

Mentorship of Academics in Higher Education Institutions: A Scoping Review and Future Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to suggest a normative mentorship model that can contribute to the efficiency of academics at higher learning institutions. Furthermore, the article is focused on promoting a follow-up normative mentorship model based on primary data to be collected at the Namibia University of Science and Technology in Windhoek, Namibia. The research employed a scoping review using the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews, a meta-analysis (Prisma) flow chart for the literature studied for this article, and qualitative content analysis to achieve the research objective. This objective included examining the benefits of mentoring strategies for mentors and mentees and exploring the challenges of mentoring strategy. The study's findings revealed that mentorship practices generally contribute significantly to academics' research productivity, enhancing their workload efficiency and giving them a crucial role in the development of graduate students and faculty members. The paper also details how mentorship strategies are challenged by both the dynamic process of a mentorship process and balancing the mentors' capabilities with their responsibilities. The paper concludes that the mentorship of academics produces many favorable work outcomes, such as academic adjustment to organizational culture, career development and advancement, promotion, job satisfaction and constructive participation in the organization. Based on the findings, the study recommended that serious consideration and implementation of a formal mentoring strategy is required when institutions of higher learning mentorship strategies or frameworks are not formally recognized or implemented. Moreover, performance indicators should be clearly stated to ensure that the mission and vision of the institution are accomplished and that a conducive learning environment should be embraced. In conclusion, before the normative mentorship model can be implemented, all the various stakeholders in the academic ecosystem can buy into ensuring effective implementation and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the sustainable mentorship model for the benefit of most stakeholders, the students.

Keywords: Mentorship, mentors, mentee, academic.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, mentorship is known as a tool used by institutions to bring forth growth in development, and with higher education, there are no exceptions (Cordie et al., 2020). Institutions of Higher learning recognize mentoring as a valuable strategy for growth and development in more elevated education, especially among the academic staff. Many higher education institutions worldwide adopt mentoring programs as a staff development approach, especially for new lecturers. However, mentoring should not stay with lecturing and higher education. As cited by Nunan et al. (2023), mentorship is practical yet beneficial for institutions to expand and be sustainable. Although a remarkable phenomenon, what exactly is mentorship? Mentorship is a form of learning in a workplace to mitigate the ever-evolving complex problems that may arise (Nunan et al., 2023). Therefore, the research links mentorship to teaching, community engagement, and research in higher education. Nunan et al. (2023) view mentorship as an ongoing process between the mentor (the individual teaching through practice) and a mentee (an individual who receives the practical teaching). Wong and Premkumar (2007) define mentoring as a learning process that builds helpful, personal, and reciprocal relationships. Emotional support is a crucial component of this process. Within mentoring relationships, mentees develop and learn through conversations with more experienced mentors". Mentoring is a technique used to enhance the three pillars of a university, which consist of teaching, community engagement, and

research; this paper will go into more detail on how mentorship can impact those three pillars (Cordie & Lin, 2020). According to Andersen and West (2020), in their research on improving mentoring in Higher Education in undergraduate education and exploring Implications for Online Learning, mentorship is when a senior person provides guidance, emotional support, and advice to a junior or junior employee. In the study context, this is the definition that Andersen and West (2020) opted for to guide the article.

In academia, mentoring is an increasingly high-impact strategy for promoting academic and student success in higher education institutions (Law & Hales, 2020). Mentorship assists academics in preparing students for their career journey (Law & Hales, 2020).

Mentorship is equally relevant in the context of Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), previously known as Polytechnic of Namibia, which was renamed Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) in 2015 (Namibia University of Science and Technology, 2024). This paper is a follow-up from Naris and Ukpere (2010), who observed that despite the widespread use of mentoring in higher education, there is a lack of a well-established policy in the Human resource code at NUST as it inherited the Human Resource code when the institution was known as the Polytechnic of Namibia (Naris & Ukpere, 2009). The lack of a well-established policy is particularly alarming given the diverse needs of newly appointed staff members at NUST, who could greatly benefit from additional support mechanisms (Cordie & Lin, 2020). Given the limited research on mentorship in higher education institutions in Namibia, this study will largely contribute to the knowledge of mentorship and propose a mentorship framework that can be recommended at any university (Naris & Ukpere, 2009).

The following primary research questions guide this paper:

- What are the benefits of mentoring for mentors and mentees?
- What are the challenges of mentoring for mentors and mentees?
- What is the suggested mentorship model of academics at institutions of higher learning?

