

# Youth Mentoring: A Strategic Move Towards Sustainability

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## **Abstract:**

The one condition that is bottom line for the survival of humanity is socio-ecological integrity. Youth mentoring helps to build capacities in youth to preserve and promote social integrity. This thesis looks at youth mentoring programs in general and Mentor Sweden specifically, and analyzes how youth mentoring programs can contribute strategically towards a sustainable development through the lens of the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development. The final outcome is a proposed set of suggestions which any mentoring organization can use in order to help move society strategically towards sustainable development through its mentoring programs.

## **Keywords:**

Strategic Sustainable Development, youth mentoring, sustainability principles, social sustainability, Youth Mentoring for Strategic Sustainable Development.

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# Statement of Contribution

This thesis is a product of a joint effort by the authors with each of the four group members contributing individual perspectives, insights and abilities. Each member had unique strengths to add to the process. The original topic idea was proposed by Henry Mgbemena who is a mentor with the collaborating organization; the other three showed individual interest in it and came together.

Each of four members did literature review individually. The planning and outlining of the thesis was carried out in group meetings. Henry Mgbemena brought in his mentoring and coaching experience, Bilal Bin Saeed his teaching experience and computer skills, Ying Wang her administration skills and Si-Ying her interview skills. These blend of experiences and skills guided us throughout our work.

Throughout the experience we have gained more knowledge about ourselves, our strengths, weaknesses and the process of collaboration and dialog.

We are grateful for this valuable group learning experience. We went through all the stages of a group process. The lessons learned from the moments of doubts, the search for clarity and the moments of flow are treasures we will value in our life's journeys.

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# **Executive Summary**

This thesis aims to provide useful information regarding youth mentoring programs and their role in moving society strategically towards sustainability. The research is a study about current youth mentoring practices, and providing suggestions for how they can become Youth Mentoring for Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD).

## **Introduction**

Young people in our society are now growing under circumstances unfamiliar to previous generations (Griffin, 1993; Wallace, 1995). They experience powerful socio-ecological impacts due to globalization and economic trends with little or no preparation. Though youths have more freedom now, this comes with responsibilities and there are reasons to suggest that the safety nets provided by families and communities are breaking down. Youth mentoring is one way of providing support to foster individual resilience in a socio-ecologically challenged world.

Youth mentoring is based on Community Psychology (Dalton et al. 2001) which emphasizes values and concepts such as Ecological Levels of Analysis, First-Order and second-Order change, Empowerment, Social Justice, Diversity, Individual wellness, Citizen Participation, Collaboration and Community Strengths and Psychological Sense of Community. This thesis explores the most popular and most researched model of youth mentoring by Rhodes (2005). That model proposes that socio-emotional, cognitive and identity developments are processes which a mentoring relationship aims to promote (Rhodes 2002; Dubois et al. 2005).

Part of the challenges youths now face is the sustainability challenge of meeting their needs in a manner that do not prevent others from meeting their needs, now or in the future. This crucial capacity is essential for the youth that will inherit the future. Youth mentoring should therefore prepare them for the challenge and also equip them to be part of the solution. The thesis also explored how different authors from Maslow (1943) to Max-Neef (1991) have defined human needs.

The meeting of our needs today and tomorrow is the domain of sustainable development. In the past few years sustainable development has been widely discussed and debated. Scientists have been seeking ways to find solutions in order to move society towards sustainability. The first definition of sustainable development was put forward by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 which defines it as, *“meeting the needs today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”*. In order to unite the efforts of various disciplines towards sustainable development, Robert et al. (2000) developed a Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) based on the generic Five Level Framework (5LF) for planning and decision making in complex systems.

This generic 5LF developed by Robert (2000) is a conceptual model that applies a whole-system perspective, and helps to structure planning and decision-making for success in any complex system. These levels consist of five specific and non-overlapping levels: System, Success, Strategic Guidelines, Actions and Tools levels. It outlines an interrelationship between the five levels and which can build upon each other as the subject matter of the levels are analyzed (Robert 2000).

Since youth are the future of society, societal success depends on what their future actions are going to be. Should it be sustainable or unsustainable? Considering youth mentoring as a powerful tool and understanding that it can have a lifelong impact, mentoring youth in a strategically sustainable manner is one solution to cope with problems that may arise in future, in fact it is a way of avoiding those problems.

In order to have a closer look at the youth mentoring in action, Mentor Sweden was chosen as a case study. Mentor Sweden is a member of the international organization Mentor Foundation. The findings of that report are applicable to other youth mentoring programs, as these base their practices on the same basic theories of mentoring as Mentor Sweden.

In the past decade Mentor Foundation has mentored more than a million youths in 40 countries. According to MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) of America (2003), 17.6 million young Americans need a caring adult in their life due to the circumstances of their lives. Of this number 2.5 million are in a mentoring relationship, a big opportunity for a strategic move towards sustainable development. There is a similar need in other parts of the world.

The research objectives has been to look at different youth mentoring processes and strategies and to provide the reader with an understanding of how the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development can help youth mentoring programs in moving society strategically towards sustainability. The second objective is to develop considerations and provide relevant suggestions for how to actually make youth mentoring contribute to strategic sustainable development. The research question this thesis answers is *“What does a youth mentoring program need to do to build capacities in those mentored so that they can contribute to a Strategic Sustainable development?”*

## **Methods**

The methodology followed can be divided into four main steps. (1) First, assessment of the current reality through literature review and data collected through a workshop and interviews. (2) Secondly, structuring and analyzing data using the generic Five Level Framework. (3) Thirdly, developing considerations for Youth Mentoring for SSD, backed by literature and The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development. (4) And finally, providing comparison with current youth mentoring practices with the ideal and providing suggestions for change and enhancement.

## **Results**

The results from the examination of current youth mentoring practices, considerations for Youth Mentoring for SSD and the gaps between the two, were structured using the Five Level Framework.

The Five Level Framework provides a structured understanding for planning and decision-making in any complex system. Comparing the current mentoring practices with the hypothesized ideal revealed that at the systems level current mentoring practices do not consider the biosphere as part of their system. Also, in some cases, internet is not considered a part of the larger system.

At the success level it was found that some elements of intellectual development, psychological and emotional development, social development, ecological awareness development were not being addressed.

Similarly strategies for screening and training of mentors with respect to Strategic Sustainable Development capabilities are not widely implemented. Finally strategies for selecting mentor/mentee activities are not structured and target based. At the actions level mentor and mentee do not have comprehensive action steps for effecting a transformational change. Finally the tools level lacked ecological awareness raising tools or simple milestones checklists to monitor progress.

## **Conclusion**

Using the Five Level Framework the gap between where youth mentoring is today and what the Youth Mentoring for SSD could be is discussed as to why it is necessary to fill those gaps and how the gaps should be filled strategically using transformational change processes and tools.

The authors suggest that if youth mentoring continues to be passive about the environment, the program will be neglecting the primary system that we all depend upon. Youth mentoring needs to proactively raise the awareness of every stakeholder especially the mentors and mentees, to environmental issues. In a world facing these sustainability issues of pollution, water scarcity and others, it will get to a point where civility is thrown away and what will be uppermost in the human mind will be survival of the fittest and mentoring will hardly be a consideration. As small as the effect might seem, a sustainability mindset might help the mentor and mentee in choosing their actions, both when they are together and in their private lives. This sustainability mindset can affect their transportation, buying habits, recycling, etc. This thesis suggests that sustainability education be included in the training of the mentors and mentees. Sustainability information could be included in the manuals provided to the mentors.

It is also suggested that mentees should be given a new vision of what it means to be a successful human being. Teenagers usually see success as possessions and popularity; they do not see the services that produce success. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) and Seligman (2000) suggest that teenagers need a definition of success that includes all human needs with adequate proportions of pleasure engagement and meaning. A successful Youth Mentoring for SSD will be building individual capacities, developing both internal and external resources for personal growth as well as capacities and attitudes that will help lead society strategically towards sustainability.

The authors believe that youth mentoring should target the intellectual, psychological/emotional and social development along with the development of ecological awareness in the mentees and that this will result in the development of the 5Cs in youth, as developed by Pittman et al (2002). These 5Cs are: Competence, Character, Connections, Confidence and Contribution; attributes that help the youth to build successful and happy life.

Guidelines developed by Rhodes et al. (2006) states that effective strategies for youth mentoring programs concern strategies for screening and training of mentors, effective matching, time commitment, and structured and target based activities.

The authors provide a simple guide for choosing daily actions based on backcasting from a life well lived, while contributing to socio-ecological sustainability and the choices made along the way to arrive at such an end. An example of a set of simple decision guiding criteria for every action is the Four-Way test of Rotary International.

The authors recommend presenting mentor and mentee with a Life Wheel that shows how a holistic view of life will guide creative design of actions and activities that synergize with each other.

Using the FSSD with the core concepts based on socio-ecological laws and principles, it is recommended that youth mentoring programs should identify all its stakeholders. With an understanding of these stakeholders, the authors suggest what could be success for all stakeholders within “Sustainability principles”, the guidelines for choosing actions that will establish youth mentoring as a strategic move towards sustainability.

And finally, a recommendation that youth mentoring organizations wishing to make more impact through youth mentoring to partner with sustainability NGOs like the Natural Step to see their work within the big picture of SSD and get guidance and coaching to seamlessly integrate sustainability principles into their program. This will help implementation of our suggestions and running a youth mentoring program for SSD.

# Glossary

**Backcasting:** It is planning with the desired end in mind, this is then followed by determining the step by step strategic actions to reach the desired end (Dreborg 1996).

**Biosphere:** is “a part of the Earth, including air, land, surface rocks, and water, within which life occurs, and which biotic processes in turn alter or transform. From the broadest bio physiological point of view, the biosphere is the global ecological system integrating all living beings and their relationships, including their interaction with the elements of the lithosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere” (Doyle et al. 2008).

**Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD):** “is a framework for planning in complex systems [that] provides guidelines for problem analysis, strategies, discovery of brilliant actions, and for design of relevant tools” (Robèrt 2000).

**Five Level Framework:** A generic framework for planning and decision-making in complex systems utilizing five distinct levels: (1) System, (2) Success, (3) Strategic guidelines, (4) Actions, and (5) Tools (Robèrt 2000).

**Human Needs by Max-Neef:** Refers to nine fundamental human needs as defined by the Chilean Economist Manfred Max-Neef (1991). These needs are required to be satisfied in order for people to remain healthy physically, mentally, and socially. The needs are: Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Participation, Understanding, Creativity, Identity, Idleness, and Freedom.

