

## **An Assessment of Mentoring Programmes for Novice Secondary School Teachers' Competencies in Mbeya Region, Tanzania**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Mentoring programmes are cost-effective and interesting in helping one to grow in different teaching methodologies for practicing secondary school teachers and learning processes for novice teachers. When mentoring is carried out in one's early career development, novice teachers become competent and execute their work with confidence. Yet, there are a few studies which have so far been conducted concerning the assessment of mentoring programmes for novice secondary school teachers' competencies. Specifically, the study examined the forms of mentoring offered to novice teachers in secondary schools in Mbeya region; and established stakeholders' perceptions on mentoring programmes in developing novice teachers' teaching competencies in secondary schools in Mbeya region. A descriptive survey research design utilizing quantitative and qualitative approaches was used to a sample size of 110 respondents. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively while qualitative data being analysed through content analysis. The findings revealed that different forms of mentoring were practiced in Mbeya region. These included formal and informal mentoring, instance and group mentoring, situational and supervisory mentoring where each form of mentoring benefited novice teachers towards teaching and learning. Also, the study revealed positive perception of mentoring programs towards developing novice teachers' competence in secondary schools from stakeholders. Further, novice teachers viewed their mentors as models to help understanding of their own strengths and weakness, as well as acquiring problem solving skills, thereby filling the gap created by limited practices and experiences not covered during teacher training. It was recommended that there is a need to strengthen programmes in secondary schools in order to support novice teachers' progress in the beginning of their teaching career.*

**Keywords:** *Mentoring programmes, novice teachers, secondary school, teaching competencies*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mentoring programmes are cost effective and interesting in facilitating teaching and learning process for both novices and practicing secondary school teachers because when mentoring is carried out earlier, novice teachers become competent and can execute their work with confidence (Mena et al., 2016). According to Gong et al. (2014), mentoring is the process or an opportunity to develop an individual's mental and professional capabilities. The most widely accepted definition is that of Geeraets et al. (2010) who defined mentoring as a developmental interactive relationship established between mentors and mentees in which mentors transmit knowledge, skills, and experience and provide support, guidance and friendship to mentees. The developmental interactive relationship that transmits knowledge, skills and experience provides mentees with challenging work, social support and safe relationship through a process of knowledge and skill sharing, which positively affects employee performance and behavior (Callahan, 2016). On the part of mentors, mentoring relationships provide an opportunity to give back to the community, can build leadership and management capacities and expand professional network (Desimore et al., 2014).

Research on mentoring programmes in different parts of the world indicates that the teaching reform processes need to occur in two areas; novice teachers who enter the teaching profession for the first time and practitioners who are experienced teachers. For novice teachers, their professional knowledge and skills in teaching are better capacitated with mentoring programmes. A survey by Fortune 500 companies in the USA showed that 96% of the companies reported that mentoring programmes were important employee development tools while about 75% of the Fortune companies informed that mentoring was a key factor in their employees' success (Gong et al., 2014). Again, 71% of the 500 companies and private companies indicated that using mentoring programmes enhanced effectiveness among workers. Another survey of 77% of the companies that have mentoring programmes indicated improvement in both employee retention and job performance (Scandura, 2008).

Mentoring programmes are teaching and learning processes that have

helped in-service teachers in different parts of Tanzania (Eby et al., 2008). Primary school teachers in Shinyanga Region, for example, underwent mentoring programme under Education Quality Improvement Project-EQUIP (Soko, 2012). Other programmes include Licensed Secondary School Teachers Tanzania (MoEC, 2004) and Two-tier Diploma Student-Teachers (MoEC, 2007). Moreover, there have been several attempts to start mentoring programmes in Tanzania but most of them were not sustainable. Some were limited in scope (not scaled up country-wide); others were not supported by the existing government policies. Some mentoring programmes existed in documents, but no studies have been conducted in areas related to mentoring to enhance teaching to novice teachers (MoEC, 1998).

### **Forms of Mentoring Programmes**

Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) provided two types of mentoring programmes, namely formal and informal mentoring that are accompanied with phases or stages. According to Geeraets et al. (2018) formal mentoring entails as 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 et al. (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. They further stated that a poorly planned and unstructured mentoring programme could be a waste of time.

