

MENTORSHIP AS A VALUE ADDITION STRATEGY FOR TECHNICAL INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

The development of any nation is pegged on the quality of education offered. Teachers play a central role in a county's education system and so does their quality. It is important to ensure that the training of the teachers is at par with the developmental needs of a country. The training carried should aim at producing an all-round teacher who is well versed with the dynamic field of teaching. Due to the high demand of education, large content of the material to be covered and limited time to get sufficient instruction both in pedagogy and the teaching subjects, a lot needs to be done to ensure a competent teacher at the end of the teaching practicum. The objective of this paper will be to explore current status of mentorship practice in the technical and vocational institutions, to review the challenges to the implementation of mentorship in the technical and vocational institutions and recommend the benefits of mentorship to the mentor, mentee and the instructional process as a whole. Document analysis was used in data collection and secondary data used to study the various aspects of mentor and mentee academic based interaction in the technical and vocational institutions. The study established that through the mentor mentee interaction there was a great reduction in the attrition rate of the student teachers, the interaction also served as a great opportunity for the university staff to formulate liaison with the technical institution which is an important aspect towards the improvement of the learner's capacity. It was further established that through mentorship the rigidity of the classroom instructional approach is broken and an informal engagement is allowed which is a great step towards an enhanced instructional process. Through mentorship the study also established that the mentees were able to settle in their institutions of teaching and hence commence of instructional activities early enough. The study thus concluded that mentorship is a good practice and should be encouraged amongst student-teachers going for the teaching practicum exercise.

Keywords: mentor, mentee, teaching practicum

Problem statement

The subject of mentorship has been discussed from different perspectives in terms of the institutions of engagement. Among the approaches observed in the mentorship process is the secondary school institutions where there has been engagement of mentors in assessment and guidance of student teachers during their teaching practicum. Mentoring can generally be described as the interaction between a mentee and mentor mainly focused on the guidance by the mentor on different education-based issues with the aim of making the mentee more efficient in their academic engagements during their time of attachment. While there seems to be a number of

initiated mentor-mentee based activities in the basic education, not much has been observed in the tertiary education sector with the reason being partly the lack of knowledge on the means and the benefits of this process. This gap will be addresses by reviewing the literature in the areas of mentorship across different institutions and bringing out the means of implementation and the merits of the exercise.

Research questions

The purpose of this literature is to explore the research related to mentorship among trainers technical and vocational institutions. The following questions were developed to guide in the review of the literature.

1. What is the current status of mentorship practice in the technical and vocational institutions?
2. What are the challenges to the implementation of mentorship in the technical and vocational institutions?
3. What are the benefits of mentorship to the mentor, mentee and the instructional process as a whole?

Theoretical framework

The two major mentoring models that have been adopted by several institutions include the cooperate model and the collaborative model. (Muraya et al., 2020). A study by (Ochanji & Marcos, 2017) indicated that due to the insufficient nature of the corporate model in terms of assisting the student teacher in their practicum, the collaborative model was a better approach which entails the following; The mentoring process is considered from the perspective of the three main contributors that is the student teacher, the mentor and the university assessor. The mentee is encouraged to keep a self-reflective journal from which he shares self-evaluation with the mentor. In this model the mentor is given a central role in that they act as guides in assisting the mentee to understand the applicational use of professional documents and also act as a role model in the instructional processes. In this model, importance is attached from the point of initiation of the mentorship process. The selection of the mentor is done with great care to ensure that the person selected has the qualities necessary for the mentees growth. The mentors other responsibility entails appointment of an assisting teacher who is well versed in the mentees content area. This is important since in some cases the institution may have more than one student teachers teaching in different areas. The cooperating teacher works closely with the mentee by checking on the quality of the content and the monitoring interaction with the students. The teaching practicum coordinator assigns the university assessors to their respective students and also initiates the link between to the mentors. The university assessors will observe the student teachers to ensure they are teaching as per the required guidelines, they will hold briefs with the mentors to discuss the mentee and also award marks to the student teachers as per their performance.

