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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of Teachers' Mentorship Activities on Students' Life Skills Development in Public Secondary Schools in Geita Town Council, Tanzania

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All authors contributed equally to this research.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess the Strategic ways for enhancing teacher mentorship Activities on Students' Life Skills Development in Public Secondary Schools in Geita Town Council, Tanzania. It aimed at examining teachers' mentorship practices, perceptions, effects and possible strategies for enhancing teacher mentorship activities on students' life skills development in public secondary schools in Geita Town Council. The study used convergent parallel research design, mixed approaches and social learning theory which was developed by Albert Bandura (1977) as its theoretical foundation. Questionnaires technique was used to gather data 197 students, 115 teachers and interview was used to gather 4 ward educational officers, 7 heads of schools and one district educational officer (DEO). A total of sample sizes were 324 respondents. Since the reliability of the questionnaires had a correlation coefficient of 0.8, the validity and reliability of the research tools were put to the test. Descriptive statistics were used in SPSS to analyse the quantitative data and thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. The findings suggest that effective teacher mentorship significantly enhances students' life skills, contributing to their overall personal and academic development. The study highlights the need for structured mentorship programs in schools to foster a supportive environment that encourages the holistic development of students.

Keywords: Teacher mentorship; life skills development; students life skills development**INTRODUCTION**

The development of life skills in students is increasingly recognized as a crucial component of education, contributing not only to academic success but also to personal and social well-being (UNICEF, 2020). Life skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and emotional intelligence are essential for students to navigate the complexities of life beyond school (World Health Organization, 2021). In this context, teacher mentorship emerges as a vital mechanism through which these skills can be nurtured

and developed (Hudson, 2019).

Teacher mentorship significantly influences secondary school students' academic and personal development by enhancing their achievement, well-being, and life skills (Davis & Humphrey, 2018; Ronfeldt et al., 2015). Research indicates that mentorship fosters cultural competence, allowing students to engage effectively with diverse perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 2015). Additionally, mentorship programs empower students to cultivate leadership skills and personalize their learning experiences, addressing individual needs and

promoting a sense of belonging (Hudson, 2015). Moreover, teacher mentorship has deep historical roots in Europe, tracing back to figures like Socrates, and evolved through the apprentice system in the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, where humanists championed personal mentorship (European Commission, 2019). In contemporary Europe, mentorship is crucial to educational policy, particularly in Finland, where government initiatives aim to enhance student development through structured mentorship programs (Sahlberg, 2015). Research indicates that mentorship significantly improves student outcomes and fosters a collaborative school culture, essential for effective teaching (Hobson et al., 2016). The integration of technology and the growing need for diversity in classrooms further emphasize mentorship's relevance in modern education (López-Pérez et al., 2020; Özdemir et al., 2021). In the USA, teacher mentorship gained traction in the late 20th century as a key strategy to improve teaching quality and address equity in high-need schools (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Studies reveal that effective mentorship enhances student achievement by providing teachers with the skills and confidence needed for successful instruction (Journal of Teacher Education, 2023).

In Africa, particularly Nigeria, mentorship has historically been embedded in cultural practices, with a formal focus emerging in the 1980s to support new teachers (Van der Walt, 2016). Current challenges in the Nigerian education system, such as inadequate teacher training, underscore the need for mentorship to improve educational outcomes and foster professional development (Adu, 2018; Oyediji & Adepoju, 2019). By creating supportive networks and promoting collaboration, mentorship is essential for enhancing teaching quality and student growth in diverse educational contexts.

Likewise in Tanzania, teacher mentorship has gained formal recognition since the early 2000s, driven by government and international efforts to enhance educational standards. Initiatives aim to provide ongoing support, guidance, and skill development for students in secondary schools (Temba, 2020; Kafanabo, 2019). Programs like the mentorship at Nyankumbu secondary school, funded by Anglo Gold Ashanti, and similar initiatives supported by Geita Gold Mining focus on empowering youth through skills development and confidence-building (Daily News, 2024). Despite these positive strides, challenges such as inadequate funding and lack of commitment from

some experienced teachers hinder the effectiveness of mentorship programs. This situation has prompted research into teachers' mentorship activities for students' life skill development in public secondary schools.

