

## **Responsible Mentorship: Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice: A Case Study of KALRO-CRI, Kenya: A Literature Review Report**

**Ann Wangui<sup>1</sup> & Dr. Gladys Muasya<sup>2</sup>**

**St. Paul's University**

### **Abstract**

*This paper presents a systematic literature review aimed at facilitating responsible mentoring to bridge the divide between research and practice within KALRO-CRI, Kenya. The study draws on sources from Google Scholar. The systematic review delves into professional development and mentorship across diverse fields, spotlighting the significance of networks and mentoring in aiding transitions. The review suggests enhancements in postgraduate mentorship satisfaction and introduces the TAD Framework, a proposed mechanism to augment compatibility between mentors and mentees. It advocates for formal mentoring initiatives catering to Early Career Academics, highlighting the synergy between scientific pursuits and practical application. Notably, the review underlines the criticality of interpersonal skills for graduate triumph and suggests collaboration between academia and industry to combat graduate unemployment challenges. Emphasizing the imperative of collaboration for building trust and achieving successful outcomes, the review concludes by advocating the establishment of structured mentoring programs and the cultivation of interdependence in professional milieus. Additionally, it explores the significance of interpersonal aptitudes and the seamless integration of fresh graduates into the workforce through academia-industry collaboration. The study asserts that mentorship should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a singular event. It advocates for a structured program tailored to workplace dynamics and overseen by mentors, positing that such an approach can effectively narrow the gap between research and practice. The review also underscores the significance of an optimally oriented mentorship period to equip graduates, postgraduates, and working professionals with the tools to function as autonomous practitioners. Notably, mentorship contributes to bolstering the confidence of both mentors and mentees, facilitating an environment where mentor-leadership is revered.*

**Key words.** Research, practice, responsible mentorship, KALRO-CRI, (Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization - Coffee Research Institute), TAD Framework and systematic literature review

## **Introduction**

Recent studies have indicated that there is a gap between research and practice. Research is more theoretically inclined while practice is application of the theoretical research findings. In the past, soft skills have been replaced by technology. However that is changing with more soft skills being sort after to boost productivity in the work setting. Conforming to Emel (2008), skill gaps have been identified in the area of leadership, communication, problem-solving, technical skills, and more. Further, economic changes, technological advancements, globalization, and market volatility contribute to the growing demand for essential people and team skills. Different scholars have tried to introduced various ways of bridging the skill gap, mentorship included. With this particular study aimed at bridging the gap between research and practice through exploring the importance of responsible mentorship in Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO)-Coffee Research Institute (CRI) located in Ruiru Kenya. It will delve into the various mentoring approaches and their potential impact on developing competent leaders and professionals. By examining existing research and case studies, the review seeks to highlight the significance of mentorship in ensuring continuous learning, skill enhancement, and the overall success of organizations in a dynamic and evolving business environment.

KALRO-CRI, formally Coffee Research Foundation, was formed following the KALRO ACT of 2013 No.17 that saw the merger of Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), Tea Research Foundation (TRF) and Kenya Sugar Research Foundation and Coffee Research Foundation. It was later operationalized in 2014. CRI is mandated to conduct research and to investigate all issues relating to coffee production, processing, marketing and ancillary thereto matters. Initially, it was managed and financed by farmers who contributed a two percent levy. After the merger, it is now a parastatal funded partly by the National government, internal generated revenues: coffee seeds and seedlings sales as well as partnerships with both government and non-governmental projects.

The organization research work dates back in the 1908 (Gichuru, 2023) when the need to curb coffee leaf rust and coffee berry diseases specifically affecting the then available coffee varieties of K7, SL 28 and SL 34 saw the Kenya Government appoint the first coffee entomologist at the National Agricultural Laboratories (NAL) in Kabete. The government who were the only authorized coffee growers bought Jacaranda grounds in 1944 establishing the research under the Ministry of Agriculture by 1949. On 19<sup>th</sup> August 1964 Coffee Research Foundation was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee under the companies Act (Cap.486) managed and financed by farmers. From growing the traditionally varieties; K 7, SL 28 and SL 34 to breeding the disease resistant varieties of Ruiru 11 cultivar in 1985 and Batian cultivar in 2010 the evolution meets specific farmers needs as well as adapting to climatic changes.

