

An Exploration of Issues That Affect Mentoring and Teacher Effectiveness in Government Aided Secondary Schools in the Acholi Sub-Region

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Abstract

This paper investigates the challenges faced in mentoring and its implications for teacher effectiveness in Government-aided secondary schools in the Acholi sub-region in Uganda. The study used a descriptive, cross sectional research design within a focus on government aided secondary schools in the Acholi sub-region. It was found that mentoring faces challenges such as limited time, teachers' negative attitudes, lack of motivation and poor relationship between teachers and administrators, which leads teachers to distance themselves from mentors and avoid mentoring sessions, thus impacting on teacher effectiveness. The study recommends that education stakeholders should emphasize mentoring to enhance quality education at all levels in Government-aided secondary schools. Government should institutionalize the mentoring process to change teachers mind set on mentoring and improve quality mentoring training.

Keywords

Mentoring, Challenges, Implications, Effectiveness, Teachers, Secondary Schools

1. Introduction

According to Feyissa et al., (2019), mentoring entails career support that is provided by an experienced, knowledgeable, skillful, empathetic and committed in-

dividual or a mentor to another less experienced individual or a mentee. It involves a reciprocal relationship between the two parties and hence improves both their career outcomes. Mentoring provides opportunity for individualized attention and support (Bwiruka et al., 2021). Mentoring has also been defined as an interactive process that helps individuals acquire teaching skills based on lesson design, methods of delivery, stimulating interests in the subject and motivating students to learn more effectively and efficiently thus improving teacher effectiveness (Mentoring is conceived to be a Continuous) (Janas, 1996; Metros & Yang, 2006). Professional Development (PD) is a tool to improve teachers' instructional skills. Little, (1994) suggested that the conventional forms of professional development and support grounded in training are poorly conceived to help teachers to expand possibilities to learning, teaching and schooling. Mentoring at school level has been conceived as a better model for helping teachers expand their knowledge and expertise in classroom instruction. It is associated with positive outcomes such as assisting the mentee in establishing clear learning goals and professional relationships and improving both their theoretical knowledge and practical skills (Feyissa et al., 2019). Smith & Lynch (2014) argued that quality education largely depends on the magnitude of school based teacher mentoring in improving teachers' skills, knowledge and values which leads to learners' achievements. It is difficult to determine to what degree mentoring impacts on teacher effectiveness, since there are vast differences among the structures that each school chooses to implement.

Although mentoring began as a process by a known and trusted person, Green-Powell (2012), it has evolved into variety of programmes where adults are recruited and trained to become mentors for those in need of assistance. Mentoring is one of the key teacher development strategies that were identified as effective in addressing educational reforms in Uganda (Lyseight & Elaine, 2017) Mentorship, if done well, is an important, sustainable and cost effective tool for creating dynamic learning spaces. However, in East Africa, mentorship is not well integrated in schools, and as with colonial models of education, mentorship remains patriarchal and hierarchical thus not enabling space for young people (Ssemata et al., 2017) In Malawi (Mwanza, Moyo, & Maphosa, 2016) identified that mentorship can be dangerous and disabling for women because of this male dominated model. In their study of mentorship in Kenya, Ochanji, Twoli, & Bwire & Maundu (2017) suggest that mentorship models are biased towards men both in terms of quantitative inclusion (access and consequent career development) and in terms of qualitative inclusion (recognizing that different genders have different needs).

Mentoring is an interactive process that helps individuals acquire teaching skills based on lesson designs, methods of delivery; stimulating interests in the subject and motivating students to learn more effectively and efficiently thus improving teacher effectiveness (Janas, 1996; Metros & Yang, 2006). Although mentoring began as a process by a known and trusted person, it has evolved in to variety of programmes where adults are recruited and trained to become

mentors for those in need of assistance. Mentoring was very helpful as it could guide, encourage and motivate the individuals in organizations/Institutions. However, mentoring has many challenges which make it difficult for teachers to be able to acquire more supportive skills.

In Africa, mentoring started long before the Greek Civilization (Green-Powell, 2012). In ancient Africa, when a child was born, everyone in the village would share the responsibility of teaching him/her. But there was also one person a non-family member, who would be assigned a special role of bringing up the child. This person was called “habari gani menta” in Swahili meaning a person who asks: “what is happening?” The practice of apprenticeship and transferring generational knowledge, so prevalent in craft societies of past centuries, draws heavily on the concept of mentoring (Deans et al., 2006).