A scoping review collects and summarises the literature (Ark-sey & O'Malley, 2005). Furthermore, the review was based on three questions set for this article. As reflected in the figure, the review opted for a Prisma flow chart Figure 1. to guide the identification, screening and selection of the articles for this review (Ark-sey & O'Malley, 2005).

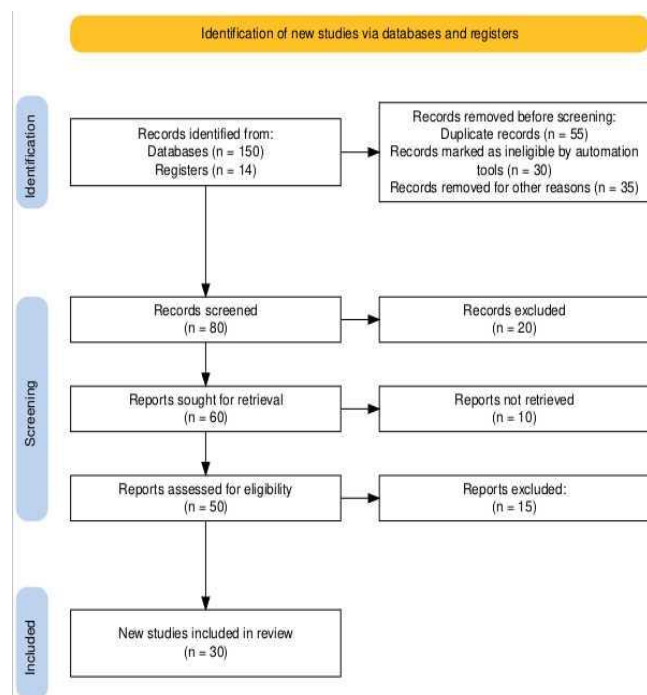


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow chart

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper's literature review aims to examine an already documented phenomenon through multiple theoretical perspectives. This section is structured as follows: section 2.1 presents the broad overview of the impact of mentorship at HEIs, and 2.2 pronounces the paper's comprehensive framework of effective mentorship relationships. Section 2.3 analyses the recent empirical literature on mentorship's role at HEI in Namibia and other countries.

Overview of Mentorship at High Education Institutions (HEI)

According to Smith et al. (2024), Mentoring is an aspect of teacher education that shows promise in facilitating adjustment to university, professional identification, critical thinking, planning, and classroom management skills. This means mentoring is popular for capacity-building, knowledge transfer, and employee retention in many organizations, especially in the educational sector. Researchers Nnabuife Ezimma K. et al., 2021 argue that mentoring produces many work outcomes in the workplace, such as career development and advancement, promotion, pay, job satisfaction, and organization participation. Hansford & Ehrich (2006) support this, arguing that mentoring programs have affected many fortunate professions in business, industry, and education.

Harvard Business Essentials (2004) wrote that tertiary educational institutions are labor intensive and are primarily dependent on their employees for efficient delivery of services to achieve their goals. According to Diggs et al. (2023), mentorship in higher education has grown as a mechanism not only to retain and graduate students but also to retain and develop highly effective faculty. Anderson (1988) defined mentorship as a nurturing process where more skilled and experienced persons serve as role models to teach, sponsor, encourage, counsel, and befriend less skilled or professional persons. Eller, Lev and Fuerer (2014) wrote that early studies identified two mentoring functions, namely, psychosocial functions (role modelling, acceptance/confirmation, counselling, and friendship), as well as career functions (sponsorship, exposure/visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments).

Career-related mentorship fosters protégés' professional development; psychosocial functions increase self-efficacy, self-worth and professional identity (Eby et al., 2010). Mentors give insight into the unwritten and vague norms in academia and help mentees navigate into higher social networks (Portillo, 2007). Mentors also take a particular interest in their mentee's professional and personal development and assist in socialization into academia's discipline, culture, and career (Benavides, 2018; Watson, 2007). Mentoring is, therefore, an engaging relationship-building process developed through multiple encounters, trust, and reliability. Cited in Rinfret et al. (2023), recent literature acknowledges that mentorship is dynamic and lacks a one-size-fits-all approach (Ashley et al., 2023; Ding & Riccucci, 2022; Evans et al., 2023), the authors argue that Individuals from diverse backgrounds seek varied forms of mentorship for different reasons, often utilizing different strategies (Azevedo et al., 2023; McCandless et al., 2022). Therefore, this paper argues that research is needed to fine-tune mentoring relationships and practices in business and HEIs to better cater to mentors' and mentees' productivity.

