

## **MENTORING PROGRAMME AND WORK PERFORMANCE OF MRSM TEACHERS IN KELANTAN**

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**ABSTRACT:** Work performance is of the essence in any organization. In an educational institution, teachers' work performance plays a significant role in making the goals of the institution are achieved. Underperforming teachers have been an issue in Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM) since its establishment. Based on some literature, mentoring programme has been suggested to improve work performance. MRSMs have been exposed to information on mentoring and its benefits yet the implementation is by far disappointing. Thus, this working paper focuses on mentoring programme and its relationship to the work performance of the teachers of MRSMs in the state of Kelantan. The finding of this working paper reveals that the mentoring programme (in any way it is implemented) has a relationship with the teachers' work performance. The implication of this working paper is for MRSMs to implement mentoring programme in its effectiveness so that the problem of underperforming teachers could be reduced.

**KEYWORDS:** Mentoring Programme, Work Performance, MRSM Teachers

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Work performance is an element any organization wants to enhance and optimize. It refers to what an individual does in the work situation (Sonnetag and Frese, 2002). Every organization needs highly performing individuals to meet the goals set. Excellent individual performance in an organization will guarantee the delivery of good products and services.

The question is which individuals perform best in which situation. The answer to the question is a person with strong cognitive ability, motivation, strong personality and professional experience will perform the best. However, there are situations where individuals do not perform effectively giving a negative outcome to the organizations. This may be due to workers having low cognitive ability or low motivation besides having weak personality. All these could be improved through training, exposure to specific experiences, feedback interventions, behaviour modification and improvement of action process. These elements of improvement happen in mentoring programme. In the context of individual development, mentoring has been a pertinent issue to improve performance of each worker (Arora and Rangnekar, 2015). It is said to function as a catalyst for improved career outcomes. Throughout history, mentoring has played an important role in extracting the full potential of individuals. This is because mentoring is an activity performed by those who wished to provide direction and to serve as an advisor on a range of topics which the mentee seeks guidance (Kohn and O'Connell, 2015).

Arora and Rangnekar (2015) defined mentoring as an intense interpersonal exchange between the supervisor who happens to be a senior experienced colleague and the subordinate who is interpreted as a junior inexperienced colleague. According to Lokman, Mohd Nihra Haruzan, Khadijah, Shafeeq and Aqeel (2015), implementing this intense interpersonal exchange of knowledge, opinions and criticism will produce efficient, excellent and highly capable educational officers.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) by George Homans, John Thibaut, Harold Kelley and Peter Blau refers to a two-sided, mutually contingent and mutually rewarding process involving 'transactions' or simply 'exchange'. The actions are contingent on rewarding reactions from others (Emerson, 1976). Thus, according to the SET, quality mentorship implemented in any organization will produce quality workers with high self-confidence and morale. Workers with confidence will in return produce high quality work performance.

There are two types of mentoring in existence—formal mentoring and informal mentoring (Menges, 2015). Some organizations prefer to have formal mentoring programme by initiating and controlling it, assigning mentors to protégés. Throughout the specific period of mentoring time, the organizer will facilitate and support the relationship until it achieves the prescribed goals. In contrast, informal mentoring develops spontaneously with little or no involvement of the organization. It materializes based on mutual identification, interpersonal comfort and sympathy. Informal mentoring is self-organized whereby mentor and protégé decide on which goal to pursue and in which time frame (Menges, 2015). Both formal and informal mentoring are found to be of essence in giving support to new teachers in order to develop themselves to improve their work performance (Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz and Johnson, 2014).

In short, mentoring, regardless it being formal or informal, plays an important role in giving emotional support to boost individual's confidence and morale (Desimone et. al., 2014). This in return will affect the work performance of individuals in any organization to be positive.

The issue that exists is that mentoring is not practised or if it is practised (though not wholeheartedly), it does not give the effect that is desired by organizations. Organizations need to know that mentoring is one of the contributing factors that helps to reduce the problem of underperforming staff in an organization. This working paper is performed in order to prove that it is so. The findings of this study should contribute to the improvement of educational organizations in terms of their teachers' performance with the implementation of effective mentoring programme.