**Life Skills:** “Life skills are the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO 1996).

**Life Wheel:** Refers to a tool that describes a whole life. It can be used to measure balance and satisfaction in life.

**Mentor:** Refers to “a professional adult who, along with parents, provides a young person with support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and constructive example”. (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership 2009)

**Mentee:** is the one who seeks for valuable advice and support from someone more experienced in order to grow personally and/or professionally.

**Sustainability Principles:** Refers to basic principles for socio-ecological sustainability to define the minimum requirements of a sustainable society (Ny et al 2006). The principles are derived from basic laws of science, and have been published and peer reviewed. These principles are as follows:

In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing...

1. concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust,
2. concentrations of substances produced by society,
3. degradation by physical means  
and, in that society...
4. people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

**Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD):** A way of planning sustainable development designed to help bring clarity, rigor, and insight to planning and decision making to achieve a sustainable society in the biosphere. Grounded in a 'backcasting from sustainability principles' approach, whereby a vision of a sustainable future is set as the reference point for developing strategic actions (Robèrt 2000).

**Youth mentoring:** "A relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated, young protégé--a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé" (Rhodes 2002).

**Youth Mentoring for SSD:** Youth Mentoring for SSD should backcast from a vision of youths that have awareness, capacities and behaviours based on a sustainability mindset that allows them to contribute to SSD while living their lives to the fullest.

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# 1 Introduction

*“When a nation goes down, or a society perishes, one condition may always be found; they forgot where they came from. They lost sight of what had brought them along.”*

*Carl Sandburg*

The one condition that is bottom line for the survival of humanity is the social and ecological integrity of the system we live in. The health of one cannot compensate for the sickness of the other. Our social system or social fabric is empowered by three fundamental constituents namely, our dependence on one another, our capacity to self-organize to be a constructive part of the system, and that the system is healthy if it recognises diversity (Robèrt et al. 2004).

Our sustainability challenge is to remember where we came from, and the natural laws, rules and norms that sustained our journey. This sustainability challenge manifests in issues such as climate change, pollution, health concerns, negative community development, energy security, erosion of trust and social cohesion. The challenge we face for our survival as humanity is recognizing this socio-ecological connection and complexity and then acting strategically, independently and interdependently to maintain the integrity of the whole; this is the domain of Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD) (Robèrt et al. 2004). Usually different disciplines, professions, organizations and individuals are dealing with different aspects of these issues through their own lenses. The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) aims to provide a universal lens to unite the efforts of these entities. The FSSD is explained later in section 1.2.

One important factor in promoting sustainable development today, according to Lyngdoh (2005), is supporting the promotion and development of social, economic and environmental livelihoods of youth. These livelihoods become sustainable when they maintain capabilities, assets and activities that do not undermine natural system. Keith and Bijur (2000) postulated that refocusing the framework for the education of today’s youth around the concepts of sustainability can enable them to acquire the knowledge, skills and values that can shape their lives and the world around

them.

Considering that the learning of today's youth is not confined to the classroom, or professional educators; community youth mentoring can be one important way of dealing with our current sustainability challenge. Through youth mentoring relationships, caring adults provide young people with support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and a constructive example (National Mentoring Partnership 2003).

Introducing sustainability concepts in youth mentoring programs can be one of the effective avenues to empower our youths with enduring sustainability mindset for the future. Considering that youths have a very short future view ranging from days to weeks (Keith and Bijur, 2000), exposing them to the concepts of sustainable development can enable them to look into the future, often generations, in order to be prepared as the future unfolds.

Recognizing that mentoring has a number of complex variables, and that its ultimate purpose has primarily been focused on social sustainability, we hypothesize that youth mentoring can benefit from the "*Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD)*", which is a rigorous scientific framework (Robèrt 2000). Using FSSD as an analysis tool, this thesis investigates how youth mentoring programmes can: contribute to the integrity of our socio-ecological system; build personal capacities and life skills in youths; and enable them to live their lives at the fullest.

To understand how success is currently defined in youth mentoring, the thesis will, in the next section, review the basics of youth mentoring, its definition, the theories youth mentoring is based on, and present an overview of the most popular youth mentoring model. The next section will also explain the basic concepts of Strategic Sustainable Development.

## 1.1 Understanding mentoring

*“To lose hope when you are young and have your life ahead of you is a terrible destiny, yet we allow millions of children around the world to grow up deprived of the right to hope.”*

*HM Queen Silvia of Sweden*

Youth mentoring is a way to nourish this hope and hopefully in a world that has a hope for survival.

Researchers from Maslow (1943) to Kegan (1982) have emphasized the crucial role relationships play in our lives, but the factors that make these relationships optimal have not been well understood (Johnson et al. 1999).

In a longitudinal study on the lives of young people from birth to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday from poor multi-ethnic families in Hawaii, Werner and Smith (1992) asked the question “*what makes people stay well as opposed to what makes people unwell*” when confronted by the same risk factors that make these groups vulnerable to maladaptive outcomes such as ill health, delinquency, long term unemployment etc. They found that common risk factors like chronic poverty, family disruption, teenage pregnancy, and serious physical/emotional trauma did not universally result in negative outcomes in all cases. Their research showed that two-thirds of the teenagers grew to become mature, healthy and well-adjusted members of the society. In their research they identified one protective factor that stood out in the well-adjusted groups: They all had an informal mentor from within their peer group and the community in their lives.

A similar result was obtained in a study of Latino single mothers (Rhodes 2005; Katz 1997). These studies marked the beginning of formal mentoring programs. Since then mentoring has been integrated into businesses, educational institutions, pre and post vocational training, professional development, health and social care and as a policy intervention in vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals (McGowan et al. 2008).

Strong evidence has been provided, by the Public/Private ventures (P/PV) evaluation of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America mentoring programs, that

through structured mentoring programs, caring adults can positively influence youths (Roaf et al, 1994).

Dubois et al. (2002) also reported evidence of positive academic, social, emotional, behavioural, career development outcomes in mentored youth in a meta-analysis of more than 50 evaluations of mentoring programs.

### **1.1.1 Definition**

Youth mentoring has been defined as follows:

Youth mentoring is an organized close relationship between young people (mentees) and caring adults (mentors) who along with parents; guide, support, encourage and positively influence these young minds through constructive examples to develop good characters and competences. A mentor actively listens to the mentee, provides support and helps to bring out the best in the mentee (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership 2003).

Another definition given by Rhodes (2002) is that youth mentoring is:

“A relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated, young protégé--a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé”.

### **1.1.2 Theories of mentoring**

In order to understand how mentoring is done; an overview of underlying theories that support formal and informal mentoring is presented. The major theories are:

- Attribution theory
- Reactance theory
- Mutual benefit theory
- Self-help theory
- Community psychology theory

### *Attribution theory*

This is attributing a difficult situation either to an internal lack of competence (internal attribution) or to the complexity of the situation requiring assistance (external attribution) (Little 1990).

### *Reactance theory*

This theory states that mentee will accept assistance to the degree that it plays to their positive feelings of self-efficacy (Little 1990). The assistance will be rejected when people begin to feel that their freedom to choose an action is threatened (Hart 1988). The unpleasant feeling of reactance also motivates them to perform the threatened behavior to prove that their free will has not been compromised.

### *Mutual benefits theory*

This theory postulates that mentoring relationship is for the benefit of the mentor and the mentee (Zey 1984; Little 1990).

### *Self-help theory*

Self-help theory maintains that mentees will seek support to prevent negative effects on their self-esteem and social relations (Little 1990).

### *Community psychology theory*

Mentoring programs embrace most closely the theories, concepts and values of community psychology (Dalton et al. 2001). These include:

- *Ecological Levels of Analysis*: This is an ecological framework used to understand how human communities function (Kelly 1966; Trickett 1984). According to Kelly, four principles govern people in settings.
  - *Adaptation*: People's action in a given context is adaptive.
  - *Succession*: Current structures, norms attitudes and policies in every setting have a history and an understanding of this history is necessary for any meaningful intervention.
  - *Cycling of resources*: Every setting has resources and possibilities for new ones. Capitalizing on individual, groups and institutional strengths rather than introducing outside mechanism of change results in lasting change.
  - *Interdependence*: This recognizes the systems nature of

settings in carrying out any intervention.

- *First-Order and Second-Order change*: A first-order change attends to the individuals in a setting to tackle a problem while a second-order change attends to the systems and structures to facilitate person-environmental compatibility.
- *Empowerment*: Empowerment is context and population specific (Zimmerman 2000). Empowerment can exist at three main levels (Shultz et al. 1995): at the community level empowerment reflects actions taken by a group of people to improve lives in a community; at the organizational level it reflects processes and structures designed to enable actions by members towards organizational goals; and, at the individual level empowerment incorporates beliefs regarding competency to act in regard with an understanding of the socio-political environment, which includes knowledge of the laws and an appreciation of one's rights and responsibilities. (Nachshen 2005). Through empowerment, people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives (Rappaport 1984).
- *Social Justice*: Social justice emphasizes fairness to all individuals and groups in a society. Community Psychology advocates equality and policies that allow for the wellbeing of everyone particularly the marginalized populations (Dalton et al. 2001).
- *Diversity*: The principle of human diversity is at the core of Community Psychology. Mentoring programs are culturally tailored to minority and other diverse youth populations (Dubios et al. 2006).
- *Individual Wellness*: This is the physical and psychological wellbeing of all people.
- *Citizen Participation*: Mentoring programs support citizen participation through volunteering of community members as mentors (Dubios et al. 2006).
- *Collaboration and Community Strengths*: Mentoring capitalize on community strengths of existing youth servicing agencies and organizations within the community (Dubios et al. 2006).
- *Psychological Sense of Community*: Mentoring is based on a sense of community, serving to nourish, sustain, and indeed, to create a community (Armstrong 2009).

### **1.1.3 Youth mentoring model**

This thesis will explore the most popular and thoroughly researched model of youth mentoring by Rhodes (2005). That theory proposes that socio-emotional, cognitive and identity developments are processes that a mentoring relationship aims to promote (Rhodes 2002; Dubois et al. 2005). Mentor Sweden, which is used as the case study and is introduced in the Methods section of the thesis, also follows the guidelines provided by this model. It is based on theories of community psychology, in which mentors have more influence and positive outcomes to the degree that all three dimensions and the pathways to each dimension is considered (Dubois et al. 2005). The model has the following parts:

#### *Mentoring relationship*

The foundation of a mentoring relationship is based on mutuality, trust and empathy: Absence of a bond based on this trio may cause mentor and or mentee to disengage before the relationship could develop to have a positive impact (Dubois et al. 2005).

