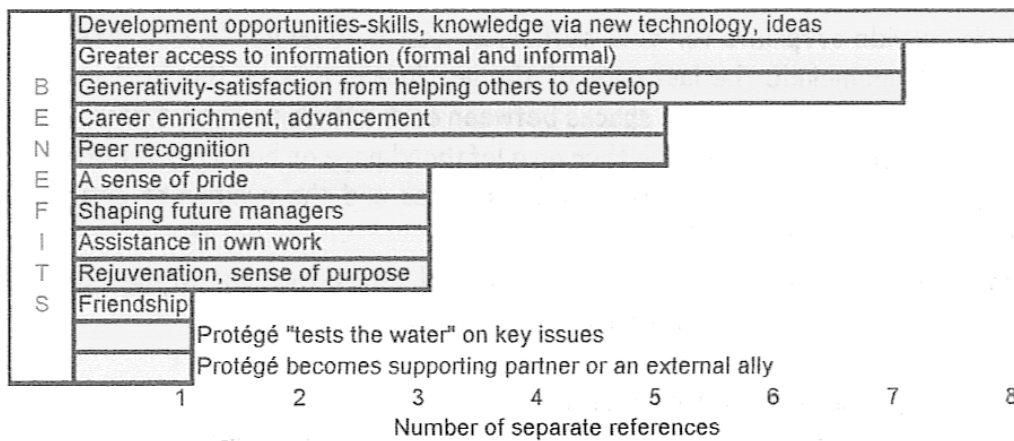
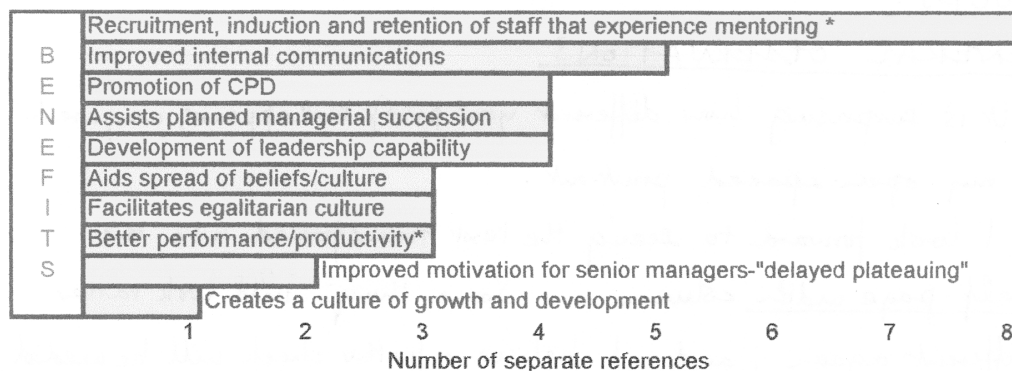
Figure 2: The benefits of mentoring for the protégé.



On the downside, authors identify a number of possible pitfalls in the process, set out in Appendix 1, of which the majority centre on the mentor (incompetence and acting unethically) and the problems arising from dysfunctional interaction (dependency, jealousies, resentment, lack of commitment and failure of trust).

Mentoring in agriculture

It is not possible here to do full justice to the range and number of studies, on mentoring in general, which have been published (see Turner 2006 for a

Figure 3: The benefits of mentoring for the mentor*Figure 4: The benefits of mentoring for the business*

more comprehensive account). What is clear from a cursory glance, however, is that most such studies have taken place in the context of large firms, which are likely to be located in or close to areas of high population density. The literature search was unable to identify any studies conducted on mentoring in an agricultural context. Conclusions that seem appropriate in a non-agricultural context may not be valid for the conditions pertaining in agriculture, where managers are operating in businesses with small workforces and, by definition, working and probably living in sparsely-populated areas. For instance, a definition which denies the validity of mentoring relationships between line manager and subordinate may be far too narrow where this is the only kind of relationship that is possible, given a lack of alternative potential mentors in the locality. Likewise the lack of alternatives may inhibit developments of mentoring 'constellations' and place more emphasis on the dyadic relationship.

Hence the motivation for this study, which aimed to

- Establish a definition of mentoring, and of the mentoring relationship, appropriate to conditions in English farm management.
- Investigate the frequency of mentoring among farm managers in England;
- identify the potential benefits and pitfalls associated with mentoring for the stakeholders as represented by the protégés, mentors and the constituent farm businesses;
- explore the factors inherent within the agricultural industry that might inhibit the occurrence of mentoring; and
- make recommendations, if appropriate, for widening the extent and enhancing the impact of mentoring for agricultural managers.

Methodology

Primary data collection

A combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was adopted. The use of a structured questionnaire, administered by post to a relatively large sample, offered the prospect of data which lent itself to statistical analysis, and which could potentially be generalised to the population of agricultural managers as a whole. This was supported by semi-structured interviews with a small sub-sample of informants, with the aim of gaining greater depth of understanding of the responses and of the motivations behind them.

Postal questionnaire

In deciding the sampling frame for the survey, certain decisions were made. Although there is no *prima facie* case for discriminating between farmers and farm managers in respect of mentoring needs, logistical considerations restricted the study to employed farm managers working within England. Defra suggests a total population of 15,400 salaried managers at June 2005 (Defra 2006: 12) but of course does not provide lists of such managers to would-be researchers. Thus it was necessary to build a sampling frame from a variety of sources, by approaching consultancy firms and farming companies, as well as central and branch officials of the IAgRM; the National Farmers Union; and agricultural leadership training courses run by the John Edgar Memorial Trust and the University of Plymouth/Worshipful Company of Farmers. In addition, a ‘snowballing’ process was created by asking respondents in the first trawl to extend an invitation to one or two other farm managers. These approaches ultimately yielded a sample of 352 farm managers for the postal questionnaire.

The two-page questionnaire is shown in Appendix 2, and was designed by reference to the objectives of the study, and to the literature on both mentoring and research methods. It includes demographic questions as well as those concerning mentoring issues. Questions were mainly closed, but respondents were given some opportunity to enlarge on their experience of mentoring relationships. Questionnaires were response-coded to ensure that reminders were not sent to managers who had responded, but the key to the coding remained confidential to the researcher. The questionnaire was coloured

yellow in order that it would stand out on a manager's desk (Mangione, 1995: 86).

