

# Examining the Effectiveness of Mentoring Process in Developing Teaching Competencies of Secondary School Novice Teachers: A Case of Mbeya Region in Tanzania

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## ABSTRACT

Mentoring programmes are cost effective for both novices and practicing secondary school teachers as when carried out earlier, become competent and confident. Yet, a few studies have been conducted in Tanzania in particular Mbeya region on the matter. The study examined the effectiveness of mentoring process in developing teaching competencies of the secondary school novice teachers in Mbeya region, Tanzania. Padua's theory, Social cognitive theory and Herzberg two factor theories guided the study. A case study design using a sample of 110 novice and experienced teachers was used to execute the study. Questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics aided in analyzing quantitative data while content analysis served for qualitative data. The findings revealed that mentoring programs resulted into confidence and command among novice teachers where mentors cultivate specific ideas among mentees in facilitating teaching and learning. Yet, mentoring programs contributed to the professional development of novice teachers with personal support to cope with their new work environment. It was concluded that mentorship effectively develops novice teachers' competencies and recommended that mentors should cultivate further understanding of how to help novice teachers and how to create mentoring goals to support novice teachers' progress in the beginning of their teaching career.

**Keywords:** Mentoring, Mentor, Mentee, Novice Teachers, Teaching Competencies & Secondary School Teachers.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Mentoring programmes are cost effective and interesting for both novices and practicing secondary school teachers because when mentoring is carried out earlier, novice teachers become competent and are able to execute their works with confidence. Yet, there are a few studies which have so far been conducted in Tanzania (in particular Mbeya region) concerning the effectiveness of mentoring process in developing teaching competencies of secondary school novice teachers. According to Callahan (2016) mentoring is the process or an opportunity to develop an individual's mental and professional capabilities. The most widely accepted definition is that mentoring is a developmental interactive relationship established between mentors and mentee in an organization in which mentors transmit knowledge, skills, and experience and provide support, guidance, and friendship to mentee (Geeraets *et al.*, 2010).

Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) provided two types of mentoring namely formal and informal mentoring that are accompanied with phases or stages. They further stated that

a poorly planned and unstructured mentoring can be a waste of time. Mentoring provides mentee with challenging work, social support, and safe relationship harbors through a process of knowledge and skill sharing, which positively affects employee performance and behavior (Callahan, 2016). For novice teachers who enter the profession and get more knowledge in teaching; there may be a great likelihood for effective teaching in schools if are capacitated with mentoring programmes. Secondly, existing practitioners can benefit from further education (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% of the Fortune companies informed that mentoring was a key factor in their employees' personal success. Again, (71%) of the 500 companies and private companies indicated that using mentoring programmes in their organizations enhanced effectiveness among workers. Another survey of 77% of the companies that have mentoring programmes indicated improvement to both employee retention and job performance (Geeraets *et al.*, 2010). Mentoring programmes are cost effective and interesting for both novices and

practicing secondary school teachers in Tanzania because when mentoring is carried out earlier, novice teachers become competent and are able to execute their works with confidence (Wandela, 2014). A few attempts for mentoring programmes in Tanzania, have been conducted in areas related to mentoring so as to enhance teaching to novice teachers. Reports show that mentoring programmes have been helping in-service primary school teachers in Shinyanga Region under Education Quality Improvement Project-EQUIP (Soko, 2012). Other programmes which were attempted are mentoring for Licensed Secondary School Teachers Tanzania (MoEC, 2004) and mentoring to support Two-tier Diploma Student-Teachers (MoEC, 2007).

Despite of several attempts to start mentoring programmes in Tanzania but there are no mentoring programmes that have been started so far. Those Mentoring Programmes had some weaknesses that made them not very useful. Most of them were not sustainable; they were limited in scope (not scaled up country-wide); and were not supported by existing government policies. Some mentoring programmes existed in documents yet; no studies of mentoring were carried out before they were started. This study examined the effectiveness of mentoring process in developing teaching competencies of secondary school novice teachers in Mbeya region.