#### *Socio-emotional development*

Mentors modeling care and support can challenge negative perspectives mentees may hold about themselves and their relationships with adults and demonstrate that positive relationships with adults are possible (Dubois et al. 2005).

#### *Cognitive development*

Meaningful youth relevant conversations between mentor and youth could lead to cognitive development (Vygotsky 1978).

#### *Identity development*

Freud (1991), Kohut (1984), Cooley (1902) have described that people internalize the attitudes, behaviors and traits of significant people in their life. This gives them a sense of identity of who they are or can become.

#### *Moderating Processes*

Influences of personality, family, contexts and the length of the relationships, determine both the foundation of mutuality, trust and empathy as well as the pathways to youth outcomes (Dubois et al. 2005).

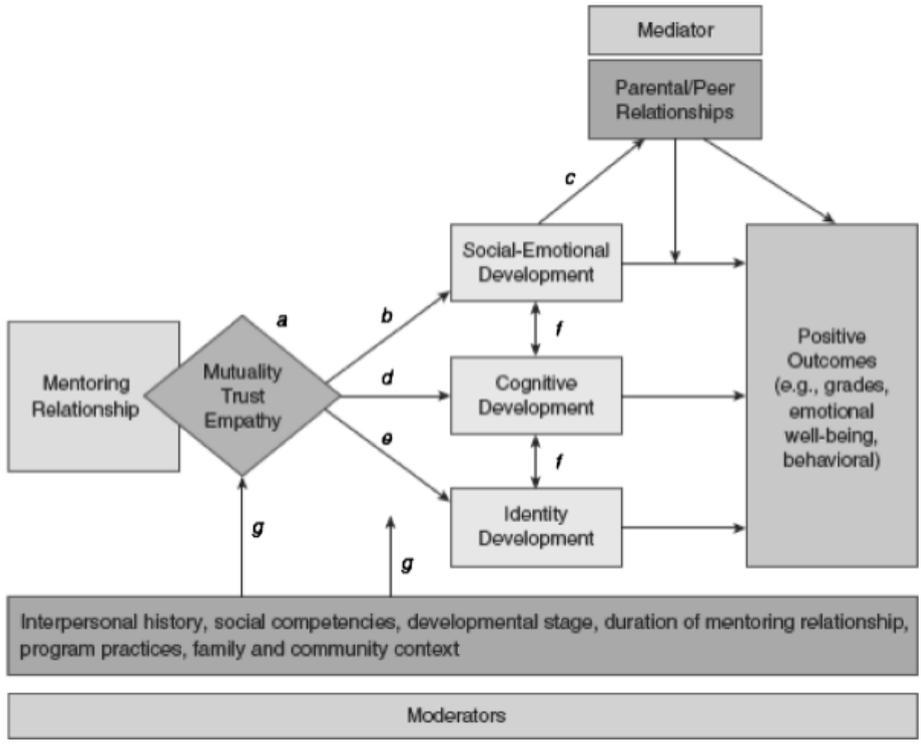
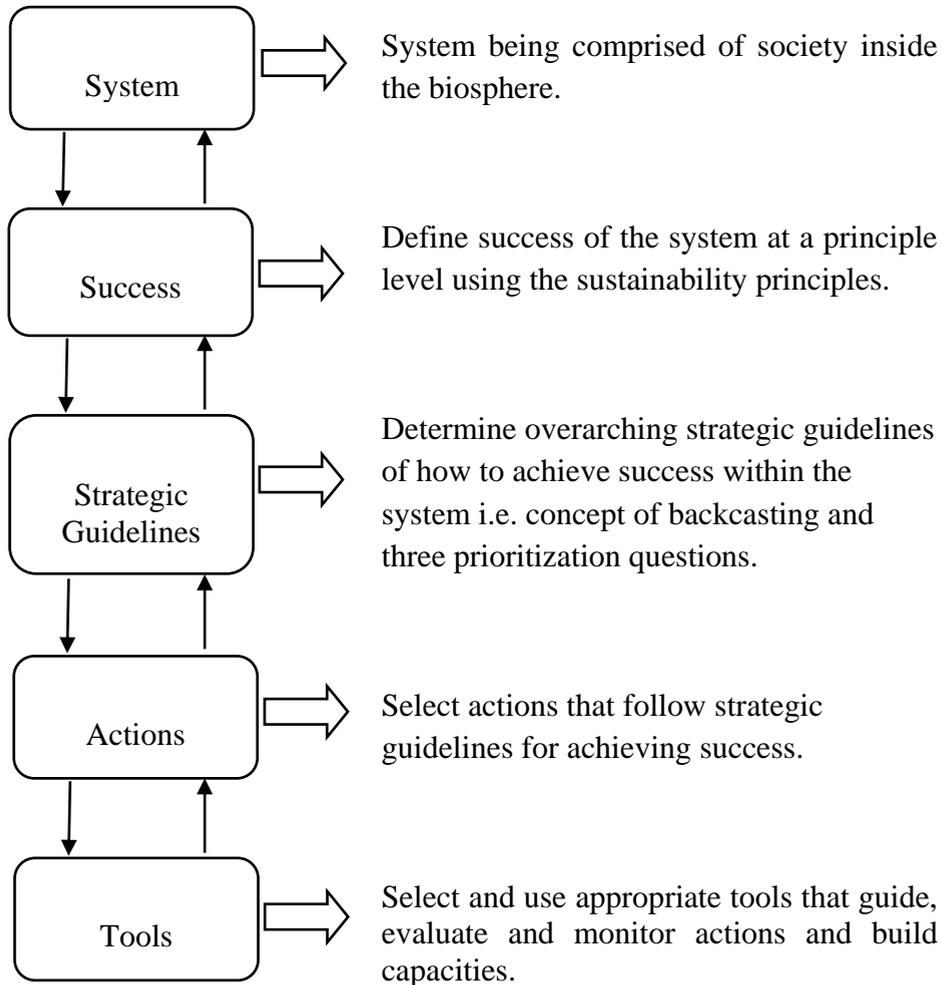


Figure 1.1 Model of youth mentoring (Rhodes, 2005)

## 1.2 Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD)

The term sustainable development has been used for the last two decades. It was first used and defined by the Brundtland Commission (1987), formerly known as World Commission on Environment and Development as: “meeting the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. According to this definition society should use natural resources to meet their needs in a way that does not exhaust them so that future generations can also benefit from those same resources. The term strategic refers to systematic and scientific approach to society’s sustainability. To deal with the complexity of sustainability and avoid the reductionist approach to dealing with sustainability Robert (2000) developed the generic Five Level Framework (5LF) which is a scientifically validated framework for planning and decision making in any

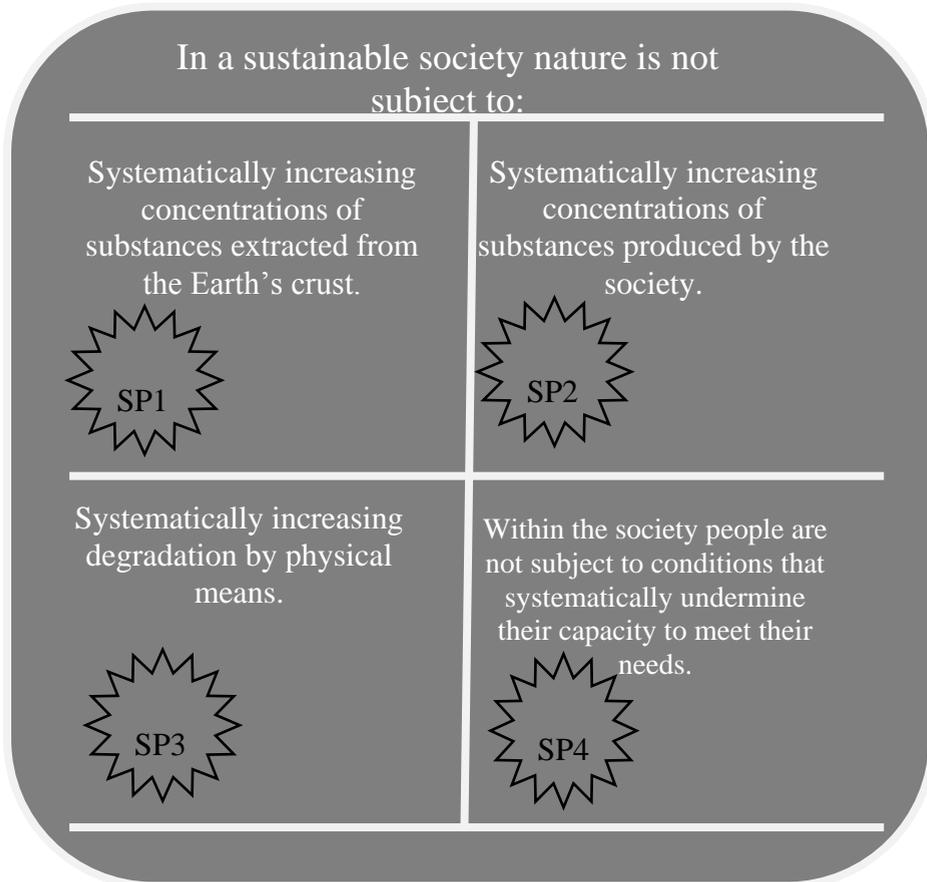
complex system. This generic framework is explained later in section 2.2. This framework laid the foundation for the FSSD (Robèrt 2000) shown in figure 1.2 below.



*Figure 1.2 Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD)  
(Robèrt 2000)*

The different levels of the FSSD provide a structured approach for planning strategically towards sustainability.

The *systems level* defines the boundaries of system in which the problem lies. In this case the system is identified as the human society within the biosphere. The *success level* of the FSSD defines the overall success of the participants or actors of the system. For SSD the success at a principle level is defined by the four system conditions. These system conditions or sustainability principles are elaborated in the figure 1.3 below.



*Figure 1.3 Sustainability principles (Robèrt 2000)*

The *strategic guidelines level* of the FSSD helps in defining a strategy in achieving success. FSSD provides three prioritization questions for prioritizing actions to achieve success and the concept of backcasting from success. Backcasting from success means envisioning the success and then taking actions to achieve that success. Those actions taken towards success can be prioritized using the three prioritization questions, which are:

- Will my action lead in the right direction towards success?
- Does my action provide a flexible platform for further steps towards success?
- Is my action going to provide a good return on investment so that we can take further steps towards success?

