

## **AN ASSESSMENT OF MENTORING PROGRAMME AMONG NEW LECTURERS AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**Samuel Jabez Arkaifie**

Directorate of Human Resource, Cape Coast Technical University, P. O. Box DL 50, Cape Coast

**Eugene Owusu-Acheampong**

Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies, Cape Coast Technical University  
P. O. Box DL 50, Cape Coast

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**ABSTRACT:** *The goal of the study was to assess the effects of mentoring programme on newly employed lecturers at University of Cape Coast. The specific objectives were to assess the level of mentees involvement in mentoring decisions, to determine the criteria for pairing mentees to mentors, and to determine the effects of the mentoring programme on mentees. The philosophy underlying the study was the pragmatist philosophy and the approach was mixed method. The concurrent mixed method design was used. The stratified, simple random and the purposive sampling techniques were used respectively to select participants for the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study. Instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics whereas qualitative data was analysed using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis procedure. The study revealed mentoring programme has a positive effects on mentees work and personal life. Through the support of mentors, mentees are able to come out with articles and other publications, improved their teaching skills, developed a cordial relationship with their colleagues, and developed a positive personal life style. It is recommended that the mentoring programme should be sustained since the mentees regard it as valuable and enhances their competencies on the job.*

**KEYWORDS:** mentoring; recruiting; evaluating; mentee; mentor; employees; organization

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### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Employee mentoring programme is an indispensable human resource development activity that is required to develop the competencies of staff for tomorrow's performance. It is an activity that is needed in our contemporary business environment to improve employee intelligence, build organization knowledge, ensure effective transfer of knowledge, enhance organizational capabilities and ensure the sustainability of firm's competitive advantage (Abiddin, 2012). It must be emphasized that the two most essential resources required for use in organisations are the human and the material resources. The human resource also termed as the manpower requirement or workforce are fundamental to the success of the organization without whom the materials and other resources become useless (Okurame & Fabunmi, 2014).

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The concepts of mentoring continue to gain popularity in organisations today. This is where newly recruited employees are assigned to mentors to help the mentees cope with stressful and challenging task at the workplace. Mentoring programmes are considered to be fundamental factor for organisations succession planning and employees career development programmes. It is considered an effective training mechanism for employee development (Chrysoula, Georgios, Miltiadis, Stamatios, & Grigorios, 2018). Notwithstanding, most firms undertake mentoring activities without taking measures to assess its effects on employees adjustment, improvements in work performance and to determine the usefulness of such programmes to ascertain whether it should be a continuous activity or vice versa (Ofobruku & Nwakoby, 2015).

Though there have been many studies e.g Chrysoula, Georgios, Miltiadis, Stamatios, & Grigorios, (2018); Hamlin & Sage (2011) and Ofobruku & Nwakoby (2015) on employee mentoring programmes in corporate organization and firms on the effectiveness of mentoring programmes on newly recruited employees, on the contrary, no study has been conducted on the effects of mentoring programmes on new lecturers at the University of Cape Coast. It is in view of the literature gap that this study aimed at addressing the gap in knowledge by assessing the effectiveness of the mentoring programme on newly recruited lecturers at University of Cape Coast. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the area of employee training and development.

The concept mentoring concerns facilitating the personal and professional growth of persons through knowledge sharing and insights that have been learnt through several years of work and practice. Mentoring is classified as a personal development interactions existing between an experienced and more knowledgeable employee and inexperienced ones (Ofobruku & Nwakoby, 2015; Ndebele, Heerden, & Chabaya, 2013; Hamlin & Sage, 2011; and Bell & Treleaven 2011). It is considered as an intimate developmental relationship programme between two persons with one partner ready and showing willingness to learn from the experiences of another (superior) in all facet and spheres of human endeavour (Okurame, 2013). It can be concluded that mentoring is a continuous activity from which a mature and an experienced executive or superior makes available to younger employees his wisdom, experiences and the act of common sense to on their job roles.

