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Evaluation of the Mentoring Scheme for Female Senior Members in the University of Education, Winneba

Abstract

This study sought to evaluate the mentoring scheme for the female senior members of the University of Education, Winneba in five key areas. First it determined the level of mentoring experience that both the mentors and mentees had. It also assessed the benefits that the mentees derived from the scheme. The study further examined participants' opinions about the scheme, possible challenges faced by both mentors and mentees on the scheme as well as recommendations for improvement.

Ten mentors and forty female mentees were randomly selected for the study and a semi-structured interview type was used to gather data from the participants. The study adopted qualitative but descriptive survey and therefore the Atlas ti software was used for the data analysis. The outcome of the analysis indicated that both mentors and mentees had some level of experience in the exercise and most of the mentors however, had earlier experience before the inception of the scheme. There were however, some challenges faced by both mentors and mentees. These were: heavy work schedules family responsibilities and differences in areas of speciality. Suggestions for improving upon the scheme included expansion of its focus area and organisation of more workshops for the participants.

Background of the study

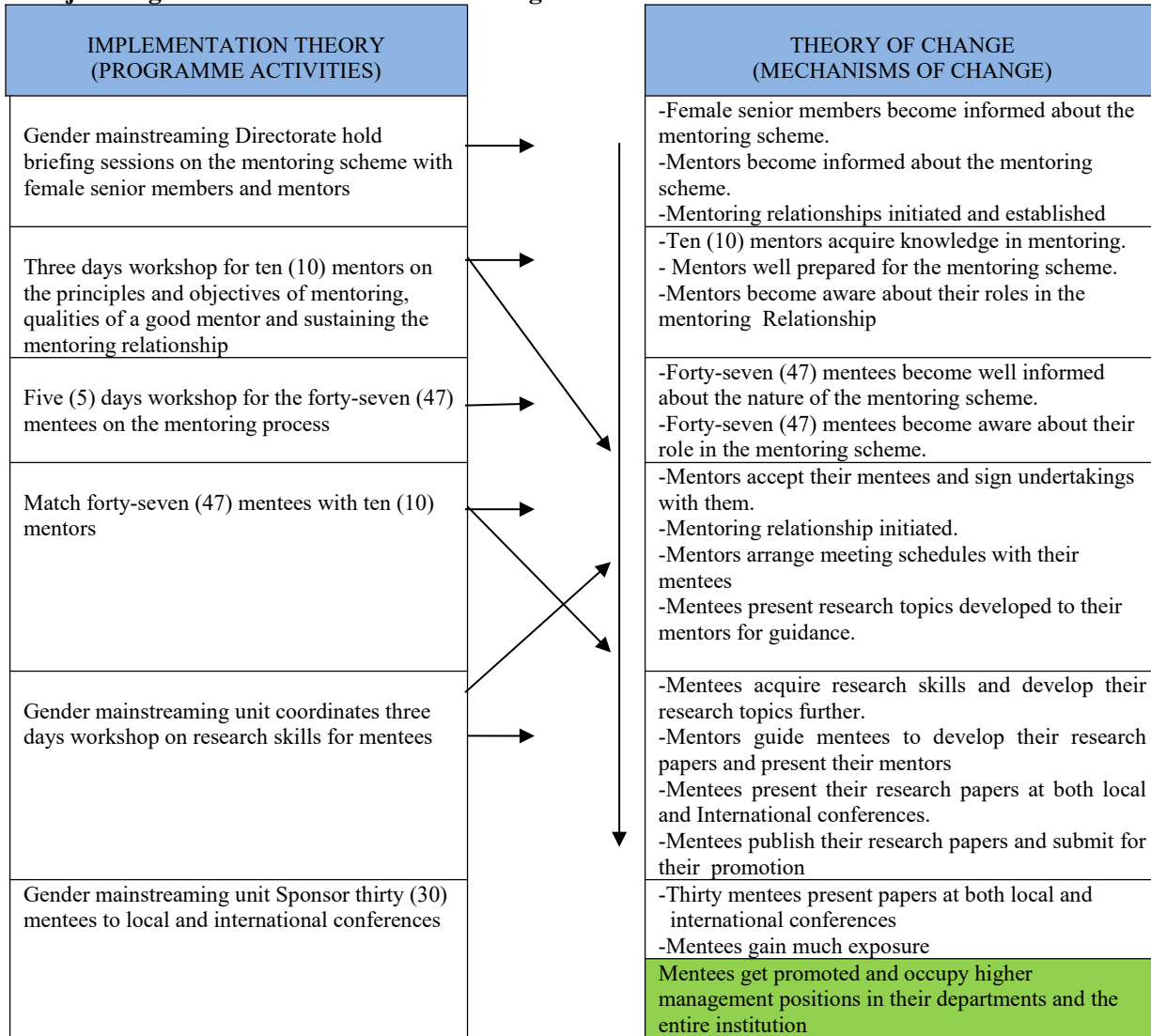
The University of Education, Winneba mentoring scheme for female senior members originated from the findings of a research conducted by the Gender Action Team in 2004 under the Gender Mainstreaming Project funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York. It is therefore, clear that for the female senior members to be able to effectively manage the challenges they face and progress in their career like their male colleagues there is the need for an intervention. In view of this, the primary purpose was supporting the growth and professional development of female senior members through enhancing the research skills. This was to enable them to break the glass ceiling and increase their visibility in the system.

