UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

ESTABLISHING A PEER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR PHYSIOTHERAPY STUDENTS

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MPHYST

Faculty of Health Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

2008

Supervised by
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my partner, friend, and husband of the past 21 years, ***Carel Nel****. I want to thank you, from my heart, for allowing me to become more than I have ever imagined possible. Thank you for supporting me in everything I do and for loving me unconditionally. I love you!*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- To our Lord, God Almighty, for giving me to opportunity and the means to be able to do this study
- To my family (Carel, Rouxne and Salome) for supporting me and loving me unconditionally
- To my supervisor, friend, and mentor, Dr Carina Eksteen, for all the encouragement, guidance, and sharing of knowledge
- To Dr Pixie du Toit, for training me to become a mentor and allowing me to learn from her
- To my parents (Johann and Lien) for all the work they have done, for all the love, encouragement, assistance, and support
- To my colleagues from the Department of Physiotherapy, for all their support, encouragement, and help during this study
- To all my friends, for the patience, support, and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

1. Introduction

During 2005 a need was recognized by the staff members of the Physiotherapy Department at the University of Pretoria for a program that will address the emotional/personal wellbeing of students. It was decided that a peer mentorship program might address the facilitation of integration of personal development as well as academic support of Physiotherapy students.

2. Research questions

Is the HAPPY Mentorship program fulfilling a need experienced/identified by the physiotherapy students?

Are the physiotherapy students at UP of the opinion that the mentorship program should continue?

How can the mentorship program be adapted based on the suggestions of the students, to optimally meet their needs for social, emotional and/or academic support?

3. Research approach

A qualitative, descriptive, participatory action research approach.

4. Population and sample

Population: all students of the Physiotherapy Department

Sample: the students who volunteer to participate In the study.

They included:

- Peer mentors
- Mentees
- Students who did not participating in the program

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Schematic presentation of the research process

BACKGROUND

NEED IDENTIFIED

Need was identified – possible solution → peer mentorship program

↓

Development of peer mentorship program

↓

Implementing of HAPPY Mentorship program

PHASE ONE

EVALUATION/REVIEWING OF PROGRAM

Data collection

↓

Focus group discussions

Self report questionnaires

↓

Data analysis

↓

Revising and adapting of program

PHASE TWO

Implementing of adapted program

↓

Data collection

↓

Focus group discussions

Self report questionnaires

Reflection

↓

Data analysis

↓

Revising and adapting of program

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5. Some preliminary results

Positive experiences

- Supportive environment
- Easier transition to university life for mentees
- Academic guidance and support for the mentees
- Good relationship between mentor and mentee if they meet regularly
- Mentors learned life and coping skills
- Snacks at the meetings!!
- Emotional/moral support

Negative experiences

- No/ little interaction between mentor and mentee
- Logistics of meetings with peer mentors and program coordinator and between mentors and mentees
- Lack of commitment by the mentor
- Insufficient information about the program

Some suggestions

Mentees	• Screening to determine who will benefit most • Optional for first year students
Mentors	• Must be third year students • Two mentees per mentor • Mentor should be older than the mentee
Program administration	• Program should definitely continue • All students must receive adequate information about the program • Meeting times should be fixed well in advance • Meetings at central venues
Matching	• Match mentor and mentee with same first language and /or cultural background • Match in same residences
Contact between mentor and mentee	• Initial contact on the first year camp • Should have regular contact e.g. once a month • Contact before tests and exams • More regular informal/natural meetings

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Conclusion

All participants (90 % of all students in the Department of Physiotherapy) agreed that the program must continue with the suggested changes. Most of the objectives were reached in cases where there was adequate contact and communication between the mentor and mentee – there was a supportive environment created for the mentees and they had positive role models; there was more interaction between students and staff members; the mentees (first years) reported that the transition to university life was easier and the mentors felt that they learned a lot about themselves as well as experienced improvement in life skills.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades there has been a worldwide trend towards initiating and implementing mentorship programs in a wide variety of organizations, especially at tertiary institutions and in work environments. Mentorship programs at tertiary institutions were established to provide social, emotional and/or educational support to students with the aim of enhancing professional conduct (Milner & Bossers, 2005). The main aim of these mentorship programs is to facilitate a student or newly qualified professional who can be viewed as a generalist to develop into a specialist or expert in their field of practice (Rosser, Rice, Campbell & Jack, 2004).

Professionalism is not a process of natural development. Not everybody has instinctive knowledge about being a professional. This is one of the reasons why professional physiotherapy associations and other organizations develop and implement mentorship programs. The majority of mentorship programs currently functioning in the field of Physiotherapy use more experienced physiotherapists to guide newly qualified physiotherapists.

In order to develop a mentorship program, it is important to investigate whether mentorship programs actually achieve the results that they originally set out to do. Evidence that mentorship programs are effective or have the effect that they intended to have, is difficult to establish. This is due to the fact that most of the research is qualitative in nature. Authors Block, Claffey, Korow & McCaffrey (2005) and Milner & Bossers (2005) seem to agree that mentoring add value to the professional development of students, but only two studies were found that investigated the value or impact of a mentorship program.

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Milner & Bossers (2005) evaluated an occupational therapy mentorship program at the University of Western Ontario. They performed a quantitative study to evaluate the experience, strengths, weaknesses, changes needed, and effectiveness of the mentorship program and whether it should continue or not. The researchers used questionnaires (n=179) in the evaluation of the program. The results indicated that the program should continue and that it was effective in assisting students in the development of professionalism.

Rosser, et al (2004) evaluated a pilot mentorship program for specialist practitioner-nurses in the United Kingdom. The conclusion of the study was that most participants believed that the presence of a mentor was important during role transition and that the program prepared and supported the mentors effectively for the role they had to play.

Limited literature is available on South African mentorship programs and specifically on the evaluation or development of such programs. Page, Loots & Du Toit published an article in 2005 on the tutor/mentor program at the University of Stellenbosch. Advantages of a mentorship program identified in their study indicated that mentors and mentees engaged in more interactive learning, more active learning, more open communication, immediate feedback, less anxiety, and greater ownership of the learning material by the student. No literature could be found on a mentorship program designed specifically for a physiotherapy department or developed for physiotherapy students in South Africa.

In 1996 a curriculum for a new course for physiotherapy students, namely *Professional Development and Leadership* (PDL), was developed by Eksteen, Mostert and Tshibangu (1997) in the physiotherapy department (PD) of the University of Pretoria (UP). The main aims of this course were:

- to promote the development of the self-concept of students,
- to be a successful student,

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- to develop their maximal potential as a person as well as a physiotherapist, and
- to become a citizen of the country who can make a holistic contribution to the community they live and work in.

The limitation of the course however was that continuous practical and personal support for the students (in the form of a mentorship program, to facilitate the integration of the interpersonal skills acquired as part of their lifestyle, with the acquired knowledge in the academic course) did not exist at that stage.

During 2005 a need was recognized by the staff of the PD at UP for a program that will address the emotional/personal wellbeing of all students, and in particular first year students. Because of a special interest in emotional support and crisis debriefing, as well as four years experience as a volunteer at a crisis centre, the researcher was approached by the PD to develop and establish such a mentorship program.

1.1.1 Development of the HAPPY Mentorship Program

According to Hayes (1998) mentoring is defined as:

> *…a voluntary, intense, committed, extended, dynamic, interactive, supportive, trusting relationship between two people, one experienced and the other a newcomer, characterized by mutuality*.

The characteristics of mentors and mentor programs are described by Hayes (2005); North, Johnson, Knotts & Whelan (2006); Pfund (2006); Ridout (2006); and Singletary (2005). According to these studies the characteristics of a mentoring/mentorship program are described as:

- consistency in terms of a positive approach towards a supportive and open environment for discussion and expressing of opinions, and
- dynamic, interactive, trusting and committed to the program and the mentee (Milner & Bossers 2005).

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Characteristics of a mentor include:

- being supportive,
- being a facilitator,
- being encouraging, promoting independence and conveying joy,
- being responsive, a good listener, open and honest, non-judgmental, approachable, available, patient, and
- having a genuine interest in helping the mentee (Ridout, 2006; Singletary, 2005).

With the definition and characteristics of an effective mentor in mind, a mentorship program was developed at the beginning of the academic year 2006 at the PD at UP. The aims of the development of a mentorship program (before the commencement of the research) were to:

- provide students with a supportive environment that will motivate and assist them to develop to their maximum personal and academic potential,
- structure the mentorship program in such a way that it provides a framework for positive interaction between students, peer mentors and staff,
- create an atmosphere and program structure that would help junior students to understand and manage the challenges of life at university,
- to establish a procedure during which the mentorship program could be introduced to senior students and to give them the opportunity to volunteer to become peer mentors,
- equip volunteer senior students to become peer mentors who are positive role models to junior students,
- equip students who volunteer to become peer mentors to develop practical skills in interpersonal communication, conflict management, leadership and other interpersonal skills in order to facilitate the development of these skills in their mentees, and
- give every physiotherapy student the opportunity to develop into a well-balanced student and a professional physiotherapist.

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In order to stimulate the imagination of the students and help them to identify with the program, the researcher felt that this mentorship program should have a unique name. With the above-mentioned characteristics of a mentor and a mentorship program and objectives of the PD for the mentorship program in mind, the researcher created a name for the mentorship program in the form of an acronym. The acronym HAPPY was decided on and it stands for:

- H: honourable
- A: approachable
- P: positive attitude
- P: productive participant
- Y: yearning for learning

According to the Oxford dictionary (2000) the concept "happy" is defined as

> *…the state of pleasurable content of mind, which results from success or the attainment of what is considered good*.

The acronym HAPPY reflects the characteristics of a mentorship program mentioned by authors Milner & Bossers (2004), Hayes (1998), Ridout (2006) and Singletary (2005) as well as the aim envisaged by the PD with the mentorship program. This aim is to give every student the opportunity to attain emotional wellbeing and develop as a physiotherapist, "counsellor" (emotional supporter) and health educator − Pryor & Prasad (2002) − and have a positive influence on their patients, colleagues, as well as the community of which he/she will be part.

The mentorship program was launched in February 2006. A brief introduction was given to the third and fourth year students and they were invited to apply to the program coordinator to be trained as peer mentors. It was explained to them that participation in the mentor program was voluntary. Participation would not benefit them academically, they would not receive any remuneration and that the time spent on training and meetings with their mentees would have to take place in their own free time.

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Application forms, to apply to be a peer mentor, were handed out, completed and were returned to the program coordinator (Addendum 1). The program coordinator conducted interviews with each of the potential peer mentors during which the content, objectives, and aims of the program were explained. They were asked to sign a written agreement in which they committed themselves to the mentorship program for a year (Addendum 2).

First year students were also introduced to the program and were informed that a peer mentor (fourth year student) would contact them. The second year students were given a choice as to whether they wanted a peer mentor or not. They had to submit a written application form (to be allocated to a peer mentor) to the program coordinator (Addendum 3). Third year peer mentors were assigned to the second year mentees.

One main training seminar for peer mentors was conducted on a Saturday morning. The main objectives of the training seminar were to train senior students to:

- give emotional support to mentees whenever necessary,
- defuse or manage any crisis experienced by the mentee, and
- empower the mentee to be able to manage any crisis or problem.

The program coordinator compiled a training manual which was handed out to the peer mentors. The contents of the training manual included the following:

- Self portrait: Know yourself questionnaire
- Characteristics of a peer mentor:
    - honourable
    - approachable
    - positive attitude
    - productive participant
    - yearning for learning
- Emotional intelligence
    - characteristics

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- Person centred support
- General tips on mentoring

Follow-up training and report-back sessions were conducted throughout the year by the program coordinator. During these sessions between the program coordinator and the peer mentors, problems and possible solutions were discussed and report forms, on which peer mentors could give an account of their meetings with the mentees, were collected (Addendum 4).

Matching of peer mentors and mentees was done randomly using the class lists of the year groups. Where possible, male mentees were matched with male peer mentors; but some male mentees had female mentors (this was necessary because of the fact that there were only two male peer mentors).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is no other peer mentorship program developed specifically for a physiotherapy department in South Africa that could be used as a guide to establish the HAPPY Mentorship Program. Limited literature is available on the establishment of a mentorship program at tertiary institutions in South Africa − only one study was found on a mentor program at the University of Stellenbosch where the authors evaluated the perspectives of the students of a South African mentorship program over a six-year period.

The concept of mentoring was foreign to the students in the PD at UP. The concept where senior students would mentor junior students (mentees) had to be introduced to them and both peer mentors and mentees had to engage into the program and take ownership of it.

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Due to limited South African research on mentorship programs, it was therefore decided that the researcher would develop, establish, implement and review the program using the experiences and perceptions of the students.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Is there a need amongst physiotherapy students at UP for the HAPPY Mentorship Program?
- What are the views and experiences of the physiotherapy students at UP on the HAPPY Mentorship Program?
- Is the HAPPY Mentorship program achieving the goals of the PD at UP for such a program?

1.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

To answer the research questions the research approach should reflect the process of problem solving and decision making during the implementation of the program as well as the students' participation and evaluation of the program and suggestions on how to adapt the program to suit their needs best. The process should further:

- reflect the investigation into an existing mentorship program,
- reflect on the process of implementation and the results of the program evaluation,
- reflect on decision making, followed by
- action to implement the suggestions made by the participants of the study.

To determine whether the adapted program is meeting the needs/has achieved its original goal(s):

- a re-investigation has to be performed,
- reflection on the data should take place again,
- decision making, and

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- new actions, based on the reflection, should be implemented.

The only research approach that fits such a continuous process of data gathering, reflection, planning and action, is a participatory action research approach.

A qualitative, descriptive, participatory action research approach was chosen to conduct this study (De Vos et al, 2002). Action research is known by various phrases (e.g. action inquiry; collaborative research and participatory inquiry) and these various terms make it difficult to obtain one definition. The researcher decided on two definitions that offer an inclusive definition, those of Dick (2002) and of Bradbury & Reason (2003).

According to Dick (2002) action research can be defined as:

> *… a flexible spiral process which allows action (change, improvement) and research (understanding, knowledge) to be achieved at the same time. The understanding allows more informed change and at the same time is informed by that change. This allows the understanding to be widely shared and the change to be pursued with commitment.* ***(http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/aandr.html)***

Bradbury & Reason (2003) offer the following definition:

> *…a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory world-view. It seeks to reconnect action and reflection, theory and practise in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people*

With this research, the researcher seeks to develop a mentor program for the physiotherapy students that could result in the implementation of a peer mentorship program (Streuber Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). This program will be developed for the students, therefore the participants in the program development and the research will be the physiotherapy students who participate in the peer mentorship program as well as those who did not participate in the peer mentorship program.

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1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to establish a peer mentorship program in the PD of UP by incorporating the students as participants in the mentorship program as well as in the research process. This will entail that students participate as peer mentors or mentees, evaluate the process or activity they went through as participants and make suggestions on how the program (process) should be adapted (if they experience the need for it). Students who did not participate in the mentorship program will also be included in the study in order to gather as much data as possible. Their insight as outsiders might give an important perspective. The suggested changes will be implemented by the program coordinator.

The study will be done in two phases. The objectives of the first phase are to:

- develop and implement a peer mentorship program for physiotherapy students at UP,
- determine the physiotherapy students' experience of whether the first implementation of the HAPPY Mentorship Program meet their needs for social, emotional and/or academic support, and
- identify whether there is a need amongst the physiotherapy students at UP for the mentorship program to continue.

If the students do not express a need for the HAPPY Mentorship program to continue, the study will end here.

If the students expressed a need for the HAPPY Mentorship to continue, the further objectives are to:

- establish whether the students have any suggestions on how to adapt any facet of the program so that it will optimize the program to meet their needs for a mentorship program,
- establish the extent to which the objectives of the PD for the mentorship program have been met, and
- based on the data gathered through implementing abovementioned

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objectives, revise the HAPPY Mentorship Program.

The objectives for the second phase are to:

- implement the revised HAPPY Mentorship Program,
- monitor the process of delivery according to revised program schedule
- determine whether the adapted version of the HAPPY Mentorship Program is addressing the limitations that were identified in the first phase of the mentorship program,
- determine whether the adapted program meets the needs of physiotherapy students for social, emotional and/or academic support,
- establish whether the students have any other/further suggestions on how any facet of the mentorship program should be adapted to address needs that have not been met or that have not been identified previously during phase one,
- establish the extent to which the objectives of the PD for the mentorship program have been met with the adapted version of the mentorship program,
- revise and adapt the HAPPY Mentorship Program according to data gathered from students and staff members of the PD once more, and
- formulate the process and guidelines on which a peer mentorship program for undergraduate physiotherapy students at UP is based.

1.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population for the research will be all students at the PD at UP. The sample group will be those students who volunteer to participate in the study. Students who are peer mentors (third and fourth year students), mentees (first year students and second year students who had peer mentors), as well as students who did not participate in the mentorship program (second, third and fourth years) will be approached to participate voluntarily in the study.

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1.7 RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process is explained in the following three tables:

- Activities preceding the study
- Phase One
- Phase Two

Table 1.1

Activities preceding the research study

	ACTION	METHODS
ACTIVITIES PRECEDING THE RESEARCH STUDY	Need was identified by PD of UP	Possible solution → peer mentorship program
	Decision by PD to develop peer mentoring	Literature review Name of program was created Training manual was compiled

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Table 1.2

Phase One of participatory action research

PHASE ONE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY	Introduction of HAPPY Mentorship Program	Possible mentors will be made aware of program and invited to apply Mentors will be selected and trained First year students (mentees) will be introduced to the program Mentor and mentee matching will be done randomly Mentors will be allowed to start mentoring process Follow-up training and informal support by the program coordinator
	Data collection	Methods: focus group discussions and self-report questionnaires
	Data analysis	Transcribing of focus group discussions Coding of data collected: open coding & axial coding Conclusion
	Revising and adapting of program	

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Table 1.3

Phase Two of participatory action research

	ACTION	METHODS
PHASE TWO OF THE RESEARCH STUDY	Implementation of adapted program	Revising of training manuals Recruiting of potential peer mentors Training of peer mentors Matching of peer mentors and mentees
	Data collection	Focus group discussions Self-report questionnaires Any other techniques that have become evident during phase one of the study
	Data analysis	Transcribing of focus group discussions Coding of data collected: open coding & axial coding Conclusion
	Revising and adapting of program	

1.7.1 Data collection plan

During phase one of the study the researcher will be using focus group discussions and self-report questionnaires. Focus group discussions will be done with students selected from each of the following groups: peer mentors; mentees; students who did not participate in the mentorship program. The students will be invited to participate voluntary. Self-report questionnaires will be completed by all students in the PD who volunteer to participate in the study.

These methods of data collection, namely focus group discussions and self-reported questionnaires, were chosen for the following reasons:

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- Focus group discussions facilitated by a group leader are an integral part of any action research study. It gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain data not otherwise obtainable (Cunningham, 1993). By using focus group discussions the participants are involved in the development process. These discussions are carefully planned and conducted in a permissive, non-threatening environment.

- Self-report questionnaires with open-ended questions are used because it allows respondents to express themselves in their own words. It also offers them the opportunity to elaborate on their answers (Clarke & Dawson, 1999).

During phase two the same methods will be used as well as any other data gathering techniques that becomes evident during the data analysis in phase one.

1.7.2 Data analysis

Focus group discussions will be recorded with two tape recorders. An observer (experienced in qualitative research) attending the focus group discussions, will make notes. Field notes will also be made by the facilitator of the focus group discussions at the conclusion of the session. Data will be transcribed verbatim. It will be read through a few times until themes can be identified. The themes will be coded (open coded and then axially coded) to search for trends and patterns in the experiences and opinions of the participants. Data obtained from the self-report forms will also be open coded first followed by axially coded by determining the relationship between the identified concepts.

1.8 MEASURES TO ENSURE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY (TRUSTWORTHINESS)

According to Lincoln and Guba, the basic question to address trustworthiness is:

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> *How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?* (1985, p. 290)

The researcher will use the following methods to ensure trustworthiness:

1.8.1 Low interference descriptors

When using this method the researcher will use descriptions phrased very close to the participant's accounts and the focus group facilitators' as well as observers' field notes. Direct quotation (verbatim) will be used where applicable to ensure that the data is interpreted and reported correctly.

1.8.2 Data triangulation

The researcher will be obtaining data on the same "variable" from different sources:

- Peer mentors
- Mentees
- Students not participating in the mentorship program.

Similar questions about the mentorship program will be asked and answered by three different groups (peer mentors, mentees and non-participants) in order to get a full perspective of the students' experiences about the HAPPY Mentorship Program.

1.8.3 Methods triangulation

Multiple methods will be used. In this study, the researcher will use:

- self-report questionnaires, and
- focus group discussions

Two different methods will be used to collect and interpret the data to ensure that the same information was gathered by using different methods.

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1.8.4 Member checking

The researcher will give feedback and hold discussions with the actual participants about her interpretations and conclusions on the gathered data. This will be done to verify the participants' experiences and give insight into the data.

1.8.5 Peer review

The researcher will discuss her interpretations and conclusions on the raw data with her colleagues in the PD of UP.

1.8.6 Data saturation

Data collection (especially focus group discussions) will continue until saturation of data is reached.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The research protocol of this study (number S90/2006) was presented to the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee and was found to be acceptable.
- All participants will be informed on the format of data collection and the reasons for the data analysis.
- At completion of the study a copy of the results, discussion and recommendations will be made available to all participants.
- Participation will be voluntary and all information will be handled confidentially. No names will be revealed – if direct quotes will be used to indicate continuation of interpretation of observation in the text, fictional names will be used.

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1.10 THE COURSE OF THE STUDY

The reasons and aims for developing and establishing a peer mentorship program at the PD of UP are discussed in Chapter 1. Furthermore, the research problem, research questions and research approach is discussed. The process of the study, the methods of data gathering, as well as the data analysis are indicated.

At the conclusion of the chapter, the ethical considerations and the ways to ensure trustworthiness are discussed.

In Chapter 2 literature concerning aspects of mentoring is reviewed. Some of the aspects covered are definitions of mentoring, mentoring functions and roles, characteristics of a mentor, and the need for a mentorship program. Some limitations are described which include the actual content of the mentor training programs, how matching between mentor and mentee is done, and the developing process of a mentorship program.

Chapter 3 describes the research design, the aims and study population of phase one of the research study. Furthermore, the data collection and analysis will be discussed. The results obtained from data gathered in phase one are described in detail.

In Chapter 4 the research design, the aims, study population, data gathering and data analysis of phase two of the research study are discussed. The results are described in detail.

In Chapter 5 the results of the study are discussed based on the objectives of the study. The limitations of the study, as well as the recommendations for further study are also discussed.

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CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of the literature review in qualitative research is to construct a logical framework for the research project (De Vos et al, 2002, p. 266 – 267). True to qualitative research, the literature review in Chapter 2 aims to serve the following functions:

- to demonstrate the basic conjectures behind the research questions, and
- to show that some gaps in previous research have been identified and that this study will aim to fill that demonstrated gap.

The aspects of mentoring that form the basis or the foundation of a mentorship program to be discussed in this chapter include:

- Definitions of mentoring
- Mentoring functions and roles
- Characteristics of a mentor
- The need for a mentorship program
- Mentorship programs
- Assessment of a mentorship program
- Research design and measurement tools.

2.2 METHODOLOGY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The search for relevant literature was initially started using the health databases Medline and Pubmed, on the library website of the Faculty of Health Care Sciences of the University of Pretoria. The keywords used at first were peer mentorship; physiotherapy; undergraduate students. No articles were found. The search was expanded to include peer mentorship programs in any faculty and numerous

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articles were found of which 11 were relevant to this research study; relevant being mentorship programs at tertiary institutions.

A second search was done using Google Scholar and the keywords used were: mentorship programs; peer mentoring; tertiary education; professional life. Advanced search options included only English articles, full text articles on human subjects published in the previous 20 years. Twenty seven articles were found of which nine were relevant.

When a search was done to find articles reporting on research done on the assessment of mentorship programs, the following keywords were used: assessment; mentorship programs; undergraduate programs. The search was done in the Medline and Pubmed databases and only two articles were found.

A summary of the most relevant articles is tabled below. The articles were analyzed and grouped into the following themes: undergraduate and postgraduate mentoring; mentoring for professionals; assessment or evaluation of mentorship programs, and a category for other relevant articles that could not be classified under any of the other groups.

TABLE 2.1
Undergraduate and postgraduate student mentoring

AUTHORS	TITLE	SETTING	SUMMARY
Page, BJ, Loots, A & Du Toit, DF (2005)	Perspectives on a South African tutor/mentor program: the Stellenbosch University experience.	University of Stellenbosch, Faculty of Health Science. Ten top second year students mentor first year students	• Introduction: background, bridging programs, mentoring at Health Sciences faculty, program development, problems in early years, subsequent development. • Implementation: conceptual framework, funding. • Success factors: program had effective role in student academic success irrespective of course design; senior students were able to advise mentees on ways to study; gave them opportunity to workshop together. • Conclusion: developing program over six years, still changing, put emphasis on tutoring.

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Pfund, C, Pribbenow, CM, Branchaw, J, Lauffer, SM & Handelsman, J (2006)	The Merits of Training Mentors	Wisconsin Mentoring Seminar: training graduate students and post-doctoral researchers as mentors for undergraduates	• Wisconsin Mentoring Seminar • Objectives of seminar: to train mentors to communicate effectively; to consider issues of human diversity; to discuss mentoring approaches; to apply a "scientific teaching" approach to mentoring. • Implementation: over past 30 months the seminar has been run 22 times at 11 institutions. • Evaluation of impact of seminar by surveys; data gathered on mentors who either did or did not participate in the seminar. • All considered seminar as positive, more aware of students' needs. • Seminar is an effective means of improving communication and evaluating skills of mentors.
Rose, GL & Rukstalis, MR (2008)	Imparting medical ethics: The role of mentorship in clinical training	Medical students and faculty members	• Medical ethics: Principles of Medical Ethics – codifies honourable behaviours for physicians; emphasize competence and honesty. • Mentoring in medical school: definition – mentors serve as models that directly assist in career development and provide emotional support. Advantages & disadvantages of mentoring. Prevalence of mentoring. Ethical issues in mentoring relationships. • Alternatives to one-on-one mentoring: assigned individual; small group or peer; intentional modelling; implication for mentoring, and ethics instruction. • Recommendations for administrators, faculty members and students tabled, e.g.: administrators should examine curricula for opportunities to incorporate mentoring functions that develop moral character; faculty should give students the opportunity to process their clinical learning by asking questions; students should actively seek out role models, mentors among faculty or senior students.
Yates, P, Cunningham, J, Moyle, W & Wollin, J (1997)	Peer mentorship in clinical education: first year students	School of Nursing, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.	• Aim of study – to examine the potential a peer mentorship may have in helping nursing students to improve clinical learning outcomes. • Preliminary findings of pilot peer mentorship programme. • Results suggest benefits of mentoring - reducing anxiety, improving self confidence

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Johnson, WB (2008)	Are advocacy, mutuality, and evaluation incompatible mentoring functions?	Faculty members in higher education mentoring students	• Mentoring in graduate education: Elements of mentoring: enduring personal relationships; increasingly reciprocal and mutual; greater career experience and achievement; provide career assistance. • Mentor functions (encouragement, affirmation, information sharing, self-disclosure, counselling, protection, and collegiality) are likely to facilitate mutuality and mentor advocacy. • Student preference for collegiality and mutuality – students are most satisfied when mentors provide significant emotional support, genuine collaboration and friendship. • Tensions between advocacy and evaluation in mentorship – mentors must learn to strike a balance between advocacy and evaluation functions. • Recommendations for administrators and faculty: actively prepare faculty for mentor role; educate and train faculty in the art of boundary maintenance; feedback function; encourage mentoring constellations; consider strategies for separating mentorship and evaluator roles; mutuality and advocacy may facilitate remediation.

TABLE 2.2
Mentoring for professionals

AUTHORS	TITLE	SETTING	COMMENTS
Barnett, JE (2008)	Mentoring, boundaries, and multiple relationships: opportunities and challenges.	Professional development of psychologists	• Why mentoring: roles and definitions of mentoring. • Boundaries: basic ground rules for professional relationships. • Boundaries crossings and violations - Whether crossings will result in violations depends on: intent; crossing should be perceived as positive by protégé; crossing should not occur to gratify mentors' needs. • Multiple relationships e.g. to serve as a graduate student's professor, research supervisor, advisor, and mentor. • Recommendations for effective boundaries in mentoring include: engage in a thoughtful process of ethical decision-making prior to crossing boundaries; always consider motivations of action; remain aware of own emotional state.

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Block, LM, Claffey, C, Korow, MK & McCaffrey, R (2005)	The Value of Mentorship within Nursing Organizations.	Florida, USA. Mentorship programs in hospitals to enhance nursing satisfaction	• Statement of problem – to review the impact nurse mentorship programs have on nurse retention and healthcare organizations. • Background – present nursing shortage is a result of nurses leaving the profession for other jobs. Main reasons: burnout; frustration; lack of administrative and peer support. • Discussion: mentorship program is cost-effective, fosters long-term growth and retention through a structured support system that enhances job satisfaction. • Recommendations for mentorship programs: organization must consider the needs of mentors and mentees; organization must support these initiatives and be willing to commit both financial and human resources to these programs; encourage organizations to support education regarding benefits of mentoring.
Hayes, EF (2005)	Approaches to Mentoring: How to Mentor and Be Mentored	University of Massachusetts. Associate Professor and Coordinator of Family Nurse Practitioner Concentration	• Mentoring: definitions, benefits, purpose. • Mentoring and mentee qualities (e.g. mentor should be committed to invest time and resources; willing to share knowledge, interests, values and beliefs) • Phases of mentoring: Early phases include planning; developing trust; exploring roles; responsibilities. Final phases reflect accomplishment; mentee proficiency and competence; self-actualization. • Mentoring programs: most successful when both parties are willing and able to devote time, energy and resources to the relationship; ideally requires a long-term commitment e.g. a year; ideal if potential mentors and mentees live in the same geographical area.
Koplin-Baucum, S (2005)	Innovative Solution: Mentor program: Evaluation, Change , and Challenges	Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center – 18-month registered nurse mentoring program	• Mentor preparation: interested nurses apply, attend six-hour class for instruction. • Mentor committee: two clinical nurse specialists, a chief nursing officer, a data entry technician, a human resources specialist, and four staff registered nurses from various clinical areas. • Impact of program – retention

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North, A, Johnson, J, Knotts, K & Whelan, L (2006)	Ground instability with mentoring	Registered nurses	• Definition and roles of mentors. • Choosing mentors. • Goal of mentor relationship - to achieve a safe and competent practise. Program provided support for novice nurses and enriched the practise of experts.
Ridout, S (2006)	Mentoring: Guided by the light.	Australian Physical Therapy Association – Members Mentoring Members Program	• Overview: definitions, roles. • What mentoring entails – it enhances leadership, professional and career development and member recruitment and retention. • Characteristics of a good mentor: responsive; good listener; open and honest; approachable and available; patience; good observer, etc. • Benefits for the mentor: feel good; demonstrates values; opportunity to expand professional network. • Mentoring for leadership development. • Self-selection mentoring. • Distance mentoring. • Mentoring culture.
Singletary, SE (2005)	Mentoring Surgeons for the 21st Century	Mentoring surgeons at a large tertiary care cancer treatment centre (own experience) and published reports of mentoring strategies at other institutions	• Characteristics of a good mentor and mentee. • Skills needed for surgeons in training. • Special demands of 21st century. • How model of mentoring change to meet demands: mosaic mentoring; collaborative mentoring; mentoring through professional organizations; mid-career mentoring. • How to develop a mentoring culture. Institution must foster a mentoring culture and successful mentors must be trained. Skills to be taught: interpersonal communication; time-management; presentation skills; teaching and team-building skills.

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TABLE 2.3
Assessment/evaluation of mentorship programs

AUTHORS	TITLE	SETTING	COMMENTS
Milner, T & Bossers, A (2005)	Evaluation of an occupational therapy mentorship program	Evaluates the mentorship program offered at the Occupational Therapy Department of The University of Western Ontario	• Literature review. • Method: mentors and mentees over four graduating years (1999 – 2002) completed survey using open-ended questions. • Positive comments on the mentorship program: inspiring; valuable experience; mentors were helpful, open, flexible, supportive; program facilitated professionalism, provoked thinking, good learning experience, provided insight into real occupational therapy. • Criticism of the program: did not establish a relationship; disappointing experience; lack of consistency; scheduling of meetings were difficult; program too formal and structured; lack of commitment; meetings not organized well. • Recommendations from the participants: ability to choose own mentor; incorporating meeting times into class schedule; increase consistency between groups increase allotted time for mentoring.
Rosser, M, Rice, AM, Campbell, H & Jack, C (2004)	Evaluation of a mentorship programme for specialist practitioners	Macmillan National Institute of Education – established specialist practitioners support new practitioners (nursing)	• Development, definitions and characteristics of mentoring. • Evaluation methods: formative approach using self-report questionnaires with open and closed questions. Participants: mentors, mentees, service line managers and Macmillan service development managers. • Impact of the programme: mentors were prepared for the role: mentees were enabled; benefits to the service. • Program content and design. • Conclusion and future directions.