Transition of one generation of researcher to another requires continuous mentorship considering research is continuous. To reduce skill gap, networking of the senior and junior scientist would ensure maximum productivity of research work. Since the merger in 2013 to 2022 little or no employment opportunities on permanent basis by the organization has been witnessed. Considering some staffs have retired, died, and others resigning ,vacancies have been created and not filled this has resulted in the decline in numbers of scientific paper produced notably by the fresh recruits in work places and post graduate studies enrolling an indication of the research and practical mentorship divide in the organization.

In today's economic climate, organizations often promote individuals to leadership positions without providing sufficient mentorship or training. Mentorship of leaders is vital in ensuring they can build as well as sustain a team to lead. Failure to this ,emergence of half-backed professionals who struggle to meet the demands of their roles is witnessed. Various mentoring approaches can be employed to bridge the skill gap and foster continuous learning in CRI: Peer Mentoring, reverse mentoring, open mentoring as well as situation mentoring are networking types to close the divide. On the other hand, topic mentoring focuses on specific topics to build expertise in a given field.

### **Review**

This paper is a systematic report on different literature review to guide in identification of how to conduct responsible mentorship with the intention to bridge the gap between research and practice a case of Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization-Coffee Research Institute.

### **Search methods**

The search aimed to find papers published between 2016 and 2023 using electronic databases such as Google Scholar. However, among the chosen was one publication from 2008 that discusses responsible mentorship that contained information that enriched the study. The search used the keywords "Mentorship," "communication," and "gap" to generate relevant articles. All systematically selected papers are written in English.

The literature review matrix table came in handy in extraction and organization of information needed in the literature review report. The literature review matrix table had subtopics on how to use the APA format of referencing, stating the broader topic as well as the specific topic. More on identifying the theories used, research problem identification as well as the research questions in the papers used. Further the research designs used in each paper identified what is known and the unknown information extracted from the literature reviewed.

### **Search outcomes**

20 research papers were sampled randomly from the google scholar data base .Qualitative assessment was used to picked different journal articles based on use of key words match ( gap, communication, mentorship). Among them, 7 proved to be outdated (2015 and below) when the

publication years were examined. The abstracts of these 20 papers were also examined with 10 only being chosen for further review. This is so because they offered information relevant to the study line of bridging the gap between research and practice through responsible mentorship in three aspects: undergraduate, postgraduate and the working professionals. Important in bridging the gap in KALRO-CRI. However, only 10 papers were picked and full examined in content since they were closely related to the topic as well as current in year of publication. In reference to various journal articles chosen, they are sub divided into themes for easy recommendation towards bridging the divide within KALRO-CRI.

### **Search Results**

This comprehensive literature review explores different dimensions of professional development and mentorship in various fields, particularly in, postgraduate research, academia and medicine. It highlights the role of networks and mentoring in supporting transitions in academia. How to transition to Independent practice in the medical field, the review emphasizes that the transition to independent medical practice is a multifaceted process affected by feedback, regulatory requirements, and the relationship between supervisors and supervised. Relationship between mentor and mentee in the academia is also explored. Factoring this finding, a formal structured program aligning to work structure at KALRO-CRI would significantly aid in bridging the divide between research and practice. This can be bolstered by creating an enabling environment of interactive mentorship in various spheres of the institute. The senior management continuously guiding the new work force and existing ones while the fresh undergraduates bring in their expertise in technology advancement ensuring an equilibrium in performance delivery.

