

## **Mentorship of Novice Lecturers at the University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University**

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### **Abstract**

*This article draws on the findings of a study conducted in 2011 to examine perceptions of lecturers towards mentorship of novice lecturers at the University of Zambia and Copperbelt University. Data were collected from 47 respondents. Two separate self-completion questionnaires, one for senior academic staff and another for novice lecturers, both with quantitative and qualitative elements, were used to collect data. Data revealed that both the senior academic staff and novice lecturers perceived mentorship to be necessary for the professional development of novice lecturers. However, the data further revealed that the absence of policy on mentorship of novice lecturers, indifferent attitudes by senior academic staff,*

*overrunning programme schedules encountered by both senior academic staff and novice lecturers and unwillingness by some novice lecturers to be mentored negatively affected the mentorship of novice lecturers. Those who provided mentorship did so informally on humanitarian grounds. On the basis of these findings, the study recommends that the University of Zambia and Copperbelt University should develop policy on mentorship and that mentorship be included among the duties of senior academic staff to avoid unscheduled work overloads. In so doing, the two universities might establish mentoring of novice lecturers as a norm. To achieve this the paper recommends that senior academic staff should be trained in various aspects such as purposes of mentorship, needs of novice lecturers and benefits of mentorship. Lastly, the two universities should consider making mentorship of novice lecturers count towards one's promotion.*

**Key words:** Mentorship, novice, challenges, senior academic staff, professional development.

## **Introduction**

This study set out to examine the perceptions of lecturers of the mentorship of novice lecturers at the University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University. Mentorship is a professional relationship between a mentor and a mentee for the purpose of professional instruction and guidance. In other words, mentoring describes a process by which a more experienced or knowledgeable individual offers assistance to a less experienced individual. On the level of terms used in the study, it was felt there was huge potential for ambiguity in meaning and therefore it is necessary to explain how we used the terms 'novice lecturer' and 'senior academic staff'. Throughout this study, the term novice lecturers is used to describe first time university lecturers who are still at the level of Lecturer III; and have between 3 months and three years of university teaching experience, and include both Masters and PhD holders. The term senior academic staff refers to lecturers at the level of Lecturer Grade One, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Full Professor.

Trends in higher education in Zambia reflect a significant change of values commensurate with the liberalisation of the education sector. This has given birth to a massive boom in higher education that includes both public and private universities. However, these universities suffer from lack of appropriately qualified academic staff, low faculty salaries, poor libraries and teaching resources, poor infrastructure, over enrolment of students and lack of financial resources for research and for attendance and presentation of papers at international conferences.

The new private universities especially have had issues surrounding the quality and experience of teaching staff, as well as logistical and administrative hiccups. The public, established universities and education authorities have been sceptical about these emerging universities. This scepticism has been aided by uncoordinated expansion in the programmes on offer. However, in recent years the credibility of some of these new universities has been growing as more and more people get attracted to their range of programmes, especially business-oriented programmes that they offer.

The competition brought by the private (and church-run) universities through the programme range they offer has compelled public universities like the Copperbelt University and the University of

Zambia to respond by reviewing their own programmes. To cope with this expansion, which has put pressure on the lean staff available, the universities have employed two strategies; firstly advertise to employ already qualified staff and secondly employ Staff Development Fellows (SDFs). The second option is often seen as more ideal. As such SDFs are recruited enmasse and being locally trained, they graduate in huge numbers and upon joining their respective institutions as novice lecturers, they take on the responsibility of teaching most courses at first and second year levels, usually without any mentorship.

And yet novice lecturer mentorship forms a central part of university education in many countries. Mentorship can make the difference between motivated, happy lecturers in a academic workplace that is usually rife with issues of stress. However, interactive observations and discussions with both novice lecturers and senior academic staff at the University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University point to the absence of a systematic mentorship programme for novice lecturers to support, nurture and foster growth of teaching. As a result, novice lecturers face numerous challenges that include: inadequate knowledge and mentorship on preparation of assessments, teaching, professional conduct, and professional development. The current study was therefore conducted to examine the perceptions of lecturers concerning the mentorship of novice lecturers at the University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University. The study's objectives were to:

- (i) determine existence and nature of policies or programmes for mentorship of novice lecturers at the University of Zambia and Copperbelt University
- (ii) examine perceptions of lecturers concerning the mentorship of novice lecturers.
- (iii) establish the benefits of mentorship among academicians.

## **Literature review**

Since the seminal work of Kram (1985) many authors and scholars have been interested in the role of mentorship of novice employees in their career development. The range of mentoring functions possible, however suggests that developmental relationships vary in the ways they support individual development.