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TABLE 2.4
Other relevant articles

AUTHORS	TITLE	SETTING	COMMENTS
Jacobi, M (1991)	Mentoring and Undergraduate Academic Success: A Literature Review	Critical review of literature on mentoring, emphasis on links between mentoring and academic success	• Definitions of mentoring. • Mentoring functions and roles. • Characteristics of relationships. • Mentoring and undergraduate success: prevalence; links between mentoring and academic success. • Research design. • Theoretical models. • Recommendation for further studies: quasi-experimental research needed to understand relationship between mentoring and academic success; evaluation research to measure effectiveness of formal mentoring; qualitative and ethnographic research to understand dynamics and development of mentoring relationships.
Tucker, B, Jones, S, Mandy, A & Gupta, R (2006)	Physiotherapy students' sources of stress, perceived course difficulty, and paid employment: Comparison between Western Australia and United Kingdom.	Physiotherapy students in Western Australia and United Kingdom	• Introduction: physiotherapy education; levels of stress; aims of study. • Methods: questionnaire comprising of demographic section and USOS questionnaire. • Results: major sources of stress, differences between subgroups • Discussion: academic stress is highest stressor; similar levels of stress in Australia and UK; final year students had less stress; female students experience more stress.

The aspects of mentoring mentioned in paragraph 2.1 will now be discussed under the following headings:

- Definitions of mentoring
- Mentoring functions and roles
- Characteristics of a mentor
- The need for a mentorship program
- Mentorship programs

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- Assessment of a mentorship program
- Research design and measurement tools.

2.3 DEFINITION OF MENTORING

The researcher commenced this study by searching for a definition for the word "mentoring" or "mentors". Numerous definitions were found as well as a marked diversity in characterizing these concepts. A critical review done by Merriam (1983) concludes that mentoring is not clearly conceptualized in the literature. That is still the case in present literature. There seems to be confusion on what exactly is being measured when assessing a mentorship program and there is no clear indication of the ingredients of a successful program. Further confusion is caused by the following:

> *Mentoring appears to mean one thing to developmental psychologists, another thing to business people, and a third thing to those in academic settings.*

The word mentor (according to the Oxford Dictionary, 2000) means:

> *… an experienced and trusted counsellor or adviser*.

The origin of the word is generally believed to be derived from a character in Homer's *Odyssey* and Fenelon's *Telemaque.*

In Homer's *Odyssey,* Mentor is a trusted friend to whom Ulysses leaves the care of his household when he departs for the Trojan War (a ten-year battle). The goddess Athena assumes the form of Mentor and cares for Ulysses' son, Telemachus, until the war's conclusion. Some variations of this story state that she actually accompanies Telemachus on his journey to search for his father at the end of the war. Some variations describe Mentor as a man. This story has reached mythical proportions and is probably the most widely-cited story in history. (http//:www.mythweb.com/odessy/index.html)

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In a literature review done by Jacobi (1991) definitions for mentoring from three different fields were tabled. As this study on the HAPPY Mentorship Program is conducted at a tertiary education institution, the following table lists definitions that have been derived from the higher education field.

TABLE 2.5

Definitions of mentoring in higher education

Author	Definition
Blackwell (1989)	"Mentoring … is a process by which persons of superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés" (p. 9).
Lester & Johnson (1981)	"Mentoring as a function of education institutions can be identified as a one-to-one learning relationship between an older person and a younger person that is based on modelling behaviour and extended dialogue between them" (p. 119).
Moore & Amey (1988)	"By our definition, mentoring is a form of professional socialization whereby a more experienced (usually older) individual acts as a guide, role model, teacher and patron of a less experienced (often younger) protégé. The aim of the relationship is the further development and refinement of the protégé's skills, abilities and understanding" (p. 45).
Moses (1989)	"Ideally, a professor takes an undergraduate or graduate student under his or her wing, helps the student set goals and develop skills, and facilitates the students' successful entry into academic and professional circles" (p. 9).
Schmidt & Wolfe (1980)	"Mentors are colleagues and supervisors who actively provide guidance, support, and opportunities for the protégé. The functions of a mentor consist of acting as a role model, a consultant/advisor, and a sponsor. (p. 45).
Schandley (1989)	"First, it is an intentional process of interaction between at least two individuals… Second, mentoring is a nurturing process that fosters the growth and development of the protégé… Third, mentoring is an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé…Fourth, mentoring is a supportive, often protective process. The mentor can serve as an important guide or reality checker in introducing the protégé to the environment he and she is preparing for. Finally … an essential component of serving as a mentor is role modelling". (p. 60).

Although these references in Table 2.5 were published 20 years ago, they are still relevant and are included to demonstrate that this concept of mentoring is definitely not a new or recent one.

More recent definitions found in the literature include the following:

- *Mentor relationships can be described as dynamic, emotionally connected, reciprocal relationships in which the faculty member or supervisor*

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shows deliberate and generative concern for the student or trainee beyond mere acquisition of knowledge or clinical skill (Johnson, 2008).

- *Mentors and protégés have enduring, personal, and reciprocal relationships… Mentors encourage the protégé's self-exploration, and the process can lead to identify transformation* (Rose and Rukstalis, 2008).
- *A relationship rather than a function, mentoring fosters personal nurturing between the mentor and the mentee. Mentoring encompasses both personal and professional growth toward excellence* (North et al, 2006).

From the above-mentioned definitions it is clear that the basic concepts of mentoring remained the same. It implies that mentoring is a process and a relationship, not merely a function. Mentors guide, support and assist the mentee to develop and grow to become a competent professional.

The definition the researcher found to be relevant to this program was one used by Hayes in an article published in 1998. According to Hayes (1998), mentoring is:

> *…a voluntary, intense, committed, extended, dynamic, interactive, supportive, trusting relationship between two people, one experienced, and the other a newcomer, characterized by mutuality*.

In this study, mentoring is defined as a voluntary, committed and supportive relationship between a senior (third or fourth year) student, as the mentor, and a first year student (the mentee). From the definitions described in paragraph 2.2 it can be deduced that researchers indicate both a psychosocial and a vocational function, thus, emotional and psychological support, direct assistance with career and professional development, and role modelling.

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2.4 MENTORING FUNCTIONS AND ROLES

Jacobi (1991) provided an overview of five functions or roles that have been ascribed to mentors. The authors selected by Jacobi for the above-mentioned literature review, satisfied four criteria, namely (a) they attempted to provide generic descriptions of mentoring; (b) their definitions were original, based on personal observations, interviews, or survey data; (c) their descriptions were relatively detailed; and (d) these authors are cited frequently in articles on mentoring. Mentoring functions from the consulted literature are summarised in Table 2.6.

TABLE 2.6

Mentoring functions

Functions	Blackwell 1989	Burke 1984	Kram 1985	Levinson et al 1978	Phillips-Jones 1982	Zey 1984
Acceptance/ support/ encouragement	X		X	X	X	X
Advice/ guidance	X		X	X	X	X
Access to resources						X
Challenge/ opportunity		X	X		X	
Clarify values/ goals	X					
Coaching		X	X			
Information	X	X				
Protection	X		X			X
Role model	X		X	X	X	
Social status						
Socialization/ "host"	X			X	X	X
Sponsorship	X	X	X	X		X
Stimulate acquisition of knowledge	X					
Training/ Instruction	X			X	X	X
Visibility			X		X	

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From the table it is clear that there is a wide variety of roles and functions ascribed to a mentor. The review that Jacobi did in 1991 indicated the following components of mentoring for which there is strong agreement:

- The primary dynamic of a mentoring relationship is to help and to provide support by the mentor to the mentee. This support is always intended to help the mentee to succeed academically or in the workplace.
- The specific functions provided to mentees vary, but mentoring includes any or all of the following broad components: emotional and psychological support; direct assistance with career and professional development, and role modelling.
- These relationships are reciprocal – both the mentor and the mentee benefit from the relationship. These benefits might be emotional or tangible in nature, but not monetary.
- Mentoring relationships requires direct interaction between mentor and mentee – this is a personal relationship.
- Relative to their mentees, mentors show greater achievement, experience and influence within a particular environment.

In an article written in 2005 on the approaches to mentoring, Hayes (2005) defines the role of the mentor as:

> *..to promote the newcomer's career advancement, educational and personal development.*

According to Hayes (2005) mentoring is the process during which a novice is encouraged to believe that he or she will be able to take on a new role successfully. Barnett (2008) describes the role as follows:

> *As role models, guides, and teachers, mentors may play a vital role in helping their protégés become competent professionals*.

Smith (2007) summarized the roles and tasks of a mentor in the form of a table.

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TABLE 2.7

A summary of the roles and tasks of the mentor (Smith, 2007)

A mentor is a/an… (roles)	A mentor… (tasks)
▪ Advisor ▪ Catalyst/enabler ▪ Critical friend ▪ Guide ▪ Listener ▪ Role model ▪ Sounding board ▪ Strategist ▪ Supporter ▪ Tactician ▪ Teacher	▪ Asks questions ▪ Challenges productively ▪ Encourages risk-taking ▪ Helps identify goals ▪ Listens actively ▪ Offers encouragement ▪ Promotes independence ▪ Provides feedback ▪ Share critical knowledge

The Australian Physiotherapy Association runs a mentorship program named MMM (Members Mentoring Members). They believe that mentoring includes the following functions: leadership development; career development; professional development; member recruitment and retention; growth in physiotherapy practice, education, research, and professionalism.

The role of the mentor in the HAPPY Mentorship Program is to:

- be an approachable emotional supporter,
- empower the first year student to be able to adapt to university life, and
- give them the opportunity to develop into a well-balanced student and a professional physiotherapist.

In view of the discussion in paragraph 2.4 on the role and functions of a mentor or a mentorship program, the next question is: what are the characteristics of a good mentor?

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2.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTOR

The characteristics of mentors and mentor programs are described by Hayes (2005); North, Johnson, Knotts & Whelan (2006); Pfund (2006); Ridout (2006); and Singletary (2005). According to these studies the characteristics of a mentoring/mentorship program are described as:

- Consistency in terms of a positive, supportive and open environment that creates an environment in which other people (in this situation the mentees) feel emotionally secure to discuss any subject and to express opinions;
- Dynamic, interactive, trusting and committed (Milner & Bossers, 2005).

Furthermore, a mentor should be:

- supportive,
- a facilitator,
- encouraging,
- promoting independence and convey joy,
- responsive,
- a good listener,
- open and honest,
- non-judgmental,
- approachable and available,
- patient,
- demonstrating a genuine interest in helping the mentee,
- teaching by example, and
- rejoicing in the success of their mentees.

It seems that there are various specific characteristics and tasks that can be assigned to mentors. This leads to the conclusion that there are certain actions that a mentor should not do. Singletary (2005) listed some of these actions mentors should not do, namely, do not:

- protect the mentee from experience,
- use threats or coercion to mould the mentees' live,

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- assume credit for the mentees' work,
- take over things the mentees should be doing themselves,
- force the mentee in any direction,
- use undue influence,
- lose critical oversight, and
- condemn.

Georgiou (2002) attempted to identify business leaders in South Africa who are recognized as having high morals and a good business ethic. She formulated the core of the characteristics of a mentor in the business environment in the form of an acronym:

M: modesty
E: excellence
N: nobility
T: tenacity
O: optimism
R: resourcefulness
S: success

To encompass the characteristics of a mentor mentioned in the literature as well as the characteristics the researcher felt to be essential to be successful as a mentor, the acronym HAPPY was created as the name for the mentorship program of the PD of UP. The acronym stands for:

- H: honourable
- A: approachable
- P: positive attitude
- P: productive participant
- Y: yearning for learning

2.6 THE NEED FOR A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Tucker, Jones, Mandy & Gupta (2006) compared the physiotherapy student's sources of stress, the perceived course difficulty, and paid employment between Western Australia and the United Kingdom (UK). This was done because educators were concerned about the levels of stress observed in students. Staff at Cur-

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tin University of Technology in Perth and University of Brighton in the UK estimated that during the course of one year fifteen (15) to eighteen (18) % of students display symptoms of depression or poor coping skills. One of the aims of their study was to identify the sources of stress of enrolled students at the above-mentioned tertiary education institutions in Western Australia and the UK.

Data was collected using a questionnaire which comprised a demographic section and an Undergraduate Sources of Stress (USOS) questionnaire. The USOS questionnaire comprised eighteen (18) items in three subsections (financial; personal and academic) and one item about overall levels of stress during the course. The students were asked to reflect on their years as a student in Physiotherapy and then rate the different items to indicate to what extent the items contributed to their levels of stress.

The majority (seventy-one (71) percent) of the respondents (which included seventy (70) percent of all students eligible to participate) perceived the course to be more difficult than they anticipated. All students indicated that academic issues, particularly the amount of work to learn, time demands of the course, and conflict with other activities, were the main source of stress during the course.

One of the recommendations of the study by Tucker, et al (2006) is that there may be a role for physiotherapy programs that assist students to manage stressors and to develop a 'work-life balance' in order to prepare them for professional life. Although this study was done in Western Australia and the UK the same results can be expected to be relevant in South Africa. The reason for this is that the curriculum and contact hours as well as clinical hours in South Africa are similar to those in Western Australia and the UK.

A study done on a peer mentorship program in clinical education for nurse practitioners showed that peer mentorship programs can reduce student anxiety, improve self-confidence, and help students to understand and negotiate the culture

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of the clinical environment on placement (Yates, Cunningham, Moyle & Wollin 1997).

Only one South African example of a mentorship program at a tertiary education institution could be found in the literature. It is a study conducted by Page, Loots and Du Toit (2005) at the University of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. They described their experience of the development of a tutor/mentor system over a six-year period from 1999–2005. Tertiary education institutions in South Africa report poor student "pass through" rates – one in five undergraduates and post graduates drop out annually. In an attempt to attend to the thirteen (13) to eighteen (18) percent failure rate among second year medical students a peer support program was launched. The main aim of this program was to equip students to become academically self-sufficient. The primary task of the mentors was tutoring – thus it was named a tutor/mentor program.

The reason for developing the support (mentor) program initiated by the PD of UP differs from the program at the University of Stellenbosch because of the good "through put" rate of the students at the PD of UP. Page, et al (2005) also mentioned that the allied health care disciplines (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dietetics and speech therapy) at Stellenbosch University have low failure rates. Therefore,

> *…to these disciplines, the tutor/mentor program plays a mentoring more than a tutoring role.*

The focus of the program at the University of Pretoria is to address the students' levels of stress and emotional wellbeing and to facilitate professional development. It was decided that a peer mentorship program might address the practical facilitation of the students' personal development and provide academic support that will enable students to develop into well-balanced professional physiotherapists.

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2.7 MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Formal mentoring programs have become increasingly popular over the last two decades. They are designed for a wide range of reasons; e.g. career development, retention, or academic success among students at risk of failure, or attrition (Allard, Dodd & Peralez, 1987). Other programs have placed students in the mentor role, hoping this experience will promote their development and reinforce their commitment to higher education (Humm & Riesman, 1988).

When developing the HAPPY Mentorship program, the researcher studied a number of other programs to ascertain what their aims and outcomes were. The keywords used in this search included peer mentoring, physiotherapy and tertiary education.

TABLE 2.8

Mentorship programs

INSTITUTION	FORM OF MENTORING	AIM/ OBJECTIVES	MENTORS +MENTEES	TRAINING	MEETINGS
Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center Koplin-Baucum (2005)	Formal: 18-month program for registered nurses (RN)	Was developed in response to nurse shortage to promote retention	Mentor: RN who has attended BGSMC mentor class Mentee: newly hired or transferred RN	Six-hour class taught by mentor committee	No information available
Australian Physiotherapy Association Ridout (2006)	Formal: qualified physiotherapists: experienced APTA members mentoring new members	To facilitate the professional development and career growth of another member	Mentors apply and information is added to database. Mentees contact mentor directly.	No information available	No information available
Notre	Formal:	Provide stu-	Mentors:	No infor-	Mentors

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Dame School of Physio-therapy	qualified clinicians mentoring students	dents with op-portunity to gain support from qualified clini-cian who is will-ing to share time	qualified clini-cians who volunteer. Mentees: stu-dents at Notre Dame	mation available	must meet face-to-face with mentees once a year from year 2-4
University of Texas at Brownsville http://blue.utb.edu/sa	Formal: peer men-toring	To help first year students to successfully adjust to uni-versity	Mentors are selected Mentees are first year stu-dents	Attend a two day workshop	No infor-mation available
James Cook Uni-versity	Formal: peer men-toring	To provide a welcoming and supportive envi-ronment for new students and link them with role mod-els	Mentors apply and have ap-pointment with coordina-tor. Mentees are first year stu-dents	Attend mentor training work-shops; two plan-ning ses-sions per year; two orientation days per year	Meet with mentees three times per semester
College of Physio-therapists of Manitoba	Formal: qualified physio-therapists mentoring new gradu-ates	To provide new graduate with the opportunity to continue learning; to fa-cilitate greater understanding of ethical is-sues; to in-crease men-tee's confi-dence in clinical practice.	Mentor: a col-lege regis-tered physio-therapist with minimum of two years ex-perience who volunteers Mentee: a new graduate	No infor-mation available	No infor-mation available
Faculty of Health Sci-ences, Stellen-bosch Uni-versity	Peer tu-tor/mentor	To enable/ empower stu-dents to be-come academi-cally self-sufficient and have them eventually "weaned off"	Top academic second year students men-tors five or six first year stu-dents; 3rd years mentors 2nd years	No infor-mation available	Tutor/ mentors were re-quired to meet with their groups two hours per week

Abbreviations:

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RN: registered nurses
BGSMC: Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center
APTA: Australian Physiotherapy Association

More recent studies have shown that mentorship programs are established to provide social, emotional and/or educational support to students with the aim to enhance professional conduct. Milner & Bossers (2005) conducted a study at the University of Western Ontario in Canada. They evaluated the mentorship program of the School of Occupational Therapy. In this program the students were divided into diversified groups of five or six mentees and assigned to one mentor. These groups (the mentor with his/her mentees) organized meetings once a week and sessions focused on ethical issues, marketing the profession and group-identified topics. Mentors, who were volunteers, had an orientation session with the coordinator of the program at the start of the program as well as a debriefing session at the end (after two years). The program coordinator also organized two meetings per year with the mentors to discuss the experience of being a mentor.

At the Macmillan National Institute of Education (Rosser, Rice, Campbell & Jack 2004) lecturers provided educational support for Macmillan specialist nursing professionals. The essence of their mentorship program was to facilitate a student or newly qualified nursing professional who could be viewed as a generalist, to develop into a specialist in their field of practice. The Macmillan Mentorship Training Programme was launched across the UK in consultation with Macmillan Clinical Nurse Specialists since nursing students across the United Kingdom expressed that they sometimes felt isolated and unsupported. The aim was to establish a formal mentorship program to provide mentors (experienced Macmillan nurses with knowledge and skills) to support new colleagues with role transition and facilitate their professional development. Mentors attended a two-day workshop where various topics were covered: e.g. definitions of mentorship; mentorship relationships, and role transitions. Mentees attended one of the two days to meet

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their mentors and to obtain an overview of the program. Mentors received continued support in the form of action learning groups.

Authors (Block, Claffey, Korow & McCaffrey 2005; Milner & Bossers 2005) seem to agree that mentoring add value to the professional development of students, but only two studies were found that evaluated the value or impact of a mentorship program.

2.8 ASSESSMENT OF A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Milner and Bossers (2005) evaluated an occupational therapy mentorship program at the University of Western Ontario. They performed a quantitative study to evaluate the experience, strengths, weaknesses, changes needed, and effectiveness of the mentorship program and whether it should continue or not. The researchers used questionnaires (n=179) in the evaluation of the mentor program. The results indicated that the program should continue and that it was effective in assisting students in the development of professionalism.

A study done by Rosser (2004) evaluated a pilot mentorship program for specialist practitioner-nurses in the United Kingdom. The conclusion of the study was:

> ..*there was a shared belief that the presence of a mentor was important during role transition and that the program was effective in preparing and supporting mentors for their role*.

According to Jacobi (1991) there are a limited number of empirical studies the association between mentoring and academic outcomes. As this is one of the objectives of the HAPPY Mentorship Program the researcher was interested in methods or tools for measuring the outcomes of a mentorship program. As far as informal/natural mentoring is concerned, only one study, by Jacobi, could be found assessing the relationship between mentoring and academic success. Erkut and Mokros (1985) used a survey in which 723 students at six different arts

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colleges completed a questionnaire. All respondents were able to identify a member of staff who had an impact on them, someone who demonstrated the kinds of qualities and skills they considered important for themselves. The authors, however, suggest that the development of mentor relationships is by-products rather than causes of high achievement.

Page et al (2005) concluded that for medical students the tutor/mentor program played an effective role in students' academic success. They arrived at this conclusion by comparing the academic results before and after the implementation of the tutor/mentor program.

According to Jacobi (1991), one of the best studies on evaluating the outcomes of a mentoring-transcript program for freshmen was done by Cosgrove in 1986. Students who had applied to enter the program were randomly assigned into control and experimental conditions. Opportunities for both cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons were provided for by such factors as place of residence and gender. Students who participated in the program were more satisfied with the university environment and showed greater developmental gains than the control group. Although this study showed some evidence of the effectiveness of the mentorship program, it did not measure the unique contribution of the mentorship program on its own versus other interventions, nor did it measure the effect of the mentorship program on the students' academic success.

To understand the impact of a formal mentorship program on academic success methodological rigor is necessary. Difficulties in comparing mentorship programs include the following:

- Mentoring programs differ significantly; they actually have little in common.
- The programs vary in their goals and objectives.
- The programs vary in methods of the selection, training and monitoring of mentors.

According to Jacobi (1991):

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Until some standardization emerges in the definitions, components, and goals of mentoring programs, empirical research is unlikely to provide convergent findings.

2.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Previous research done on mentoring and academic success has relied mostly on retrospective, correlational design; data were collected at a single point in time with a limited sample (e.g. Burke, 1984; Erkut & Mokros, 1989; Roche, 1979). This resulted in studies reporting results that fail to eliminate alternative explanations for the effects observed. Jacobi (1991) proposes that future research requires designs that include both cross-sectional and longitudinal components.

For the study on the HAPPY Mentorship Program it will not be possible to include a cross-sectional component as there are no mentees who did not have a mentor. It might be possible to compare the mentees who had regular contact with their mentors with those that did not have as much contact. The longitudinal component will be addressed as data was collected over a two year period.

2.10 CONCLUSION

The literature review in Chapter 2 includes an overview of several definitions of mentoring as well as the functions, roles and the characteristics that most authors ascribe to mentors. It was established that over a period of almost 30 years there were similarities in the definitions and characteristics of mentors used by the authors. The method of implementation and management of mentorship programs differ depending on the setting and the aims of the mentorship program. Despite the variations, some principles can be identified in all the programs:

- the aim or goal of the specific program,

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- the choice of mentors: some programs use volunteers, while other mentors are chosen by the program coordinator or manager,
- training for mentors and/or mentees,
- structure of the program – most programs do not have a formal structure, and
- evaluation or assessment of the program - only a few of the programs included some assessment.

Gaps identified included:

- the actual content of the mentor training programs,
- how matching between mentor and mentee is done,
- monitoring of the program and/or the mentors,
- how to identify and handle problematic situations e.g. non-committed mentors; mismatching of mentor and mentee,
- assessment of the program: methods or tools used to determine the effects of the program, and
- the developing process of a mentorship program.

Results from other mentorship programs have been investigated to determine factors that influence the success of a mentorship program as well as examining methods on how to establish and assess such a program. It was concluded that the best way to assess a mentor program is longitudinal as well as cross-sectional studies of the components of the program. As this study is a phenomenological qualitative study where the researcher attempts to understand participants' perceptions, experiences and understanding of the HAPPY Mentorship Program, the literature review will be extended during the discussion of the results of the research to clarify the results of this study.

In Chapter 3 the research methodology, results and conclusion of the first phase of the study will be discussed.

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CHAPTER 3

PHASE ONE OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

From the summary at the end of the previous chapter it can be seen that there are shortcomings in the knowledge on how to establish the process of implementing a mentorship program. To establish a mentorship program requires the application of the principles of mentoring and the evaluation of the outcomes of a mentorship program. In order to optimize the relevance of the program, the shortcomings that were identified during the evaluation of the program must be addressed; the program must be adapted and then re-evaluated. The development of a mentorship program cannot be evaluated in any other way than through participatory action research. Therefore, the research approach used in this study was participatory action research.

Following the latter guideline on participatory action research, the objectives of the first phase of the research were to:

- develop and implement a peer mentorship program for physiotherapy students at UP,
- determine the physiotherapy students' experience of whether the first implementation of the HAPPY Mentorship Program met their needs for social, emotional and/or academic support, and
- identify whether there was a need amongst the physiotherapy students at UP for the mentorship program to continue.

If the students did not express a need for the HAPPY Mentorship Program to continue, the study would have ended here.

If the students expressed a need for the HAPPY Mentorship Program to continue, the further objectives were to:

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- establish whether the students had any suggestions on how to adapt any facet of the program in order to optimize the program to meet their needs for a mentorship program,
- establish the extent to which the objectives of the PD for the mentorship program were met, and
- based on the data gathered through implementing abovementioned objectives, revise the HAPPY Mentorship Program.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

To achieve the objectives of the first phase of the study the research approach should reflect a process of evaluation of the existing mentorship program, reflection, decision making, revising the program, and implement an adapted program. To determine whether the adapted program is meeting the needs/has achieved it's original objectives, it should be re-evaluated, reflection on the data and decision making should take place again, and new action, based on the reflection should be implemented. A participatory action research approach was chosen as it fits such a continuous process of data gathering, reflection, planning, and action is (as mentioned in Chapter 1).

3.2.1 Fundamental characteristics of action research

Whitehead, Taket, & Smith (2003) say that:

> *Action research is methodologically flexible to the point that it encourages methodological triangulation/pluralism approaches.*

Although it is true that there is no one method of doing action research, there are some fundamental characteristics according to which it should be implemented. These characteristics can be summarized as:

- The research is context bound.
- The process seeks to have the full commitment by researchers and participants.

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- Those involved in the research pay regular attention to the process and how it affects the lives of others.
- The focal point of the research is an action or a change.
- The decision to implement the action or change is in the hands of the stake-holders (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

Participatory action research (PAR) attempts to contribute to the concerns of people in a specific situation as well as to the larger goals of social science. Instead of trying to find the most efficient solutions to specific problems (as with traditional research), PAR utilizes communal participation to create knowledge. The participants are not merely objects of the study − they become partners in the research. In this study, the researcher received information from the physiotherapy students themselves, as this particular mentorship program was specifically developed for them.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative, descriptive, participatory action research approach was chosen to conduct this study. Table 3.1 illustrates the preceding activities as well as Phase One of the research project. The steps reflected in Table 3.1 are a schematic presentation of the process of the first phase of the study.

Table 3.1

Activities preceding the research study and Phase One of the research process

	ACTION	METHODS
ACTIVITIES PRECEDING THE RESEARCH STUDY	Need was identified	Possible solution → peer mentorship program
	Decision by Department to develop peer mentoring	Literature review Name of program was created Training manual was compiled

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	ACTION	METHODS
PHASE ONE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY	Introduction of HAPPY Mentorship Program	Possible mentors were made aware of program and invited to apply Mentors were selected and trained First year students (mentees) were introduced to the program Mentor and mentee matching was done randomly Mentors were allowed to start mentoring process Follow-up training and informal support by the program coordinator
	Data collection	Methods: focus group discussions and self-report questionnaires
	Data analysis	Transcribing of focus group discussions Coding of data collected: open coding & axial coding
	Revising and adapting of program	

3.4 STUDY POPULATION

Population

- All students of the PD at UP.

Sample group

- Students in the PD of UP who volunteered to participate in the research study to determine their experiences of the HAPPY Mentorship Program. They included:

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- Peer mentors (third and fourth years).
- Mentees (first years, and second years who had peer mentors).
- Students not participating in the program (second, third and fourth years).

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The research protocol of this study (number S90/2006) was presented to the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee and was found to be acceptable.
- All participants of the research (peer mentors, mentees, and students who did not participate in the mentorship program) were informed regarding the format of data collection and the reasons for the data collection and analysis before the data was collected.
- At completion of the study a copy of the results, discussion and recommendations were made available to the participants.
- Participation in the data collection was voluntary and participants were ensured that all information would be handled confidentially. No names would be revealed – when necessary, fictional names would be used.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

3.6.1 Data collection methods

Data collection in Phase One consisted of the following activities:

- three focus group discussions were conducted - one focus group discussion from each of the following groups: peer mentors, mentees, students who did not participate in the mentorship program; and

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- self-report questionnaires completed by all students in the PD who volunteered to participate in the study.

It was decided to use these methods, (focus group discussions and self-report questionnaires) as data collection techniques for the following reasons:

- Focus group discussions are an integral part of any action research study with the aim to obtain the views and suggestions of the participants of the process. It gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain data not otherwise obtainable (Cunningham, 1993) and involve the participants in the development process. These discussions were carefully planned and conducted in a permissive, non-threatening environment.
- Self-report questionnaires with open-ended questions were used since it allows respondents to express themselves in their own words. It also offers them the opportunity to further elaborate on their answers (Clarke & Dawson, 1999).

3.6.2 Data gathering process

3.6.2.1 Focus group discussions

The researcher decided on at least three focus group discussions; one group consisting of peer mentors, one mentee group, and one group with students who did not participate in the mentorship program. The researcher contacted thirty (30) students telephonically to invite them to participate in the study, seventeen (17) agreed to participate in the study. The participants were informed about the research study and the reasons for data collection and analysis. Informed consent (Addendum 5) was obtained and it was reiterated that participation was voluntary and that the information would be treated confidentially. The focus group discussions had to be scheduled at a time that suited the facilitator, the observer, as

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well as the participants. Table 3.2 supplies detail on the number of participants present at each discussion.

Table 3.2

Participants of the focus group discussions

FOCUS GROUP NUMBER	GROUP MEMBERS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
1	Peer mentors	7
2	Mentees: first year students	6
3	Non-participants of the mentorship program	4

A focus group facilitator with experience in conducting focus group discussions and an independent observer, experienced in qualitative research, conducted and facilitated the focus group discussions. The facilitator, skilled in facilitating discussions in small groups, was unknown to the participating students and unbiased towards the research study or the outcome of the research. The question guide used for the focus group discussions included the following questions:

- What is your perception/experience of the HAPPY Mentorship Program?
- Do you think that the program has reached its goals/objectives?
- If yes, do you have any suggestions/recommendations to improve the program?

3.6.2.2 Self-report questionnaires

The self-report questionnaires were completed by all students of the PD at UP who volunteered to participate in the study – whether they were involved in the mentorship program or not. Open-ended questions were used to guide the self-report questionnaires (Addendum 6). The open-ended questions used in the questionnaire included:

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- Why did/didn't you participate in the HAPPY Mentorship Program?
- Positive experiences of the mentorship program.
- Negative experiences of the mentorship program.
- Should the program continue?
- Suggestions/recommendations to improve the mentorship program.

A total of 154 out of 170 students completed the self-report questionnaires – that is ninety (90) % of the all the students in the Physiotherapy Department. In Table 3.3 the detail of the students who participated are described.

Table 3.3

Detail of self-report questionnaires

GROUP	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION
Mentees	36	76
Mentors	32	100
Non-participants	86	95

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Focus group discussions were recorded using two tape recorders while an independent external observer (experienced in qualitative research) took notes during the discussion on participant's reactions and interaction. Data was transcribed verbatim, read repeatedly to obtain a good understanding of the data and searched for categories, themes, trends and patterns of the transcribed data. The emerging categories were open coded and trends, themes and patterns axially coded. The data obtained from the self-report questionnaires was coded in a similar way.

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3.7.1 Outcome of the coding

The data gathered from the focus group discussions and the self-report questionnaires will be discussed jointly. The reason for this is that the themes that were identified after data analysis were the same. Where direct quotes were used, it will be mentioned whether they were obtained from a focus group discussion or a self-report questionnaire.

Analysis of the data stated after the focus group discussions were transcribed and the self-report questionnaires' data were summarized. Categories were identified and are listed below:

- Support available for the mentees and the peer mentors
- Program administration
- Matching of peer mentors and mentees
- Peer mentors – advantages, characteristics and suggestions
- Meetings between mentees and peer mentors as well as between peer mentors and program coordinator
- Relationships established between mentees and peer mentors

In each category the following themes were identified:

- Positive comments/experiences
- Negative comments/criticism
- Suggestions for adjustments or adaptations to the program

3.8 RESULTS

The results are discussed under the headings of the above-mentioned categories (paragraph 3.7.1) that were identified in the data obtained from the focus group discussions, as well as the self-report questionnaires.

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3.8.1 Support available for the mentees and the peer mentors

3.8.1.1 Positive experiences

Supportive environment

A number of peer mentors felt that the program provided support for the mentees – there was someone to talk to. The mentees themselves also commented on the support:

Quote 3.1(focus group discussion):

> *….I always felt that she made herself available for me…..*

The mentees mentioned that they did not need to feel alone, they had someone to talk to. The peer mentors also had support – the program co-ordinator was there to support them and to be their mentor. There was also a system of referral; if they came across a problem they could not cope with, they could refer the mentee through the program coordinator (the researcher) to someone who could help.

Academic support for the mentees

The mentees were of the opinion that the program provided academic support – they were provided with previous test and examination papers and some of them also received previous years' notes from the peer mentors. To have someone in a senior year of study giving them advice and help with the course work was very helpful.