Teacher mentoring enhances students' critical thinking, time management and organization, leadership qualities, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, critical thinking, and interpersonal relationship skills. Brown (2021) claims that teacher mentoring also helps kids acquire critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and decision-making abilities, all of which are vital life skills. However, students have low ability to think critically, to solve their problems, they lack effective communication skills, and students have low ability to manage their time. Consequently, lack of life skills development is still a problem among the students or secondary graduates such as an increase in crimes including robbery, prostitution, and early marriage practical by secondary graduates or students. In addition, young people who are in secondary schools lack financial management skills, struggle with managing their time efficiently and limited problem-solving abilities (Brown & Johnson, 2018). Therefore, there was the need of this study to investigate the implementation of mentorship strategies for students' life skills development in Geita Town Council. To achieve the purpose of this study, the researchers were guided by the following: What are the possible strategies for enhancing teacher mentorship activities on students' life skills development in public secondary schools?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Social learning theory, often related to Albert Bandura (1977), suggests that individuals learn through observing and imitating the behaviours of others, particularly in social contexts. This theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning and highlights the importance of cognitive processes such as attention, retention, and motivation. In the context of the study "social learning theory will imply that students can acquire life skills by observing and imitating the behaviours and guidance provided by teacher mentors. The theory supports ideas that mentorship can have importance on student's life skills development, as mentors serve as role models and give opportunities for students to learn and practice these skills. Social learning theory is highly relevant, according to this

theory, individuals learn by observing and imitating others, and the teacher, as a mentor, plays a crucial role in shaping students' behaviours and skills. Through mentorship, students not only acquire academic knowledge but also observe and internalize essential life skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, from their teachers. The mentor-student relationship becomes a key factor in fostering positive social behaviours and shaping the students' overall development. Therefore, the theory contributes greatly to learning processes like interaction and feedback and emphasizes the significance of internal interaction. Teacher mentors provide a platform for students to interact, seek guidance and receive constructive feedback, fostering the development of life skills through ongoing dialogue and communication.

The Role of Teachers' Mentorship Activities on Students' Life Skills Development

Under the heading "Looking inside and outside of mentoring," Sweden employed a qualitative approach. Research from Iceland suggests that rather than adding mentoring to an already heavy workload, the focus should be on providing mentors with the time and space they need to do their tasks (Steingrims Dottir & Engilbertsson, 2018). To encourage those starting their careers and having a positive effect on their work and life, it is crucial to make sure that those designated as mentors are aware of their tasks and that their work is knowledge-based. Furthermore, as other academics have pointed out, mentors ought to acknowledge and value the experiences and background information that newly recruited teachers bring to the table (Hong & Matsko, 2019). Since there seems to be a difference between those who have received this kind of training and those who have not, individuals in charge of mentoring must have basic training for it to be as effective as possible. The study's conclusions demonstrated the following: (1) novel approaches to mentoring and dedication to the role of a mentor; (2) practical implications for the course's content and structure; and (3) mentoring as a factor in teachers' professional development and the significance of establishing a third space. Hence, this means that funds are necessary for mentoring activities to take place because the mentors can buy teaching and learning materials for implementing skills with the students.

In Argentina, by using a longitudinal study or qualitative analysis with the title "Impact of structured mentoring programs on Teacher Retention and Job Satisfaction". According to Smith et al. (2020), develop formal

mentorship programs with clear objectives, match experienced teachers with students, and foster a supportive environment. Furthermore, Brown and Johnson (2019) organize regular workshops focusing on mentorship skills and effective communication, incorporating evidence-based practices. The findings revealed a significant increase in teacher retention rates and reported satisfaction among participants in the structured mentorship program compared to the control group. Additionally, improved mentor-mentee communication, increased confidence in mentoring abilities, and a positive impact on classroom practices as reported by participating teachers demonstrate the development of teachers and the importance of creating a third space. Hence, it means that in-school funds are necessary for mentoring activities to take place because the mentors can buy teaching and learning materials for implementing skills with the students.