To be able to achieve these objectives, the mentors were required to:

- develop the research skills of the mentees;
- help set realistic goals and encourage mentees to achieve such goals;
- meet with mentees to review goals once every month;
- assist and develop the interpersonal and writing skills of mentees;
- help enhance mentees self-esteem through recognition of professional abilities;
- help mentee publish at least one paper by the end of the mentoring period (one year);
- review the mentoring process periodically together with the coordinator;
- ensure absolute confidentiality throughout the mentoring period; and
- motivate, give feedback, share positive reactions and offer constructive criticism.

(UEW Gender Mainstreaming Unit, 2006).

Project Logic Model of the UEW Mentoring Scheme for Female Senior Members



Theory behind the University of Education, Winneba female mentoring scheme:

If female senior members are given the needed guidance by their mentors to develop research papers, improve upon their research skills and given enough exposure both locally and internationally then they can have enough publications that would facilitate their promotion to top management positions where they can head departments and influence or be part of the decision making body.

Statement of the problem

Findings of the study conducted in UEW by the Gender Action Team indicated that women were under represented in higher management and academic positions. It was noted that out of a staff population of 1232 only 22% were females. Out of this, 3% were senior members, 3% were in the senior staff category and 16% were in the junior staff category where salary levels were very low. As of 2004 only 2 females had risen to the associate professorial rank as against 28 men. Only 1 female was a head of department as against 28 men (UEW Planning Unit, 2004). This clearly indicates that there were very few women at the decision making levels. It was also noted that productivity level of women in the University was very low resulting from the fact that they were saddled with a lot of activities that took a chunk of their time

coupled with their reproductive roles have a telling effect on their ability to research and publish, which is a major prerequisite for career progression and promotion. Hence, evaluating the mentoring scheme for female senior members in the UEW becomes necessary.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the extent to which female senior members have gained, through the University of Education, Winneba mentoring scheme.

Research Questions

The evaluation questions that guided this process evaluation are as follows:

1. What is the level of mentoring experience that both the mentors and mentees have?
2. How beneficial is the mentoring scheme to the female mentees?
3. What are participants' opinions about the scheme?
4. What are the possible challenges faced by both mentors and mentees on the scheme?
5. What are the recommendations for the improvement of the mentoring scheme?

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the research findings will provide constructive information that will assist University of Education, Winneba to rethink strategies in the mentoring scheme. The study is also intended to contribute to existing knowledge on mentorship in Ghana and across the world.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The review of literature on mentoring focuses on three main areas specifically, mentoring and women, benefits in mentoring relationships, and challenges in mentoring.

Mentoring and Women

Mentoring in the traditional sense performs a dual function of helping protégés or the mentees with their work and advancing their careers, as well as providing psychological support. This concept of mentoring as a career advancing strategy is typical of the functionalist approach to mentoring. Mentoring has been recognised as an important step for women aiming to break through the 'glass ceiling' and assume top management positions in organisations and in various societies. Literature on mentoring indicates that women are less likely to have access to informal mentoring networks as a result of their numerous reproductive roles and sometimes male dominance in organisations. Formal mentoring according to Chesterman (2004) is therefore particularly valuable to Women. Through it women gain access to spheres of influence that were previously closed to them, build their self-confidence and increase their visibility. Formal mentoring relationship is structured, both supportive and effective in terms of the professional challenges that a woman faces.