Quote 3.2(focus group discussion):

> *…it's good to know there's someone older than you where you can get information, even if it's only for academics…*

Other mentees felt it was more than just academic support. One of them commented on the difference between the mentor and a tutor:

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Quote 3.3 (self-report questionnaire):

> *The mentor is one-on-one attention, they don't have to explain the work, just give advice…*

Emotional support for the mentees

Quote 3.4(self-report questionnaire):

> *…she made me feel that if I had a problem with anything, I could contact her…*

Some mentees felt they could talk to their mentor about anything. It was good to have this emotional support, especially at the beginning of the academic year. One of the non-participants of the mentorship program remarked that mentees could also approach the peer mentor with problems other than academic problems.

Support for the peer mentors

The peer mentors had support from the program coordinator. Meetings were scheduled during the year during which feedback were given from the peer mentors as well as from the program coordinator. During these meetings relevant training was also given by the program coordinator based on the needs experienced by the mentees or the peer mentors or based on the observations of the program coordinator. She was also available for the mentors if they were experiencing any problems, either personal problems or problems concerning their mentees.

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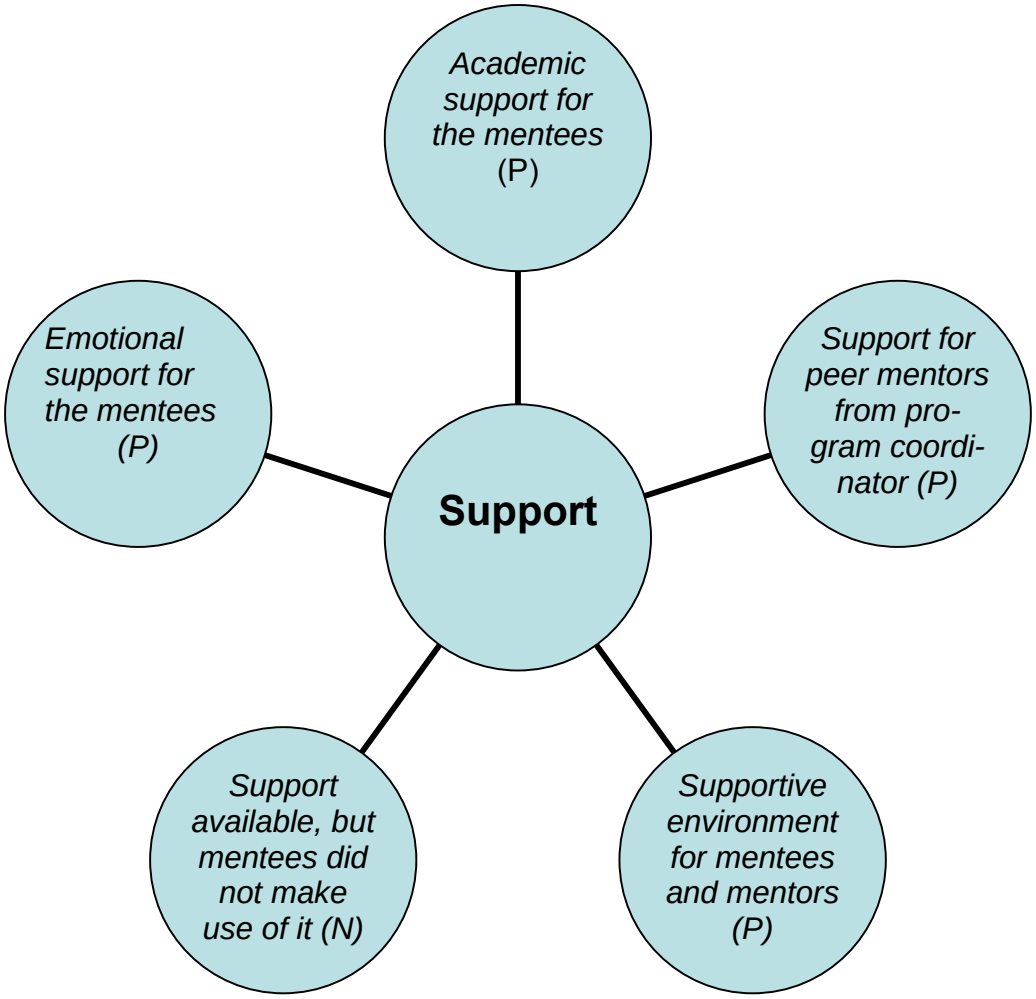

Figure 3.2 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "support"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions.

3.8.1.2 Negative experiences

Mentees did not make use of support available

According to one of the peer mentors, the support was available, but the mentees did not make use of it. She commented that a reason for that might be that there was no established relationship between the mentee

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and the peer mentor. The mentee might not have had the courage to ask for help or advice because no relationship has been established.

3.8.2 Program administration

As part of the self-report questionnaires the participants of the study were asked if they were aware of the program and where they got information on it. Only three respondents replied that they were not aware of the program. The majority of students reported that they heard about the program at the PD or personally from the program coordinator.

All respondents agreed that there is a need for a program such as the HAPPY Mentorship Program and that it should continue.

3.8.2.1 Positive experiences

A need for the program

Peer mentors remarked that there is a need and a place for a program such as the HAPPY Mentorship Program. According to them the junior students (first and second years) can really benefit from the support. Even students who did not participate in the mentorship program agreed that there is a need for a mentorship program and that there are many students that could benefit from such a program.

3.8.2.2 Negative experiences/comments

Insufficient information

Several students who did not participate in the mentorship program stated that their reason for not participating was a lack of information about the program. They did not know how much time would be involved or they assumed that it would be too time-consuming (according to their own words),

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without actually knowing what the program entailed. One student thought the mentorship program was only to provide academic support to the mentees and decided that she is not "a teacher" − she was not willing to do tutoring. Another student had negative connotations to mentoring because of previous experience with mentoring and decided immediately not to participate when she heard about the program.

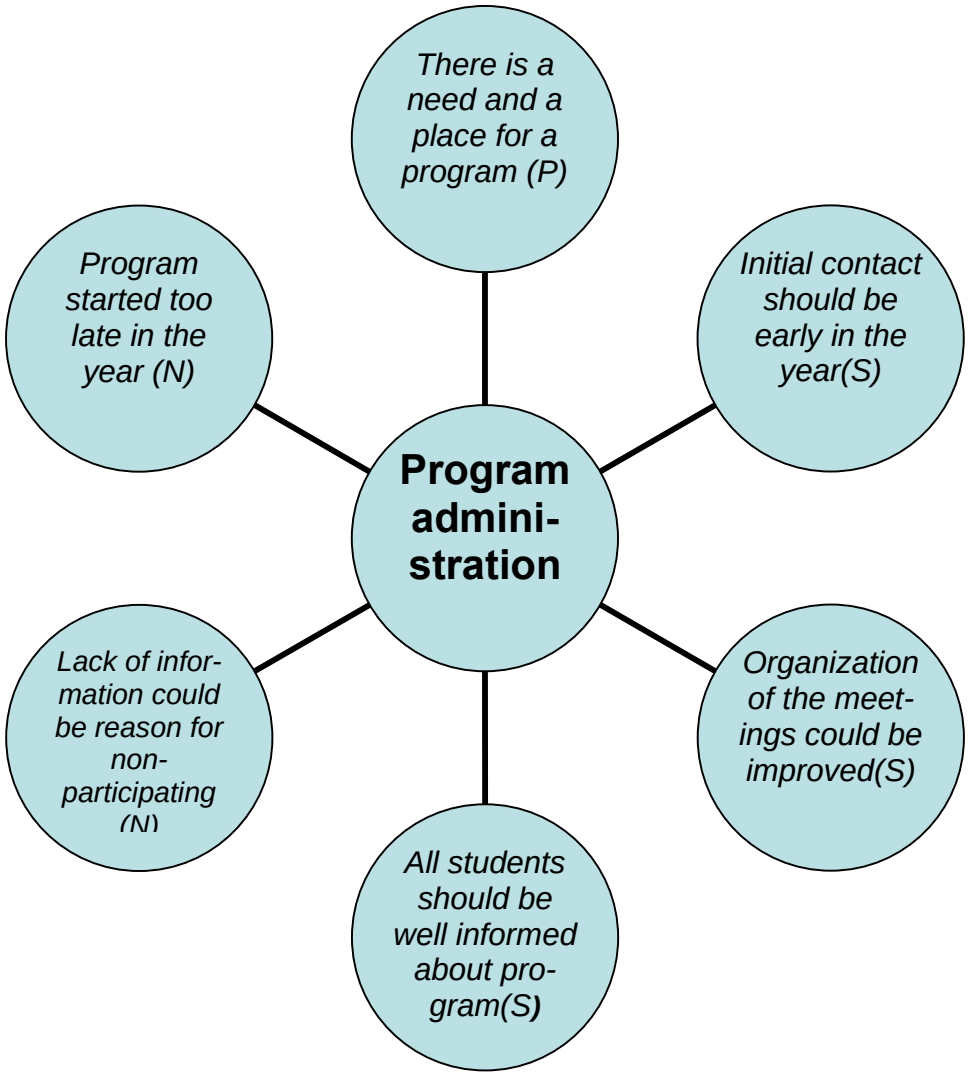

Figure 3.3 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "program administration"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions.

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One of the peer mentors remarked that she was unsure exactly what is expected of/from her. She said that they had the training in theory, but she was not sure how to apply it in practice. Another peer mentor commented on the fact that the mentees did not know what the role of the peer mentor was; they did not utilize the peer mentor appropriately.

The mentorship program started too late

The peer mentors' first contact with the mentees was at the end of March/beginning of April 2006. The peer mentors remarked that by that time the mentees had sorted out a lot of problems themselves. It was nearly time for examinations and most of them had already settled into university life.

3.8.2.3 Suggestions of participants on program administration

Early and regular contact between peer mentor and mentee

The initial contact should be as early in the year as possible – ideally in the first week of the first year students' academic year. The participants in the research suggested that there should be more contact between the mentees and peer mentors – formal as well as informal meetings. The mentees who had regular contact with their peer mentor had a positive experience of the mentorship program. They felt that it was to their advantage to be part of the program.

Organization of meetings between peer mentors and mentees

Meetings were held between all the peer mentors and the mentees. This was done twice during the year. The program coordinator facilitated these meetings and the aim was to promote interaction between the mentees and peer mentors.

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Most participants of the research study felt that the organization of the meetings could be improved. There was also a suggestion that the meetings should be scheduled on the time table well in advance. This might improve the attendance of the general meetings by all mentees and peer mentors.

Information on the mentorship program

At the implementation of the program, the program coordinator gave a brief introduction and information session to the third and fourth year students. They were asked to apply to the program coordinator to be trained as peer mentors. The first year students were also given a short information session and they were informed that a peer mentor would contact them.

According to a number of research participants it was essential that the peer mentors as well as the mentees must be well-informed about the program. Even students who choose not to participate in the mentorship program said that they might have volunteered if they had more information about e.g., the amount of time it would require from them per week/month to be a mentor. They also suggested that all students of the PD need more information on the program e.g., about the purpose of the program, the role of the mentor, and the logistics of meetings.

3.8.3 Peer mentor/mentee matching

The matching between peer mentor and mentee was done randomly according to the class lists. Where possible, peer mentors and mentees of the same gender were matched together.

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3.8.3.1 Positive experiences

The most successful matchings were those who had developed or established a friendship – the regular contact resulted in emotional bonding between them.

3.8.3.2 Negative experiences

Mentees experienced difficulty associating with fourth year students
One of the mentees remarked that it was difficult to establish a friendship with a fourth year student. She felt the difference in experience (professional and life experience) between a first year and a fourth year student was sizeable and she did not always feel comfortable communicating with the peer mentor. Another mentee mentioned that there was a perception that the fourth year students did not have enough time available to spend on mentoring the junior students.

Incompatibility
According to the peer mentors there were some cases where the peer mentors and mentees were incompatible. They did not have similar interests and it was difficult to form a relationship. One student also commented that there was a language barrier between the peer mentor and mentee. This made communication difficult and was a hindrance in the establishment of a relationship.

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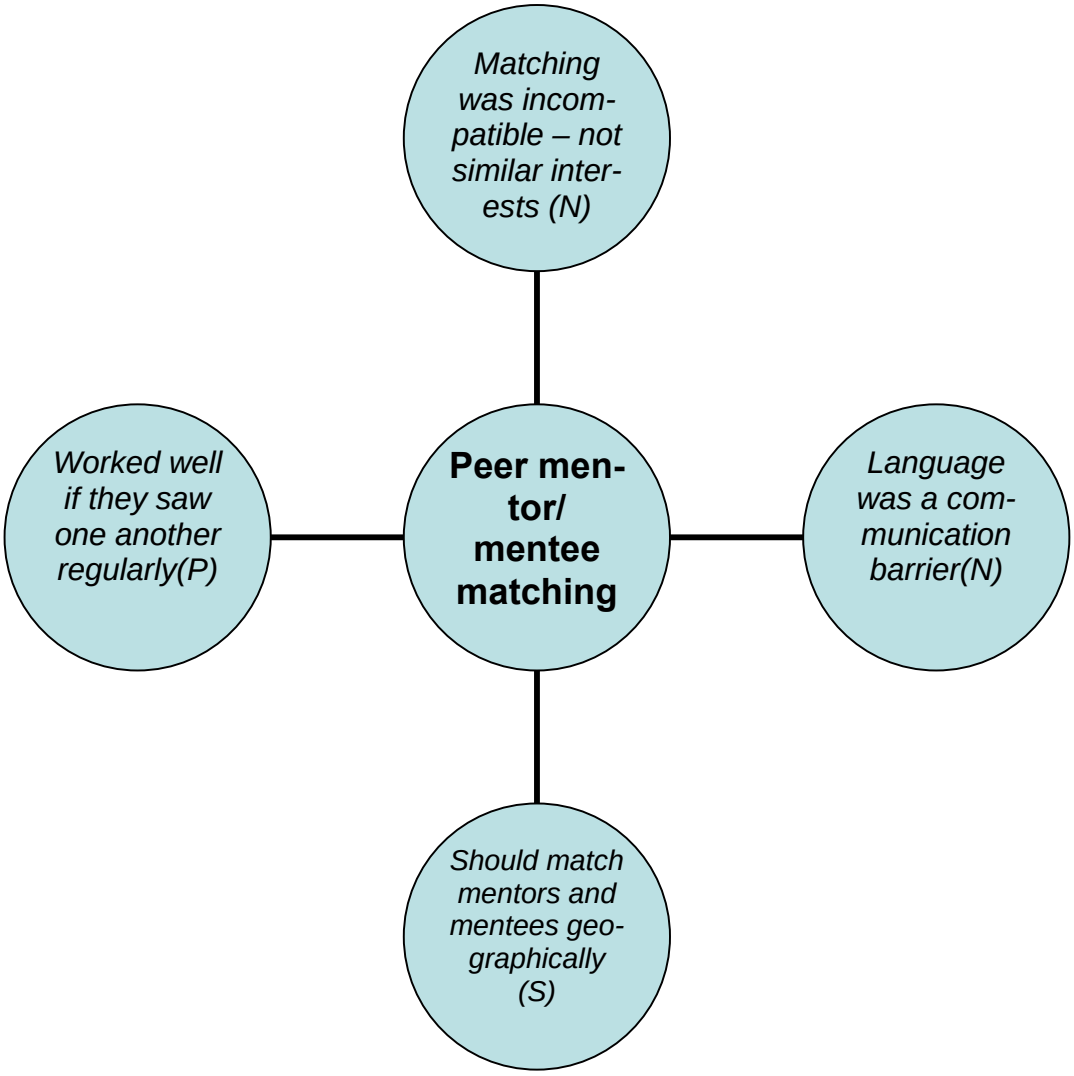

Figure 3.4 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "matching"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions.

3.8.3.3 Suggestions by students on improving the matching process

Matching of mentees and peer mentors according to geographic location

It was clear from the students' comments that the establishing of a relationship between the peer mentor and mentee developed easier if they lived in the same residence or lived close to one another. It was sug-

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gested that matching should be done geographically, starting by matching students living in the same residence.

Suggestion to overcome language barriers between students
One of the peer mentors suggested that students who speak the same first language should be matched together. The student acknowledged that it might not always be practically possible, but it should be taken into consideration when matching peer mentors and mentees.

3.8.4 Peer mentors

3.8.4.1 Positive experiences

Advantages of the HAPPY Mentorship Program for the peer mentors
Most of the peer mentors agreed that the program is not only beneficial for the mentees, but definitely for the peer mentors as well. They were learning new skills such as life skills and communication skills. They interacted with one another, as well as with the mentees and got to know them better.

Aspects the peer mentors felt supported them were:

- Support from the program coordinator;
- Meetings for peer mentors during the year to get feedback from the peer mentors and further training on aspects of mentoring; and
- The program coordinator was available for them if they were experiencing problems.

A number of peer mentors commented on the fact that it was a “good feeling” to help someone else. A comment from one of the mentors regarding the reason why she wanted to be a mentor:

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Quote 3.5 (self-report questionnaire):

> *…I had such a positive experience that I wanted to do it for someone else…*

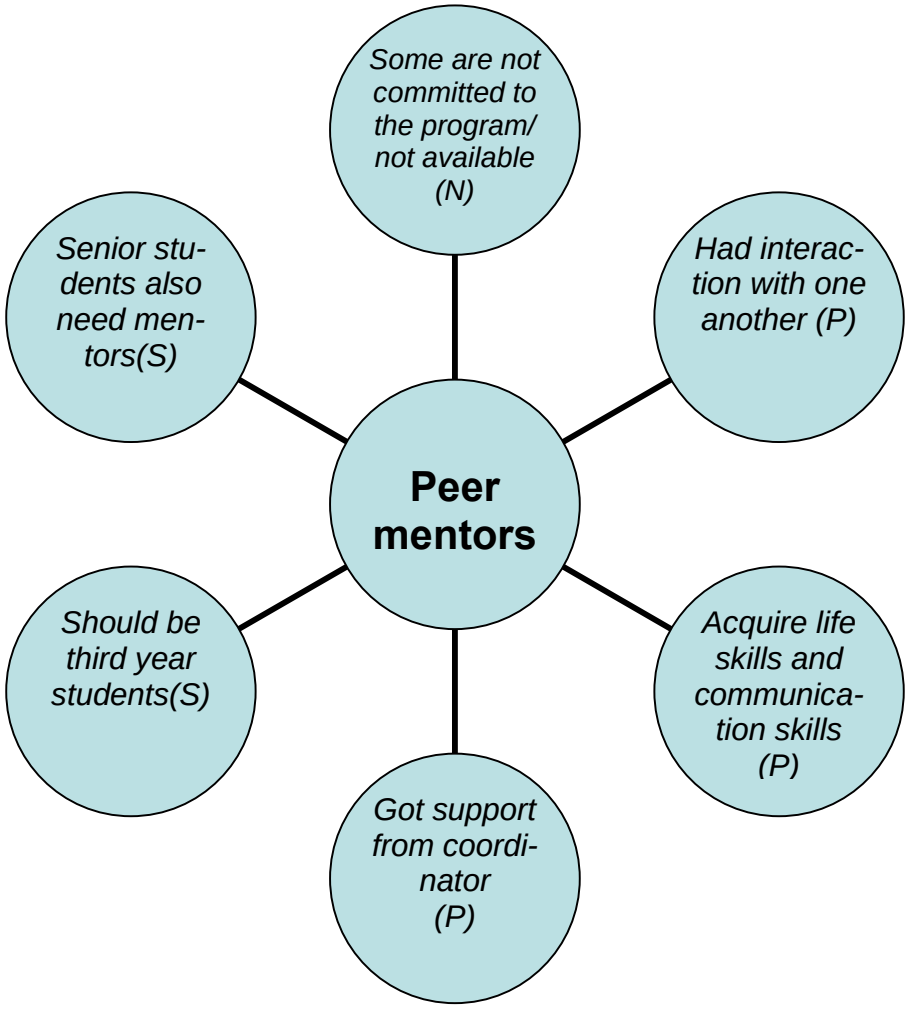

Figure 3.5 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "peer mentors"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions.

3.8.4.2 Negative experiences

Peer mentors not committed or too busy

There were a few remarks regarding peer mentors not being committed to their mentees. The mentees felt that they were too busy or simply did not

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seem to be willing to put enough effort in to establish a relationship with the mentee. One of the mentees also remarked that it is difficult to establish a friendship with a fourth year student. Another said that it appeared that the peer mentors did not have enough time available for the junior students.

Final year students (peer mentors) unavailable

It was generally observed by the program coordinator (researcher) that fourth year students were too busy to attend to their mentees. They were often not available because of clinical work and they were seldom at the campus of the Faculty of Health Care Sciences. It was really difficult from both the peer mentor and the mentee's point of view to get together.

3.8.4.3 Suggestions from the research for peer mentors

Peer mentors have to make a commitment to their mentees

There was a strong feeling amongst mentees that peer mentors must really be committed and willing to put in a lot of effort and time into the establishment of a relationship with the mentee. Data collected from the self-report questionnaires as well as the focus group discussions highlighted the fact that the participants of the study agreed that the peer mentor must be committed to their mentee for this program to be effective. There should also be regular contact between the peer mentor and mentee.

Third year students should be utilized as peer mentors.

It was suggested by the majority of the participants of the research study that the peer mentors should be third year students instead of fourth year students. Reasons given for this suggestion was that the fourth year students were just too busy and they do not come to the PD often enough. There was a suggestion that second year students could be peer mentors, but the majority of participants of the study thought third year students

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would be the best year group to use as peer mentors. They also suggested that peer mentors should be sufficiently trained and realize exactly what they are letting themselves in for.

Peer mentors for all students

Peer mentors and some of the students who did not participate suggested that senior students also need mentors. They felt that it is not only the first year students who need support, but it should be available to all students, even to the fourth year students.

3.8.5 Meetings between mentees and peer mentors as well as between peer mentors and program coordinator

In paragraph 3.8.2.3 the organization of meetings has already been discussed. Other issues concerning the meetings will now be discussed

3.8.5.1 Positive experiences of peer mentors and mentees

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Mentor meetings with program coordinator

Some of the peer mentors commented positively on their meetings with the program coordinator. They felt that these meetings (where the program coordinator and the peer mentors are present) were comfortable, informal and informative.

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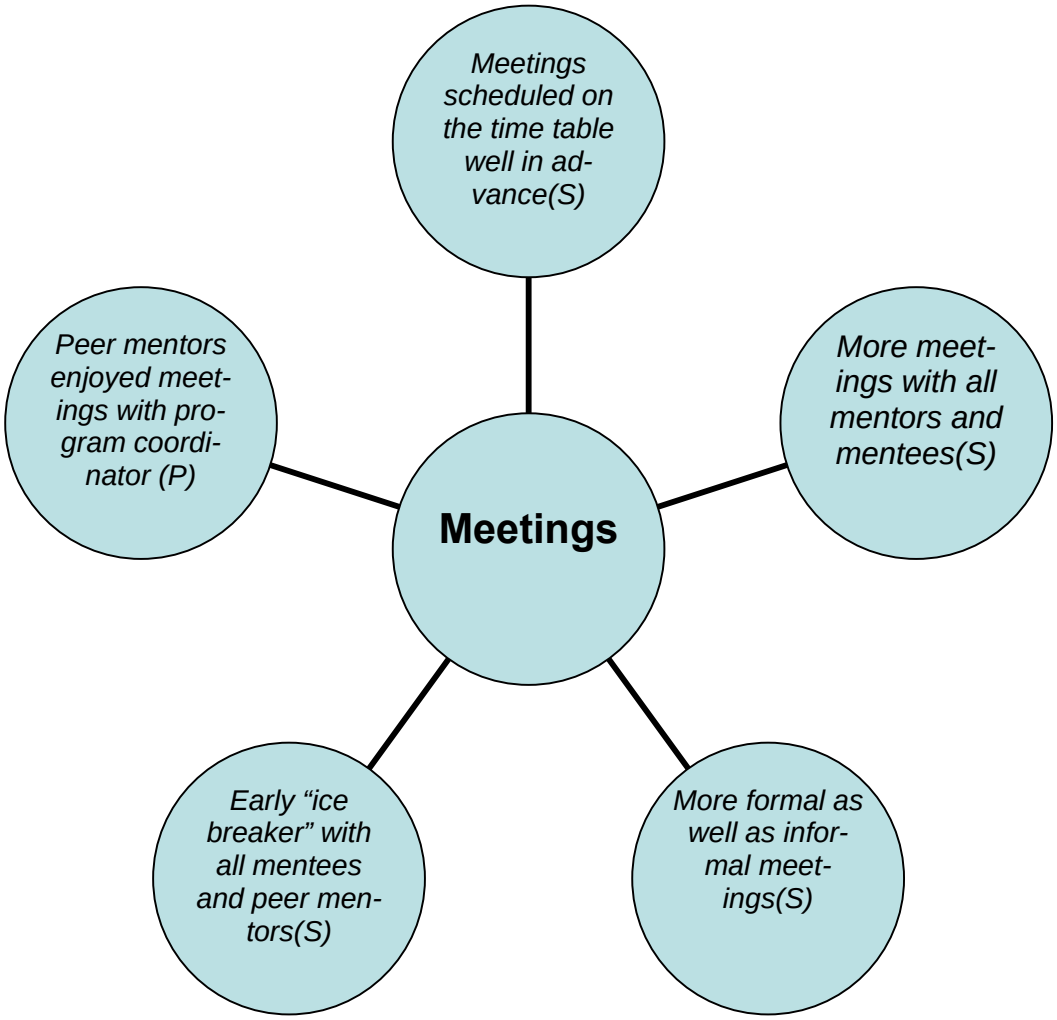

Figure 3.6 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "meetings"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions.

3.8.5.2 Suggestions for the enhancement of the meetings

More regular meetings between peer mentors and mentees

There should be more meetings with all the peer mentors and the mentees together – this was the opinion of a number of the peer mentors as well as mentees. They enjoyed the "get-togethers" but felt it could be more regular.

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More regular meetings between peer mentors and program coordinator
The peer mentors proposed that there should be more regular meetings with the program coordinator; they also need the meetings for peer support.

Better organization of meetings for all peer mentors and mentees
A number of students suggested that the dates as well as venues of the meetings should be organized well in advance. One possibility that was raised was to put the meetings on the students' official time table. It was also suggested that these meetings should be organized on days when the fourth year students have class on the Health Sciences' campus, maybe before or after scheduled class.

Contact between mentees and peer mentors early in academic year
The peer mentors felt they should be involved from the first day the first year students arrive. There should be some kind of "ice-breaking" meeting where everybody (mentees and peer mentors) can meet. This meeting should take place in the orientation week of the first year students.

3.8.6 Relationships/interaction between mentees and peer mentors as well as peer mentors and program coordinator

3.8.6.1 Positive experiences concerning interaction

Interaction with other students
The mentees commented on the benefit of having peer support. It is easier to relate to another student instead of a member of staff, especially if the mentee know the peer mentors experienced similar situations or difficulties. It was also an advantage to be able to interact with students from

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different year groups. The peer mentors described the opportunity they had to interact with the first year students as a positive experience.

Interaction between the peer mentor and the program coordinator
The contact and support that the peer mentors had with the program co-ordinator was mentioned as one of the advantages of the program. They felt that she was approachable and that she was available for them if they experienced any kind of problems.

3.8.6.2 Negative experiences

No or too little contact between mentee and peer mentor
A few mentees said that they had never met their peer mentors; they did not know what they looked like. Some had not even talked to their peer mentor. Because of too little contact, there was no relationship established between mentor and mentee. Some had one telephone conversation but no further contact. A number of the mentees said that they did meet their peer mentor, but there was not enough interaction, they did not get to know each other.

When talking about the objectives of the program the peer mentors commented that they could not be good role models if they have only seen their mentee once.

Not enough trust between peer mentor and mentee
One peer mentor felt that there was not enough trust between peer mentor and mentee because they did not know one another well enough. A reason given for this comment was that there was insufficient contact between them to establish a relationship.

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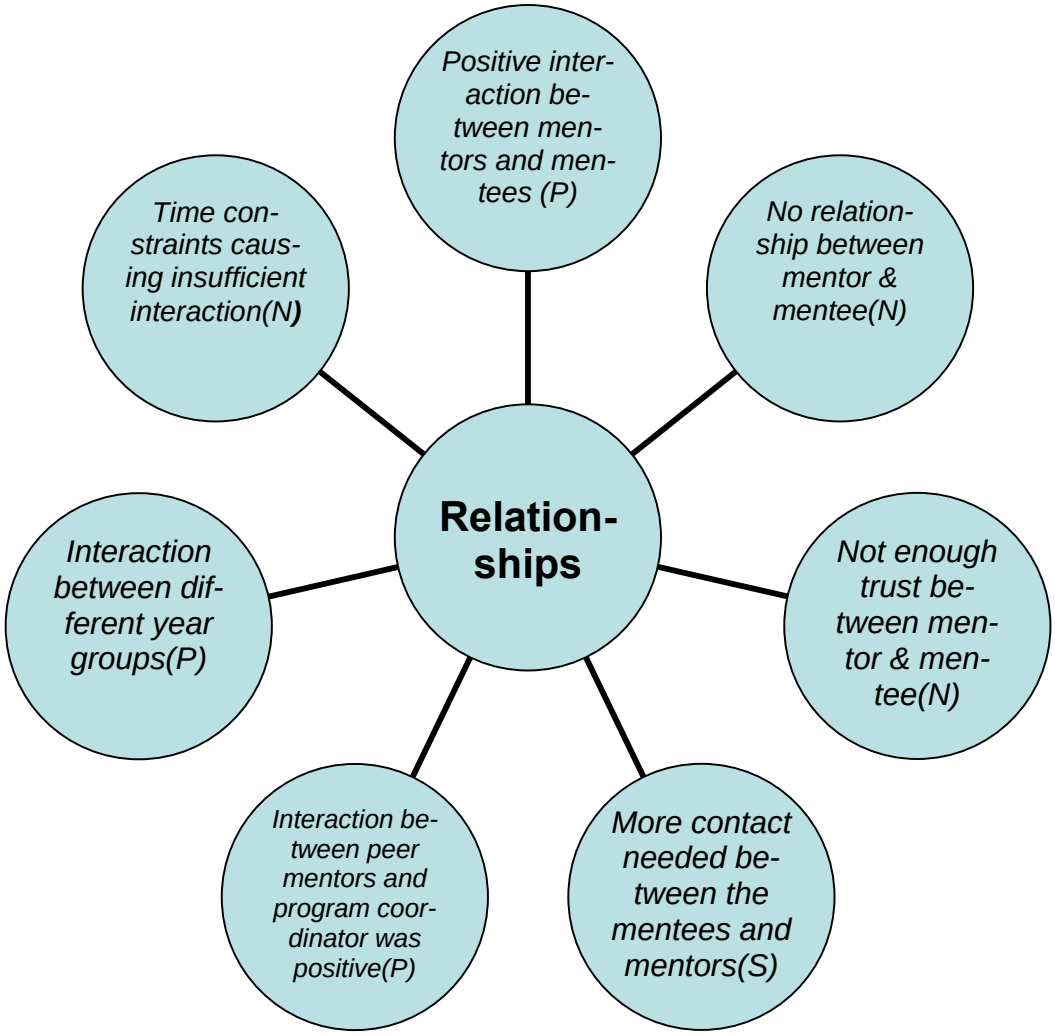

Figure 3.7 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "relationships or interaction"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions.

Time constraints of peer mentors and mentees

Peer mentors and mentees both commented on not having enough time to interact sufficiently. They were too busy or they could not coordinate their time in order to get together. Because of this they could not get to know one another well enough and no trusting relationship could develop.

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3.8.6.3 Suggestions on how to develop stronger relationships

Regular contact between mentees and peer mentors

It was generally felt by all the research participants that there should be more regular contact between peer mentors and mentees. This regular contact should include structured group meetings as well as informal individual meetings between a peer mentor and a mentee. A first structured meeting between mentee and peer mentor was especially important to ensure that every mentee meet his/her peer mentor. From there on the mentee and peer mentor could organize their own meetings between themselves. One mentee suggested that peer mentors and mentees should meet one another once a week in the first few weeks of the academic year. The mentees also felt that the contact should be initiated by the peer mentor; the mentee might not feel confident enough to make contact with a senior student first.

3.9 CONCLUSION

After the data was analyzed, the following limitations to the mentorship program were recognized:

- There was a lack of available information about the program. Students who were not directly involved with the program did not know what the program entailed and were not sure what the aims or objectives of the mentorship program were.
- The mentorship program started too late in the year. The mentees had already sorted out most of their problems on their own by the time the peer mentors contacted them.
- Final year peer mentors were not available, not committed or just too busy to meet with the mentees. Some of the mentees also felt that it was difficult to

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"connect" with a final year student; they did not feel comfortable to talk to the peer mentors.

- In some situations there was no or too little contact between the mentee and the peer mentor.
- Meetings between peer mentors and program coordinator as well as between peer mentors and mentees were not well organized.

A summary of all the suggestions proposed by the participants of the study is given in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Summary of suggestions after Phase One of the research

Program Administration	• Program should definitely continue • All students should receive adequate information about the program • Program should start as early as possible in the year • Better advertising of the program • Students should be motivated to participate
Meetings	• Have initial meeting between all peer mentors and mentees in the beginning of the year to meet one another • Meeting times should be shown on timetable • Training during the week instead of weekends • Meetings to be more organized
Mentors	• Should be third year students • Mentor should be committed to the mentee • Mentors available for all year groups, not only 1st years
Matching	• Match in same residences • Match mentors and mentees living close to one another • Match peer mentor and mentee with the same first language
Relationships	• Peer mentor and mentee should have regular contact e.g. once a month • More informal/fun meetings between peer mentors and mentees • More meetings with all the mentees and peer mentors

The suggestions will be discussed under the headings of the categories listed below:

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- Program administration
- Meetings
- Peer mentors
- Mentor/mentee matching
- Relationships

Program administration

There was general consensus among all participants in the study that the mentorship program should continue, although some changes are necessary for it to be more effective. They felt that there is a need for support and that the mentorship program can fulfil that need.