The general objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of mentoring process in developing teaching competencies of the secondary school novice teachers in Mbeya region, Tanzania. Specifically, the article tried,

- (i) To determine whether novice teachers enhance their confidence and command through mentorship programmes in facilitating teaching and learning in Mbeya region, Tanzania.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Mbeya Region in Tanzania. The reason for conducting a study was that there are a few studies in local context of Tanzania and Mbeya in particular as the area seems to be new and unfamiliar with regard to mentoring novice secondary school teachers. The study utilized case study 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 are novice (new) teachers and 1,841 are experienced teachers. Yet, the statistics from Districts Education Offices indicates that there are 85 Secondary Schools: 68 are Public and 17 are private owned schools. For the purpose of this study the population included 138 novice (new) teachers who were recently posted to work in those three districts councils of Rungwe – 50 new teachers, Busokelo – 45 new teachers and Kyela – 43 new teachers.

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

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} n = 138 / 1 + 138 \times (0.5 \times 0.5)$$

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

Therefore, the representative samples comprised of Rungwe District Council 40 respondents, Busokelo District Council 36 respondents and Kyela District Council 32 respondents.

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 their personal experience of each respondent regarding the examination of the effectiveness of mentoring process in developing teaching competencies of the secondary school novice teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS while qualitative data being analyzed through content analysis.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To ensure validity in this study, the researchers used triangulation method to collect data. Researchers were able to ensure reliability by preparing in advance an interview guide and questionnaires in which the questions asked were directed and created. 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). The results were as follows.

### A. Novice Teachers' Confidence and Command through Mentorship Programmes

This objective determined whether novice teachers enhance their confidence and command through mentorship programmes in facilitating teaching and learning. Respondents' views were sought by administering the questionnaires and interviews. To obtain data on this aspect, the respondents were asked 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 were obtained and summarized in Table I as shown hereunder.

The results in Table I show that 85% of respondents strongly agreed that confidence and command have been a result of a mentor providing the opportunity to draw novice teachers' one's conclusions. This implies that, novice teachers were provided with skills to enable them to perform their jobs. It was found that confident novice teachers were able to utilize well skills and solve the problems they encountered. The statements above concur with Geeraets *et al.* (2018) who reported that many teachers begin their careers with a lack of confidence in their abilities, which can affect educators at all levels. Through offering mentoring programs, novice teachers change and enrich their careers, building confidence (or efficacy) in their abilities as they learn from older or younger colleagues.

TABLE I: NOVICE TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE AND COMMAND

Statements	% Strongly agree	% Agree	% Uncertain	% Disagree	% Strongly disagree
Mentor provides the opportunity to draw one's conclusions	85	15	0	0	0
Mentors have specific ideas about how a novice teacher should teach the lesson content	80	10	0	10	0
Mentoring programme contributes to the professional development of Novice teachers	90	10	0	0	0
Mentoring programmes provide Novice teachers with personal support to cope within their new work environment	75	25	0	0	0
In mentorship, the mentor provides instructions and advice to be tailored to the mentee needs	70	0	0	30	0
Mentoring programs are cost effective and interesting, when carried out earlier novice teachers become competent and are able to execute their works with confidence	60	0	20	20	0

Source: Field Data, 2022.

One of the key informants was of the following view:

*We see some changes to our novice teachers where through coaching, confidence and command on issues they teach have increased. They now can stand by their own (Mentor, M, 1).*

On the other hand, the results in Table 1 show that 80% of respondents strongly agreed while 10% of respondents agreed that mentors have specific ideas about how a novice teacher should teach the lesson content towards cultivating confidence and command. It was found that by inculcating relevant ideas to novice teachers, the facilitation of teaching and learning has been fruitfully. Moreover, 10% of respondents disagreed on the matter. The statement above concurs with Gilles *et al.* (2013) who asserted that novice teachers through mentorship appreciate general help, pedagogical support, and personal support through practical advice, instructional support, encouragement, and positive feedback something that enhance confidence and command in their dealings.