Both questionnaire and the covering letters underwent a rigorous process of testing, and were piloted with a group of fourteen managers; these latter were excluded from the eventual analysis. Reminder letters were sent to non-respondents a month after the initial mailing.

Face-to-face interviews

Postal respondents were asked to volunteer for face-to-face interviews, and the 106 who agreed formed the basis of the sampling frame for the qualitative element of the study. The sample was purposively selected, the primary criterion being that respondents should have experienced mentoring as a protégé. The second criterion was the mode of acquiring a mentor (sought and chose; allocated by a superior; mutual consent). Subsidiary criteria, used to ensure a comprehensive coverage, included the number of mentors, the current size of business managed, years of experience as a farm manager and age. Fourteen respondents were selected for interview, the principal constraint on the number being that of time.

As well as protégés, five mentors were interviewed, these being randomly selected from the sixteen respondents to the postal survey who had indicated that they had had experience of being mentors, and were willing to be interviewed.

Consideration of the main face-to-face interview techniques available (schedule structured, non-schedule-structured (focused) and non-directive) led to selection of the focused interview approach (Brunt 1997: 103; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996: 234-235). This technique was considered flexible enough to explore any leads that might emerge, but structured enough to allow themes to be identified. This "conversation with a purpose" with appropriate, but minimal direction from the interviewer, was intended to enable the interviewee to relate their experiences, to describe whatever events seemed significant to them, apply their own definitions and to reveal their opinions and attitudes. The interview guides are shown in Appendices 3 and 4. Interviews were tape-recorded to ensure an accurate record of the audible communications conducted during the interviews, and tapes later transcribed. The duration of the interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to two and quarter hours.

Secondary data collection

Library investigations were conducted for books, journals and occasional papers, as well as the Internet for sources of secondary data. Personal and third person contacts were made with organisations participating in (a) the Defra (2004) "Fresh Start" (England) scheme, and (b) mentoring programmes in North America. Official government statistics, on economic and physical data, was accessed as supportive information.

Results

Postal survey.

The 352 questionnaires sent in total elicited 177 responses (50.3%) in the first instance, and the reminders generated an additional 38. (The request for

Table 4: Survey Questionnaire: Table of frequencies (Questions 1 - 12, excluding question 6).

Analysis of frequencies									
Variable	n =	Elements of response						Total %	
Age (years grouped)		20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-70			
Age %	212	5.7	21.2	34.9	24.5	13.7			100.0
Gender group		Male	Female						
Gender %	213	100.0	0.0						100.0
Years as manager (grouped)		<5	5-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30		
Years grouped %	209	6.7	16.3	14.4	15.3	12.0	35.4		100.0
Farmer's son/daughter		Yes	No						
Farmer's son/daughter %	212	34.4	65.6						100.0
Formal qualifications		None	Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Higher Deg.			
Formal qualifications %	205	2.0	14.6	53.2	27.8	2.4			100.0
Member Disc. Group/Prof. Org.		Yes	No						
Member Disc. Group/Prof. Org. %	190	94.2	5.8						100.0
Experienced mentoring		Yes	No						
Experienced mentoring %	211	63.5	36.5						100.0
Reasons for non-experience		Not aware	No opportunity	No need	No suitable mentor	Other ¹			
Reasons for non-experience %	79	41.8	50.6	2.5	1.3	3.8			100.0
No. mentoring relationships		1	2	3	3+				
No. mentoring relationships %	129	20.9	37.2	20.9	20.9				100.0
Mode of acquiring a mentor		Sought/chose	Allocated	Mutual consent					
Mode of acquiring a mentor %	124	9.7	19.4	71.0					100.0
Were the outcomes beneficial		Yes	No						
Were the outcomes beneficial %	132	98.5	1.5						100.0

additional names resulted in an additional 47, of the 352 questionnaires sent, which resulted in 33 responses). Total response, upon which the analyses were based, was 215, giving a 61% response rate. Of these, 106 (30%) indicated that they would be prepared to participate in an interview.

The results of the questionnaire survey are summarised in Tables 4 and 5. Quoted farm sizes ranged from 8 to 24,282 hectares (ha); a range of 24,274 ha. Median size was 920ha: dispersion is expressed by use of the inter-quartile range in Table 5.

Table 5. Inter-quartile range of the current size of the business managed (hectares).

Size of the business (ha)

Valid N = 206

Percentiles	ha
25	405.0
50	920.5
75	1600.0
Inter-quartile range	1195.0

Worthy of note is that all respondents were male, and just over a third were farmers' sons. Most had qualifications of some sort, with just 30% at degree level or above: 53% possessed diplomas of one kind or another as their highest qualification. The overwhelming majority were members of at least one agricultural discussion group.

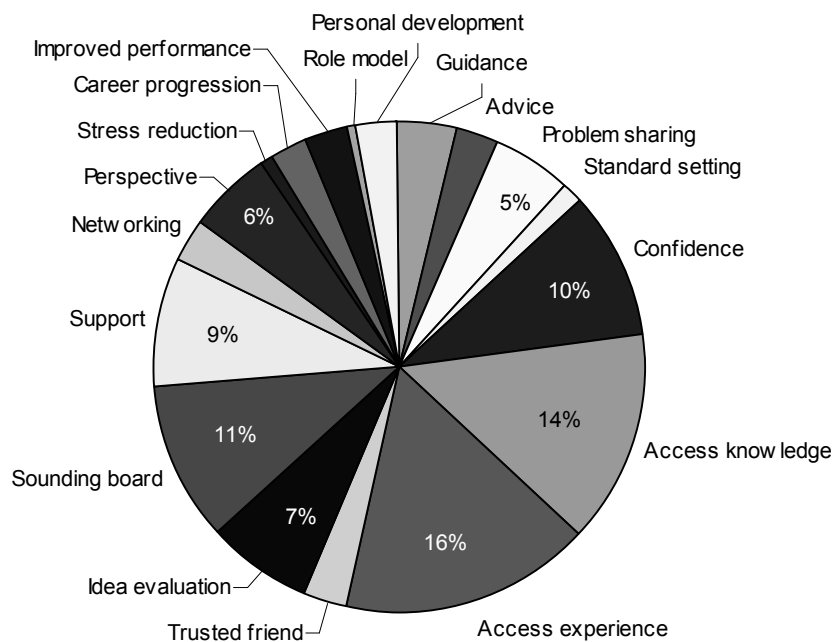
Nearly two-thirds of respondents had experienced mentoring as a protégé, and of those 80% had had two or more mentoring relationships. By far the most common method of establishing the relationship was by mutual consent (71%), with only 20% arising from a formal allocation process. Almost all respondents considered that the outcomes of these relationships were beneficial. Of those who had not experienced mentoring, 51% had not had the opportunity, and 42% were simply not aware of the concept.

