Part 1

Varieties of Skills
Skills Development at the Heart of the Mentoring Relationship

Given the natural character of change, the development and transfer of skills is proving to be a recurring challenge for organizations. Maintaining and controlling these resources is a competitive advantage and contributes to ensuring flexibility in order to adapt to market developments (Cazal & Dietrich, 2003). Individuals’ support and the enhancement of their skills become, consequently, a crucial need. Our research is in line with this framework of ideas. This chapter focuses on the issues of support practices – in particular mentoring – in the development and dissemination of skills.

Mentoring is classically defined as: “A relationship based on mutual respect between an experienced, recognized and credible person (mentor) and a younger person (mentee)” (Guay, 2002). It allows the mentees to consolidate their professional identity and to benefit from support in order to develop their career. This assistance and learning relationship is at the heart of our question. In this sense, the main objective of our research is to study mentoring through the prism of competence. A literature review will allow us to better apprehend competence, beyond its polysemic notion. The idea is to establish the distinction between the three levels of analysis (individual, collective and organizational) that are linked to it.

Chapter written by Manel DARDOURI.
Then, we will present the characteristics and challenges related to mentoring practice that constitutes an opportunity for the development and transfer of skills (Fredy-Planchot, 2007). The issue which feeds our thinking is based on the following question: *How does mentoring contribute to the development of individual skills and the emergence of collective skills within a company?*

### 1.1. Competence: a “portmanteau” word

Several researchers have lent themselves to the exercise of identifying the notion of competence. The number of scientific writings on the subject leaves little hope to those who would like to advance other simpler formulations. Koebel’s census work (2006) reveals a numerical presentation: “The catalogue of the *Institut de l’information scientifique et technique* (INIST) is part of the CNRS whose mission is to collect, process and disseminate the results of scientific research and lists, in 2002, 2726 articles containing the word competence in the title”. On the basis of this observation, it should be noted that the plurality of definitions has inspired multiple changes in professional practices (development of competence standards, manpower planning, recruitment and personal assessment, identification of key skills and strategic management, etc.) (Coulet, 2016).

In France, this concept has been the subject of various negotiated agreements, such as manpower planning (2005), senior measures (2010), generation contracts (2013), employment agreements (2014), jobs management, career paths and mix of trades (2015) and so on. In this sense, it would be pointless to go into criticism of the definitions identified in the literature. We will endeavor to shed light on the context of emergence of the notion of competence our wish being, at first, to establish a state of discourse places and of practices using this concept and second, to identify the challenges and the types of skills observed within businesses.

#### 1.1.1. Latest developments

Let us recall first of all that the etymological origin of the term, “competence” derives from the Latin word *competens*, which means “that goes with”. Thus perceived, competence basically implies a dynamic interaction process (White, 1959). However, the variety of definitions in the
literature reveals that it is a term with different facets, which means only what the author wants to say (Zemke, 1982; Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; Murray & Donegan, 2003; Wright et al., 2001).

A semantic identification of the competence concept stresses that this term has been used in varied disciplinary fields: sociology, psychology, education and training sciences, ergonomics as well as management sciences (Murray, 2003). The first literature review around this subject designates the word competence as a sponge-word, which absorbs numerous meanings: “As the sponge absorbs little by little the substances it comes across, the word competence is enriched by all the meaning attributed by those who use it” (Gilbert & Parlier, 1992).

Other authors still highlight its protean aspect by stating that “the plasticity of this term is an element of the social force that it constitutes and of the ideas that it conveys” (Ropé & Tanguy, 1994). The term is sometimes defined as a specific skill, but more often, mainly in sociology, as a set of skills owned by a person in a specific context. This being the case, it should be noted that the introduction of the notion of competence depends largely on national contexts, whether cultural, institutional, legal or economic, in which it is registered.

After presenting the normative definition of this concept, as it is suggested in the English dictionaries, we will present the definitions institutionally proposed by AFNOR, MEDEF and ROME (French operational directory of trades and jobs). Finally, we will refer to the scientific literature on the subject.

1.1.1.1. Standardized common framework – monolingual dictionaries

The first reference that we identify is that of normative dictionaries, which provide a global acceptance of the term competence. In this regard, Larousse proposes the following definition: “In commercial and industrial business, competence is the set of knowledge, qualities, abilities, aptitudes which enable us to discuss, consult and decide on everything that concerns a profession” (Larousse Commercial, 1930).

Petit Robert presents skills as follows: “In-depth, recognized knowledge, which confers the right to judge or to make decisions in certain matters” (Petit Robert).
These first definitions show that skills are similar to knowledge and implicitly depend on the context in which they develop. These meanings – certainly clear – remain very limited.

1.1.1.2. Institutional framework

1.1.1.2.1 MEDEF

In the French context, Zarifian (2009) mentions that the first institutionally established definition of the word “competence” was proposed by the Mouvement des entreprises de France (MEDEF): “Professional competence is a combination of knowledge, know-how, experience and behaviors, exercising in a specific context. It is expressed during its implementation in the professional situation from which it is valid. It is therefore up to the company to which it belongs to locate, evaluate, validate and evolve it”. This definition has undoubtedly influenced the management of enterprises, which are embarked on what, at the time, was called “skills logic”, an expression replaced today by “skills approach” and supported by laws on vocational training, which assigns skills development as the major objective of training policies.

1.1.1.2.2 AFNOR

According to the Association française de normalisation (AFNOR), competence is the “implementation, in the professional environment, of capabilities that allow us to properly exercise a function or an activity” (AFNOR, 1996). It is therefore the ability to mobilize knowledge (practical or theoretical) allowing us to deal effectively with a work situation in a given context. This definition makes explicit the relationship between competence and action. An employee is competent only to accomplish something, for a task or a function. There are no universal skills.

1.1.1.2.3 ROME

According to the Opérationnel des métiers et emplois (ROME), competence is identified as the set of knowledge, know-how and social skills, which are manifested in the exercise of a job/profession, in a situation of a specific activity. Depending on the nature of the activity, ROME distinguishes three types of skills:

– basic technical skills that translate into the principal know-how required to carry out the job/profession. They serve as a base for the construction of professional mobility areas;
– associated skills that are a set of knowledge and know-how that are not indispensable for the job/profession, but which constitute an asset for accessing or advancing in the job/profession;

– common skills that bring together basic technical skills, associated skills and job-related capabilities.

1.1.1.3. Emergence of the notion of competence in academic research

1.1.1.3.1 Competence, a defined construction adapted to a context

Competence is a “portmanteau” word that cannot be reduced to a single context. In fact, this notion has gained a particular visibility since the 1990s and continues to evolve (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). This concept was originally introduced in linguistics in Chomsky’s seminal work (1988). In an organizational framework, the author examines competence as an ingredient of linguistic performance. Their observations lead them to see that the latter is an essential, but not unique, element of performance. In fact, the interest of their contribution is to establish the distinction between competence and performance within companies.