As Kram (ibid) has contended, individuals are more likely to build supportive relationships at work if they consider what their needs are, which career and psychosocial functions would respond to those needs, and who in the organization might be available and capable of providing those mentoring functions. After a systematic diagnosis of this kind, it is possible to outline with whom to initiate and build a relationship. Such strategy enables an individual to assume responsibility for relationships at work and to direct one's energy in positive directions. Those who feel isolated or "disconnected" from the organization will feel empowered as they build relationships that support their career advancement and personal development.

Moir and Stobbe (1995) assert that it is equally important to recognize the potential reciprocity of a developmental relationship. When a manager at midcareer, for example, provides sponsorship,

coaching, counselling, and friendship, he/she not only furthers a junior colleague's growth and development but her own as well. By offering career and psychosocial functions the midcareer manager satisfies generative needs, stays in touch with a younger generation, and if the junior colleague advances, the manager receives recognition and respect from peers and superiors for developing younger talent.

Moir and Stobbe further advance that mentoring relationships lead toward a higher satisfaction, trust, self-efficacy, and achievement of career goals. These have led to better performance and encouraged individuals for higher commitment to the organisational development. The bottom line is that the mentor helps the mentee to negotiate his/her environment in the organization that he/she has joined. Through this relationship, mentors afford opportunities to the mentee to excel by eliminating barriers to their professional development.

As a novice, a lecturer is a long way from being a skilled expert and is, therefore in need of guidance. In the initial stage of their teaching the lecturer is more of an apprentice, someone who is unaware of their inexperience and eager to profit and learn the art of teaching from the advice of those who are already qualified.

A mentorship programme can provide for forums for faculty members to describe and reflect on their professional lives and issues. Mentorship can lead to, amongst others, a strengthened understanding of the roles of faculty members and to sustainability and enrichment of their place in the profession.

For benefits of mentorship to be realized, senior academic staff must play their role in supporting novice lecturers and avoid giving novice lecturers the most difficult courses and the most demanding related activities. In addition, they need to help poorly performing novice lecturers instead of despising and ridiculing them.

This process should lead to a culture in which senior academic staff and novice lecturers work together on shared inquiry into effective practices to improve student achievement. These systems work on the assumption that the development of lecturer proficiency is acquired not through solo study but via collegial deliberations. They seek to guide and facilitate the learning paths of novice lecturers as they become rooted in the professional culture of their academic discipline. Methods of teaching, student counselling and guidance and evaluation such as quality assurance methods, learning diaries, various learning assessment methods, ways to evaluate institutional structures and conditions of learning are important to a novice lecturer (North-South-South Higher Education Institution Network Programme, 2009).

The purpose of mentoring is to promote the newcomer's career advancement, personal development and education. The outcomes of the mentoring process are accomplished goals, role fulfillment and self-efficacy. Therefore, mentoring is a process that can encourage self-efficacy that enables one to take on a new role successfully and become a fully committed professional (Lawson, 1992). Mentoring researchers have empirical evidence that support the role of mentoring for career advancement. Many countries have adopted mentoring as a tool for career advancement.

In Japan, mentoring relationships have been incorporated into the working culture. Mentoring emphasizes high value on continuity, obligation and duty between individual, the notion of respect for elders and the concept of seniors protecting novices from failure. These indicate that mentoring has been accepted more than a tool in Japan since it is already embedded in their culture (Enerson, 2001).

This review clearly indicates that mentoring is an important tool for career advancement among employees, including the academics. From the professional perspective, the discussion tries to establish the roles and outcomes of mentoring that eventually leads to positive individual career and organisational outcomes. Studies around the world have come to a conclusion that there is a strong connection between mentoring and career advancement. However, as mentioned earlier no literature exists on the subject of mentorship of novice lecturers in Zambia. It was therefore necessary to conduct a study of this nature and examine the perception of senior academic staff and novice lecturers about mentorship of novice lecturers in tertiary institutions in Zambia and particularly at the University of Zambia and Copperbelt University.

