

A Review of Mentoring Programs for New Faculty Members in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Mentoring programs facilitate the effective transition of new faculty members in higher education institutions (HEIs). Currently, there are limited literature review papers on new faculty member mentoring programs in Malaysian HEIs. Thus, there is a need for research that synthesizes existing knowledge and identifies areas for improvement in these new faculty member mentoring programs. Furthermore, the impact of informal mentoring relationships needs to be more explored. This study informs the development of effective and sustainable mentoring programs for new faculty members in Malaysia HEIs by analyzing current practices, identifying knowledge gaps, and highlighting effective strategies. The methodology used for this study is a narrative literature review, systematically collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing existing research on mentoring for new faculty members that has taken place in Malaysian HEIs. The literature indicated that well-structured mentoring programs could enhance new faculty members' job satisfaction, teaching practices, and research productivity. However, the lack of consistency in program implementation and evaluation methods and the scarcity of longitudinal studies hinders conclusive assessments of their long-term effectiveness. The literature presents both consistent findings and notable variations. Effective mentoring programs rely on structured support and clear communication, yet cultural and institutional barriers can hinder well-designed programs. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effects of mentoring programs and comparative studies of different mentoring types. Exploring cultural and contextual factors can help tailor programs to diverse academic environments. The findings provide insights for optimizing mentoring programs for policymakers and HEI administrators. Understanding the key components of successful mentoring and avoiding common pitfalls can lead to more effective support structures, enhancing faculty development, educational outcomes, faculty retention rates, and institutional culture.

Keywords: Mentoring Program, New Faculty Members, Higher Education, Mentoring Relationship, Professional Development

Introduction

The definitions of mentoring, like the practices themselves, are evolving and expanding. Historically, definitions have often reflected poorly defined roles for mentors and mentees, resulting in unclear expectations (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Despite these inconsistencies, there is a broad consensus that mentoring is “relational and developmental,” encompassing both career and psychosocial functions and involving phases and transitions (Liu et al., 2021). The evolving nature of mentoring necessitates an understanding that adapts to contemporary academic and professional contexts.

Studies in different expertise domains show the importance of mentoring for personal and skills development (Stoeger et al., 2021). Hence, a strong rationale exists for implementing mentoring across diverse contexts and institutions. Hairon et al. (2020) reported the variability of mentoring across institutions, emphasizing the need for consistency. Similarly, new faculty members are vital for higher education institutions, bringing fresh perspectives and knowledge that foster innovation and excellence. Their teaching and research greatly influence student learning and institutional growth (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Supporting them is essential for upholding educational standards and enhancing institutional reputation. Robust mentoring programs will facilitate their transition and ongoing professional development (Cook-Sather, 2020; Cordie et al., 2020).

Previous studies revealed a growing body of literature indicates the benefits of mentoring to the mentor, mentee, and the organization are enormous (Eby & Robertson, 2020; Grocutt et al., 2022; Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021; Schwan et al., 2020). For mentees, it offers valuable guidance and support, significantly enhancing their professional development, job performance, and confidence (Schwan et al., 2020). Mentors, in turn, experience increased job satisfaction and personal growth, as mentoring helps refine their leadership and communication skills while keeping them engaged with new perspectives (Nyanjom, 2020). For organizations, mentoring results in improved retention rates, a more collaborative work environment, and more robust succession planning, collectively enhancing overall performance and boosting the institution’s reputation (Grocutt et al., 2022).

Mentoring programs play a crucial role in the professional development of new faculty members in HEIs. These programs provide new faculty with guidance, support, and resources essential for navigating the challenges of academia (Dahlke et al., 2021), through which they can develop teaching skills, enhance research capabilities, and gain valuable insights into the academic culture and institutional expectations (Davis et al., 2022). Mentors offer personalized advice and feedback, helping them set and achieve their professional goals (Toh et al., 2022). Additionally, mentorship fosters a sense of belonging and community, significantly improving job satisfaction and retention rates. By building strong professional networks and receiving continuous support, new faculty are better equipped to contribute effectively to their institutions, ultimately leading to higher academic and professional success (Jones et al., 2021).

This literature review explores the challenges, implementation, and effectiveness of mentoring programs for new faculty in Malaysian HEIs. It examines mentoring models and their impact on teaching, research productivity, job satisfaction, and professional development. Challenges like resource constraints, mentor-mentee matching, and cultural

factors are discussed. The review synthesizes research to evaluate program effectiveness and offers recommendations to enhance mentorship, aiming to foster the academic and professional growth of new faculty members in Malaysian higher education.

Literature Search and Selection

For this literature review, rigorous methodologies and database selection criteria were employed. Relevant mentoring studies published in English over the past five years were systematically searched in ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases. The search focused on empirical and theoretical research, identifying 25,100 records, which were narrowed down to 6,036 journal articles after comparison with existing literature. To ensure relevance, non-English publications, theses, dissertations, and conference papers were excluded. Finally, 50 journal articles on mentoring in Malaysia were selected for detailed analysis. The initial step involved defining keywords such as “mentoring,” “new faculty mentoring,” “mentoring in higher education,” “mentoring outcomes,” and “new faculty mentorship in Malaysia.” These were chosen to capture a wide range of literature on mentoring programs for new faculty in Malaysian HEIs. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were considered, focusing on empirical research on professional development impacts and theoretical studies on mentorship mechanisms and best practices. Articles were screened for relevance to new faculty mentorship in Malaysian higher education, a clear focus on mentoring programs, and substantial discussion of outcomes or implications. This methodological approach aims to synthesize current knowledge on mentoring programs, offering insights into effective strategies and identifying areas for further research and improvement.