## **2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In MARA Education System, mentoring programme for the teachers has been introduced since the nineties. The main aim of the programme is for the new teachers to have a career and psychosocial support from experienced mentors to a relatively less experienced protégé (Menges, 2015). During the initiation of the mentoring programme, head teachers and potential mentors are briefed of the importance of mentoring and how effective the programme should be. This is in line with the finding from the research by Lokman et. al. (2015) which states that mentoring is essential in honing the teachers' skills in communication, boosting the teachers' confidence and competencies, and enhancing the teachers' knowledge. This will eventually lead to excellent individual performance by the teachers.

Even though several researches (Desimone et.al., 2014; Janasz and Godshalk, 2013; Craig, Allen, Reid, Riemenschneider and Armstrong, 2012) have proven that any kind of mentoring, formal or informal, virtual or face-to-face plays an important role in developing positive work performance, the implementation of mentoring programme in MRSM Education System is not successful in producing the desired result—efficient, excellent and highly capable teachers. The implementation part of the mentoring programme in MRSM is left to each MRSM to decide. Some MRSMs undertake the task of running the programme full force as a formal mentoring programme. Nonetheless, a few choose to be ignorant about it. Most MRSMs perform mentoring programme only to the new teachers assuming that it would benefit them more than the existing teachers. Middle age and senior teachers are left out of the programme with the assumption that this group of teachers has more experience and no need for 'off-line advice from one person to another to assist the

recipient in making significant advances in their personal, professional or career development' (Iversen et. al, 2014).

Mentoring can be considered as one of the contributing factors to overcome the problem of underperforming teachers. It is a process whereby a more senior, experienced and trusted person (Kohn and O'Connell, 2015) gives advice to another to assist the recipient in making significant development personally, professionally or in career wise (Iversen et. al., 2014). Kohn and O'Connell in their book entitled *9 Powerful Practices of Really Great Mentors: How to Inspire and Motivate Anyone* (2015), have outlined several advantages of mentoring. Mentoring is said to develop potential more effectively, and to support professional development functions within an organization.

Mentoring is proven to be effective in enhancing work performance in a research by Christine Menges (2015). Menges (2015) has done a research to see how organizations establish formal mentoring programmes in order to advance personal and professional development. Besides Menges (2015), Arora and Rangnekar (2015) have done a research to evaluate the impact of Supervisory Career Mentoring (SCM) on Occupational Commitment (OC). The finding of the survey indicates that mentoring with a relationship which is high in terms of agreeableness and conscientiousness among the mentor-mentee dyads will produce professional and emotional enhancement.

Desimone et.al. (2014) look into mentoring in terms of its dimensions; formal mentoring and informal mentoring. They pose a question whether formal mentoring and informal mentoring complement each other or do they compensate one another. According to their reading, formal mentoring is thought to improve teacher's confidence, knowledge and instruction and to increase retention. Informal mentoring, on the other hand fulfils the role and functions not fulfilled by formal mentoring. Based on the t-test statistical analysis performed, the findings show that protégé interacts more with informal mentor than with formal mentors though both give the positive impact on the protégé in the sense that both boost protégé's confidence, increase the morale and job satisfaction and reduce the feeling of isolation. When all the emotional and other aspects of support are given to the protégés, they will turn out to be better in their work performance (Desimone et. al., 2014).

Iversen et. al. (2014) come up with a study on how effective mentoring has been to young clinical academics as a form of intervention. Any form of mentoring is said to be effective to improve work performance even if it is virtual mentoring (Reese, 2015). A study by Jill A. Reese (2015) on music teacher education has looked into the virtual conferencing technology in order to implement mentoring programme for the new music teachers.

Based on all the researches above, it can still be concluded that the findings are inconclusive. This is because, in Maktab Rendah Sains MARA context, some MRSMs do not implement mentoring programme though a lot of literature confirm the effectiveness of mentoring. If other MRSMs do, the implementation is still not effective. Some of the new teachers in those schools still do not perform in their working field.

