INFLUENCE OF MENTORSHIP ON ATTITUDE OF POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON CAREER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
Mentorship is a lifelong relationship in which a mentor helps a mentee reach full potential in career chosen pathways. Some common ways of implementing mentorship are face-to-face or one-on-one mentorship, grouping and e-mentorship. Mentorship relationship require, both mentor and mentee to mutually benefit and may be used to address career and education based issues that often face learners when transiting to spheres of life. Mentorship prepares learners to effectively and efficiently handle career and social issues that contract them. The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of mentorship on post-secondary school student’s attitude towards career and choice for further education.

The study utilized quantitative data collection methods to collect data from 67 post-secondary education students on attitude towards career and further education pathways. The study used a baseline and end line surveys to compare change in attitude and career pathways of mentees in a mentorship programme. Data was analysed descriptively using percentages, mean and standard deviation while t-tests was used to test for significance in difference between group means at \( \alpha=0.05 \) level. The study found out that attitude of students towards career and further education was poor at (M= 20.70; SD=6.11, N=67), (M= 10.55; SD= 3.03, N=67) respectively as compared to the end line (M=11.18; SD=6.34, N=67) and (M= 6.07; SD= 6.28, N=67) respectively. There was a marked improvement in attitude at the end line indicating that sustained mentorship improves attitude of students towards further education and career pathways.

Keywords: Mentorship, Attitude, Career, Mentor, Mentee, Post-secondary, e-mentoring,

Introduction
Mentorship in the education sector has been used to describe the relationship that exist between a more experienced faculty member and a less experienced one or sometimes a student (Lee, Anderson & Burnett, 2015). In Greek mythology, Odysseus, while away entrusted the care and education of a child to a friend, Mentor. Mentor in his capacity provided the Odysseus son with the required life skills and sustained mentorship (Finley, 1954). Today, mentor is used to imply role model, coach, guide, sponsor or adviser (Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2014). Mentoring is a life relationship in which mentor helps mentee reach full potential (Spencer, Tugenberg,
Ocean, Schwartz & Rhodes, 2013). Mentoring provides both career function and intrinsic function to enhance inclusion and development in society.

Again, mentoring is developmental process which has been applied in the academia, workplace and in the society at large. In time and space, mentoring is critical as career-advancement tool. The impact of mentoring on attitude and behaviour of students has in most cases minimized risk of school failure and dropping out (Schargel & Smink, 2014). In addition, a study conducted by Schargel & Smink, (2014) indicated that having a mentor has a positive effect on youth at risk of academic failure boosting retention, interest in learning and academic achievement. Again, the main cause for poor career development, research publishing, and progression in academia is attributed to lack of mentoring (Ibegbulam & Jacintha, 2016). When mentorship programs are guided by an intelligent, dedicated, encouraging, and genuine mentor, participants develop a sense of personal transformation and empowerment for sustained achievement. An effective mentor takes pride in the growth and accomplishments of the mentee in the long run.

A variety of platforms can be used to offer mentorship programs depending on facilities and environments in which mentorship is organized. Mentorship approaches include face-to-face or one-on-one mentorship, group mentorship and e-mentorship. While face-to-face mentorship and group mentorship are considered as the classical methods of mentorship, application of modern technologies can be used to enhance and make the process interactive and enjoyable. E-mentorship as practiced today involves use of computer software, games and videos as well as other forms of communication technology including telephones (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2012). This augments interest in learning endearing learners to specific career paths and promoting learning achievements.

**Mentoring and career advancement**

Mentorship promotes career advancement which in the long run leads to success in chosen pathways. Again, career is a series of jobs an individual holds during work life (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 2013). In addition, every individual aspires to be successful in chosen career, while nature of that success depends on expectations on the career itself (O'Shea, Monaghan & Ritchie, 2014). Noteworthy is that different expectations and definitions exist even in cases where similar careers pathways are pursued. According to Costa, Sutin, Eaton & Miech, (2016), career success constitutes objective and subjective elements of achievement and progress of an individual through vocational lifespan. By implication, objective career success can be measured extrinsically, salary and occupational status (Kraimer, Seibert & Astrove, 2015) while, subjective career success could be measured based on an individual’s perception of career actualization success (Shen, et al., 2015). Variations in the expectations and definitions therefore defines success in a career.