Another suggestion was that the program should start as early in the academic year as possible. It was felt that it should start as soon as the first year students are welcomed at the PD – since that is when they need the support.

The lack of adequate information about the mentorship program was one of the main criticisms about the program. Quite a few participants suggested that **all** students should be better informed, not only the peer mentors and mentees. It was felt that students would be positive towards the mentorship program if they were well informed and knew what it entails. Better advertising was also suggested; students should be encouraged to join the program by providing information and by informing them about the advantages of being a mentor as well as being a mentee.

Meetings between mentees and peer mentors

The initial contact between the peer mentors and the mentees was felt to be very important. There were suggestions regarding an “ice breaker” at the beginning of the year. The students felt there should be regular get-togethers of all the peer mentors and mentees to enable them to meet and interact with one another.

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In order to simplify the organization of the meetings, it was suggested that the meeting times (for meetings with all peer mentors and mentees present) could be scheduled on the time tables of the mentors and mentees. Even the meetings between the peer mentors and the program coordinator could be scheduled on the time tables and it was suggested that the meetings and training sessions should be held during the week instead of over a weekend. There was a general feeling that the meetings (peer mentors and mentees, as well as peer mentors and program coordinator) were not well organized and that this should be improved.

Peer mentors

The majority of participants of the study felt that third year students should be trained to be the peer mentors instead of final year students. The third year students might have more time and it would be easier to organize meetings since they have lectures in the afternoons at the PD.

It was suggested that the peer mentors should be committed to the program and to their mentee. Some students felt that the peer mentors were only mentors in name; they never saw or met with one another. In order for the program to be a success, the peer mentors should be well trained and committed.

Other suggestions include that there should be peer mentors for all the year groups, not only for the first year students. One student felt that there should be an opportunity for peer mentors to join later in the year, although this was not practically possible since the training seminar was done only once a year.

Peer mentor/mentee matching

The peer mentors and mentees who had the most successful relationships were generally those who lived close to one another or were in the same residence. The participants of the study suggested that matching should start off with match-

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ing peer mentors and mentees who live in the same residence. The rest should be matched geographically; those living close to one another should be matched.

Interaction/relationships between peer mentors and mentees

There was a general feeling that there should be more regular meetings – meetings with all the peer mentors and mentees as well as meetings with the peer mentors and the program coordinator. A number of participants in the study suggested that there could be more "fun" or informal meetings for the peer mentors and mentees, where they have a chance to interact and get to know one another better.

The peer mentors and mentees who had a successful relationship met regularly. It was suggested that the peer mentor should meet with her/his mentee/s at least once a month. This could be an informal meeting, maybe just a quick coffee or a more structured meeting at a specific place.

With these suggestions in mind the program was adapted. Phase Two of the participatory action research commenced at the beginning of 2007, when the adapted program was implemented and it is discussed in Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER 4

PHASE TWO OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The goals and objectives formulated in Chapter 1 of this study distinguished between two phases. Phase One entailed the development and implementation of the HAPPY Mentorship Program. The last facet of the implementation of the mentorship program consisted of formal data gathering to evaluate the participants' opinions and/or experiences on whether the program should continue or not. If they felt the program should continue, they were asked to communicate the positive aspects, the problems, and frustrations that they experienced. They were also asked to make suggestions on how to improve the program.

Due to the fact that the main consensus of the participants of the research project after Phase One of the research was that the mentorship program should continue, the second cycle of the participatory action research study is described in this chapter. The second cycle entails the adaptation of the mentorship program based on the conclusion at the end of Phase One that was described in Chapter 3, the implementation of the adapted program, and the monitoring and evaluation of the adapted program. The aims of Phase Two will be described in more detail in paragraph 4.3.

4.1.1 Adaptation of program after Phase One

After the completion of Phase One of the study, the results were analyzed and used to adapt the HAPPY Mentorship Program. A summary of the changes made, based on the conclusion in Phase One of the study, follows. They were:

- The third year students were informed about the program and asked to apply to become peer mentors.

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- The fourth year students who were trained as peer mentors in their third year (in 2006) but to whom no mentees were assigned, were given the opportunity to apply to be peer mentors, although it was explained to them that the final year peer mentors had much difficulty to find time to meet with the mentees in 2006.
- The training seminar was conducted on a Saturday in January 2007, before the first year students enrolled at the PD.
- After attending the training seminar they had the opportunity to commit to the program for a year by signing an agreement form.
- The peer mentors were present from the first day that the first year students were welcomed at the PD at UP.
- A general “ice-breaker” meeting was organized by two of the peer mentors. All the peer mentors, mentees, as well as the program coordinator were present. Another general meeting was held later in the year.
- Peer mentors and mentees were matched based on geographic location of residence.
- The program coordinator had meetings with the peer mentors throughout the year, more or less every six weeks.

These changes will now be discussed in more detail.

- Peer mentors and matching

One of the major changes to the program was that the peer mentors were mostly third year students (only six fourth year students applied to become peer mentors). They were trained before the first year students arrived and were matched with the mentees in the first month of the academic year of the first year students. The matching was done according to their geographical location. First peer mentors an mentees living in the same residence were matched and then the rest were matched, taking the geographical area where they live into consideration.

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- Training of peer mentors

The peer mentors were trained before the first year students arrived at the PD of UP. The training seminar was also adapted to include certain new information. The peer mentors had to sign an agreement of commitment at the seminar, wherein they undertook to meet their mentee at least once a month and complete a report form, which had to be submitted to the program coordinator at the end of the year. At the seminar the peer mentors volunteered to design a special T-shirt identifying them as peer mentors when they meet the first year students. It was approved and the manufacturing of the T-shirts was organized by them. The goal was to be clearly visible to the first year students.

- Introduction of the program to the mentees

The first contact between the peer mentors and the mentees was on Parents' Day – when the first year students and their parents are invited to the PD and where they are introduced to the lecturers and accompanied on a tour through the Department. The program coordinator introduced the HAPPY Mentorship Program to the students and parents and a number of peer mentors assisted with the tour through the Department. This event, which took place at the end of January 2007, was the peer mentors' first informal interaction with the first year students.

The general "ice-breaker" meeting between all the peer mentors and mentees were organized by two of the fourth year peer mentors. Activities were planned to facilitate getting to know one another better and to facilitate socialization. Every-body had pizza and cold drinks afterwards.

- Matching of peer mentors and mentees

The matching of the peer mentors and the mentees was as far as possible done geographically. This was done at the general "ice breaker" meeting and at the first house meeting of the Physiotherapy students in the first semester of the academic year (These house meetings are held twice a year for all students in

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the PD). Students in the same residence were matched first. Most of the peer mentors had two mentees, but two peer mentors had three mentees. This was necessary because these peer mentors were matched with mentees living close to them and the fact that there was twenty-eight (28) peer mentors for fifty (50) mentees. Another aspect that was taken into consideration when pairing peer mentors with mentees was gender. The majority of matches were of the same gender, but there were only three male peer mentors with about thirteen (13) first year male students. The program coordinator consulted with the selected peer mentors to ascertain whether they would object if some of the male mentees be allocated to a female peer mentor. Race was also taken into account and peer mentors and mentees of the same race were matched together where possible.

The program coordinator and the peer mentors had meetings throughout the year ─ more or less every six weeks. These meetings were used as report-back sessions on their mentoring, further training on aspects of mentoring, as well as informal interaction and sharing of experiences. These meetings gave the program coordinator the opportunity to be available for the peer mentors. They could discuss either personal problems or problems related to their mentoring.

During the third semester a second general meeting, where all the peer mentors and mentees were present, was organized by two of the third year mentors who volunteered. The main aim of this meeting was to determine whether the mentees and peer mentors actually succeeded in getting to know one another during the year. It was a fun event and hamburgers and cold drinks were enjoyed afterwards.

At the end of the year an informal function were held attended by the peer mentors and their partners and the program coordinator with her family.

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4.2 RESEARCH PROCESS

Based on the participatory research design of this study the second phase of the research process was put into effect by implementing the adapted mentorship program described in the preceding paragraphs. The following flow-diagram illustrates the process of the research project.

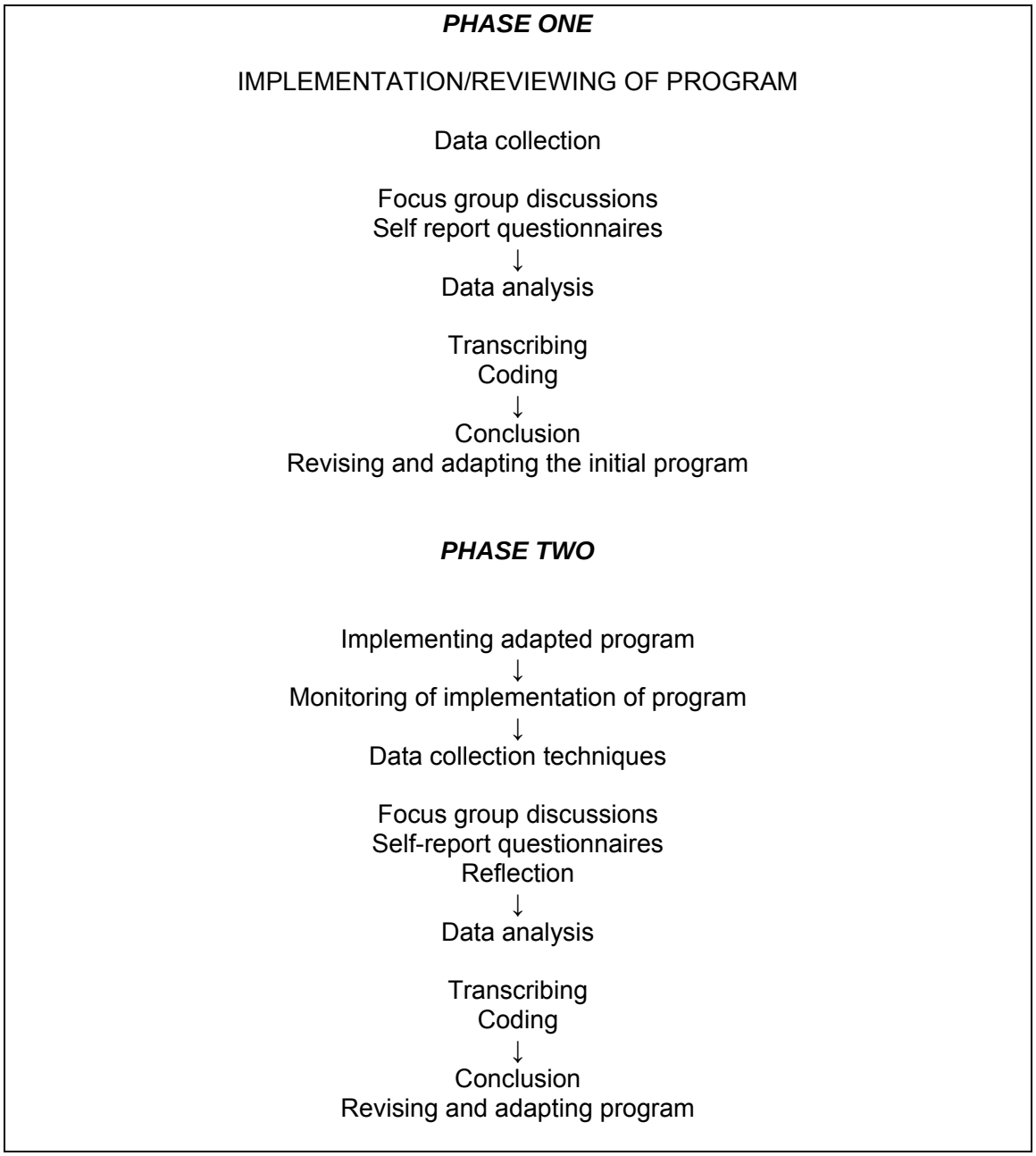

Figure 4.1 ***Schematic presentation of the research process***

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4.3 AIMS OF PHASE TWO

Phase Two of the participatory action research commenced at the beginning of the year in which the revised program was implemented (2007). Following on Phase One of the study, the aims of Phase Two were to:

- adapt the HAPPY Mentorship Program and implement the adapted program,
- determine whether the adapted version of the HAPPY Mentorship Program addressed the limitations that were identified in the first cycle of the mentorship program,
- determine whether the adapted program meets the needs of Physiotherapy students for social, emotional and/or academic support,
- establish whether the students have any other/further suggestions on how any facet of the mentorship program should be adapted to address needs that have not been met or that have not previously been identified during phase one,
- establish the extent to which the objectives of the PD for the mentorship program have been met with the adapted version of the mentorship program,
- revise and adapt the HAPPY Mentorship Program according to data gathered from students and staff members of the PD once again, and
- formulate the process and guidelines on which a peer mentorship program for undergraduate Physiotherapy students at UP could be based.

4.4 STUDY POPULATION

Population

- All students of the PD at UP.

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Sample group

- Students in the PD of UP who volunteered to communicate their experiences of the HAPPY Mentorship Program in the second phase of the study. Participants included:
    - Peer mentors (third and fourth year students)
    - Mentees (first year students)
    - Students not participating in the mentorship program (second, third and fourth years).

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research protocol of this study (number S90/2006) was presented to the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee and was found to be acceptable.

- All participants were informed that the implemented program and the way it was monitored would be evaluated. The format of data collection and the reasons for the data analysis were also communicated.
- At completion of the study a copy of the results, discussions and recommendations were made available to the participants.
- Participation in the second phase of this study was voluntary and students were assured that all information would be handled confidentially. No names would be revealed during formal and informal discussions of results – when necessary, fictional names would be used.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

During the second phase of the study data were collected using the same methods as in Phase One, namely self-report questionnaires and focus group discussions. The same methods were used since those methods provided the information that the researcher needed to obtain. Reflection and monitoring of the mentorship program by the researcher were also used in Phase Two. Reflections by

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the researcher were discussed with the study supervisor in order to obtain objectivity with regard to the observations. This step was taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the researchers' interpretation of the gathered data.

4.6.1 Data collection methods

Data were collected in Phase Two by using focus group discussions, self-report questionnaires as well as reflection. The reason for using more than one method to gather data is to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis of the data. Data triangulation is one measure used in qualitative research to ensure trustworthiness (Krefting, 1991).

It was decided to use these methods, (focus group discussions, self-report questionnaires and reflection) as data collection techniques for the following reasons:

- Focus group discussions are an integral part of any action research study. It gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain data not otherwise obtainable (Cunningham, 1993).
- Self-report questionnaires with open-ended questions were used since it allows respondents to express themselves in their own words. It also offers them the opportunity to elaborate on their answers (Clarke & Dawson, 1999).
- Reflection was used by the researcher to remain attuned to her own actions throughout the study. To encourage reflection, the researcher kept a diary as a data collection strategy. According to Streubert Speziale & Carpenter (2007):

> *…Using a self-reflective mechanism can help sort out some of the important issues that may arise throughout the study.*

4.7 DATA GATHERING PROCESS

The data was gathered at the end of the academic year in 2007. The goal of the researcher was to evaluate the second phase of the mentorship program in order

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to gather data and implement changes (if necessary) before the start of the new academic year (2008).

4.7.1 Focus group discussions

Table 4.1: Detail of the participants of the focus group discussions

FOCUS GROUP NUMBER	GROUP MEMBERS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
1	Second years: non-participants	7
2	Second years: non-participants	6
3	First years: mentees	6
4	Third years: mentors	10
5	Third years: non-participants	7
6	Fourth years: mentors	6
7	Fourth years: non-participants	7
8	First years: mentees	6

Focus group discussions in Phase Two of the study were done as follows:

- Informed consent to participate was given by every student before each discussion.
- Every discussion was recorded and an observer who made notes of the discussion was present. The same facilitator that was used in Phase One acted as facilitator for the focus group discussions in Phase Two, except the last one – which was facilitated by one of the observers.
- The sequence in which the focus group discussions were held depended on when the volunteers from the different year groups and the facilitator were available to participate in the discussions.

The same question guide was used as in the first phase. It included the following questions:

- What is your perception/experience of the HAPPY Mentorship Program?

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- Do you think that the program is reaching its goals/objectives?
- Do you think the HAPPY Mentorship Program should continue?
- Any suggestions/recommendations?

4.7.2 Self-report questionnaires

Self-report questionnaires were completed by all students of the PD of UP who volunteered to participate in the study (peer mentors and mentees who participated in the mentorship program, as well as students who did not participate in the mentorship program)(Addendum 6). Details of the number of self-report questionnaires completed are tabled below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Detail of the participants in the self-report questionnaires

GROUP	NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION
Mentees	37(out of 50)	74
Mentors	15(out of 27)	55
Non-participants of the mentorship program	29(out of 58)	50

The open-ended questions the participants were asked to respond to were:

- Why did/didn't you participate in the HAPPY Mentorship Program?
- Positive experiences of the mentorship program.
- Negative experiences of the mentorship program.
- Should the program continue?
- Suggestions/recommendations to improve the mentorship program.

Eighty one (81) self-report questionnaires were completed (45 % of the student population). The reason why the number of students who completed the questionnaires was less than in the first phase was that the students were asked to complete the forms during exam time. It was difficult to contact them and they appear to be focused on studying – not participating in a research project.

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4.7.3 Researcher reflection

Reflection was done at different stages throughout the research process. The first deliberate reflection by the researcher was on the training seminar at the beginning of the academic year, when the peer mentors were trained. The students (peer mentors) were requested to complete an evaluation form after the training seminar – on the presentation, presenter, content, venue, and duration of the seminar.

Further reflections were done after meetings between the program coordinator (the researcher) and the peer mentors. During the data analysis of the focus group discussions and the self-report questionnaires, the researcher reflected on the results and these comments will also be discussed.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Focus group discussions were recorded with two tape recorders while an independent external observer (experienced in qualitative research) made notes during the discussion of participant's reactions and interaction. Data were transcribed verbatim and open and axially coded by reading through the data repeatedly to identify themes, trends and patterns of the transcribed data.

Data obtained from the self-report forms were also open coded and then axially coded in the same way as the data obtained from the focus group discussions.

4.8.1 Outcome of coding

Analysis of the data obtained from the focus group discussions and the self - report questionnaires were summarized in the following categories:

- Relationships/Interaction between peer mentors and mentees
- Support in the mentorship program

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- Program administration
- Matching between peer mentors and mentees
- Peer mentors – advantages, characteristics.
- Meetings between peer mentors and mentees, as well as between peer mentors and program coordinator

Under each category the following themes were identified:

- Positive comments/experiences
- Negative comments/criticism
- Suggestions for adjustments or adaptations to the program

The data gathered from the focus group discussions and the self-report questionnaires will be discussed simultaneously. The reason for this is that the categories identified after analysis of the data from both techniques corresponded. Where direct quotes are used, it will be mentioned whether it was obtained from a focus group discussion or a self-report questionnaire.

4.9 RESULTS

Results from the first four questions of the self-report questionnaire will be discussed in paragraph 4.9.1. The rest of the data obtained from the questionnaires, as well as from the focus group discussions will be discussed in paragraph 4.9.2. It was decided to discuss it simultaneously because similar information was gathered from both data collection techniques. In the next paragraph (4.9.3) results obtained by reflection will be discussed.

4.9.1 Results from self-report questionnaire question 1 – 4

The first four questions in the self-report questionnaire were:

- Are you aware of the mentorship program of the Physiotherapy Department of the University of Pretoria? Where did you hear about it?

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- Why did/did you not participate in the HAPPY Mentorship Program?
- If you did participate, indicate whether you were a mentee or a peer mentor.
- If you did not participate – do you think you missed out/would have liked to have had/be a peer mentor?

The results from these questions are discussed firstly since the information obtained from these questions presents a logical starting point to see the rest of the results in context.

Participants' awareness of the program

Every participant who completed the questionnaire was aware of the program. Most of them had heard about the program in the PD and from the coordinator of the program. A number of students reported that they were informed by other students in the PD.

Reasons why mentees participated in the mentorship program

Most of the mentees participated in the program because it was compulsory for first year students and it was available. Some mentees thought it would be helpful to get support from the senior students:

Quote 4.1 (self-report questionnaire):

> *…I thought it might be helpful to learn from the older years how they experienced their first year….*

Other reasons mentioned by mentees for participating in the mentorship program were:

- to receive academic as well as moral/emotional support,
- to obtain more confidence studying at the university,
- to make the transition easier,
- getting to know other students better, and
- it looked like fun!

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The mentees who did not fully participate in the mentorship program (they did not make contact with their peer mentor) were more often than not older/senior students who had already studied a different course and felt that they did not need a peer mentor. One mentee said she did not participate because it made her feel insignificant. (Apparently some promises made by the peer mentor were broken).

Reasons why peer mentors participated in the mentorship program

The peer mentors said that they saw:

Quote 4.2 (self-report questionnaire):

… a desire to help other students ...

as one of the main reasons for participation. They felt that they could help, because they had been in similar situations as the mentees. One peer mentor commented that he realized the need for a program like the HAPPY Mentorship Program through personal experience. He received support from a peer mentor in his first year and that helped him tremendously.

The opportunity to learn new skills and empowering themselves to handle difficult situations were also reasons given by peer mentors for participating in the mentorship program. One commented:

Quote 4.3 (self-report questionnaire):

…I want to give [support] and be more than just a student…

Reasons why students did not participate in the mentorship program

Reasons given for not participating in the mentorship program mainly involved lack of time available and lack of information on the mentorship program. The fourth year students reported a lack of available time to be their main reason for not participating. Quite a few had extra-curricular activities (sport, after hours work, coaching, house committee responsibilities, etc.) and felt that they would not be able to give enough attention to everything. Two respondents expressed concern that they did not feel equipped to be a mentor; they felt that they were not able to provide support to another student.

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4.9.2 Results obtained from self-report questionnaires and focus group discussions.

The results will be discussed under the headings of the categories mentioned in paragraph 4.7.1 which were identified in the data obtained from the focus group discussions, as well as the self-report questionnaires.

4.9.2.1 Relationships/Interaction between peer mentors and mentees

The aspects of interaction and relationships that will be discussed in this paragraph include interaction between peer mentor and mentee on a one-to-one basis and interaction between all mentors and mentees. Figure 4.2 demonstrates all aspects regarding relationships/interaction between peer mentors and mentees.

(1) Positive experiences

Positive, well-established relationships
All students (peer mentors and mentees) who had positive experiences reported a good relationship with each other. They enjoyed the interaction and in some cases the peer mentor and the mentee became friends. The mentees benefited from the advice based on the peer mentors' experience. The mentees also felt comfortable to talk to their peer mentors, due to a well-established relationship.

Students who did not participate in the program commented on the fact that everybody seemed to enjoy the program and that stronger and better relationships (compared to the previous year when the first phase of the program was implemented) were established between the peer mentors and the mentees.

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Positive meetings/contact sessions

The initial meeting at the beginning of the year (the "ice breaker"), where all the mentees and peer mentors were present, was a positive experience for most students. This "ice breaker" activity was planned and organized by two of the peer mentors. The peer mentors and mentees sat, facing one another, in two long rows. They were handed a number of questions which they asked one another. After the first question was asked and answered, everyone moved on one seat to their left for the next question. Examples of the questions asked:

- Where were you born?
- How many siblings do you have?
- What is your favourite colour? Why?
- What was your favourite school subject? Why?

After this "ice breaker" activity the matching of peer mentors with mentees was done. A few peer mentors already made contact with mentees living in the same residence and were matched. The rest were as far as possible matched according to their geographical location.

The meetings between the peer mentors and their mentee/s were also experienced positively. The peer mentor had arranged an initial meeting with the mentee, to get to know him/her better before the mentoring process officially started. One peer mentor (who had two mentees) commented during a focus group discussion:

Quote 4.4:

> *What worked nicely for me initially going out for coffee not with them all together, just one at a time and spending quite a bit of time getting to know them, finding out how their living arrangements are, what they like to do and everything like that, just kind of getting to know them and later on just maybe a quick coffee with them all together and just ask about problems or whatever and then sms, but initially just establishing a good session with them and then according to their need, try and see them.*

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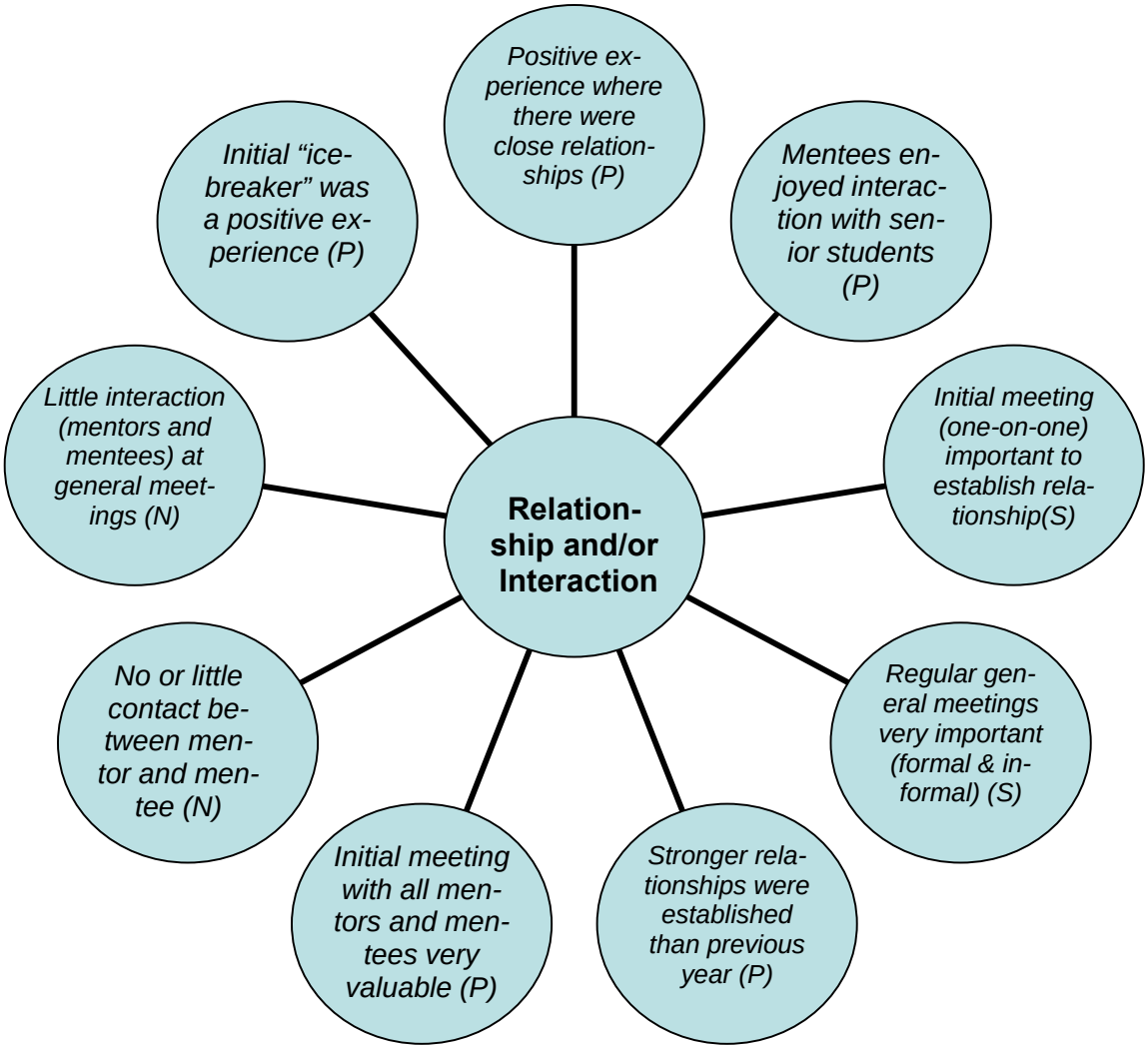

Figure 4.2 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "relationships/interaction between peer mentors and mentees"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestion

Interaction between senior students and first year students

Most mentees felt it was beneficial to meet the senior students and hear about their experiences of their first year and about Physiotherapy and life at university.

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The general meetings with all mentees and peer mentors present received quite a number of positive remarks – the mentees enjoyed the games and especially the food. The mentees and the peer mentors had the opportunity to meet new people. The peer mentors specifically remarked that it was good to get to know the first year students better. Without the mentorship program they would probably not have had this kind of interaction with one another or with the first year students. The peer mentors commented that it was also an opportunity to get to know their fellow peer mentors better. They could discuss problems and share experiences; it was a positive experience to realize that other students had similar problems or difficulties to theirs.

(2) Negative comments/experiences regarding the interaction between peer mentors and mentees

No or little contact between peer mentor and mentee

From a few of the peer mentors' perspective it was reported that some of the mentees were not participating – they said that the mentees were either not interested or never indicated that they needed any help. One peer mentor said that she left several messages for the mentee but never got any reply and then decided to stop contact.

A number of peer mentors, who did make contact, did not feel that they really developed a relationship with their mentee. Time constraints were given as the main reason for this. The peer mentors were too busy with their own academic work or they lived too far from either the campus or from each other to meet with the mentees regularly. Two peer mentors said they met their mentees in the beginning of the year and never heard from them again.

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Some mentees reported that they never met their peer mentors; they did not even know what they look like. One mentee said it was probably his fault that there was no contact because he was never able to react to the peer mentors' invitation to meet. Mentees commented that they felt uncomfortable and awkward to contact someone that they met only once to discuss their problems. One mentee said she did not have the confidence to contact her peer mentor, because she did not know her well enough.

Other negative comments were that the peer mentor was not approachable or was not available or did not give any academic help. This problem, though, seems to be the exception. One mentee had the following comment:

Quote 4.5 (focus group discussion):

> *…their mentor was very good and from that [their experience] nobody would disagree with the mentorship program, everyone would go for it, but because of one single mentor you get the wrong impression of what it's about and you're against the idea…*

(3) Suggestions to improve interaction between peer mentors and mentees

Initial contact between mentors and mentees

A few peer mentors agreed that it worked well to have an initial one-on-one meeting with the mentees to get to know them – go out for coffee or ice cream. It gives them an opportunity to plan how often and where they will meet.

A suggestion to make the initial contact between the peer mentor and mentee easier was that the peer mentors should attend the first year camp that is organized every year by the house committee of the PD. There they will have the opportunity to meet all the first year students and interact socially with one another.

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Regular contact between peer mentor and mentee

There also should be regular contact between the peer mentor and the mentee; once a week in the beginning of the year and later at least once a month. More contact is also needed before and after tests and exams (even if it is only by text message).

The general meetings (with all mentees and peer mentors present) should be more informal and interactive. There was a suggestion that the peer mentors should surprise the mentees as a group after lectures and just join them for a cold drink and socialize.

4.9.2.2 Support for the peer mentors as well as for the mentee

From the focus group discussions and the self-report questionnaires it was clear that both the mentees and the peer mentors needed emotional support. The mentees required academic support as well.

Aspects of support which will be discussed in this paragraph include support or the lack of support for the mentees as well as for the peer mentors. The nature of the support provided or experienced included emotional and academic support. Figure 4.3 illustrates all aspects that are discussed hereafter.

