

Forms of Mentoring Programs in Developing Teaching Competencies of Novice Secondary School Teachers: A Case of Mbeya Region, Tanzania

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East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences

Abstract: This study sought to investigate on effectiveness of mentoring processes in developing Secondary School teachers' competencies in Mbeya Region, Tanzania. The study utilized the cross-sectional research design with both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study used a sample of 110 novice and experienced teachers who were selected using various approached. A questionnaire and interview schedule were used as sources of data collection form novice teachers and experienced ones, respectively. Quantitative data from questionnaire was analysed descriptively while qualitative data from the interview guide was analysed through content analysis. The study established that mentoring process resulted into developing teaching competencies among novice teachers in Mbeya region where different forms of mentoring processed were practiced to benefit novice teachers towards enriching the teaching and learning process. Additionally, mentoring programs are a positive initiative towards developing novice teachers' competence in secondary schools while mentoring programs helped novice teachers acquire problem solving skills and empowerment that filled the gap created by limited practices and experiences not covered during college training. The study recommended that mentors need to develop a greater understanding on mentees' strengths and weaknesses for the mentorship to take place effectively.

Keywords: Mentoring; novice teachers; teaching competencies; teachers; mentoring programs.

How to cite:

Ally, M. S., and Libent-Mabagala, D. (2022). Forms of Mentoring Programs in Developing Teaching Competencies of Novice Secondary School Teachers: A Case of Mbeya Region, Tanzania. East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences 3(5)130-136. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2022v03i05.0227>.

Introduction

Mentoring programs are important interventions for both novices and experienced secondary school teachers as they transmit skills, experience and knowledge towards guidance, support and friendship to the mentees in organizations (Ragins, Yah and Aderibigbe (2016). Yet, there are a few studies such as Meena, Garcia, Clarke and Barkatsas (2012) regarding its cost effectiveness and Wandela

(2014) about officializing mentoring and its benefits in Tanzania.

According to Gong, Chen and Yang (2014), mentoring is the process or an opportunity to develop an individual's mental and professional capabilities. It is a developmental interactive relationship between mentors and mentees in the organization whereby mentors transmit knowledge,

skills, and experience and provide support, guidance and friendship to mentee (Geeraets & Ruth (2018)).

Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) provided two types of mentoring namely formal (that which involves mentors and mentees' frequent and organized meetings over a specified period of time) and informal (that which involves supportive relationship developed outside of organized programs). They further stated that a poorly planned and unstructured mentoring can be a waste of time if affiliation between mentor-mentee relationships is not attained during the cultivation stage. DeZure (2016) indicated that instant mentoring that makes use of immediate and personalized coaching has been influential in teaching and learning as during entry point, mentees may not be confident and innovative enough. While there are many types of mentoring, Faucette and Nugent (2017) argued that with group mentoring, a mentor works with several mentees at once to share his/her expertise. Besides, Kelly, Sim and Ireland (2018) asserted that peer mentoring takes place when a person lives through a specific experience that may be new such as focusing on youths or others while situational mentoring involves a short term discussion between for example executives on high impact issues, problems, challenges or opportunities towards enhancing individual or organizational performance and competence. DeZure (2016) asserted that supervisory mentorship involves a mentoring that focuses on practices where opportunities to reflect on matters get evaluated in depth towards greater mastery of issues.

Mentoring provides mentees with challenging work, social support and safe relationship harbors through a process of knowledge and skills sharing which positively affects the employee performance and behavior (Callahan, 2016). Researchers on mentoring programs in different parts of the world indicate that the teaching reform processes need to occur in two areas; to novice teachers (who enter the teaching profession for the first time) and to experienced practitioners (who are experienced teachers). For novice teachers who have just entered the profession, there may be a great likelihood for effective teaching in schools if they are capacitated with mentoring programs (Hudson, 2004).

A survey by Fortune 500 companies in USA showed that 96% of the companies reported that mentoring was an important employee development tool while

about 75% informed that mentoring was a key factor in their employees' personal success. Again, 71% of the 500 companies indicated that using mentoring programs in their organizations enhanced effectiveness among workers (Scandura, 2008). Therefore, mentoring programs become important for organizational effectiveness and success.