This situation occurs because Xu and Payne (2014) find not all mentoring relationships are constructive. Their research, *Quantity, Quality and Satisfaction with Mentoring: What Matters Most?* is conducted to study the effects of quantity and quality of mentoring on mentoring specific outcomes. They find that nowadays the concept of mentoring is broadened from one-on-one relationship to a developmental network whereby a mentee may have more than one mentors. The findings show that mentees require time and emotional energy to initiate and maintain the relationships with more mentors. They also need to consider the different work styles and personalities of the mentors when interacting. Mentees also experience an increase in role conflict and job burnout. The general satisfaction of mentees with the mentoring relationship is low. Some protégés and mentors evaluate the mentoring relationships as being dysfunctional or dissatisfying when the relationships frustrate the major needs of the protégés or even the mentors. This proves that mentoring is not effective in influencing the work performance of the workers. Is this the reason why mentoring is not practised to produce positive results on work performance in certain MRSMs?

Kumar, Irudayaraj, Jomon and Singhal (2013) question the effectiveness of mentoring on work performance in their article '*The Shadow of Negative Mentoring at the Workplace*'. The gap to effective mentoring lies in the three negative mentoring experiences from mentee's perception. They are ineffective mentor-protégé match within the dyad, mentor's distancing behaviour and mentor's work-related attitude. Kumar et. al. (2013) stress on the issue that negative effect of mentoring is an understudied case. They propose that the three negative mentoring experiences mentioned above would reduce the organizational citizenship behaviour of the mentees making them have negative affective (emotion or desire as influencing behaviour. Using a test for mediation as the statistical analysis, the study proves that negative effect is the mediating variable between the three negative mentoring experiences and the decline in the organizational citizenship behaviour for the protégé. Kumar et. al. (2013) conclude that negative mentoring experienced by protégés will have far-reaching implications not only for the protégés but also for the organizations when they become the workplace deviance and be the underperforming workers in the organization. This finding clearly puts mentoring as a hindrance to the work performance of the staff in an organization.

In light of this situation, mentoring programme in MRSM should be reviewed in terms of its implementation. The effectiveness of mentoring programme should be taken into consideration in order to overcome the problem of underperforming teachers in MRSM regardless of them being new, middle age or senior teachers. MRSMs should be made to understand the importance of executing effective mentoring. The scope of this working paper is restricted to analysing whether there is a relationship or not between any form of mentoring (implemented in any way) in MRSMs in Kelantan and the work performance of the teachers in those MRSMs. This in return will verify whether the implementation of mentoring programme in MRSM (if any) is contributing to the teachers' work performance or not.

### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

This working paper intends to identify how far MRSM teachers in Kelantan experience mentoring in one way or another. It is also to analyse the relationship between mentoring implemented in MRSM Education System (specifically in the state of Kelantan) and the MRSM teachers work performance. In particular, this working paper aims to provide answers to these questions:

1. Do the MRSM teachers experience (in any way) formal or informal mentoring in their teaching career?
2. Is there a significant relationship between mentoring programme in MRSM and the teacher's work performance?

### **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

This is a field survey descriptive research. The objective of this working paper is to analyse the relationship between mentoring implemented in MRSM Education System (specifically in the state of Kelantan) and the MRSM teachers work performance. The population of the survey is the MRSM teachers in the state of Kelantan. There are 5 MRSMs. Each MRSM consists of varying number of teachers namely MRSM Pasir Tumboh has 47 teachers, MRSM Pengkalan Chepa has 76 teachers, MRSM Tumpat has 60 teachers, MRSM Jeli has 72 while MRSM Kuala Krai has 78 teachers. The total number of teachers in MRSMs in Kelantan is 333. 275 respondents have responded.

The instrument used in this research is in the form of questionnaires. There are three sections of the instrument namely First Section, Second Section and Third Section. The first section consists of 9 items for testing the criterion of mentoring. The scores for each mentoring item are on a Likert's scale of 1 through 7, where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 7 indicates strongly agree. Items 1 to 5 test on the informal aspect of mentoring while items 6 to 9 cover the psychosocial aspect of mentoring. The instrument is an adaption from 1058

Azman Ismail, Muhamad M. Abdullah and Sebastian K. Francis (2009) in *Mentoring Program and its Impact on Individuals' Advancement in the Malaysian Context*.