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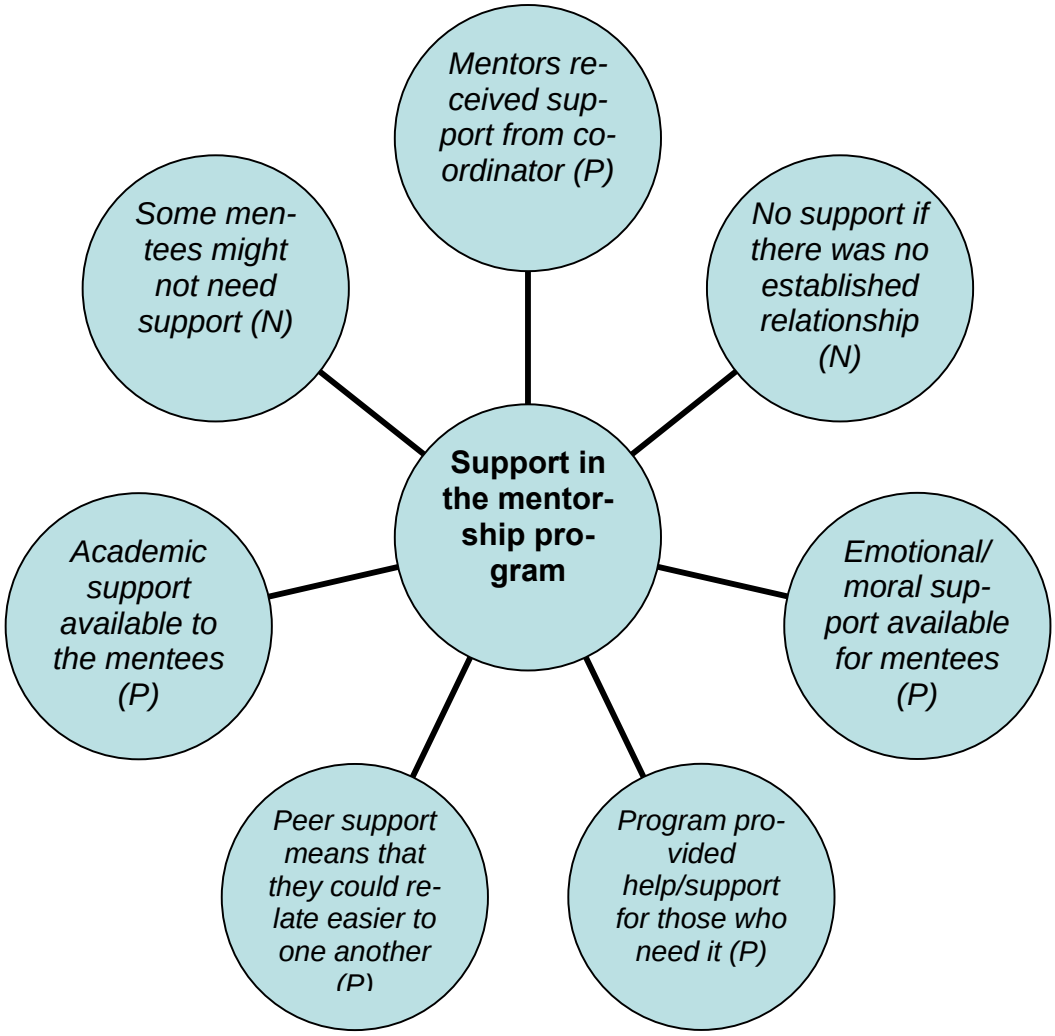

Figure 4.3 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "support"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestion

(1) Positive experiences concerning support for mentees and peer mentors

Emotional support for the mentees

The majority of the mentees felt they had emotional support and some received emotional as well as academic support. The mentees had some-

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one to look up to, someone they could talk to and from whom they could get useful information and advice. The peer mentors were reassuring and assisted them in the adjustment to life at university. Some of them became quite good friends with their peer mentors through the year and said they had received a lot of guidance. In one of the self-report questionnaires, the following remark was made by a mentee:

Quote 4.6 (self-report questionnaire):

> *…it allowed people to become more confident about physio[therapy] as well as helping us to adjust to the new environment…*

The peer mentors also felt that the program provided emotional and academic support to the mentees. The program is there to support the first year student, not to solve their problems for them – its aim is to empower the mentee. In the words of one of the peer mentors during a focus group discussion:

Quote 4.7:

> *…It's like, more working together – mostly it's the mentee that have a problem with something, it's not like you are sorting out the problem for the mentee, but you are just giving ideas so that he/she can make an informed decision about whatever she wants to do …*

Academic support for the mentees

For some of the mentees the academic support they received was the most important advantage of the program. They received previous exam papers from their peer mentor and one of the mentees commented that the help she received after she failed a subject was very valuable.

The peer mentors agreed that the mentees received academic support but that the academic support is an extension of the tutor's work and does not overlap with or replace the functions of the tutor.

Peer support vs. support from lecturers

One of the peer mentors commented that it was much easier to give advice on something that you have been through or have done yourself. It is

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also easier for students to relate to another student than to a lecturer. The mentees know that the peer mentors have been in the same situation, therefore they can relate much better to one another.

Support for the peer mentors

The support the peer mentors received from the program coordinator was also pointed out as one of the advantages of the program. They felt comfortable at the meetings between the peer mentors and the program coordinator and felt they could discuss problems or difficult situations in a safe environment; they felt that she was their mentor. During these meetings it was also reassuring to interact with the other peer mentors and learn how to cope with difficult situations or realize that they managed situations successfully, or they received tips on how to establish contact with their mentee or any other matters associated with the mentees.

Program provided help and support

It was agreed by the majority of the participants in the study that the program provided help for those who needed it. The mentees had someone to talk to and they felt it was good to know that other people had similar problems when they were first years. They could learn from the peer mentors how to cope with certain problems. The program also assisted mentees to keep motivated.

Quote 4.8 (focus group discussion):

….it was like a supporting group, it helped a lot with motivation…

(2) Negative experiences/comments regarding support in the mentorship program

No support for mentee where there was no relationship

In some cases there was no or too little contact to establish a relationship between the peer mentor and the mentee. These mentees who had no es-

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tablished relationships with their peer mentors experienced no support. On the other hand, some mentees mentioned that they did not feel that they needed any support.

4.9.2.3 Program administration

There were numerous comments on the organization and the administration of the mentorship program. These will be discussed under the themes of positive experiences, negative experiences and suggestions on the improvement of the management of the program. The main aspects that were discussed under this category are illustrated in Figure 4.4.

(1) Positive experiences about the program in general

All participants of the study agreed that the program should definitely continue – even those who had a negative experience or no experience of the program. A number of students said that the program provides the support that students need. Others commented that they benefited from being part of the mentorship program and would like other students to experience the same benefit.

Program provided help and support

Students who did not participate in the program saw this program as a safety net to support students. During a focus group discussion one student remarked:

Quote 4.9:

> *…The view I had of it was that it was sort of a parachute, no, not a parachute, a netting system to catch people so they don't fall through the system in terms of support, extended support where the staff can't get to the people, on a more student level.*

A unique program

Participants in the study felt that this program is:

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Quote 4.10 (self-report questionnaire):

…a fresh new approach.

It had improved from the previous year (2006) when the first cycle of the program was implemented. There had been a marked development since the previous program. The students were proud that they were the only student group in the Faculty of Health Care Sciences to have such a program (as far as they knew) and commented on the fact that students from other departments noticed that physiotherapy students are:

Quote 4.11 (focus group discussion):

…a close group who socialize together.

The participants of the focus group discussion speculated whether this perception had something to do with the mentorship program.

Meetings/contact sessions

The initial meeting at the beginning of the year, the "ice breaker" activity, where all the mentees and peer mentors were present, was a positive experience for most peer mentors and mentees. While some thought the other big meetings during the year did not have much purpose, others felt it was great fun and should have been done more often.

(2) Negative experiences

Lack of information about the program

The students who did not participate stated that lack of information was the main reason why they did not participate - they did not know what would be expected of them and how much time participation in the program would take.

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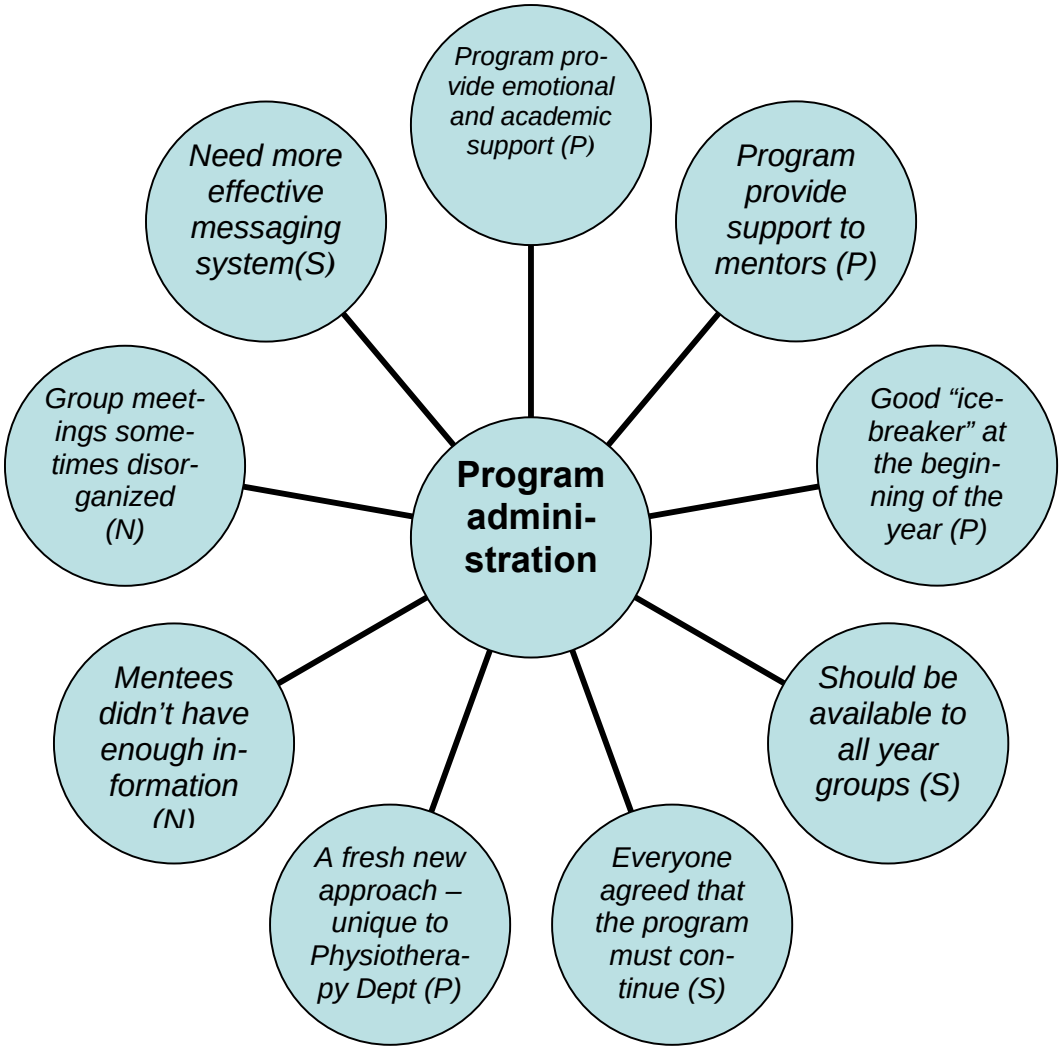

Figure 4.4 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "program administration"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions

When asked why she did not attend the general meetings with all the mentees and peer mentors, one of the mentees, commented:

Quote 4.12 (focus group discussion):

> *…I was honestly not interested because I didn't know what it was about, why I have to go…*

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The mentees also reported that they did not know exactly what the program entailed, whether it was supposed to be more of a relationship and not only academic help. One student said she did not participate because of the negative connotation with a previous informal mentorship program, she just assumed it would be the same and was not interested.

Disorganized group meetings between mentees and peer mentors

The group meetings between all peer mentors and mentees were perceived by some of the participants as being disorganized because of last minute changes in dates and venues. The mentees had little or no interaction with their peer mentors during these meetings. One commented:

Quote 4.13 (focus group discussion):

> *…the thing is even if you get there, it is very intimidating and awkward. When you get there it's like, they're older and it's the whole inferiority thing…*

Another of the mentees felt that the meetings were too long and some activities (games) were irritating.

Unnecessary messaging

Text messages were sent to peer mentors to give information regarding venues and times of meetings. This really bothered the senior students who did not participate in the mentorship program as peer mentors, since they got all the text messages meant for the peer mentors. However, they felt that the participants seemed to have a lot of fun, but thought that sending the messages to the whole third and fourth year classes could be avoided.

(3) Suggestions for improvement of program administration

Meeting administration

The following changes or adaptations were suggested:

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- There was a strong feeling that meeting times should be set well in advance and that they should be fixed.
- The meetings should be held at a venue centrally located for the peer mentors and mentees.
- Some also felt that there should be more structure and interaction during the meetings.
- One mentee had a negative experience at the first general meeting (the games were irritating) and suggested that there must be a coffee group instead of the games.
- Another suggested general meetings (for all the peer mentors and mentees) more often.
- One mentee also suggested that there should be more fun events which include all the mentees and peer mentors.

Database for messages to participants of the mentorship program

To avoid sending text messages to all the students it was suggested that a separate database for the participants in the mentorship program be created on the software program used to sent text messages.

Adequate information on the program

A mentee suggested that the role of the peer mentor must be explained to the mentees as well − everybody must know exactly what the program entails. Numerous participants felt that all students in the PD should be informed about the program. Everyone should have information on what the program entails, what is expected of the peer mentors and mentees, and also what benefits the mentorship program has for the peer mentors.

Mentors for all students

Most of the participants felt that the mentorship program should be expanded to include all students, not only first year students, as senior students also need peer mentors.

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4.9.2.4 Matching of peer mentors and mentees

Matching between mentees and peer mentors proved to be difficult. When the program was first implemented, the matching was done randomly according to the class lists. In the second phase the matching was structured deliberately based on the suggestions received at the end of Phase One of the study (first cycle of implementation of the mentorship program). Figure 4.5 illustrates aspects regarding matching of mentees and peer mentors.

(1) Positive experiences

Matching based on geographical location worked well
One of the suggestions after Phase One of the study was that students should be matched according to the geographical location of their residence. This entails that mentees and peer mentors who live close together or in the same residence should be matched together. In Phase Two, this was implemented as far as possible.

The peer mentors and mentees experienced this type of matching as being beneficial towards the development of relationships between the mentee and the peer mentor. It was easy for the mentor and mentee to meet with one another if they lived in the same residence, for example.

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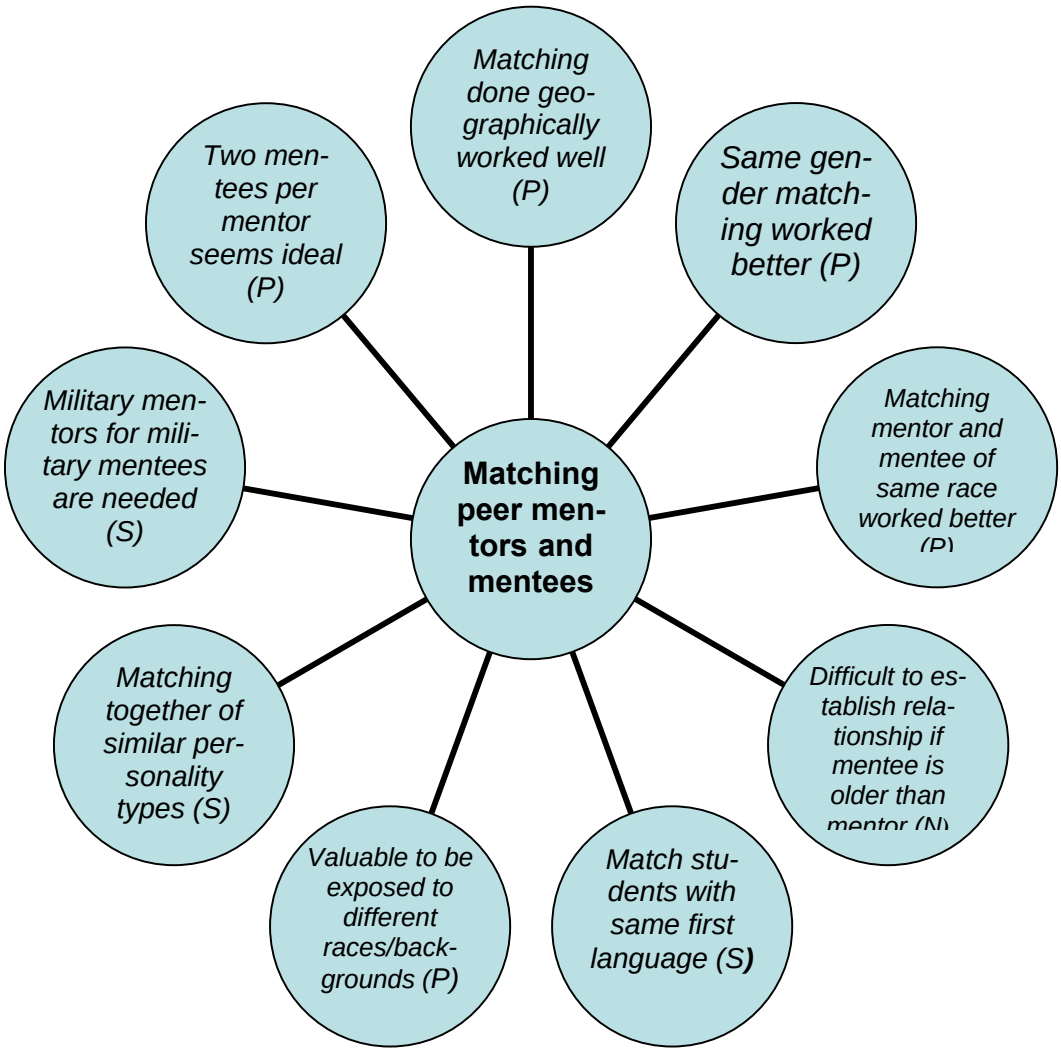

Figure 4.5 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "matching of peer mentors and mentees"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions

They could have regular contact, any time of the day. A number of the mentees commented during focus group discussions:

Quote 4.14:

> *I had a mentor in the res [*residence*]; we go to her often and have coffee with her …. She always came in and says hi before a test or exam and find out how it was afterwards…*

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Same gender matching

Matching according to gender seems to be important. As far as possible this was done, but there were two cases where a peer mentor was female and the mentee male. This was necessary since there were too few male peer mentors to match with the male mentees. The female peer mentor remarked that it took longer for her to "connect" with the male mentee than with her other mentee, who was female. The match worked well in the end, but the relationship took longer to establish.

Matching same cultural groups

Similar experiences were reported where the peer mentor and mentee came from different race groups or cultural backgrounds. It appeared that matching students of the same race group were more successful. There was, however, one specific example where an African, female peer mentor was matched with an African, male mentee and a Caucasian, female mentee. In this peer mentors' case she had a better connection with the male mentee (who was African) than with the female Caucasian mentee. The ideal situation seems to be to match peer mentors and mentees from the same gender and race. A peer mentor in a focus group discussion reported:

Quote 4.15:

> *…if I'm a black person and I know what black people are going through, I can help you much better than if you're a white person; I don't know your lifestyle, I don't know what your needs are.*

Matching peer mentors and mentees with same gender and race groups appeared to work the best in this study. An opposite opinion though was given by one of the senior students:

Quote 4.16 (focus group discussion):

> *I think it's very beneficial to come into contact with different personalities [cultural groups], especially because you will be exposed to so many different personalities when you start working in the hospital. So to be exposed to something like that in a safe, secure environment, is probably better.*

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(2) Negative experiences

Difficult to organize meetings

The main reason mentioned for difficulties experienced with meetings between the mentee and the peer mentor was geographical. The peer mentor and mentees who did not live close to one another found it difficult to fix a time to meet. Because of differences in the time tables of first and third year students, it was also difficult to coordinate their meetings in the PD or during lunch times.

Difference in gender and/or cultural group

A number of peer mentor and mentee matchings between students of different races or gender were quite successful, but the students concur that the disparity in race or gender made the establishment of a relationship more complicated. Factors that challenged the establishment of relationships were gender, race, and different backgrounds.

Age difference between mentee and peer mentor

A peer mentor commented that it was difficult to make a connection with a mentee if the mentee was older than the peer mentor. Most of the older students in the first year class were not interested in the program. These students felt that they did not need support − at least not from someone younger than them.

(3) Suggestions to improve matching between peer mentors and mentees

Matching based on personality types

Quite a few of the mentees felt that matching should be done by pairing mentees with peer mentors with similar personality “types” and interests.

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They thought that personality types could be established, for instance by completing questionnaires. Other participants of the study did mention that they were not sure how this matching according to personality types could be done in practice. One student also felt it is important to match peer mentors and mentees with the same first language. Another student had a different view and commented that the exposure to different personalities would be beneficial to the program. She felt that they, as physiotherapists, should be able to communicate with a person from any cultural group or personality "type". Having a mentee or a peer mentor from a different language group was a good opportunity to experience this.

Matching based on geographical location

It was suggested that the mentees should be matched with peer mentors in the same residence. It was quite noticeable that the peer mentors and mentees living close to one another or in the same residence had more contact and could establish a relationship easier than those who did not live relatively close to one another.

Matching students in the Military service

Another suggestion was that there specifically should be peer mentors who are employed by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) for the mentees who had a bursary scheme from the SANDF, if possible. These students are employed by the SANDF; they might have specific needs or queries that will be different from the rest of the students.

Mentor/mentee ratio

One mentee for one peer mentor would be the ideal situation, but not practically possible as there are only between twenty (20) and twenty-five (25) mentors for fifty (50) mentees. According to the participants two mentees for one peer mentor seemed to be a well functioning ratio.

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4.9.2.5 Peer mentors

Many of the participants commented on the benefits of being a peer mentor, as well as being mentored by a peer. There were also some negative comments on the commitment of some of the peer mentors. In Figure 4.6 the aspects regarding the peer mentors are illustrated.

(1) Positive experiences

Acquiring new skills

The peer mentors reported a number of benefits that the program gave them. One of these benefits was learning new skills. These skills included life skills, communication skills, skills to manage anger, and crisis management. They attained these skills and received valuable information during their training sessions, as well as during their meetings with the program coordinator. They felt empowered and equipped to use these skills in other situations in future.

"Good feeling"

The peer mentors "felt good" to be able to teach – they could teach, give advice and support, as well as help their mentees academically. One peer mentor felt that it was beneficial to re-live the confusion and nervousness of the first year student; to her it felt good to know that she had been through it and survived. Another peer mentor said it kept her "on her toes" to go through the work with the mentee – it was actually good revision of first year knowledge.

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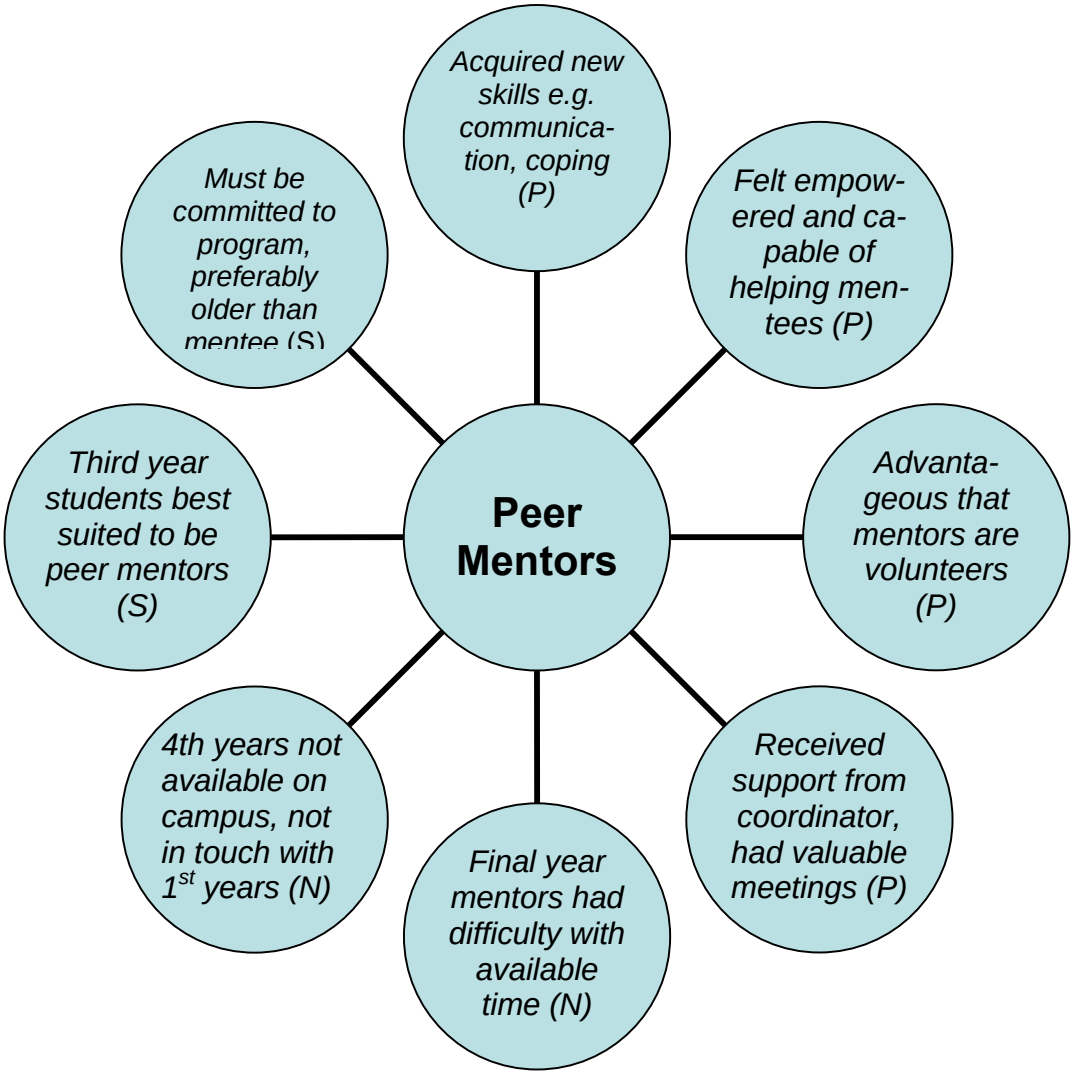

Fig. 4.6 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "peer mentors"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestions

Support from the program coordinator

The support of the program coordinator was mentioned as a positive aspect of the mentoring program. The socializing of the peer mentors with one another during meetings with the program coordinator appeared to be important as well. One student reported that the social function at the end of the year (peer mentors with the program coordinator) was one of the highlights of the year.

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A voluntary program

Most of the participants; mentors and mentees, as well as those who did not participate in the mentorship program, agreed that it is beneficial for the success of the program that the peer mentors must volunteer. They felt that if one volunteers, you will be more committed and willing to put effort and time into the program.

(2) Negative experiences

Final year mentors too busy

According to the majority of participants, using fourth year students to be peer mentors was problematic. The peer mentors who were in their fourth year experienced difficulties to attend general meetings and also to arrange meetings with their mentees. The main reason for these difficulties was a lack of available free time. Fourth year students are working on their research projects at the beginning of the academic year, which takes up most of their free time. Another problem is that their clinical education requires three to four weeks or even longer away from campus. This meant they had little free time available. Some of the mentees also commented that they felt that the final year students were not in touch with first year problems anymore.

Lack of contact with the peer mentor

Some of the mentees reported that they never met their peer mentors. Some had telephone contact only once but they never met each other face to face. The mentees who saw their peer mentors only once or twice said they did not have the confidence to approach the peer mentor, because they did not know him/her well enough. It was also difficult for some participants of the mentorship program to find a time that suited both (especially the mentees with fourth year peer mentors).

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Time constraints for peer mentors and mentees

There was not enough time to meet regularly because of the busy academic schedules of the peer mentors as well as the mentees. It was found that the mentee and/or the peer mentor were too busy to meet; they could not find time to get together. The fourth year students had difficulty finding time between research, clinical work, classes and tests to make an appointment with a mentee. One mentee also felt that she was too busy to attend the general group meetings (she had other commitments after scheduled class times). Several students have other activities after hours and that made it difficult to fit in time for meetings.

(3) Suggestions concerning the peer mentors

Third year students as peer mentors

There was consensus amongst peer mentors, mentees and non-participants of the mentorship program that third year students would be more suited as peer mentors. They have more free time available than the fourth year students. Some of the mentees felt that second year students could also be considered as mentors but many peer mentors felt that second year students would not be able to do it, as they do not have enough experience (life experience as well as experience regarding the Physiotherapy course).

Number of mentees per peer mentor

Two mentees per peer mentor appeared to be the ideal, though one student suggested one mentee per peer mentor, but realized the practical implications as there were more mentees (fifty (50)) than peer mentors (twenty-seven (27)).

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Peer mentors for mentees in the SANDF

A new suggestion not mentioned before is the possibility of a peer mentor in the SANDF specifically for the students on a bursary scheme from the SANDF. This participant thought it would have helped her a lot if she had someone in the same situation as herself, as they faced specific challenges that other students did not have.

Peer mentor characteristics

Characteristics of a good peer mentor indicated by the participants of the study were that the peer mentor should be trustworthy, available, approachable, and be fully committed to the program and to the mentees. It was also felt that a peer mentor should be older than the mentee.

Support for the mentors

One of the suggestions made by the non-participants of the mentorship program was that a support system for the peer mentors should be established. They suggested a system of referral for the peer mentors when they were faced with situations beyond their ability to handle. These students were not aware of the detail of the system and that such a support system for peer mentors existed, since they did not participate in the mentorship program.

Committee of peer mentors

One of the participants of the study suggested that there could be a committee of mentors available to mentees instead of having one or two mentees per peer mentor. How to manage this in practice was not discussed but the student who suggested it realized that it would be very difficult to manage.

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Peer mentors organize social activities

One of the respondents felt that the peer mentors as a group should organize more activities with their mentees. She felt that they could meet for a movie or coffee more often or participate in some physical activity e.g. tennis.

Suggestion box

It was suggested that a box be placed in the PD where mentees could place opinions, concerns or problems they experienced anonymously. Students who were too shy to give their opinion in a meeting could make use of this method. They could also submit personal requests in the suggestion box which they would be hesitant to share with their peer mentor. The program coordinator of the mentorship program should handle these suggestions, if need be.

4.9.2.6 Mentees' comments on the mentorship program

The mentees had several positive, as well as negative comments on the program. This, together with comments by other participants of the study, will be discussed under the following headings: positive experiences; negative experiences, and suggestions. Figure 4.7 illustrates aspects identified regarding the mentees.

(1) Positive experiences

Well-established relationships between peer mentors and mentees

The mentees reported numerous positive experiences and perceptions where a good relationship between the peer mentor and a mentee had been established. They felt they had emotional support and some received academic support as well. The mentees had someone to look up to, someone they could talk to and from whom they could get useful information and advice.

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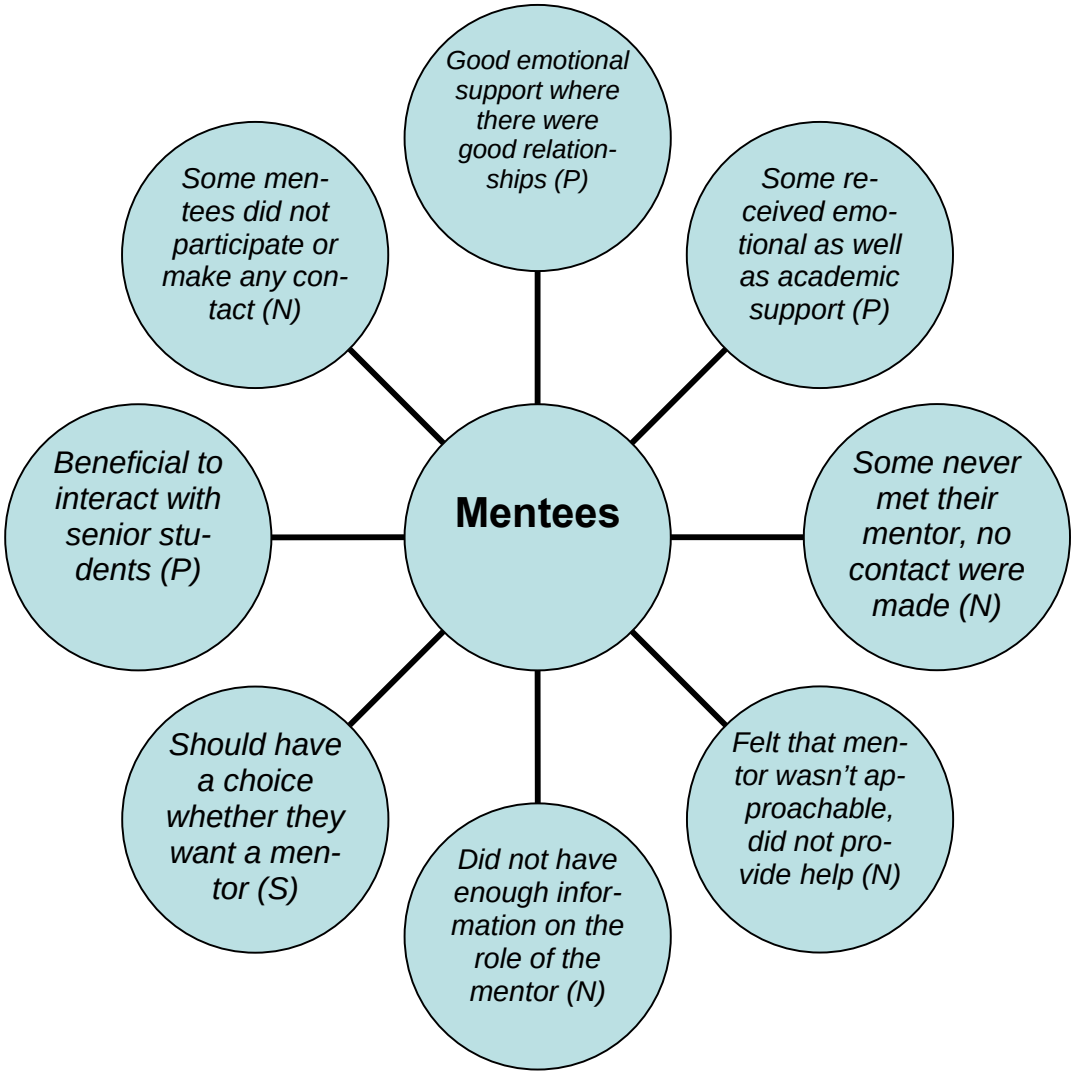

Figure 4.7 Radial diagram of the aspects regarding the category "mentees"
Symbol guide:
(P): positive experience; (N): negative experience; (S): suggestion

Emotional and academic support experienced by mentees

The peer mentors felt that the program provided emotional and academic support to the mentees and that the academic support is an extension of the tutor's work, but does not overlap with or replace the functions of the tutor. They felt the program is also there to empower the mentee, not to solve their problems for them. In the words of one of the peer mentors:

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Quote 4.17 (focus group discussion):

> *…It's like, more working together – mostly it's the mentee that have a problem with something, it's not like you are sorting out the problem for the mentee, but you are just giving ideas so that he/she can have an informed decision about whatever she wants to do.*

(2) Negative elements experienced by the mentees

Mentees not participating in the mentorship program

A number of peer mentors remarked that their mentees were not interested in the program or that the mentees felt they did not need support from the peer mentors. The peer mentors made the first contact and asked the mentees to contact them when they felt the need to talk to someone or when they experienced a problem. However, some of the mentees did not make contact. It was also mentioned by the peer mentors that it was difficult to form relationships with mentees if they did not see one another regularly.