In Uganda, the same practices also take place. Children born in a family are brought up by an uncle or aunt. Mentoring started long before the coming of formal education but its documentation was not adequately done. In the primary education section, Teacher Development Management System (TDMS) was initiated in October 1993 across six catchment areas responsible for providing support and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for in-service teachers and teacher trainees in Primary Teachers Colleges (PTC) (USAID, 2003).

In the Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda, a report from (MOES, 2004) reveals that mentoring has become an extremely popular policy for improving the performance of teachers. What perhaps remains a concern is that mentors have not been trained adequately in the mentoring process and seem to have negative attitudes towards mentoring in government-aided secondary schools. Teachers continue to be absent from schools and even when they are present, they do not enter classes to teach regularly, despite being timetabled to be teaching. It is realized that teachers resist mentoring process and therefore little attention is given to the mentoring process and yet it is a strategy that is acclaimed for developing teaching skills of teachers. Perhaps teachers in the Acholi sub-region have been teaching poorly because of resistance to mentoring in Government-aided secondary schools (MOES, 2012).

This research study was carried out in government aided secondary schools because, the study targets a significant portion of the education sector in Uganda, which caters to a large number of students. Accessibility and availability of resources: Government aided schools in Uganda often have more limited resources compared to private or elite schools. This makes them particularly vulnerable to various challenges that can affect teacher effectiveness and the quality of mentoring programs. Lastly, Policy implications: Government aided schools are directly influenced by government policies and regulations, which play a crucial role in shaping the education system. By conducting the study in government aided schools, researchers can identify key issues and challenges that may require policy interventions and improvements. The study can be used to inform policymakers and educational authorities about potential areas for reforms and investments.

Research Questions

What are the implications of mentoring challenges on, teacher knowledge and responsibilities, the classroom environment setting, design assessment, effective feedback, and effective interaction between teachers and students in government-aided secondary schools?

2. Method

2.1. Study Area

Acholi sub-region is in the Northern Part of Uganda. The Acholi sub-region is made up of eight districts. These districts are Gulu, Amuru, Nwoya, Omoro, Pader, Agago, Kitgum and Lamwo. There are 48 government-aided secondary schools in this sub-region. The study was carried out in 42 government aided secondary schools in the Acholi sub-region.

2.2. Study Design

A cross-sectional study design was used among mentors and mentees who teach in the government aided secondary schools in the Acholi sub-region. Information on mentoring implications and challenges was obtained using open ended interviews and documentary analysis.

2.3. Study Population

The participants for this study were 56 teachers, Directors of Studies an, Deputy head teachers and head teachers from Government-aided secondary schools who are involved in school mentoring programmes in the Acholi sub-region. The teachers were sourced through the office of the head teachers.

The participants were receiving continuous professional development through head teachers supervision and feedback, because of identified difficulties teachers encounter in teacher such as time management, poor teaching methods, inadequate preparations, lack of feedback to students. Teachers were engaged in mentoring processes organized by school mentors. These were Directors of studies, Deputy head teachers and head teachers of government aided secondary schools in the Acholi Sub-region.

2.4. Sample Size Determination

The minimum sample size for the study was determined by using the sample size formula for simple proportions (Cresswell, 2012).

2.5. Sampling Techniques

The list of government-aided secondary schools from the Acholi sub-region obtained. The schools were sampled using a simple random sampling technique of balloting, six government aided secondary schools were from each of the district. This was the first stage.

In the second stage, a list of all the teachers was made. The number of teachers

in the 42 government aided secondary schools were 56. The third stage was sampling techniques used was purposive sampling. In the third stage, mentors were sampled using the researchers' own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their surveys. In the government-aided secondary schools, there is one head teacher, two deputy head teachers and one Director of studies.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The ethical consideration were addressed by the researcher who obtained a letter of introduction from Gulu University, Faculty of Education and Humanities and Gulu University Research Ethics Committee to introduce him to the Resident District Commissioners, District Education Officers and Head teachers of the selected Government-aided secondary Schools in the Acholi sub-region. Confidentiality and anonymity were addressed by keeping especially personal information or sensitive issues confidential and anonymous so that readers may not be able to discover the identity of the respondents. Personal life, attitudes and feelings were kept private and protected in a lockable place and were used by researchers only.

2.7. Data Analysis

Both primary and secondary data was collected. The researcher used open-handed interview and documentary analysis to collect the data. Quality control was ensured through determining validity, reliability and extraneous variables. Data analysis was descriptive, response from the head-teachers, deputy head teachers, (academic), directors of studies and teachers were organized according to the themes identified from research questions and analyzed using qualitative data analysis software method called customs table.