### **Postgraduate Mentorship to Undergraduates**

Asif, Edison and Dolan (2023) argues on postgraduate perception of a successful undergraduate researcher mentorship and how to apply those characteristics in the context of mentoring undergraduates research teams, shaping career path of undergraduate as early as in tertiary institution is preparing them for professionalism and competency. This as well align them to their areas of interest. The study focuses on developing talent of a larger group a team based approach also known as the vertically integrated project team which expands the potential talent pool beyond the possibility of one on one apprenticeships. This approach would fit CRI workforce in terms of convenience in financial and time aspect. Undergraduates are recruited without discrimination of discipline, race, gender or competency. They are also asked to encourage their peers to join through the word of mouth. Use of four factors perceived to enable undergraduate researcher talent development was used in this study. This included undergraduate researcher characteristic, research project characteristics, mentoring implementation and outcome for both postgraduate and undergraduate by use of team based approach. Talent development is outstanding mastery of

systematically developed competencies in an occupation, this translates to growth for individuals, institute as well as entire organization. Research on talent development indicate functions of mentor depended on developmental stage of the student mentee.

The talent development is achieved through use of a framework that includes four successive levels of talent development, three of which involve mentoring among them being; aptitude, competence, expertise and transformation achievement.

### **Mentorship in General Practice: Health Sector**

In this study, cultural mentorship model is used on people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Research participatory action and workshops members and are employed as the research methods where community leaders, non-indigenous, local health practitioners were used. It is aimed to bridge the specific gap of inequitable access to and inappropriate care the significant cause of the gap between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the non indigenous Australians. The use of WOTWOD (Ways of Thinking and Ways of Doing ) program is embedded in the cultural respect activities into the practice where indigenous health project officers as the cultural mentors are teamed with the WOTWOD project officer to work with the participating general practice staff by use of the WOTWOD Toolkit as a guide. The toolkit is design to understand the culture of this local people and in respect to that know how fill the missing health gap in respect to the people with their culture. A local care partnership created of community elders and the community controlled organization and relevant medicare local or primary health network oversee the WOTWOD program implementation. Participants in the cultural mentorship were categorized into mentor and mentee relationship and system dimensions. The principle emphasizes for mentorship to be effective mentors and mentee to be comfortable with their own identity with mutual trust between mentor and mentee both to be flexible, prepared and mutual respectful to achieve mutual understanding and goals of clinically and culturally appropriate general practice and primary care service.

To minimize harm during the orientation with the locals, the health practitioners from WOTWOD had to understand the health system and services available to the local community such as leadership and advocacy for the community, effective communication with general practice staff to improve cultural knowledge, passion and pride in own identity, aboriginality and ethnicity. Both the cultural mentor and mentorship team and local care partnership need these characteristics to enable them to walk together with practice and PHN staff to improve access and health care choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities .

Somefun and Adebayo (2020) conducted a study that aimed in exploring importance of bridging the gap of mentoring the African based doctoral scholars in the sub Sahara Africa something that has not been seen in the past. Notably, Ezeh et al.'s (2010) study aims to promote capacity building in

population and public health research by creating a network of locally trained scholar who have global recognition through a PhD training fellowship programme. According to Caruso et al. (2016), scholars with research mentors are more confident, visible in research networks, more collaborative and have higher prospects of professional development unlike those with no mentors. Therefore, to strengthening capacity of working force at CRI, continuous mentoring of upcoming lot of scientist is critical in ensuring longevity in research. Mentoring refers to transmission of knowledge, and professional support and capacity (Cole et al., 2016). This is usually informal and face-to-face often over a period of time of more experienced (mentor) and less experienced (mentee). According to Manderson et al. (2017) the mentor as well benefit from mentoring in that it improves their quality of PhD. Mentoring in vertical and horizontal is where peer mentoring is involved and interchange roles. CARTA program is used to admit 7 cohorts under the research. Peer mentorship, which is mentorship within participants of the CARTA participants is employed. Ezeh et al. (2010) and Fonn et al. (2016) use the four Joint Advanced Seminars of mentorship that entails facilitator-fellow mentorship. Fellow-fellow which is mentorship within cohort mentoring, fellow-fellow mentorship of different members from different cohort mentorship In this regard knowing more about cohorts can help identify gaps. Scarcity of mentors, ambiguity in mentor-mentee relationships and role as well as the lack of proper mentoring knowledge and skills in the African Institutions of higher learning, lack proper structures according to Ssemata et al. (2017) were some of the challenges incurred in the study. Time, mentee attitude, lack of mentoring skills by mentors, lack of motivation to mentors and mentees, lack or responsiveness by both mentor and mentee were some of the challenges experienced. It was established mentee measure of successful mentorship was measured by completion of their studies (graduation in academics), publishing their work, conference attendance and successful grant application. It is recommended to have a formal training embedded in the CARTA programme, train mentors and guide on mentoring to be used in mentoring to ensure uniformity in this mentoring approach.