At the same time, this notion has been used in ergonomics by Maurice de Montmollin (1986), in order to understand the activity in a specific context and through the implementation of actions and training. The author notes that the observation of instantaneous behavior is not sufficient to understand the activity. Therefore, he mobilizes a more profound reflection on competence: “a set of knowledge and know-how, typical behaviors, standard procedures, types of reasoning that can be put in place without new learning […] They sediment and structure the achievements of professional history” (de Montmollin et al., 1986). In addition, he distinguishes three essential components:

– knowledge which indicates “how it works”. This is the knowledge that an operator must mobilize to perform a task;

– know-how which indicates “how to get something working”. This is an atypical know-how, acquired through personal practice and difficult to transfer;

– meta-knowledge acquired through experience and mobilized to manage knowledge.
However, de Montmollin invites us to remain cautious about the use of the term “competence”. He adds that skills are internal structures of the person, which make sense only in a determined context. Leaving this context, the person is without “transferable baggage”. Thus, de Montmollin’s input constitutes both a contribution and a limit to the ergonomic approach.

In other disciplines, such as sociology, researchers question the dynamics which support the skills inherent in experiences, training and career paths (Zarifian, 1999).

In addition, in the field of psychology, they try to understand how the articulation of academic experience with professional experience contributes to the construction of skills (Meyers & Houssemand, 2006; Oiry, 2005).

1.1.1.3.2 Competence in business

This notion has been adopted in the business world in view of the inefficiency of traditional methods of adult training, which focus solely on knowledge. In this sense, a more rigorous identification of skills was necessary in order to obtain an adaptable workforce (Cappelli & Crocker-Hefter, 1996; Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). According to Patrick Gilbert and Michel Parlier (1992), the notion of competence should respond to the need for flexibility of enterprises, or even to “an imperative of flexibility”. These authors support the fact that competence, or rather skills, refers to a set of knowledge, action capabilities and behaviors structured according to a goal, and in a type of a given situation. This definition recalls the context of actions studied in ergonomics by de Montmollin et al. (1986) as well as the notion of purpose, in cohesion with the theme of flexibility. In contrast, and unlike de Montmollin, the authors highlight the existence of transferable skills, reusable to infinity. In addition, they defend the thesis of a hierarchy of skills between specialized (inferior) and transferable (superior) skills.

Moreover, because of its link with performance, the notion of competence is echoed in other areas of management. In the consulting industry, for example, competency is deployed in various areas such as recruitment, remuneration, training and career management. Generic skills grids are put in place and mobilized by consultants and managers. This use brings out new definitions of competence, which prioritize the notion of the expected result: “a combination of know-how, knowledge, performance-oriented behaviors, and personal attributes that contribute to
improving individual performance and the success of the organization” (Klarsfeld, 2000).

In terms of business strategy, the literature suggests that the development of a set of key competencies (core-competence) contributes to the acquisition of a competitive advantage in the marketplace. In fact, a key competence translates into the coordination of know-how of different production and the integration of multiple technology streams (Hamel & Heene, 1994). The mobilization of key skills implies, therefore, the identification of skills and know-how within the company. However, the major limitation of this contribution lies in the difficulty to use the means necessary to make the theory operational.

As we can point out, the evolving nature of the environment certainly reinforces the need for skills management, or even “management through skills”, but it also questions the effects and effectiveness (Dietrich et al., 2010). In this sense, in order to clarify this “portmanteau” word, Aubert, Gilbert and Pigeyre (1993) invite us to reduce the field of research and to address the notion of competence according to the researcher’s approach. We thus approach it in a context specific to HRM.

1.1.1.3.3 Skills in HRM

In order to clarify the notion of competence in the HRM register, we have favored a cumulative approach to knowledge, based on French-speaking summaries (Aubert et al., 1993; Courpasson & Livian, 1991; Defélix et al., 2006). This literature review has a dual objective: to capitalize on recent research where real efforts of clarification and characterization have been made, and to identify the different types of skills in order to better position our issue.

Gilbert’s literature review (2006) traces the emergence of the concept of competence(s) in the disciplinary field of HRM. The author associates the first use of this concept with the emergence of actions and forecasting studies in individual management. Later, the Centre d’études et de recherches sur les qualifications, (French center for research on education, training and employment), CEREQ, developed the notion of competence, proposing a program to “anticipate the production of skills” and distinguishing its three components: knowledge, know-how and social skills. The deployment of this program has led to the emergence of a qualitative
and individual approach in the context of human resources management (Gilbert, 2006).

During the 1990s, large enterprises as well as SMEs became more attentive to job content (Defélix & Retour, 2003) and to the identification of skills. Successive crises, particularly of financial origin, have imposed on businesses the management of uncertainty weighing on the evolution of jobs. Thus, it became urgent to adapt to an environment perceived as lastingly turbulent (Gilbert, 2006). This situation revealed the importance of employees’ versatility and their functional mobility internally. Employees’ support and the enhancement of their skills became, therefore, a critical need which is the subject of academic and institutional issues.

The literature on this subject emphasizes that the introduction of the notion of competence(s) in the enterprise implies an identification in advance of the expectations with regard to the employees and a prior knowledge of the resources of each one (Amadieu & Cadin, 1996; Dubois & Retour, 1999; Klarsfeld, 2000; Oiry, 2005). Consequently, many companies have implemented skills approaches (Masson & Parlier, 2004), whose forms are multiple, hybrid and in which, sometimes, instrumentation dominates (Oiry, 2006). In addition, it should be noted that the HRM favors the management of individual (micro-level) and, to a lesser extent, collective skills (meso-level) (Charles-Pauvers & Schieb-Bienfait, 2010).

1.1.1.3.4 The competence approach

The term “approach” means a way of walking and a way of acting. It thus implies an anchor in the action. In essence, the understanding of the competence approach refers to the implementation of actions around the notion of competence. In fact, a competence approach offers common rules within the structure, provides a framework for action to the operators and clarifies strategic issues. In addition, adopting a competence approach invites us to rethink the entire HR system and to combine the strategy with the real employees’ actions. It is therefore unique and specific to each company. Philippe Zarifian (2005) defines a competence approach as a global process of identification, mobilization, development and recognition of the skills of the people concerned. The author reveals that one of the most important issues of a competence approach is to make an explicit cross-check and link between the overall strategy of the company and the concrete professional actions, taking into account the motivations and the changes specific to each
one. Moreover, the deployment of a competence approach, even if it is an internal matter for each enterprise, permanently solicits the external such as the environment and the recipients (the clients and the public) of the service that it offers or provides. However, in an unstable environment, HR policy, strategic framework and production processes are all in constant motion. The relevance of a competence approach is consequently based on the permanent adjustment of the enterprise to a mobile universe. In this sense, Zarifian (2005) highlights that the competence approach provides the explicit possibility of linking these different movements and of regularly verifying the quality of the latter.

In summary, a competence approach is a way for the enterprise to put in place a work organization in which employees can mobilize their skills in an individual or collective way. It structures and boosts human resources management, by placing it in a clear methodological framework, and by providing a set of operational tools.

In concrete terms, a competence approach assumes, first, a complete analysis of “the notion of skills” within the company. Second, it requires the identification of skills required by a job or a profession and of key skills developed by the coordination of different production know-how. At the same time, it calls for the establishment of training in order to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and to support the employees in the development of new skills. Finally, it requires the analysis and evaluation of newly acquired skills, by measuring employee feedback.