Some researchers Jonson (2008) and Cox (2005) have asserted that determining the success of every mentoring programme requires the active involvement of mentees. Metzger, Hardy, Jarvis, Stoner, Pitlick, Hilaire & Lodise (2013) posits that involving employees in the mentoring programme make participation effective, helps mentees learn and relate well with mentor. Osif (2008) indicate that mentees should be able to decide and select the kind of mentors to understudy. According to Miller, Barnes, Miller, & McKinnon, (2013) mentoring the human resources of institution is inevitable because of the positive effects it has on preparing new and inexperienced employees to improve their effectiveness, efficiencies and to their build confidence in the job for institutional growth and success. Solkhe & Chaudhary (2011) assert human resource are vital elements for firm's productivity and therefore, are required to be mentored by experienced

members of the organization. In Chavez (2011) perspective, institutions or firms cannot remain highly competitive unless they resort to inspire, build confidence, lead, support, and continuously mentor employees (Nick, Delahoyde, Del Prato, Mitchell, Ortiz, Ottley & Siktberg, 2012). In Rothwell (2010) study, mentoring new employees was found to improve employee's effectiveness and performance. Inadequate mentoring programmes for organizational members adversely affect their performance. Mentoring programmes was found to be effective for equipping employee with the capabilities for replacing aging and retiring employees and executives. It cannot, therefore, be doubted that maintaining the success of organisations performance hinges largely on the ability to harness the talent of its younger employees through leadership progression programmes that stems from mentoring strategies (Ndebele, Heerden & Chabaya, 2013).

## METHODOLOGY

The study was a mixed method and therefore used the concurrent mixed method design. The total sample size for the quantitative part of the study was ninety-seven lecturers. Ten mentees were conveniently selected for the qualitative part of the study. The stratified and simple random sampling techniques respectively were employed to select participants for the quantitative part of the study. Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data respectively from respondents. The quantitative data was analysed using IBMSPSS version 20 while Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis procedure was employed to analyse the qualitative data. Descriptive statistics was used to determine the mean and standard deviation of criteria for pairing mentees while inferential statistics was used to analyse the effects of mentoring programme on mentees.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Gender

As regards the gender distribution of respondents, out of the total sample of 97 respondents, 63 (64.9%) were made up of male respondents and 34 representing 35.1 percent were females. This indicates that the respondents were male dominated. This might be explained by the fact that the gender gap widens at both secondary and post-secondary levels of education with females constituting only 33 percent at the secondary and post-secondary. It could therefore be argued that fewer females get to the tertiary education level hence few qualify for appointment for lectureship positions in the university.

Table 1: Gender

Sex	Freq.	%
Male	63	64.9
Female	34	35.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field survey, (2019)

### Level of Mentees Involvement in Mentoring Decision

Table 2 sought to determine how much input mentees had in pairing them with their mentors. From the table, 39 of the respondents (40.2%) had moderate amount of input in pairing them with their mentors. Thirty-three representing (34.0%) of the respondents had very little input in the programme. Those who did not have any input into the pairing with their mentors represented 25.8 percent. None of the respondents had a great deal of input in the programme.

Further interview with some of the mentees indicated that their appointment letters as lecturers came with the name of their mentors without them taking part in the selection or choice of mentor. They believe it did not give them any flexibility as to who they chose as their mentors. One of the respondent indicated that *“This is just an academic exercise which they did not need my help so they just paired me with a senior lecturer”*. Some of the respondents who indicated that they had moderate input in pairing with their mentors were mostly those who had schooled at the university and had had some relationship with the department. One of the respondents indicated that *“Because I was once a teaching assistant at the department, I had a fair idea about those who could be my mentors so I asked the Head of Department to pair me with the one I liked”*.

Table 2: Level of Mentees Involvement in Mentoring Decisions

	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
No Involvement	22	34.9	3	8.8	25	25.8
Very Little	17	27.0	16	47.1	33	34.0
Moderate Amount	24	38.1	15	44.1	39	40.2
A Great Deal	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field survey (2019).

### Mentees Knowledge of the Criteria for Pairing

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents' views on whether they knew the criteria for pairing them with their mentors. From Table 3, 75 (77.3%) out of the total respondents of 97 did not know the criteria for pairing them with their mentors; however, 22 (22.7%) knew the criteria. Specifically, 14 (22.2%) of the total male respondents knew the criteria; while 8 of the females representing 23.5 percent of the total females also knew the criteria.

The high number of respondents not knowing the criteria for pairing could be inferred from the type of mentoring programme being pursued by the university. With the formal mentoring programme, the criterion for pairing is normally done by those who initiate the programme in the first place. That is, the basis for pairing is done by a third party rather than the mentees or their mentors. This view is in line with the views of researchers whose findings revealed that in formal mentoring programme, mentees and mentors are often paired by a third party who do not reveal the criteria for pairing. In the view of Nick et al. (2012) the reason why mentees are not allowed to participate in pairing may have been influenced by the number of mentors in a particular establishment who may be limited in supply. Nick et al. (2012) have indicated that no matter the

criteria used by third parties in pairing, it should be communicated to both the mentors and their mentees clearly to ensure maximum outcome in the mentoring programme.