One of the key informants was of the following view:

*Through mentorship, novice teachers have learned how to select relevant lesson contents to be used in classroom teaching as per curriculum. In so doing, confidence and command have been key factors towards their success (Mentor, M, 13).*

Furthermore, the results in Table I show that 90% of respondents strongly agreed while 10% of respondents agreed that mentoring programs contributed to professional development of novice teachers. This implies that with mentorship novice teachers are developed professionally and are able to apply their professional competency towards students' success. The statement above concurs with Gilles *et al.* (2013) who contended that mentoring assists novice teachers with the challenges they face and promote professional development as mentoring has been shown to help novice teachers acquire needed skillsets.

One of the key informants was of the following view:

*Novice teachers have been entering classrooms with a steep learning curve although capacitated in their preparation programs in colleges. Unfortunately, they are found to lack content knowledge and have*

*unrealistic expectations on workload resulting into a mismatch between their beliefs and practices. When, mentoring and guidance are being carried out; they come to realize the realities and cope with the situations they get in (Mentor, M, 15).*

From the above affirmation, Keskin *et al.* (2018) asserted that novice teachers might be overwhelmed with workload responsibilities, classroom management issues, assessment of students and the overall picture of what it means to be a teacher. Therefore, it is through their unique roles that they learn to collaborate with others, differentiate instructions and come up with helping tactics that aid students from diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, the results in Table I show that 75% of respondents strongly agreed while 25% of respondents agreed that mentoring programs provide novice teachers with personal support to cope within their new work environment. This implies that support from mentors helps mentees accept the environment they work in order to serve students in their day-to-day teaching and learning. It was found that in order to enable novice teachers perform better, mentors helped novice teachers develop instructional strategies under their guidance, get rid of isolation, and use available data in their schools to make instructional decisions. Therefore, novice teachers receiving mentorship developed effective and best practices faster than teachers who were not mentored. By so doing, mentors encouraged novice teachers to reflect on their practice and made changes as required.

One of the key informants was of the following view:

*Our mentoring on novice teachers enabled them acquire the necessary guidance something that aided them develop strategies that resulted into proper decisions (Mentor, M, 1).*

Similarly, the results in Table I show that 70% of respondents strongly agreed that in mentorship, the mentor provides instructions and advice to be tailored to the mentee needs. This implies that when mentors provided instructions, mentees accommodated them fully for the purpose of facilitating teaching and learning. Moreover, 30% of respondents disagreed that some instructions could not be provided fully to enable novice teachers perform well. The statement above concurs with Ruday (2018) who reported

that an idea that works for one teacher may not work for another person, who might possess a different personality or philosophy as in a mentoring relationship; the mentor guides and helps the novice.

Nonetheless, the results in Table I show that 60% of respondents strongly agreed that mentoring programs are cost effective and interesting as when carried out earlier novice teachers become competent and are able to execute their works with confidence. The results concur with Gilles *et al.* (2013) who stated that an effective mentor can provide personal and practical support to a novice teacher while taking an active role when learning from their mentors. However, novice teachers need to communicate their needs and think about the mentor's suggestions critically before assimilating them into the classroom. Yet, 20% of respondents were undecided as they could not see the difference while 20% of respondents disagreed that mentoring programs are not cost effective and interesting as there are some novice teachers, although they undergone mentorship training could not assume their competence in their execution of works. This was obvious in some cases something that needs a reflection.

Generally, the results show that confidence and command through mentorship programs among novice teachers resulted into a mentor providing the opportunity to draw novice teachers' conclusions as it was found that mentors have specific ideas about how a novice teacher should teach the lesson content towards cultivating confidence and command. Yet, mentoring programs contributed to professional development of novice teachers as mentoring programs provide novice teachers with personal support to cope within their new work environment. As mentors provide instructions and advice to be tailored to the mentee needs; it was revealed that mentoring programs are cost effective and interesting as when carried out earlier novice teachers become competent and are able to execute their works with confidence.

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