Pearson's chi-square test ($p < 0.05$) was used to detect significant associations between selected variables. The only statistically significant relationships identified were unsurprising: a direct relationship between age and years of experience, and inverse relationships between age and formal qualifications; and years of experience and formal qualifications. There were no significant associations between age and experience of mentoring; number of mentoring relationships; method of acquiring a mentor; and current area managed. There was no relationship between level of qualification and area farmed, nor did the respondent's family origin (farmer's son or not) have any bearing on the mentoring variables.

Question 13 of the questionnaire asked respondents: 'Please list the main benefits you gained from the mentoring experience'. 265 responses were received to this open question from 115 respondents, and these were coded

into 18 distinct benefits as illustrated in Figure 5, of which the key benefits indicated were, access to experience, access to knowledge, sounding board, confidence and support. Although key by virtue of frequency of occurrence, the foregoing does not purport to impute any significant importance to any one particular beneficial aspect cited, or diminish the importance of those occurring at the lower frequencies.

Figure 5. The benefits of mentoring for the protégé; postal survey responses.



Those respondents who indicated that their experience of mentoring had not been beneficial were asked, at interview, to explain. Two respondents in the “allocated mentor” category gave the following reasons. ‘Insufficient time allocated to mentoring process’ (respondent 295); ‘Wrong person selected as mentor’ (respondent 295); ‘Lack of truth being told to me’ (respondent 176). The third respondent, in the predominant “mutual consent” category stated that, ‘My mentor lacked good communication skills, never listened, which lead me to feeling more isolated and lacking in confidence. His way was always right, no matter what’ (respondent 273).

Interview survey

The qualitative element of the study was an important complement to the quantitative data captured by the postal survey questionnaire, adding a degree of richness to the latter, and enabling deeper levels of understanding.

The applied nature of the research suggested analysis by the ‘framework’ method, which involved in-depth familiarisation with the recorded material in order to identify a thematic framework. In this case, after recording, sifting, and charting, sixteen main themes emerged from the nineteen interviews as

summarised in Table 6. These formed the basis of the thematic matrices employed in the systematic coding and analysis of each interview, from which in turn an overall profile of the responses of the interviewed farm managers could be drawn. The process embodied certain features, considered by Ritchie and Spencer (1994: 177-178), to be key to the efficacy of the “framework” method:

- grounded on the experiences of the interviewees;
- dynamic – open to change and re-evaluation, throughout the analysis process;
- systematic – it allowed the methodical treatment of similar units;
- comprehensive – allowed a full review of the material available;
- enabled the easy retrieval of material by the researcher, or third parties;
- allowed comparisons and associations to be made;
- accessible to others.

Table 6. The main themes emerging from the focused interviews.

THEME

Career path

Mentoring

Mode of initiation of the mentoring relationship(s)

Relationship of the mentor to the protégé

Duration of relationship(s)

Type of relationship(s)

Relationship boundaries (Open/Closed)

Balance of power

What do you understand by mentoring?

Beneficial aspects of the mentoring relationship for the protégé

Beneficial aspects of the mentoring relationship for the mentor

Negative aspects

Qualities and abilities sought in a mentor

Was mentor training considered potentially beneficial?

Desirable characteristics in a protégé

Can mentoring be recommended?

Nature of the relationship

Lack of space here precludes full discussion of all these themes (see Turner 2006 for a full account).

The majority of mentoring relationships (from a total of 64 between the 19 interviewees) were with an employer (19%) or line manager (30%), with 17% being with peers. Over 40% of the mentoring relationships had endured for more than 10 years; 64% for more than 5 years; and 14% for less than 2 years.

Only 9 of the 64 were formal relationships, and virtually all were stable and active (as opposed to passive) in nature. Fifteen (23%) were private rather than publicly-acknowledged relationships. 47% of the relationships were categorised as ‘open’, with no boundaries on discussion, whether on work, career, social or private issues: another 44% put boundaries around private issues only, leaving a very small number limited to work and career only.

The analysis attempted to assess the balance of power between mentor and protégé in the way that the mentoring process was used. The result was a more or less equal split (about 30% each) between a balance held by the mentor, held by the protégé, or held equally in an approximate state of equilibrium: the remainder were in a state of flux, mostly moving from mentor to equilibrium or protégé.

Perception of the mentoring process

Table 7 sets out the main themes that emerged when interviewees were asked to explain their understanding of ‘mentoring’. Unsurprisingly, support and guidance are the dominant themes, though more two-way processes also emerge from the list (e.g. sounding board; dialogue; interactive).

Table 7. Themes identified in response to the interview question, ‘What do you understand by the word mentoring’?

Themes in order of frequency	N
Support	11
Guidance	7
Sounding board	5
Advice, Problem solving, Rôle model	4
Access to experience	3
Altruistic, Confidence, Opportunity for dialogue	2
Critical, Counselling, Encouraging, Interactive (two-way), Networking	1
Nurturing, Older (senior) person, Personal development, Plan future	1
Protective, Training, Trust, Understanding.	1

Benefits for the protégé

Three distinct groups of benefits were identified:

- Career-enhancing: coaching, sponsorship, protection, exposure and visibility, challenging work assignments, access to networks.
- Psychosocial: rôle modelling, counselling, sounding board, friendship, acceptance, confidence and self-esteem, confirmation and confidant.
- Special attributes: complementary benefits, synergy.