Mentorship is crucial in developing graduate students and faculty members (Meier, 2023). For graduate students, mentorship offers valuable emotional support during the highly stressful phases of their academic journey, with long-lasting effects on their careers (Alshayhan et al., 2023; Hummel & Hersey, 2023). Faculty members also benefit significantly from mentorship, experiencing higher career satisfaction (Luna & Cullen, 1995), increased research output (Fountain & Newcomer, 2016), and greater satisfaction throughout the promotion and tenure process (Ashley et al., 2023). Mentorship is a well-established practice (Fowler, 2022), extensively explored in the literature across various disciplines, examining different types, purposes, motivations, and benefits (Bozeman & Feeney, 2009; Bozionelos, 2004; Chaos et al., 1992; Farrell et al., 2022; Kram, 1985).

The Namibian academia has faced several challenges regarding effectiveness and global importance. One of such challenges is incessant student enrolment thus increasing student enrolment in Namibian universities on an annual basis demand for better competent academia that will deliver qualitative learning, research and services that can rival its peers in the developed world. Osezua and Agbalajobi (2016) posit that a critical avenue through which academic standards can be maintained and sustained is through academic mentoring. Creating a mentoring system for academics is undoubtedly a step in the right direction if instituted in the Namibian university system.

Faculty handbooks and the HR code at NUST rarely mention formal mentorship of junior faculty as they navigate faculty ranks. Therefore, this paper adopts a framework that argues that not only does student success depend on faculty success but that investing in faculty is as integral as investing in students.

Mentorship relationship process and components framework at High Education Institutions

According to Watson (2007), mentoring is a cyclical process operating within institutional and interpersonal structures that can transform into a trusted partnering relationship. Watson's (2007) mentoring framework argues that three stages of mentorship can help faculty meet academic requirements (research, teaching and community service) and develop support networks. Watson (2007) demonstrates the relational dynamics between the mentor and mentee at each stage: hierarchical years, junior/senior colleagues, and the trusted sage years. This is represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Best Practice Suggestions

Stage	Best Practice Mentor Activities	Best Practice Protégé Activities
Hierarchical Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide needed and timely advice • Mirror protégé's efforts • Create appropriate boundaries and role expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect different mentor roles • Respect appropriate boundaries and role expectations
Junior/Senior Colleague Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly clarify mentoring expectations • Leverage personal and professional network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly clarify mentoring expectations • Take appropriate advantage of the mentor's network • Develop a reputation outside of the mentor's network
Trusted Sage Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain existing protégé relationships and build new ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage knowledge gained as a protégé and apply as a mentor

(Watson, 2007)

According to Watson (2007), the hierarchical years refer to the initial period when a new professional is assigned to work within the organization. In both business and academia, the initial relationship is formal, hierarchically based, tactically focused and could best be described as advisory or directive rather than mentoring (Watson, 2007). The hierarchical relationship generally lasts between three and four years. During this time, the advisor assists the new professional in understanding the corporate culture, getting appropriate work supplies, completing required forms, getting placed on an initial project and guiding the new professional through recurring yearly actions (e.g., performance appraisals). In this case, various researchers argue that the relationship is tactical and designed to enable the employee to become productive quickly (Bain & Fedynich, 2011). The next stage is a more informal development of mentorship, which could be a formal structure via academic policies.

Watson (2007) argues that the junior/senior colleague years or stage occur after the early hierarchical years and reflect a transitional period when the mentee has become fully oriented. Therefore, the relationship with the

mentor evolves based on individual goals and personalities. The junior/senior faculty relationship revolves around professional commonalities and similar personalities where the senior faculty (mentor) provides support (Watson, 2007). It is at this stage that senior faculty (mentors) introduce junior faculty (mentees) to their social networks and increase the mentees' visibility in academia. Mentors may also help guide mentees' career progression toward Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) (Fleming et al., 2015; Wolfe et al., 2018). The final stage—trusted sage years—occurs when hierarchical boundaries are eliminated, and the mentor becomes a lifelong, trusted friend. At the same time, the mentee assumes the role of mentor for students and junior faculty (Watson, 2007). Accordingly, while specific activities vary by mentoring stage, mentors and mentees should create thriving relationships, respect time expectations and demands, ensure necessary advisement occurs, and be open to an increasingly deep and personal relationship (Watson, 2007).