Wandela (2014) assert that mentoring programs are vital to both novices and practicing secondary school teachers in Tanzania because when mentoring is carried out earlier, novice teachers become competent and execute their work with confidence. Geeraets et al. (2018) assert that formal mentoring demands as structure where both mentor and mentee possess specific goals and targets toward attaining the organization's goals and culture. It portrays commitment of time and energy where the mentor guides and shares opinions with mentees (Aderibigbe, 2013). Informal mentoring on the other hand requires minimal or no structure and may or may not have clear and specific goals as in many cases, it is normally for interpersonal enhancement that promotes the career development of the mentee (Kelly et al., 2018). Instance mentoring focuses on a short time

mentorship for it is less expensive and has a simple option to employ where senior staff becomes mentors without investing a lot of time (Ingersoll & Strong, 2012). The only requirement is one hour or less of the mentor's time to meet with a mentee (Callahan, 2016). Meena et al. (2016) asserted 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 will have an area of expertise to share and the mentees will have similar personal development goals or wish to learn specific new skills or knowledge (Benson-Jaja, 2010). 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, and challenge or opportunity where the purpose of mentoring is to enhance individual and organizational performance, as well as increase proficiency in leadership competencies. Besides, supervisory mentoring according to Geeraets et al. (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 ensure that s/he/they perform it.

Desimone et al. (2014) in their study examined the variances for informal and formal mentoring and the way to improve the mentoring policy in Philadelphia, USA. The results showed that informal mentoring is likely to play a significant role for mentee's learning while having little knowledge on their performance as the most induction programme. The findings further showed that informal and formal mentors aided similar purposes but delivered compensatory and harmonizing upkeep. The findings celebrated a set of policy endorsements to improve novice teacher support among which in order to increase formal mentor training.

Despite its usefulness in promoting teacher career development, there are a few studies which have so far been conducted concerning the assessment of mentoring programmes for novice secondary school teachers' competencies in Mbeya region in Tanzania. This study assessed the mentoring programmes for novice secondary school teachers' competencies in Mbeya region. Specifically, the article;

- i) Examined current forms of mentoring offered to novice teachers in secondary schools in Mbeya region.
- ii) Established stakeholders' perceptions on mentoring programmes in

developing novice teachers' teaching competencies in secondary schools in Mbeya region.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study was underpinned by Padua's model of mentoring teachers. Padua's model (2003) or theory was adapted from Routman's Model that focused on effective teaching and learning in mentoring novice teachers. As per Padua (2003) the founder, mentor teachers possess a deep understanding and experience on specific content areas that they share with mentees. The theory assumes that a mentor teacher has the task of assisting teachers in refining instructional strategies and engaging novice teachers in conversations while providing overall support. Padua (2003) recommends that on using any of the techniques, the novice teacher and mentor should discuss the lesson's objectives and the instructional strategies, and focus on why objectives are selected. Afterwards, teachers should discuss the lesson and plan for the next steps to follow.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Mbeya Region in Tanzania utilizing a descriptive survey research design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The target population for this study included government secondary school teachers in Rungwe, Busokelo and Kyela Districts. Statistics show that these districts have a total of 1,936 Government Secondary School Teachers, out of which 138 were novice (new) teachers and 1,841 were experienced teachers. Yet, the statistics from Districts Education Offices indicate that there are 85 Secondary Schools: 68 are Public and 17 are privately owned schools. For this study, the target population included a total of 138 novices (new) teachers who were recently posted to work in those three district councils; whereby 50, 45 and 43 new teachers were from Rungwe, Busokelo and Kyela districts respectively.

The sample for this study was generated from the sampling formula developed by Kothari (2009). Kothari's formula helped the researcher to arrive at a target sample.

$$n = 138 / (1 + 138 \times (0.5 \times 0.5))$$

$$n = 110 \quad \text{approximately } 110$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study comprised of 40, 36 and 32 respondents from Rungwe, Busokelo and Kyela District Councils respectively.

The study used simple random sampling technique in drawing novice teachers. In this technique, each member of the population had the same probability of being chosen (Kothari, 2004). Purposive sampling was used among experienced teachers to obtain and utilize the personal experience of each respondent regarding the examination of the effects of mentoring on secondary school teachers' competencies; a case of Mbeya region in Tanzania. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentage with the help of SPSS software while qualitative data was analysed through content analysis.

To ensure validity, the study used triangulation method to collect data. Questionnaires and interview guide were pre-tested before being used. The aim was to test whether the instrument would elicit responses required to achieve the research objectives, to test whether the content of the instrument is relevant and adequate, to test whether the wording of questions is clear and suited to the understanding of the novice teachers and to develop appropriate procedure for administering the instrument with reference to field conditions (Krishna & Swami, 2006).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Forms of Mentoring offered to Novice Teachers

This objective examined current forms of mentoring programmes offered to novice teachers in secondary schools in Mbeya region. To obtain data on this aspect, the respondents were asked to express their views on the matter by indicating the choices in Likert type scale statements while providing additional views through interview on the question. The results are summarized in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Forms of Mentoring**

Statements	% strongly agree	% agree	% uncertain	% disagree	% strongly disagree
Formal mentoring	90	10	0	0	0
Informal mentoring	85	15	0	0	0
Instance mentoring	80	20	0	0	0
Group mentoring	70	20	10	0	0
Peer mentoring	60	0	40	0	0
Situational mentoring	60	30	10	0	0
Supervisory mentoring	70	0	30	0	0