All but two of the 64 relationships contributed to career enhancement for the protégé, no doubt closely linked to the predominance of the employer/

manager as mentor, noted earlier. Four of the nineteen interviewees failed to cite any psychosocial benefits, a result which may have been due to failure of interview technique and or sample size. However, to expect all mentoring relationships to comply with the concept of an ideal model may border on the naïve given that Zey (1991: 214) stated that ‘the mentoring process does not follow easily predictable stages’ and that ‘some functions of the mentor relationship may be performed simultaneously, or never at all, and their order of appearance varies according to the needs and goals of the particular mentor and protégé’. These four outcomes may have found resonance with this view, majoring as it would seem, on career enhancement in response to an individual’s particular needs.

Eight interviewees identified complementary or synergistic outcomes such as, ‘Synergy of [combined] brainpower’ (respondent 157); ‘it happened out of a close working relationship, a great friendship’ (respondent 102) – here both protégé and mentor benefited mutually, and each achieved more than they could have done working independently outside the mentoring relationship; a very close working relationship developed with the protégé’s (respondent 146) third mentor which developed beyond the managing of the farm to the whole estate, to the material benefit of the estate and both parties.

Overall the tenor of the responses was highly positive: typical responses were “To have mentors was one of the great things of life” (respondent 298), and another, “I wouldn’t be where I am without mentoring” (respondent 352).

Benefits to the mentor

Two categories of benefit were identified:

- Psychic: pride, self-satisfaction, ego-gratification, sense of worth and continuity of mentor’s own work.
- Material: promotion, tangible reward, support and information.
Zey (1991: 78-90)

Psychic rewards were identified as primary in virtually all cases, both by protégés and by those interviewees who were also mentors. Five of the nineteen interviewees, including one mentor, cited material benefits for the mentor, including information, support, career assistance, helping the (employing) organisation - and in one case an annual day’s fishing at the expense of the protégé.

Negative aspects

Interviewees found some difficulty identifying negative aspects of the mentoring experience. The few responses can be classified under five heads:

- Incompetence (e.g. “Where line-managers do not have the capacity to mentor, but are required to. Lack of knowledge. Give invalid advice” (respondent 241));
- Trust (e.g. “Absence of trust. May lack adequate experience, perception, understanding or knowledge” (respondent 045));

- Time consumption;
- Exposure of self (e.g. “Ultimately it’s your call. Mentoring is not a soft option” (respondent 332));
- Acting under false pretences (e.g. “Some people may be frauds” (respondent 045); “To pretend to help, or act adversely” (respondent 241)).

Qualities sought in a mentor

Table 8 shows the frequency of mentions of particularly qualities and abilities which interviewees considered important in a mentor.

Table 8: Qualities and abilities sought in a mentor

	n	%
Trustworthy	14	16.9
Knowledgeable	13	15.7
Experienced	10	12.0
Listener	10	12.0
Rôle model	9	10.8
Friend	8	9.6
Challenging	7	8.4
Net worker	7	8.4
Accessible	5	6.0
Total	83	100.0

Interviewees were not individually asked to place relative values on these characteristics, but the frequency of mentions does give a broad indication of relative collective values. It is particularly noteworthy that trustworthiness comes top of the list, a little ahead of knowledge and experience. Closely linked with trustworthiness is the ability to act as a rôle model, helping to emphasise the importance of a relationship that works, rather than just the ability to transfer knowledge. Being a friend was regarded as important by less than half the interviewees.

Desirable characteristics in a protégé

The image created by the five mentor-interviewees of the ideal protégé was as one who was able, trustworthy, open, ambitious, compatible with (though not a clone of) the mentor, motivated, in need of help, unselfish and with a good attitude – neither subservient nor superior.

Mentor training

Of the nineteen interviewees, six felt that mentor training was potentially beneficial, with comments such as, “there aren’t enough mentors out there” (respondent 284), “case for being analytical re processes and scenarios” (respondent 115) and “definitely if got right qualities. Would become professional” (respondent 146). Another six interviewees gave conditional affirmatives, and five gave negative responses such as “No, right person, not the training that’s important” (respondent 157). The five interviewees who were mentors in their own right were split on this issue.

Can mentoring be recommended?

All the responses were unequivocally in the affirmative, with eleven of the nineteen placing special emphasis on the benefit to young people, while not discounting the value of mentoring in later life.

Discussion

The nature of the mentoring relationship

Benchmarking the level of mentoring experience found in this sample of farm managers proved difficult, since few authors had addressed this aspect of mentoring. Moberg and Velasquez (2004: 95) stated that ‘between thirty-eight percent and fifty-five percent of employees have been recipients of mentoring at some time in their careers’. Torrington and Hall (1998: 465) in studying career activities in a research sample identified 24% of managerial staff involved in a formal mentoring scheme. Roche (1979: 14-15) in a study of 4004 executives (28 were female) found that nearly two-thirds of the 1250 respondents had a mentor or sponsor, and one-third of these had ‘two or more mentors’. Roche (1979: 15) went on to say that ‘Mentor relationships seem to have become more prevalent during the last twenty years’. None of the authors made reference to any informal mentoring activity that may (or may not) have been taking place at the same time. It has not therefore been possible, at this stage, to draw any reliable conclusions from comparisons, except to say that the frequency of mentoring in this study approximated most closely to Roche’s findings.

The two main reasons given for those not having experienced mentoring were lack of opportunity and awareness (92%). Given the relative physical and intellectual isolation of farm managers from the wider business environment, such justification is plausible. To what extent an interaction existed between awareness and opportunity, was not established. It was considered important that individuals were at least aware of mentoring, and its potential benefits, and thus able to make an informed choice whether or not to enter into a mentoring relationship.

Not surprisingly, there was a highly significant inverse relationship between age and level of qualification, with 46% of the 20-39 years group having a Bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 24% of the 50-70 group. This suggests that the level of qualifications acquired in the industry will advance as older managers retire and are replaced by younger, more highly qualified people. Since such managers could be expected to be imbued with

the discipline of learning, this trend could also have the effect of progressively enhancing attitudes to the culture of continuing professional development in the industry – including mentoring.