In China, by using the qualitative method with the title "Towards an inclusive student partnership". Chan and Luo (2020) that peer or nearly peer mentoring creates a more comfortable environment for mentees to connect with their mentors, especially in light of the hierarchical relationship that exists between instructors and students in Chinese culture. When undergoing mentor training, mentors must receive assistance and direction regarding how cultural values influence their interactions with mentees and the traits that mentees possess. The study's findings examine several mentoring techniques and how they affect mentees' development of holistic competencies in an after-school mentoring program for secondary school students in Hong Kong. This implies that the government should institutionalize the mentorship process to change teachers' mind sets toward mentors and improve quality mentor training.

In Malaysia, by using the literature review method, a team approach. Teachers' attitude: in teachers' professional development, teachers' attitude is one of the important things because it correlates with the instructional content and pedagogical approach of teachers (Rutten, 2021). Teachers' attitude influences the mentoring strategy because teachers have the awareness to change knowledge and skills in their teaching practices. Hence, this implies that there is a potential bias in literature towards predominantly positive perceptions. That bias may overlook the challenges and resistance some teachers face, such as a lack of resources, inadequate support, or entrenched traditional practices and establishing their personal and

professional capacities to adapt to the student's learning environment.

In Uganda, under the heading "Developing teacher educators in Uganda using a mentoring approach" and with the use of simple random sample, purposive technique, and cross-sectional research design or descriptive design. Mentoring is one of the primary teacher development practices that are successful in tackling Uganda's educational reforms, according to Eyesight and Elaine (2017). When used correctly, mentoring is a significant, long-lasting, and useful tool for developing engaging learning environments. Unfortunately, mentorship is not well integrated in East African schools, and, like colonial educational methods, it is still patriarchal and hierarchical, which prevents young people from feeling free (Ssemata et al., 2017). As a result, they discovered in their research that teachers deal with issues like time constraints, low altitude, a lack of motivation, and strained relationships with administrators. These issues cause teachers to distance themselves from their mentors and skip meetings, which lowers their effectiveness. They said that to improve the quality of education at all levels in government and secondary schools, education stakeholders should place a strong emphasis on mentors. Hence, this implies that there should be similar quality of mentorship programs and having trained mentors and resources to provide meaningful guidance. Additionally, systemic issues such as inadequate funding, large student-teacher ratios, and insufficient support from educational institutions can limit the impact of mentorship.

In Tanzania, by using the qualitative method, Mendez et al. (2019) highlighted the idea of providing mentors with regular training so they can impart their wealth of knowledge and expertise to the upcoming generation of scholars. Furthermore, Azubogu (2018) pointed out that mentorship has a considerable effect on enhancing the knowledge and skills of less experienced people, which might explain its importance. This shows that people who are mentored will have more education and skills

in the area where they are mentored. This implies that there is a need to solve or remove the limitations or challenges in mentorship, such as mismatches between mentors and mentees, the time commitment required, and the variability in mentorship quality. In addition, the assertion might overlook the importance of other factors that contribute to skill and knowledge acquisition such as formal education, self-directed learning and practical experience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used convergent parallel research design, mixed approaches. Questionnaires and interviews techniques were used to gather data between 197 students, 115 teachers, 7 heads of schools, 4 ward educational officers and one (1) district educational officer. Moreover, the study employed questionnaire and interview as instruments of data collection. Furthermore, the study employed simple random sampling to select teachers and students and purposive sampling to select head of schools, WEO and DEO as participants in the study. Meanwhile, face and content validity were used to check the accuracy of the instruments and thus the reliability coefficient of the questionnaires was 0.80. Descriptive statistics were used in SPSS 20 version, to analyze the quantitative data in computing frequencies, percentages and charts in quantitative data while thematic analysis was used in qualitative data. Nonetheless, ethical issues considered in the study included permission from authorities to collect data, voluntary participation and harmlessness, anonymity, confidentiality, avoiding plagiarism, using APA style, justice and data falsification and ensuring informed consent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Strategic ways for enhancing teacher mentorship Activities on Students' Life Skills Development. This objective provides responses concerning the strategic ways for enhancing teachers' mentorship on students' life skills development in secondary schools. Teachers and students responded to the objective.