At the *actions level* different actions are selected according to the strategic guidelines defined at the previous level. In the end different tools are selected to guide and monitor actions, build capacities and evaluate the overall performance.

These levels are inter-connected to each other, as shown by the arrows in the figure 1. It has proved to be a useful tool for planning a change towards socio-ecological sustainability (Robèrt 2000).

### **1.2.1 SSD and human needs**

At the root of sustainability issues is the way humans try to meet their needs. Different authors have identified different categories of needs. Authors like Maslow (1943) presented a theory of human motivation in which he presented hierarchy of needs, which is shown in figure 1.4 and Max-Neef (1991) proposes a non-hierarchical taxonomy of nine basic needs that all humans have shown in the figure 1.5.

Humans, with the passage of time, have identified different ways to meet their needs. Those ways may or not be in compliance with the system conditions. While meeting those needs the abuse of political, economic and environmental power might prevent others from meeting their needs. Strategic Sustainable Development tries to guide the society in meeting its needs in a sustainable manner.

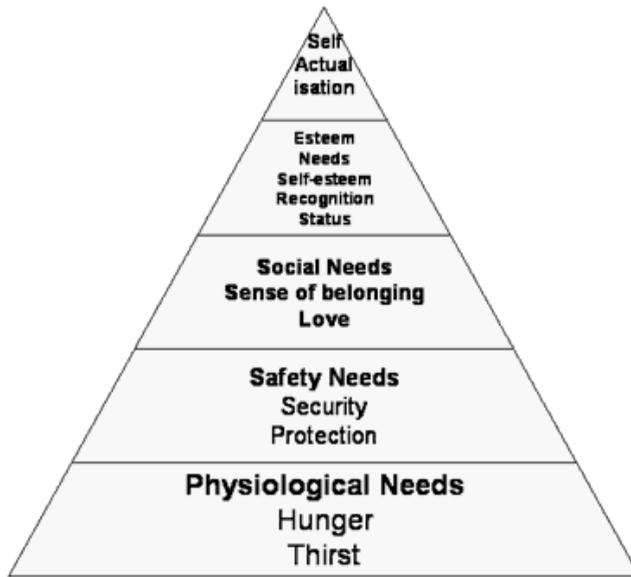


Figure 1.4 Maslow's hierarchy of needs (source:Tutor2u 2009)

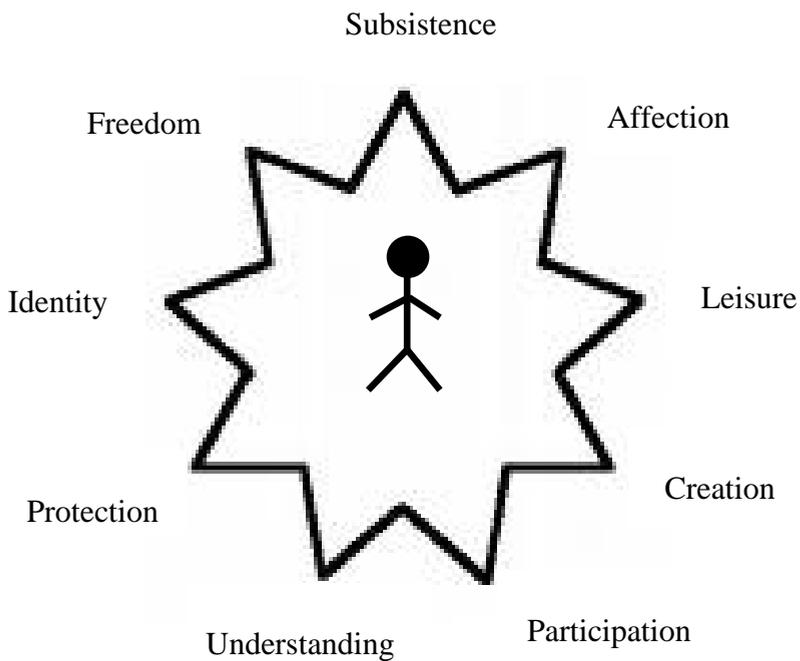


Figure 1.5 Max Neef (1991) Human Needs

## **1.2.2 Youth mentoring and SSD**

*“The future promise of any nation is directly measured by the present prospects of its youth.”*

*President John F. Kennedy*

The future promise of a sustainable society depends so much on whether the youths that will inherit the future, know how to and have the capabilities to meet their needs in a socio-ecologically sustainable manner.

Youth mentoring is one way to build these capacities in youths for meeting the universal human needs. An accepted fact is that youth mentoring has been recognized as a powerful tool with lifelong benefit that has an opportunity of translating into a huge reduction in socio-ecological impact. This impact has high visibility and is comparatively easier than changing mindsets and behaviors of adults. According to MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) of America (2003), 17.6 million young Americans need a caring adult in their life due to the circumstances of their lives. Two and a half million are in a mentoring relationship. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, in the middle of 1990s, stated in a report about the benefits of youth mentoring that it can help in uplifting emotional stability, better behaviours, better social interaction and also career advancement (Jean and DuBois 2006).

In the past ten years Mentor Foundation has positively touched the lives of more than one million young people in more than 40 countries (Mentor Foundation 2009). Youth mentoring towards SSD will build capacities in youths to be able to meet their needs sustainably.

Taking into consideration the magnitude and duration of impact, visibility, the efficacy of solution, sustainable youth mentoring could really be strategic in moving society towards sustainability.

## 1.3 Research objectives

This research aims to accomplish the following goals:

- To review previous academic work on youth mentoring and look at youth mentoring in practice, to provide readers with a general understanding of the role youth mentoring can have in moving the society towards Strategic Sustainable Development.
- To provide suggestions for considerations in a youth mentoring program that will contribute to SSD. These suggestions will be grounded on the theories and scientific model of youth mentoring using the Framework for Strategic Sustainable development.

## 1.4 Research questions

In order to achieve the research objectives, the primary research question was designed as follows:

- *What does a youth mentoring program need to do to build capacities in mentees so that they can contribute to a Strategic Sustainable Development?*

The purpose of this was to explore youth mentoring programs in general and one in particular (youth mentoring programs run by Mentor Sweden) to understand and identify the gaps between the current situation and desired future of youth mentoring programs from the perspective of strategic sustainable development.

Guided by the above overarching question, the following secondary questions were asked to help in answering the primary question.

- *What is the current reality? How are youth mentoring programs currently helping to move society towards sustainability?*

This question guided the identification of the sustainability work that youth mentoring is doing today from a perspective of Strategic Sustainable Development.

- *What should a youth mentoring program helping to move society towards SSD look like?*

Answering this question provided a vision of a ‘successful’ youth mentoring programs at a principle level, designed in compliance with the principles for sustainability.

- *What are the gaps in the current program?*
- *What are some strategic steps youth mentoring could take to move from their current ways of operating to the envisaged ideal model of mentoring?*

The previous three questions elaborate the tension between where a youth mentoring program is now, and where it might be if it wants to help move society towards sustainability. These questions ask how that tension can be addressed, to reduce the distance between youth mentoring programs today and the envisioned Youth Mentoring programs for SSD.

## **2 Methods**

The methodology of this study involved four steps. In the first step data was collected from different sources. In the second step, the collected data was structured into the Five Level Framework to analyze and understand it. After analysis, the third step involved developing considerations for a youth mentoring program that can contribute towards Strategic Sustainable Development. The final step was comparing the current youth mentoring practices with the suggested youth mentoring program for SSD. This comparison led to the identification of gaps and suggestions of how those gaps could be filled.

### **2.1 Case study of Mentor Sweden**

Our research examined several youth mentoring programs based on the information they put out on the internet for the general public. The major strength of this work was the close collaboration with Mentor Sweden which was chosen as a case study. A workshop and interviews were conducted with the personnel of Mentor Sweden enable us to understand the reality and deeper into relevant areas, gather related information and arrive at a recommendation for the question at hand. The fact that one of the authors is a volunteer mentor with the organization helped the collaboration and information access.

Currently Mentor Sweden carries out three programs: Youth Mentoring, Parental Program and Project Inspiration. The details of Mentor Sweden and the unique work it is doing are available in Appendix A.

It is noteworthy that the application of this research is not limited to Mentor Sweden only but to any youth mentoring program that aims to build capacities in youth.

## **2.2 Overall research approach**

The overall research is structured on the generic Five Level Framework developed by Robèrt (2000). It is a conceptual model that applies a whole-system perspective, and helps to structure planning and decision-making for success in any complex system (Robèrt et al. 2004). These levels consist of five specific and non-overlapping levels: System, Success, Strategic Guidelines, Actions and Tools levels. It outlines an interrelationship between the five levels and which can build upon each other as the subject matter of the levels are analyzed (Robèrt 2000).

The Systems Level defines the boundaries of the specific system, under consideration, the systems dynamics, laws, rules and norms. The Success Level identifies the desired goals to be achieved within the specific system. The Strategic Guidelines Level provides prioritization criteria for selecting actions from the vision of success in order to achieve the success (Level 2) in the system (Level 1). The Actions Level defines concrete actions to take following the Strategic Guidelines (Level 3) for achieving the success (Level 2). The Tools level describes various tools to assist in moving towards success (Robèrt 2000).

The Five-Level Framework applies a whole-system perspective; it takes a bird's eye view of broader and interrelated issues in order to avoid only focusing on partial issues, areas or topics in planning. If there is no systemic perspective, wrong decisions are more likely to be made. It can help analyze the distinction and the interrelationships between the different levels in order to have a better understanding of the System, Success and Strategic Guidelines levels as the foundation for identifying appropriate Actions and deciding on appropriate Tools.

Since a youth mentoring program are part of a complex system involving mentors, mentees, schools, communities, parents, and other stakeholders the Five-Level Framework is useful to help people to identify, understand and evaluate youth mentoring programs moving towards its vision.

### **2.2.1 Step 1: Literature review and data collection**

Here the current reality of a youth mentoring program and its relationships were examined. This was carried out by collecting primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through a workshop and interviews; the secondary data was collected through literature review by using different web search engines like Google Scholar and different research journals on children psychology, children health and development, sustainable development, youth mentoring, mentoring etc. The data was collected by answering the following guiding questions. The idea behind asking these questions was to gain knowledge of the role of youth mentoring in the system, what success means for youth mentoring and how youth mentoring organisations plan and conduct their operations.