The results in Table 1.1 show that almost all respondents strongly agreed that one of the forms of mentoring is formal mentoring. It was found that in

this formal mentoring a mentor was assigned with one or two novice teachers whereby assistance was given to them for enabling teaching and learning. The outcome from this mentoring is that mentors were able to provide classroom management guidelines, encourage and assist novice teachers; and enabling strategies and resources available towards enriching the school culture and environment for the novice teachers. This agrees with Callahan (2016) who reported that mentoring as a personal guidance is provided to beginning teachers in schools by experienced teachers resulting into novice teachers gaining job satisfaction, improving the ability to develop lesson plans accompanied with effective classroom management strategies thereby acquiring better questioning techniques and enhanced student achievement. This has been obvious in the studied area where, novice teachers affirmed to have acquired adequate skills through formal mentoring.

One of the key informants had the following view;

Through formal mentoring novice teachers have been assisted in managing teaching and enriching their competencies and careers development something that increased effectiveness in their classrooms. With the provided formal mentoring, novice teachers were found to have higher satisfaction and greater commitment at work (Mentor, M, 2).

Furthermore, the results in Table 1.1 show that majority (85%) of respondents strongly agreed on the presence of informal mentoring. It was noted that informal mentoring provided to novice teachers provided a complementary support to them than it was in-school mentorship where interactions was enhanced. It was further contended that when a novice teacher has no formal mentor but receives support through informal means such as veteran teachers, principals, official conference, retired teachers and many others aided well their coaching for guidance provision. The statement above concurs with Desimone, et al. (2014) who contended that with informal mentoring, novice teachers appreciate the support provided by mentors where less-experienced colleagues achieve more skills in the absence of a formal program. One of key informants opined;

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 while enhancing the ability to ask when needed and growing their abilities (Mentor, M, 7).

On the other hand, the results in Table 1.1 show that 80% of respondents strongly agreed that the other form of mentoring is instance mentoring. Whereby senior staff in various institutions become mentors without investing a lot of time to enable their mentees to acquire skills. In the study area, experienced teachers were able to dedicate their time to help novice teachers improve their working capabilities. The mentors' experience enables mentees to have time to share what they have for a given time thereby improving the novice teachers' skills. The statement above concurs with Aderibigbe (2013) who reported that mentoring new teachers can improve skills and help them through their transition to job satisfaction. A growing body of research suggests that novices who receive mentoring have higher job satisfaction and are more committed to their jobs. According to Ingersoll and Strong (2012), all mentoring should include three aspects including emotional support, teacher qualifications and coaching skills.

Additionally, the results in Table 1.1 show that 70% of respondents strongly agreed that group mentoring was among the mentoring forms. It was found that novice teachers when mentored in groups, kept students on task better, used effective discussion techniques, developed good lesson plans, had positive classroom environment where they could adjust instructions appropriately and manage classrooms effectively. Here a mentor would be in position to meet with mentees, posing questions, listening what mentees discuss and allow conversations to align with the skills provided. This agrees with Mena et al. (2016) who reported that group mentoring necessitate mentees to have freedom to discuss issues that may be guided by the mentor for successful implementation of teaching and learning.

One of the key informants had this to comment:

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

Similarly, the results in Table 1.1 show that 60% of respondents strongly agreed that peer mentoring was among the forms of mentoring that involved two individuals that include a mentor and mentee could come together and solve challenges that come by towards professional development and growth while facilitating mutual learning and building a sense of community engagement. It was found that with peer monitoring, novice

teachers could be more open to each other while sharing the skills that could enable the facilitation of teaching and learning. The results 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. Moreover, 40% of respondents were undecided on the matter from the fact that in most cases, such form was not employed in the study area.

Nonetheless, the results in Table 1.1 show that 60% of respondents strongly agreed that situational mentoring was among the forms of mentoring. It was found that situational mentoring aided novice teachers to solve immediate challenges. Although, immediate challenges were solved through this form, in some instances, such forms could be transformed to a more long-term situation. The results are in concurrence with Faucette and Nugent (2017) who insisted that situational mentoring is useful when immediate solutions are required to enable a mentee solve the challenges that come by.

One key informant narrated 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 a formal mentoring (Mentor, M, 4)

Finally, the results in Table 1.1 show that 70% of respondents strongly agreed that supervisory mentoring is among the forms of mentoring used to nurture novice teachers in the study area. It was found that supervisory mentorship focuses on inherent responsibility of relationship where a novice teacher's development plan outlines expectations for coaching and feedback provision. This form of mentoring was found to be used in day to day uses where guidance was provided to aid mentees acquire skills relevant for the job's performance. The statement above concurs with Kelly et al. (2018) who reported that when new teachers participate in mentoring programs their students show greater academic gains. Moreover, formal and informal mentoring were found to be used frequently in the study area compared with the other forms of mentoring.