All these steps are defined according to the strategic objectives of the business. As this process is specific to each company, there is not a single good model, a “one best way”, of competence approach (Le Boterf, 2000). Zarifian (2005) stresses that “nothing is more foreign to a competence approach than its confinement, a priori, in a ‘single method’”. The deployment of such an approach implies a strong and continuous commitment of the General Management of the company (Le Boterf, 2000). This commitment must implement the articulation between the competencies identified at the individual, collective and organizational level. As skills are intangible assets that are necessary for the proper development of the business, it is essential to know how to differentiate them.
1.1.2. Skills typology

The seminal work of Nordhaug (1996) in management science takes into account the link between collective, individual and organizational competences:

– at the individual or “micro” level of analysis, individual competence is composed of knowledge, abilities and individual skills;

– at the group or “meso” level, it is a collective competence, composed of knowledge, collective capabilities and the social codes of a team;

– at the enterprise or “macro” level, it is the organizational competence, defined as the set of knowledge, abilities and the genetic code of an organization.

Nordhaugh (1996) considers that the articulation of micro, meso and macro levels of analysis contributes to building a “skills network”. In addition, he stresses that each level is grasped by particular disciplinary fields. For example, the individual level (micro) is often addressed in psychology, ergonomics, education sciences and management sciences (HRM), while the collective level (meso) is often studied in sociology and social psychology, and that the organizational level (macro) is used in law, micro-economics and management sciences (strategy). In this sense, we describe in the following the characteristics of each level of analysis.

1.1.2.1. Organizational skills or the macro-level of analysis

The concept of organizational competence is the subject of a preoccupation shared by several disciplines (industrial economy, organizational theory, human resources management and strategic management). Charles-Pauvers and Schieb-Bienfait (2010) address organizational competence as the coordinated and rewarding combination of a set of individual and collective skills. They argue that organizational competence cannot be grasped in the company, if its identification and analysis are made without connection with the individual and collective skills, which constitute it. However, the understanding of how to manage organizational skills refers to the identification of a sustainable competitive advantage. In HRM, this organizational competence covers both the intragroup collective competence and the intergroup collective competence, both of which are nourished by individual skills.
In this sense, it seems fundamental to identify the notion of individual skills and the notion of collective skills in order to better understand the organizational skills that they include.

### 1.1.2.2. Individual skills or the micro-level of analysis

In addition to the “emergence of the competence in HRM” section of this chapter (see point 1.1.1.3) and referring to the literature of Gilbert and Parlier (1992), we stress that individual competence has a set of invariants. In fact, an individual competence is of an operational nature. In other words, it has meaning only in relation to a particular action. In addition, it is relative to a given situation, established in order to achieve a previously established objective. Leplat (1991) highlights this specificity and argues that individual skills characterize the implementation of knowledge in order to achieve a goal, the execution of a task. The concept of competence must always be specified: one is “competent for a task or a class of tasks”.

In addition, Gilbert and Parlier (1992) point out that the components of individual competence (knowledge, practical know-how, reasoning, etc.) are dynamically combined and constitute an evolutionary process under permanent construction. These skills are acquired through a guided learning process, either through continuous and/or initial training, or through action. The recognition of these required skills can only take place through the eyes of others: it is not enough to declare oneself competent. Therefore, individual skills come into being as a result of collective recognition.

Furthermore, the works of Loufrani-Fedida and Saint-Germes (2013) identify four levels of consideration of individual competence:

- the skills required by a job or a profession;
- the skills mobilized by an individual in the exercise of their function;
- the skills held (available) by an individual at a given time;
- the potential skills of an individual (not yet implemented).

The first three levels point out the importance of the notion of context (employment, exercise of function, given time) in the identification of individual skills. However, the authors highlight that potential competencies – the fourth level – have been “thought out”, but are not clearly defined. They are usually considered as being cross-disciplinary, transferable and too often reported to executives or employees called upon to play a major role in
the future of the company. They belong to the privileged domain of the management of potentials and careers.

1.1.2.3. Collective skills or the meso-level of analysis

Even if all publications identified at the beginning of this chapter that deal with competence concern individual skills, collective competence has attracted the attention of a large number of researchers (Charles-Pauvers & Schieb-Bienfait, 2010; Krohmer, 2004; Retour, 2005; Retour & Krohmer, 2011) in different disciplinary fields (Rouby & Thomas, 2004).

It should be noted that coordinating the work and pooling individual skills in autonomous teams or in project teams is generalized naturally (Loufrani-Fedida, 2012) and has led to the emergence of collective skills that should be exploited. According to Dejoux (1998), collective competence is difficult to measure and only its descriptive character gives it a usable added value. In fact, on this subject, most authors support the notion that “collective competence is different from the sum of the individual skills that compose it” (Le Boterf, 1997).

An inventory of art in management sciences has led to the emergence of two approaches according to which collective competence can be defined (Battle, 1999). The first describes the vision of a harmonious articulation of collective skills. This approach addresses collective competence as the result of “existing cooperation and synergy between individual skills” (Le Boterf, 2000). According to Dejoux (1998), it is “an indefinable component, specific to the group, resulting from the synergy and the dynamics of it”.

The second approach is that of interaction: collective competence is the result of the interaction of individuals in the same or different occupations. It does not emerge in a harmonious and instantaneous manner. It is not enough to create collective forms of work for their members to have a collective competence (Battle, 1999). The time variable is essential so that the members of the group learn to know each other, to think and to act together. A risk of conflict is therefore possible, if the individuals are not comfortable in the collective. Each member will act according to his or her interest. However, it is important and fundamental to note that, in both cases, collective competence transcends individual competence (Retour & Krohmer, 2011).
In addition, the literature offers other ways to define collective competence. Le Boterf (1994), for example, emphasizes that a collective competence can be identified according to its characteristics. In fact, collective competence leads to the emergence of a common operative image within the group. In addition, beyond the construction of a common representation, the collective determines a common objective. Therefore, it creates a common code and language, which reinforces each person’s sense of belonging to the group. This concept implies instant cooperation between members and provides opportunities for collective learning, thanks to the common experience of the group. Le Boterf also adds that the diversity of groups within the enterprises gives birth to different kinds of collective skills.

For her part, Michaux (2003) focuses her attention on the study of collective competence within the coordination process. In fact, she rejects the definition of collective competence, which is linked to performance and indicates that it is necessary to take into account other elements (formal organization, technology, etc.) to explain collective performance. The author attempts to identify the factors that allow a collective to collectively and effectively resolve the problems encountered. Thus, she defines collective competence as the set of “tacit knowledge and know-how (shared and complementary) or even of informal exchanges supported by solidarities which participate in the repeated and recognized ability of a collective to coordinate in order to produce a common result or to co-construct solutions”.

She reveals the existence of several collective skills and distinguishes three in particular:

– the first concerns a community of practices internalized by the collective. A community of practice includes a group of individuals who have a common history, interact frequently, share knowledge and encounter similar problems within the same organization (Chanal, 2000). Competence, here is common and owned by all individuals. Dubois and Retour (1999) made particular reference to this type of competence in their work;

– the second typology of collective skills integrates interaction scenarios constructed between individuals within a collective. It refers to complementary knowledge that allows the mobilization of a network of operators, which are deemed competent to act (Krohmer, 2004);
– the third typology translates into an ability to co-construct an ad hoc solution internalized by the collective. Knowledge is, here, shared or complementary and promotes the processes of communication and of negotiation in an unusual or complex situation (Krohmer, 2004). This collective competence is linked to the work of the sociologist, Zarifian (1999).