Pursuant to Yardley et al. (2018), the theory of evidence based study is used. Clinical teacher and postgraduate trainees were the focus in practicality rather than theoretical. The learners in this instance is the undergraduates, postgraduate and residents are also not limited. The do's, don'ts and don't know method guidance were used and four themes: working place learning, independence and responsibility, mentoring and coaching, as well as the patient perspectives employed. Focusing on the theme of working place learning the junior staff at CRI can learn through practical mentorship within the institute and during field assignment. Providing open channel communication where mentees are allowed to voice their concerns and mentors being receptive reverting in time ensures in limiting the divide in professional milieus. It was realized that transition should be continuous and not a one time event. Learning needs to be embedded in practice and learners to be provided

with authentic and meaningful learning opportunities. Medical education should not be an event but a supervised prolonged development process that builds confidence in the trainee on both technical and non-technical skills without compromising patient safety. This is however contributed by an enabling environment where interpersonal relationship and trust level is good.

### **Academia area mentorship**

Considering Purwantoro et al.'s (2021) study Its objective is on developing human resources capable of recognizing their strengths and limitations, selecting the most appropriate profession for them and delivering authentic experiences in the practice. Dejavato, a Non Governmental Organization that deals with international volunteerism and usually conduct regular mentoring training with schools and institutions partnered with it. Mentors from the partnered Schools and institutions chosen to implement the training management model for volunteer from various parts in the NGO faced challenges between them in various capacities such as ineffective communication between mentors and volunteers, inadequate preparation of mentors to conduct mentoring activities through the EVS program, poorly planned mentoring activities, evaluation that were primarily limited to follow-up activities. The training management model was aimed in solving difficulties encountered by Dejavato partner schools in managing volunteer programs on project sites on frequent misunderstanding between volunteers and the mentors, lack of optimal mentoring management, some voluntary activities that did not run as expected. Dejavato implementation of the training management model did not significantly enhance mentors capacity nor the lack of standards put in place for mentors selection which impacted amount of success seen by the volunteers running the program and their project location. Focusing on research work on mentoring early career academics in Tanzania, Mgaiwa and Kapinga (2021) and Collins, Brown and Holum (1991) study the use of the theory of social learning where the cognitive apprenticeship model is employed. The research study is aimed at solving the challenges Early Career Academics face regarding teaching, research and delivery of public services in Higher Education levels. The study also seeks to show what strategies are in place to address such challenges. The challenges they face due to lack of mentorship includes; lack of formal institutional mentoring arrangements, lack of institutional mentoring policies or frameworks, isolation by the senior academics as well as exploitation by senior academics. This negatively affects the productivity of the ECAs in ways such as lack of confidence in teaching as well as inadequate preparation for teaching. However to change this potential mentoring strategies recommended in this study are: Provision of regular training for mentors this will mould effective mentors, putting mentorship frameworks in place as well as establishing peer support as part of mentoring to counter the challenges. The study contribute by evaluating how mentor in Higher Education affect the kind of mentees ( students) in their future. By this it means a competent Early Career Academics will transfer value to the students( mentee) The

students are polished to join the work environment contributing to research in the future that will make the difference in our economy, social lives as well.

Manevska et al. (2018) explores the importance of collaboration between the learning institutions (colleges and universities) and the academia. Interpersonal skills competence is important for a student before joining the work environment. Therefore the need to bridge the gap between the university curriculum and the industrial needs. the industry is more practicality while in academia is more theoretical. Before a graduate undergoing internship is critical in preparing them in facing the working world by instilling confidence, communication skills as well as problem solving skills. After graduation and joining the work environment managers and supervisors should mentor the fresh employees to instill confidence in how they deliver their job. The gap between the curriculum and what employers want has seen many graduate working in areas they are over qualified to some even missing job due to the difference.