However, as most authors into research with regard to mentoring relationships have pointed out, these relationships are frequently less available to women than to men (Cox, 1993; Hansman & Garofolo, 1995; Hill, Bahniuk, & Dobos, 1989 & Hite, 1998). Supporting this assertion, Collard and Stalker (1991) pointed out that, initiating mentoring relationships can be problematic and complex for women, particularly when all potential mentors are male. According to Stalker (1994) some of the barriers women face in the mentoring relationships is lack of women mentors and problems associated with men mentoring women. Blunt & Lee (1994) also add that conflicts between work and family responsibilities is one of the major challenges that women face in the mentoring relationships and that affect their ability to derive the maximum benefits associated with mentoring. Another barrier hindering women seeking mentoring is that because organizations continue to be dominated by males, women have difficulty initiating and maintaining mentor-protégé relationships. Hale (1995) also notes that cross-gender mentoring creates unique concerns for which little research exists.

Mentoring can take various forms like faculty to faculty mentoring, faculty to student mentoring and student to student mentoring. The adoption of any of these forms of mentoring by an institution depends on the goal that it is meant to achieve. In higher educational institutions the concept of quality improvement with its associated empowerment of college and university faculty, harness their unique talents and skills and promote professional growth necessitated the stress on faculty to faculty mentoring. The focus had been on women because as Chesterman (2004) indicates, throughout the world the higher education sector reflects the wider society in demonstrating the long-term impact of systematic and cultural barriers to women's progress to senior management positions.

Ramsay (1995) notes that, in higher education women remain absent or are significantly under-represented wherever status, influence and power reside at both institutional and national levels. Magner (1994) notes in a study that the lowest paid faculty positions in higher education were in those fields dominated by women. Singh (1997) also pointed out that women are grossly under-represented in higher education. Quoting the 1988 UNESCO report in support of this assertion, Singh (1997) states that globally, "men outnumber women about five to one at middle management level and about twenty to one at senior management level".

A resolution of the 1998 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education was that women's active involvement at policy and decision-making levels within higher education and society should be increased (UNESCO, 1998). Mentoring is noted to support professional growth and renewal, which in turn empowers faculty as individuals and colleagues. It has been shown in both business and higher education as an effective means of providing guidance and counsel to aspiring leaders and showing them how to get ahead (Boice, 1992). Mentoring thus provides a structure in which women can advance their position in society and their respective career.

Benefits in Mentoring Relationships

In spite of the challenges that usually face both the mentors and protégés in mentoring relationships one cannot deny the fact that there are many inherent benefits to be derived from mentoring of any kind, whether career-related, psychosocial and peer mentoring. The functionalist approach to mentoring allegedly provides mutual benefits to the protégé, the mentor, and the organisation. Benefits to the mentor include satisfaction, loyalty, and peer recognition. Benefits to the protégé are assumed to include a greater understanding of organisational culture, career advice, and promotion, while benefits to the organisation include increased motivation and productivity, "stability of culture", "reduced turnover", leadership development, and improved communications (Darwin, 2000). According to Cassim (2005) mentorship ideally offers a "win-win" scenario for both mentor and protégé, with reciprocal enrichment in areas such as: mutual respect, friendship, personal fulfilment, career enhancement, productivity, understanding and valuing diversity, and role models.

Chesterman (2004) notes that mentoring benefits mentor and mentees as well as the organisation. They are able to find out more about themselves and the way they operate and develop a significant personal and business relationship with another individual.

Mentors have the opportunity to nurture and develop junior colleagues, to pass on their own knowledge and to give something back to their profession or their organization. They gain as they can make significant relationships with other staff members and sometimes initiate a long-term friendship. The mentor is recognized in the organization for making a commitment to develop others.

Gilles and Wilson (2004) in a study notes the some benefits mentors perceived to have derived from the mentoring relationships. Among the benefits were that, mentors are stimulated emotionally and intellectually reported a sense of satisfaction with their role, they enjoyed sharing their experiences and see their mentees succeed, they feel pride and a sense of self-worth and are often re-energised for their profession, questions from mentees cause mentors to be more introspective, mentors receive new ideas

from mentees as well as from mentor training. Mentors receive new ideas through mentoring and that keep them up to date with educational theory and thus increasing their professionalism. The learning relationships provide more collegiality and enhanced interpersonal skills. Because of their knowledge and skills, professional opportunities become available to mentees;

The mentors in the Gilles and Wilson study clearly benefited, and as they were in a formal programme at an institution, the institution also benefited. According to Seidman (1994) Parsons argues that “well-functioning social systems require a ‘fit’ between the needs and motivations of the individual and the role requirements of the institution or social unit”. The fact of the “fit” between roles, benefits, expectations from role players and the institution, informs the programme, which in turn reflects the paradigm in which mentoring operates.