- What is the vision of different mentoring programs and specifically Mentor Sweden?
  - How do they envision themselves (organization) in the future?
  - How do they envision the future of the mentoring?
- What is the mission of different mentoring programs and specifically Mentor Sweden?
  - What is their core purpose?
  - What are their values?
- What are the widely used mentoring models and which one does Mentor Sweden follow?
- How do they define success of their mentoring programs?
  - What do they think a successful mentoring program provides as an output?
  - What does a successful mentoring program do?
- How do they make sure that their definition of success is incorporated in their mentoring programs?
  - Do they try to follow the guidelines of a successful mentoring program?
- How do they evaluate the success of their programs?

### **2.2.2 Step 2: Structuring and analysis of data**

In this step the data was first structured into the generic Five Level Framework, which is explained in the section 2.2. The reason behind using the Five Level Framework is to easily understand the different forms of data in a more structured way and also because it would be easy to see the data through the lens of FSSD. Similarly this helped the research team in understanding the current reality; the mentoring system, how the success is defined in youth mentoring, what are the strategic guidelines followed, what are the different actions and tools used for ensuring a smooth running of the program.

### **2.2.3 Step 3: Considerations for Youth Mentoring for SSD**

During this step considerations for an ideal youth mentoring were developed using the FSSD. The reason for using FSSD for this was to develop a model for Youth Mentoring for SSD, a mentoring model that achieves the vision of youth mentoring as well as contributing towards Strategic Sustainable Development.

These considerations lead to the identification of the key elements of youth mentoring that can lead to Strategic Sustainable Development. The vision and success definition were developed for Youth Mentoring for SSD and then this vision and success definition was used to identify gaps in the current youth mentoring practices, in the next step.

### **2.2.4 Step 4: Comparison between current reality and Youth Mentoring for SSD**

Once the current reality had been analyzed and also the youth mentoring model for SSD had been identified, the next step was to compare the two and find areas of opportunity for making youth mentoring a strategic move towards sustainability.

The identification of the areas of opportunity leads to making suggestions to the current youth mentoring practices. The purpose of these suggestions

was to transform the current youth mentoring practices into a situation where youth mentoring is working not only towards social sustainability but socio-ecological sustainability. This comparison and suggestions were based upon the Framework of Strategic Sustainable Development, theories and models of youth mentoring.

The methods can be summarized into the following matrix:

Assessment of the current reality through literature review and data collected through workshop and interviews.	Through the guiding questions stated in section 2.2.1.
Structuring and analysis of data.	Through 5LF and FSSD.
Youth Mentoring for Strategic Sustainable Development, vision and definition of success.	Through FSSD, theories and models of youth mentoring.
Comparison of current reality with the ideal and making suggestions.	Through FSSD, theories and models of youth mentoring.

*Table 2.1 Summarized methods*

## **3 Results**

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section contains results regarding the current reality of youth mentoring programs of Mentor Sweden and youth mentoring in general. Then second section illustrates what the considerations are for a Youth Mentoring for SSD. In the last section a comparison is carried out between the current reality and the considerations for Youth Mentoring for SSD.

### **3.1 Current reality**

Current reality of youth mentoring refers to how youth mentoring is currently performed and the way it's different processes are carried out. The results include threads of information that allow us to see what is currently being adopted in youth mentoring, the practices of Mentor Sweden and its influence within the society.

It was important to assess this because it provided an in-depth understanding of the system of youth mentoring, its definition of success, the strategic guidelines being followed, the actions being taken and the tools used. The Generic Five Level Framework (5LF) explained in section 2.2 has been used for structuring the information.

#### **3.1.1 System**

At the systems level it was important to have a clear understanding of what youth mentoring in general and Mentor Sweden in particular identify as their system. This enabled this research to have an understanding of what is considered while taking any step in youth mentoring. The data collected enabled this research to identify if youth mentoring can identify its stakeholders or not.

At the systems level the following are main findings:

- Current view of system boundaries
- Function and focus area
- Understanding the youths way of seeing the world

### *Current view of system boundaries*

Traditionally mentoring is considered a social endeavour and Mentor Sweden considers its system as comprising of the following:

- *Mentees and their families:* Young people aged between 13 and 17.
- *Mentors:* Adults with no criminal records, interviewed by program leaders.
- *Within the organization:* Board of Trustees, staff, scientific advisory network.
- *Schools:* 17 schools in Sweden's three largest urban areas, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.
- *Funders:* Mentor Sweden is primarily (90%) funded by Swedish companies.

### *Function and Focus*

Mentor Sweden is a non-profit organization. The mission is to give young people the strength to stand against violence and drugs and promote their wellbeing. Mentor Sweden also aims to improve parenting skills. For Mentor Sweden, its aim is to considerably increase the impact on the lives of Swedish youth, parents and society at large (Mentor Sweden 2009).

### *Understanding the youths way of seeing the world*

Mentors are able to see how the teenagers nowadays live their lives, instead of framing from the scope of the media; through the mentors the young people would learn about personal and professional life of the mentor.

## **3.1.2 Success**

At the success level it was important to see how Mentor Sweden and other youth mentoring programs define what success means for them and what vision they have for their future. This definition of success guided the assessment of the current reality and helped in providing suggestions in the discussion section.

The vision of Mentor Sweden was found out to be:

*“Mentor Sweden’s vision is that all young people in Sweden will have a strong belief in their future and can say no to violence and the use of drugs.” (Mentor Sweden 2009).*

Values as stated by Mentor Sweden (2009):

*“We at Mentor believe in man's inner strength. We want to get people to grow, see their potential and take responsibility for their own lives. We show trust and strive to understand and respect different perspectives. Our working environment characterized by warmth, joy, respect and commitment. We value good communication, pleasure at each other's successes and promote everyone's talent and knowledge.”*

Our research findings from literature, workshop and interviews revealed how youth mentoring programs in general define the success. The main findings are:

- Focus on personal development
- Prevention of substance misuse, promotion of health and zest for life
- Building of good social network
- Increased integration between companies and schools, cultures, geographical areas and between generations.
- Mutual growth

#### *Focus on personal Development*

The success of a youth mentoring relationship is the development of emotional intelligence, cognitive and identity development as discussed in the youth mentoring model presented by Rhodes (2005) in section 1.1.3.

#### *Prevention of substance misuse, promotion of health and zest for life*

Another success definition was found to be preventing youth from using drugs or other substances that can harm their health. And also at the same time promoting health and helping them bring zest in their lives (Mentor Sweden 2009).

#### *Building of good social networks*

Mentor Sweden aims to build social network as a resource for the mentees (Mentor Sweden 2009).

*Increased integration between companies and schools, cultures, geographical areas and between generations*

Integrating companies and schools, cultures, geographical areas and bridging generation gaps is a success criterion for Mentor Sweden (Mentor Sweden 2009).

*Mutual growth*

The relationship between mentors and mentees is a balanced, two-way learning experience that aims towards the development of emotional intelligence, cognitive development and identity development (Rhodes 2005).

### **3.1.3 Strategic guidelines**

The purpose of studying the strategic guidelines was to understand and analyze how youth mentoring program make decisions about what actions the organization and the mentor and mentee can take in moving towards success.

Neither the interviews nor the literature indicates that a structured approach to strategic decision-making seems to be used. There are a number of findings that could be described as strategies to guide actions. These are that actions should:

- Support the overall work of Mentor Foundation's mission to prevent drug-related harm and to promote the health and well-being of young people.
- Build constructive relations between adults and the young, reduce risk factors that might lead the young people to the wrong direction, e.g. substance misuse and violence.
- Ensure no harm to mentee.
- Integrate the mentoring program, the parenting program and the project inspiration to support in the achieving success.

### 3.1.4 Actions

The need to determine the actions taken by/for youth mentoring programs is to analyze those actions later on in the comparison between the current reality and Youth Mentoring for SSD, to ensure that they lead strategically towards success. At the actions level the following are the activities which youth mentoring organizations are currently doing:

- Mentoring
- Parental support
- Marketing
- Providing international support
- Activities performed by the mentoring pair
- Mentor-mentee matching
- Project Inspiration
- Collaboration and lobbying

Though these activities support the organization in carrying out its work but the main focus of this study is on those actions which are related to the mentoring pair.

#### *Activities performed by the mentoring pair*

Mentoring programs provide suggestions for actions and activities mentor and mentee can engage in. These activities include, watching movies together, cooking meals together, helping with school homework, learning about goal setting etc. Though guidance is provided, mentors and mentees ultimately choose their activities based on their interests.

#### *Mentor-mentee matching*

Mentors are recruited from the public. The recruitment process includes ensuring that the mentors have no criminal records. The mentees should also not have problems that require professional help. After introduction and interviews, mentors will receive one-day training. The program leaders subsequently match mentors and mentees according to expectations and fit. Follow-up and monitoring shortly after the program started, is carried out through monthly reports by the mentors. The mentoring pair gets counselling by the program leaders during the mentoring period if needed.

### **3.1.5 Tools**

This section gives some examples of tools used in youth mentoring programs. Tools can aid actions or monitor the process of youth mentoring.

The main findings at this level are:

#### *A handbook for mentors*

A handbook developed by Mentor Sweden is given to mentors. This manual contains information about mentoring, communication, relationship development, elements of developmental psychology, what is not acceptable in the relationship and a list of suggested activities.

#### *Training sessions and guides*

Youth mentoring programs usually train mentors to enhance their abilities for effective mentoring. The purpose of this training is to create an understanding of what youth mentoring is and the regulations guiding the relationship. The duration of the training varies from organization to organization.

#### *Professional support base*

As a resource available to the mentoring organisation, are a pool of professionals like counsellors, consultants and doctors, that the organization can turn to when needed.

#### *Monthly follow up*

The mentors are expected to submit a monthly report of what the pair did together. This report contains the details of activities and discussions they have had and subjective evaluations of experiences.

## **3.2 Youth mentoring for SSD**

Youth mentoring for SSD should backcast from a vision of youths that have awareness, capacities and behaviours based on a sustainability mindset that allows them to contribute to SSD while living their lives to the fullest. Some key considerations for a vision of Youth Mentoring for SSD are presented here. These are presented at the different levels of FSSD to facilitate the later comparison and analysis between the current reality and

the vision of a youth mentoring program working towards Strategic Sustainable Development. These are based on the knowledge of Strategic Sustainable Development and also the literature available on youth mentoring.