The study proposes creation of an assessment tool during internship to be developed by the graduate. Mentoring will see the sharing of knowledge to mentees, advising them, opening up about ways improving for the graduate as well. The study shows the need of incorporating a created assessment tool by learning institution and the business environment that translate to confident, graduate who are good communicators, good negotiators as well as able to solve problems even in stressful situations. This translates to employability on graduating.

In a study done by Hadjar Mohajerzad et al. (2021), bridging the gap between Science and Practice : Research Collaboration and the perception of Research Findings, Education-Based Approach is used to aimed towards answering how collaboration between scientist and practitioners within the research process influence the practitioners trust in research, applicability of research knowledge as well as the attributed relevance of research findings. Based on Van Schaik et al. (2018), collaboration is supported between the scientist and the practitioners who work together through the process of research. At the end of the day it is the practitioner who decide if the research knowledge is useful to what extent and how useful is it. The main barrier for this study is the perception of applicability and the relevance of the research knowledge as well as trust in science. The study suggestion collaboration between researchers and the practitioners who implement knowledge generated from research into practicality is important in boosting their trust levels and feeling like they are part of the journey. There is no point of theoretical research without implementation of the findings acquired.

Denvall and Skillmark (2020) tries to bridge this gaps between the academic and the practical knowledge by use of three discourses proposed included academic bridge, practice bridge and service-user bridge. Evidence-based practice and its diverse combinations, formation of new institutions as well as the today globalization that triggers fragmentation. Conforming to one of the



proposed discourses of academic bridge, junior staffs at CRI can be encouraged to pursue further studies that would ensure specialization in a particular area of expertise. This guided by their mentors ensures well informed individuals hence bridging the practice divide. Further, the gap is attributed to weak implementation of research results in social service setting, lack of interest in research within the social work community, poor understanding of the condition of social work within the research community and incentives within university in-house academic knowledge and exchange or a rational matter between agency and research.

## **Discussions**

### **Postgraduate Mentorship to Undergraduates**

A good interpersonal fit between the mentor and mentee is very important to postgraduates since they work closely, therefore the TAD Framework might benefit the Mentor. Postgraduates assisted in project selection that fits their knowledge background and skills set of undergraduate is important to fit in the available time on weekly basis as well set period for project completion. However, a postgraduate researcher may hinder talent development assuming current competence of an undergraduate is their potential rather than prior preparation.

Postgraduates emphasized the need of undergraduate being interested in research rather than doing it because it is a degree requirement to graduate committed ones would have more experience since they would do multiple ones. Therefore they organized undergraduates into group boosting their confidence especially when research is not progressing well. Interpersonal relationship between mentor and mentee is a key consideration before pairing them. Also it is important to evaluate relationships between mentee while grouping them. Evaluating the mentee feeling on being supervised is also critical in ensuring a harmonious relation that leads to successful mentorship. The effectiveness of exposure the mentee receives in the work setting should be evaluated later after being placed in various work places. This will assist in further identification of areas that need further research. Time allocated for mentorship should be analyzed if it is enough or limited for a successful mentorship practice.

### **Mentorship in the Health sector**

In this study, cultural mentorship model is used on people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, it was established that the mentee's measure of a successful mentorship was measured by completion of their studies; graduating in their academics, publishing their work in reputable sites, attending various research conferences, and obtaining successful grants application. However a formal training is recommended to be embedded in the CARTA programme ,train mentors and guide on mentoring to ensure uniformity in the mentorship approach.