According to Geeraets and Ruth (2018) formal mentoring is a structure where both mentor and mentee have specific goals and targets to match the organization's goals and culture. This involves the commitment of time and energy to guide and share opinions between the players. More so, Kelly, Sim & Ireland (2018) asserted that informal mentoring unlike formal mentoring, has minimal or no structure and may or may not have a clear and specific goal. In many cases, it is normally for interpersonal enhancement and can promote career development of the mentee. Instance mentoring on the other hand focuses on a short time mentorship for it is less expensive and is a simple option to employ where senior staff becomes mentors without investing a lot of time. The only requirement is one hour or less of the mentor's time to meet with a mentee (Callahan, 2016).

Meena, Tynjälä and Heikkinen (2016) affirmed that group mentoring entails mentoring in which one mentor works with several mentees at once in a group. It is stated that the mentor in this stance has an area of expertise to share and the mentees have similar personal development goals or wishes to learn specific new skills or knowledge on.

Whereas peer mentoring takes place between a person who has lived through a specific experience and a person who is new to that experience, situational mentoring as per Callahan (2016) entails a short term discussion between executives, on a high impact issue, problem, challenge or opportunity where the purpose of mentoring is to enhance individual and organizational performance as well as to increase proficiency in leadership competencies.

Besides, supervisory mentoring, according to Geeraets and Ruth (2018) engages time to explore techniques and help solve problems with opportunities to reflect day to day practices of an organization where one oversees a person or group of people engaging in an activity or task and keeps order or ensures that mentees have performed it.

Mentoring programs are vital to novices and practicing secondary school teachers in Tanzania because when mentoring is carried out earlier, novice teachers become competent and they execute their works with more confidence (Wandela, 2014).

There have been several attempts to conduct mentoring programs in Tanzania such as Education Quality Improvement Project-EQUIP conducted by Soko (2012) that focused on in-service primary school teachers in Shinyanga Region. The study concentrated on the methodology used in teaching. The other which supported Two-tier Diploma Student-Teachers was facilitated by MoEC (2007); it reflected on purely methodology of teaching and mentoring for Licensed Secondary School Teachers in Tanzania. Likewise, MoEC (2004) conducted a mentoring program focusing on the content with little emphasis on methodology to novice teachers. Besides, the gap exists as most of these studies were non-sustainable, were limited in scope (not scaled up country-wide) and were not supported by existing government policies (Wandela, 2014).

This study investigated on effectiveness of mentoring processes in developing teaching competencies of secondary school novice teachers in Mbeya Region. Particularly, the study sought to address two objectives:

1. To establish current forms of mentoring offered to novice teachers in secondary schools in Mbeya Region.
2. To establish stakeholders' perceptions on mentoring programs in developing novice teachers' competencies in secondary schools in Mbeya region.

Methodology

Design

The study utilized the cross-sectional research design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Cross-sectional design was desirable as it enables the collection of data in a single point in time. The mixed approach was used to help the researchers gain a more complete picture than a standalone quantitative or qualitative study.

Population and Sampling

Mbeya region was selected for this study. Out of its seven districts, Rungwe, Busokelo and Kyela had critical cases of teachers who had not undergone mentoring. Therefore, the researchers purposively selected the stated districts to enable the attainment of the study's objectives. The population

in this study included novice and experienced teachers who worked in three Districts Councils totalling 138. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to draw novice (*mentees*) and experienced (*mentors*) through the help of a sampling formula developed by Kothari (2009). The formula helped the researchers to arrive at a sample of 110 teachers.

Instruments Used

The study utilized a structured questionnaire to collect data from novice teachers so as to get their opinions on the availability of mentorship programs. An interview guide was administered to experienced teachers to ascertain if mentoring programs existed in the study area.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the researchers carried out a pilot study to pre-test the tools before being used. The aim was to establish whether the instruments would elicit responses required to achieve the research objectives, to test whether the content of the instruments is relevant and adequate, to test whether the wording of items were clear and to develop appropriate procedures for administering the instruments with reference to field conditions (Krishna & Swami, 2006). Moreover, reliability was ensured by undertaking a test which yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.82 from the desired amount of 0.7 and above, which means the questionnaire was reliable for data collection.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Quantitative data from questionnaire was analysed descriptively while qualitative data from the interview guide was analysed through content analysis. Data from questionnaires was identified where common views from the respondents' description of their experiences were assigned codes and labels. Frequency counts of the responses were obtained to generate information about the respondents' views.

Ethical Considerations

Respondents were given an informed consent to affirm their willingness to participate in the study where participation was voluntary and one was free to participate in answering questions and participants were free to withdraw at any time. Furthermore, privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study by excluding personal identifiers during data collection. The researchers ensured that all the information

obtained was kept in strict confidence and only for the purposes of the study.