### **3.2.1 System**

Development at any stage in human life involves the unfolding of natural tendencies in reaction to the level of support and challenges a person acquires. This means that a mentee will respond to any mentoring program according to his/her hereditary traits and the environment provided to him/her (Hamilton et al. 2004). Therefore the system for Youth Mentoring for SSD will not only constitute of mentor and mentee but along with the schools, families, neighbourhoods, in some cases cyberspace, the society and the biosphere at large.

In order to define and achieve success the understanding of the system is very important (Robèrt et al. 2004). Sustainability is dependent on two basic things i.e. social sustainability and ecological sustainability. Robèrt et al. (2004) stated that both these are interdependent and there is a positive correlation between them. This interdependence shows that the success of one is the success of the other. Hence the system of a Youth Mentoring for SSD should take into account both a robust social fabric and a robust ecosystem

### **3.2.2 Success**

After defining the system of a youth mentoring program for Strategic Sustainable Development its success definition was developed. This principle definition of success is based on the FSSD which ensures a holistic approach to success for the different stakeholders involved which are discussed in the following subsections.

#### ***Principle based definition of success***

The principle based definition of success from the FSSD perspective consists of four sustainability principles presented by Robèrt (2000; Ny et al 2006). These principles are also illustrated in figure 1.3. A youth

mentoring program for Strategic Sustainable Development will be able to build capacities in the youth such that they act based on the understanding of sustainability principles described in FSSD.

These principles also stand as success definition for the mentoring organization itself and its process. This means that the mentoring organization's activities must also be in compliance with the sustainability principles.

### *Success for different stakeholders*

The success of the different stakeholders (i.e. the mentees, mentors, mentoring organization and supporting community/society) involved in youth mentoring is given as follows:

#### *Success for Mentees*

Different authors and theories have identified different successes for a youth mentoring program. This thesis adds the socio-ecological sustainability focus. These different perspectives of success which are discussed below are:

- The Five Cs developed originally by Pittman (2002)
- The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine's list of personal and social assets for facilitating positive youth development
- Success of a mentee as defined by (Cairns Youth Mentoring Scheme 2009).
- Success as achieving a full and balanced life through the combination of Life Wheel and Max Neef's Human needs

The successes that a youth mentoring program should aim to achieve, as pointed out by Pittman et al. (2002), are:

#### *Competence*

Building competence is to enhance mentees' existing pool of knowledge and skills so that they can react more effectively to the challenges posed by the environment. Competence also means to achieve a favourable fit of abilities that can help distinguish the individual. Here the knowledge can also be enhanced in the field of socio-ecological sustainability. Using this knowledge the mentee

will be able to appreciate the importance of the ecological systems and his/her dependence on them. The mentee should also have the competence to choose and carry through actions that contribute to a strategic sustainable development.

### *Character*

Building character aims to mould mentees' intentions of behaving in a society. Character development ensures that actions are just and good for the society as a whole. Similarly it should protect the rights of the mentee as well. This character building can help the mentee to behave responsibly towards his or her peers and the social and ecological system. His/her actions should be just to the socio-ecological systems which the mentee would have already identified through enhanced competence.

### *Connections*

Connections aim at learning ways to establish social relations with adults or peers or with younger people. These connections can also be the connectedness to the biosphere. This will enable the mentee to feel the relationship between him/her and the biosphere. The mentee will be able to recognize the connection between him/her and the natural cycles of the biosphere.

### *Confidence*

This will let a person achieve the conviction and certainty required to demonstrate one's acquired competence and character in challenging situations. A confident mentee will be able to employ the competence he/she has and the character that he/she possesses now in his/her sustainability habits and relationships.

### *Contribution*

This is the most essential ingredient of mentoring. It means to educate youth not to use the above mentioned attributes to achieve self centred objectives but to develop a sense of giving and sharing. A contributing mentee means that the mentee will have a shared mental model of a successful and significant life and would understand the importance of others' success. This mentee will be able to see clearly that his/her success is based on the success of other individuals, of society as a whole, and of the ecological integrity of the natural system which we all are dependent upon.

Similarly youth mentoring program should consider the success of a mentee as creating an individual (Cairns Youth Mentoring Scheme 2009):

- Who has self worth
- Who can set up his/her goals
- With the ability to make a go in life using the talent he/she has
- Who is emotionally stable
- Who has a positive attitude towards work
- Who can say no to drugs

And also,

- Who has some spiritual belief (Mentor Foundation 2009). Research shows that youths that get exposed to spirituality principles are more likely to stay away from drugs and violence, make better grades in schools, and have respect for others (Mentor Foundation, 2009)
- Who considers the eco-system and employs his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes in living according to Sustainability principles.

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (NRCIM, 2002) presented the different personal and social assets for facilitating positive youth development. These assets are explained as follows:

#### *Physical Development*

It was found out from the literature that when creating a youth mentoring program there is usually a strong focus on personality and character building. However such programs fail to recognise the fact that healthy individuals have better capability of grasping and adopting positive attitudes. Therefore, a very carefully and wisely planned youth mentoring program should include the methods to help improve youth's physical capabilities such as how to attain and maintain good health. What to do and not to do in this pursuit.

Youth should be taught about how to get good defence against certain behaviour initiated diseases such as HIV or other diseases related to smoking, drinking and unhealthy eating.

#### *Intellectual Development*

Youth mentoring programs should focus on helping young people better adapt to their environment. This includes enhancement of

their intellectual ability. They should be helped in recognizing their own skills and strengths and how they can benefit through them. They should learn about how to practice empathy and how they can be beneficial to the society as a whole. They should have respect for different cultures and skills to survive and flourish in an alien environment.

This intellectual development will also lead to understanding humility of limits, constraints and boundaries within nature. It will lead to development of harmony and balance with nature as well. It will also help to understand the good and bad uses of science and the root causes of unsustainability. Eventually this understanding will lead to the development of ecological awareness in the youth, enabling them to understand their connectedness with the nature.

#### *Psychological and Emotional Development*

For the youth a big barrier for personality growth can be the overflow of emotions and rush of blood associated with their age (Goleman 1995). They should learn how their emotions can be used positively and how they can make a difference in the society they live in or help change the things they do not admire in the same society. They should learn to conceive a purposeful life that not only fulfils their needs but also has impact on others and even those they may have to teach later in their life.

It should be realised that without attaining a stable emotional and cognitive behavioural pattern the youth does not touch the levels of understanding all other traits they are given training about. Neither do they recognise the importance of learning those skills nor do they intend to practice them. The biggest challenge for a youth mentoring program is to devise ways and methods that can positively trigger young people's emotions and cognitions so as to make them act according to the desirable code of conduct.

#### *Social Development*

Having worked on physical and emotional tendencies of the youth, the third focus should be on improving their social skills. Youths are usually fascinated by the idea of independence and are driven by the desire to act on their own.. They often tend to resist the barriers posed by their parents or other related adults. This can lead to a

conflict between young and older generations. Youth Mentoring for SSD should focus on convincing the mentees that such barriers are not offensive but are necessary for carrying on the norms and traditions to a further stage. They should learn how to give and to share. Their growth should also be the growth of the society and culture and that they do so willingly.

These assets can be summarized in the following table along with the benefits of these assets' development:

*Table 3.1 Assets that facilitate positive youth development (Adapted and modified from NCRIM 2002)*

<b>Personal and Social Assets That Facilitate Positive Youth Development</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
Physical Development	Healthy individual
Intellectual Development	Improved career development systems thinking and harmony with nature
Psychological and Emotional Development	Improved behaviors and attitudes
Social Development	Shared mental models

### *The Life Wheel*

The Life Wheel is a tool that describes a whole life. It can be used to measure balance and satisfaction in life, a success dimension for a mentee. It has been adapted to include environmental awareness and to show that the wheel revolves around the satisfaction of human needs. The different aspects of the Life Wheel are ways and means of meeting human need as

described by Max Neef (1991). This life wheel is not attributed to a single author. Authors like Whitworth et al. (1998), have put forward different areas of the Life Wheel and this research has adapted it as an ingredient for Youth Mentoring towards SSD. The strategic guidelines for choosing actions should ensure harmony and balance between all the activities of the Life Wheel. The Life Wheel and its different areas are illustrated in the figure below.



*Figure 3.1 Life wheel for youth mentoring (Adapted and modified from Kotelnikov, 2009)*

### *Success for Mentor*

The basic definition of success for a mentor engaged in Youth Mentoring for SSD would be effective mentoring and achieving the goals set for him/her by the mentoring organization and also the goals that the mentor has set personally.

The success of mentor can be having a feeling of satisfaction through making a difference (Department for Victorian Communities, 2006). This can also lead to feeling of contributing towards SSD.

#### *Success for the mentoring organization*

A definition of success for mentoring organizations engaged in Youth Mentoring for SSD would be providing quality mentoring to youths leading to the desired outcomes for the mentees and mentors. Having an effective youth mentoring program that has positive outcomes and creating a difference in the lives of the young individuals.

#### *Success for the community and greater society*

The success of effective youth mentoring at the societal or community level can be increased community interaction and connectedness. This could also lead to a more collaborative community which ultimately builds confidence and positive relationships within it (Department for Victorian Communities, 2006).

The success definition for society can also be having individuals who are not engaged in unsustainable practices. It can be said that ideal youth mentoring might create individuals who are contributing to strategic sustainable development by addressing the system conditions of FSSD.

### **3.2.3 Strategic guidelines**

Strategic guidelines play an important role in guiding the actions towards success. The authors recommend three fundamental concepts that will be strategic guidelines for implementing a Youth Mentoring for SSD. These are the concepts of backcasting, three prioritization questions and the 4 Way Test. Johnson et al. (2005) emphasized on building strategies on strengths, i.e. one is to build the structure of the program on the strength of the learner, in this case the mentee. This will make an ideal condition for mentees to take further steps in learning and exploring the yet undiscovered. Another strategic guideline for choosing an action towards success can also be building on the strengths of the mentor or the supporting community or greater society.

### *Backcasting*

Backcasting is planning from success principles. Applying the concept of backcasting is beginning with the end in mind and then determining the strategic steps to take to achieve the desired end. At the heart of FSSD is backcasting from sustainability principles as the desired outcome, the end in mind (Holmberg and Rob ert 2000). Youth Mentoring for SSD should backcast from the defined success described in the success section above. The application of backcasting from the success of a well lived life can lead to a life of self-inquiry and contemplation resulting in living a life with the end in mind (Covey 1998).