Methodology

This research process entailed the review of literature from different publication in the field of academic mentorship in the technical and vocational education. Keywords used in the research process included: mentor, mentee, mentorship, teaching practicum, mentor functions in technical

institutions, mentors training and challenges experienced by the mentors and mentees in technical education institutions. The sources of reference include books and academic journals but there are also conference proceedings which have been narrowed in according to the topical area.

Literature Review

Technical and vocational institutions and mentorship

Unlike the university the technical institutions are avenues of practical applications where direct engagement between the teacher and the learner play a pivotal role (Lord et al., 2008). In such environments mentorship is likely to thrive more since the students on teaching practicum are normally coming from institutions where the dominant teaching approach is lecture method. In most of the universities the use of lecture method as a mode of instruction is very common (Ekechukwu & Horsfall, 2015). This is evident even in engineering-based courses where the bulk of the content is taught in class with series of laboratory sessions normally marked with increased student population which is a limiting factor in effective student teacher and student apparatus interaction. According to (Coatsworth, 2016) When the student teacher on teaching practicum moves from the university environment to the technical institutions where hands on experience is takes precedence there is a greater need for a mentor who will aid in their integration into the new system.

(Lord et al., 2008) stated that for the purpose of proper and efficient operations, an institution must be guided by ethics and policies. The education sector is one of the larger areas where there is interaction of diverse entities and for that matter that matter it is quite important that any parties engaged in the system be well informed of the rules of interaction. The teacher trainee who joins the workforce in a training capacity is quite unlikely to be knowledgeable of the workings of their teaching institution apart from the textbook knowledge that they interact with in the classroom setting. The lack of knowledge on the work ethics and policies is likely to plunge the teacher trainee in a coalition course with the other staff in their respective stations. For this reason, the presence of a mentor presents a one stop consultant on issues related to policies and ethics hence facilitating an enhanced working environment.

According to (Sanzo, 2018) The practice of posting teacher trainees to their teaching practicum stations in most cases comes to end on the part of the university once the teacher is assigned their institutions of teaching. Once that is done the only follow up is to await the assessment process. There are no specific assigned teachers to assist the mentee in their teaching practicum experience and the burden of finding their way around is left to the trainee. In some training institution the principal once the trainee reports will assign the head of departments or the deputy principals in charge of academics to handle them although it is highly likely that in some cases they may not have done pedagogy related programs hence a little can be achieved in terms of enhancing the trainees teaching skills. It is thus imperative that the trainee is assigned a specific mentor with the requisite qualities of having done some pedagogical based skills.

The teaching practicum is an expensive and highly engaging exercise and this is mainly due to the numerous out of university interactions that are required between the teacher trainee the assessors to ensure consistent advisory opportunities (Ekechukwu & Horsfall, 2015). The workforce in the

universities is strained due the extensive requirements of covering their curriculum and at the same time be in the trainee institutions offering guidance on teaching practicum matters. In most cases the teaching practicum exercise takes place at the same time the regular university programs hence the need for a critical balance which have been aided by embracing the introduction of online classes among the universities.

The distance between institutions is at times so great to afford sufficient assessments for all the teacher mentees by the university assessors, other locations are also pose security risk to the assessors hence the need to engage mentors and ensure that the learners are well assisted through the program.

(Knippelmeyer & Torraco, 2019) have also noted that the mentorship program not only stands to benefit the mentee but also the mentor. In most cases the mentors who are already part of the teaching fraternity are out of touch with the contemporary pedagogical practices hence they get to benefit from refresher short course on the same and also through guidance of the mentees. Before commencing the mentorship exercise the mentors are undertaken through training session which comprehensively covers the requirements and the duties they are supposed to undertake during the mentorship exercise. They are also advised on the contemporary issues that may be arising in the teaching profession. Based on the feedback from the mentors they have really benefitted from the exercise and noted an improvement in their own skill since they are now able to also practice the skill imparted during training when they are working with the mentees.