Table 1. Possible Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Mentorship Activities on Students' Life Skills Development.

Statement	SA F (%)	A F (%)	M F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)
The provision of funds in schools does not support mentorship activities	36(19.1%)	32(17.0%)	19(10.1%)	46(24.5%)	55(29.3%)
The provision of continuous curricula supports mentorship activities	102(54.3%)	34(18.1%)	45(23.9%)	5(2.7%)	2(1.1%)

Positive attitudes of teachers enhancing teacher mentorship	105(55.9%)	31(16.5%)	36(19.1%)	8(4.3%)	8(4.3%)
The teamwork approach does not contribute to teachers' professional development like a mentor	19(10.1%)	24(12.8%)	27(14.4%)	71(37.8%)	47(25.0%)
Involvement of teacher qualification and coaching skills enhancing mentorship activities	105(55.9%)	22(11.7%)	38(20.2%)	20(10.6%)	3(1.6%)
Government support to teacher mentorship in public secondary school	111(59.0%)	40(21.3%)	25(13.3%)	8(4.3%)	4(2.1%)
Mentor serve as role models, inspiring other educators to strive for excellence	87(46.3%)	29(15.4%)	49(26.1%)	15(8.0%)	7(3.7%)

Key: SA= strongly agree, A =Agree M= Moderate, D= Disagree, SD= strongly disagreed.

Source: Filed Data (2024)

Provision of Funds in Schools Does

A combined 36.1% of students agree that the provision of funds does not adequately support mentorship activities, with 19.1% strongly agreeing and 17.0% agreeing. However, 53.8% of students disagree, indicating that the majority believe funding does support mentorship to some extent. The remaining 10.1% are neutral. This suggests a divided opinion among students on whether current financial resources are sufficient for effective mentorship programs. Steingrims et al. (2018) therefore revealed that in order to encourage those starting their careers and have a positive effect on their work and life, it is crucial to make sure that those designated as mentors are aware of their tasks and that their work is knowledge-based.

Provision of Continuous Curricula

A strong majority of students, 54.3%, strongly agree that continuous curricula support mentorship activities, with an additional 18.1% agreeing. A smaller portion, 23.9%, remain neutral, while only 3.8% disagree. This indicates that most students see a well-structured curriculum as beneficial for sustaining mentorship, aligning with theories that emphasize the importance of continuous educational frameworks in fostering mentor-mentee relationships. Therefore, when undergoing mentor training, mentors must receive assistance and direction regarding how cultural values influence their interactions with mentees and the traits that mentees possess (Chan and Luo, 2020). Thus, the government should institutionalize the mentorship process to change teachers' mind sets toward mentors and improve quality mentor training.

Positive Attitudes of Teachers

A majority of 55.9% of students strongly agree that positive teacher attitudes enhance mentorship, with

16.5% agreeing. Meanwhile, 19.1% are neutral, and 8.6% disagree. This suggests that most students recognize the crucial role of teacher attitudes in the effectiveness of mentorship, supporting theories that link positive teacher dispositions to successful mentoring outcomes. In support with, Brown and Johnson (2019) added that organizing regular workshops focusing on mentorship skills and effective communication, incorporating evidence-based practices.