Studies indicate that attitudes towards career tend to change and improve when students are involved in mentoring programs (Schunk, & Mullen, 2013; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng & DuBois, 2008). In this context, mentors provide practical examples for the mentees, which then inspire and guarantees interest to pursue specific career paths. Thus mentoring process allows students
to have a better chance of making career choices at an earlier stage if enrolled in mentorship programs (Wisker, Exley, Antoniou & Ridley, 2013). Similarly, studies comparing the outcome of career mentoring on employee performance in organizations have concluded that mentorship led to higher career achievement (Bapna, Langer, Mehra, Gopal & Gupta, 2013; Kim, Egan & Moon, 2014). By implication, mentoring at secondary school level enhances chances of choosing career pathways where learners have greatest interest and subsequently enjoying work in their specialization.

During the period of career development, students require mentorship to help make career decisions that guide work life. A study conducted by Crawford & Smith, (2005) revealed that when students are provided with mentors, they develop interest in specific career pathways for sustained success and advancement in work life. Mentorship therefore provides the bridge in helping students make choices regarding career development. On the same vain, a study conducted by Iyengar, Huberman & Jiang (2004), indicated that when people are faced with too many choices (in most cases more than seven), such persons become overwhelmed and make irrational decisions resulting in dissatisfaction with career choices. As a result, such persons either make decisions based on poor heuristics or avoid making decisions altogether and thus inappropriate career choices in our case. The mentorship process in such instances need to provide avenues for making such choices with sufficient information from the industry and resultant options.

**Mentoring and educational advancements**

Students aspire to achieve highest levels of educational attainment which propels them to best professional careers. However, as they grow, their dreams are thwarted due to lack of clear and logical guidance during formative stages of life (Erickson, McDonald & Elder, 2009). Such guidance can best be offered through mentoring which should capture changing career interest of the learners. In a study conducted by Cabrera (2014), mentored students indicated that their choices in higher education was influenced by guidance and support received from mentors and such students were more successful in the careers chosen. The conclusion made from the study was that mentoring increases the likelihood of students to go for professional career pathways in higher education. When mentors help and direct students during the process of mentorship, Students make constructive choices for the future. Another study conducted by Erickson, McDonald & Elder, (2009), revealed that students who had mentors were 53% more likely to advance to the next level of education than counterparts who did not have mentors. Other studies have indicated that students enrolled in mentorship programs advanced grades than students who were not mentored (Maxwell, & Connell, 2013; Moore, Hair & Scarupa, 2002).

**Personal Benefits of Mentoring**

Further benefits of mentorship exist depending on processes of implementation, duration of the program and aspects emphasised during the process. While the personal attributes of the mentor and the mentee determines the outcome of mentorship programme, benefits of a mentorship process, often leave a positive mark on both the mentor and mentee (Straus, Johnson, Marquez & Feldman, 2013). For the mentee, mentorship programmes may impact positively on
communication skills and confidence levels (Cameron et al., 2013). Through mentorship, mentees develop valuable networks and exposed to different ways of achieving objectives a part from day to day experiences in their day to day immediate environment (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2014). On the other hand, by watching and learning from their role models, students develop excellent communication and interact effectively with other people. Better communication and coping skills are beneficial in career and education advancements. Studies have shown that the combination of a higher self-confidence and the ability to communicate better is a vital tool that enables students to further their lives in positive ways (Marks & Wade, 2015; Northouse, 2015).

**Problem Statement**

In Kenya, and many developing worlds, unemployment, career mismatch and lack of motivation at work place has become a challenge (Akintayo, & Banjo, 2013). Most students graduating from various degree programs are either unemployed, unsatisfied with their jobs or do not perform as expected in their respective workplaces. As a result of this, many initiatives have been put into place to deal with such challenges. Such have included the insistence of performance contracting, attempts to modify training syllabuses, monitoring training institutions with check and balances in the quality control departments. However, it is worth noting that the aforementioned challenges still exist in Kenya (Obong’o, 2009). The above challenges have been compounded by lack of proper attitude towards education and career. In Kenya, it is perceived that academic performance leads to better jobs, and better jobs leads to good life. As a result of that, students are often taught to “pass exams and secure good courses like medicine, law and engineering”. While not all students can be absorbed to train for the prestigious careers, others who fail to attain the required clusters are left to join the pool of pessimistic youths who have not clear vision for what they want to be in the future. On the other hand, students who join the so called prestigious courses are soon faced with the reality that they neither have the passion for the career nor the attitude that goes with the career (Edwards & Quinter, 2011).