Whether changes in the structure of the industry, such as the trend towards larger farming businesses, will result in a more formal approach to mentoring, such as that evident in some large organisations in this country, has yet to be established, as has the desirability of such a change since the practice of formal mentoring has been challenged by Kram and Bragar (1991a: 10) and Caruso (1992: 86). The survey results suggest that mentoring in agricultural management takes a largely informal form, with respondents valuing its reliance on acquisition of mentor by mutual selection, and its more relaxed and non-bureaucratic mode of operation.

The most common type of mentoring relationship identified among the interviewees was between line manager/employer and employee. This is likely to be influenced by the small size of workforce in the typical agricultural business, the geographical dispersion of protégé and potential mentors, typically “flat” managerial hierarchies, and the practice (perhaps more prevalent in the past) of the young assistant manager discussing business with the “employer” over one of the meals of the day. The desire on the part of the “boss” who appointed the manager to see him or her succeed may also play a part. Some of these factors may also account for the large number of mentoring relationships that started during the protégé’s first period of full-time employment, and the high proportion of ‘mutual selection’ relationships. Do these latter relationships represent a true choice from a range of possibilities, or were they the only alternatives available at the time?

In reviewing the literature, it was noted that a significant proportion of authorities discounted manager/subordinate relationships as true mentoring. However the large majority of these references were made in the context of formal mentoring where the mentor is assigned (Clutterbuck, 1992:32; Clutterbuck and Megginson, 1999: 3; Clutterbuck and Sweeney, 1998: 1108; Dalton and Thompson, 1986: 239; Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995: 14; Holloway and Whyte, 1994: 5, 12; Parsloe, 1999: 36; Stredwick, 2003: 323). Even Kram (Figure 1) in the relationship constellation gave recognition to the ‘boss’ in the context of mentoring. Roberts (2000: 19) recognised that variations from the classical mentor-protégé dyad can occur to satisfy particular needs. It may be that agriculture with its singular business characteristics and management structure based in a rural, largely isolated, context has evolved its own particular “working” model. To what extent this model achieves congruence with the mentoring functions postulated by Kram (ibid. Table 1), or compromises the ethical considerations (Moberg and Velasquez: 2004: 115) has yet to be established.

Though employer/line-manager relationships dominated, many managers had more than one mentor with nine of the nineteen interviewees having three or four categories of mentor, and fifteen (79%) having three or more mentors. These managers exemplified Kram’s (Figure 1) relationship constellation model; a model which may typify the reality of the mentoring experience for others in agriculture.

The manager/subordinate mentoring relationship found some support in the primary research, in the fact that no negative comments were made about it during the interviews and that three interviewees, unsolicited, applauded it. It is possible that this reflects their expectations, as much as the efficacy of the experience.

Contrary to expectations raised by Caruso (1992:127), who found the dyadic relationship to be rare, 53 (out of 64) relationships within the interview group were identified as being of this form. Most (64%) of these were in excess of six years' duration, and more than forty per cent exceeded ten years in duration – including one of more than 30 years. This mirrors the findings of Clutterbuck and Megginson (1991: 161), Gibbons (2005: 1), Guest (2000: 7), Petrin (2004: 2), and Roche (1979: 4), although none of these offer evidence on the relationship between longevity of the relationship with its quality. It was not clear to what degree longevity was influenced by the nature of the industry, or reflected factors such as long periods of employment with one employer, loyalty, or a paucity of alternative mentors.

Some survey respondents referred to peer-group mentoring, although it was not always clear whether these represented 'true' mentoring, or membership of 'action learning' groups (which could conceivably include a mentoring element or a climate conducive to the development of mentoring relationship(s)). Peer mentoring, though yet to be evaluated, may have something to offer in farming, particularly in helping to meet the unsatisfied needs of protégés in their early years of employment (see Kram and Isabella (1985: 119-121)).

Finding a definition that fully encapsulates the complex and dynamic phenomenon that is mentoring is not easy, as most researchers have discovered. Caldwell and Carter (1993: 20) consider that mentoring is 'not a rigid process. If it were one model [and definition] would suffice'. Despite the pitfalls, we here suggest a definition for mentoring appropriate to the agricultural context:

'A dynamic process, of varying duration, in which a mentor or mentors give assistance on a one-to-one basis, according to need, in all or some of the elements of the career and professional development of a protégé. A successful mentoring relationship achieves positive outcomes for the protégé (and, in most cases, for the mentor) by virtue of the quality of the relationship, irrespective of the relative social or professional rôles of the participants'.

The value of mentoring

Was mentoring beneficial? Of the one hundred and thirty two valid responses to this question in the survey, only two considered that they had not benefited from the process. The majority of interviewees felt that mentoring should start in the early stages of a person's career, reflecting the views of Levinson et al (1978: 57) and Dalton and Thompson (1986: 103) that the developmental period in early and middle male adulthood is the critical phase in which to form a mentoring relationship. The most recent of these publications is twenty years old, and the frequency in modern times of

‘downsizing’, and more flexible attitudes to mid-career changes, could lead to a manager accepting the status of a protégé in a new career later in life. Such a situation would not preclude the same person from being a mentor at the same time.

Benefits to the protégé were many and varied, with the most commonly-cited being the opportunity to access experience and knowledge, the provision of a ‘sounding-board’ for the protégé’s concerns, as a way of boosting confidence. For the mentor, intangible or psychic rewards predominated. This is consistent with an older person having secured his or her basic needs in life, and seeking higher order satisfaction (e.g. ego-fulfilment) through the mentoring process. Some business benefits were also occasionally identified, through raising the potential of human and social capital.

Compatibility in the mentor-protégé match is crucial, particularly in the dyadic form. Characteristics thought by protégés to be important in a mentor included trustworthiness, knowledgeability, experience and good listening skills. The building of mutual trust, in particular, was seen an essential requirement in a relationship in which the conduct of the process renders both mentor and protégé vulnerable. (See also Clutterbuck and Megginson (1999: 147); Garvey (1999: 50); Clutterbuck (2003c: 5). Opinions on the benefits of mentor training were mixed – perhaps not surprising in a context where the mentoring relationship is usually arrived at by mutual agreement, rather than as a (professional) appointment. In view of the potential pitfalls identified in the literature and by respondents, the provision of suitable training would seem advisable, even for mentors who might otherwise possess all the requisite attributes.