In reference to Krohmer’s works (2004), a fourth kind of collective competence has been identified by Dubois and Retour (1999). According to these authors, collective competence can be the set of organizational solutions. They define it as “the ability of a collective of individuals at work to constantly invent its organization well beyond the mere declination of an overall scheme formalized by organizational rules”.

The following table groups together different collective skills, as presented in Krohmer’s works (2004):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective skills</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common practices</td>
<td>Knowledge and know-how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenarios of interaction</td>
<td>Mobilization of a network of operators deemed relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-construction of an ad hoc solution</td>
<td>Ability to co-construct an ad hoc solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational solutions</td>
<td>Ability of a collective to constantly invent its organization well beyond the mere declination of an overall scheme formalized by organizational rules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1. Typologies of collective skills (Krohmer, 2004)

As for Retour and Krohmer (2011), they insist on the fundamental role of collective competence as a factor in the development of individual skills. In their works, they attempt to study the link between the possession of collective skills and the increase in individual skills. In fact, they distinguish four essential attributes, which constitute collective competence:

– common frame of reference: the set of standardized representations developed according to the information held by the members of the collective (de Montmollin et al., 1986). Krohmer and Retour (2011) specify
that the frame of reference is not the addition of individual representations, but rather a shared heritage resulting from a genuine “work” of collective development. It is operative, as it is built to serve the preparation and implementation of the planned action. It is jointly developed by those involved in the preparation and implementation of the action. It tends to meet predetermined goals by mobilizing actions. It is therefore ephemeral and transient (de Terssac & Chabaud, 1990), and developed for a pooling of each person’s skills;

– shared language: the development of a team-specific language, which allows one to “converse using half-words, to read between the lines, to save time in the abbreviated utterance, to avoid comments and explanations” (Le Boterf, 1994). Designated as a common language (Guilhon & Trépo, 2000) or even a common operative language (Falzon, 1991), it makes it possible to forge the identity of each person and to distinguish oneself in the team;

– collective memory: according to Girod (1995), this is composed of non-centralized collective declarative memory (1); non-centralized collective procedural memory (2) and collective memory of judgment (3). Retour and Krohmer (2011) present these as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of memory</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-centralized collective declarative memory</td>
<td>Based on the acquisition of knowledge from another individual or on the creation of new knowledge through interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-centralized collective procedural memory</td>
<td>Originates from the confrontation of the know-how of two or more individuals working together. Common know-how is not the simple sum of individual know-hows. It is useful for the achievement of the task and remains controlled by the individuals who participated in the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective memory of judgment</td>
<td>The set of knowledge that originates from the confrontation of memories of individual judgments. When faced with a complex problem that they cannot solve alone, individuals confront their interpretations of the problem, to arrive, through discussions, at a common interpretation, generally different from the initial interpretation of each of the individuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2. Components of the collective memory (Retour & Krohmer, 2011)
– subjective commitment: several authors refer to this component in their definitions of collective skills. Wittorski (1998), for example, views collective competence as a cooperative problem-solving approach. As for Dubois and Retour (1999), they discuss the ability of a group of individuals at work to constantly invent its organization. In fact, in the exercise of their work, individuals take initiatives and decisions for which they become responsible. According to Zarifian (2005), this decision-making implies a certain autonomy and a responsibility of the act, which constitute the very heart of the competence.

1.1.3. Articulation of collective skills and individual skills

The identification of the attributes of collective competence invites us to study the management of these skills and to analyze the link between collective competence and individual competence. However, it seems obvious that collective skills depend on individual skills held by each employee belonging to a collective. In this sense, the works of Retour and Krohmer (2011) show that the sources of creation of collective skills are of two types: they are specific to persons or specific to organizational factors.

In the first case, emotional interactions, informal relationships and cooperation play a crucial role in the construction and management of collective skills. In the second case, formal interactions, management style as well as the action levers specific to the HRM govern the creation and development of collective skills.

We will examine these two sources.

1.1.3.1. Factors specific to people

The works of Retour and Krohmer (2011) remind us of the role of the “emotional” factor in relations between individuals. The more employees feel comfortable in a collective, the more they will be able to develop a positive image of their common experience with the other members. Le Boterf (1994) highlights this idea, specifying that the emotional factor allows the constitution of a community and reinforces the investment of individuals in the development of collective competence.
In addition, informal relationships between individuals belonging to the same group create and stabilize certain forms of collective competence. These relationships lead to the emergence of collective habits and customs and contribute to the construction of a social universe specific to a collective. This universe influences the way individuals act and allows the development of new collective skills.

In addition, the concept of cooperation in a team is part of the elements that promote such a development. In fact, the cooperation in question does not rest solely on a better coordination of acts of work, but rather on a job exercised in common, on mutual understanding of solid agreements concerning the nature of knowledge to develop, on the understanding of common objectives and the meaning given to individuals’ common actions (Zarifian, 1995; Retour & Krohmer, 2011).

1.1.3.2. Organizational factors

Among the organizational elements that pave the way for the emergence of new collective skills, Retour and Krohmer (2011) have distinguished the role of formal interactions. The authors point out that the establishment of structures – such as basic work units or small project groups – is a means of empowerment that pushes individuals towards a collective dynamics and facilitates such an emergence. This assumes that the collectives have the time necessary for this purpose. Thus, the lack of time can be a constraint that hinders the development of collective skills and impacts, indirectly, the transfer of these skills.

Beyond formal structures, management style can interfere with the creation and development of collective skills. The role of managers and the business culture is essential. In fact, in order to increase their capital of collective skills, the members of a group must be able to compare themselves to the contributions of other groups belonging to the company and to get an idea of the neighboring skills. The adopted management style must allow individuals to know the common objectives and to work together for a common purpose. The objective must be clear, precise and accessible. Its achievement must subsequently be valued by management (Everaere, 1999).
Finally, the third element addressed by Retour and Krohmer (2011) is the HRM policy mobilized in the company. During recruitment, the company must ensure that the candidates likely to integrate it share the collective values promoted by the managers. During the evaluation of performance, emphasis must be placed on the importance of the concept of cooperation, information exchanges and knowledge transfer. During the remuneration process, the company can add factors relating to collective performance. In addition, the incentive to develop collective skills must be the subject of training sessions for employees.

Following the analysis of individual and organizational elements, we find that the organizational configuration developed by the managers not only interferes with the creation of collective skills, but also influences the informal functioning and the dynamics created within the collectives. Retour and Krohmer (2011) report that collective skills do not only develop in the framework of control or autonomous rules, but also emerge from the interaction of structures and operators.

Identifying the links between the different levels of analysis of skills (individual and organizational) was the ambition of this first part of this chapter. After reviewing the literature, we identified a set of definitions of competence according to its different natures and in various disciplinary fields. Then, we highlighted the existing complementarity between the individual, collective and organizational level of skills within the company.