General principles

Mentorship in teaching practicum can be described as the assistance offered by the experienced teachers already in offering instruction in the teaching institutions to integrate into the system of teaching and add value to the activities of the institution of practice (Ochanji & Marcos, 2017). In a study by (Mathur et al., 2012) it was also noted that mentorship requires both the activities of the mentor in offering support by attending to the mentees need and the ensuring their availability when called to assist. On the other hand, the mentee has to elicit activeness in their actions as these is likely to inform the mentor on the specific areas of need in terms of the areas of assistance. Mentorship is not limited to staff pairwise interaction where a mentee has to be assigned a single person to interact with but in some situations, they can be informed of the need to avoid the limitation of interaction to only one teacher (Singh et al., 2013). The perception that mentorship can only occur between highly senior or experienced teacher and the mentee should be discarded and the interaction be open across the range of experience. This is due to the fact that the current technological change has placed a lot of dynamics which the young staff may be in a better position to advance (Muraya et al., 2020).

mentorship and its fore rewards

A study by (Singh et al., 2013) indicated that there was evidence that in the selection of the mentor there are considerations that are to be taken into account, this include ensuring that the mentor has done pedagogy as part of the teacher training and they also have experience in the field of teaching. They should also be motivated to assist the young teachers in growing and becoming more effective in their work. Improves the value of an institution in terms of the quality of teaching.

This is due to the fact the new staff don't have to begin from scratch but get to benefit from the experience of others well versed with the way of doing things. (Cambria, 2006) also explained that the growth rate of the staff in terms of their expertise and work-related progression is also well experienced since through the guidance of the experts and their consistent presence the real time response is enhanced. In the teaching practicum experience, there assessment is normally done from two perspective that is by the mentor and the university-based lecturer. (Singh et al., 2013) noted that, as much as the mentor's assessment does not constitute the final grade but requires moderation of the university lecturer the positive is that their consistent presence in the teaching institution ensures that the apprentice teacher does not need wait time in case there is need for consultation. In the assessment exercise carried out during the teaching practicum the resource required can prove too overwhelming when the student teachers are spread over a wide area. In cases when the program involves in-service teachers the university lacks the discretion of selecting the institution of practice since the teacher most likely go back to their previous institutions to practice. The logistical support to various far-flung areas of the country is quite expensive hence the service of mentors is important in such situations for cost reduction purposes. (Arslantas & Kocagoz, 2021)also posit that the attrition of experts in any profession is well protected through the mentorship session. The exit strategy when well implemented through mentorship programs where the apprentice is allowed to time with the expert allows for a fluid generational transition. Due to the nature of the integration of both formal and informal learning approaches with a bias on the latter the link between the mentor and the mentee is likely to prompt more skill passage as compared to textbook based transitions. Through the creation of the nexus between the university staff and the technical institutions there is the creation of a great opportunity in different research areas and academic consultancies across different academic fields. In study by (Koigi et al., 2018) it is noted that the mentees report a faster time period of settling in in their new institutions. This thus ensures that they will have sufficient time to prepare their content and deliver in an efficient manner. (Mpfungu & Chimhenga, 2016)The mentee introduction process to the classroom by the mentors allows the students to adjust to the new teacher. Unlike in the university set up where there are limits in terms of the time of interaction between the learners and their instructors, the teaching practicum takes care of this as consistent contact is maintained with the cooperating teacher hence a good opportunity for effective guidance. The self-worth of the mentor is also enhanced as they feel good about having the chance to assist a practicing teacher from a low point to a professional level. The mentors also take the opportunity to refresh themselves since some are a long way from their days of schooling. This also leads to changes in the ways that they engage their learners as they are likely to benefit from contemporary teaching techniques.

Implications

(Ochanji & Marcos, 2017) noted that the requirement of a close academic relationship between the teacher and the student is one of the impetuses of a good performance. The study also indicated that the quality of education is likely to go down if there is no sufficient interaction between the experienced teachers and the new incoming teachers. (Knippelmeyer & Torraco, 2019) in their opined that in the current system the employment of teachers is at a low level and because of this experienced teacher who could have served as good teachers are exiting the teaching profession before the new one is in long enough to learn from them.