Benefits, however, will only be manifest if the mentoring experience is successful, which is more likely to be the case if the principles that guide good practice are followed. The main ones are:

- Mentoring is a voluntary activity;
- Mutual trust is central to success.
- Mentoring is not a rigid activity, and its practice will give rise to variations due to individual needs, attitudes, inter-personal skills, resources and differences in organisations’ cultures and practices;
- It is an active two-way process;
- Either participant can opt out without prejudice;
- Although there is a measure of altruism on the part of the mentor, there need to be other rewards (material and/or intangible) if the relationship is to be sustained;
- The relationship is non-judgemental, and non-directive;
- It is essential that both parties in a mentoring relationship act ethically.

Emerging issues

The following issues arise from the study:

Was the mentoring effective in fact, as well as in perception?

This study is marked by an almost unanimous agreement amongst its subjects that the mentoring experience was beneficial. However, this is a expression of perception rather than an evaluation of enhanced managerial performance as measured against objective criteria. 'Feeling good' does not necessarily translate to improving productivity or enhancing career progression. This concern, raised by Beaumont (1993: 144), could not be addressed in the context of this study, but might warrant further investigation.

Is this level of activity adequate for the needs of agricultural management?

The study established that the practice of mentoring exists in the agricultural management profession. The lack of a comprehensive sampling frame, as delineated in the Methodology, means that generalising in order to estimate the proportion of managers benefiting is impossible. However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a significant minority (36.5%) of agricultural managers have not experienced mentoring, and for some of the others it has been an unsatisfactory experience. It is also reasonable to assume that the proportion of those who had not experienced (beneficial) mentoring would be smaller in the non-responding part of the sample than in the respondents' group. This would suggest that the proportions of beneficiaries of mentoring in agricultural management are, if anything, over-estimated in this study.

What factors might have inhibited the occurrence of mentoring in agriculture?

Seen in the context of the apparent level of mentoring revealed in this study, the following factors may have been background inhibitors to participation:

- Isolation (see Giles 1975: 625). This was apparent in physical terms on most of the visits made to interviewees, but less obvious was the social and intellectual isolation due to the demanding time inputs inherent in many of the farm managers' posts. Where a manager was able, or willing, to exercise delegation this was less of a constraint.
- Awareness. Mentoring was not a term in common parlance among most farm managers interviewed until this study brought it to their attention.
- Opportunity. Although this overlaps with awareness, there may have been a shortage of mentors due simply to insufficient potential mentors, or the lack of a general culture of mentoring.
- Relatively small businesses. There were few, if any, peers except in the early stages of a manager's career, and the choice of potential mentors within the business, other than an immediate superior, was limited.
- Personal traits. In the authors' experience farm managers' exhibit strong characteristics of independence and self-reliance. In some cases these traits could have inhibited the development of a mentoring relationship if they had declined into insularity bordering on arrogance. 'Never saw the benefit of mentoring' (respondent 334).

These questions, together with the associated issues, have informed the conclusions and subsequent recommendations.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study has been to define mentoring, establish its prevalence, value, potential pitfalls and factors that might inhibit mentoring for farm managers in England. Although the target group were not predominantly farmers' sons they had worked on farms, and had begun to envisage their 'dream' of being a farm manager, during their formative years. The majority of respondents had experienced mentoring relationships at different career stages, and had found them to be rewarding both in terms of career and personal development. These relationships were of substantial longevity, with alliances that approximated to the classic mentor-protégé dyad. A high proportion of mentors were the employers or line-managers of their protégés. This arrangement apparently functioned effectively, and seemed to be an accepted feature – an almost unremarked tradition - of the industry. Protégés had, particularly in the early days of their careers, looked to their employer/line-manager for wise guidance and support: mentors enjoyed the opportunity to assist younger managers who were embarking on journeys akin to those that they had experienced. The process is supported by high levels of involvement by farm managers in discussion groups and professional bodies, providing additional knowledge transfer and, for some respondents at least, filling some of the functions of a mentor.

The main factors inhibiting the further development of mentoring appear to be awareness and opportunity, issues that professional bodies such as the Institute of Agricultural Management could have a rôle in addressing. How might this be taken forward? There are precedents. Mentoring in agriculture, as a formal activity, came to notice in England through the inception, in 1993, of the work of the Farm Crisis Network, and more recently the Defra UK Farming - Fresh Start scheme. The development of a mentoring scheme is one of five elements of the latter, and is currently under development through the Regional Development Agencies (RDA) (Defra 2004: 1). Such schemes have raised a general awareness of mentoring, and provide a gateway for those wishing to enter into their first mentoring relationship. However, the efficacy of the mentoring element of this latter government scheme, with its formal structure and short duration, has yet to be ascertained.

Developing mentoring further is likely to rely on one or both of:

1. Building on, enhancing or facilitating that which is already in existence;
2. Creating a new structure with a mandate to improve the knowledge transfer of mentoring and provide opportunities for mentoring relationships to occur.

The latter strategy has all the attractions of a new venture, but carries with it the implications of additional resource acquisition, re-experiencing the initial problems faced by existing provision and the loss of time inherent in resolving such issues. The former strategy would obviate the need to “re-invent the wheel”, avoid the attendant costs, and enhance the probability of being accepted by existing organisations as a partner rather than a competitor.

This would be the preferred strategy.

Whilst it is recognised that the practice of informal mentoring will continue, as will formal mentoring schemes in the larger farm businesses, it is proposed that the first strategy should be adopted, setting out to utilise the abundance of organisations, groups and clubs already in existence in the agricultural industry. It is also proposed that a more formal, though not unduly bureaucratic, higher profile approach should be adopted in the interests of making the process happen. There is no reason to suppose that the principles of good practice articulated earlier could not be incorporated into such a strategy. It should also be acknowledged that mentoring is a concept that stands uneasily on its own, and therefore ideally needs to be associated with other developmental activities to achieve general acceptance.