## Methodology

Since the researchers sought to obtain in-depth understanding of the topic being studied, a case study design was used. This study design enabled the researchers to understand the perceptions of senior academic staff and novice lecturers about mentorship of novice lecturers. A combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to collect the data. The target population for this study were lecturers at the University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University. The study used purposive sampling to select the four schools. Purposeful sampling involves selecting respondents that manifest the characteristics that are of greatest interest to the researcher. The senior academic staff selected for the sample were those willing to be part of the sample and were able to provide information on mentorship. The novice lecturers were chosen by using the proportional simple random sampling procedure. This procedure was used because it provides respondents equal chance of being selected for the sample and reduces researcher biasness. The sample comprised forty-seven (47) respondents, consisting of twenty (20) senior academic staff at Lecturer 1, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Full Professor and twenty-seven (27) novice lecturers at the level of lecturer Grade III. These were drawn from the Schools of Education and the School of Medicine at the University of Zambia (UNZA) and the School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and School of Engineering at the Copperbelt University (CBU).

The distribution of respondents was as indicated in table 1:

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents.**

School	Senior Academic Staff	Novice Lecturers
Education (UNZA)	10	12
Medicine (UNZA)	4	5
Mathematics and Natural Sciences (CBU)	3	5
Engineering (CBU)	3	5
Total	20	27

Primary data for this research were gathered in 2011. Two separate self-completion questionnaires, one for the senior academic staff and another for novice lecturers, were used to collect data. These different instruments facilitated the collection of in-depth data from the respondents. Responses from qualitative data were coded and tabulated and interpretation analysis used, inter alia, to establish and describe themes and sub-themes emerging from the data. Data analysis further consisted of item analysis of the questionnaire responses. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the quantitative aspects of the data to generate frequencies, percentages, figures and tables.

## **Findings and discussion**

This study set out to examine the perceptions of lecturers about mentorship of novice lecturers at the University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University. This next section presents the findings of the study with regard to the existence and nature of policies or programmes for mentorship of novice lecturers at the University of Zambia and Copperbelt University, the perceptions of lecturers concerning the mentorship of novice lecturers with specific focus on novice lecturers' areas of need, obstacles to mentorship and benefits of mentorship among academicians. Concurrently, a discussion of these aspects is done.

Given the nature of the topic, the analysis presented in this article needs to be exploratory so as to illuminate in detail the existing viewpoints of academic staff on the mentorship of novice lecturers.

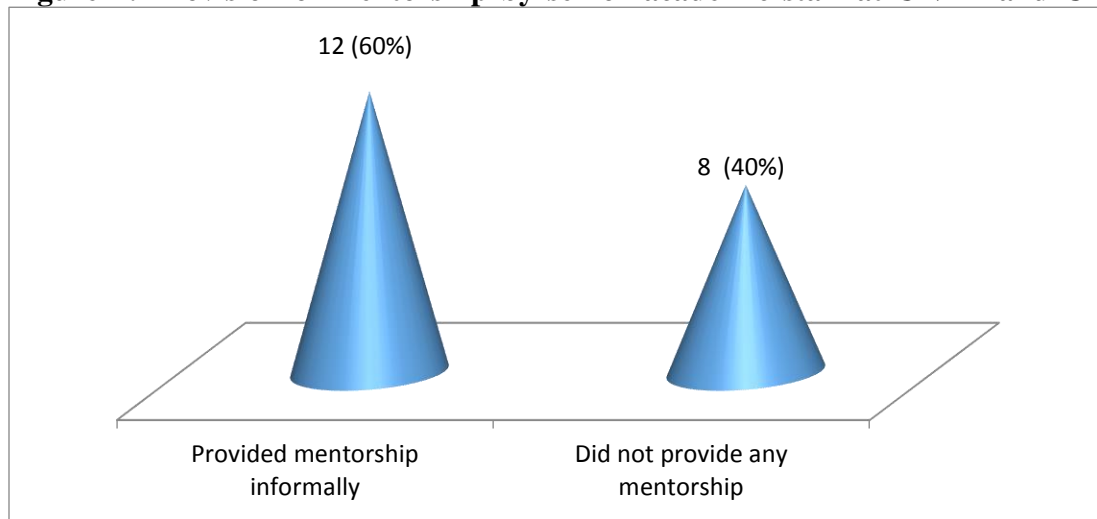
Primary data for this study were gathered from 27 novice lecturers (17 male and 10 female) of varying ages who had been lecturers for periods between six months and thirty-six months. Demographic characteristics analyzed included the age, gender, duration of teaching at university, and qualifications of novice and senior academic staff. In addition, the sample consisted of twenty senior academic staff (15 male and 5 female) all of whom had university teaching experience of not less than 6 years. The research sites were the School of Education and the School of Medicine of the University of Zambia and the School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the School of Business of the Copperbelt University.