Results and Discussion

This section presents findings of the study as guided by two objectives.

Objective 1: To establish forms of mentoring offered to novice teachers in secondary schools of Mbeya Region.

The study sought to establish forms of mentoring offered to novice teachers in secondary schools of Mbeya Region. Novice teacher respondents' views were sought by administering a questionnaire to them. The questionnaire responses appear in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that majority of novice teachers agreed to have experienced formal mentoring, informal mentoring, instance mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, situational mentoring and supervisor mentoring. However, a significant number of novice teachers were uncertain whether group mentoring, peer mentoring, situational mentoring and supervisor mentoring took place.

Therefore, it can be held that all forms of mentoring listed in the questionnaire were agreed by respondents even though some respondents were not sure of selected types of mentoring. The fact that all forms of suggested mentoring existed in schools was supported by information from key informants as follows:

Table 1: Forms of Mentoring

Statements	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)
Formal mentoring	100	0	0
Informal mentoring	100	0	0
Instance mentoring	100	0	0
Group mentoring	90	10	0
Peer mentoring	60	40	0
Situational mentoring	90	10	0
Supervisory mentoring	70	30	0

One of the key informants, an experienced teacher was of the following view:

Novice teachers in their early times in teaching managed to enrich their careers through various forms of mentorship received, something that increased their effectiveness in their classroom practices. With the provided forms of mentoring, novice teachers were found to have higher satisfaction and greater commitment at work (Mentor, M, 2)

One more key informant was of the following view:

With informal mentoring that complements formal mentoring, novice teachers attain the growth mindset or the desire to learn and grow in their profession while improving their skills in teaching and learning. Further, a culture of learning at the school contributes to individual growth mindset resulting into teachers feeling confident in their duties (Mentor, M, 7).

Another key informants was of the following view.

Group mentoring was carried out in most cases during weekdays where mentees had time to reflect on what pertains their coaching whereby challenges encountered

would be discussed and resolved. This helped in most cases those novice teachers who in one way or the other got stuck on the way during the teaching and learning processes (Mentor, M, 9).

Furthermore, it was revealed by one of key informants that "in some instances, our mentors used situational mentoring to fix some issues that could not have been understood by novice teachers. The use of such form complemented issues that could not be accommodated in formal mentoring" (Mentor, M, 4).

The findings concur with the view of Desimone, et al., (2014) who contended that with informal mentoring, novice teachers appreciate the support provided by mentors and less-experienced colleagues achieve more skills for teaching. The same is supported by Kelly, Sim and Ireland (2018) who argued that mentoring new teachers improves skills and helps them through their transition to job satisfaction. The results further concur with Callahan (2016) who reported that peer mentoring has been helpful among novice teachers who in many times have possibilities of interacting with each other in a manner to help when need arise.

Objective 2: To establish stakeholders' perceptions on mentoring programs in developing novice teachers' competencies in secondary schools in Mbeya region.

This objective sought to establish stakeholders' perception on mentoring programs in developing novice teachers' competencies. Respondents' views

were sought by administering a questionnaire to novice teachers in the form of 5 point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and an interview schedule to experience teachers/mentors. The questionnaire responses regarding the forms of mentoring appear in Table 2.

Table 2: Perception on Mentoring Programs in Developing Novice Teachers' Competencies

Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Novice teachers view the mentor as a model to develop a greater understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses	70	30	0	0	0
Mentoring is perceived as an important employee development tool	80	0	20	0	0
Mentoring is perceived as a key factor for employees' personal success as mentoring enhances effectiveness among employees	80	20	0	0	0
Mentoring programs improve both employee retention and job performance	75	10	0	15	0
Mentoring helps Novice teachers to acquire problem solving skills and empowerment	80	0	20	0	0
Effective mentoring programs help novice teachers to fill the gap created by limited practices and experiences that could have been covered during trainers' education and training in colleges	90	10	0	0	0

According to Table 2, majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that novice teachers view the mentor as a model to develop a greater understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, that mentoring is perceived as an important employee development tool and that mentoring is a key factor for employees' personal success as it enhances effectiveness among the employees. Further, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that mentoring programs improve both employee retention and job performance, that mentoring helps novice teachers to acquire problem solving skills and empowerment and that effective mentoring programs help novice teachers to fill the gap created by limited practices and experiences that could have been covered during teacher training period.

Furthermore, results in table 2 show that 70% of respondents strongly agreed and 30% agreed that novice teachers view the mentor as a model to develop a greater understanding of their own strengths and weakness. This implies that the role of mentoring has been of expanding knowledge among novice teachers while enabling them to acquire necessary skills to eliminate their small weaknesses.

