

BARRIERS TO MENTORING OF GRADUATES IN QUANTITY SURVEYING FIRMS: FINDING A GOOD FIT

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The descriptive study seeks to determine barriers to mentoring practices for Quantity Surveying graduates employed by consulting firms based in Dar es Salaam. Data was collected from 53 questionnaires returned by graduates employed in firms involved in the study out of 65 administered. Analysis of data was done by IBM SPSS Statistics 20 using descriptive statistics-frequency and compared means one sample t test features. Findings revealed that there were several significant barriers to mentoring practices in consulting firms including poor delegation of work, mentor expertise, poor mentoring procedure and personal problems. Generally, there exist barriers to mentoring of graduates in quantity surveying firms in Tanzania which impede their learning process as well as work performance. The study recommends that Architects and Quantity Surveyors Registration Board (AQRB) and Tanzania Institute of Quantity Surveyors (TIQS) to advocate for informal mentoring, organize training programs to sharpen the skills of mentors in order to improve the performance of graduates, hence finding a good fit.

Keywords: graduates, mentoring, quantity surveying, Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

Although a person can learn and develop a career through many ways, being a mentor or mentee provides an interactive and customized experience. Mentoring offers invaluable benefits not only to individuals but also to the organization that employs them. Even some professionals agree that mentoring is an important leadership competency as well as professional responsibility (Oke and Otasowie, 2020; Hoffmeister *et al.*, 2011). Mentoring is a relationship between a mentor and a mentee that aims to guide personal and professional development over time (Inzer and Crawford, 2005; Mohtady *et al.*, 2019). The main aim of mentorship is to ensure that workers improve both psychologically and physically while performing work and come out with great work product. Some studies show that individuals who have been mentored will report greater career outcomes than individuals who have not been

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mentored (Nkomo and Thwala, 2013). Through mentorship individuals find it easy to transform knowledge taught at school into practice with minimum amount of errors. Mentoring is achieved through formal and informal setting to develop skills and knowledge within an organization. Formal mentoring involves structured system that include pre-set guidelines which assist both the mentor and mentee to fulfil the objectives of the program. Usually, in formal mentoring the organization develops a program and process for mentoring to take place (Inzer and Crawford, 2005; Oke *et al.*, 2016). Informal mentoring is a natural component of relationship that occurs throughout the society, in workplace, as well as in social, professional, and family activities (Inzer and Crawford, 2005).

Mentoring programs are important not only for business but also to serve as bridge between business and academia (Ilieiva, 2015). There is strong relation between competence and frequency that is the students with more years of experience tend to perceive themselves to be more competent (Lee and Hogg, 2008; Hoffmeister *et al.*, 2011). A particularly challenging task for someone who is starting out in their professional life is to assemble and integrate several kinds of knowledge gained from experience, education, and work (Lee and Hogg, 2008; Oke *et al.*, 2016). It is increasingly being acknowledged that mentoring practice can result in the much-needed innovation, growth, and sustainability for the construction industry demands (Oke *et al.*, 2016). However, mentoring mechanisms have been identified as a highly complex processes to further in an organization and as a result knowledge sharing or transfer hostility is perceived as a phenomenon that widely dominates organizational reality (Mohd Nor a and Egbu 2010). This is quite challenging because mentoring practices not only aid the professional development of a protegee but also the organization. The problem faced by most quantity surveying firms is the continuous loss of knowledge which is due to the retirement or resignation of key personnel (De Long and Liam 2000; Rahmah *et al.*, 2011). With the help of mentoring practice, knowledge and skills can be easily transferred in the workplace and thus minimizing risk of losing vital knowledge.

Researchers predict that the technical skills possessed by quantity surveying professionals will not advance without the mentoring process (Shafie *et al.*, 2014) as competencies in skills are becoming fast relevant and important for service providers (Rahmah *et al.*, 2011). Several studies have focused on the outcomes of mentoring as they relate to a particular style of mentoring such as the roles and functions of mentor-mentee (Swanepoel, 2012), challenges of mentoring in South African construction industry (Hoffmeister *et al.*, 2011), mentor-mentee relation (Nthombekaya, 2015), mentoring practices (Oke and Otasowie, 2020), benefits of mentoring to a Mentor, mentee and organization (Mohtady *et al.*, 2019). For example, it is believed that mentee in informal mentoring receive greater benefits than those in formal mentoring relationships (Washington, 2010) and that mentoring practices are essential for mentor-mentee aspirations as they expected to have thorough knowledge and understanding of client operating environment and dilemma (Oke and Otasowie, 2020). Most of these studies focus on formal and others on informal mentoring from the organization or firm perspective such as Melrose (2006) mentoring online graduate students and Schollosser and Kahn (2007) mentoring in an academic environment. However, the lack of study on barriers for mentoring quantity surveying graduates as identified from literature is a motivator to this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring in the Construction Industry