### **Existence of policy on mentorship of novice lecturers at the UNZA and CBU**

The results show that the UNZA and CBU had no statutory policy or programme for mentoring novice lecturers. None of the senior academic staff provided formal mentorship. Eight (40%) of the respondents admitted to not providing any mentorship to novice lecturers at all while twelve (60%) said they provided informal mentorship to novice lecturers. Seven (35%) of the twenty senior academic staff indicated that novice lecturers did receive mentorship from senior academic staff, ten (50%) said they did not while three (15%) were not sure.

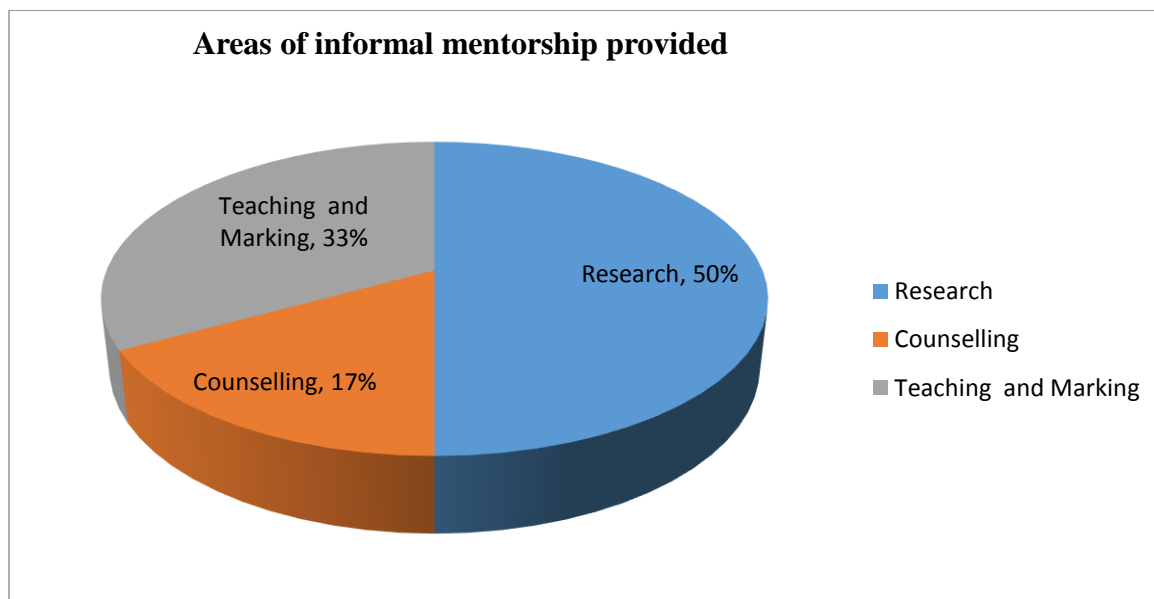
In response to the question 'Why have you not provided mentorship to any novice lecturer?', the senior academic staff who did not provide any mentorship to novice lecturers attributed this to the lack of a policy and formal programme on mentorship of novice lecturers. They added that their job description did not include formal mentorship of novice lecturers. See figure 1.

**Figure 1: Provision of mentorship by senior academic staff at UNZA and CBU (n = 20)**



As revealed in the findings the commitment of parties to the mentorship relationship was highly questionable. When mentorship was provided it was at the goodwill of the senior academic staff. The twelve respondents who provided informal mentorship to novice lecturers indicated that they were motivated to do so out of a sense of responsibility and obligation to novice lecturers and provide professional support that would help novice lecturers acquire research and other skills and thereby ensure that quality education was provided and high professional standards upheld in the university.

The twelve respondents who attested to providing informal mentorship indicated that they offered mentorship in the areas indicated in the following chart:



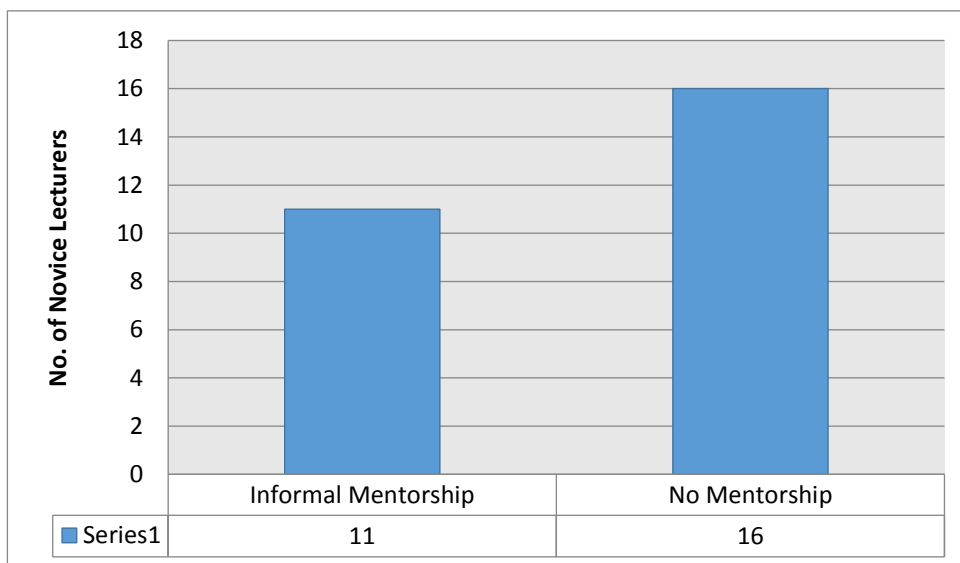
Regarding formal training in mentorship, 3(15%) of the senior academic staff indicated having been trained, while 17(85%) said they had not received any formal mentorship training at all. Ten (50%) of the senior academic staff expressed willingness to be trained in formal mentorship while the other ten (50%) did not express interest in such training, and yet scholars such as Williams (2001) and Ganser and Koskela (1997) have emphasised the need to have trained mentors. As Ganser and Koskela (ibid: 54) have observed:

the success of mentor programmes was dependent upon the quality of training afforded to mentors. A mentor also needs to have thorough understanding of mentorship and thus, needed to have some form of mentoring training.

In addition to the reasons that have already been discussed, it appears at least to a certain extent, that the lack of training in mentorship could be behind the indifference senior academic staff did not offer mentorship to novice lecturers. But the lack of interest in being trained shows clearly the other reasons are equally a factor.

Similarly, the novice lecturers alluded to the fact that there was no policy on mentorship with eleven (41%) indicating they had an informal mentor while sixteen (59%) said they had no formal mentor since they joined the university as a lecturer. Those who received informal mentorship attributed it to a sense of personal obligation by the senior academic staff. See figure two below.

**Figure 2: Nature of mentorship received by novice lecturers at UNZA and CBU (n=27)**



Among the novice lecturers, five (18.5%) of the respondents reported that the level of mentorship provided was adequate, ten (37) felt it was inadequate, seven (25.9%) indicated that mentorship was non-existent while four (14.8%) were not sure. Among the senior academic staff, five (25%) and twelve (44.4%) reported that the current level of professional mentorship offered to novice

lecturers at their university was adequate and not adequate respectively while 3(15%) were not sure.

In terms of who had provided the most beneficial professional help since joining the university, eight (29.65) of the novice lecturers indicated fellow novice lecturers, three (11.1%) pointed to their mentor while nine (33.3%) revealed that they did not receive any help at all.

The novice lecturers were asked about the extent to which they needed professional help. Senior academic staff were also asked about the extent to which they felt novice lecturers needed professional help. The responses are indicated in tables 2 and 3 respectively.

**Table 2: Novice lecturers' perceptions of the extent to which they needed professional mentorship in the first three years of teaching (n = 27)**

Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Considerable	Total
Understanding job demands	4(14.8%)	13(48.1%)	4(14.8%)	6(22.2%)	27(100%)
Preparing lecture notes	7(25.9%)	14(51.8%)	1(3.7%)	5(18.5%)	27 (100%)
Conducting research	3(11.1%)	15(55.5%)	1(3.7%)	8(29.6%)	27 (100%)
Teaching effectively	5(18.5%)	13(48.1%)	2(7.4%)	7(25.9%)	27 (100%)
Counselling students	4(14.8%)	15(55.5%)	2(7.4%)	6(22.2%)	27 (100%)
Developing course materials	4(14.8%)	15(55.5%)	3(11.1%)	5(18.5%)	27 (100%)
Writing journal articles	8(29.6%)	7(25.9%)	4(14.8%)	8(29.6%)	27 (100%)
Evaluating student work	2(7.4%)	13(48.1%)	6(22.2%)	6(22.2%)	27 (100%)
Practising self-reflection	4(14.8%)	12(44.4%)	7(25.9%)	4(14.8%)	27 (100%)
Participating in departmental tasks	4(14.8%)	10(37.0%)	7(25.9%)	6(22.2%)	27 (100%)
Managing personal stress	4(14.8%)	14(51.8%)	2(7.4%)	7(25.9%)	27 (100%)
Motivating students	3(11.1%)	14(51.8%)	3(11.1%)	7(25.9%)	27 (100%)
Writing conference papers	4(14.8%)	13(48.1%)	4(14.8%)	6(22.2%)	27 (100%)
Understanding work ethics	3(11.1%)	9(33.3%)	6(22.2%)	9(33.3%)	27 (100%)
Awareness of promotional requirements and procedures	2(7.4%)	12(44.4%)	5(18.5%)	8(29.6%)	27 (100%)
Participating in professional associations	5(18.5%)	8(29.6%)	10(37.0%)	4(14.8%)	27 (100%)