In the UK, the Institute of Agricultural Management, with its remit to 'maintain and improve the standards of practice of Agricultural Management' (I.Agr.M., 1998: 3) appears to be the natural choice to take a leading rôle in enhancing and facilitating the practice of mentoring in England in partnership with Defra. The scope of the project would include farmers as well as farm managers.

Developing such a strategy might include the following steps:

1. The Institute initiates a dialogue with the organisations currently offering mentoring, and in liaison with the universities and colleges in England devises an awareness campaign aimed at graduating students. In many cases this could be executed through local branches of the Institute (often still operating under the previous title of the Institute, the Farm Management Association). The Consultation with national bodies, such as the National Farmers' Union, National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs, The Farmers' Club and County Agricultural Societies, would test support and widen the campaign.
2. Given the importance (and often difficulty) in recruiting mentors, the Institute actively seeks to recruit potential mentors from within its membership. Other sources of potential mentors include farmers' organisations, retirees from agricultural service industries, and colleges.
3. In view of concerns raised in the study that the terms associated with mentoring are regarded by some with suspicion, careful attention is given to perceptions of the concept, and to the possible need to 'rebrand' it.
4. The Institute website is enlarged to include information on mentoring, and links to providers and facilitators.
5. A coordinator is appointed to initiate and develop the above outline proposals. Such a person could be funded by Defra, through the RDA's, and be responsible to the Director of the Institute of Agricultural Management.

This may not be the definitive answer to raising the general awareness of mentoring, or its practice, within the agricultural industry. It does, though represent a basis for discussion at the very least, and at best a feasible

approach to the formulation of a coherent strategy. The intention is that such an approach would be inclusive of farmers as well as farm managers, and in the longer term increase the level of participation in mentoring beyond the current level, to contribute to the continuing development of a high standard of management in agriculture.

Mentoring is not a general panacea for the problems and challenges in a farm manager's professional life, but it emerges from this study as a critical development process that can assist a person's development both professionally and personally, and as such should be considered as much part of a manager's portfolio as skills development, the acquisition of experience and continuing professional development. The dyadic nature of most mentoring relationships make it ideal for an industry such as agriculture, where undertaking training of a more conventional form, and bigger group sizes, creates logistical and time management difficulties which act as major inhibitors. It also ensures that the transfer of knowledge and skills can be geared to the specific needs of the protégé.

As the pressure mounts to compete at European and global levels it is essential that the human resource represented by the profession of agricultural management be developed to its highest potential. On the evidence of this study, mentoring has an important part to play, and is worthy of encouragement.

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Appendix 1: Possible pitfalls arising from the mentoring process

Origin	Problem	References
1. Mentor, protégé mismatch.	Failure to determine needs. Confusion over rôles.	Bagshaw (2004: 8). Megginson & Clutterbuck (1995: 94).
2. The Mentor.	Protégé perceived as a threat. Prevents protégé receiving just acclaim (<i>Salieri phenomenon</i>). Manages protégés career, creates hostility or dependence. Fails to cope with additional responsibility, pressure. Exploits relationship for own ends. Fails to see need for altruistic impulses to co-exist with motives of self-interest to sustain the relationship. Betrays protégé. Weak mentor fails to protect protégé (“Black Halo” effect). “Fraudulent mentor” – seeking sexual relationship in cross- gender mentoring.	Caldwell & Carter (1993: 19). Caldwell & Carter (1993: 19). Clutterbuck & Sweeney (1998: 1112). Holloway & Whyte (1994: 22). Levinson (1978: 253). Clutterbuck (2004:1). Zey (1991: 90). Zey (1991: 147). Zey (1991: 137). Daily Mail (2005: 43). Levinson (1978: 238).
3. The Protégé.	Has one mentor only – <i>all eggs in one basket</i> . Incompetence.	Kram (1983: 621). Zey (1991: 90).
4. Problems arising from dysfunctional interaction. (Particular problem depends on interaction between mentor and protégé, and may involve third parties).	Dependency on mentor. Jealousies and resentment arising from elitism among peers, and spouses in cross-gender mentoring. Lack of commitment to time needed. Failure of trust. Viewing mentoring as a therapy, or a “quick fix”. Lack of open-mindedness.	Bagshaw (2004: 9). Megginson & Clutterbuck (1995: 95). Zey (1991: 151). Bagshaw (2004: 9). Caldwell & Carter (1993: 18, 19). Kram (1988: 185). Bagshaw (2004: 8). Clutterbuck & Sweeney (1998:1113). Garvey (1999: 135). Holloway & Whyte (1994: 22). Zey (1991: 90). Clutterbuck (2004: 1). Coulsting (2004: 1). Garvey (1999: 164). Goldsmith (2002:1). Dalton & Thompson (1986: 42).
5. The business.	Failure to plan or properly execute mentoring programme.	Clutterbuck & Sweeney (1998: 1113). Clutterbuck (2004: 1). Megginson & Clutterbuck (1995: 94).

Appendix 2: postal questionnaire

CONFIDENTIAL

RESPONSE CODE.....

MENTORING IN AGRICULTURE. A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FARM MANAGERS

Introductory Notes.

- ❖ If there is a question that you do not wish to answer, simply leave it blank and move on to the next question.
- ❖ Please tick the appropriate boxes.

1. Age. Under 30 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60+ ☐

2. Are you MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ ?

3. Years of experience as a Farm Manager?
<5 ☐ 5-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21-25 ☐ >25 ☐

4. Are you a farmer's son or daughter? YES ☐ NO ☐

5. Formal Qualifications, please list.....
.....

6. What is the current size of the business that you manage, or have managed in the past?ha/acres (please delete as appropriate).

7. Have you been, or are you a member of a discussion group and/or professional organisation? If so please state their name(s).....
.....

The following questions focus on mentoring, so please refer back to the definition in the introductory letter should you need to do so.

8. Have you experienced mentoring? YES ☐ NO ☐

If the answer was NO, please go to Question 9.
If the answer was YES, please go to Question 10.