For the mentees on the other hand, Chao et al. (1992) note that the outcomes of the mentorship are directly related to what and how much input the mentor provides for the protégé, and that the experience will influence the protégé’s job satisfaction. McKenzie (1995) notes that, “people without mentors are lacking in knowledge in several key areas as compared to others. They have poor understanding of how their organisation actually works, are unaware of opportunities for promotion and may be unsure of where they want to go and what they want to do”. Gardiner (1999) on the other hand found in a study of a mentoring scheme established to assist emerging women researchers at Flinders University in Australia that the women mentees were much aware of their situation and reported greater concerns about research. They felt their capacity as academics was lower and therefore needed much guidance. Thus they were eager to pursue research and willing to take guidance. They were likely to move higher along their career paths with the assistance of their mentors. In a study conducted by Allen et al (2004) on “Career benefits associated with mentoring for protégés”, they noted that female protégés who reported more mentor functions were more satisfied with their jobs and careers and held more optimistic future career prospects.

According to Dreher and Cox (1996) mentoring relationships affect protégés’ careers positively and are related to achievement and influence in organizations, which leads to protégés’ earning higher salaries. Nelson and Quick (1985) also note that having a mentor may help increase the quality of organizational life for women and may help alleviate stress by increasing self-esteem. Dreher & Ash (1990) note further that, protégés in mentoring relationships with senior employees may gain special forms of entry into meaningful social networks and acquire important managerial skills by observing effective senior management.

Challenges in Mentoring

Both mentors and protégé are often faced with some challenges in the mentoring relationships especially when it involves women protégés and male mentors and thus have some effect on the outcome of the relationships. While formal mentoring relationships may help women’s career advancement, problems associated with both formal and informal mentoring programs remain. Burke, McKeen & McKenna (1990) pointed out that finding mentors in male-dominated workplaces may be difficult for women. Male mentors may be assigned to women protégés; however, when compared to female mentors, they provide much less career development and psychosocial functions, such as career planning, performance feedback, and personal support. There may be few women role models in organisations or successful women who have fought for their places within their organisations but may not be willing to mentor junior women. Women’s choices concerning marriage, childbearing, and careers may lead to perceptions that women are less committed to their careers, thus limiting their participation in mentoring relationships.

Early research on mentoring assumes that the gender of either the mentor or the protégé does not affect how the relationships are formed or the quality of the interactions between mentor and protégé (Stalker, 1994). Miller (2002) however identified five major cross-gender mentoring relationship complexities such as collusion in stereotypical roles, limitations of role modelling, intimacy and sexuality concerns, public scrutiny, and peer resentment. According to Feist-Price (1994) mentoring relationships are likely to be

faced with many problems when men and women in the work settings assume stereotypical roles in relating to each other such as father–daughter, chivalrous knight–helpless maiden, tough warrior–weak warrior, and macho–seductress. The protégé is likely to feel inferior or oppressed and may rely exclusively on the mentor for instructions on what needs to be done at a point in time. This may retard progress on the part of the protégé especially in the absence of the mentor or if mentor does not make much time for the protégé.

Role model mentoring is another challenge that often faces mentoring relationships. It involves both interaction and identification with someone else of higher stature. As Dreher & Cox (1996) note, when professional and personal concerns of mentors and protégés are different in a mentoring relationship, problems with interaction may occur.

Women mostly face problems of choice between work and family commitments, particularly if they are one of few women in a male-dominated workplace and therefore identifying with male role models may become difficult or impossible. According to Hansman (1998) men may prefer interacting with and mentoring males whom they perceive to be more like themselves and may therefore choose to develop protégé relationships with other men and exclude women colleagues as protégés.