The data in table 2 shows that on most of the items, novice lecturers needed help in executing most of their duties and roles. This agrees with their assertions regarding their displeasure or dissatisfaction with the inadequacy and/or non-existence of mentorship.

**Table 3: Senior academic staff perceptions of the extent to which novice lecturers need**

**professional mentorship in the first three years of teaching (n = 20)**

Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Considerable	Total
Understanding job demands	6(30%)	1(5%)	4(20%)	9(45%)	20(100%)
Preparing lecture notes	5(25%)	4(20%)	4(20%)	7(35%)	20(100%)
Conducting Research	5(25%)	3(15%)	3(15%)	9(45%)	20(100%)
Teaching effectively	5(25%)	2(10%)	5(25%)	8(40%)	20(100%)
Counselling students	5(25%)	2(10%)	8(40%)	5(25%)	20(100%)
Developing course materials	6(30%)	3(15%)	6(30%)	5(25%)	20(100%)
Writing journal articles	5(25%)	4(20%)	4(20%)	7(35%)	20(100%)
Evaluating students' work	5(25%)	3(15%)	7(35%)	5(25%)	20(100%)
Self evaluation	6(30%)	3(15%)	4(20%)	7(35%)	20(100%)
Managing personal stress	6(30%)	4(20%)	6(30%)	4(20%)	20(100%)
Writing conference papers	8	3(15%)	5(25%)	4(20%)	20(100%)
Organising workshops and conferences	5(25%)	4(20%)	5(25%)	6(30%)	20(100%)
Awareness of promotional requirements and procedures	6(30%)	3(15%)	6(30%)	5(25%)	20(100%)
Participating in professional associations	5(25%)	5(25%)	6(30%)	4(20%)	20(100%)
Participating in departmental tasks	5(25%)	4(20%)	6(30%)	5(25%)	20(100%)
Motivating students	5(25%)	5(25%)	6(30%)	5(25%)	20(100%)

Senior academic staff indicated higher scores in the category 'never' and lower scores in the category 'sometimes'. This is consistent with the earlier findings which show that there was little professional interaction between senior academic staff and novice lecturers.

**Perceptions of senior academic staff and novice lecturers about novice lecturer mentorship**

It is not new that the study found that both the senior academic staff and novice lecturers perceived mentorship to be necessary for professional development of lecturers in universities. In the current study, age, gender and duration of service did not influence perceptions towards novice lecturer mentorship. Sixteen (80%) of the senior academic staff regarded mentorship of novice lecturers, as important. The reasons for this included the need to help novice lecturers fit in, settle and adjust to occupational demands at the earliest possible time. However, others, four (20%) felt that mentorship kills individual initiative and pressurised the novice lecturers to conduct their professional affairs in more or less exactly the same way as the senior academic staff. Twenty-six (96%) of the 27 novice lecturers deemed novice lecturer mentorship to be very important as they needed experienced lecturers to mentor them. In this vein, the majority (22) representing 81.5% of the novice lecturer respondents indicated they were in favour of formal mentorship being instituted

in their school. In what follows, we consider the areas in which novice lecturers indicated that they needed help from their senior colleagues.

### **Areas in which mentorship was needed**

The areas where novice lecturers needed mentorship included: preparation of teaching notes, research, teaching, development of course materials, counselling students, writing of journal articles, evaluation of students' work, self-evaluation, organisation of workshops and conferences and writing conference papers and creation of awareness about promotional requirements and procedures. The creation of awareness about promotional requirements and procedures was singled out as particularly affecting the promotion prospects of novice lecturers in a number of ways. Significantly, seventeen (63%) of the novice lecturers felt that the lack of mentorship had affected their prospects for promotion. They felt that not knowing how the system worked, how to handle stress and how to manage time and work towards a goal had affected their prospects for promotion. In addition, because of the absence of mentorship, novice lecturers felt they could not competently write conference papers nor could they execute research appropriately. Others indicated that they had found it very hard to fully grasp the full range of the pre-requisites for promotion. This illustrates the difficult terrain that novice lecturers have to navigate. In support, some of the respondents linked promotion to mentorship as one novice lecturer lamented:

*Mentorship is very important for our professional development. Lack of it can be disastrous. Lack of mentorship at the University of Zambia contributed to my staying for seven years without promotion.*

Viewed in this way, it might be the case that had there been mentorship, vis-a-vis research and publications, the novice lecturers' curriculum vitae would have been enhanced, thereby facilitating promotion. In other words, the lack of mentorship was perceived to lead to stagnation in academic prowess hence the delay in promotion. This tallies with global literature on the topic which asserts that a satisfied mentoring relationship will eventually help towards a better career goal and career advancement among academicians. The absence of mentorship leads to stagnated career progression. A wide variety of studies demonstrate the efficacy of mentorship in work places. For instance, researchers such as Ismail and Arokiasamy (1983) have argued that employees with a mentor support gain more promotions, higher incomes and more work satisfaction than employees without a mentor. Hence, it is argued that mentoring, too, has a great impact on career advancement of academics. William and Blackburn (1988) studied faculty mentoring in eight nursing colleges and found that mentoring types of role specific teaching, and encouragement were related to the research productivity of the novice lecturers. In the best of circumstances, the process of mentoring is mutually beneficial to both mentors and protégés in ways that include personal and career advancement for the mentee and professional stimulation for mentors. Having a mentor who would help guide a novice lecturer through the job demands and help him/her to reconcile theory and practice thus becomes extremely important.

### **Obstacles to mentorship of novice lecturers**

With regard to why they had not provided mentorship to novice lecturers, the senior academic staff reported several obstacles to the mentorship of novice lecturers. In a multiple response question, the respondents indicated that they did not provide formal mentorship because the University of Zambia and Copperbelt University lacked a mentoring policy and programme to guide the mentorship of novice lecturers at the two universities. In addition, they did not have adequate time (because of schedule overruns) to spend on mentoring novice lecturers. Furthermore the expectation that senior academic staff would mentor novice lecturers was not accompanied by monetary and other incentives. Other reasons were that novice lecturers did not see the value of mentorship. Inadequate time caused by schedule overruns on the part of both senior academic staff and novice lecturers stood out as the most outstanding challenge to their mentorship endeavours.

Apart from the lack of a policy on mentorship, another core problem reported by the novice lecturers was that of indifference by senior academic staff to the mentorship of novice lecturers. It is worth pointing out, however, that this indifference can be understood in the context of the lack of motivation to provide mentorship. The combination of lack of a policy, lack of training in formal mentorship, and lack of incentives for mentors, coupled by a heavy work schedule, compels senior academic staff to spend their precious time on activities they considered more worthy. Other lecturers simply lacked basic knowledge of mentoring practices. As discussed earlier, only three (15%) of the senior academic staff in the sample had been trained in mentorship. Under these circumstances, novice lecturers simply did not have a choice of people to mentor them.

When the twelve senior academic staff who offered informal mentorship to novice lecturers were asked about the response of the mentee(s) to the mentoring relationship, eight (40%) said it was very good, two (10%) said it was bad and two (10%) said it was very bad. To this effect, one of the senior academic staff pointed out that:

*novice lecturers need to show willingness to a mentorship relationship. Some of them behave as if they know it all. As a result, I concentrate on my other duties of my profession.*

The lecturers who provided mentorship indicated that mentorship thrived in an environment of openness seven (25%) and colleagueship four (15%). On their part, the novice lecturers identified numerous factors that determined mentoring relationships between senior academic staff and novice lecturers. Seven (25.9%) indicated a two-way communication, five (18.5%) indicated humility while eleven (40.7%) indicated joint research activities with senior academic staff as key to the mentoring relationship.

### **Benefits of mentorship**

The responses point to the fact that there was no significant difference between the views of senior academic staff and novice lecturers regarding the benefits of mentorship. Under ideal circumstances, the process of mentoring is mutually beneficial to both mentors and novices in ways that include personal and career advancement. Nine (33.3%) of the novice lecturers felt that mentorship gave them confidence to teach effectively and interact with colleagues at a professional

level, eleven (40.7%) indicated that the guidance novice lecturers received from mentors helped them settle down quickly in their job, five (18.5%) indicated benefits in terms of acquisition of skills on time management and goal-setting as the benefits which they derived from the mentorship. Further to this, ten (50%) said mentorship led to capacity building or professional development skills in the mentee while fourteen (51.9%) of them indicated that it helped them to understand their job descriptions. Novice lecturers further felt they had developed colleagueship with their mentors.