Table 3: Knowledge on the Criteria for Pairing Mentee and Mentor

	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	14	22.2	8	23.5	22	22.7
No	49	77.8	26	76.5	75	77.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field survey, (2019).

#### Means of Mentees Preferred Criteria for Pairing with Mentors

From Table 5, 'professional skills' is what the respondents highly preferred to be used as a criterion for pairing them with their mentors. Evidently, it recorded a mean rank of 1.85 (SD=1.60). Specifically, the male respondents recorded a mean of 1.67 (SD=1.00), whereas the female respondents recorded a mean of 2.18 (SD=2.33). Though the males mean is lower than that of the females, statistically, there is no significant difference in their preference for using professional skills as the main criteria for pairing them to their mentees. This is because the Mann-Whitney U test recorded a p-value of .516 which is greater than the significant value of .05.

The least preference of respondents on their preferred criterion for pairing with the mentor was number of children. This they considered as less important as compared to the other criteria. From the table, the overall mean for number of children is 9.27 (SD=3.28). Both male and female respondents ranked the number of children as least preferred criterion for pairing with a mean of 8.63 for male and 10.44 for female. Their corresponding standard deviation was 3.73 and 1.73 for male and female respondents, respectively.

Table 5: Means of Mentees Preferred Criteria for Pairing with Mentors

Variables	Male		Female		Overall		Mann-Whitney U Test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	P-Value
Professional Skills	1.67	1.00	2.18	2.33	1.85	1.60	.516
Achievement	2.57	2.02	2.41	1.05	2.52	1.74	.639
Level of Qualification	3.00	1.86	4.50	1.88	3.53	1.99	.001**
Life/Career History	4.27	2.63	3.09	1.40	3.86	2.34	.031*
Years of Experience	3.89	2.81	4.00	2.45	3.93	2.67	.480
Personal Values	4.10	1.96	4.62	1.61	4.28	1.85	.160
Vocational Skills	4.37	2.44	5.62	2.81	4.80	2.63	.097
Marital Status	6.27	3.48	7.71	2.49	6.77	3.23	.049*
Age	6.98	3.44	8.06	2.57	7.36	3.19	.232
Religious Association	6.54	3.60	9.32	2.29	7.52	3.46	.000***
Number of Children	8.63	3.73	10.44	1.73	9.27	3.28	.039*

Source: Field survey (2019)

### **Effects of the Mentoring Programme on Mentees**

Respondent 1 spoke of how the mentoring programme has affected his professional development. He indicated that *“Very soon I will apply for promotion to senior lecturer. It was my mentor who guided me to publish six (6) articles, four (4) of them were co-authorship with him.”* That is, one of his tasks as a lecturer (to research) can materialise because of the guidance and advice of the mentor. For the respondent, the career guidance from the mentor has facilitated the publication of the articles. For him, his academic writing has also improved because *“...my mentor will always insist on me doing an excellent job without compromising on standards.”* One of the core functions of a lecturer is research which is part of the professional development of a mentee. Therefore, it can be inferred here that through the guidance and advice of the mentor, the mentee will be able to grow and develop professionally.

The above view is also shared by respondent 2, who added that the presence of the mentoring programme through the mentor has helped him fit well in the lecturing career which he entered with a lot of uncertainties. Respondent 2 indicated that: *“...before coming to the university, I was not sure whether I could fit into the department since I was very young.”* Through the intervention of the mentoring programme he has been able to fit well in the department since his mentor *“...always shares some of the challenges he faced when he was first appointed into the university and how he overcame them”*. Respondent 2’s response confirms a critical role that a mentor plays in ensuring that the mentee is able to develop professionally. This implies that the ability of the mentor to share career history in the form of challenges he or she has encountered before provides a springboard for the mentee to either overcome or avoid them.