1.2. Mentoring, a practice of personal and professional development

In order to study the issues of this support method, we propose a summary of the literature dedicated to this subject. The origin and functions, now proven, of mentoring, are presented as well as the issues identified as being in the service of human resources management.
1.2.1. A look at the evolution of mentoring

1.2.1.1. Mentoring: from odyssey to the company

Even if the enthusiasm for mentoring is growing rapidly (Ragins & Kram, 2007; van Vianen et al., 2018; Walker & Yip, 2018), in particular in an organizational context, the phenomenon is not new: mentoring finds its roots in Greek mythology. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Mentor, in his capacity as a wise and reliable friend of King Ulysses was bound to see through his warrior duties. Ulysses had entrusted to mentor the task of supervising, guiding and educating his son, Telemachus. Mentor, more experienced and older than Telemachus, assumed the role of parent and guardian. Just as the *Odyssey* became the prototype of the journey, the name Mentor, by losing its capital letter, became “a word of the everyday language, a noun designating a particular role, that of guide, advisor, master” (Houde, 2001).

The first study that highlighted this relationship is entitled *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, by the French writer François Fénelon, in 1790. Later, Daniel J. Levinson (1978) became interested in the impact of mentoring on the development of the adult man in his book *Seasons of a Man’s Life*. Kram (1985), one of the most cited authors on the subject in the literature, laid the first theoretical foundations of the mentoring relationship and its impact on the development of men and women at work. It is in the 1970s that this practice was formalized in American universities, schools, associations and companies. Its appearance in the organizational context was contemporary of the awareness of the major changes linked to the acceleration of technological progress and globalization (Angel & Cancellieri-Decroze, 2011). In the second half of the 1990s, *Mentoring* noted its benefits in a long-term logic (Szczyglak, 2014). It was initially designed as an innovative practice that promoted personal accomplishment and contributed to the productivity of organizations. However, the first successes, met by this method, exceeded expectations and encouraged professionals to develop and refine the application method. In fact, success has grown (Angel and Cancellieri-Decroze, 2011). Three-quarters of American organizations have established mentoring programs (Smith et al., 2005). In addition, the practice has experienced a great development in Canada, Australia and England.
The important development of this practice as well as the academic literature testifies to the extent, relevance and interest of mentoring, for both individuals and businesses (Ragins & Kram, 2007). The first definition of mentoring that we identify comes from the works of Ragins and Kram (2007): “Mentoring is a relationship between an older and more experienced mentor and a younger and less experienced ‘protégé,’ the purpose of which is to assist and develop the protégé’s career”.

In a more recent study, they added that “Mentoring is a developmental relationship which is integrated into the career context” (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Thus, these authors point out that the objective of this support method is the protégé’s personal and professional development. It is important to note here that the term “protégé”, does not seem very appropriate as, in French, it brings a paternalistic connotation that is no longer relevant in the modern practice of mentoring (Mitrano-Méda, 2012). We will use, for our part, more easily, the term “mentee”.

As for Fletcher and Ragins (2007), here is the definition that they suggest evokes a more general scope: “It is an interdependent and generative developmental relationship that promotes mutual growth, learning and development in a career setting”.

Part of the support “nebula”, Paul (2004) highlights the intergenerational character of reciprocity and solidarity of the mentoring relationship. She defines mentoring as a relationship of assistance and learning between a mentor and a mentee. In this sense, several researchers have studied the role of mentoring in an organization. Mentoring is becoming more prevalent in the service of organization performance (Abate et al., 2003), and is a well-established professional and research area (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005). Ivanaj and Persson (2012) reveal the potential role of mentoring in the management of the enterprise. In fact, they specify that it is a “profitable relationship, more often between an experienced manager and a less experienced manager, taking place among the efficient levers of HR development”. In this literature review, we found that mentoring is often assimilated to a relationship of intergenerational exchange – between a novice and a senior – integrated in a specific context, in order to contribute to the mutual personal and professional development of its operators (mentor and mentee).
Our research work is included in this framework of reflection. We will discuss, in what follows, the difference between support forms and we will express the emergence of mentoring practice in French organizations. The second part of this chapter attempts to identify the impact support practices – in this case, mentoring – in the development of the previously mentioned skills. Its objective is to recognize the challenges of a mentoring relationship at the macro-level and at the meso-level of analysis. The underlying idea aims to understand how mentoring develops individual skills and brings out collective skills.

1.2.1.2. Comparison of support modes

Today’s organizations are called to change on various levels and to meet the challenges posed by the labor market. However, modifying the conceptions and practices within an organization requires the implementation of resources and conditions necessary to cope with change. In fact, Lafortune (2008) emphasizes that a change, even if it is prescribed and oriented within the company, cannot impose itself. The author presents the support methods as an ally necessary in a mobile universe. Mentoring, professional tutoring as well as coaching, belong to the nebula of these professional support practices (Paul, 2004). Alves et al. (2014) suggest that these techniques are the three most developed support practices in enterprises. Nevertheless, despite their “family likeness”, each of these forms is specific and different from the other (Paul, 2009). They are differentiated in their objectives and their application method within the company.

In French-speaking semantics, mentoring is distinguished from coaching and tutoring. Ivanaj and Persson (2012) explain in their works of comparative analysis that tutoring leads to the emergence of professional knowledge such as know-how, while mentoring is exercised at the service of the transmission of social skills.

In addition, the Canadian Houde (1996) and the French Paul (2004) distinguish the limits of coaching in relation to mentoring. They argue that mentoring is positioned in an interpersonal and intergenerational perspective over the long term, whereas coaching, by its cognitive-behavioral nature,
aims clearly at effectiveness defined in the short term. In addition, Paul (2004) stresses that mentoring is distinguished from coaching or tutoring in that it is more oriented towards the quest for meaning rather than the acquisition of techniques.

Thus, the idea behind the practice of mentoring would be education, a field where the mentor evolves into a “conduct” and “guidance” register, and is distinguished from coaching, based on the idea of training and more focused on operations (Deschamps et al., 2000). For their part, Damart and Pezet (2008) remind us that coaching is considered, in English-speaking literature, as a mentoring tool. Integrated in an organizational framework, these two concepts can share a common goal and tend, over time, to merge (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2005). It is undoubtedly for this reason that confusion persists today between these forms of support.

Consequently, Cancellieri-Decroze1 closely observes the implementation of these practices within companies and reveals that “coaching is always oriented towards a specific goal, while mentoring is aimed first and foremost at the transfer of know-how, social skills and the active exchange between two peers. This distinction does not entail an opposition between the two. They are complementary. Both provide tools in the field of human resources management”. In addition, she adds that “mentoring must not be confused with tutoring, which is practiced most of the time in the framework of an apprenticeship contract, having a dimension of evaluation of the tutor with regard to their tutoree, which does not exist in mentoring” (Angel & Cancellieri-Decroze, 2011).

In this framework of comparison, several researchers have attempted to clarify the points of divergence between coaching and mentoring. Tutoring, with its technical and instantaneous character, is easily identifiable and is not subject to as many questions as “mentoring VS coaching”.