With a good mentorship program there is also an assurance of quality in the education system. The teachers are some of the main custodians of education hence when their training is well taken care of then there can be surety that the system is well enhanced.

Mentors’ functions

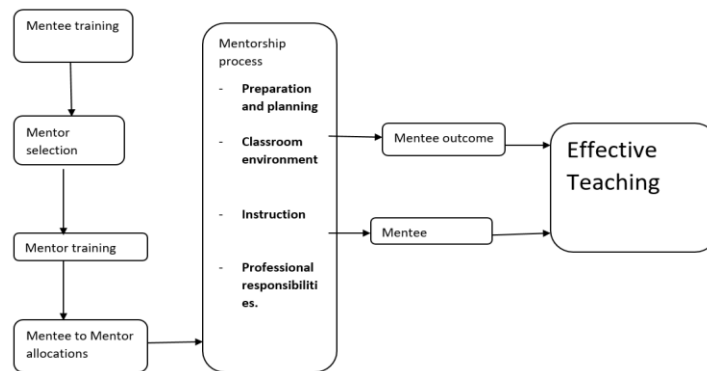
(Mathur et al., 2012) states that mentors functions include offering advisory on the current trends in teaching and approaches to instructions that fit well with the contemporary times. Facilitate growth of the mentees by offering advisory on growth opportunities available and career progress opportunities in their field of study. In the field of teaching there is a variety of teaching materials, the mentee advises on the most relevant and these is important in allowing the mentee to save time that could have been spent in search for the required material (Ochanji & Marcos, 2017). Most of the mentees are coming from academic institutions with little experience of the job market. Their knowledge of work ethics and professional requirements can well be learnt from the mentees.

Mentorship towards effective teaching

Mentee training

The process of mentorship is initiated at the admission of the students to the post graduate program. The postgraduate diploma program in technical and vocational education is meant to equip teachers with pedagogical skills required for instruction in the technical and vocational institutions. The admissibility to the program is based on the prior attainment of a bachelor’s degree in teaching areas found in technical institutions but still lacking in pedagogy. The introduction of the program was informed by the need to have technical institution trainers equipped with pedagogical skills which culminated to the government policy directing that any teacher in the technical institutions would only be allowed to teach if they had acquired skill in the science of teaching. In the course progression, different skills are developed to ensure that teachers understand both their educational needs and those of the learners. Among the areas of consideration include psychology, educational foundations, teaching methods and curriculum development and management. Integrated in these course areas is an attachment period which accounts for the teaching practicum, a time where the students are supposed to go and practice learnt content in the real environment. This is where the practicing teacher gets to interact with the mentor in guidance towards the development of the required skill set.

Mentorship towards effective teaching



Mentor training

Mentors are identified from the training institutions where the student teachers are going to do their teaching practicum. The task of identifying the mentors is assigned to the institution principals who is tasked with the responsibility of identifying an experienced teacher who has a good background of pedagogy, is committed to the teaching profession and is willing to walk through the journey of mentorship with a training teacher. The university through the department of technology education facilitates a training session of the basic requirements of the mentor before the teaching practicum exercise. A thorough and elaborate workshop is initiated where issues pertaining to mentorship are addressed, the department also allows room for further consultations with the mentors.

Allocations

The university teaching practicum coordinator prepares a list of alignment for the mentors and the mentees. For the post graduate students most are in-service teachers coming as continuous professional development hence the mentors are identified amongst their colleague teachers. For effective assistance the mentor is advised to work with subject teachers whom they share the same teaching areas. This ensures that apart from the pedagogical skill required in the lesson delivery the student teacher also gets the benefit assistance in the content area which is a great advantage in terms of wholesome development.

Mentorship and training process

(Ndeke, 2015) opined that Mentorship is an experience that extends beyond the formal confines of the classroom boundaries. When the mentee interacts with the mentor, they get to benefit much from observing the model of behavior of the mentor in real time which is quite beneficial for the student. The mentee is guided in the management of professional documents which is an extension of the skills already studied at an earlier stage but at the classroom level. The mentor takes the mentee through the flow of professional documents and their utilization from the syllabus all the way to the lesson plan which counts as the point of contact between the teacher and his students. Assessment by the mentor is also performed based on guidelines formulated and communicated by the university's technology education department. Extracurricular activities form part of the

important engagement plan that a student-teacher needs to be part of, this under the guidance of the mentor.