It is worth mentioning that although same-gender mentor-protégé relationships may be advantageous, there are very cogent issues that still remain and affect the efficacy of these relationships. First is the limited number of women in leadership or higher management positions and therefore makes it difficult to have women mentors for the teaming population of women mentees or protégés. This according to Eldridge (1990) could affect mentoring relationships as the few potential women mentors may be overwhelmed and have other pressures limiting their availability to protégés. Protégés may also complicate matters by establishing unrealistic expectations of mentors that demand more time and emotional energy than women mentors are willing or able to give.

Next is that psychosocial function as mostly exists in same-gender female relationships may according to Burke, McKeen & McKenna (1990) not provide the best type of career help that is valued in the workplace. The psychosocial functions of friendship and social support even though are very necessary, they are not always what move women ahead in organizations. What is needed is a strong push to work towards achieving organisational goals and objectives. Finally, Hale (1995) notes that women may be seen by both male and female colleagues as having less power, and thus less influence as mentors, in the workplace. This may affect the progress of the same-gender mentoring relationships involving women mentors and women protégés

Other challenges that serve as potential barriers to women's career development and participation in mentoring relationship include family and child care responsibilities. Chandler (1996) mentioned that women who are delaying or interrupting their careers for childbearing often experience late career entries or career interruptions, which could lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining mentoring relationships. This according to Chandler (1996) means that potential mentors, both male and female, may focus their efforts on men protégés instead of women because they perceive men as being "more serious" about their careers.

Methodology

The study was a descriptive research of both primary and secondary data. It covered a population of ten (10) mentors and forty seven (47) female mentees who are senior members of University of Education, Winneba in the academic, professional or administrative status that by appointment became members of convocation and possess not less than a masters' degree or its equivalent from various recognised institutions. The list was obtained from the Gender Mainstreaming Unit of the University.

Sampling Procedures

Purposive and random sampling technique was adopted for the study to obtain the sampling frame. By using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population of ten (10) mentors and forty seven (47) mentees, ten(10) mentors and forty(40) mentees were purposively and randomly selected to represent a cross section of the population. This was done to ensure that mentors and mentees were selected on genuine basis for the study.

Method of data collection

The semi-structured interview type through telephone conversation with a speed-link digital voice recorder was used to gather data. This was used because the data were purely qualitative in nature. As the World Bank Group (2004) note, semi-structured interviews “add value to assessment of the capacity and character of organisations or institutions, to verifications of macro-economic data about the state of local socio-economic conditions, or to efforts to understand the basic mind set of intended beneficiaries”.

Method of Data Analysis

The data was basically qualitative data and therefore, the Atlas it software was used for the data analysis. Data gathered were transcribed and thoroughly read, after which each was coded. In the coding process free coding, code by list and quick coding icons were mainly used. These were used due to the nature of the data and to facilitate the data analysis. After the coding some of the related codes were merged.

Findings and Discussions

Level of experience of the mentors and mentees

All the mentors had some level of exposure in mentoring. Those who did not have any formal training in mentoring prior to the inception of the scheme in the University of Education, Winneba in a way gained some experience by virtue of their position in their departments. The Gender Mainstreaming Unit however organised some briefing session for all the mentors as well as the mentees to enable them know their roles and responsibilities on the scheme. This came out clearly when both mentors and mentees were asked to state their roles. This is as evidenced in a mentee’s response:

They gave us the definition or explanation on mentorship and how it helps the young people to tailor the issue towards what they want to be. Though there was no handout, there was a power point presentation and for the first time I have heard of what mentorship is and at what level it should be for an institutions like this.

Another mentee also said:

We were taken through topics like the mentor - mentee relationship, and what you are expected to do as a mentee, what you should expect from your mentor and things like that.

In general an initial training as was done by the Gender mainstreaming unit was very necessary because as Goodlad (1998) pointed out that “whatever additional instruction tutors and mentors receive, they must be given basic training” in responsible mentoring.