Teamwork Approach in Work

A minority of 22.9% of students agree that teamwork does not contribute to professional development as effectively as mentorship, with 10.1% strongly agreeing and 12.8% agreeing. However, a significant 62.8% disagree, indicating that most students believe teamwork is a valuable component of professional development alongside mentorship. This reflects theories that advocate for collaborative learning and peer support as essential elements of professional growth. Thus, one advantage of social learning theory in the context of teamwork is that it emphasizes the importance of observational learning and modelling, which can enhance collaborative skills among teachers. By working together in teams, educators can share best practices and innovative teaching strategies, fostering a culture of continuous improvement without requiring a formal mentorship structure. Additionally, social learning can create a sense of community among teachers, encouraging peer support and feedback that contributes to their professional growth.

Involvement of Teacher Qualifications and Coaching

More than half of the students, 55.9%, strongly agree that teacher qualifications and coaching skills enhance mentorship, with 11.7% agreeing. A total of 20.2% are

neutral, and 12.2% disagree. This suggests that the majority value the role of qualified and skilled teachers in effective mentorship, consistent with theories that emphasize the importance of expertise and pedagogical skills in mentoring. As supported by Eyesight and Elaine (2017), when mentorship is used correctly, mentoring is significant and can provide long-lasting and useful tool for developing engaging learning environments.

Government Support

A substantial 59.0% of students strongly agree that government support is crucial for teacher mentorship, with an additional 21.3% agreeing. Only 6.4% disagree, while 13.3% remain neutral. This highlights the perceived importance of governmental involvement in ensuring the success of mentorship programs, in line with theories that stress the role of institutional support in educational initiatives. As stated by Azubogu (2018), mentorship has a considerable effect on enhancing the knowledge and skills of less experienced people, which might explain its importance. This shows that people who are mentored have more education and skills in the area where they are mentored.

Mentors Serve as Role Models

A significant 46.3% of students strongly agree that mentors serve as role models, with 15.4% agreeing. However, 26.1% remain neutral, and 11.7% disagree. This suggests that while a majority see mentors as inspirational figures, a notable portion is either uncertain or disagrees. This aligns with theories that propose mentorship as a key factor in professional role modelling, though the variation in responses indicates that not all students may experience this impact equally. The data suggests that while teacher mentorship is largely seen as beneficial for both students and educators in public secondary schools, its effectiveness is closely tied to factors like adequate funding, continuous curricula, positive teacher attitudes, and government support. These elements are crucial for creating a supportive environment that enhances mentorship activities. However, the mixed perceptions on certain aspects, such as the impact of teamwork and funding, indicate that there may be areas in the mentorship framework that require further attention and improvement to ensure that all students and teachers can fully benefit from these programs. Additionally, teachers added their responses concerning the strategies for enhancing teacher's mentorship activities on students' life skills development. Thus, mentors ought to acknowledge and value the experiences and

background information that newly recruited teachers bring to the table (Hong & Matsko, 2019).

Another effective strategy is the creation of clubs and group mentorships within schools. These groups allow students to connect with peers who share similar interests or challenges, creating a supportive community where they can learn from one another. Regular seminars and workshops further enrich these mentorship activities by providing both mentors and mentees with new insights, skills, and perspectives on various topics. These events also offer opportunities for professional development, enabling teachers to become more effective mentors. Therefore, as shown by Keshmirrpoor et al. (2019), mentoring is crucial for early career academics because it promotes the growth of professional skills, self-assurance, and scholarly productivity. It also lowers stress and improves job satisfaction, all of which helps students gain better life skills from teachers.

To sustain and enhance these mentorship initiatives, support from the government and cooperation from parents are essential. Government support can come in the form of policies, funding, and resources that facilitate mentorship programs, while active parental involvement ensures that the guidance provided in school is reinforced at home. Additionally, educating both students and the wider community on the importance of mentorship helps to build a culture that values and prioritizes these activities. To maximize the impact of mentorship, it's crucial to create a conducive environment for these activities, which includes providing mentors with dedicated spaces like offices within schools where they can conduct sessions in a professional and consistent manner. This reinforcement of the mentorship structure ensures that it becomes an integral part of the school system, ultimately benefiting both students and educators. Similarly, Munir and Amin (2018) added that support for educators boosts their self-esteem, enhances their instruction, and increases their efficiency in assisting students in reaching their goals. This implies that mentors should create positive attitudes toward mentees to facilitate students by counselling students on what to do to avoid engaging in risky behaviours.