Lack of information on the mentorship program

When asked why she did not attend the general group meetings with all the mentees and peer mentors, one of the mentees remarked that she was not interested because she did not know what the mentorship program entailed. A number of mentees mentioned that they were not sure what the role of the peer mentor involved. The mentees also commented that they did not know exactly what the program entailed, whether it was supposed to be only academic support or more of a "relationship".

No or little contact between mentor and mentee

Some mentees reported that they never met their peer mentors; they did not even know what they look like. One mentee said it was probably his fault that there was no contact because he was never able to attend the meetings. Two peer mentors said they met their mentees in the beginning of the year and never heard from them again.

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(3) Suggestions by mentees to improve the mentorship program

Assessment of first year students

The peer mentors suggested that there should be some kind of assessment to determine which first year students would benefit most from this program. They were not sure how practical such a screening would be or whether it would be possible, but they felt some of the mentees did not need support and that these students should be identified before the program started. They suggested that a method be found to ensure that first year students, who need it most, should get the support.

Program participation should be optional for mentees

There was also a strong feeling among most of the participants of the study that first year students should have a choice whether they want to participate or not. The first year students should be well informed about the program and then have the option to decide whether they need a peer mentor or not.

Regular interaction between mentees and peer mentors.

Another general opinion was that the mentees as a group must meet and interact with all the peer mentors more often. There was even a suggestion that the mentees should be able to choose his/her own peer mentor – but several practical problems regarding that suggestion were acknowledged.

4.9.3 Self-report questionnaires completed by staff

In order to establish whether the program has achieved the original goals formulated by the staff of the Department of Physiotherapy, the researcher obtained the relevant information by means of a questionnaire. Staff was

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asked to complete an open ended questionnaire (Addendum 7). Seven (7) out of nine (9) staff completed the questionnaire (one member of staff was on leave and the other member of staff is the researcher).

The following categories were identified after studying the data by reading it repeatedly:

- Aspects concerning the program administration
- Support available in the mentorship program

Under each of these themes the following themes will be discussed:

- Positive comments
- Negative comments
- Suggestions for improvement

4.9.3.1 Program administration

All the staff members were aware of the HAPPY Mentorship Program. Reasons why the program should continue, is discussed under the positive comments in paragraph (1). According to one member of staff a support program such as the mentorship program is needed because:
Quote 4.18:

> *Physiotherapy is an emotionally, intellectually and physically challenging course.*

(1) Positive comments

The mentorship program provides a supportive environment to students
The staff all agreed that the HAPPY Mentorship Program provide a supportive environment for all the students.

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The mentorship program is structured to create a framework for interaction between students, peer mentors, and staff

The majority of members of staff felt that the mentorship program created a framework for interaction between the students (mentees and peer mentors) but did not directly involve interaction with staff members other than the program coordinator. In the words of one member of staff:

Quote 4.19:

> *I see it* [the mentorship program] *more as directly benefiting interaction between students, with a positive sign-off to student-staff interaction.*

According to another member of staff the mentorship program should not be too structured – it must retain the ability to accommodate a group with a wide variety of personalities.

(2) Negative comments

Too little time available for interaction

One member of staff felt that there was not sufficient time available in the students' schedule for the peer mentors and mentees to interact regularly. This is caused by a very full academic program, as well as clinical education (work) for the peer mentors in a variety of clinical settings in and around Pretoria.

Staff does not have adequate information on the mentorship program

According to one of the members of staff it was difficult to comment on the program because of the fact that she was not sure exactly what the program entailed. Two other members of staff also indicated that they were not sure if the mentorship program was achieving some of the objectives that were originally formulated.

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(3) Suggestions for the improvement of the program administration

Time allocated on the departmental time table for interaction between the peer mentors and mentees.

A suggestion was made by one staff members that time on the departmental time table should be allocated to the mentorship program – either for meetings between peer mentors and mentees and/or for meetings between the peer mentors and the program coordinator.

Integration of the mentorship program with the PDL curriculum

In Chapter 1 it was explained that the need for a mentorship program originated when the curriculum for the subject *Professional Development and Leadership (PDL)* was developed. One member of staff made the comment that the peer mentors could "practise" the skills that they were taught in PDL (communication skills, stress management, listening skills) while supporting their mentees, without even realizing that they were learning practical skills that were taught academically in another course. Because it was part of the mentorship program, it became just the implementation of 'life skills' with no relation to 'academic work'. In fact they were developing or 'sharpening' life skills that they would need to implement in their work environment. According to this staff member this "link" between the PDL and the mentorship program should not be official since it could harm the spontaneity and "fun" element of the mentorship program.

4.9.2.3 Support available in the mentorship program

(1) Positive comments

Peer mentors provide support to mentees

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Support for the mentees by peer mentors is very beneficial. According to one member of staff receiving support from a peer is more beneficial than support from a member of staff. Students are more likely to ask questions about the course, university life, about the lecturers, or anything else that they are battling with/are curious about to a peer than to a lecturer. This is because the mentee feels more comfortable to ask for help/information from another student instead of a member of staff.

Support for the peer mentors

Members of staff observed that peer mentors had continuous support from the program coordinator. The peer mentors had regular meetings with the program coordinator and she was constantly available for personal meetings with a specific peer mentor, when necessary.

The peer mentors could also support one another. One member of staff commented that students were now more sensitive towards one another regarding personal problems. It might be that the mentorship program sensitizes the students (especially peer mentors) to react to other peoples' needs, more than before becoming part of the program.

Peer mentors could develop new skills

The peer mentors develop life skills in a supportive environment under the guidance of the program coordinator. A member of staff said that this development of skills was a valuable advantage of the program:

Quote 4.20:

> *…they will have to apply these skills in their work situations as physiotherapists with colleagues and patients.*

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(2) Suggestions for the expansion of available support in the mentorship program

Support available to senior students

One member of staff suggested that the support provided by the mentorship program should be made available to senior students as well. However, she did not have a practical solution for the problem regarding who would provide this support.

Appointment of a part-time mentor (coordinator)

The suggestion made by one of the members of staff was that a part-time (half-day) mentor program coordinator could be a solution for the above-mentioned problem (managing a mentorship program for 200 students). This coordinator should have no other responsibilities except the mentorship program. At present, the program coordinator of the HAPPY Mentorship Program is a member of staff with a full schedule of teaching (theoretical and practical classes as well as clinical supervision) while managing the mentorship program as well.

Another member of staff suggested that there should be a full time program coordinator that receives remuneration for managing the mentorship program without the workload of other academic responsibilities.

4.9.4 Results from reflection and monitoring by the researcher

4.9.4.1 Reflection after the training seminar at the beginning of Phase Two

The reflection done after the training seminar provided valuable insight into the way of thinking of the peer mentors. They were asked to evaluate the training seminar and give comments and suggestions on facets of the training seminar that can be improved.

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Venue of the training seminar

Most of them agreed that it was beneficial to have the seminar at a venue outside the university. It enhanced the informal and relaxed atmosphere that the program coordinator strove to create. She did not want the peer mentors to experience the seminar as just another lecture; she wanted them to relax and participate. The researcher experienced that the peer mentors were relaxed and felt at ease to talk about themselves – this would probably not have been the case at the department where the seminar would have been held in a lecture hall.

The snacks and lunch that were provided were received very favourably. It created an opportunity for the peer mentors to interact with one another as well as with the program coordinator. The researcher felt that the peer mentors were relaxed and that they used the opportunity to get to know one another better. It was also an opportunity for the researcher to observe them interacting socially with one another.

Content of the training seminar

The peer mentors were, on the whole satisfied with the content of the seminar. They felt more equipped and prepared to conduct themselves as peer mentors. The overall feeling of the peer mentors was that they prefer the one-day training seminar, although some commented that it was a bit tiring.

The researcher felt that there were times during the day that some of the peer mentors became tired. In future, the researcher would include one or two extra activities (where the peer mentors could participate in some physical activity or feedback session) during the day to break long theory sessions.

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4.9.4.2 Reflection after meetings between program coordinator and peer mentors

The meetings held between the peer mentors and the program coordinator during the first phase of the study were held in the afternoons after lectures. This did not work well – some students had to travel to the PD from clinical areas where they were working and arrived late − others had other prior engagements from time to time. This meant that they did not attend these meetings regularly. The researcher also experienced that they were tired after a day of lectures and clinical work.

In Phase Two, the meetings were planned for an evening during the week. They as held at different locations to accommodate most of the peer mentors. The program coordinator asked for volunteers to organize the meeting (the venue as well as the snacks). This system worked very well; the peer mentors were involved in the process of the mentorship program and they were enthusiastic participants. They had time to relax after clinical work before coming to the meeting. The researcher also saw that they attended the meetings more willingly since they were part of the process.

During these meetings time was set aside for report-back, especially about specific problems encountered with the mentees. This provided the opportunity for the peer mentors to reflect on the handling of the situation, as well as “brainstorm” for possible solutions for specific dilemmas. What the researcher experienced during these feedback sessions was that the peer mentors felt almost relieved if they heard from other peer mentors that they experienced similar problems with, for instance, contacting the mentees, as they did. This was the ideal opportunity to ascertain what specific problems the peer mentors experienced.

There was also time allocated for peer mentors to talk about personal and/or academic problems that they themselves experienced. The re-

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searcher believe that it was very important for the peer mentors to know that it was not expected of them to have all the answers or to feel that they must always be in control. They must realize that they need mentoring as well.

4.9.4.3 Reflection after the data analysis

Quite a few of the negative experiences reported from the participants of the study were also observed by the researcher during the establishment of the mentorship program. Each of the categories identified in Phase Two will now be discussed.

- Relationships/Interaction between peer mentors and mentees
  The researcher realized that there was a need for more regular meetings (between peer mentors and mentees as well as peer mentors and program coordinator). Meetings between the peer mentors and program coordinator should be held at least once a month and the general meetings with all the peer mentors and mentees present should take place once a semester. The researcher is of the opinion that a method should be developed to monitor the meetings between the peer mentors and his/her mentees. In this way the program coordinator could oversee that regular meetings are taking place.

- Support in the mentorship program
  Support for the peer mentors as well as for the mentees was available through the mentorship program. The researcher suspect that the cases where no support was experienced might have been because of insufficient information on the program. On the other hand, she observed cases where support was available and sufficient.

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- Program administration

  The organization of meetings between the peer mentors and the program coordinator were not done effectively. The researcher believes that the meetings should have been planned at the beginning of the academic year and included in the official time table of the PD.

- Matching between peer mentors and mentees

  It was difficult for the fourth year and first year students who did not live close to one another, to find time to meet. During Phase Two the matching of peer mentors and mentees were done according to their geographical location as far as possible – this made it easier for the mentors and mentees to meet. They could see one another during supper or meet for a quick coffee, if they lived in the same residence.

- Peer mentors

  The researcher concluded during the first year of the implementation of the mentorship program, that most of the fourth year students were not able to manage to organize regular meetings with their mentees. The main reason for this was a lack of free time. When third year students were used as peer mentors in Phase Two, it was more effective as they had more time available. The researcher found that third year students were the preferable year group to use. They have more free time than the fourth year students and they are likely to be emotionally stronger and more experienced than the second year students.

In conclusion, the suggestions are summarized in Table 4.3.

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Table 4.3

Summary of suggestions after Phase Two

CATEGORY	SUGGESTIONS	REFLECTION
Mentees	• Screening of first year students to determine who will benefit most	• This might not be practical or possible as the matching must be done as soon as the mentees start their year. This is, however, a valuable suggestion that can be considered.
	• Making the mentorship program optional for first year students	• After thoroughly informing the mentees on the program, the program coordinator could give them the option to participate in the mentorship program or not.
	• Students must be supplied with adequate information on the mentorship program	• The researcher realized that most of the negative perceptions might have been caused by insufficient information on the process of the mentorship program.
	• First year students must meet all the peer mentors	• The researcher believes this does happen during a general meeting with all the peer mentors and mentees present. There should be more interaction between the peer mentors and the mentees during the meetings.
Mentors	• Must be third year students	• The researcher agrees that this is the best year group to use as peer mentors.
	• Two mentees per mentor is a good ratio	• In most cases this is a successful ratio.
	• Peer mentors employed by the SANDF matched with mentees employed by the SANDF	• The researcher aims to match SANDF students but, this will be determined by the students who volunteer to become peer mentors.

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	• Mentor must be trustworthy, available, approachable and committed	• These are characteristics that the researcher believes is essential for a peer mentor – it is included in the training manual.
	• Mentor should be older than the mentee	• The researcher will take the age of the mentees into consideration when matching them with a peer mentor.
	• Peer mentors should have a support system and referral system	• The researcher believes the program coordinator provided support to the peer mentors and a referral system does exist.
	• Committee of mentors available to the mentees instead of individual peer mentor/mentee matching	• The researcher does not believe that this form of mentoring will be effective in reaching the objectives that the PD of UP had in mind when developing this mentorship program.
Program administration	• Program should definitely continue	• The researcher very strongly agrees after analyzing the data of the study
	• All students must receive adequate information on the program	• The researcher is aware that inadequate information was one of the limitations of the mentorship program and intends to inform the whole PD (students and staff) in future.
	• General meeting times should be fixed well in advance	• The researcher believes that it will be most effective if fixed on the time table.
	• General meetings should be held at central venues	• This was being done as far as possible

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	• Separate grouping on software program for sending of text messages to peer mentors	• This is a good suggestion and the researcher will endeavour to establish such a database.
	• The mentorship program should be available to all students	• Because of limited resources, it will not be possible at this stage. If a full time program coordinator is appointed, it could be feasible.
Matching	• Personality types should be matched	• The researcher does not believe that this is possible to achieve, but it will be investigated.
	• Mentor and mentee should have the same first language	• The researcher will attempt to match students with the same first language as far as possible.
	• Match mentees and peer mentors living in the same residences	• The researcher is sure that this is the most important criteria for matching peer mentors and mentees, because they can see one another regularly and build a relationship
	• Match same race/cultural groups	• The researcher will take race and cultural group into consideration with matching as far as possible.
Relationship/interaction between mentee and peer mentor	• Initial contact on the first year camp	• The researcher strongly agrees that meeting at the first year camp very valuable and will implement it in future.
	• Have initial one-to-one meeting between peer mentor and mentee to establish relationship	• This first meeting is extremely important and should be initiated by the peer mentor.

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	• Should have regular contact e.g. once a month • Contact before tests and exams	• The researcher believes that the success of the mentorship program is based on regular contact and developing a relationship.
	• More informal/natural meetings with all the mentees and peer mentors present	• Through regular meetings the peer mentors and mentees can stay in contact
	• Suggestion box	• The researcher will implement a suggestion box after informing all the participants of the mentorship program about the purpose of the box.

4.10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER FOUR

In Chapter 4 the second phase of the study was discussed. The aims of this phase were to:

- adapt the HAPPY Mentorship Program and implement the adapted program,
- determine whether the adapted version of the HAPPY Mentorship Program addressed the limitations identified in the first cycle of the mentorship program,
- determine whether the adapted program meets the needs of Physiotherapy students for social, emotional and/or academic support,
- identify factors that should specifically be monitored during the course of the program,
- establish whether the students have any other/further suggestions on how any facet of the mentorship program should be adapted to address needs that have not been met or that have not been identified previously during phase one,

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- establish the extent to which the objectives of the PD for the mentorship program have been met with the adapted version of the mentorship program,
- revise and adapt the HAPPY Mentorship Program according to data gathered from students and members of staff of the PD once again, and
- formulate the process and guidelines on which a peer mentorship program for undergraduate Physiotherapy students at UP is based.

The data collection methods used in this phase included focus group discussions (8), self-report questionnaires, and reflection and monitoring of the mentorship program by the researcher.

The suggestions by the participants of the study on improving certain aspects of the mentorship program are summarized in the previous chapter in Table 4.3.

In the next chapter the results will be discussed and analyzed in order to fulfil the final objective of the research project, namely to formulate the process and guidelines on which a peer mentorship program for undergraduate Physiotherapy students at UP is based.

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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was the establishment of a mentorship program in the PD at UP. The original aim of the mentorship program was to establish a program which would address the emotional/personal wellbeing of all students during their development as professionals (Eksteen, Mostert & Tsibangu, 1997). As time passed, the second aim surfaced, namely to create a peer support structure for students, especially for first year students. The opportunity arose to achieve both the above-mentioned aims when the matter was discussed at a staff meeting and the researcher volunteered to establish a peer mentorship program, seeing that she had a special interest and previous experience in emotional support and crisis debriefing.

5.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENTORSHIP PORGRAM

As mentioned in the introductory paragraph, a need was identified to provide emotional support, as well as assisting the students to develop as professional physiotherapists. The main aim of this study was, therefore to establish, implement and review a peer mentorship program at the PD at UP.

The HAPPY Mentorship Program was developed by the researcher in November 2005 based on information gained from literature published on similar mentorship programs in tertiary education (Koplin-Baucum, 2005; Ridout, 2006; Notre Dame School of Physiotherapy; University of Texas at Brownsville; James Cook University; Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Stellenbosch), as well as training material from the Sinoville Crisis Centre (with the permission from the director of the centre). No other published peer mentorship program, developed specifi-

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cally for a Physiotherapy Department in South Africa, could be identified on the databases used (Pubmed and Medline). Therefore, it was essential for the program to be reviewed and evaluated in order to determine whether it was reaching the goals it was aiming to achieve. Due to the limited South African research on mentorship programs, it was therefore decided that the researcher would engage in an action research program to establish such a program through collaboration with the participants of the mentorship program, as well as students who were not part of the mentorship program. The development of the HAPPY Mentorship Program is discussed in detail in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1.1.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions, on which the study was based, were:

- Is there a need amongst Physiotherapy students at UP for the HAPPY Mentorship Program?
- What are the views on and experiences of the Physiotherapy students at UP concerning the HAPPY Mentorship Program?
- Is the HAPPY Mentorship Program achieving the goals of the PD at UP for such a program?

5.4 RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process of this study is discussed in detail in Chapter 1 (paragraph 1.7). A summary in the form of a schematic diagram is given to illustrate how the mentorship program development and research process ran simultaneously.

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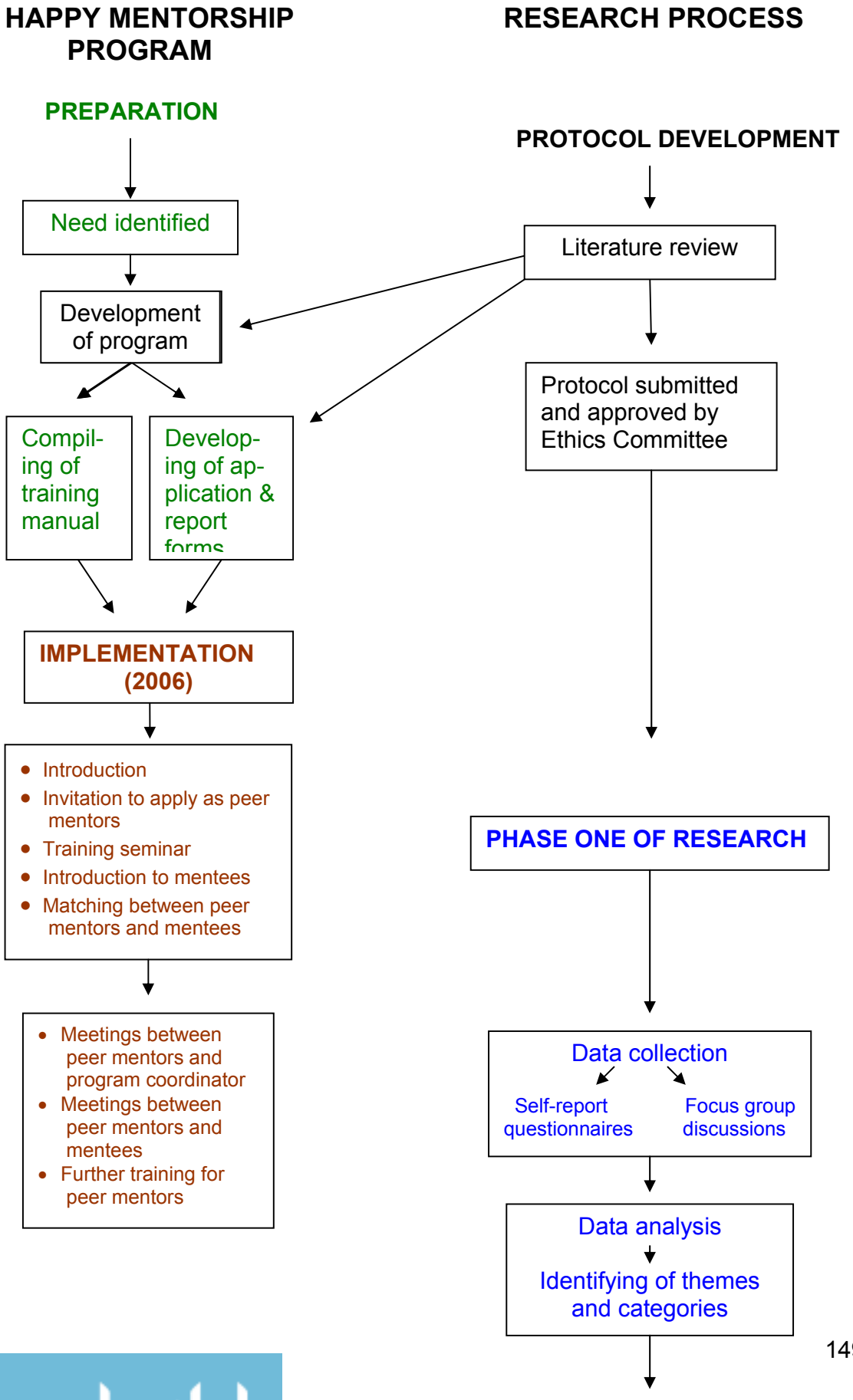

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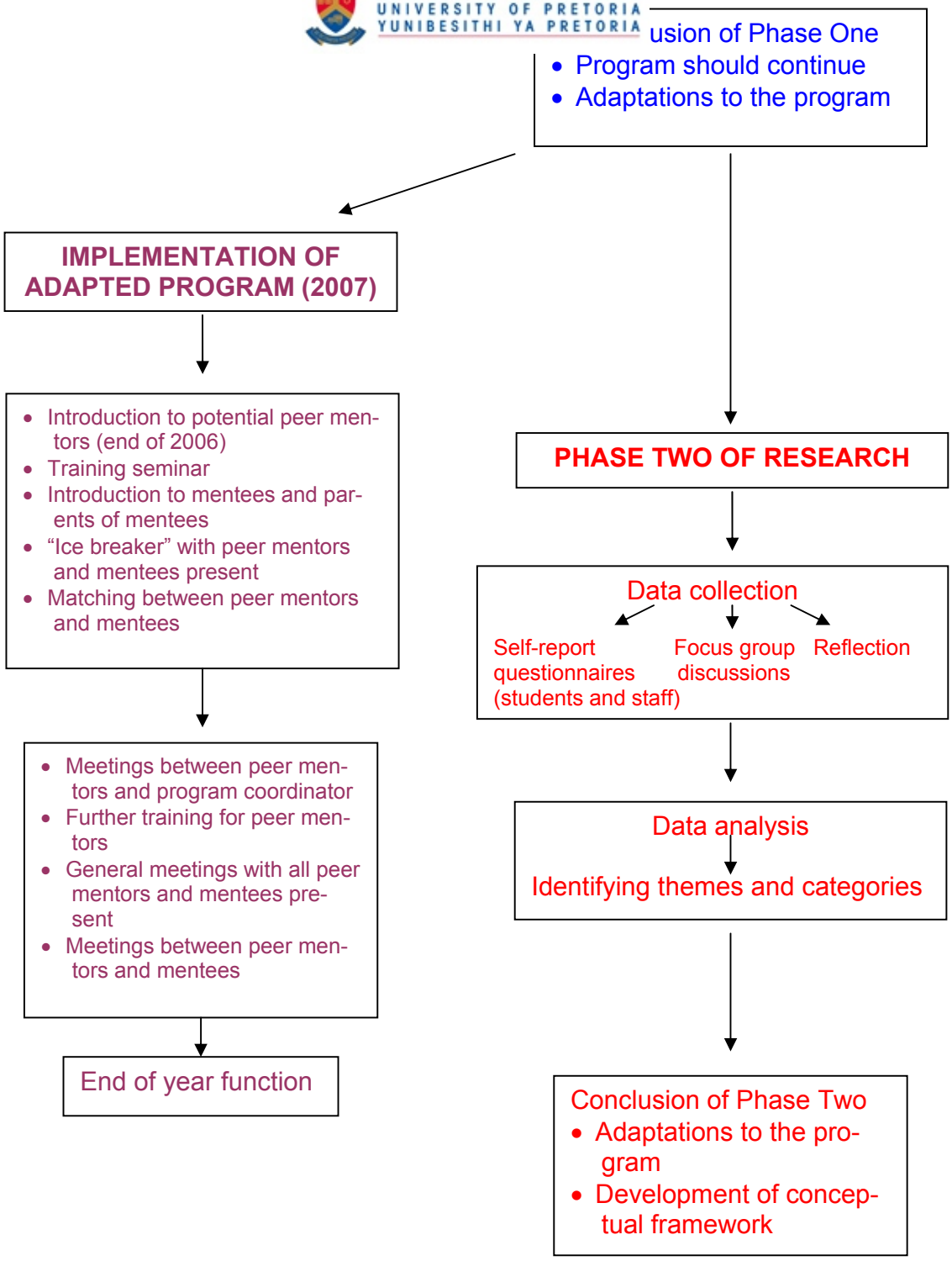

Fig. 5.1 Schematic diagram illustrating mentorship development and research process

Colour guide:
Green – Preparation phase of the mentorship program
Brown – First implementation of mentorship program (2006)
Blue – Phase One of the research project
Plum – Implementation of adapted program (2007)
Red – Phase Two of the research project

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5.5 DISCUSSION ON WHETHER THE AIMS/OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY WERE REACHED

The study was conducted in two phases. Phase One started with the implementation of the HAPPY Mentorship Program in 2006. Phase Two commenced at the start of the academic year in 2007.

The discussion is based on the objectives described in Chapter 1 (paragraph 1.5). The results of Phase One and Two and reflection by the researcher will be discussed under each heading.

5.5.1 Preparation for the implementation, as well as the development of a peer mentorship program for Physiotherapy students at UP

The HAPPY Mentorship Program was developed at the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006. The training manual was compiled, as well as a variety of different report forms (Addendum 4) necessary for monitoring and evaluation of the program. These forms were: report forms for peer mentors to record their meetings with their mentees; report forms for the program coordinator to record individual meetings with peer mentors; and report forms for the program coordinator to record individual meetings with mentees. With the start of Phase One of the study (March 2006) the students were informed on the mentorship program. The third and fourth year students were invited to apply with the program coordinator (also the researcher) for training as peer mentors. The successful applicants were trained and matching of peer mentors with mentees was done randomly according to the class list.

Two general meetings took place during the year, where all the peer mentors and mentees were present. The aim of these meetings was to encourage interaction between the mentees and the peer mentors as a group.

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The program coordinator had four meetings with the peer mentors during the year which took place approximately every six weeks. During these meetings the program coordinator gave further training on topics identified by her, as well as the peer mentors during the monitoring of the program. These additional topics which were discussed included depression, anger management, as well as time management. During the meetings the peer mentors also had the opportunity to report back on their contact sessions with the mentees and to discuss problems they may have experienced, for example how to make contact with the mentee or how to provide help for a specific problem the mentee might have experienced. If the peer mentors had any personal/emotional difficulties, this was also the opportunity to talk about it, or they could make an appointment with the program coordinator to talk to her privately. Some of the peer mentors felt comfortable enough to raise certain issues during the meetings with the program coordinator. Usually these issues were problems concerning their own academic load or lack of time to meet with their mentees.

The researcher gave the peer mentors the opportunity to talk about anything that bothered them and facilitated discussion concerning the particular problem. True to the nature of counseling/facilitation methods, the researcher listened most of the time and through questioning certain statements and giving perspective on some of the issues, the peer mentors were guided to solve the issues themselves. The process followed guided the peer mentors through an experience on how to be mentored based on experiential learning.

The implementation of the program was reached its intended goal since all the participants of Phase One of the study reported that they are aware of the program. Although some did not know what it entailed, they knew that the mentorship program existed. No literature could be found to indicate criteria to measure the success of implementation of a mentorship program.

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The adapted mentorship program was implemented in the beginning of 2007 after the conclusion of Phase One. Phase Two started with recruiting new peer mentors from the third year class. A training seminar was held in the first month of the academic year and revised training manuals were distributed. The peer mentors were introduced to the first year students during the first year students' orientation week.

The training seminar included certain new information and the manual had the following topics added:

- different faces of helping, and
- identifying own emotions.

The peer mentors were asked to sign a commitment agreement at the seminar (Addendum 2). It was expected of the peer mentors to contact/meet their mentee as least once a month and a report form had to completed and submitted to the program coordinator at the end of the year. At the training seminar it was also suggested by the peer mentors that a special T-shirt be designed which will identify them as peer mentors when they meet the first year students. This was approved by the program coordinator and the production was organized by the students. The wearing of the T-shirts on the first day that the peer mentors met the first year students received positive comments on that day.

The first meeting between the peer mentors and the mentees was on Parents' Day when the first year students and their parents are invited to the Department and are introduced to the lecturers and accompanied on a tour through the Department. The program coordinator introduced the HAPPY Mentorship Program to the new students and their parents and the peer mentors assisted with the tour through the Department. By doing this the peer mentors had their first informal interaction with the first year students.

The "ice-breaker" meeting with all the peer mentors and mentees present were organized by two of the fourth year peer mentors. This was done in the week fol-

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lowing their initial meeting. Activities were introduced, designed to get to know one another better and there was interaction between all the peer mentors and mentees. Everybody had pizza and cold drinks afterwards.

The matching of peer mentors with their mentees was done according to geographical addresses as far as possible. This was done at the “ice breaker” meeting and at the first house meeting of the Physiotherapy students. It was necessary to finalize the matching at the house meeting since all the peer mentors and mentees could not attend the “ice breaker” meeting. (This problem can probably be avoided if the meetings is planned ahead of time and included in the time table, as was suggested). Students living in the same residence were matched first (some peer mentors had two mentees, two of the peer mentors had three mentees). Another aspect taken into consideration when pairing peer mentors with mentees was gender. The majority of matches were of the same gender, but there were only three male peer mentors and thirteen (13) first year male students. That forced the program coordinator to allocate some male mentees to a female peer mentor. Race was also taken into account and peer mentors and mentees of the same race were matched where possible. Three (3) peer mentors had mentees that were from a different race as themselves.

The program coordinator and the peer mentors had regular meetings throughout the year. It was scheduled approximately every six (6) weeks. During the third semester a second general meeting, where all the peer mentors and mentees were present, were organized by some of the third year peer mentors. The main aim of the meeting was to ascertain whether the mentees and peer mentors actually learned to know one another during the year. It was a fun event and hamburgers and cold drinks were enjoyed afterwards. At the end of the year an informal function was held where the peer mentors and their partners and the program coordinator with her family were present.

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Researcher reflection

After data analysis of Phase Two, it was clear to the researcher that the mentorship program was now more organized and effective than in the implementation phase. The researcher felt that the participants in the mentorship program were more informed and better equipped than during Phase One. The participants, especially the peer mentors, were also becoming more involved in the process of mentoring and were beginning to take ownership of the mentorship program.

5.5.2 Physiotherapy students' experience of whether the first implementation of the HAPPY Mentorship Program (Phase One) met their needs for social, emotional and/or academic support

Where friendship relationships were established between the peer mentor and the mentee, the mentorship program was perceived as being positive. One of the mentees commented:

Quote 5.1 (self-report questionnaire):

> *I really thought it* [the mentorship program] *was great. My* [peer] *mentor helped me with so much…and becoming a really great friend.*

The mentees in successful peer mentor/mentee relationships reported that they received support on social, academic, and emotional levels. They really felt that there was someone available (the peer mentor) when they needed somebody for support.

Quote 5.2 (self-report questionnaire):

> *My mentor and I became good friends. She helped me when I needed help…*

In a few cases no friendship relationships were established. These mentees reported that they experienced no benefits from the mentorship program since they did not once meet their peer mentor – one mentee remarked that she did not even know what her peer mentor look like. These mentees did not receive any support at all and for them the program did not meet their needs.

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The same conclusion was reached by researchers at the Children's' Hospital Los Angeles when they evaluated new graduate nurses' perception of a mentoring program over a six year period (Beecroft, Santner, Lacy, Kunzman & Dorey, 2007). Their results indicated that the participants who met with their mentors regularly perceived the mentoring as supportive, guiding and stress reducing. The conclusion reached by these researchers was that regular face-to-face meetings are essential for a successful relationship between the mentor and mentee because it requires adequate time for this connection between mentor and mentee to grow.