Regarding the components of an effective mentoring relationship, this paper embraces the critical elements of an effective mentoring relationship by Eller, Lev and Fuerer (2014). According to Eller, Lev and Fuerer (2014), a fruitful mentor-protégé relationship is comprised of components such as (1) open communication and accessibility, (2) goals and challenges, (3) passion and inspiration, (4) a caring personal relationship; (5) mutual respect and trust; (6) exchange of knowledge; (7) independence and collaboration; and lastly (8) role modelling (see Figure 1). Eller, Lev and Fuerer (2014) conclude that three of the eight themes fit the "career-related" category, while five could be categorized as "psychosocial," which therefore highlights the importance to both mentors and protégés of a supportive mentoring relationship (Kram, 1983; Schockett & Haring-Hidore, 1985).

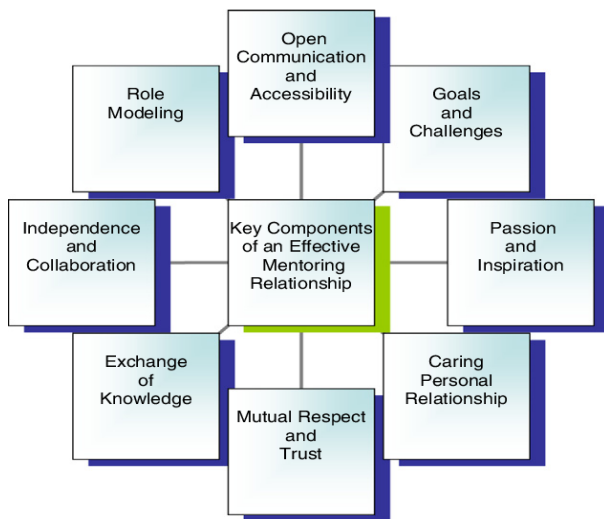


Figure 1: Key components of an effective mentoring relationship.

Source?

Let's have a description and explanation of the above diagram here

Empirical literature on mentorship at Higher Education Institutions

Adopting a quantitative research method approach and following the ex-post facto research design, Okon, Owan, and Owan (2022) analyzed the contribution of three mentorship practices relatively and cumulatively to the research productivity of early-career academics in the field of educational psychology in universities. The study was conducted in the South region of Nigeria, whereby its population covered 723 early-career researchers (ECRs) in educational psychology distributed across 19 universities in South-South Nigeria. The "Mentorship Practices and Research Productivity Questionnaire" (MPRPQ) was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was designed by the researchers and then validated by three experts. Primary data were collected from the field after copies of the instrument had been administered to respondents. The study results revealed that mentorship practices were generally shown to significantly contribute to the research productivity of ECRs in educational psychology in universities. Specifically, the adoption of cloning and apprenticeship approaches to mentorship contributed substantially to the ECRs' research productivity. The

study concluded that mentorship practices are essential determinants of the research productivity of early-career educational psychologists, and it recommended that institutions strengthen their mentorship practices to boost the productive research capacities of ECRs.

Diggs et al. (2023) discuss the specific challenges faced by faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), particularly Women of Color (WOC) faculty, in providing effective mentoring due to resource limitations and a lack of institutional support. The study utilized a collaborative auto-ethnography approach triangulated with program data. The authors detail how, even though HBCUs excel in mentoring students, the faculty's responsibilities are often underemphasized and influenced by past experiences, role definitions, and institutional expectations. The authors emphasize the need to recognize mentorship's role in HBCUs and call for more research to address issues related to faculty mentorship, especially for WOC faculty members. The study underscored the importance of equitable mentorship and support for faculty to foster student success within HBCUs, calling for reevaluating institutional standards to value mentoring as a visible academic service. According to Diggs et al. (2023), HBCU faculty members are expected to produce quality professional experiences comparable to those of other majority White institutions. However, HBCU faculty may lack fundamental training and resource support.

The aim is to identify the mentor characteristics that lead to superior mentoring outcomes and to provide human resources development (HRD) professionals with evidence-based suggestions for recruiting, selecting, and training mentors to improve the effectiveness of mentorship programs. Deng and Turner (2023) critically reviewed quantitative research on mentor characteristics that impact effective mentoring. Their study found that five critical categories of mentor characteristics are linked to successful mentoring outcomes. These are competency in context-relevant knowledge, skills and abilities; commitment and initiative; interpersonal skills; pro-social orientation and an orientation toward development, exploration and expansion. Institutions must focus on recruiting and training mentors to ensure a sufficient pool of qualified mentors and mentors who meet the desired criteria (Deng & Turner, 2023). Additionally, the author argues that incorporating the desired mentor characteristics into both processes, rather than just selection, will help with self-selection and developing these characteristics. Lastly, Deng and Turner (2023) wrote that despite the ongoing interest in identifying effective mentor characteristics, the existing literature is fragmented, making it challenging for HRD professionals to determine which characteristics are crucial for mentoring relationships and success.