The twelve senior academic staff that were in favour of mentorship indicated that it would quickly help develop new lecturers and improve the quality of services they offered, support professionalism and promote improved collegial relationships. They added that mentorship should therefore be part of an induction programme in university teaching which would support professionalism.

With regard to the benefits that the mentors derived from the mentorship relationship, five (25%) of the senior academic staff indicated that it helped them to evaluate their own professional status, four (20%) indicated that they learnt new concepts and ways of doing things from the mentee, three (15%) indicated that it accorded them the opportunity to help novice lecturers in their research when called upon, while others derived job satisfaction from being a role model.

In summary, the biggest contribution of this article then is to locate the perceptions of lecturers towards novice lecturer mentorship and analyse how these perceptions affected their attitude and behaviour towards mentorship of novice lecturers. This article has shown that the need for formal mentorship of novice lecturers at UNZA and CBU is well recognised and, is considered important, yet is still missing from the two institutions. This has caused a lack of interest in mentoring novice lecturers. The article has further demonstrated that where it is provided, even if informally, mentorship has benefits for both the mentee and the mentor. Most importantly, the article has discussed the negative consequences of the lack of novice lecturer mentorship on novice lecturers. Clearly, the position of both the novice lecturers and senior academic staff at the two universities agrees with the relevant literature regarding the efficacy of mentorship practices on novice academic staff in tertiary institutions. These are all issues that have been raised by previous research globally on mentorship in academic circles.

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this article was to examine the perceptions of lecturers towards mentorship of novice lecturers at the University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University. In numerous ways, the findings of the study show that although the benefits of novice lecturer mentorship are well appreciated there are still numerous bottlenecks to successful mentorship of novice lecturers at the two universities. Top on the list of these challenges is the lack of a mentorship policy at the two universities. Our core argument is that the lack of policy and strategy on mentorship of novice lecturers has negative consequences for novice lecturers, students and the universities as a whole and yet university authorities did not seem to fully appreciate the consequences of the lack of

mentorship on novice lecturers' performance and student learning outcomes as one senior academic staff member pointed out:

*here at the University of Zambia, we now have more novice lecturers including Staff Development Fellows who have not been mentored but they stand in front [of class] to teach. What is supposed to happen is that novice lecturers must first observe long-serving lecturers [senior academic staff] teach then they teach under observation of the long serving lecturers [senior academic staff]. Without mentoring, as a university we are compromising the quality of training.*

Much of the focus of this research has been on understanding the professional needs of novice lecturers and how the lack of mentorship negatively affects their professional development. The many areas of professional work in which novice lecturers indicated that they needed help from senior academic staff confirms the universally held notion that most professionals irrespective of their academic qualifications and professional skills require mentorship upon entry into a new working environment. This mentorship was also recognised by senior academic staff as being very necessary for professional development; hence the majority (60%) of the senior academic staff provided informal mentorship to novice lecturers despite the various obstacles like inadequate time and lack of institutional policy on mentorship.

## **Recommendations**

Our analysis of the perceptions of lecturers towards mentorship of novice lecturers at the University of Zambia and Copperbelt University suggests the need to develop a policy on mentorship to take care of formal mentorship training programmes that are designed to assist novice lecturers have a successful start to their career. Under this arrangement every novice lecturer should have a mentor who would assume responsibility for initiating them into their job. This must include mentorship for research activities, publication and teaching. This might help university authorities become aware of issues surrounding the expectations, experiences and challenges of novice lecturers and might help novice lecturers to clarify and manage their dilemmas as they settle in their jobs. There is need therefore, to have mentorship that is designed to assist novice lecturers have a successful start in their career.

A key feature is that once instituted the suggested policy should ensure that mentorship is included among the duties of senior academic staff to avoid unplanned work overloads. The two universities should consider making mentorship of novice lecturers count towards one's promotion. In so doing, the universities should be able to establish, through mentoring, the norms of collegiality, collaboration, and continuous professional development and establish mentoring of novice lecturers as the norm in universities beyond simply providing emotional support or professional socialization.

Finally, for maximum efficiency and effectiveness, it is desirable that mentors should be accordingly trained. Mentorship researchers have consistently suggested that mentors need preparation and training in various aspects such as purposes of mentorship, concerns and needs of novice lecturers, patterns of mentorship and so on as spelt out by Williams (2001).

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