Researcher reflection

On reflection, the researcher decided that this problem can be addressed by monitoring the meetings between peer mentors and mentees more specifically. A proposal by a member of staff is that a form of electronic reporting by peer mentors and mentees should be set in place. Electronic reporting of peer mentor-mentee meetings is thought to be less threatening and might therefore be more honest. Only the program coordinator would have access to that information. This will enable the program coordinator to identify problem areas earlier during the year (instead of receiving a report as late as the end of the academic year) and then react to those problems as soon as they are identified.

The question can be asked whether a negative experience, as the one mentioned above, will influence the mentee involved negatively towards mentorship programs and cause the student to loose interest in becoming a peer mentor. On the other hand, it is possible that the mentee would be motivated to become a peer mentor to improve on the mentoring that he/she has received. This will be an interesting aspect of a mentor program to monitor in future.

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5.5.3 The identification of a possible need amongst the Physiotherapy students at UP for the mentorship program to continue

All the participants in the study agreed that the mentorship program should continue. Even students who had a negative experience of the mentorship program wanted the program to continue after some adaptations to make it more effective and valuable. They felt that there is a need for support and that the mentorship program can fulfil that need. Because of this overwhelming positive response, the study continued after completion of Phase One.

5.5.4 Determining whether the adapted version the HAPPY Mentorship Program (Phase Two) was addressing the limitations that were identified in the first cycle of the mentorship program

The limitations recognized in Phase One were:

- There was a lack of available information on the program. Students not directly involved with the program did not know what the program entailed and were not sure what the aims or objectives of the mentorship program were.
- The mentorship program started too late in the year. The mentees had managed to sort out most of their problems on their own by the time the peer mentors met them.
- Final year peer mentors were not available (due to a busy schedule), not committed, or just too busy to meet regularly with the mentees. Some of the mentees also felt that it was difficult to connect with a final year student; they did not feel comfortable to talk to the senior peer mentors.
- There was no or too little contact between the mentee and the peer mentor.
- Meetings were not well organized.

Table 5.1 gives a summary of how these limitations were addressed, as well as reflection from the researcher.

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Table 5.1

Limitations of Phase One addressed in Phase Two

LIMITATIONS IDENTIFIED DURING PHASE ONE	ACTION TAKEN DURING PHASE TWO	RECOMMENDATION/ REFLECTION
Lack of available information	First and third year students (potential peer mentors and mentees) were given specific information sessions during classes	Information sessions for all year groups – whether they participate in the mentorship program or not
Program started too late	Program started within the first month after the commencement of the academic year	Program should start on the day that the first year students arrive at the PD
Final (fourth) year students too busy to be committed peer mentors	Third year students trained as peer mentors in Phase Two	Continue with third year students as peer mentors
No/too little contact between mentee and peer mentor	Peer mentors were encouraged to see/contact mentees more regularly	Peer mentors should commit to meeting with their mentees once a month. Regular meetings promote friendship relationships
Meetings between peer mentors and program coordinator not well organized	Dates of meetings were scheduled earlier, but changes often occurred due to timetable changes or other commitments of the program coordinator	Set dates at the beginning of the year and incorporate them into the timetable

Researcher reflection

Most of the limitations were addressed, some more successfully than others. The organization of meetings, for instance, can still be improved – meetings were scheduled but the time and venue had to be changed often on short notice due to academic commitments or activities at the residences for instance. Regular meetings (at least once a month) between mentees and peer mentors should also be strongly encouraged.

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5.5.5 Determining whether the adapted program met the needs of Physiotherapy students for social, emotional and/or academic support

Needs of the mentees

After data analysis of Phase Two it was clear that the needs of the mentees, who had established relationships with their peer mentors and were meeting regularly with one another, were undoubtedly met. The mentees reported that they had someone to look up to, someone they could talk to and someone from whom they could get useful information and advice – academically as well as emotionally. Some of the mentees even became friends with their peer mentors through the course of the year and remarked that they will probably remain friends. The peer mentors were reassuring and assisted the mentees to adjust to life at university.

Some of the mentees saw the academic support they received as the most important advantage of the program. This support entailed mainly the obtaining of previous exam and test papers, although most of these papers were also available from the library. Although the mentorship program was not developed with academic support as one of the main aims, it seems that the support most needed by the mentees was of an academic nature. This does not mean that the peer mentor replaced the tutor – some of the peer mentors commented that the academic support that they provided was an extension of the tutor's work. (At UP tutors are appointed to assist students academically). Where a tutor will discuss specific academic themes or topics the first year students experienced difficulties with at specific times (in the form of extra classes), the peer mentor will work one-to-one and assist the mentee with aspects such as time management or study methods.

The peer mentors also felt that the program provided emotional and academic support to the mentees. The program is there to support the first year student, not to solve their problems for them – it aspires to empower the mentee.

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Needs of the peer mentors

The peer mentors received support from the program coordinator. This was also pointed out as one of the advantages of the program. The peer mentors felt comfortable at the meetings between themselves and the program coordinator and felt that they could discuss problems or difficult situations in a safe environment. They experienced this support as the program coordinator being their mentor. During these meetings it was also reassuring to interact with other peer mentors.

The majority of participants felt that the program provided help and support to those who needed it. The mentees had someone whom they could talk to and felt it was good to hear that other people had similar problems and that they could learn from the peer mentors how to cope with certain problem areas.

Other advantages of the mentorship program

The participants of the study perceived the certain advantages. The mentees as well as the peer mentors reported on advantages of the mentorship program.

The peer mentors reported, amongst others, the following advantages:

- Learning new life skills
- Interaction with fellow peer mentors as well as mentees
- “Good feeling” to help others
- Felt empowered to help mentees with their problems

Similar advantages were also reported by McLean (2004) as most rewarding experiences for the peer mentors. Other rewarding experiences mentioned by the peer mentors of the HAPPY Mentorship Program included meeting new people, becoming more responsible, and being forced to revise academic work in order to assist the mentees.

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The mentees at the Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine commented on their most rewarding experiences. These included developing an excellent mentor-mentee relationship; knowing someone was responsible for you; the year being made easier; and learning the tricks of the trade (McLean, 2007). These comments correspond with the comments that were made by mentees of the HAPPY Mentorship Program. They felt safe because they knew there was someone who is looking out for them.

Researcher reflection

In summary it can be said that the adapted HAPPY Mentorship Program did provide social, academic, as well as emotional support. The perceptions reported by the participants of the research correspond with other studies found in literature (McClean, 2007).

5.5.6 Students' suggestions on how to adapt any facet of the program so that their needs for a mentorship program can be met

The participants of the study had numerous suggestions. Some suggestions were practical and logical, while others were not realistic. The suggestions are discussed under the following headings:

- Program administration
- Meetings
- Peer mentor
- Peer mentor/mentee matching

5.5.6.1 Program administration

In Table 5.2 the category "program administration" is summarized

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Table 5.2

Suggestions regarding the category "program administration"

SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF PHASE ONE	SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF PHASE TWO
Program should start early in the academic year	The first year students should have a choice whether to participate in the mentorship program or not
All the students of the PD should be better informed about the mentorship program	Sending of text messages regarding the mentorship program to peer mentors only and not to the whole class
Better promotion of the program, especially to encourage students to apply to become peer mentors	The mentorship program should be available to all students of the PD of UP

It was suggested that the program should start as early in the academic year as possible. The participants (especially the peer mentors) felt that it should start as soon as the first year students are welcomed in the PD since that is when the mentees mostly need the support.

The lack of adequate information on the content and the structure of the mentorship program was one of the negative comments frequently mentioned by the participants of the study, especially during Phase One. Quite a few participants suggested that **all** the students should be better informed about the mentorship program, not only the peer mentors and mentees. They felt that students who might have a negative impression of the mentorship program could become more positive towards the mentorship program if they were well informed and knew what it entails. Better promotion of the mentorship program amongst all students was also suggested.

One of the suggestions only mentioned in Phase Two was that some of the participants felt that the first year students should have a choice whether to participate in the program or not. This suggestion was made by students who have studied a different course before being selected for

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Physiotherapy. They were first year Physiotherapy students, but had attended university previously. Some of them had already completed a three-year degree.

Another suggestion made in Phase Two concerning the program administration, was the formulation of a separate database for the sending of text messages to peer mentors and mentees. The researcher intends to implement this suggestion if possible with the current software program used for text messages.

Researcher reflection

The students should be encouraged to join the program by informing them on the advantages of being a peer mentor as well as being a mentee. This promotion of the mentorship program should be done by the program coordinator.

It is true that the students who have been to university previously might not need as much emotional support or assistance in adapting to university life as the first year students who finished school the previous year, but the researcher feel that they still need some academic support and furthermore the general meetings (for all mentees and peer mentors) ensure that first year students get to know the peer mentors, as well as one another. This also assists first year students in feeling part of a group – that they are part of the PD of UP.

Because of limited resources, the suggestion that the mentorship program should be available to all students of the PD at UP, will not be a possibility at this stage. If a full time program coordinator is appointed, this could be re-considered.

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5.5.6.2 Meetings between peer mentors and mentees as well as between peer mentors and the program coordinator

Table 5.3

Suggestions regarding the category "meetings"

SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF PHASE ONE		SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF PHASE TWO
Initial contact should be started with a fun event ("ice breaker") between the peer mentors and the mentees		General meetings (peer mentors and mentees) should be held at central venues (at the PD or on campus)
General meeting times (for meetings with all the peer mentors and mentees present) must be scheduled on the departmental time tables		
More general meetings (meetings with all the peer mentors and the mentees present) should be held		
Peer mentors should meet with their mentee/s at least once a month		

The initial contact between the peer mentors and the mentees was very important for both the peer mentors and the mentees, hence the suggestion in Phase One that an "ice breaker" meeting (a meeting where all the mentees and peer mentors could interact socially and get to know one another informally) should be held at the beginning of the year. This suggestion was implemented at the beginning of the following year with the start of Phase Two. It was an informal, fun-filled occasion.

Quite a few participants in Phase One also suggested more regular general meetings (meetings with all the peer mentors and mentees present). That would give the peer mentors and the mentees more opportunity to get to know one another better. In order to simplify the organization of the general meetings there was a suggestion after Phase One that the times (for meetings with all the peer mentors and mentees present) should be scheduled according to the timetables of the peer mentors and mentees.

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This could not be done in Phase Two, as the official timetable was already finalized by the time the data analysis of Phase One was done.

They also suggested that meetings between the peer mentors and the program coordinator should be held more regularly. The peer mentors felt they had adequate support from the program coordinator and benefited from the meetings with her, but that more regular meetings would be beneficial. The positive feedback and the good interaction between everyone present at the meeting resulted in a feeling of encouragement and motivation and it was suggested that it should take place more often.
The peer mentors also suggested that meetings between them and the program coordinator should be scheduled on the departmental timetables. They suggested that these meetings and training sessions should be held during the week instead of on a weekend. In Phase Two another suggestion was proposed to simplify the logistics of the meetings. This was that the meetings are held at a venue that is centrally located for the peer mentors when meeting with the program coordinator, as well as for the mentees and peer mentors when the general meetings are held.

During Phase Two both meetings between the program coordinator and the peer mentors, as well as the general meetings with all the peer mentors and mentees present were held more often. Three general meetings with all peer mentors and mentees present were held during the year, but suggestions received after Phase Two indicated that the number of these meetings could even be increased. The program coordinator had four meetings with the peer mentors.

Based on suggestions during Phase One of the research project, meetings between the peer mentors and their mentees should take place at least once a month. The peer mentors and mentees that had a successful relationship met regularly. The nature of these meetings could vary be-

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tween an informal meeting (sharing a quick cup of coffee) and a more structured meeting on a specific time at a specific place.

This suggestion was implemented by peer mentors and mentees during Phase Two**.** The peer mentors and mentees who persisted with regular and well-spaced meetings established successful friendship relationships. Due to time constraints not all of the peer mentors could meet their mentees every month.

Researcher reflection

"Ice breaker" meeting

During the "ice breaker" meeting the researcher observed that the first year students were somewhat nervous at first, not knowing what to expect. During the activity, and while enjoying snacks afterwards, everybody was relaxed. Matching could be done between the students present. The researchers' suggestion would be that this meeting is essential to establish contact between the peer mentors and mentees and that it must take place in the first week of the academic year of the first year students.

General meetings with all the peer mentors and mentees present

The suggestion that the times for these meetings should be scheduled on the departmental timetable should be taken seriously by the researcher as program coordinator because it might be the only way to ensure that all the peer mentors and mentees will be able to attend these meetings. The organization of respective timetables will be one aspect of future planning.

Meetings between program coordinator and peer mentors

The meetings between the program coordinator and the peer mentors benefited both the researcher and the peer mentors. The meetings were characterized by group mentoring of the peer mentors where the researcher (the program coordinator) acted as their "mentor". The re-

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searcher was encouraged and motivated after meeting with the peer mentors and it would be ideal if it could be held once a month.

Meetings between peer mentors and their mentees
The researcher is of the opinion that some form of meeting between the peer mentor and the mentee once a month is the minimum contact necessary for this mentorship program to ultimately reach its intended goals – if no relationship is formed between the peer mentor and mentee, no building of trust can take place and the mentees will probably not share their problems with their peer mentor.

5.5.6.3 Peer mentors

In Table 5.4 suggestions regarding the category "peer mentors" are summarized.

Table 5.4

Suggestions regarding the category "peer mentors"

SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF PHASE ONE		SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF PHASE TWO
Third year students should be trained to be the peer mentors instead of fourth year students		Peer mentors employed by the SANDF matched with mentees employed by the SANDF
Peer mentors should be committed to the program and to their mentee		To select a committee of mentors that will be available to the mentees instead of individual peer mentor/mentee matching
Students must have an opportunity to join the mentorship program later in the year		

The majority of participants in Phase One of the research project felt that third year students should be trained to be peer mentors instead of final year students. They thought that due to the fact that the third year students are having class in and around the Faculty that they should have

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more time available and it would be easier for them to organize peer mentor/mentee meetings. The final year students spend most of their time at clinical areas and are seldom at the PD. This suggestion was confirmed during Phase Two of the research. During Phase Two it became clear that the third year students who were peer mentors could meet more often with their mentees than the fourth year peer mentors. (There were some fourth year peer mentors since fourth year students were given the opportunity to participate in the mentor program because they had undergone the training as third year students (2006), but did not get the opportunity to be matched with a mentee).

Due to the fact that some peer mentors did not meet with their mentees (whether they were at fault or not) the mentees participating in Phase One suggested that the peer mentors should be committed to the program and to their mentee/s. During the training seminar at the beginning of Phase Two the characteristics of a peer mentor were reiterated. The peer mentors were requested to sign an agreement form stating that they commit themselves to the mentorship program and their mentees.

One student (who participated in Phase One) suggested during the evaluation process of the program in Phase Two that there should be an opportunity for third year students to join the mentorship program later in the year as peer mentors.

A further suggestion that was mentioned in Phase Two which was not raised during the first phase was that there should be a peer mentor employed by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) specifically for the mentees that do their Physiotherapy training through the SANDF. These students receive bursaries from and are treated as part of the employee system of the SANDF. As such they have specific needs or queries that will differ from those of the rest of the students.

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During one of the focus group discussions in Phase Two, one of the mentees suggested that a committee of mentors should be available for all mentees instead of matching individual peer mentors and mentees.

Researcher reflection

The researcher observed that the peer mentors in Phase Two had a stronger commitment towards their mentees than those in the first phase. Because of improved training and some monitoring it seemed that the peer mentors were making a stronger effort to meet and interact with their mentees.

The suggestion that there should be an opportunity for third year students to join the program later in the year is not a feasible option at this stage. The logistics of the program and the time available only allows one training seminar at the beginning of the year. The researcher also is of the opinion that it will be difficult to match a peer mentor to a suitable mentee if the peer mentor only joins the mentorship program later in the year.

Whether the suggestion concerning the SANDF will be possible to implement in future will be determined by the students who volunteer to become peer mentors. If a student from the SANDF bursary system apply and is trained as a peer mentor, it will be taken into consideration when the matching between the peer mentors and mentees is done.

If the objectives of the HAPPY Mentorship Program are taken into consideration, the researcher cannot see how the method of mentoring (committee instead of individual peer mentor/mentee matching) which was suggested could be effective. If the program's main aim is academic support, this could be a very good suggestion – different people could be available for different subjects. The HAPPY Mentorship Program though, is mainly

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focussed on emotional support with academic support a secondary aim. Therefore, the researcher is convinced it is of the utmost importance that the peer mentor and the mentee develop some kind of friendship relationship. This will not be possible if a mentee sees a different peer mentor every time he/she might experience a problem.

5.5.6.4 Peer mentor/mentee matching

Table 5.5

Suggestions regarding the category "matching"

SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF PHASE ONE		SUGGESTIONS AT THE END OF PHASE TWO
Matching peer mentors and mentees living in the same residence		Personality types should be matched
		Match same race/cultural groups
		Mentor and mentee should have the same first language

From the results it was clear that the peer mentors and mentees who had the most successful relationships were generally those who lived geographically close to one another or were living in the same residence. Participants of Phase One suggested that the matching process should start with matching peer mentors and mentees who live in the same residence. The peer mentors and mentees who did not live in residences were matched based on geographical location. In Phase Two this suggestion was restated by the participants in the study. The matching was done according to geographical location as far as possible.

Other suggestions mentioned in Phase Two included matching peer mentors and mentees according to personality types. Matching should also be done considering race, cultural group and/or first language of the students, according to suggestions during the second phase. These are criteria that will be taken into consideration as far as possible. It will again depend on

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the profile of the students who apply to become peer mentors – if there are five mentees who are Zulu speakers but only one peer mentor with Zulu as his/her first language it will be impossible to match all those mentees to the same peer mentor.

Campbell & Campbell (2007) undertook a study at a large metropolitan university in California to explore the effects of gender and ethnic group on the matching relationship. The authors concluded that matching the same gender and matching according to ethnic groups did not have a statistically significant effect on the academic achievements of the mentees. In their literature review, they found mixed results. In their discussion they mentioned a study done by Hollingsworth & Fassinger who found that gender had no influence on mentoring effectiveness. Noe (1988) went so far to declare that gender matching (matching mentors and mentees of the same gender) is associated with decreased mentoring effectiveness. Still, there remains an assumption in mentoring literature that same gender and same race matching will result in better communication and a closer relationship.

Researcher reflection

The researcher observed during Phase Two that most of the peer mentors and mentees living in the same residence developed stronger friendship relationships than those who did not live close to one another. It was easier for them to meet for a short time, maybe just have a quick chat in the dining room.

The researcher fails to see how matching according to personality types could be implemented at this stage. The matching of the mentee and peer mentor is done in the first week after the mentees arrive at university. It would be very difficult to determine personality types in a matter of a few days and there would be additional cost involved for the psychometric

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testing that would be a requirement to match peer mentors and mentees based on personality type. This is, however, something to investigate in future.

In the opinion of the researcher matching of peer mentors and mentees of the same gender were more effective. It seemed they established friendship relationships much easier and expeditiously. The same is true for matching between peer mentors and mentees of similar race groups.

5.5.7 Establishing the extent to which the objectives of the PD for the mentorship program have been met

As mentioned in paragraph 1.1.1 the objectives with the development of the HAPPY Mentorship Program are:

1. To provide students with a supportive environment that will motivate and assist them to develop to their maximum personal and academic potential.
2. To structure the mentorship program in such a way that it provides a framework for positive interaction between students, peer mentors and members of staff.
3. To create an atmosphere and program structure that would help junior students to understand and manage the challenges of life at university.
4. To establish a procedure during which the mentorship program could be introduced to senior students and to give them the opportunity to volunteer to become peer mentors.
5. To equip volunteer senior students to become peer mentors who are positive role models to junior students.
6. To equip students who volunteer to become peer mentors to develop practical skills in interpersonal communication, conflict management, leadership, and other interpersonal skills in order to facilitate the development of these skills in their mentees.
7. To give every Physiotherapy student the opportunity to develop into a well-balanced student and a professional physiotherapist.

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The above-mentioned objectives correlate with the objectives established by the Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine at the University of Natal. McLean (2004) lists the objectives of this peer mentorship program and the objectives which compare with the HAPPY Mentorship Programs' objectives are:

- Encourage student interaction
- Provide peer group support for students
- Encourage friendships and build confidence and trust
- Provide role models for students

The extent to which each objective was met by the HAPPY Mentorship Program is discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.5.7.1 The provision of a supportive environment that will motivate and assist them to develop to their maximum personal and academic potential

During the first year after implementing the mentorship program (Phase One of the study) this objective was not effectively reached. The reason for this is that a supportive environment was only experienced by some of the participants of the mentorship program. The mentees who had an established relationship with their peer mentors felt that they benefited from the availability of a support system (the mentorship program).

The peer mentors received support from the program coordinator but they felt that the meetings with the program coordinator could have been held more frequently.

In Phase Two of the study the majority of students who participated in the mentorship program felt that support for the mentees as well as for the peer mentors were available. Even those mentees who did not feel that they needed support from a peer mentor knew that it was available.

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The provision of a supportive environment in which the learning and development of the student can take place is one aspect of mentoring which is also emphasized by Smith (2007). Although this author was referring to qualified professionals, he stated that the mentor should provide this safe environment for the mentee.

5.5.7.2 Structuring the mentorship program to provide a framework for positive interaction between students, peer mentors and staff members

In Phase One of the study the structure of the mentorship program was developed especially to encourage interaction between the student participants of the program and the program coordinator. A training seminar and continued training and report-back meetings with the peer mentors and the program coordinator were held throughout the year. Two general meetings were held where all the mentees and peer mentors were present – this was considered too little interaction by the participants of the research. As discussed earlier in paragraph 5.4.5 it was proposed that these general meetings should take place more frequently.

The participants in Phase Two of the study agreed that the HAPPY Mentorship Program provides a framework for interaction between the students (mentees and peer mentors), as well as between the peer mentors and the program coordinator. One aspect which can be improved upon is the interaction between participants of the mentorship program and all the staff members of the Physiotherapy Department.

Researcher reflection

During reflection on this shortcoming of the mentorship program, the researcher decided to invite some of the staff to attend the general meetings when the mentees and peer mentors meet as a group. Some members of

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staff did express an interest in participating and from personal experience the researcher can state that these meetings can certainly improve relationships between students and staff members.

5.5.7.3 Creating an atmosphere and program structure that would help junior students to understand and manage the challenges of life at university

During Phases One and Two of the study first year students (mentees) who benefited from the mentorship program were those who had regular contact with their peer mentors. These mentees experienced support contributing to an easy and positive transition to life at university.

In the self-report questionnaire one of the mentees commented:
Quote 5.3:

> *It* [the mentorship program] *offered me support. And coming to university, a new environment, I need all the help and support I can get.*

Another comment from a mentee:
Quote 5.4 (self-report questionnaire):

> *…you don't feel like you are being thrown in at the deep end…because you have someone there to help you and show you the way.*

In general the mentees experienced that there was support available. One of the staff members also commented that there is a different atmosphere in the Department since the mentorship program had started. The researcher also experienced that the students were more sensitive towards one another; it seemed that they are concerned about each other's wellbeing.

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5.5.7.4 Establishing a procedure during which the mentorship program could be introduced to senior students and to give them the opportunity to volunteer to become peer mentors

At the start of Phase One the program coordinator had a brief information session with the fourth and third year students during which the mentorship programs' aims and structure were explained. They were also informed that this is a voluntary program and participation in the mentorship program will not benefit them academically, neither will they receive remuneration. It was also mentioned that they will have to meet with their mentees in their own free time. Following this introduction, they were given the opportunity to complete application forms.

From the data collected it can be deduced that this information session in Phase One did not adequately informed the students because quite a few of the respondents of the study commented that they did not know what the mentorship program entailed. One reason for this could be that the second year students failed to receive any information on the program (the reason for this is that the potential mentors where recruited from the third and fourth year students). Even so, some of the third and fourth year students (who attended an information session) replied that they were not exactly sure what would be expected of them, therefore they did not apply.

Information sessions were presented to all year groups at the beginning of the year when Phase Two of the research project commenced. The program coordinator provided the second year students with additional information on the program, as well as the advantages of being a peer mentor at the end of the previous year (2006). This was done at that time since they had to apply to be trained as peer mentors for the following year at the end of the previous academic year. The program coordinator conducted interviews with the applicants and the time, date and venue of the

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training seminar in January of the following year was set before they completed their exams at the end of November 2006.

Researcher reflection

The researcher had the impression that students, who did not have enough information on the mentorship program, did not develop an interest to participate in the program. This problem was addressed at the start of the second phase at the beginning of the following academic year (2007).

The fact that the students were informed about the mentorship program resulted in the perception that there was more interest and enthusiasm about the program. The researcher received a positive reaction and numerous applications from students willing to become peer mentors (there were twenty-eight (28) applications out of a class of thirty-nine (39)). The researcher ensured that all the third year students were informed about the program and observed that they were optimistic about taking part.

5.5.7.4 Equipping volunteer senior students to become peer mentors who are positive role models to junior students

During the training seminar in Phase One the characteristics of a peer mentor (and a role model) were discussed and peer mentors were equipped with guidelines on the application of certain life skills e.g. communication and listening skills. The program coordinator (who developed the program and training manual) selected the following characteristics as essential to mentoring, namely to be honourable; approachable; a productive participant; positive, and continuously yearning for further learning.

Most of the characteristics selected for the HAPPY Mentorship Program were mentioned by Terrion and Leonard (2007). They conducted a literature review with the goal of developing a taxonomy of characteristics of

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the student peer mentor. The characteristics they identified which correlated with the HAPPY Mentorship Program were:

- Supportiveness (correlates with being approachable)
- Trustworthiness (honourable)
- Interdependent attitude to mentoring, mentee, and program staff (productive participant)
- Empathy (approachable)
- Enthusiasm (positive)

5.5.7.5 Equipping students who volunteer to become peer mentors to developed practical skills enabling them to facilitate the development of these skills in their mentees

The life skills included in the training manual were communication skills, conflict management and leadership. The training manual developed for Phase One included the following topics:

- Self portrait: enabling the peer mentors to learn to know themselves. They also completed a "Know yourself" questionnaire.
- Characteristics of a peer mentor.
- Emotional intelligence: the characteristics of emotional intelligence are discussed.
- Person-centred support: how to support the mentees emotionally, socially, and academically. Life skills are mentioned and discussed.

Based on the suggestions after Phase One the training manual was adapted in Phase Two and one topic was added, namely different faces of helping. Certain practical activities were also added (e.g. designing their own T-shirt portraying their personality).

Evans (2007) stated that:

> *The key to any successful relationship is communication…*

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Communication is one aspect which received particular attention during the training seminar of the HAPPY Mentorship Program. Authors (Terrion & Leonard, 2007) included aspects which influence the mentoring relationship positively which are not considered in the HAPPY Mentorship Program. These include: personality match with the mentee, prior mentoring experience, and academic experience.

After the training seminar of Phase Two the peer mentors commented that the information gained at the training seminar was sufficient to equip them to support their mentees. Aspects not accentuated in the training seminar were covered during further training sessions e.g. signs and dangers of depression. Most of these aspects are also covered in the PDL curriculum at the PD at UP.

During the meetings between the peer mentors and the program coordinator further training took place. In these meetings (in Phase Two) the peer mentors were trained in methods of conflict management, effective communication, and how to recognize signs of depression or other emotional problems. The importance of their commitment to the program, as well as to their mentees was emphasized and they were reminded to be HAPPY - honourable, approachable, positive, productive, and yearning for learning!

5.5.7.6 Giving Physiotherapy students the opportunity to develop into a well-balanced student and a professional physiotherapist

The HAPPY Mentorship Program was developed to provide socio-emotional support to assist first year students to develop to their maximal potential. At the implementation stage (Phase One) of the research the mentorship program did not fulfil this goal entirely and the main reason for

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this was a lack of information on the mentorship program for all the students of the PD.

In 2007, after implementing the adapted version of the HAPPY Mentorship Program the students became more aware of the mentorship program and they were interested in taking part in the program (there were twenty-eight (28) applications for becoming peer mentors out of a class of thirty- nine (39)).

Three (3) years after implementation students would have had a peer mentor during their first year and would have had the opportunity to be mentored as well as being trained and acted as a peer mentor. Therefore, the program provides a vehicle through which the students have the opportunity to develop to their utmost potential.

Student mentors at the James Cook University in Cairns (Treston, 1999) commented in this regard as follows:

> …[the mentorship program provided] *the opportunity to put something back into the system to show that they appreciate the mentoring that they received as beginners.*

Researcher reflection
The researcher experienced a more optimistic and positive atmosphere at the Department since there is a support structure in place for the peer mentors and the mentees.

5.5.8 Revising the HAPPY Mentorship Program after Phase One

The HAPPY Mentorship Program had been revised after completion of Phase One of the action research process (changes discussed in detail in Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.1). The revised program was implemented during Phase Two of

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the action research process. At completion of Phase Two of the HAPPY Mentorship Program students were asked to evaluate the program once more. The results are discussed in Chapter Four (paragraph 4.9).

The most significant change after Phase One was to use third year students as peer mentors instead of fourth year students. The fourth year students who were trained as peer mentors in 2006, but were not assigned mentees, had the opportunity to apply to become peer mentors in 2007. It was explained to them that the final year peer mentors experienced difficulty in finding time to meet with the mentees. Only six (6) fourth year students volunteered to become peer mentors for 2007.

Other changes that were made include that the peer mentors were trained earlier in the year and were matched with the mentees within the first month on arrival at university. The matching was done according to their geographical location. Students living in the same residence were paired first and then the rest of the students were matched by pairing students living in the same area, as far as possible. Table 5.6 gives a summary of all the suggestions and changes implemented after Phase One.

Table 5.6

Suggestions and adaptations after Phase One

SUGGESTIONS AFTER PHASE ONE	ADAPTATION IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE TWO	ADAPTATION NOT IMPLEMENTED
All students must receive adequate information on the program	The first and third year students received an information session	The second year students did not receive formal information on the program because they were not actively involved in the program
Program must start as early as possible in the year	The training seminar was presented in the first month of the academic year	

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Better advertising of the program	Formal information sessions Information on meetings to peer mentors on notice board in PD	
Students must be motivated to participate	Formal information sessions for all potential peer mentors and mentees	
Have initial meeting in the beginning of the year between all peer mentors and mentees	A general meeting with all the peer mentors and mentees present was organized by peer mentors in the beginning of the academic year	
General meeting times (with all the peer mentors and mentees present) should be scheduled on the official timetable		Was not able to integrate meetings due to time table constraints
Training for peer mentors during the week instead of on weekends	Training seminar was done on two occasions – one on a Saturday, another on an evening during the week	
Meetings between peer mentors and mentees should be better organized	The meeting times were scheduled well ahead of time where possible	
Peer mentors must be third year students	Third year students were trained as peer mentors, fourth year students trained earlier were given an opportunity to participate as peer mentors	
Peer mentors must be committed to the mentorship program	The importance of regular contact was emphasized and the peer mentors were asked to sign a “contract” to commit to the program for a year	
Peer mentors for all year groups, not only 1st year students		This was not possible to accomplish due to staff shortage

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Students must have the opportunity to join the mentorship program as peer mentors later in the year		For the sake of effective management of the program, it was not possible at that stage – training seminar only presented once at the beginning of the year
Match peer mentors and mentees living in the same residences	This was implemented as far as possible	
Match mentors and mentees according to geographical location	This was implemented as far as possible	
Peer mentors and mentees should have regular contact e.g. once a month	The peer mentors were instructed to meet regularly with their mentees	
More informal/fun meetings with all the mentees and mentors present	Three general meetings were planned for the year (2007)	

5.5.9 Establishing whether the participants have any further suggestions on how any facet of the mentorship program, not previously identified during phase one, should be adapted

The revised program was implemented during Phase Two of the action research process. After implementing the revised version of the HAPPY Mentorship Program students were asked to evaluate the program once more. The results are discussed in detail in Chapter Four (paragraph 4.9). Table 5.7 gives a summary of suggestions and adaptations after data analysis of Phase Two of the research.

After reflection on students' comments and suggestions, the program was revised and adapted once more at the beginning of 2008. This cycle will continue, keeping the mentorship program relevant by adapting to students' needs and

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possible changing circumstances in and around the PD. By maintaining the active monitoring of the mentorship program during the year, in a formal and informal way as well as formal evaluation at the end of the academic year, data will be gathered for continuous research and publications on the subject.