The following table outlines the key points of divergence between mentoring and coaching, in reference to the works of Benabou and Benabou (2000), Guay (2002) and Houde (2001):

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1 Exchanges in 2015 with Dominique Cancellieri-Decroze, head of the first national association on mentoring in France, EMCC, and a member of Cap Mentorat.
### Table 1.3. Comparison between the coach and the mentor, resumption of the works of Benabou and Benabou (2000); Guay (2002); Houde (2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of relationship</strong></td>
<td>Functional relationship oriented towards the task at hand, short-term needs.</td>
<td>Personal relationship oriented towards the objectives of medium-term professional and personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ultimate goal: mastery of skills related to function.</td>
<td>Ultimate goal: autonomy, self-confidence, ability to act on one’s professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Areas of knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Learning activities focused first of all on the know-how, the other two being present incidentally.</td>
<td>Intense activities of learning oriented towards attitudes, social skills and know-how.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extension of changes</strong></td>
<td>Interactions with the coachee of a professional nature; more restricted, more precise field.</td>
<td>Integration of great emotional component. Larger field, involving at the limit the whole person and their areas of life (holistic vision).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
<td>Learning.</td>
<td>Learning and Growing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficient use of the protégé’s existing skills.</td>
<td>Updating, development of the mentee’s potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modeling</strong></td>
<td>The coach instructs or guides a team. The coach commands respect through their professional skills. They sometimes become a model.</td>
<td>The mentor has a privileged relationship with a particular person. The mentor is a model that commands respect and admiration for his or her person as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational status (and hierarchical line)</strong></td>
<td>The coach may be the immediate superior.</td>
<td>The mentor must not be the immediate superior of the mentee in order to ensure confidentiality, foster mutual trust and avoid placing the mentor in the role of evaluating the mentee, which would be conflicting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
<td>Learning activities and technical or professional interventions focused on performance.</td>
<td>Activities focused on the self-actualization of the apprentice and on the development of a greater competence. A mentor’s “political” commitment (protects, represents or negotiates for the protégé, introduces them in various networks of influence).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.2.2. Functions of the practice of mentoring


– psychosocial functions thus correspond “to the aspects of the relationship that reinforce the identity, the sense of competence and the efficiency in the professional role” (Kram, 1985). These functions are divided into four activities: role model, acceptance and confirmation, advice and friendship;

– career functions correspond “to the aspects of the relationship that promote the protégé’s career progression” (Kram, 1985). They include five activities: sponsoring, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection and challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career development functions</th>
<th>Psychosocial functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposure and visibility</td>
<td>Role modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create opportunities so that the decision-makers can see and appreciate the individual’s skills, abilities and professional talents.</td>
<td>Display appropriate attitudes, values and behaviors to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share ideas.</td>
<td>Listen and share personal and professional problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide feedback.</td>
<td>Offer advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propose strategies to achieve professional objectives.</td>
<td>Support and show empathy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship and training</td>
<td>Acceptance and confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and defend individuals.</td>
<td>Respect and believe in the individuals’ ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect and minimize the risks of being in delicate situations.</td>
<td>Conduct informal interactions at work and discuss various topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign difficult and challenging work tasks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4. The functions of mentoring (Cranwell-Ward et al., 2004)
In addition, the authors question the impacts of these functions. In fact, Allen et al. (2004) distinguish two categories: objective and subjective.

Objective effects emphasize promotion and compensation, whereas subjective effects translate into organizational involvement, satisfaction – in the professional sense – of individuals. In addition, the authors highlight the “stimulating” nature of mentoring and reveal that it promotes the identification and development of young talent. This idea is also developed in a study published in 2011 by Harvard Business Review, which validates the theory that mentoring is a powerful lever for talent retention within companies. It reduces turnover and enhances human capital (Tjan, 2011).

In this reflection framework, Arora and Rangnekar (2014) remind us of the usefulness of mentoring programs in the mentee’s learning and skills development. In addition, Bruna and Chauvet, (2013) and Lankau and Scandura (2002) had already pointed out that this support method makes it possible to:

– facilitate the relationships between various individuals, to better understand the logic of different behaviors;

– install a climate of trust within the teams, to limit misunderstandings and conflicts of value;

– create a constructive synergy, through the development of a common framework and a sense of belonging to the team.

In fact, Bruna and Chauvet (2013) study the concept of mentoring by integrating it in a managerial framework. They assume that a mentoring approach applied to management would allow the company to reveal, mobilize and retain the best of its collaborators. Mentoring thus proves to be a strategy to take greater advantage of the skills and potential specific to collaborators. It accelerates the understanding of professional environments and internal cultures and contributes to a better adaptation of individuals. This refers to the contributions identified in the works of Cranwell-Ward et al. (2004), who consider the practice as a good support mechanism for the individuals with difficulties of adaptation to change.
1.2.3. Diversity of the practice of mentoring

In France, in the course of the years 2000, large groups began to be interested in the topic (Total, Sodexo, Carrefour, Air Liquide, AXA, GDF Suez, EDF, Société Générale, Crédit Agricole, Bouygues Télécom, Coca Cola, Danone, Les Galeries Lafayette, L’Oréal, Saint-Gobain, BNP Paribas, Pernod Ricard, Groupe BPCE, Peugeot Citroën, PSA, Areva, Veolia, Sanofi Aventis Groupe, France Télécom, Orange, Auchan, Renault, Vivendi, SNCF, Generali France, Lafarge, Schneider Electric, etc.) (Szczyglak, 2014). Professional networks and business schools were also beginning to mobilize mentoring programs (HEC Alumni, Paris Dauphine, etc.). Inspired by the Canadian model, the French Chamber of Commerce and the Industry of Paris-Ile-de-France (PIAC) founded, in 2008, the Institut du mentorat entrepreneurial (IME) to support business growth. Female external professional networks, such as EPWN, offer their members mentoring programs. Foundations offer united mentoring, as is the case of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women (CBFW). In 2012, an association representing mentoring in France was created in Paris, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and consulting firms have begun to add mentoring programs in their service offerings. In 2014, the world’s leading innovation and advanced engineering consulting firm, Altran France, launched a mentoring program for talent management.

This list, which is not exhaustive, reflects the efficiency – on the individual and organizational level – of this new tool of support that combines mutual assistance between collaborators and performance research. However, the use and form of mentoring vary from one structure to another, depending on the needs and strategic objectives. In fact, among the more widespread forms of mentoring, we can identify women’s mentoring, which has grown in recent years. It is a form of support of women managers with the objective of “breaking through the glass ceiling” (Giscombe, 2007).

In addition, we found that mentoring for high-potential executives is largely mobilized. This form of mentoring contributes to talent retention and to succession management.

Integration mentoring also deserves to be mentioned. In this case, it facilitates the adaptation of new entrants to the rules of the organization and contributes to their development in a well-defined framework.
In addition, Hezlett and Gibson (2005) are particularly interested in entrepreneurial mentoring. Mitrano-Méda and Véran (2014) define it as the voluntary support of a novice entrepreneur by an experienced entrepreneur.

With respect to collective mentoring, it involves one or two mentors who are in charge of a group of a dozen mentees gathered around a common problem. The advantage here is twofold: on the one hand, the enterprise maximizes the number of beneficiaries of the program, and, on the other hand, the mentees benefit from both the mentors’ advice and the interaction with their peers. Cross-mentoring and E-mentoring illustrate two cases of collective mentoring.

New forms of mentoring emerge in response to changing business needs. It is therefore necessary to identify “mentoring 360°”, which is to form a network of five or six mentors solicited separately by the mentee, at regular intervals, in order to have feedback on their performance. Mentoring 360° is well-adapted to many approaches of instant online mentoring, which are enabled by new technological tools, particularly those inspired by Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and so on.