Respondent 7 had a similar experience with her mentor who made herself available anytime the mentee called upon her. The respondent further added that *“My mentor has introduced me to some of her colleagues although I am not in the same department with her. I can contact any of her colleagues anytime I face any challenge in her absence.”* For Respondent 7, there was always someone she could talk to even in the absence of the mentor. This implies a constant availability of a mentor even if the original mentor is not available. However, the availability of mentor for Respondent 7 was not so with Respondent 6 who expressed his disappointment with his mentor. Respondent 6 explained that *“...I tried meeting my mentor on several occasions but he was always busy. I met him twice throughout the one year period.”* The little or non-availability of the mentor implies non-existence of the mentoring relationship since the relationship involves the mentor and the mentee. It can also be inferred here that the non-availability of the mentor will inhibit the professional development of the mentee if the mentee fails to get help elsewhere.

Similar experience from Respondent 6 was expressed by Respondent 9 who hinted the non-availability of the mentor as a great challenge. He had to rely on other colleagues in the department rather than his mentor. Respondent 9 expressed his disappointment as follows: *“I tried getting in touch with my mentor several times but he was never available so I just forgot about him and went on with my normal life. It was colleague lecturers that I consulted whenever I had any challenge.”* It is assumed from Respondent 6 and 9 that the person who did the pairing did not consider the schedule of the mentors before pairing the mentor to the mentee. This could explain why the

mentors of the above respondents were always busy. It could also be implied that the consent of the mentor was not sought before the pairing process was initiated.

Respondent 3 also added another dimension on the professional development. The respondent hinted that the mentor provided a platform where the respondent could learn the way the mentor teaches and researches. According to her *“Through the mentoring programme, my teaching and research skills have greatly improved because my mentor coached me to adopt how she teaches and researched.”* It can be inferred here that the mentors do not only guide mentees in their research work but they also help their mentees to imitate their style of teaching which is also another core function of a lecturer. Again, since the respondent has seen a great improvement in her teaching and research it could be inferred that the style of the mentor produces the best of results.

Majority of the respondents agreed that the mentoring programme had improved their personal development both at the Institution and their family life. This was revealed when respondents were asked how the mentoring programme had affected their personal development. According to Respondent 1, his mentor has been his marriage counsellor since he *“...has been married for over 20 years”* as a result, the mentor has been helping him *“...disciplined myself with my finances and my martial life. I am almost done with my house construction because of the discipline I learnt from my mentor.”* It is inferred that a good relationship with a mentor can extend to personal life where the mentor tries to inculcate positive experiences gathered over the period to their mentees. It is assumed that once these positive experiences are shared and adopted by the mentee, the mentee will be able to avoid unpleasant situations which could affect his or her career.

Respondent 2 added that his mentor *“...is like a father to me...”* who was always in handy to help him cope with his personal life. He stated that *“... my mentor frequently call to check up on me and the family.”* This portrays a father-son relationship where the mentor assumes a father figure in order to guide the behaviour of the son (mentee) in managing the son's life. This was also expressed by Respondent 8 who indicated that although the mentoring programme had ended some 2 years ago, her mentor continue to be *“...a father, a friend and a colleague.”* Respondent 8 added that *“My husband is a friend of my mentor and it was through my mentor that I met my husband.”* From the foregoing, the mentors' ability to introduce the respondents to new friends promotes the mentee's personal development as they come into contact with people whom they could fall upon anytime the respondents need help.

Respondent 7 added that the mentoring programme had helped him *“...know majority of the key players in the university...”* for whom he could *“...call on them at any time.”* This exposure has helped him to be appointed as a Coordinator of a programme at the Department which was through one of the friends of the mentor. He stated that *“...I learnt the appointment was through one of his friends who recommended me for the position.”* Respondent 4 also added that the PhD programme she was pursuing was through the recommendation of the mentor.

Respondent 5 believes he did not enjoy any personal development although he admitted he had improved professionally. He wondered whether his mentor was not interested in his personal life

or he himself did not open up for the mentor to be interested in his personal life. Respondent 5 recounted that “*I do not know whether I did not open up or my mentor did not want to get into my personal life but we hardly talked about it.*” It is assumed that the mentee should demonstrate the willingness to let the mentor become interested in his or her personal life. Mentees who try to shy away from discussing the personal life with their mentors do not enjoy much in personal development. It is also implied that the personal development of the mentee becomes possible depending on the relationship of the mentoring parties.

Respondent 6 and 9 continued to express their disappointment with their mentors because of the inability of the mentors to have time for them. They indicated they did not enjoy anything out of the mentoring relationship.