Investigating the differences in the teachers' professional development (TPD) through mentorship in the workplace, the authors Zhang, Ma and Xu (2024) examined the role of mentorship in the professional development of teachers. They conducted a meta-analysis of pertinent empirical data. The authors used data from over 2,900 individuals, 66 experiments and 12 countries, presenting a meta-analysis of the association between workplace mentorship and TPD. Zhang, Ma and Xu's (2024) study indicated that mentoring activities could somewhat boost the TPD. Additionally, they argue that mentorship contributes positively to the discipline of science and language, kindergarten, individual mentoring and curriculum research. In conclusion, researchers Deng and Turner (2023) argue that the development of TPD is influenced to varying degrees in four aspects: discipline, educational stage, intervention strategy and mentorship cycle.

Cited by Eller, Lev and Fuerer (2014), in a retrospective study of 152 alum protégés and 42 of their mentors, Haggard and Turban (2012) identified mentor and protégé functions based on the psychological mentoring contract. This contract comprises perceived obligations from mentors and protégés, including relational and transactional commitments. According to Eller, Lev and Fuerer (2014), the relational obligations of mentors include availability, encouragement, acceptance and trust, and advising. Relational obligations of protégés include loyalty, respect, friendship, support and deference (Eller et al., 2014). Transactional obligations of mentors include career support, networking opportunities, intervening on behalf of the protégé, and providing challenges. Transactional obligations of protégés include project assistance, willingness to learn, high performance, and information (Eller et al., 2014).

METHODS

This literature review's qualitative, descriptive research design aims to compile and evaluate the exciting body of knowledge published since 2007 regarding mentoring at institutions of higher learning. The goal is to

investigate the benefits and challenges and suggest a mentoring framework at higher learning institutions from developed, emerging, and underdeveloped countries. The elements include the mentoring models, advantages, challenges, and benefits. The review was carried out in Table 3 methodically to guarantee a thorough comprehension of mentoring at higher education institutions. Moreover, the literature review followed accepted practices.

Table 3: Literature-reviewed model

No	Components of the literature process	Description
1	Type of literature research	Empirical, literature-reviewed article
2	Years	2007 to 2024
3	Language Status	English
4	Study design	Surveys, ethnographic, case studies, observational, Observational. Meta-analysis.
5	Database	Scopus, Emerald, ABSCO, Google Scholar, Science Direct. Humanities and Social Communications, Education Sciences, Springer, NUST library search, NUST library online journals and Scholarly Journal archives.

Testing the outdated NUST mentoring framework is the end goal of a follow-up article based on the empirical evidence studied for this narrative literature review article.

Literature Search Strategy

Searching for pertinent mentoring literature was done using a methodical technique. According to Booth (2016), the following actions were performed: The selection of resources involved searching popular academic databases, including Google Scholar, PubMed, JSTOR, and Scopus, for peer-reviewed books, articles, and conference papers on mentoring at higher education institutions. The investigation encompassed a wide range of viewpoints using grey literature, such as publications from alternative educational establishments like schools.

The search term combination for mentoring comprises "mentoring," "mentorship," "mentor-mentee relationship," "mentoring models," "mentoring outcomes," and "mentoring challenges." The article adheres to Petticrew and Roberts's (2006) rules to establish the article's inclusion and exclusion criteria. All English-language research published by 2014 or later was included in the review. Studies addressing mentoring in higher education institutions were the focus of attention, along with evaluations of the literature and theoretical works. Studies that do not address mentorship at higher education institutions meet the exclusion criterion.