3. Findings

This section presents research findings on challenges of mentoring and their implications on teacher effectiveness as a professional practice in government aided secondary schools. Data were collected using qualitative interviews from 56 respondents. These respondents were the head teachers (14), Deputy Head teachers (14), Directors of studies (14) and teachers (14) from government aided secondary schools in Acholi sub-region. Data analysis was presented in **Table 1**.

The findings of the qualitative study highlight that mentors are facing many challenges including negative attitudes, limited time, lack of motivation, poor relationships inadequate mentoring skills, laziness, lack of cooperation and many others.

These findings are supported by the results of the interviews, where 53.6% of respondents reported that teachers have negative attitudes towards mentoring in government aided secondary schools. **Table 1** suggests that negative attitude is one of the major challenges in implementation of mentoring services in educational institutions as reported by the majority of the head teachers, Deputy head

Table 1. Descriptive statistics about challenges of mentoring.

Items about Challenges of mentoring	No		Yes	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Limited Time	33	59.4%	23	40.6%
Inadequate Mentoring Skills	42	75.5%	14	24.5%
Lack Of Space	52	93.2%	04	6.8%
Attitude	26	46.5%	30	53.5%
Lack Of Personnel	47	83.9%	09	16.1%
Lack Of Motivation	34	61.6%	22	38.4%
Poor Relationship	40	70.6%	16	29.4%
Confidentiality	54	96.8%	02	3.2%
Lack Of Planning	48	85.5%	8	14.5%
Lack Of Training	53	94.2%	3	5.8%
Indiscipline	47	83.9%	9	16.1%
Inadequate Resources	45	80.0%	11	20.0%
Absenteeism	50	89.4%	6	10.6%
Lack Of Policy	52	93.5%	4	6.5%
Teacher/Learners Ratio	49	86.8%	7	13.2%
Teacher Transfer	55	98.4%	1	1.6%
Laziness	44	78.0%	12	22.0%
Expensive Exercise	54	97.1%	2	2.9%
Lack Of Cooperation	44	78.4%	12	21.6%
Lack Of Follow-Up	53	95.2%	3	4.8%
Lack Of Funds	44	79.0%	12	21.0%
Lack Of Feedback	53	95.2%	3	4.8%

Grey-Major challenges; Light brown-Also require attention.

teachers, Directors of studies and teachers. For example, one of the head teachers reported that,

“our teachers have negative attitude towards mentoring in teaching they do not know the meaning of mentoring, they have never participated in mentoring”, “they say mentoring waste time and mentoring does not improve teaching skills among teachers”.

Another deputy head teacher reported that,

“teachers have negative attitudes towards mentoring as they say we attended mentoring sessions before and it has not helped us to grow and develop and when a mentor requests them to meet them they do not turn up.”

When asked, a directors of studies also reported that,

“teachers in our schools today are not very happy with mentoring services because it is rarely done and it wastes time”.

This implies that teachers have negative attitudes towards mentoring in government aided secondary schools in Acholi sub-region. Therefore, the items about challenges of mentoring and their implications affect teacher effectiveness according to head teachers, deputy head teachers and directors of studies in government aided secondary schools.

Another challenge that mentoring has in teaching is limited time. **Table 1** suggests that limited time is one of the major challenges in implementation of mentoring services in educational institutions as majority of the head teachers, Deputy head teachers and Directors of studies reported. One of the head teachers reported that time is very little for mentoring since everything is time tabled. One of the directors of studies also reported that finding time on the time table is very difficult as there are already many subjects to be taught in all classes. Director of studies reported that limited time is a challenge in mentoring. For example, one of the head teachers reported that,

“we hardly find time to carry out mentoring, there are many school activities to be accomplished and our time table is so congested that time for mentoring becomes so limited.”

Yet another Director of studies reported thus,

“we have no time for mentoring in our school, because there is a lot of work which comprise of teaching, assessing learners making schemes of work, looking for teaching materials”. “We get so tired that we are not able to attend to mentoring services”.

This implies that time is very crucial in every activity, inadequate time make it difficult for work to be accomplished. Limited time makes it difficult for mentors to conduct mentoring services to mentees in government aided secondary schools. Therefore, the items about challenges of mentoring affect teacher effectiveness according to head teachers, deputy head teachers and directors of studies in government aided secondary schools.