### *Three prioritization questions*

The strategic guidelines for prioritizing actions for youth mentoring program that works towards SSD should meet the three minimum criteria:

1. Actions should be moving towards strategic sustainable development and the vision of mentoring, as described in the previous section.
2. Actions should serve as a flexible platform on which future actions can build upon.
3. Actions should provide a good return on investment, in the form of building personal and social assets so that further steps can be taken in the future.

### *The 4-way Test of Rotary International*

The 4-way Test of Rotary International (1943) is adapted to develop guiding questions for personal actions. The reason for adapting The 4 Way Test is because it complies with the three prioritization questions and has widely been accepted as a good ethical guide for right behavior. These guiding questions are:

- Is my action based on what is true?
- Is my action fair to all concerned including the environment?
- Will it build capacity, goodwill and better friendship?
- Will it be beneficial to all concerned including the environment?

And some other questions like:

- What are the different domains of my life and the need they satisfy?
- Is my life, activities of the day a blend of pleasure, engagement (of my unique talents) and meaning or service? (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Seligman 2000)

The strategic guiding questions should be applied to the different areas of the life wheel guide as discussed in section 3.2.2.

### **3.2.4 Actions**

A Youth Mentoring program for SSD will manifest itself through actions and activities that follow strategic guidelines to achieve the defined success within sustainability constraints. These actions should aim to raise consciousness for sustainability, challenge existing perceptions, and encourage responsibility and initiative taking to promote sustainability habits in mentor and mentee. Similarly these actions should also build the personal and social assets in the mentees to promote positive youth development and build the 5 Cs discussed earlier in section 3.2.2.

Some specific actions can be gardening, watching any movie that shows the state of the world, or an autobiography of a well lived life, storytelling and visiting the elderly. Other actions that are common in youth mentoring programs include visiting museums, helping with homework, taking walks, cooking together, writing curriculum vitae, setting goals, visiting universities etc. Most of these could probably be adapted to contribute to a strategic sustainable development.

The most important thing here is that all these activities should be in line with the definition of success. The overall purpose of these actions and activities should be to build competence and provide support for the overall positive development in the youth. Another important purpose of these activities is to build a systems thinking approach in the mentee, so that he/she can see the importance of the socio-ecological sustainability.

### 3.2.5 Tools

For Youth Mentoring for SSD a number of tools can be used to help the overall youth mentoring process. These tools can be coaching and training of the mentors, a simple milestone checklist, etc. These tools are not exhaustive and have not been tested for youth mentoring and are only suggestions. These tools are meant to enable the selection of actions that will lead strategically towards success.

#### *Milestones checklist tool*

The checklist for the milestones of the Personal and Social Assets that facilitate positive youth development was originally developed by NCRIM (2002). Necessary changes were made to the milestones to better meet the needs of Youth Mentoring for SSD. This tool can be used to check the success milestones against a specific personal or social asset. The checklists for different personal and social assets are given below in tables 3.2 to 3.5.

*Table 3.2 Physical development milestones for a youth mentoring program  
(Adapted and modified from NRCIM, 2002)*

<b>Personal and Social Assets That Facilitate Positive Youth Development</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved health habits</li><li>• Improved health risk management skills</li></ul>

*Table 3.3 Intellectual development milestones (Adapted and modified from NRCIM, 2002)*

<b>Personal and Social Assets That Facilitate Positive Youth Development</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
<p>Intellectual Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of essential life skills</li> <li>• Knowledge of essential vocational skills</li> <li>• Success at school</li> <li>• Rational habits of mind-critical thinking and reasoning skills</li> <li>• Knowledge of more than one culture</li> <li>• Improved decision-making skills</li> <li>• Knowledge of skills needed to navigate through multiple cultural contexts</li> <li>• Knowledge of the causes of unsustainability</li> <li>• Necessary skills and understanding of how he/she can contribute strategically towards sustainability</li> <li>• Avoidance of activities that are not in compliance with the sustainability principles stated in the FSSD</li> </ul>

*Table 3.4 Psychological and emotional development milestones (Adapted and modified from NRCIM, 2002)*

<b>Personal and Social Assets That Facilitate Positive Youth Development</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
<p>Psychological and Emotional Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved mental health, including positive self-regard</li> <li>• Good emotional self-regulation skills</li> <li>• Good coping skills</li> <li>• Good conflict resolution skills</li> <li>• Mastery motivation and positive achievement motivation</li> <li>• Confidence in one’s personal efficacy</li> <li>• “Planfulness” – planning for the future and future life events</li> <li>• Sense of personal autonomy/responsibility for self and for his/her actions relating to others and the biosphere</li> <li>• Optimism coupled with realism</li> <li>• Coherent and positive personal and social identity</li> <li>• Pro-social and culturally sensitive values</li> <li>• Spirituality or a sense of a “larger” purpose in life, interconnectedness and interdependence with nature and society</li> <li>• Strong moral character</li> <li>• A commitment to good use of time</li> </ul>

*Table 3.5 Social development milestones (Adapted and modified from NRCIM, 2002)*

<b>Personal and Social Assets That Facilitate Positive Youth Development</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
<p>Social Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connectedness-perceived good relationships and trust with parents, peers and some other adults</li> <li>• Sense of social place/integration-being connected and valued by larger social networks</li> <li>• Attachment to pro-social/conventional institutions, such as school, non-school youth programs</li> <li>• Ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts</li> <li>• Commitment to civic engagement</li> </ul>

### **3.3 Comparison between current reality and Youth Mentoring for SSD**

In this section of the results a comparison is made between the current reality of youth mentoring as a whole and at Mentor Sweden in particular, and the Youth Mentoring for SSD a comparison was done between them. The purpose of this comparison was to identify areas in youth mentoring which needed further improvement with regards to socio-ecological sustainability and then making suggestions accordingly in the discussion section. The comparison is structured into the generic Five Level Framework.

### **3.3.1 Gaps at the system level**

Comparing the current youth mentoring and the suggested considerations for a Youth Mentoring program for SSD the following gaps can be identified at the systems level:

*Systems understanding does not include biosphere*

The current view of the system of most youth mentoring programs doesn't seem to actively see the connection between the programs and the biosphere.

*No consideration of cyber space*

Similarly current youth mentoring programs do not consider the cyber space as part of their system even though this clearly is a part of daily life for most youth in the western world.

### **3.3.2 Gaps at the success level**

At the success level a key gap found was that there is no success definition based on the sustainability principles. It was also found out that youth development goals in mentees currently do not involve the ecological awareness development which will allow the mentors and mentees to contribute strategically towards sustainability.

### **3.3.3 Gaps at the strategic guidelines level**

At the strategic guidelines level the following gaps can be identified:

*Strategic guidelines for choosing actions for mentor and mentee not explicit*

The mentors and mentees are currently not provided with a set of strategic guidelines that are in line with the principles of Strategic Sustainable development that help them prioritise between different actions that can help lead towards success. Similarly another gap found was that the strategic guidelines for actions were not based on the three prioritizations questions.

*Backcasting is not explicit as a planning method*

The strategic guidelines for current youth mentoring seem to be lacking the explicit strategy of backcasting from success.

### **3.3.4 Gaps at the actions level**

A major gap found at the actions level was that there are few specific actions that really address the ecological aspect of sustainability.

### **3.3.5 Gaps at the tools level**

None of the existing tools for youth mentoring that have been reviewed in this research has been found to aid ecological awareness development.

## **4 Discussion**

In this discussion part of the thesis, the gaps between the current youth mentoring (as exemplified by the Mentor Sweden case study) and the proposed considerations for a Youth Mentoring program for SSD will be analyzed. The thesis will discuss the gaps on each level of the Five Level Framework and attempt to clarify why it is necessary to fill the gaps. Suggestions are also made for how the gaps can be filled. Because of the difficulty of prescribing actions and tools which will be specific to each situation, focus will be mainly on the system, success and strategic guidelines.

### **4.1 Systems Level**

As it was expected current youth mentoring programs identify the system with a strong focus on the social system, but with no emphasis on the biosphere. It is important to fill this gap. If youth mentoring continues to be passive about the ecological systems, the programs will be neglecting the primary system that we all depend upon. Mentor Sweden activities are not so much dependent on fossil fuels, but it needs to proactively raise the awareness of all other stakeholders to ecological issues. In a world facing sustainability issues like pollution, water scarcity, terrorism, climate change, etc, it will get to a point where civility is thrown away and what will be uppermost in the human mind will be survival of the fittest and not the fitting. As small as the effect might seem, a sustainability mindset might help the mentor and mentee in choosing their actions, both when they are together and in their private lives. The mindset can affect their transportation, lifestyle and buying habits, recycling, etc, having the potential to help lead society strategically towards sustainability.

Youth mentoring is about preparing the youth for the future, this preparation needs to have a whole systems perspective that includes ecological systems. This whole-systems approach will help the youth see the challenges and opportunities ahead serving as the best way to prepare them for the future.

This thesis suggests that sustainability education be included in the training of the mentors and mentees. Sustainability information could be included in their manuals as stories. Partnering with The Natural Step or other sustainability organizations can provide the training for a seamless integration of a whole systems perspective. Youth Mentoring for SSD will proactively try to protect the biosphere that helps to provide for many of our basic needs.

Youth mentoring does not consider cyber space as part of their system. The usage of internet and different platforms available over the internet has increased over the last decade. Youth have become active users of the internet, especially the social networking websites. These platforms can play a major role in shaping behaviours and attitudes of the youth. So, it is very important to recognize the cyber space as part of the system and making changes in the programs accordingly.

## **4.2 Success Level**

Current youth mentoring programs' definition of success as prevention of drug use and promoting wellbeing, as stated in their missions, is only one aspect of sustainability because they are building capacities to be able to satisfy the whole of human needs.

A major gap identified in success definition is absence of success as defined by FSSD as explained earlier. With a broadening of success definition to include sustainability principles both the mentor and mentee can see themselves and their role differently. They can begin to see their capacity building as a necessity to be good stewards of the world. This redefinition is important so that the mentee will have a new vision of what it means to be a successful human being. Youth normally consider success as possessions of tangible things and being popular, they often do not connect their success to the success of the whole society.