Studies however indicate that mentorship can be used to accelerate the development of positive attitude towards education and career (Dobrowolska, Kane, Pilewska-Kozak & Linsley, 2013). Through mentorship, students get to establish a relationship with individuals in various careers and academia. Through that, they get to have a foretaste of what they want to be in the future. It is in the light of such encounters that students develop positive attitude towards their career and education. In this study, we investigated the influence of mentorship on attitude of post-secondary school students on career and further education.

**Purpose and objectives**

The purpose was to find out the influence of mentorship on attitude of post-secondary school students on career and further education. With documented evidence of the influence of mentorship on career and further education advancement. Introduction of career and educational
mentorship in creating a generation of career informed and focussed students while eliminating career mismatch and employment apathy.

Theoretical context

Personal Construct Theory

Personal Constructs Theory of human functioning and of personality. The theory was developed by George Kelly (Bannister, D., & Fransella, 2013). The central tenet of the theory is that one’s prediction and interpretation of events occur through bipolar constructs derived from experience (Winter, 2013). According to the theory, individuals characterize themselves by the way they interpret the world as well as the hypotheses they form about the replication of events, including interpersonal events (Carlston, 2014). The theory views human behaviour as an experiment for an individual (person as scientist). Such individual is therefore involved in a constant process of development of hypothesis which are either denied or confirmed. The individual develops more confidence when each hypothesis is confirmed. By this they validate their beliefs through further personal experiences and behaviour and hence development of a construct. It is through this process that individuals take stock of similarities and differences they perceive within the world on a continuous process, and place interpretive patterns upon them.

The theory can be adopted to explain the outcomes of the relationship between a mentor and a mentee in a mentorship program. While the mentee is in the process of acquiring new experiences, the mentor aids in the process of interpreting the experiences and formulating of constructs. When new challenges are met, the mentor provides the lived experience and thus aids the mentee in denying or confirming the hypotheses formed at an earlier stage in life. This enhances the process of construct development.

Conceptual Framework

This study was conceptualized with the personal construct theory where independent variable is mentorship program while the attitude of students towards career and further education as the dependent variables. The relationship between the variables is as presented in figure 1.
Mentorship
- Duration of mentorship
- Mentorship platform adopted
- Mentor characteristics

Mentorship program
- Career paths
- Career

Career guidance
- Learner achievement

Attitudes towards Mentorship
- Attitude towards career
- Attitude towards further education
- Addressing issues

Career Development
- Generation of Interest
- Positive Pathways
Methodology
The study adopted quantitative research approach was applied. Quantitative strategies helped in deriving quantifiable and comparative estimates of the variables of interest which were based on the use of a self-administered questionnaire. Baseline data was obtained at the beginning of the study while the end line data was collected shortly before the students graduated from the mentorship programme.

Specifics of program
The mentorship program that was evaluated was implemented by e-Mentoring Africa, a non-governmental organization registered in Nairobi, Kenya. It consisted of three different approaches to mentoring; individual, group, and e-mentoring. An e-mentoring platform was created and each mentee’s profile was developed. All the mentors who had prior registered as volunteers were matched with mentees in an online platform. All the mentees met once a week for group mentorship in a common place. The organization facilitated meetings between mentors and mentees for one-on-one mentorship at the convenience of mentors and mentees. The mentoring program ran for a duration of 11 weeks upon which all the successful mentees were graduated.

Findings and Discussion
Findings from students at baseline and end line survey. At the baseline, 89 students completed the questionnaire while at the end line survey, 67 students were able to complete the questionnaire. During data cleaning, the students who had filled the baseline survey questionnaire but did not complete the end line survey questionnaire were filtered out.

Demographic characteristics
Based on the end line survey, a total of 67 students (26 male and 41 female) participated in the study. Of the students who participated in the study, a majority were aged between 19 and 20 years of age. A majority of the female students were aged 14 while a majority of the boys were aged 15. Figure 2 represents the ages of the students.
From the study, 47.6% of the students indicated that they had attained college/University education. The study revealed that most of the female students, 73.08% indicated that they had attained a College education while a majority of the male students, 56.10% indicated that they had attained secondary school education at the time of the study. The results were as presented in Table 1 below.