The overall impression of respondent on the mentoring programme at the university was with mixed reaction. Majority of the respondents were very impressed and appreciative of the programme. They recalled the numerous encounters they had with their mentors which ended up improving their personal life and career and personal. Two of the respondents on the other hand expressed their disappointment in the mentoring programme because of the way their mentors handled the programme. Respondent 6 opined that the mentoring programme was just “*...an academic exercise...*” and as a result “*... mentors hardly have time for their mentees.*” It is inferred that the non-availability of the mentor to perform his or her duty end up affecting the positive impact of the mentoring programme. Once the mentoring programme is marred with negative feelings, professional and personal development refuses to materialise.

### **Summary**

Majority of the respondents indicated that they had no idea as to how they were paired with their mentors. Those who knew the criteria indicated that they were paired on the basis of field of study, interest and career history. Those who knew the criteria for pairing were mostly those who had served at the university as teaching and research assistants before their appointment as lecturers.

When respondents were asked to rank their preferred criteria for pairing with their mentors, they ranked professional skills as the highest preferred criterion. This was followed by achievement, level of qualification, life/career history with age, religious association and number of children being the least ranked. Responses from the male and their female counterparts did not show any significant difference on their preferred criteria for mentoring when Mann-Whitney U test was conducted.

Another finding of the research that is worth noting was that the attributes of the mentors also contributed to the mentoring programme. Majority of the respondents indicated that their mentors were committed, available, had time to call them, articulated effective instructional strategies, allowed mentees to ask questions, listened to the questions of mentee, offered constructive critiques and also maintained confidentiality.

Majority of the respondents indicated a positive effect of the mentoring outcomes on their work and personal life. They stated that through the mentoring programme and the support of their



mentors, they have been able to come out with articles and other publications, improved their teaching skills, developed a cordial relationship with their colleagues, settled in the department, developed a positive personal life style and furthered their education.

Few of the respondents also stated that the mentoring programme and their mentors did not benefit and helped them. They indicated the non-availability and unwillingness of their mentors to attend to them. They stated that their mentors were very busy.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

On the basis of the key findings, conclusions reached were that:

The university uses a formal mentoring programme which does not involve mentees in pairing them with their mentors, and made it difficult for mentees to know how they were paired. The university had also made it more flexible for mentees and their mentors to decide when to meet and the number of times that they could meet.

Most of the mentors at the university were willing and committed to participate in the mentoring programme. This was confirmed by the respondents when they indicated that their mentors were good listeners, maintained confidentiality, were open-minded, offered constructive criticisms, articulated effective instructional strategies, available and had time to call them. The university averagely provided training to mentees before the commencement of the mentoring programme. However, most of the mentees were counselled on their roles and responsibilities, the objectives of the mentoring programme and they understood their expectation as mentees. A little over average had their needs in the mentoring programming being in line with the expectations of the programme. Although those who knew the criteria used in pairing them with their mentors revealed that the university paired them on the basis of field of study, interest, career history, number of years of work experience and level of education. Respondents preferred to be paired on the basis of professional skills of the mentor, his or her achievement, level of qualification, and life/career history.

The mentoring programme was designed to provide professional and personal development to mentees. However, it was revealed that there was a third outcome which was associated with the mentoring programme. This third outcome was a mixture of both professional and personal development which was termed as a mixed outcome. That is, some of the professional and personal development outcomes sometimes overlapped each other. Majority of the mentees indicated a positive effect of the mentoring programme outcomes on their work and personal life. This was possible because of the mentoring programme process and their relationship with their mentors.

## **Recommendations**

In view of the findings derived from the study, the following recommendations were made:

It is recommended that the mentoring programme by the university should be sustained since the mentees valued the programme despite the fact that some of the mentees saw the programme as a normal just an academic exercise.

It is further recommended that mentees should be given the necessary prior training. This training programme ought to be compulsory for all, so as to better appreciate the importance of the programme before it commences. Although it is difficult to incorporate the views of mentees in pairing process, the university and its administrators should use the training session as an opportunity to educate participants on how the pairings were done to avoid any misconceptions.

Finally, it is recommended that the university should develop a mentoring policy that could guide both mentors and mentees during the programme. This would ensure some level of control, uniformity and effective administration of the mentoring programme.

### **Suggestions of Further Research**

This study sought to assess the effects of the mentoring programme at the University of Cape Coast on mentees, other study could also look at evaluating the effectiveness of the mentoring programme at the University of Cape Coast.

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