Lack of motivation is one of the major challenges to mentoring services. The head teachers, deputy head teachers and directors of studies reported that lack of motivation is a challenge to mentoring services. One of the head teachers reported that, mentors are not being motivated in doing their work. Another director of studies also reported that mentoring is not being carried out well because mentors are not being motivated. For instance, one director of studies reported that,

“lack of motivation makes it hard for mentors to carry out mentoring services to mentees, there is no facilitation for mentoring services in government aided secondary schools”.

Another deputy head teacher said,

“lack of motivation is one of the challenges that mentoring processes meet in secondary schools because teachers are not regularly motivated by administrators, therefore they distance themselves from the mentors”. “Lack of motivation is the main hurdle in mentoring services”.

This implies that lack of motivation affects mentoring services in government aided secondary school. Therefore, the items about challenges of mentoring affect teacher effectiveness according to head teachers, deputy head teachers and directors of studies in government aided secondary schools.

Poor relations are one of the major challenges of mentoring services. Director of studies reported that poor relations make it difficult for mentors to mentor teachers in the schools because they tend to fear interacting with mentors. Another deputy head teacher reported that poor relationship cause anxiety in teachers, this affects mentoring process in government aided secondary schools, for example, one of the head teachers reported that,

“poor relationship among teachers and administrators affect mentoring process as they are not in good talking terms in secondary schools”.

Another director of studies reported that,

“poor relationship among teachers and administrators make teachers to fear administrators, this makes teachers hate everything they do thus affecting mentoring services”.

This implies that poor relationship affects mentoring services in government aided secondary school. Therefore, the items about challenges of mentoring affect teacher effectiveness according to head teachers, deputy head teachers and directors of studies in government aided secondary schools.

The study reported that inadequate mentoring skills are one of the mentoring challenges that require attention. Two head teachers reported that mentoring require skills in order for mentees to be guide well. One deputy head teacher reported that inadequate mentoring skills affect mentoring services as mentees would not be guided appropriately. For example, two directors of studies reported that,

“our mentors have not been equipped with adequate mentoring skills because they were not adequately trained in mentoring processes”.

One of the deputy head teachers argued that,

“mentoring does not require any training, anyone can conduct mentoring easily because it is one on one relationship in your area of specialization”.

This implies that inadequate mentoring skills affects mentoring services in government aided secondary school. Therefore, the items about challenges of mentoring affect teacher effectiveness according to head teachers, deputy head teachers and directors of studies in government aided secondary schools.

4. Discussions

The discussion is based on the previous studies from national and international context on mentoring challenges. According to the assessment by teachers and school mentors there are mentoring challenges that affect teacher effectiveness. The findings of the qualitative part of this study highlight that mentoring are facing many challenges and implications including limited time for the mentoring process, teachers' attitude towards the mentoring process and poor relation-

ship between mentors and mentees, for instance, were registered by the teachers. These came out from teachers' responses such as "people may not believe in the program or think there is need, there is no need for mentoring programme and mentees are not interested in mentoring process".

These responses revealed that teachers have negative attitudes towards mentoring and these affect teacher effectiveness in Government-aided secondary schools in the Acholi sub-region. These findings are supported by the results of the study by (Eby & McManus, 2004) 54% of those mentored reported being in at least one negative mentoring relationship. Mentoring, like all interpersonal relationships, is a very complex and ever changing situation. Negative events happen even in the healthiest of relationships, and are not necessarily a bad thing. (Harrison, Dymoke, & Pell, 2006) asserted that the ideal mentoring scenario may well lie between the school-led "bureaucratic managerial" approach for teacher training. According to (Ozcan & Balyer, 2012), this study showed that some factors affected colleague mentorship process negatively.

Findings reported that mentors hardly find time to carry out mentoring, there are many school activities to be accomplished and their time table is so congested that time for mentoring becomes so limited. Moreover, mentors face shortage of time because of engagement in laborious activities such as providing reports of the visits/assessments in schools and this, in turn, hampers the mentoring of school teachers (Akhtar, Saleem, & Awan, 2017), this again supports the current study Furthermore, the present research findings are also supported by the results of Saeed & Akhtar's study conducted in 20017. Teachers also emphasize time limitation for knowledge sharing, not greeting teachers from different union, (Ozcan & Balyer, 2012).