9. What were the reasons for not having experienced a mentoring relationship?

Was not aware of mentoring. ☐

The opportunity never arose. ☐

Did not see the need for a mentor. ☐

Failed to find a suitable mentor. ☐

Other Reasons. ☐

PLEASE TURN OVER

10. During your career in farm management, how many mentoring relationships have you experienced?

1 2 3 3+

11. When you acquired your last mentor, did you: -

Seek and choose a mentor?
Have one allocated to you?
or, it happened by mutual consent?

12. Did you find the outcomes of the mentoring relationship beneficial to you?

YES NO

If the answer was YES, go to Question 13.

If the answer was NO, go to Question 14.

13. Please list the main benefits you gained from the mentoring experience.

.....
.....
.....
.....

14. Please state why the mentoring experience failed for you.

.....
.....
.....

If your answer to Question 8 was YES, would you be prepared to participate in a follow up interview? If so would you please give your name and contact telephone number and/or email?

Name.....
Telephone No.....Mobile.....
Email:.....

In the interests of gaining as much data as possible about mentoring in agriculture, it would be very much appreciated if you could let me have the names and contact details of one or two farm managers of your acquaintance, to whom you feel I could post this survey.

.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

WOULD YOU PLEASE PLACE IT IN THE STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE AND POST IT TO ME AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY.

Appendix 3: interview guide

INTERVIEWER GUIDE: PROTÉGÉS

Considerations.

- Interviews to be conducted at a venue of the interviewee's choosing, in conditions that were suitable for the conduct of a confidential interview.
- Open questions to predominate in order to elicit as much information as possible.
- The pace and tenor of the interview to mirror the style and demeanour of the interviewee, particularly in the early stages of the interview, when the need to establish an early rapport and gain the trust of the interviewee is important.
- The interviewer to be aware of the possibility that some interviewees had more than one mentor.
- Equipment: tape recorder (portable and battery operated), tape(s), microphone, clipboard, writing materials, and interview aide-mémoire.
- Every attempt made on the part of the interviewer to be consistent and to minimise the possibility of bias.
- The interviewer to read the relevant completed questionnaire before each interview.

Prior to the interview.

The interviewee to be thanked for having completed the initial survey questionnaire; agreeing to participate in a recorded interview and having organised the necessary domestic arrangements. The procedure, expected duration (circa 1½ hours) and the purpose of the interview to be stated. Any initial queries to be dealt with at this stage.

The interview.

NOTE. The following questions/notes to serve as an aide-mémoire for the interviewer. The extent of the need for further probing/clarifying questions to be dependent on the interviewee's responses.

- I have some idea of your current position, but I wonder if you could perhaps share with me the path your career took in getting to where you are now?
- Looking back, when did mentoring start for you and what do you understand by mentoring?
- How did your mentoring relationships come about, and what was the mentor's position in relation to you? (Teacher, professor, friend, relative, immediate supervisor, employer, director).
- How would you describe your relationship(s) with your mentor

(s)? (Seeking to get responses that relate to Open/Closed; Formal/Informal; Active/Passive; Stable/Unstable; Public/Private).

- Was there evidence of a dominance balance/imbalance in the relationship?
- What was discussed by the protégé/mentor?
- Could you enlarge on what you consider to be the beneficial aspects of mentoring, and comment on what were for you negative, or potentially negative aspects?
- Would you say that your mentor benefited in any way?
- If you were looking for a mentor now, what sort of qualities/abilities would you be looking for, and would you consider that they would benefit from some form of training?
- Would you recommend mentoring for other people? If positive, looking for some indication of when in a person's career. (Stage (s) I, II, III, IV).
- Is there anything that you would like to add, that I haven't covered?

Depending on the comprehensiveness of the responses, and the pattern of the interview, some of the above questions may have been answered without the need to put all the questions. The list is not necessarily indicative of the order of questioning, nor is it restrictive if potentially rewarding avenues of questioning emerge.

Appendix 4: interview guide (2)

INTERVIEWER GUIDE: MENTORS

Considerations.

- Interviews to be conducted at a venue of the interviewee's choosing, in conditions that were suitable for the conduct of a confidential interview.
- Open questions to predominate in order to elicit as much information as possible.
- The pace and tenor of the interview to mirror the style and demeanour of the interviewee, particularly in the early stages of the interview, when the need to establish an early rapport and gain the trust of the interviewee is important.
- The interviewer to be aware of the possibility that some interviewees had more than one mentor.
- Equipment: tape recorder (portable and battery operated), tape(s), microphone, clipboard, writing materials, and interview aide-mémoire.
- Every attempt made on the part of the interviewer to be consistent and to minimise the possibility of bias.

- The interviewer to read the relevant completed questionnaire before each interview.

Proem to the interview.

The interviewee to be thanked for having completed the initial survey questionnaire; agreeing to participate in a recorded interview and having organised the necessary domestic arrangements. The procedure, expected duration (circa 1½ hours) and the purpose of the interview to be stated. Any initial queries to be dealt with at this stage.

The interview.

NOTE. The following questions/notes, to serve as an aide-mémoire for the interviewer. The extent of the need for further probing/clarifying questions would be dependent on the comprehensiveness of the interviewee's responses. According to the pattern of the interview the following were not necessarily an order of questioning to be imposed.

- I have some idea of your current position, but I wonder if you could perhaps share with me the path your career took in getting to where you are now?
- What do you understand by mentoring? Looking back, when did mentoring start for you? (Perhaps both as protégé and later as mentor).
- How did your mentoring relationships come about?
- How would you describe your relationship(s) with your protégé(s)? Seeking to get responses that relate to Open/Closed; Formal/Informal; Active/Passive; Stable/Unstable; Public/Private. Was there evidence of a dominance balance/imbalance?
- What was discussed by the mentor/protégé?
- Could you enlarge on what you consider to be the beneficial aspects of mentoring, and comment on what were for you negative, or potentially negative aspects?
- In what ways would you say your protégé(s) benefited?
- If a potential protégé were to approach you now, what sort of qualities/abilities would you be looking for?
- Would you recommend mentoring for other people? If positive, looking for some indication of when in a person's career (Stage I, II, III, IV).
- Is there anything that you would like to add, that I haven't covered?

ISSN 0014-8059

JOURNAL OF FARM MANAGEMENT

The Journal of the Institute of Agricultural Management

Volume 13. No. 4 April 2008