There is need to integrate a formal mentoring program in the CARTA network where mentors are trained to mentor using the participatory action research a cultural two-component model

developed and implemented is expected to increase the success of mentorship through reducing harm to the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Mentoring should be continuous not an one time event this will ensure mentors are fully equipped culminating a health mentoring. Continuous mentoring mentors will boost their confidence and understand mentee expectations from them. Training mentors on how to create a harmonious interpersonal relationship to ensure all participants have mentors translating into successful mentorship

### **Academic Area Mentorship**

The challenges the program faced such as misunderstanding between the mentor and mentee due to language barrier and how effective was the program in mentoring the mentee who in this case are volunteers on attachment. An affective program that caters for a competent mentor and a comfortable mentee would do great in ensuring knowledge transfer.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Theory of Practice**

In pursuit of bridging theoretical research with practical application the practical theory and social learning theory provide a comprehensive lens through which dynamic of responsible mentorship and skills development is explored through the case study of KALRO-CRI.

The concept of practice emphasizes the routine and habitual aspects of social behavior, highlighting the ways in which individuals enact their roles within a specific context. In this study, Practice Theory offers insights into how theoretical knowledge is transformed into practical action within KALRO-CRI using its various elements ;Practices and Repositories entails investigating the daily routines, behaviors, and actions of professionals at KALRO-CRI, the study will identify the existing practices and repertoires that contribute to the research-practice gap. These practices may include communication protocols, decision-making processes, and collaborative interactions. Exploring Material and symbolic resources available to the KALRO-CRI team will help the study in assessing how the resources influences the execution of practice in this study mentorship, technological tools and organization values is the resource since they impact the transition of research findings into practical application. Analyzing how individuals actively shape and negotiate their practices including exploring how mentorship experiences empower professional to engage in reflective and adaptive practices and facilitate knowledge.

#### **Theory of Social Learning**

states that individuals learn through observation, limitation and interactions with others in their social environment. In this particular study exploring the KALRO-CRI significance of interpersonal relationships and social contexts in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and attitudes. Social learning theory will provide a lens through which to understand how responsible mentorship can facilitate skill development and knowledge transfer. Through observational learning, examining how

mentors model effective practices and problem-solving approaches at KALRO-CRI by investigation into mentor-mentee relationship will give insight into how this contribute to the acquisition of soft skills and the translation of theoretical knowledge into practical proficiency. Menter-mentee interaction and feedback will be examined by assessing how constructive feedback and open communication enhance social learning processes. This includes examining how mentees internalize feedback to refine their practical skills. Finally, commonalities of practice within KALRO-CRI by exploring how collaborative groups of professionals contribute to shared learning experiences thus highlight how these communities foster a supportive environment for skill development and knowledge exchange.

More research is in a functioning formal programme that will be embedded in training curriculum of undergraduate is necessary. Training of of leaders in various capacities in work spaces need training on mentorship. This will equip them with the necessary skills resulting to confident mentors. Also teaching them on interpersonal skill that will equip them with knowledge of understanding what their mentee expect and how to handle them will see successful mentorship programs. Mentorship should be continuous not an event. This will ensure quality in term of services delivery. A conducive environment in work places for networking purposes will bridge the gap between the senior most and junior most employee. This translates to quick flow of information resulting into a more productive environment. Understanding that not every learned person has leadership skills is vital in choosing mentors during mentorship programs. Therefore, training before a promotion to leadership position is vital.

Internship is a programme that enable undergraduates in their final year gain some practical skills in the field. Fresh graduate before absorption in their new work station also go through a probation period that ensure they are mentored and oriented into their job designation. Time limit of this engagement is crucial in understanding how much is much and how much is little.

## **Conclusions**

The divide between the senior management at CRI is clear by the number of technologies and innovations produced. This is seen in low number of scientific papers published annually. Mentorship is a continuous process not a one time event. A formal programme designed to fit in the work setting and implemented by trained mentors at KALRO-CRI will contribute in bridging the gap between research and practice. Optimal mentorship period that is more practical oriented prepares fresh Interns, junior staffs as well as the senior management to deliver as independent practitioners. Mentorship increases confidence in mentors who are leaders and mentee look up to. By acquiring the relevant knowledge, understanding mentee expectations as well as ensuring they

can create a team and sustain it throughout the mentorship process, mentored professionals are better placed in their respective designated areas of duties.

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