Lack of motivation was found to be one of the major challenges to mentoring services. Lack of motivation makes mentors to fail to guide mentees adequately in their work. It leads mentors to be ineffective in their work. The finding was supported by (Reeves, 2020) research that one of the main problems that workplace mentoring programs encounter is motivating mentors. It can be difficult to convince qualified and dedicated mentors to participate in your programme. "lack of motivation is one of the challenges that mentoring processes meet in secondary schools because teachers are not regularly motivated by administrators, therefore they distance themselves from the mentors". "Lack of motivation is the main hurdle in mentoring services". In current study, it was argued that if mentees do not perceive themselves as competent learners who are motivated to achieve good grades (Guay, Ratelle, Roy, & Litalien, 2010), their lack of confidence to self-regulate learning will create high levels of delay (Klassen & Kuzucu, 2017). Motivation is a necessary precondition for mentees involvement in learning (Ciampa, 2013).

The finding revealed that *poor* relationship among teachers and administrators affect mentoring process as they are not in good talking terms in secondary schools". This is supported by (Jobs & Friedland, 2021) study that the way in which you communicate with your mentees is fundamental to your mentoring

relationship. Unrealistic expectations and assumptions can wreak havoc on a mentoring relationship. It is useful for a mentor to be able to draw on to help facilitate and manage key areas of their mentor-mentee relationship, something that is considered.

The mentee's frustrations and lack of guidance can inhibit his or her movement toward independence. Because of the differential in power between the mentor and mentee, this problem is difficult to resolve while maintaining a productive and amiable relationship. A mentee may believe that their mentor lacks commitment to their career. A study by McKimm et al., (2007) argued that personal incompatibility of mentors and mentees frustrates mentoring relationship.

Confidentiality is vital in maintaining a healthy relationship. (Hamlin, 2011) explains that mentoring has been recognized as a powerful human resource development intervention aimed at providing inexperienced employees with career advancement opportunities and also serves as a form of on-the-job training. (Bozeman & Freeney, 2009) argue that the relationship between a more senior, experienced person and a less experienced protégé with the intention of helping and developing the mentees' career.

Some mentors have inadequate mentoring skills such as providing too much or too little help to the teachers which can stall movement toward independence and encourage dependence leaving one to flounder and, again, inhibit progress toward independence. This finding is in line with report from Rankhumise, (2015) that there are common challenges that might be experienced during mentoring, namely, professional expertise mismatch, lack of training and lack of time. All these factors can result in challenges of incompatibility and as such the mentoring process in this case may not succeed. Teachers need guidance and support from a mentor; therefore, the importance of mentoring cannot be ignored (Marable & Raimondi, 2009).

5. Conclusion

Administrators play an important role in the design and implementation of the mentoring programs. Their role in supporting teachers is also crucial because teachers need administrator's guidance and support. Teachers have negative attitudes towards mentoring and these affect teacher effectiveness in Government-aided secondary schools in the Acholi sub-region. And this affects teacher effectiveness in Government-aided secondary schools. Mentor-mentee relationship is not cordial. Many mentors have not been trained; they do not have adequate skills in mentoring teachers. Time is a resource and it is a mentoring challenge that affects teacher effectiveness. Management teams in schools need to consider the creation of enough time to allow the mentor to undertake their role.

Time is a resource that is essential in completion of activities, and it is a resource that dictates upon the successes of the mentees. How to manage time in a mentoring process is difficult. Mentors fail to define the amount of time they are

willing to use at the very beginning of the relationship and if it gets out of hand the first time, they put their feet down. This implies that there are many mentoring challenges that affect teacher effectiveness. The document analysis indicates that the school authorities do not plan for mentoring; this is not seen on the timetable or work plan.

The study sought to establish relationship between mentoring and teacher effectiveness in Government-aided secondary schools in the Acholi sub-region of Uganda. Mentoring processes help to improve on teacher effectiveness as they continually attend different courses organized by school mentors and other education stakeholders. The result is that continuous mentoring process improves on teacher effectiveness in Government-aided secondary schools. This is a process required by the education stakeholders because teacher effectiveness enhances quality education in all the levels of education with specific emphasis on Government-aided secondary schools. In conclusion, quality teaching and learning demand teachers to align teaching to national-level standards and procedures set by NCDC and DES. There are many mentoring challenges which affect the quality of teacher effectiveness in government aided secondary schools in the Acholi sub-region.

Data Availability Statement

This will be made available by authors at any time.

Ethical Consideration and Consent

Ethical clearance was sought and obtained from the committee of Gulu University Research Ethics committee (GUREC). Permissions were also obtained from Uganda National Science and Technology. Participation in the study was voluntary. Respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained.

Authors Contributions

OKumu John Bismarck Drafted the manuscript and gave final approval of the version, Opio George collected and interpreted data, Ogwang Tom Henry revised the manuscript critically for important intellectual content. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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