Additionally, 80% of respondents strongly agreed that mentoring is perceived as an important employee development tool. This implies that with novice teachers as flesh employees who are capacitated with skills from their experienced mentors, mentoring becomes a tool towards their career development. It was noted by respondents that, novice teachers who were mentored were able to do their jobs with confidence (*Mentor, M, 13*).

Similarly, results in table 2 show that 80% of respondents strongly agreed and 20% agreed that mentoring is perceived as a key factor for employees' personal success as mentoring enhances effectiveness among employees. This implies that novice teachers were able to enhance their performance through mentorship as they utilized their acquired skills to improve job skills, performance and hence job satisfaction.

On the other hand, 75% of respondents strongly agreed and 10% agreed that mentoring programs improve both employee retention and job performance. This implies that when novice teachers acquire additional skills from their mentors, retention and job performance are enhanced. As per respondents, it was found that

with mentoring, novice teachers could perform their jobs with confidence (*Mentor, M, 10*)

Furthermore, results in table 2 show that 80% of respondents strongly agreed that mentoring helps novice teachers to acquire problem solving skills and empowerment. This implies that with the interaction, mentees were able to solve problems they encounter and get empowered on the ways to tackle issues in their day to day teaching and learning life. The fact that novice teachers got empowered, empowerment went in line with enabling novice teachers perform their jobs well and assisted students in the manner needed for their day to day schooling.

Finally, results in table 2 show that 90% of respondents strongly agreed and 10% agreed that effective mentoring programs help novice teachers to fill the gap created by limited practices and experiences that could have been covered during trainers' education and training in colleges. This implies that mentors aided mentees in filling the gap thereby enabling the mentees acquire necessary skills towards better teaching and learning.

In supporting the results from the questionnaire, one of the key informants was of the following view: "It is envisaged that mentors' played a great role as models to mentees, something that enhanced mentees' confidence to carry out works effectively. This led to job empowerment and success" (*Mentor, M, 5*). The other key informant was of the following view:

It was our tasks to enable novice teachers strengthen their competencies in their subject matters in order to have skills relevant for facilitating the teaching and learning process. By so doing, the majority of novice teachers were able to come out with good knowledge that can enable them stand by their own (*Mentor, M, 6*).

Another key informant was of the following view: "It has been found that novice teachers have been able to acquire skills that help them become confident and perform their works with guided techniques" (*Mentor, M, 9*). More so, another key informant was of the following view: "In carrying out mentorship, mentors have been able to observe novice teachers when teaching, allowing them to solve the challenges they meet, thereby benefiting from being

coached with extensive and comprehensive induction programs" (*Mentor, M, 11*).

Statements above are in agreement with Geeraets and Ruth (2018) who reported that mentoring programs enabled mentees to perform their jobs with competence, something that resulted into effective teaching. Findings are also in harmony with Geeraets and Ruth (2018) who reported that mentors' roles include strengthening mentees and aiding them towards the understanding of the environment they are found while making sure that the weaknesses they possess are eliminated. This was obvious in the study area from the fact that mentees found to have weaknesses could be assisted, something that resulted into competence acquisition. Likewise, the statements above are in agreement with Gong et al. (2014) who asserted that mentoring mediates between personal learning skills and career outcomes, such as job promotion and job satisfaction as mentees become skilled. Yet, the statements above concur with Benson-Jaja (2010) who observed that good mentoring programs increased teacher retention when certain other factors were in place. The results also agree with Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng and DuBois (2008) who reported that effective mentoring is associated with positive career development as well as attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that enable a mentee to enhance his/her capabilities. Moreover, Faucette and Nugent (2017) reported that mentors can help novice teachers develop essential skills and confidence in their abilities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that the effectiveness of mentoring process resulted into developing teaching competencies among novice teachers in Mbeya region where different forms of mentoring processed were practiced to benefit novice teachers towards enriching the teaching and learning process. Additionally, stakeholders perceived mentoring programs as a positive initiative towards developing novice teachers' competence in secondary schools while mentoring programs helped novice teachers acquire problem solving skills and empowerment that filled the gap created by limited practices and experiences not covered during college training.

It is therefore recommended that mentors need to develop a greater understanding on mentees' strengths and weaknesses for the mentorship to take place effectively. Furthermore, mentors are

obliged to cultivate and enable mentees acquire specific problem solving skills for better outcomes to be realized.

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