We also distinguish reverse mentoring, in which young people with high potential are responsible for assisting senior managers to acquire the skills they lack (mastery of new technologies, social networks, etc.). The objective is to educate managers on new technologies.

Other forms of mentoring already exist in enterprises, such as network mentoring. This proliferation is proof of the vitality of a practice which is on the rise (Pierre Angel & Cancellieri-Decroze, 2011).

1.3. Skills in the framework of mentoring

1.3.1. Mentors’ skills

Mentors’ skills have been the subject of different studies in management science. The works of Clutterbuck and Lane (2004) propose a comprehensive number of essential skills for a successful mentoring program. Nevertheless, the authors only develop mentors’ skills, in distinguishing two categories; micro, at the individual level, and macro, at the organizational level.
The following table contains all the skills that are determined for the mentor:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential skills – macro</th>
<th>Potential skills - micro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know how to adapt to the mentee’s needs.</td>
<td>Be confident and actively listen in order to identify the positive and negative contributions of the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the sense of analysis in order to anticipate any potential dispute.</td>
<td>Clearly identify objectives in order to ensure project management and evaluate the mentee’s commitment regarding these objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt to the different phases of the program and show availability.</td>
<td>Evaluate commitment to continuity and show understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the mentee’s needs while being assertive.</td>
<td>Have self-knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master the functions of mentoring and show flexibility to ensure all roles.</td>
<td>Encourage reflection and constant questioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize the boundary between mentoring and other support practices.</td>
<td>Remind the mentee of the goal of the practice and provide feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmit a positive and dynamic energy in order to stimulate the mentee’s motivations.</td>
<td>Know how to manage the relationship with the mentee.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.5. List of the mentor’s potential micro and macro skills (Clutterbuck & Lane, 2004)

This study aims to provide a first reflection around the mentor’s skills. At the same time, quantitative research on the same subject proposed more elaborate results (Clutterbuck & Lane, 2004). The objective was to implement a conceptual model of the mentor’s skills, drawing on the research of Boyatzis (1982) and Woodruffe (1993). Thus, the author distinguish two categories of skills:

– professional skills: which describe the technical and tangible aspect of the work at hand;

– personal skills: which describe what the work requires of the individual, in the personal sense, so that they are able to develop the competence required for the job.
According to the results of this quantitative analysis, 32 skills were identified in the first category and 33 in the second category. We mention some of them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal skills</th>
<th>Professional skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicate on the positive and negative points.</td>
<td>Stimulate the mentee’s potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have patience.</td>
<td>Facilitate learning and knowledge transfer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to concentrate on the essential without being distracted.</td>
<td>Encourage the mentee’s professional development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.6. List of the mentor’s potential micro and macro skills (Clutterbuck & Lane, 2004)

It should be noted that the English term that was used in these studies was “competences”, contrary to other research where the term “skills” was used. In this sense, we note that the term “competence” refers to the meanings of the French words “quality” or “ability”.

In considering our own interpretation, we discuss the skills identified in the works of Clutterbuck and Lane (2004) as the qualities that a mentor should possess in order to ensure their role in a mentoring program.

1.3.2. Collective and individual skills of partnerships

The metamorphosis of social and emotional links in organizations, as well as the transformations in the world of work, highlight the necessity to be supported in a mentoring relationship. The already identified career-related and psychological functions highlight the role of mentoring in developing the mentors’ and mentees’ skills.

This practice provides answers adapted and specific to the needs of each mentee. Nevertheless, within an organizational framework and beyond individual contributions, mentoring aims to achieve the common objectives previously defined by the managers of the company. In this sense, these objectives guide the managers’ choice on the type of mentoring to implement (mentoring for integration, collective mentoring, mentoring for high-potential executives, etc.). An individual mentoring program, such as
mentoring for high-potential executives, is part of an interpersonal, non-hierarchical, voluntary and confidential context. It tends to help senior executives, senior managers or entrepreneurs, to develop strategies in line with specific objectives (Szczyglak, 2014).

In the case of integration mentoring, the target translates into the development of newcomers’ individual skills, to enable them to adapt to the culture of the company and meet the expectations of the collective.

Individual mentoring therefore gives the mentee the possibility to learn the social codes in use and to acquire a common language with the other members of the group. By identifying the habits and customs of the group, the mentee feels more comfortable and becomes capable of developing an “emotional factor” – in the sense of Le Boterf (1994) – which will allow them to weave “informal relations” and to integrate into the social universe of the company. Based on the works of Retour and Krohmer (2011), this idea echoed the notions of a “shared language” and a “common frame of reference” – previously developed – which constitute the essential attributes of collective skills. In fact, mentoring influences the way mentees act and shares the mentee’s representations with those of the collective. It also promotes the coordination of individual skills of the protégé and of the members of the collective.

In addition, this practice facilitates the understanding of the social environment in which the mentee evolves and allows the development of a shared language with the collective. As a result, it helps to forge the mentee’s identity and strengthens their investment in the development of collective competence.

In the same context, the works of DeLong et al. (2008), on this subject, highlight the importance of mentoring in a “hyper-competitive” world. These authors point out that it is a personal practice that each partnership experiences differently. However and beyond the individual need, the mentoring relationship influences the nature of the links with the collective. The authors develop the idea that the objective of this practice – for the mentee – is not just to get a promotion or to be transferred. It is rather to develop one’s potential as a professional, but also as a human being, having the need to exchange and improve.
Mentoring is also similar to two complementary approaches; individual and collective. In fact, if a person wishes to be a mentee, he or she must apply these two approaches and connect with the whole collective in order to inform them. The mentees’ investment in this logic and their emotional interactions with the different members of the group contribute to the construction of links within the collective. This approach will allow the mentee to be part of a collective framework and to achieve the objective of the group at the same time and with the latter. This idea recalls the notion of “cooperation”, developed in the works of Retour and Krohmer (2011) and involving the understanding of the objectives and of the meaning given to the actions of individuals acting together. This relational capacity is identified as “an imperative behavioral competency in a mobile universe” (Szczyglak, 2014). In this sense, mentoring – as a means of strengthening cooperation – can be seen as a tool that promotes the development of collective skills.

As for mentors, the works of Eby and Lockwood (2005) reveal that the practice of mentoring contributes to the development of their (individual) managerial skills. This result refers to the contributions of Allen et al. (1997), which suggest that the evolution of a mentee’s individual skills has a positive effect on the mentors’ feeling of satisfaction. As a result, this “mirror effect” stimulates the sense of responsibility among mentors and increases their managerial skills. In the framework of this qualitative study, Eby and Lockwood (2005) argue the words of a mentor who emphasizes this managerial competence: “Probably one of the most important contributions is self-reflection on my own managerial skills, based on the things that the mentee shares with me” (Mentor A).

This contribution complements the works of Ragins and Scandura (1999), who report that the practice of mentoring allows mentors to relive their own experiences through those of their mentees. To this end, mentoring invites mentors to question their own individual skills and to identify the possibility of improving them, thanks to the appropriation of the mentees’ experiences (Johnson & Ridley, 2015), added that good mentors take their role seriously and invest the time necessary to get to know their mentees in order to be as useful as possible to them, and that they improve each other.