Benefits derived from the mentoring scheme

Both mentors and mentees mentioned that they derived many benefits from the mentoring scheme. According to them the scheme created opportunities which hitherto did not exist and that some of them had been able to either published research papers or were in the process of doing that as evidenced in the statements below:

I think each of us you know although they knew that as part of their promotion they need to publish I guess they needed somebody to kind of push them a little bit so that was done by me. I will say all of them have

one paper or two to publish over the period so the experience has been good of course I also learnt from my mentees. [Mentor]

I sent two papers to the same publisher. They brought one back to me. That one I didn't give it to my mentor it was brought back to me but I learnt the one that he made his comments on, it is going to be published soon. [Mentee]

Others were of the view that it gave them much exposure and links with people and documents which they never knew about. This corroborate finding by Gilles & Wilson (2004) in a study that both mentors and mentees stand to benefit from mentoring relationships. Mentors receive new ideas through mentoring and that keep them up to date with educational theory and thus increasing their professionalism. The learning relationships provide more collegiality and enhanced interpersonal skills. Also as Dreher and Ash (1990) note, protégés in mentoring relationships with senior employees may gain special forms of entry into meaningful social networks and acquire important managerial skills by observing effective senior management. This would enable the mentee to meet set target and be able to rise to the higher positions in management.

Challenges faced by both mentors and mentees on the scheme

Mentors and mentees were faced with challenges on the scheme. The major challenge was inadequate time resulting from heavy work schedule and other family responsibilities. This is as indicated in the responses below:

One would have wished that we met regularly but that wasn't possible. Most of our meetings like had been very informal. We couldn't follow a time table as such because of our individual work schedule. So I met them on one-on-one basis, we couldn't meet as a group. [Mentor]

We put it on record that we would be meeting at such and such time but I would want to say that even in those times we will not make it because of my schedule and her schedule. [Mentor]

there are some specific problems which I saw concerning the mentoring in UEW and that is the inability of the mentees to have enough time for themselves in improving on their own writing abilities because they have a lot to do, teaching and extra jobs they do and as you know women have other roles to play at home. [Mentor]

It has been a very lovely thing but sometimes the work schedule makes it very cumbersome. At the time you want to meet with your mentor, he/she is engaged. When your mentor is ready to meet with you, you are also engaged. [Mentee]

Although I have been given to a mentor the mentor was expecting me to work within a certain period of time but since I am also overloaded with the work and therefore I couldn't work the way I should have done. [Mentee]

This made it very difficult for mentors to meet their mentees regularly as scheduled. In the case of women the situation is very serious as they were always saddled with additional roles in their homes that made it almost impossible for them to work and rise to expected levels. Thus, as Chandler (1996) notes, women who are delaying or interrupting their careers for childbearing often experience late career entries or career interruptions, which could lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining mentoring relationships. This would definitely affect their career progression. Another challenge that came up was

the differences in career background of both the mentor and the mentee as indicated in the responses below:

Sometimes your mentor is not from your area or field of study and therefore there is that boarder such that she is not comfortable with your area and you are also not comfortable with his or her area and therefore you cannot actually come to a consensus about something. [Mentee may be the person had a content area which is not mine, for example I am not in the area of Home Economics so if you bring certain specific content because I am not in that area, it seems that I cannot be of very good help to you except that you are good yourself to making sure that the information you are bringing is content bind-to reflect your topic. [Mentor]

As Dreher and Cox (1996) note, when professional and personal concerns of mentors and protégés are different in a mentoring relationship, problems with interaction may occur. The mentee may not derive much benefit from the relationship as the mentor may be limited in scope with regard to the subject content area.

Conclusion

It is explicit from the findings that the mentoring scheme in the University of Education, Winneba has been very beneficial to both mentors and mentees regardless of the challenges. If the female senior members or the mentees continue to avail themselves to be mentored and are encouraged to work harder within the time frame they would be able to publish research papers and be promoted to higher positions in management where they can be part of the decision making bodies.

Opinion and recommendations

Participants were of the opinion that the mentoring scheme was very useful and must therefore continue. Both mentors and mentees were of the view that the duration for the scheme was very short and therefore they could not reach the desired level. They recommended that the scheme should focus on other areas like computer skill training, book writing and minutes writing so that they could gain much knowledge to pursue their career. There was also the request for regular workshops to keep participants in constant touch and be motivated to work harder.

Policy implications and recommendations

Based on the strengths of the major findings, the following recommendations were brought forward:

- The scheme should focus beyond research skills, such as writing skills for the mentees.
- There is the need to make adequate publicity on the scheme to the University community. The scheme organisers should come up with detailed information on the UEW website and that would make people really be aware of the existence of the scheme.
- Mentees should be allocated to mentors in same subject areas for both parties to derive greater benefits from the scheme.
- Both mentors and mentees should schedule their time properly to enable them to meet on regular basis.
- Regular workshops should be organised frequently that to motivate the mentees and other colleagues to work.

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