The process of construction projects is fragmented and complex, as it is made up of numerous projects of various sizes, of different nature, managed by several different players and stakeholders (Sospeter *et al.*, 2019). Mentoring is particularly useful within the context of the employment and skills development in the construction industry especially where most of its works are project oriented. The absence of mentoring in construction industry is an impediment to progress as the junior is constructed as in deficit of skills and appropriate socialization (Nkomo and Thwala, 2013). Nevertheless, evaluations of mentoring have pointed out the lack of knowledge held by middle class mentors about realities of growing up in different circumstances (Nkomo and Thwala, 2013; Hoffmeister *et al.*, 2011). In the construction industry, mentorship has been essential way to develop knowledge and skills of employees while performing the work in organizations. Due to its usefulness, there have been different career development programs that have been established by the Architects and Quantity Surveyors Registration Board (AQRB) such as seminars to mentor both employee and employers, and, Enhanced Articled Pupilage Program (EAPP) for graduates to undergo structured professional training for two years. These programs assist employers, employees, and graduates to cope with current construction techniques and technological changes.

Although Quantity surveying firms in Tanzania have different mentoring programs to ensure that their new employee become familiar with what must be done within the organization and produce high quality work with minimum mistakes, there have been barriers to mentoring of graduates in Quantity Surveying firms. It is also important to note that, mentorship within the organization has a big impact on the productivity of the individuals if well done. Thus, it is very essential to determine barriers to mentorship within the construction consulting firms in order to improve their learning process as well as work performance as a result of work taught at job by their mentors who are more experienced than mentees. There is extensive work on mentoring in both developed and developing countries. Several studies have focused on the outcomes of mentoring as they relate to a particular style of mentoring such as the roles and function of mentor-mentee (Swanepoel, 2012), challenges of mentoring in South African construction industry (Hoffmeister *et al.*, 2011), mentor-mentee relation (Nthombekaya, 2015), mentoring practices (Oke and Otasowie, 2020), benefits of mentoring to a Mentor, mentee and organization (Mohtady *et al.*, 2019). Most of these studies focus on mentoring online graduate students (Melrose, 2006), mentoring in an academic environment (Green and Bauer, 1995; Schollosser and Kahn, 2007). Moreover, some of the research studies are based on critical review of literature and others were done in the developed countries whereby the context, scope and structures are different from a developing context like Tanzania.

Mentoring Practices for Quantity Surveying Profession

A quantity surveyor is a professional who attempts to ensure the judicious use of construction industry resources to the best advantage by providing both financial management and consultancy service to the client during the construction process. According to Shafie *et al.*, 2014; Sospeter *et al.*, 2019), pre-contract stage services include: preliminary cost estimate for the purpose of advising the client on the probable cost of the project, preparation of cost plans, cost- checking to ensure that accepted tender is not more than the approved budget, preparation of tender

documents to be priced by different contractor, evaluating tender reports and recommending suitable contractors for the award of contract. Post contract stage services include preparation of interim valuation for interim certificate, periodic financial statements, valuation of variations, ascertaining of claims and final accounts. Mentoring plays a pivotal role in workplace-based learning (Mohtady *et al.*, 2019). Mentoring will provide the platform required for the transfer and sustainability of knowledge in providing the above services by quantity surveyors. Some researchers opined that a mentor and a mentee can greatly enhance their career and psycho-social development by the potential of mentoring relationship. Protégées can be assisted in developing a sense of confidence, effectiveness, and competence, through the career and psychosocial functions of mentoring (Shafie *et al.*, 2014; Oke and Otasowie, 2020).