### Table 1: Levels of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest level of education</th>
<th>Male Frequency</th>
<th>Male Percentage</th>
<th>Female Frequency</th>
<th>Female Percentage</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
<th>Total Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>56.10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>73.08</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31.71</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attitude towards career**
The study investigated the attitude of the students on career at the beginning and at the end of the mentorship program. In order to ascertain the influence of mentorship on the overall attitude of students towards career, responses obtained in the baseline survey and the end line survey were analysed. The descriptive statistics revealed disparities in the responses for all the categories tested. The results were as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Attitude towards Career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can identify my strongest abilities and skills.</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I know what I want to do during the next 1-2 years</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs are hard to find</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have all it takes to create a job</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I'm really certain about the career I want to have</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On comparing the mean, the baseline results gave a mean score and standard deviation of (M=20.70; SD=6.11, N=67) while the end line survey revealed a mean score and standard deviation of (M=11.18; SD=6.34, N=67). T-test runs on the mean score differences for the baseline and the end line surveys revealed a significant difference in attitude at the baseline and the end line (48.70619)= 9.741, p<0.001. The results were as presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Attitude of students (test statistics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>20.70</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>9.741</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End line</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This finding led to the conclusion that mentorship has a positive influence on the attitude of post-secondary school students on their career preparations. This reasoning is based on the fact that most students at the baseline registered responses which indicated negative attitude towards their career and that the attitudes changed to more positive after the mentorship program. Studies have compared the outcome of career mentoring on employee performance with results often indicating positive correlations between career mentorship and employee performance (Bapna, Langer, Mehra, Gopal & Gupta, 2013; Joo, Sushko & McLean, 2012; Kim, Egan & Moon, 2014). Based on such studies, it can be argued that mentorship at an earlier age is likely to impart positive values which could be developed further. When provided with mentors, students get to know where to begin in their career (Crawford & Smith, 2005). Mentorship bridges the feeling of ignorance of what’s out there and the overwhelming and intimidating number of options that exist for them. This overwhelm frequently leads students to push off making a decision at all until they have to, at which point they are forced into rushed decisions based on expediency and convenience rather than whether the job is legitimately a good fit or not. According to a study conducted by Iyengar, Huberman & Jiang (2004), when people are faced with too many choices (in most cases more than 7), they become overwhelmed. As a result, we either make decisions based on poor heuristics or avoid making a decision altogether. Mentorship therefore provides the needed opportunity to make informed choices.

**Attitude towards further education**

In order to ascertain the influence of mentorship on the overall attitude of students towards further education, their responses at the baseline survey and the end line survey were analysed and compared the baseline. At the baseline, more than 60% of the students indicated that they did not consider going back to school and considering different career while at the end line survey; almost 80% indicated that they were considering going back to school and considering different career options. Similarly, a majority of the students, 43% indicated that they did not consider furthering their education at the baseline while 50%, upon mentorship indicated that they would consider furthering their education at the end line. The results were as presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Attitude of students towards further education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am going back to school and considering different career options.</td>
<td>S1 3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S2 52</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to further my education</td>
<td>S1 6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S2 46</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what skills I can offer</td>
<td>S1 3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to establish the overall influence of mentorship on student’s attitude towards further education, we compared mean and standard deviation of the responses at the baseline survey and the end line survey. The baseline results gave a mean score and standard deviation of (M= 10.55; SD= 3.03, N=67) while the end line survey revealed a mean score and standard deviation of (M= 6.07; SD= 6.28, N=67). Similarly, t-test runs on the mean score differences for the baseline and the end line surveys revealed a significant difference in attitude at the baseline and the end line (t (20.87)= 6.96, p<0.001. The results were as presented in table 5 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.Dev.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>10.55</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End line</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on this finding, it can be concluded that mentorship has a positive influence on student ambitions towards further education. This conclusion is made based on the findings above indicating a shift in attitude from poor attitude registered during the baseline survey to a more positive attitude registered during the end line survey. Other studies on the benefits of mentorship had indicated that mentoring increases the likelihood students to go onto higher education (Suh, Suh & Houston, 2007; Swail, 2003). This, according to Paglis, Green & Bauer (2006) is due to the fact that when students are mentored, their choices in higher education are shaped and influenced by the guidance and support they received from their mentors. When students have someone to help them and direct them, they tend to make constructive choices for their futures. According to a study conducted by Erickson., McDonald & Elder, (2009), it was concluded that students with a mentor are 53% more likely to advance their education than their counterparts who do not have a mentor.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The results revealed that students developed positive attitude towards their career and further education after a mentorship programme. The study thus makes the following recommendations:

- Policy makers in Education sector should consider including career mentorship in school curriculum so as to guide students on the decisions they make towards their careers.
The government ministries concerned with the youths should consider including Mentorship programmes as one of the ways through which out of school youths could be empowered to make worthwhile decisions that impact on their lives.

Similar studies in the rural settings so as to provide a comparison if at all there could be any difference in attitude between post-secondary students in urban settings and their counterparts in the rural settings.

References