The Second Section tests on the Work Performance criterion. There are 10 items where the scores for each item are also on a scale of 1 through 7, where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 7 indicates strongly agree. The instrument is taken from Tengku Faekah Tengku Ariffin, Rosna Awang Hashim and Khulida Kirana Yahya (2010) in *Modelling the Relationship between Personality Factor, Perceptions of the School as a Learning Organisation and Workplace Learning of School Teachers*. The Third Section is in the form of demographic information of respondents which are the sex, working experience and educational status.

Field testing of the instrument is done and all items are reliable to be used for this study. In this working paper, Pearson Correlation Statistical Testing is performed with the aim to determine whether there is a relationship between the mentoring programme executed in MRSMs in Kelantan and their teachers' work performance. A scatterplot is produced to depict the patterns of the correlation. The result of the analysis, the linear correlation coefficient  $r$ , measures the strength of the linear relationship between the paired mentoring and work performance. A Simple Linear Regression analysis is performed to identify the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Items correspond to the mentoring construct is regressed with the work performance construct.

## 5.0 RESULTS

Based on the profile of respondents, it can be concluded that there is no element of biasness in choosing the respondents for this working paper. It is quite representative of the population of MRSM teachers as a whole covering both aspects of gender and all of the years of working experience. All items for each construct (mentoring and work performance) are analysed in terms of the frequency of each score value. Knowing the frequency of each item in each construct, Pearson Correlation analysis is performed before the Regression analysis.

### Correlation factors of mentoring and work performance

Correlation		
	Mentoring	Work Performance
Mentoring	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.493
	N	-
		.000
		275
		275

$p < 0.05$

Based on the table above, it is found that the correlation coefficient  $r$  for the variables mentoring and work performance is equal to 0.493. This shows a correlation between mentoring programme and the teachers' work performance at medium strength. Considering the  $p$  value is less than 0.05, this shows that there is a significant relationship between mentoring and the teachers' work performance.

Regression statistical analysis is performed and the result is as follows:

### Regression Analysis of mentoring and work performance (summary)

Model summary		
Model	R	R Square
1	.493	.243
	N	275

Table above shows that 24.3% of changes in the level of work performance are influenced by mentoring. This means that mentoring could predict the level of work performance among the teachers by 24.3%. Besides the information that mentoring is a predictor of work performance, regression analysis could also provide information on how significant is the level of prediction.

**Regression Analysis of mentoring and work performance (coefficients)**

Coefficients		
Model	T	Sig.
<b>1</b>		
<b>(constant)</b>	<b>10.491</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Mentoring</b>	<b>9.357</b>	<b>.000</b>

*p*<0.05

t equals to 10.491, (*p* < 0.05) shows a strong influence of mentoring on the work performance.

Data from the Pearson Correlation analysis show that there is a strong correlation between mentoring in MRSMs in Kelantan and the teachers' work performance. Regression analysis further enhances the correlation by providing data that show a strong influence of mentoring as predictor to the work performance of the Kelantan MRSM teachers. Thus, there is a strong significant relationship between mentoring programme in MRSM in Kelantan and the teachers' work performance.

**6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, work performance plays a vital role in ensuring the organizational goals are achieved. Work performance is the quality of the actions performed by the people working in an organization. When the goals set for certain organizations are not achieved, indirectly it reflects the problem that exists related to the people's performance. Underperforming staff is not a problem which can be swept under the carpet. It has to be solved. One of the solutions is to implement mentoring programme.

Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM) is a school under the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development. Up to date, there are 52 MRSMs all over Malaysia including in Sabah and Sarawak. The teachers work performance in MRSM is of the utmost importance because their outstanding performance will give impact to the students' performance. Underperforming teachers lead to students not excelling in their academic as well as co-curricular activities. Mentoring has been proposed by the Secondary Education Division of MARA to be implemented by all MRSMs with the aim of helping the new teachers to adapt to the new teaching environment and overcoming problems with the help of senior teachers. Ultimately, new teachers with smooth adaptation period will have job satisfaction which in return will reciprocate by performing to the best of their ability.