Barriers to mentoring are acknowledged in the literature. For instance, Oke and Otasowie (2020) explain that many mentoring programs do not produce the main objectives that were set before they were implemented. The failure of mentoring programs is attributed to failure to follow the procedures of implementing mentoring programs and to formulate the appropriate objectives (Agumba and Fester, 2010; Nthombekaya, 2015). Sometimes mentoring programs are not successful because of the failure to match the correct mentor with correct mentee. Agumba and Fester (2010) reveal top ten problems in mentoring which are: dissimilar personality and habits, mismatch within the dyad value, self-absorption, poor work style, distancing behaviour and neglect, manipulative behaviour, inappropriate delegation of duty, intentional exclusion, credit taking and politicking. Nkomo and Thwala (2013) and Agumba and Fester (2010) report that dissimilar personality and habits (Oke and Otasowie, 2020) was seen as negative outcome whereas bad attitudes, personal problems and deception were never a problem to mentees. Plamondon (2007) groups dysfunctional mentoring into mentor-mentee mismatch, distancing behaviour, manipulative behaviour and lack of mentor expertise (Plamondon, 2007; Shafie *et al.*, 2014). Mohtady *et al.*, (2019) Seidel (2019) and Nkomo and Thwala (2013) reveal gender differences in mentoring those male mentors gave more advice on career development while female mentors were more on psychosocial support. Interestingly, (Mohtady *et al.*, 2019) male mentees received less psychological support than female counterparts. Akin to poor delegation (Trainer, 2017; Oke and Otasowie, 2020) and/or poor mentoring procedures, Suleiman (2013) found that improper job placement and poor motivation are main causes of poor attitude to work.

Furthermore, Insala (2019), Hoffmeister *et al.*, (2011), as well as Nkomo and Thwala (2013) suggested for more study to look on problems that are encountered during mentoring and propose a remedy so that the organization can enjoy the good fruits of mentorship. It is correct to say that certain barriers impede graduates learning process as well as work performance in consulting firms in Tanzania. The quality of the relationship between mentor and mentee can affect learning, particularly any disparity in their expectations (Hodges, 2009). Therefore, it is high time to unveil barriers to mentoring of graduate quantity surveyors in Tanzania to ensure that there is smooth transfer of experience from mentors to mentee in order to improve the productivity at individual level and in Quantity Surveying firms. Other studies found that; deception (O'Seanery, 2007; Nthombekaya, 2015), Personal problems (Nkomo and Thwala, 2013), bad altitude (Suleiman, 2013; Oke and Otasowie, 2020; Nkomo and Thwala, 2013) were some of the barriers. Steinberg (2007), Kovach (2017) and (Mohtady *et al.*, 2019) revealed religious difference, tribalism as among barriers to mentoring. A

study by Hoffmeister *et al.* (2011) identified nepotism as a barrier to mentoring practices.

METHODS

This is a cross-sectional study design which attempts to gather information from mentees on barriers to mentoring graduates in quantity surveying discipline. The survey research strategy was shaped by the need to generate robust findings on the mentoring practices that can contribute to and improve graduate's work performance. There are 112 quantity surveying firms located in Dar es Salaam which are registered by the Architects and Quantity Surveyors Registration Board (AQRB). Purposive sampling techniques was used to select 65 out of 112 firms to be included in the study, based on their knowledge of the phenomenon (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The second reason for using the purposive sampling was deemed appropriate because the sample was hand-picked based upon the researchers' first-hand knowledge of the indigenous consulting firms (Rowley, 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). This implies that 58% of all the firms were sampled for the study. These firms were found to engage in both formal and informal mentoring of graduates which implies they receive graduates from EAPP program organized by AQRB as well as those who are directly employed and volunteering to gain professional experience.

Data for the study was collected using review of literature and questionnaires. The information gathered from literature review related to the study guided the design of the research instrument used which was structured questionnaire (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The questionnaire was divided into two distinct sections. Section 1 encompassed the general demographic information on participating QS graduates. Questionnaires had closed questions on barriers to mentoring and attribute variables of age, sex and experience. To enable cross comparative analysis as part of a robust data protocol, the responses were nominally coded questions so that they be entered one of various pre-prepared categories. Section 2 comprised of the rating and ranking of the 20 barriers impeding their learning process. Fifteen (15) barriers extracted from the literature formed a list of barriers in the questionnaire for respondents to rate using active variables. The barriers were assessed using 5= strongly agree, 4= agree; 3 = neutral, 2=disagree and 1=strongly disagree. Sixty-Five (65) questionnaires were sent out and 53 were returned fairly filled for use in the study equating to 81.5% success. The collected data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20 mainly descriptive statistics (frequencies) for attribute variables and compare means (One-Sample T Test) for barriers. One-sample t-tests was used to test the mean of a single sample to a predetermined value to determine if the sample mean is significantly greater or less than the test value of 3.5.

RESULTS

The respondents' attribute variables were experience, age and sex. The fact that the study was dealing with graduates; majority (83%) had experience ranging between 1 to 4 years, followed by 9.4% who had experience between 5 and 10 years and 7.6% of those with less than 1-year experience. All respondents had between 18 to 35 years of age. The participation of male and female graduates was fairly good with male attaining a higher proportion (58.5%) and female with 41.5%.