The implementation of these strategies to enhance teachers' mentorship activities carries significant implications for the educational system. By embedding structured guidance, creating supportive communities, and involving both government and parents, schools can create a robust framework that nurtures students'

overall development. This approach not only improves academic outcomes but also fosters personal growth, resilience, and social skills among students. As mentorship becomes more deeply integrated into the school environment, it helps to create a more complete educational experience, where students feel supported and empowered to reach their full potential. Brown and Johnson (2019) added that these strategies can lead to a more positive school culture, reduced dropout rates, and better-prepared graduates who are ready to contribute meaningfully to society.

In this case, the interview was conducted with WEO and DEO, their responses show the following results. During the interview the DEO had this to say:

“I think one of the best solutions is to provide more training for mentors. If teachers and other mentors have better training, they can offer more effective support to students. Also, we should make sure that there’s enough time in the school schedule for mentorship activities so they don’t feel rushed” (Interview, July 2024)

This implies that training is the most needed program to school mentors because it can help the update their knowledge and in improve their skills that can help them during mentorship programs in schools. Therefore, Alegado (2018a, 2018b), suggested that school leadership and organizations in terms of planning and coordinating suitable mentorship programs can enhance the professional development of teachers. Thus, there must be enough funds in schools and states how to conduct mentoring programs. Also, WEO added that:

A good solution would be to involve more people in mentorship programs, like community members or older students. This would take some of the pressure off teachers and give students different perspectives. We also need to ensure that mentorship is well-organized, with clear goals and regular check-ins to keep everyone on track (Interview, July 2024).

This shows that involving other community members in mentorship programs can help them be aware of student’s needs and interests in their learning careers. This can help the parents and the community at large to be more focused on the students’ school activities. As supported by the social learning theory, teacher mentors provide a platform for students to interact, seek guidance and receive constructive feedback, fostering the development of life skills through ongoing dialogue and communication. This shows that mentorship

programs provide effective communication to its members. Thus, according to social learning theory, involving more people in mentorship programs, such as community members or older students, can provide students with diverse role models and learning experiences. This can broaden students’ perspectives and foster a sense of community beyond the traditional teacher-mentor relationship. By incorporating multiple perspectives and expertise, mentorship programs can become more dynamic and effective, promoting student learning and development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study highlights several practical strategies to enhance teacher mentorship activities, emphasizing the importance of funding, continuous curricular support, and the fostering of positive relationships between educators and students. Advancements in mentorship programs require ongoing commitment from various stakeholders, including government entities and parents, to bolster these initiatives’ frameworks. By encouraging mentorship structures that involve diverse community members and instilling regular training opportunities for educators, schools can provide a more comprehensive support system for both teachers and students. Implementing these strategies will not only enrich the educational experience but also contribute to the development of resilient and well-rounded individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to society. Ultimately, by investing in mentorship programs, schools can create an environment conducive to holistic student growth, preparing learners to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

From the summary of the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made: - In bringing about changes in schools, a culture of mentorship requires creating awareness about the significance of the practice through sensitization with respect to the entire educational community. Schools should celebrate successes in mentorship, share stories with regard to positive mentorship experiences, and involve students as mentors where possible. This way, schools will provide a supportive environment by depicting benefits related to mentorship at student, teacher, and general school community levels altogether. This can be further reiterated through student-to-student mentoring programs, which would allow for peer support that encourages personal and academic development. In the long run, this will provide a supportive, non-intimidating atmosphere, which is all

one could ask for from an ideal learning environment to eventually prepare them for life beyond school.

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