In addition, other research on this subject highlights the social skills developed during a mentoring process (Wu et al., 2012). Social skills represent people’s capacity to interpret, to effectively detect social codes and
to flexibly adjust their behavior to meet social demands. These last examples are assimilated to individual skills. The literature shows that there is a positive relationship between social skills development and work performance, promotion and remuneration (Ferris et al., 2002). Moreover, individuals with strong social skills are proving to be more confident, more sympathetic and more successful in maintaining their professional relationships (Riggio & Zimmerman, 1991). Consequently, mentors who take into account their social skills are perceived as more competent and autonomous, and are more appreciated by mentees (Olian et al., 1988). Wu et al. (2012) show that mentors who better develop this type of skill, know how to listen and to express their support. It is thus easier to nurture constructive exchanges with them – in the sense of the mentee – and create a common universe in which mentor and mentee mutually evolve (Wu et al., 2012). The mentor with these skills will naturally tend to develop them in their mentee.

Thus, this shared competence will allow mentees to connect better with their universe, to develop their social capital and to easily identify the favorable opportunities for the advancement of their career (Seibert et al., 2001).

At the same time, the mentees who are in advanced phases of their careers and who have developed social skills know how to effectively express their needs and manage relational differences within the group. Wu et al. (2012) highlight that a mentor–mentee pair, in which each is provided with individual developed social skills, creates a more sustainable, confident and collectively evolving relationship.

As for collective mentoring, it is a support with a desire for decompartmentalization and transversality. It is a practice that constantly converges the macro-level of organizations with the individual micro-level, while creating exchange zones (Szczyglak, 2014).

In referring us to the works of Szczyglak (2014), we mention the case of cross-mentoring, for example, which involves mentoring between different companies. Mentors and mentees do not belong to the same structure and do not necessarily share the same activity. This type of practice adds a very important network dimension, while creating transverse communities. In fact, during the course of the program, mentors and mentees attend collective sessions allowing instant exchanges. This method allows them to develop collective skills such as cooperation, cohesion and positive attitudes, even in
the event of conflicts. Szczyglak (2014) identifies collective mentoring as “a catalyst for individual and collective talent. It accelerates the identification of the solutions suggested by the members of the group and proposes a framework of exchanges which induces an appropriation and an individual assimilation of responses and results”. The author states that collective mentoring strengthens professional identity, guides exchanges towards resolution and action and encourages new learning. To this end, mentors and mentees learn to develop their analysis and decision-making abilities.

In addition, Higgins and Kram (2001) report that this type of mentoring is more appropriate for collectivist cultures. In the same line of thinking, Sánchez and Colón (2005) take into account the fact that mentoring programs that favor individual relationships are less popular in cultures of “collectivist” origin, such as Asian and Latin American cultures. In fact, “collectivist” individuals are moving towards a mentoring approach, which offers them the possibility to benefit from several mentors at a time and who better meet their needs.

Beyond the objectives of the practice, the form of the mentoring program plays an important role in the development of the operators’ skills. In fact, each mentoring program is built around five axes:

– selection of mentors and mentees;
– training of mentors and mentees;
– pairing of partnerships;
– follow-up of partnerships;
– evaluation of the program.

At a first stage, training is a tool for the transfer of individual skills. The trainer accompanies the mentor and the mentee and makes them aware of the mentoring relationship challenges.

At a later stage, the evaluation of the program can be a means to identify, first, the individual skills, which have been acquired throughout the program, and, second, the collective skills, which have emerged.

The evaluation of a program is crucial to achieve the predefined objectives and to ensure sustainability. However, measuring the impact of a mentoring program remains a challenge, because the results are not tangible.
However, as Peter F. Drucker (1988) confirms, “if you cannot measure it, you will not be able to manage it”. In order to master and know the true value of the mentoring program, Kirkpatrick’s model (2009) seems to be the most adopted reference to achieve an evaluation (Chochard & Davoine, 2008). Briefly, this model is structured around four themes:

- reaction – have they appreciated mentoring? Are they satisfied?;
- learning – which knowledge, skills and/or attitudes (knowledge, know-how and social skills) have been acquired?;
- behaviors – do the supported persons use what they have learned? Which new professional behaviors have been implemented?;
- results – what is the impact of mentoring on the results of the organization?

This model, along with simple tools, such as surveys and interviews, enables the collection of very rich quantitative and qualitative data on the adopted mentoring program.

In conclusion of this second part, the diversity of these practices reflects the unique character of mentoring. In fact, DeLong et al. (2008) embrace the fact that it is a practice of support specific to each company. It is appropriate for each structure to determine in advance its objectives and the skills that it wishes to develop. Mentoring therefore strengthens the management tools already in place in order to ensure knowledge transfer and skills development.

1.4. Conclusion

For the company to remain competitive, it is essential to invest in the individuals’ skills development and to equip them so that they are qualified and effective. This reflection leads us to study the practice of mentoring under the prism of skills development. The objective of this chapter was to understand the individual and collective skills development in the framework of a mentoring program.

In the first part of this chapter, we presented the latest developments on the notion of competence in different disciplinary fields, but more essentially in the field of HRM. We subsequently distinguished the three levels of skills
analysis (micro, macro and meso) that feed the heart of our subject. According to the identified definitions, we attempted to respond to our problematic, by studying the challenges of the mentoring relationship with respect to the development of individual skills and the creation of collective skills.

Research in management science highlights the positive aspect of mentoring. This practice of support is a process of empowerment of individuals and enterprises, which contributes to the improvement of performance. It promotes skills transfer, a sharing of experiences and learning of new knowledge. The objectives of the program thus go beyond the individual aspect. In fact, the mentee mobilizes the individual skills developed during the mentoring program in order to build a social universe in their company. This practice facilitates, initially, learning between the mentees and their mentors, and then between the mentees and the members of the group. It allows, therefore, the creation of a set of collective skills – through interacting – and contributes to the development of the feeling of belonging to the collective. Mentoring involves acting individually, but encourages the collective nourishment of the overall performance of the company.

In addition, it is a tool which could be integrated in succession management. In fact, the transfer of knowledge and skills facilitates succession planning, whatever the reason. In this sense, mentoring promotes technical learning (tasks to accomplish, how to do it) as well as strategic learning (adaptation to the culture of the company, strategic policy understanding, achievement of the objectives set by management) of the newly integrated person in a position. Consequently, it improves productivity, develops the relational aspect and makes it possible to enrich the social capital of the individual.

In sum, mentoring is based on the mentor’s and the mentee’s mutual, reciprocal and continuous enrichment. It contributes to ensuring the mentor’s satisfaction, by valuing their background and experiences, and that of the mentee, by offering them personal and professional support within the framework of the company. Based on confidentiality and benevolence, this relationship aims to strengthen commitment, solidarity and cooperation within a defined professional framework. In a metaphorical formulation, Dominique Cancellieri-Decroze² specifies that mentoring “sows the happiness of individuals and harvests the performance of the company”.

² Exchanges in 2015 with Dominique Cancellieri-Decroze, head of the first national association on mentoring in France, EMCC, and a member of Cap Mentorat.
Mentoring emphasizes the value of the personal and professional potential of everyone as the most important asset in a business. On the other hand, in order to ensure its success, the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this practice must be affirmed. A monitored and rigorous program would improve career and talent management, strengthen intergenerational cooperation and affirm the culture of the company.

1.5. References


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