Table 1 presents results of One-Sample Statistics and T Test for barriers to mentoring graduates in quantity surveying firms. It reveals that poor work delegation, poor mentoring procedures, mentor expertise, distancing behaviour and neglecting, work

style and deception are generally agreed barriers ($MS \geq 3.5$) to mentoring graduates. Furthermore, results of One-Sample T Test in Table 1 indicate that most of barriers were significant except for distancing behaviour and neglecting, deception, work style and politicking with $Sig \geq 0.05$).

Further examination of the data shows that the poor work delegation was the highest ranked based on the overall sample (mean = 4.02). This barrier was also statistically significant different ($t(52) = 4.02, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The second overall ranked barrier impacting the quantity surveyor graduates was that of poor mentoring procedures, (mean = 3.89). The barrier was statistically significant ($t(52) = 3.89, p = 0.001 < 0.05$). The third overall ranked barrier to mentoring QS graduates was mentor expertise (mean = 3.87). This factor was nevertheless statistically significant ($t(52) = 3.87, p = 0.002 < 0.05$).

Table 1: One Sample Statistics and t- Test

Barrier	Test value ($\mu = 3.5$)	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Mean score	R
Poor work delegation	3.974	52	.000*	.519	4.02	1
Poor mentoring procedures	2.682	52	.010*	.387	3.89	2
Mentor expertise	3.309	52	.002*	.368	3.87	3
Distancing behavior and neglecting	.688	52	.494	.104	3.60	4
Work style	.622	52	.536	.066	3.57	5
deception	.361	52	.720	.047	3.55	6
Politicking (self-promotion)	-.485	52	.629	-.066	3.43	7
Dissimilar personality and habits	-2.467	52	.017*	-.292	3.21	8
Personal problems	-2.076	52	.043*	-.292	3.21	9
Intentional exclusion	-2.978	52	.004*	-.368	3.31	10
Bad attitude	-3.133	52	.003*	-.481	3.02	11
Gender difference	-7.997	52	.000*	-1.311	2.19	12
Religion differences	-9.455	52	.000*	-1.462	2.04	13
Nepotism	-9.389	52	.000*	-1.538	1.96	14
Tribalism	-11.442	52	.000*	-1.632	1.87	15

Notes: *Significant at the 95 per cent level ($p < 0.05$); R = Ranking

In the lower quartile, gender differences (mean= 2.19) religious differences (mean = 2.04), nepotism (mean = 1.96), tribalism (mean =1.87), ranked 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th respectively. All least ranked barriers were found statistically significant notably; gender difference ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$); religious difference ($p=0.000<0.05$, nepotism ($p = 0.200 < 0.05$); tribalism ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

RESULTS

This study looks at both formal and informal mentoring of graduates in quantity surveying career. As such it highlights on barriers to mentoring regardless of their settings. The barriers to mentoring of quantity surveyors’ graduates in terms of ranking are poor work delegation, poor mentoring procedures, mentor expertise, distancing behaviour and neglecting, work style and deception. The top 3 high ranked barriers are significant and the rest plus politicking are not significant. This explains that there are many barriers to mentoring graduates. The top 3 highly ranked barriers and the last 2 in the lower quartiles are discussed.

Poor work delegation was the highly ranked barrier and has been appreciated in various studies (Trainer, 2017; Oke and Otasowie, 2020). The barrier may affect the

learning process in that there could be continuous loss of knowledge which is due to unplanned activities of key personnel (Rahma *et al.*, 2011). This barrier also may culminate to a mentee being assigned repetitive work or assigned too much work that may impede his/her ability to learn (Trainer, 2017).

Poor mentoring procedures were the second ranked barrier. Mentoring procedure will provide the base required for the transfer and sustainability of knowledge in facilitating the learning process to quantity surveying graduates. Whilst absence of the mentoring procedure may hinder the knowledge transfer, the finding is consistent with several earlier studies that report that lack of proper mentoring procedure may hinder the mentoring learning process (Nthombekaya, 2015). In the absence of adequate mentoring procedures, a mentee lacks a systematic way of acquiring knowledge and as such the mentor and mentee will not reach their goals.

Mentor expertise was the third ranked barrier and supported by Plamondon (2007) and Shafie *et al.*, (2014). Mentorship is one of the important things in an organization that support learning and development and therefore the expertise of a mentor has a significant impact on the process (Hoffmeister *et al.*, 2011). The mentor is expected to be competent and possessing professional skills that will be imparted to the mentee. In the event the mentee realizes that mentor is incompetent the learning process will be jeopardized as a result of lack of trust as the mentee may hesitate to do some of the job assigned by the mentor (Plamondon, 2007).