Table 5.7

Suggestions and adaptations after Phase Two

SUGGESTIONS AFTER PHASE TWO	CHANGES IMPLEMENTED IN 2008	CHANGES NOT IMPLEMENTED
Screening of first year students to determine who will benefit most		Not practically possible as matching is done as soon as they arrive at the PD
Mentorship program optional for first year students		Program coordinator deemed it necessary for all first year students, as they are all new to Physiotherapy and might need support
Mentees must be supplied with adequate information on the mentorship program	Informed first year students at three different occasions	
First year students must meet all the mentors	On two occasions opportunities were created: at the first year camp and at the initial general meeting	
Third year students must be used as peer mentors	From 2008 onward only third year students will be used	
Two mentees per peer mentor is a good ratio	This will be applied if sufficient third year students volunteer to become peer mentors	
Peer mentors employed by the SANDF matched with mentees employed by the SANDF	Will be implemented if there are third year students on the SANDF bursary scheme who volunteer to be peer mentors	

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A peer mentor must be trustworthy, available, approachable and committed to the program	These characteristics were emphasized at the peer mentor training seminar	
Peer mentor should be older than the mentee	This will be taken into account when matching is done	
Peer mentors should have a support system and system of referral should they encounter problems with their mentees		This is already in place
Committee of mentors available to the mentees instead of individual peer mentor/mentee matching		Not possible. Friendship relationships is an integral art of the program
All students must receive adequate information on the program	An information session regarding the mentorship program will be presented to every year group	
General meeting times should be fixed well in advance and held at central venues	This will be implemented. Venues will rotate with every meeting to accommodate everyone	
Separate grouping on software program for sending of text messages to peer mentors	This is included in planning for 2008	
The mentorship program should be available to all year groups		This was not possible to accomplish due to staff shortage
Personality types should be matched		Not practically feasible
Mentor and mentee should have the same first language and be of same race/cultural group	This will be done as far as possible, depending on the language of the peer mentors	
Match mentees and peer mentors living in the same residences	This was implemented	
Initial contact between peer mentors and mentees on the first year camp	This will be included when planning the first year camp for 2008	

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Have initial one-to-one meeting to establish relationship	Will be emphasized during the training seminars in future	
Peer mentor and mentee should have regular contact e.g. once a month	Meetings between the peer mentors and mentees will be monitored by the program coordinator through using report forms that peer mentors should complete in order to document each meeting	
More informal meetings	This will be included in the planning for the new year	
Suggestion box	This will be implemented in 2008	

Researcher reflection

The researcher found it very interesting that the subject of remuneration for peer mentors was never mentioned in the comments or suggestions from the participants during either Phase One or Two. The concern of the researcher is that receiving money for mentoring may alter the peer mentors' approach to mentoring. This specific subject was also mentioned by the student mentors at the James Cook University (Treston, 1999). When this program was started it was decided that no academic credit or payment for participation would be received by the student mentors. During the development of the program, a sponsor offered to reimburse them. Most of the students were against this as they felt:

> *…it went against the ethos of the program and several chose not to receive payment.*

5.5.10 Formulate the process and guidelines on which a peer mentorship program for undergraduate physiotherapy students at UP is based

The conceptual frameworks developed in this study resulted from reflection on the processes and principles that emerged during the planning, preparation and implementation of a mentorship program in the PD at UP. The following diagrams were developed during this study:

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- The responsibilities of the program coordinator
- Detailed schematic diagram of Phase One and Phase Two
- The conceptual framework of a peer mentorship program for the Physiotherapy Department at the University of Pretoria

In Figure 5.2 an outline is given of the responsibilities of the program coordinator during this research. It is divided into three sections, namely: Planning Stage; Phase One; and Phase Two.

Figure 5.3 gives a detailed summary of the steps followed during Phase One of the action research process. Phase Two is explained in Figure 5.4.

The conceptual framework developed after this study on the basic structure of a peer mentorship program in a Physiotherapy Department is outlined in Figure 5.5

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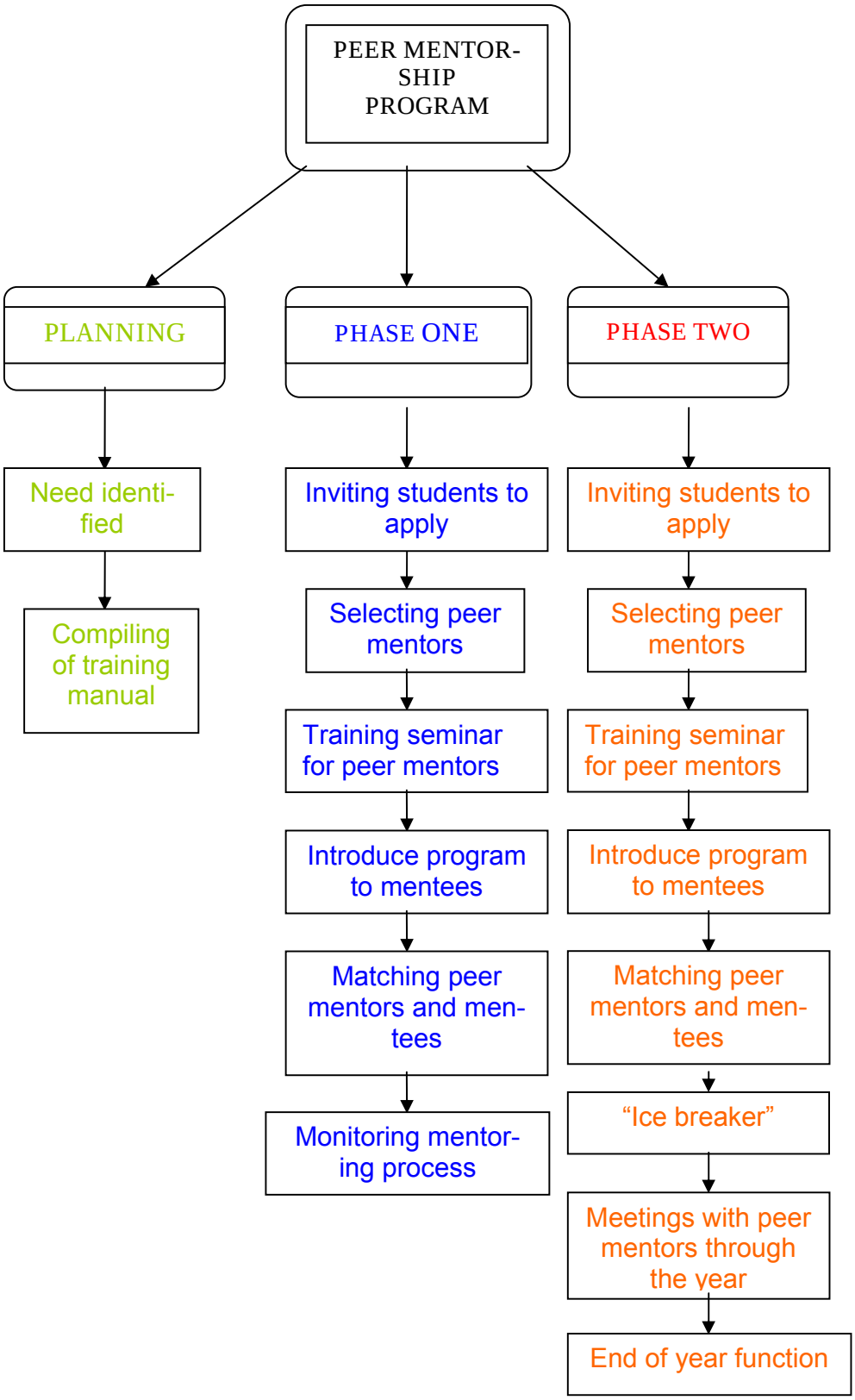

Figure 5.2 Responsibilities of the Program Coordinator

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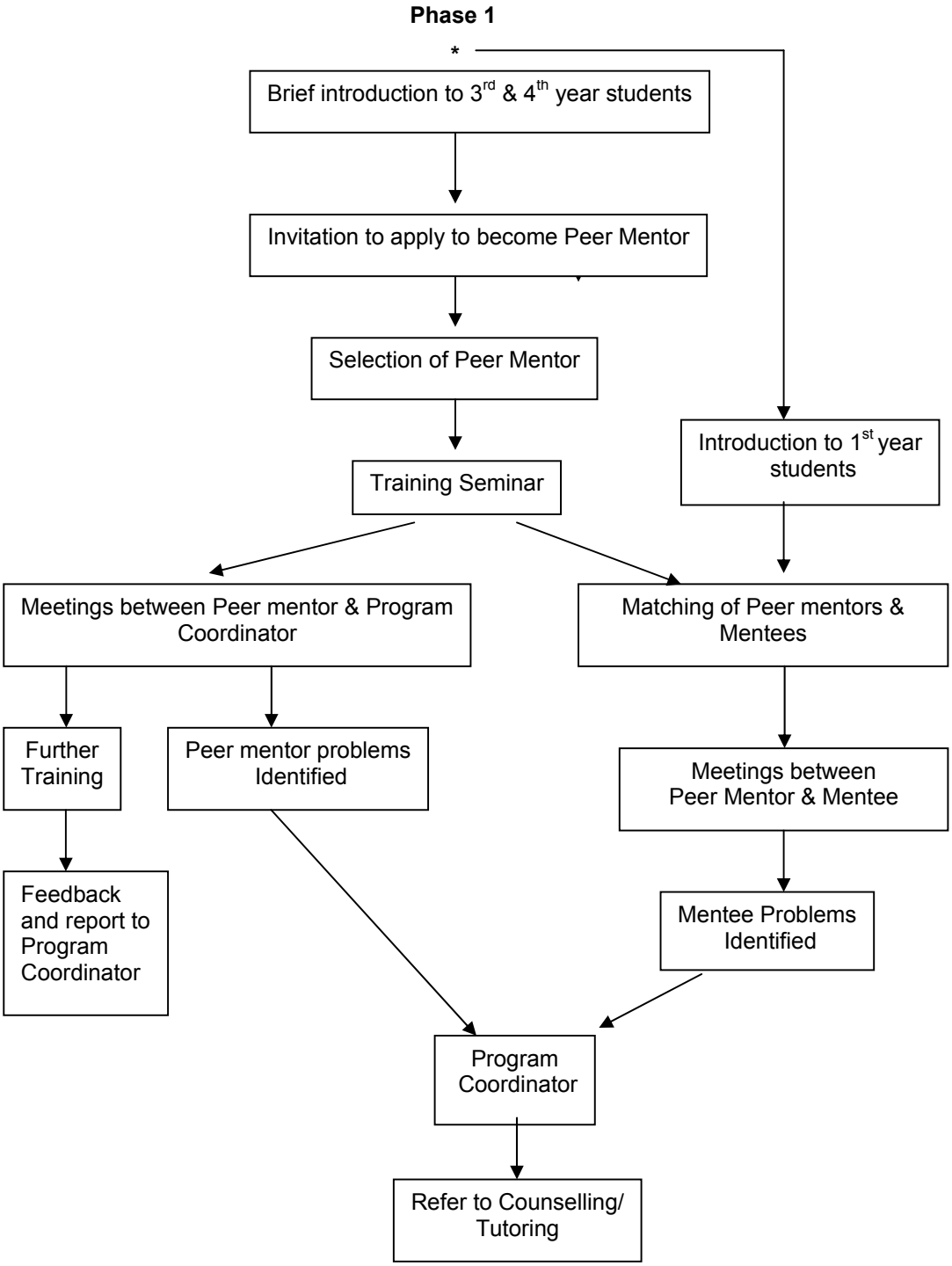

Figure 5.3 Detailed diagram summarizing Phase One

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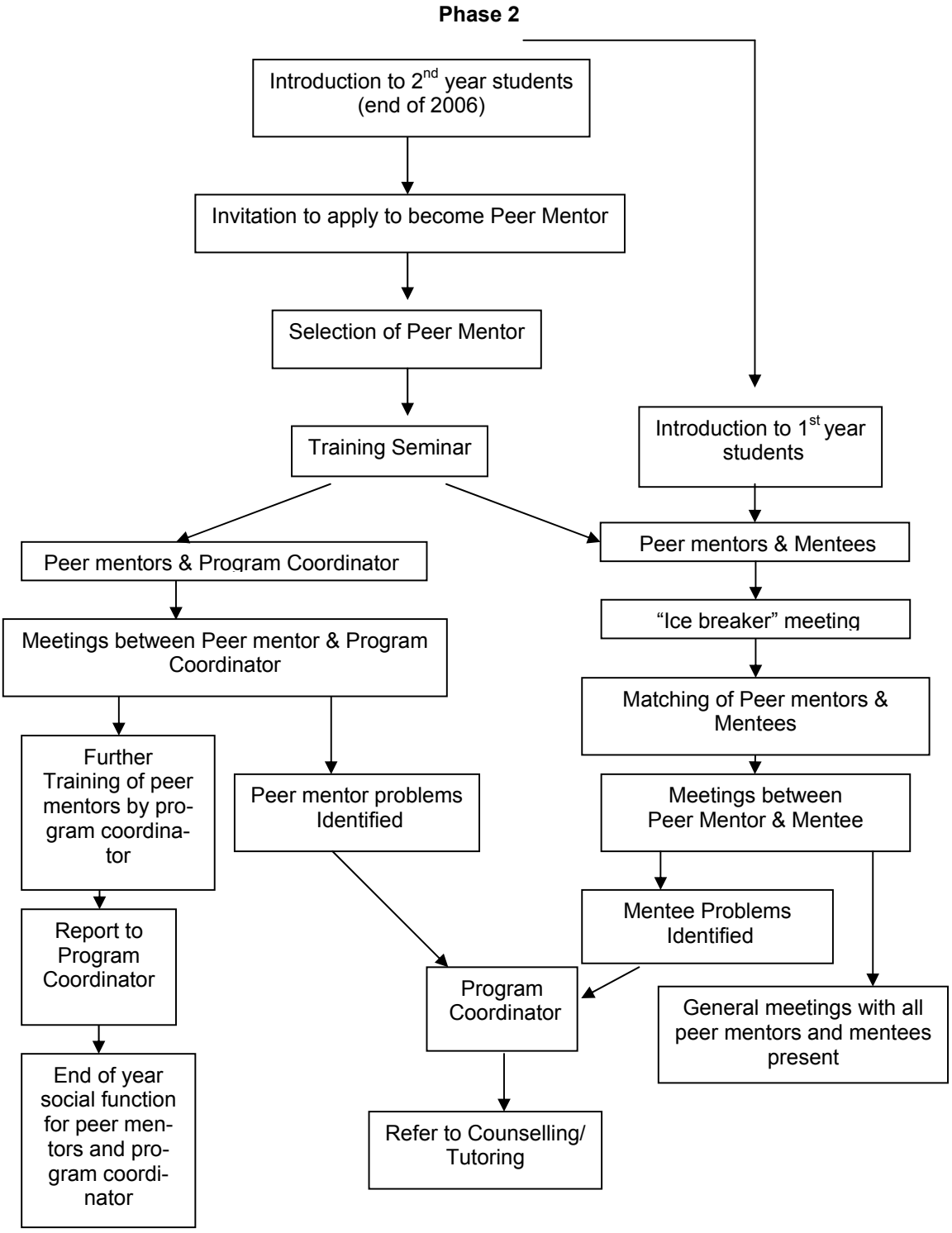

Figure 5.4 Detailed diagram summarizing Phase Two

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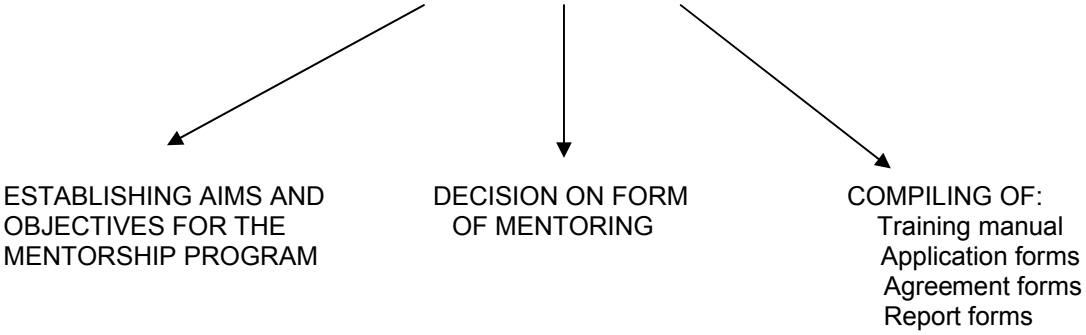
MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

A. PREPARATION



B. IMPLEMENTATION

1. Information and/or introduction to members of staff
2. Information and/or introduction to all students
3. Specific information session for students who are invited to apply to become peer mentors
4. Application forms to be handed in with program coordinator
5. Interviews of applicants by the program coordinator
6. Selection of peer mentors
7. Training seminar (first week of academic year)
8. Introduction of the program and peer mentors to mentees (first year students) at Parents Day/Orientation Week
9. “Ice breaker” meeting in first/second week of mentees’ academic year
10. Matching of peer mentors and mentees

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C. MENTORING PROCESS

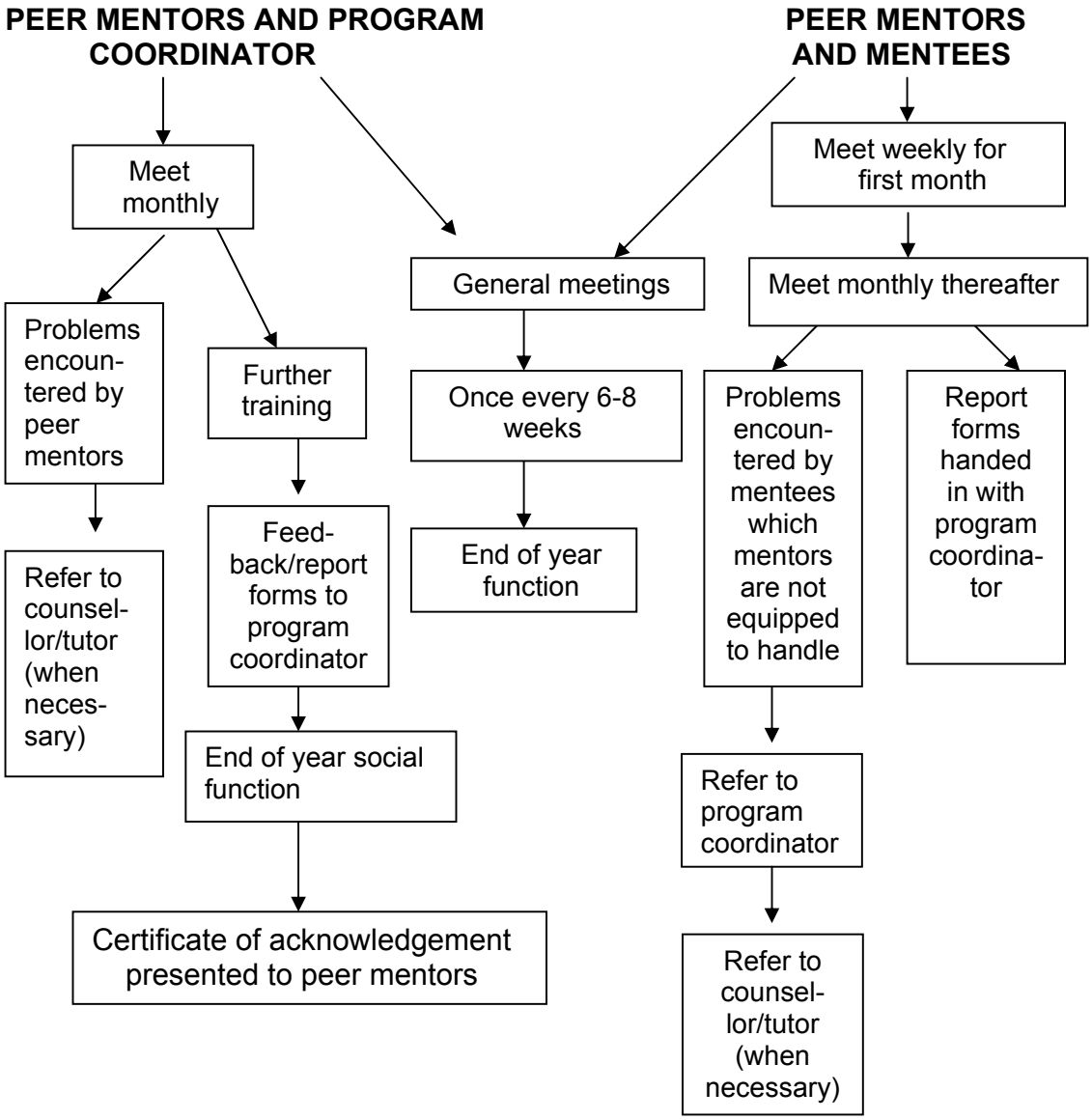

Figure 5.5 Conceptual framework of a peer mentorship program

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5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Very few limitations were identified during the course of this study. Two aspects will be discussed, namely:

- Data gathering during exam phase at the end of the academic year
- Factors that should be specifically monitored during the mentoring process

During Phase Two of the study the data gathering process occurred during the exam phase at the end of the academic year. The response to the request to participate was less positive that during Phase One. (Ninety (90) % of the total student population of the PD volunteered during Phase One in contrast with forty five (45) % during Phase Two). The difference in response rate can be linked to the fact that the students were focused on preparing for the exams instead of spending time on research projects.

Factors that the researcher identified that need to be monitored during the mentoring process include the following:

- Meetings between the peer mentors and the mentees
- The actual amount of personal time spent by the peer mentor with the men tee/s

The reason for the above-mentioned factors is that the program coordinator is able to monitor whether the peer mentor actually do make contact with the mentee. If they do not make contact, the program coordinator will be aware of this and she/he can manage the situation.

The amount of time spent on mentoring gives valuable information to the program coordinator and he/she can use this information when introducing the mentorship program to the second year students (potential peer mentors). These students receive an information session where-after they decide whether

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they want to apply to become a peer mentor. At this stage it will be helpful for them to know how much time will be involved in the process of mentoring.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

During the research process several aspects for further study were recognized:

- Continued research to improve the program
- The implementation/testing of the conceptual model of a mentorship program in other departments/faculties
- The development of an evaluation tool for mentorship programs
- Monitoring of a mentorship program by means of cell phones and/or e-mail. Internet "Blogs" can be used for reflection or feed back from peer mentors and mentees
- Comparison between a tutor-mentor program versus a tutor program or mentor program

5.8 CONCLUSION

Through participatory action research the HAPPY Mentorship Program was developed and adapted to suit the needs of the PD of UP, as well as the needs of the students (peer mentors and mentees). This study concluded with the development of a conceptual model for a peer mentorship program in a Physiotherapy Department at a tertiary institution.

Researcher reflection

Physiotherapy is a discipline of the health care sciences. As in other health care disciplines "contact" is an integral element of Physiotherapy. In health care, therefore also in Physiotherapy, physical contact alone is an objectifying of the patient and a diminishing of health care to a cold, clinical science.

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An underlying gain of this mentorship program, though, is “contact”. For the first time through the HAPPY Mentorship Program nascent physiotherapists are exposed to the phenomenon of “contact” ─ social, emotional, intellectual, and empathetic contact. This humanizing effect, hopefully, will stay with them through their careers as physiotherapists as well as their personal lives.

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ADDENDUM 1

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

APPLICATION FORM

NAME .....

YEARGROUP.....

PHYSICAL ADDRESS(Pretoria).....

.....

POSTAL ADDRESS.....

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TEL (h)..... cell:.....

E-MAIL:.....

OTHER UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED/ OTHER DEGREES OBTAINED

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HOBBIES/INTERESTS .....

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WHY WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME A MENTOR?

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ADDENDUM 2

H.A.P.P.Y MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

AGREEMENT FORM

NAME:……..

As a mentor I agree to:

- Attend mentor training workshops and planning sessions
- Give adequate notice if I cannot attend any activity
- Commit myself to this program for one year
- Sustain my mentoring in a positive and persistent manner within the designated time frame
- To submit a report form every semester as well as a report at the end of the year
- Be interested and committed to the success of the mentees in my group
- Make contact with the mentees at least once per month
- That this is a volunteer program but that I can be removed from the program if I do not fulfil my obligations

I promise that

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SIGNED:……..

DATE:……

"Life doesn't always go to the stronger or faster man, but sooner or later, the one who wins, is the one who thinks he can!"

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ADDENDUM 3

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

APPLICATION FORM

NAME .....

YEARGROUP.....

PHYSICAL ADDRESS (Pretoria).....

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POSTAL ADDRESS.....

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TEL (h)..... cell:.....

E-MAIL:.....

OTHER UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED/ OTHER DEGREES OBTAINED

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HOBBIES/INTERESTS .....

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WHY WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A MENTEE/HAVE A PEER MENTOR?

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ADDENDUM 4

REPORT FORM

A. PROGRAM COORDINATOR – MENTEE

MENTOR:……..
MENTEE:……YEAR……..
CONTACT NR:……

REASON FOR APPOINTMENT
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DISCUSSION
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PLAN OF ACTION/FOLLOW UP
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REPORT FORM

B. PROGRAM COORDINATOR – PEER MENTOR

MENTOR:……..
PEER MEN-
TOR:……YEAR……..
CONTACT NR:……

REASON FOR APPOINTMENT
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DISCUSSION
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PLAN OF ACTION/FOLLOW UP
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REPORT FORM

C. PEER MENTOR – MENTEE

PEER MENTOR:.....YEAR.....
MENTEE:.....YEAR.....
CONTACT NR:.....

REASON FOR APPOINTMENT

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DISCUSSION

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PLAN OF ACTION/FOLLOW UP

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ADDENDUM 5

Voluntary Consent concerning questionnaires and certain procedures:

Researcher's name: Mrs Corne Nel
Student Number: 8131228
Department of Physiotherapy

1.1.1.1.1.1.1 University of Pretoria

Dear participant

The perceptions of physiotherapy students of the H.A.P.P.Y. mentorship program

INTRODUCTION:
I am a MPhyst (research) student at the Department of Physiotherapy, University of Pretoria. You are invited to volunteer to participate in my research project on the perceptions of students of the H.A.P.P.Y mentorship program.

This letter is to help you to decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part in this study you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully understood, do not hesitate to ask the researcher. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely happy about what is expected of you.

The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of the students of the mentorship program. You will help the researcher to determine whether the program is reaching its goals and objectives and your input will be used to adapt or improve the program. (See participant information leaflet)

You will be required to complete a questionnaire. The completion of the questionnaire may take about 20 minutes. The questionnaire will be collected from you before you leave the class. It will be kept in a safe place to ensure confidentiality. Please remember not to write your name on the questionnaire.

The study protocol was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria, Faculty of health Sciences. The committee has granted written approval.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate.

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET

INTRODUCTION:
I am a MPhyst (research) student at the Department of Physiotherapy**,** University of Pretoria. You are invited to volunteer to participate in my research project on the perceptions of students of the H.A.P.P.Y mentorship program of the Physiotherapy department.

This letter is to help you to decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part in this study you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully understood, do not hesitate to ask the researcher. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely happy about what is expected of you.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of the students of the mentorship program. You will help the researcher to determine whether the program is reaching its goals and objectives and your input will be used to adapt or improve the program.

THE H.A.P.P.Y MENTORSHIP PROGRAM
A name for the mentorship program that will reflect the characteristics of a mentorship program for physiotherapy students was created. An acronym H.A.P.P.Y was created that stands for:

- H: honourable
- A: approachable
- P: positive attitude
- P: productive participant
- Y: yearning for learning

According to the Oxford dictionary (2000) happy is defined as: “the state of pleasurable content of mind, which results from success or the attainment of what is considered good”. The acronym H.A.P.P.Y therefore reflects the characteristics of a mentorship program as well as the aim envisaged with the program namely to give every student the opportunity to attain happiness and develop as a physiotherapist, counsellor and health educator and have a positive influence on their patients, colleagues as well as the community of which he/she will be part of.

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The objectives of the H.A.P.P.Y. mentorship program are to:

- Give students a supportive environment that will motivate and assist them to develop to their maximum potential.
- Provide positive role models.
- Provide a framework for positive interaction between students, mentors and staff members.
- Help junior students to understand and manage the challenges of life at university.
- Encourage peer mentors in the development of practical communication skills, conflict management, leadership and other interpersonal skills.
- Have a positive impact on the attrition rates of the first year students.
- Improve the program continually by evaluating and assessing throughout the program.
- Give every student the opportunity to be a H.A.P.P.Y student!

You will be required to participate in a focus group discussion and/or a personal interview. These sessions will be recorded to be able to collect data afterwards. With the focus groups there will be an independent observer present who will be making notes for data collection. The data will be treated confidentially and names will not be used. After the data is transcribed, it will be available to the participants for approval.

Data that may be reported in scientific journals will not include any information that identifies you as a participant in this study. As all information or data are anonymous, you must understand that you will not be able to recall your consent, as your information will not be traceable. All information during the course of this study is strictly confidential.

REMEMBER!!
Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can refuse to participate.

I sincerely appreciate your help.

Yours truly,

Corne Nel

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ADDENDUM 6

H.A.P.P.Y

SELF REPORT

1. Are you aware of the mentorship program of the Physiotherapy Department of the University of Pretoria? Where did you hear about it?
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2. Why did / didn't you participate in the H.A.P.P.Y. mentorship program?
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3. If you did participate, indicate whether you were a mentee or a peer mentor
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4. If you didn't participate – do you think you missed out / would you like to have had a mentor?
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5. **All students** : In the past year – did you have any problems / difficulties in regards with:
    - Infrastructure : accommodation, travel, etc

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    - Academics:

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    - Emotional/personal issues:

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6. Describe any positive experiences/advantages of the program.

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7. Describe any negative experiences/disadvantages of the program.

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8. Do you think the program should continue?

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9. Any suggestions/recommendations/improvements?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

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ADDENDUM 7

Voluntary Consent concerning questionnaires and certain procedures:

Researcher's name: Mrs Corne Nel
Student Number: 81312289
Department of Physiotherapy

1.1.1.1.1.1.2 University of Pretoria

Dear participant

The development and reviewing of a peer mentorship program for physiotherapy students at the University of Pretoria

INTRODUCTION:
I am a MPhyst (research) student at the Department of Physiotherapy, University of Pretoria. You are invited to volunteer to participate in my research project on the development and reviewing of the HAPPY Mentorship Program.

This letter is to help you to decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part in this study you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully understood, do not hesitate to ask the researcher. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely satisfied about what is expected of you.

The purpose of the study is to review the mentorship program after developing and implementing the program. You will help the researcher to determine whether the programme is reaching its goals and objectives and your input will be used to adapt or improve the program.

You will be required to complete a questionnaire. The completion of the questionnaire may take about 10 minutes. It will be kept in a safe place to ensure confidentiality. Please remember not to write your name on the questionnaire.

The study protocol was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria, Faculty of health Sciences. The committee has granted written approval.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop at any time without stating any reason. Your withdrawal will involve no pen-

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alty or loss of benefits, but as data is anonymous, you must understand that you will not be able to recall your consent, as your information will not be traceable.

The implication of completing the questionnaire is that informed consent has been obtained from you. Data that may be reported in scientific journals will not include any information that identifies you as a participant in this study. As all information or data are anonymous, you must understand that you will not be able to recall your consent, as your information will not be traceable. All information during the course of this study is strictly confidential.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to develop, implement and review the mentorship program. You will help the researcher to determine whether the program is reaching its goals and objectives and your input will be used to adapt or improve the program.

THE H.A.P.P.Y MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

A name for the mentorship program that will reflect the characteristics of a mentorship program for physiotherapy students was created. An acronym H.A.P.P.Y was created that stands for:

- H: honourable
- A: approachable
- P: positive attitude
- P: productive participant
- Y: yearning for learning

According to the Oxford dictionary (2000) happy is defined as: “the state of pleasurable content of mind, which results from success or the attainment of what is considered good”. The acronym H.A.P.P.Y therefore reflects the characteristics of a mentorship program as well as the aim envisaged with the program namely to give every student the opportunity to attain happiness and develop as a physiotherapist, counsellor and health educator and have a positive influence on their patients, colleagues as well as the community of which he/she will be part of.

The objectives of the H.A.P.P.Y. mentorship program were to:

- provide students with a supportive environment that will motivate and assist them to develop to their maximum personal and academic potential,
- structure the mentorship program in such a way that it provides a framework for positive interaction between students, peer mentors and staff members,
- create an atmosphere and program structure that would help junior students to understand and manage the challenges of life at university,
- to establish a procedure during which the mentorship program could be introduced to senior students and to give them the opportunity to volunteer to become peer mentors,

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- equip volunteer senior students to become peer mentors who are positive role models to junior students,
- equip students who volunteer to become peer mentors to develop practical skill in interpersonal communication, conflict management, leadership and other interpersonal skills in order to facilitate the development of these skills in their mentees,
- minimize the attrition rates of the junior students, and
- give every physiotherapy student the opportunity to develop into a well-balanced student and a professional physiotherapist.

If you have any questions during this study, please do not hesitate to approach me.

I sincerely appreciate you help.

Yours truly,

Corne Nel

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H.A.P.P.Y

SELF REPORT

10. Are you aware of the HAPPY Mentorship program at the physiotherapy department?

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11. Do you feel that there is a need for a program that will address the emotional/personal wellbeing of all students? Reasons for your answer?

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12. Do you think that the HAPPY Mentorship Program provide students with a supportive environment that will motivate and assist them to develop to their maximum personal and academic potential?

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13. In your opinion, is the mentorship program structured in such a way that it provides a framework for positive interaction between students, peer mentors and staff members?

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14. Does the mentorship program create an atmosphere that would help junior students to understand and manage the challenges of life at university?

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15. Do you think that the mentorship program equip volunteer senior students to become peer mentors who are positive role models to junior students?

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16. Does the mentorship program equip students who volunteer to become peer mentors to develop practical skills in order to facilitate the development of these skills in their mentees?

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17. Do you think that the mentorship can minimize the attrition rates of the junior students?

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18. Describe any positive experiences/advantages of the program.

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19. Describe any negative experiences/disadvantages of the program.

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20. Do you think the program should continue?

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21. Any suggestions/recommendations/improvements on the mentorship program?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

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