This was attested by one of the key informants as follows:

In our schools, formal and informal mentoring have been occasionally used. Other forms such as peer, situational, group etc have been used in a minimal way. The

reason has been due to efficiency in obtaining good results when used and being evaluated in a better manner (Mentor, M, 10).

Generally, the results show that different forms of mentoring were practiced in secondary schools in Mbeya region. These included formal and informal mentoring, instance and group mentoring, situational and supervisory mentoring. Moreover, each mentoring had its benefits towards novice teachers' enrichment in teaching and learning.

### **Stakeholders' Perceptions on Mentoring Programmes for Novice Teacher Competencies**

This objective established the stakeholders' perceptions on mentoring programmes in developing novice teachers' teaching competencies in secondary schools. Respondents' views were sought by administering the questionnaires and interviews. To obtain data on this aspect, the researcher asked respondents to express their views on the matter by indicating the choices (Likert type scale) provided on statements while providing additional views through interview. The results are presented in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: Stakeholders' perceptions on mentoring programmes**

Statements	% strongly agree	% agree	% uncertain	%disagree	% strongly disagree
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

The results in Table 1.2 show that 70% of respondents strongly 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. This assertion is in line with Geeraets et al. (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.

On this one respondent narrated that;

It was our tasks to enable novice teachers strengthen their competencies in their subject matters in order to have skills relevant for facilitating teaching and learning. 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).

Additionally, the results in Table 1.2 show that 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 found that novice teachers who were mentored were able to do their jobs with confidence. The statements above agree 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. Also, the statements above concur with Benson-Jaja (2010) who observed that good mentoring programs increased teacher retention, when certain other factors were in place.

Similarly, the results in Table 1.2 show that 80% of respondents strongly 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 were able to utilize their acquired skills to improve job skills, performance and hence job satisfaction. The statement above is in line with Eby et al. (2008) who reported that effective mentoring is associated with positive career development, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that enable a mentee to enhance his/her capabilities.

On the other hand, the results in Table 1.2 show that 75% of respondents strongly 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. It was found that with mentoring, novice teachers could perform their jobs with confidence. Moreover, 15% of respondents disagreed on the matter as some novice teachers could not reflect what was expected. This is in line with Faucette and Nugent (2017) who reported that mentors can help novice teachers develop essential skills and confidence in their abilities. Also, mentors shield the new teachers from making mistakes by limiting exposure to responsibility and becoming more politically aware within the school climate.

On this one of key informant had this to say:

It has been found that novice teachers have been able to acquire skills that help them become confidence and perform their works with guided techniques (Mentor, M, 9)

Furthermore, the results in Table 1.2 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. Moreover, 20% of respondents were undecided on the matter for the fact that not all novice teachers were able to utilize their acquired knowledge in solving teaching and learning challenges. 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. The statements on problem solving and empowerment concur with Mena et al. (2016) who reported that mentors use different approaches to enrich mentees where mentees' willingness to take responsibility, listening to suggestions given, hard-working, flexibility and organization towards success lead to good performance.

Finally, the results in Table 1.2 show that almost all respondents strongly 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. The statements above

are in line with Desimone et al. (2014) who contended that successful mentoring results into building relationship that is based on mutual respect, reciprocity, shared values and clear expectations to enable mentees acquire skills relevant for their jobs they are assigned to.

One of the key informants said:

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).

Generally, the results show that stakeholders have perceived mentoring programs as positive towards developing novice teachers' competence in secondary schools. It was found that through the use of multiple mentoring approaches mentors were able to support their mentees. Moreover, novice teachers view the mentors as models to develop a greater understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, as mentoring was perceived as an important employee development tool that enhanced their effectiveness and improved both employee retention and job performance. Likewise, mentoring helps novice teachers to acquire problem solving skills and empowerment, thereby filling the gap created by limited practices and experiences not covered during trainers' education and training in colleges.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Considering the findings of this study, it is concluded that different forms of mentoring programs were practiced in Mbeya region, Tanzania. These include formal and informal mentoring, instance and group mentoring, situational, and supervisory mentoring from which each form of mentoring benefited novice teachers towards the facilitation of teaching and learning. Consequently, the forms of 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. Secondly, it can be concluded that stakeholders perceive mentoring programs as positive towards developing novice teachers' competence through the usage of multiple mentoring approaches. Stakeholders also perceive mentoring programs as models to develop novice teachers' understanding and enhanced their effectiveness and improved both employee retention and job performance. Finally, it is concluded that, while

novice teachers viewed mentors as models to develop a greater understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, mentoring covered the gap created by limited practices and experiences not covered during trainers' education and training in colleges. Therefore, it is recommended that mentors need to cultivate a culture of helping mentees and create mentoring goals to support mentees' progress from the beginning of their teaching career.

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