Mentorship can be a good means of assisting students in the mastery of content and a means of reduction in the dropout rates among learners. The confidence levels of the learners are also to enhance through the consistent real time assistance accorded by the mentors. A good mentorship program is characterized by the following aspects. There is a personalized attention to the mentee and it is not a case of remote mentorship where the mentor stands from the sidelines and advise but they are actively involved all through the activities. The mentor mentee interaction is not only based on the teaching aspect but also an avenue of exchange of ideas. For the mentee being that they are still in process of studies are just from the institution and are likely to share with the mentors the contemporary issues in the teaching. With the right environment for exchange of ideas by two parties ends up enlightening each other creating a richer educational process. As part of the

learning process individual differences are very important to note and, on that aspect, mentorship serves as a good means of putting it into perspective. In the mentorship program unlike in the university-based classrooms there is an individualized attention that is given to the mentee, this aids in resolving personal aligned issues that may have prevented proper learning. The teacher in some instances may lose confidence even after having taught for some time if exposed to pedagogy training. This is a result of having been exposed to new teaching approaches of which they are not aware of, with mentors well ingrained in pedagogy, the mentee stands well guided in building confidence and handling challenges through a more personal real time guidance by the mentor. In the technical field will be found experienced mentors who apart from the classroom teaching experience have also industrial affiliations. The mentees will thus get an opportunity to advance their networking and get to understand the requirements of the industry in addition to the classroom teaching experiences. Learning occurs at three levels that is the affective, psychomotor and the cognitive. At the university where the mentees are skilled in teaching a lot of the cognitive learning is achieved due to numerous lecture sessions as compared to practical sessions. The mentor mentee academic interaction makes possible for mere practical based learning, the mentee is also able to observe the mentor at work hence aspects like work ethics are also ingrained during the mentorship process. Apart from the mentee the mentor also gets to benefit from the exercise since they are able to enhance their leadership skills.

(Knippelmeyer & Torracco, 2019) noted that among the attributes that mentors are supposed to harbor to be effective mentors include; the willingness to assume the role of leading and guiding the students through the process. This is informed by the fact that in most cases the mentors are not given a light teaching load due to the mentorship duties. For effective mentorship there is also the aspect of training which has to be well done for the mentors this is informed by the dynamic nature of education and the consistently emerging issues. (Coatsworth, 2016) opined that as a mentor there should also be the willing attitude of providing an open platform where the mentee can also seek assistance from other members of staff who are well versed in the area of profession. The mentor is not supposed to play the ultimate support system for the mentee but should also direct the mentee to the requisite channels where they can get additional help. At the end of the mentoring process there is need to write a report on the whole process and this should be done in a progressive manner to avoid the omission of information which is likely to occur if done in the last minutes of the mentoring session.

Limitations

the study findings were mostly based on records from secondary sources this may be open to biases of the publishers, this was mitigated for by the use of multiple sources to gather data on different experiences in the mentorship field.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study established that mentorship is an important component in the induction of the student teacher into the teaching profession. Mentorship was well indicated to contribute towards a better understanding of the professional development of the teacher in terms of ensuring that they were guided on the application of professional documents use and student interaction under the guidance of professional mentors.

It was also established from the study that there is still a gap in terms of embracing the mentorship practice. Most of the institutions mandated with teaching practicum are still engaging the assessors from the university in totality in terms of guiding and assessing the learners while they are on their teaching practice. This is caused partly by the absence of policies to guide the engagement of mentors. The student on teaching practicum is therefore forced to navigate through the process of teaching and learning by themselves with a likelihood confusion.

The study thus recommends that the institution institutions offering pedagogy-based courses and teaching practicum should develop policies that can give directions on the engagement of the tutors. Adequate training should also be done to the mentors to ensure that they are well versed and refreshed on the assessment methods.

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