Nonetheless, the effectuation of the mentoring programme in MRSMs has yet to be scrutinized. Some MRSMs enforce the programme to the new teachers joining the school. Others have it only on papers. There is no one fixed way of executing the programme. A few MRSMs which choose to put the programme into effect are simply running it according to how they see fit. One of the ramifications of this situation is that there are teachers who are not performing and the number of underperforming teachers is on the rise. This could be due to the ineffective execution of the mentoring programme probably caused by institutions unawareness of the importance of mentoring.

This working paper is precipitated by the situation at hand. The aim is to prove that mentoring has a positive effect on work performance in order that each MRSM will be aware of, perceive and understand the importance of implementing mentoring in its effectiveness.

There is a relationship between work performance and mentoring based on the result of the Pearson Correlation analysis. Correlation is not necessarily a causal relationship (Triola, 2005). It does not mean that mentoring causes an increase in work performance. Using the result obtained, suffice to say that there is a relationship between mentoring and work performance. Mentoring can be described as one of the contributing factors to the improvement of work performance in the people in an organization. Based on this working paper, it can be concluded that 0.493 (or about 49%) of the work performance can be explained by the linear relationship between mentoring and work performance. The reading signifies that there is a medium strength correlation between the two variables.

This means that the necessity for each MRSM to implement mentoring programme in the college for their teachers in order to increase work performance has been confirmed in this working paper. MRSMs which choose to implement mentoring effectively will have reduced problem of underperforming teachers. If the administrators have not implemented the mentoring programme in their MRSM, it is high time that they do so due to the contributing factor that mentoring has on the work performance of the teachers. And if other administrators do implement such programme in their MRSM, they should look into the effectiveness of its implementation. It is upon the administrators to emphasize and ensure that the concept and the implementation of mentoring are fully understood by the people and is carried out to the best of their ability in the organizations so that the mentor-protégé relationship could be optimized.

In this working paper, the value of regression analysis,  $r^2$  is 0.243, which means that 24% of the improvement in the work performance (dependent variable or response variable) can be explained as due to the relationship between mentoring (as independent variable, or predictor variable, or explanatory variable) and work performance. It is safe to say that the more effective is the implementation of the mentoring programme, the more improvement in the work performance can be observed.

Although Kumar et. al. (2013) have proven that mentees experience negative mentoring sessions due to the failure in the match within the dyad, the distancing behavior of the mentor and the mentors' work-related attitude, the positive relationship between mentoring and work performance should make an organization adapt their implementation accordingly to make mentoring a positive step in reducing the number of underperforming workers. In this case, MRSMs must step up with proactive actions in order to curb the negative mentoring experience from happening.

The findings of this working paper prove that mentoring can be considered as one of the ways to overcome the problem of underperforming teachers in MRSMs. Thus, one of the implications of this study is for MRSMs to understand and implement mentoring for the new teachers as part of the induction programme. Another implication of this study is to continue with mentoring programme for non-novice teachers who are underperforming as a solution to the organization's problem. This mentoring could be implemented in the form of informal way should it become an awkwardness for the non-novice teachers to be involved in mentoring since several studies have shown that informal mentoring affects work performance more than formal mentoring (Menges, 2015; Desimone et. al., 2014). This working paper is suggesting that MRSMs administrators include the non-novice teachers who are underperforming into the mentoring programme in the school since the expert mentors are there and the programme is not costly.

Based on the regression analysis result, the dimensions of the mentoring construct namely informal mentoring and psychosocial support of mentoring should be something of interest to dwell upon. Since psychosocial mentoring and informal mentoring are strong predictors of work performance, MRSMs' administrators should consider these two dimensions when implementing mentoring programme in schools.

Mentoring is being discussed as a construct per say in this working paper. Correlation and regression analyses are performed in order to find the relationship between the two variables and to know how much does the independent variable affect the dependent variable in this relationship. Now that it is proven mentoring has a significant relationship with work performance, MARA would benefit more from future study if the dimensions of mentoring are explored in more details giving in-depth attention to which dimensions in mentoring that would affect the work performance of the MRSM teachers the most. Then, administrators could place more emphasis on the identified dimensions so that mentoring is effective leading to excellent work performance.

Our everyday actions in the workplace determine our work performance. As for teachers, work performance would be the utmost important in an educational organization since the product of teachers' work performance would be the students' achievement. Underperforming teachers may be reduced if mentoring programme is put into practice effectively.

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