Others such as gender differences (Seidel, 2019; Nkomo and Thwala, 2013) and religions differences (Steinberg, 2007; Mohtady *et al.*, 2019) appear to be significant barriers such that mentoring may not take place because the mentor or mentee is discriminating towards gender or religion. At times mentoring is not successful due to human related factors such as personal problems and nepotism (Nkomo and Thwala, 2013; Hoffmeister *et al.*, 2011); dissimilar personality and habits and intentional exclusion (Plamondon, 2007; Nkomo and Thwala, 2013), bad attitude (Suleiman, 2013; Oke and Otasowie, 2020) and tribalism (Kovach, 2017; Mohtady *et al.*, 2019). The human related factors are likely to dominate in formal mentoring as opposed to informal. In informal setting, a mentor and a mentee develop relationship over time which helps to overcome some of the obstacles and find a good fit. This is supported by the work of Inzer and Crawford (2005) that informal mentoring relationships develop because protégés and mentors readily identify with each other. The current system of mentoring of graduates in our country starts with identifying firms that are ready to assume such responsibility followed by placement which does not guarantee healthy relationship. This results into many challenges to both mentors and mentees. These challenges are contrary to the aspirations of both a mentor and mentee. The finding is consistent to the study by Oke and Otasowie (2020) that, future quantity surveyors are expected to have thorough knowledge and understanding of client operating environment, dilemma and aspirations and this knowledge can be transferred effectively through mentoring practices and therefore the opposite may sparkle to barriers for mentoring.

Collectively, barriers identified in this study deter learning process, work performance and organization outcome in many ways. Human related barriers such as gender and religious differences, personal problems, nepotism, dissimilar personality and habits, intentional exclusion, tribalism, and bad attitude may lead to abortive mentoring including quitting the program by either a mentor or mentee. This could be one of the reasons that many construction graduates participate in mentoring programs but do not

acquire the required skills (Oke *et al.*, 2018). The scantily or non-mentored individuals lack an important aspect to improve their performance which could have significantly contributed to professional development and sustainability of the profession. Individuals who have been mentored tend to report greater career outcome in terms of satisfaction with their job and career, commitment to their career and intentions to stay with current organization than non-mentored (Allen *et al.*, 2004). These qualities greatly contribute to individual performance, professional development, and organization outcome at large. Poor attitude to work elevates to non-cooperation of a mentor and mentee which has negative impact on morale and productivity level of the organizations (Suleiman, 2013). Dissimilar personality and habits bring about the mismatch in personalities that are likely to affect the mentor-mentee relation (Plamondon, 2007) such that mentor and mentee are not compatible due to their social or economic status and it becomes hard to work together. Religious differences pose a threat among the mentor and mentee relation which may emanate from working times and days when they have to catch up with deadline which in turn affects organizational goals. Gender differences, tribalism, nepotism, and intentional exclusion create a sense of exclusion or favouritism to mentor or mentee which will interfere with both the performance of individuals in the program and their organizations.

CONCLUSION

Generally, there exist barriers to mentoring of graduates in quantity surveying firms in Tanzania which impede their learning process as well as work performance. Graduates of quantity surveying career are experiencing both formal and informal mentoring and in the making they come across several barriers. These barriers are mostly out of human and social factors which include poor delegation of work, mentor expertise, personal problems, intentional exclusion, bad attitude and, religion and gender differences. It seems these barriers are exuberated by the formal system of mentoring that arbitrarily allocates graduates to firms. One of the main contributions of this study lies in the identification of an ordered grouped set of barriers for mentoring QS graduates in Tanzania. Another significant contribution of this paper is that it sheds light and provides insights on the understanding of the barriers impeding their learning process and work performance within a previously unexplored context. The study therefore recommends that AQRB and TIQS to advocate for informal mentoring among registered members and consulting firms; organize training programs for mentors so as to equip them with mentoring skills; and capitalize on sensitization programs to improve the morale of mentoring in quantity surveying firms. The findings can be used by the practitioners as a basis for providing the foundation to address the barriers and “find a good fit” during mentoring process in improving the performance of graduates in the future. Secondly, the findings provide insights into how the uniqueness of the formal/informal context and consulting firms affect the mentoring processes. The barriers to mentoring of QS graduates will affect the learning process, work performance and organisation outcome.

The study was limited to mentees in consulting firms of the construction sector in Tanzania and therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other sectors of the economy or public sector organisations operating in other countries. Secondly, the study only employed statistics analysis such as descriptive and inferential statistics which take into consideration the strength of association among the barriers. Future studies could use rigorous statistical analysis such as regression analyses, multivariate techniques such as factor analysis, and structural equation modelling (SEM).

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