Youth mentoring programs need a success definition that includes all human needs with adequate proportions of pleasure, engagement and meaning. A successful mentoring with FSSD perspective will lead to; building individual capacities, developing both internal and external resources for personal growth as well as capacities and attitudes that will

help lead society strategically towards sustainability. As suggested above, education and training of mentors and mentees will help to produce this mindset.

The success can also be building the 5Cs in the youth, developed by Pittman et al (2002), as discussed in detail in section 3.2.2. These are listed as follows:

- Competence
- Character
- Connections
- Confidence
- Contribution

The above discussed 5Cs briefly summarizes the potential goals of a youth mentoring program. They can also be used towards Strategic Sustainable development. They serve as a quick checklist when deciding upon what a program, organization, or initiative should offer to youth. Each goal is broad enough to pose challenges while initiating, designing and evaluating such mentoring programs. One lens with which these different goals can be viewed is that the programs can enhance these traits within the youth in a multitude of ways and across a range of contexts and settings.

One thing worth noticing is that none of these goals has an upper limit or boundary. For example a person cannot attain such a high and remarkable character or competence level that she/he needs no further improvement. There is although a possibility to get out of balance e.g. sometimes a person values some superficial connections too much that she/he seems to lose character by adopting all the popular, but destructive, behaviours or opinions. Similarly there is a chance that confidence exceeds the competence level and this also doesn't always lead to a desirable end. These issues are worth considering when conducting a youth mentoring program because it is a general opinion that young people gain competence and character from their elders who are already connected to them and then their competence level and character help them form new connections. This is also true that confidence develops through competence and then both mutually reinforce and support each other. Finally this flow ends by demonstrating the mentee's competence in the form of contributions to SSD and this indeed is an outlet for youth's competence, but the trigger obviously is how a mentor initiates and nourishes the flow of this cycle.

## **4.3 Strategic guidelines**

A gap that was found in the youth mentoring programs is the lack of a simple and memorable strategic guiding criterion for decision making around which actions to take to move towards the defined success. It is important to fill this gap because when the mentoring program will be over it will continue to serve as a guide for the mentee. The guide the authors recommend is the three prioritization questions as defined by the FSSD and the adapted 4 Way Test of Rotary International. The three prioritization questions and the 4-Way Test complement each other and the combination of these two types of guidelines for choosing actions can be used in moving towards SSD. The guide mentioned in the section 3.2.3 includes actions being based on what is true, fair, just and builds resources.

Truth could mean the truth about humans and their needs. It could also mean the objective and scientific truths about the way the world (socio-ecological systems) works, the way we could preserve or destroy it as described in section 1.2.

The authors believe that if mentoring support actions based on what is true about oneself and other stakeholders, the scientific truth about the environment, actions that are fair; build capacity, goodwill and friendship, actions that are beneficial and recognize every human need it can help to move society strategically towards sustainability.

### **4.3.1 Strategic guidelines for choosing actions for mentor and mentee**

Taylor (2006) emphasized on the fact that the activities should be more structured. These activities must have a set goal that leads towards the defined success. Similarly another important thing to be keep in mind while devising any guidelines for choosing activities is that these activities have to be in compliance with the sustainability principles. The schools and parents should also be involved in those activities. The milestones of these activities should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) (Changing Minds 2009). SMART milestones are easier to achieve

and are realistic to plan. Step by step progress towards the ultimate goal, while keeping up to the small objectives, is most of the time a good strategy to follow.

## **4.4 Actions and Tools**

A major gap found at the actions level was that there are few specific actions that really address the ecological aspect of sustainability. Bringing to the awareness of mentor and mentee specific actions like those listed below can help move the mentoring relationship toward sustainability.

- Gardening and tree planting
- Not buying pirated copies of products
- Travelling by train
- Not leaving electronic appliances on when not in use
- Reinforcing Learning about ecosystem in mentoring activities
- Using physical energy in place of machines, not using electronic tooth brush, cleaning the house manually
- Green sports like football rather car racing, computer games
- Recycling
- Using less toys that use batteries
- Putting off lights when you are not in the room
- Using household machines washing machines, dishwasher efficiently
- Making compost
- Reducing water usage
- Reducing temperature in the house
- Avoiding use of plastic bags
- Avoiding dry cleaning
- Buying and using second hand products
- Using environmentally friendly products
- Eating fresh foods reducing the energy required for freezing

There can be a number of other actions and activities. The only thing which is important is that these actions and activities must be in compliance with the sustainability principles.

Taylor (2006) emphasized that an ongoing screening and training of mentors by more trained and qualified mentors can lead to an effective program. As discussed earlier that competence is a trait that has no upper limit and so it stands true not only for the mentees but for mentors as well. Therefore it is important for the youth mentoring program to also arrange an ongoing training for the mentors so that they get acquainted with the advancements in the youth learning requirements and also the concepts of Strategic Sustainable Development.

By collaborating with NGOs like The Natural Step or other sustainability experts mentoring organizations can obtain coaching and training on SSD for its staff and mentors to help build capacity for Youth Mentoring SSD.

Another tool that can be used to aid the overall youth mentoring process can be the milestones checklist, which is already discussed in section 3.2.5.

## **4.5 Validity of results**

This research is grounded on the works of experts in the field of sustainability, human development and youth mentoring. Very much to expectation, results showed that youth mentoring programs are not backcasting from sustainability based definition of success. One weakness recognized due to time constraints is that the research was not sent back to these experts for review and comments on recommendations. Another weakness is the absence of opinions of youths. The youths were not interviewed because of ethical issues and the time it will take to get ethical permission to interview them.

The authors recognize that future research will have to validate the contribution of this work to body of efforts towards SSD.

## 5 Conclusion

In our literature review and interviews we found a lot of scientific and anecdotal reports on the usefulness of youth mentoring as a tool for maintaining and strengthening the social fabric. Findings suggest that youth mentoring is done within the perspective of social sustainability and that the ecological perspective is mostly missing.

Using the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development with the core concepts based on socio-ecological laws and principles, systems thinking and backcasting as a planning and decision making tool in complex systems; it is recommended that youth mentoring programs identify all its stakeholders, which are:

- Mentee
- Mentor
- The mentor organization,
- The sponsor organization,
- The government
- Society and
- The environment or the biosphere.

Through a clear understanding of these stakeholders Youth Mentoring will be able to consider the interdependence, values, principles and laws governing these systems. This can help its' mentors and mentees to contribute better to a strategic sustainable development while achieving full and successful lives for themselves.

The authors recommend that the program identify and define the success of all stakeholders within "*Sustainability principles*" which is the common success of all. This means that the vision of a Youth Mentoring for SSD will be within the four sustainability principles of the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development. It is also recommended that the mentoring organization itself and the mentoring pair should choose actions and activities that are strategic, balanced and inclusive of all the needs and lead towards the success definitions of all stakeholders.

Considering that youth mentoring has contacts with youths at an early developmental stage in their lives, when the mind is fertile, curious and

open, the cultivation of sustainability mindsets and habits will likely result in a youth mentoring program that contributes to a strategic sustainable development. In short, a youth mentoring that prepares youths for a sustainable world will remove the benign tumour of ignorance before it becomes the metastasizing cancer of unsustainability, this will be “*a stitch in time that saves nine*”.

## **5.1 Recommendations for future research**

The recommendations for future research will allow testing the effectiveness of the recommendations made and helping the mentoring organization to see the practical outcomes of the research. The areas for future research are recommended as follows:

1. Integration of the action steps and tools into sustainable youth mentoring is an area for further research work.
2. To monitor and follow up the implementation of our recommendations, to test, validate and improve on it.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Brief Introduction of Mentor Sweden

Mentor Sweden is a family member of Mentor Foundation (Mentor Sweden 2009). The foundation is a non-profit organization established in Geneva in 1994 with Her Majesty the Queen of Sweden as President. The Foundation, besides Mentor Sweden, now has regional offices in Arabia, Colombia, Germany, Lithuania, UK and USA.

The Queen maintains that the common aspiration of the Foundation is to guard the right to hope in young people. This right to hope is the inspiration for the vision of Mentor Sweden.

Mentor Sweden established in 1996/97 passionately endeavors to give hope to the youths through providing them with adult role models to give them strength to stay away from drugs and violence and build in them capacities (socio-emotional, cognitive, identity) to positively look forward to the future. This passionate engagement radiates in the whole organization from the secretary general through the program managers, the mentors, the consultants and professionals that they are affiliated with (Jordås 2009). Mentor Sweden collaborates with AstraZeneca, EF Education, H&M, JM, Posten AB (the postal service), SEB, TetraLaval as general partners. Mentor Sweden also have formal agreements with Kinnevik, General Electric and Microsoft (Mentor Sweden 2009; Jordås 2009).

The efforts of Mentor Sweden are coordinated around three major programs:

- Youth Mentoring Program
- Parenting program
- Project Inspiration

### *Youth Mentoring Program*

Youth mentoring programs are designed to provide young mentees within the ages of thirteen to seventeen from about seventeen schools picked from the three largest urban communities in Sweden, with caring adults that

strategically influence their lives positively. The mentees, through these mentoring relationships, get motivated to build better self-esteem, strengthen their self-confidence, acquire new aspirations and rise to new horizons. The mentors on the other hand get to develop themselves personally and have the opportunity to give back to the society. Meetings are usually arranged twice a month between the mentor and mentee for a one year period. Preference is normally given to young people who lack adult relationships. Mentor Sweden have mentors approximately 400 youths per year with a target of 1500 youths per year by 2010 (Mentor Sweden 2009; Ryman 2009).

### *Parenting Program*

The parenting programs have the objectives to develop and strengthen the parenting skills of participants. Workshops and seminars are therefore designed to help parents execute their parental roles properly and guide them through various areas of parenthood. Data collected from these courses and seminars have showed fruitful results over the years. Within the past seven years mentor Sweden have organized courses for 1400 parents and seminars for about 2000 parents (Mentor Sweden 2009; Davant 2009).

### *Project Inspiration*

These programs are designed to increase the mentees ‘motivation to study’. According to the program manager this is achieved by providing mentees people that inspire and believe in them (Wester 2009). The expectation is that meetings between exciting people can spur up the youths to trust their own capabilities, have faith in themselves and seek help, support and encouragement when needed in their pairs, parents and other adults. Annika Falkengren, chief executive officer at SEB bank Sweden, in one of the meetings with the youths from Mentor Sweden points out through the following words the need for such programs. She says; “*No-one reaches anywhere without support and encouragement. It is you who decides and who is responsible for the choices you make*” (Mentor Sweden 2009; Wennerblom 2009).