Research design, data Extraction and Synthesis

A thorough systematic review process is hampered by the semi-systematic or narrative review technique, intended for subjects conceptualized differently and investigated by researchers across different disciplines (Wong et al., 2013). It is just not feasible to review every article that might be pertinent to the subject, so an alternative approach needs to be devised. Business journals have published several publications that use this methodology (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2017). In addition to providing an overview of a subject, a semi-systematic review frequently examines the evolution of a topic across study traditions or the advancement of research within a particular discipline. Instead of quantifying impact size, the review aims to uncover and

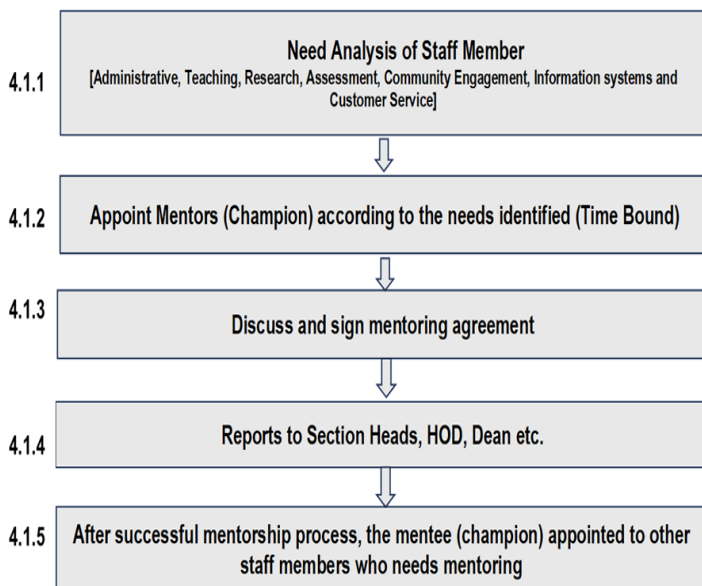
comprehend all potentially relevant research traditions that have consequences for the topic under study. These are then synthesized using meta-narratives (Wong et al., 2013). This facilitates comprehension of complex subjects. This approach, however, maintains that the research process should be transparent and have a developed research strategy that allows readers to evaluate whether the arguments for the judgments made were reasonable, both for the chosen topic and from a methodological perspective, even though it covers a wide range of topics and study types. The data was first be extracted methodically after identifying and selecting pertinent literature. Necessary details include the author(s), publication year, research context, mentoring methods, results, and difficulties. A thematic classification and integration will be applied to the retrieved data—second, Quest et al. (2012); Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Make the case that the themes created by grouping the data will correspond with the research questions posed for the article. Themes could include mentoring definitions, types of mentoring, advantages for mentors and mentees, difficulties in mentoring relationships, and results of mentoring. Finding patterns, parallels, and discrepancies among the many literary works examined through thematic analysis will be possible.

Lastly, each study and report's quality, validity, and reliability were evaluated thoroughly. This will entail evaluating each study's research design, sample size, data-gathering strategies, and analytic approaches. In the synthesis, studies of higher calibre will be given greater weight. (Roberts & Petticrew, 2006). To verify the validity of the suggested mentoring model, a comprehensive and systematic approach to analyzing the mentoring literature is ensured by the methodology described. The review will consolidate the current research on mentoring by utilizing a thorough search method, thematic analysis, and critical appraisal. This will provide insightful information for academics.

RESULTS

Where are the study results? Where is this model coming from?

Proposed Mentoring Normative Model



All the current staff and academic appointees should complete a need analysis survey as reflected in the above model. The faculty and departments should have a database of mentors who are champions in the different needs and skills, as identified (4.1.1). After the needs analysis survey is completed, champions should be appointed according to the needs analysis of the mentee (4.1.2). The faculty will then forward the mentors' and mentees' information to the Human Resource Department to compile the mentorship agreement (4.1.3). After completing the mentorship agreement, the Human Resources Department will sign the completion thereof (4.1.4). The mentee will then be added to the mentor database for future academics appointed (4.1.5).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- First, for any change like this proposed model, NUST should, through effective consultation with all staff members, buy into this proposed model. Furthermore, the mentorship responsibility should be included in the mentor's workload. Those above ensure the effective and efficient completion of the mentorship agreement.
- Key performance indicators should be identified to ensure mentorship contributes to the mission and vision of the institution.
- The institution should create a conducive lifelong learning cultural environment amongst all academics.
- Incentives can motivate mentors and mentees to complete mentorship agreements successfully

Limitations and areas of future research

This study relies only on empirical evidence from Namibia, which does not have primary data. A follow up study based on primary data can fill the Gap. The scope of the study is limited to one case study, which is the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The study also focused only on academics. Future studies can focus on the role of leadership and the support staff to enhance continuous, effective, and efficient mentorship.

In conclusion, the article proposes a follow-up after NUST implements the proposed model. The follow-up article will be based on primary data covering the academic's perception of the proposed model.

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