The Evolvement of Mentorship in the Malaysian Higher Education System

Mentoring in Malaysian higher education has evolved significantly (Sirat & Wan, 2022). Initially informal, relying on senior faculty’s willingness to guide juniors (Kamarudin et al., 2021), universities recognized the need for structured support and formalized mentoring programs (Jafar et al., 2021). This shift was driven by the recognition of mentorship’s role in academic success and faculty retention (Sarabipour et al., 2023). Research shows that effective mentorship enhances teaching, research productivity, and job satisfaction among new faculty (Abetang et al., 2020). Consequently, Malaysian universities have implemented more structured mentoring programs tailored to new faculty member’s needs (Kamarudin et al., 2021).

Formal mentoring programs in Malaysian higher education include clear guidelines, regular meetings, and specific goals for mentors and mentees (Muslim et al., 2021). These programs aim to provide consistent support and promote continuous learning and development. Universities also offer mentor training to ensure effective guidance (Hairon et al., 2020). The impact has been significant, with mentees experiencing increased confidence, better job performance, and higher career satisfaction (Nuel et al., 2021). Mentors gain professional growth and satisfaction from contributing to the development of their colleagues and students (Bäker et al., 2020). Ongoing research and feedback continue to improve these programs, ensuring mentorship remains vital in Malaysian higher education.

The evolution of mentoring in Malaysian higher education underscores the need to adapt support structures for a dynamic academic environment. The shift from informal to

formalized programs highlights the importance of structured support for new faculty's professional development. Continuous evaluation and adaptation are essential to address emerging challenges and maintain the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

Challenges Associated with Mentoring in Malaysian HEIs

In Malaysia, traditional mentoring involves brief meetings with university administrators to discuss teaching and assessment but lacks structured training for mentors (Albakri et al., 2021). Issues include tensions between mentors and new faculty members, feelings of exploitation, and poor-quality feedback (Hairon et al., 2020; Jafar et al., 2021). Professional development activities are often criticized as superficial, inflexible, and needing more follow-through (Kamarudin et al., 2023; Bachkirova et al., 2020). There is a significant gap in understanding new faculty members' specific challenges due to limited, targeted research, highlighting the need for more sustained and context-sensitive support mechanisms.

New faculty members face challenges such as attitude, competency, motivation, stress, emotions, and organizational commitment (Kamaruddin & Boon, 2020). A key issue is whether they effectively implement changes in university and classroom practices or merely document them. Without proactive faculty member involvement, the Ministry of Education Malaysia's national education goals may be disrupted (Sirat & Wan, 2022). The problem is worsened by a limited understanding of new faculty members' unique challenges, which are not resolved by experience alone and require targeted support and induction programs (Voss & Kunter, 2020). They also face challenges such as workload management, adaptation to institutional cultures, attitude, self-efficacy, motivation, and emotional stress (Mohamad et al., 2023; Kamaruddin & Boon, 2020). Balancing research, teaching, administrative duties, and personal commitments under high expectations is difficult (Mukhtar et al., 2023). In Malaysian HEIs, these challenges are intensified by the need to adapt to new teaching methods while maintaining research responsibilities, securing funding, and publishing results (Badiozaman, 2021; Ismail et al., 2022). The pressure to excel in both teaching and research, secure grants, and receive positive evaluations is overwhelming (Ismail et al., 2022; Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020). In addition, they face challenges in effective student interaction and curriculum design, including creating a positive learning environment, aligning content with industry demands, and integrating technology (Ospina & Medina, 2020). As they become absorbed in their work and isolated in their classrooms, they may lose sight of the rewarding aspects of teaching (Schwan et al., 2020). Addressing these challenges is crucial for implementing effective mentoring programs, including culturally sensitive and contextually relevant support systems (Kamarudin et al., 2023).

Despite mentor support, challenges like resource constraints, limited support, mismatched relationships, and cultural barriers persist (Muslim et al., 2021; Kamarudin et al., 2023). Ineffective mentor-mentee matching often leads to missed opportunities (Ossorno et al., 2021). Clear expectations and well-equipped mentors are essential, especially for diverse student populations (Nuel et al., 2021). Informal mentoring can result in inconsistent experiences due to a lack of structure (Stoeger et al., 2021). Structured, well-designed mentoring programs are crucial for effective mentor-mentee relationships and sustained faculty success.

To sum up, new faculty members in Malaysian higher education face challenges such as workload management, adapting to institutional cultures and balancing teaching, research, and administrative duties. Stress related to competency, motivation, and emotional management further hinders effective practices. Mentorship programs often struggle with mismatched relationships and cultural barriers. Effective support requires recognizing these issues and implementing structured, culturally sensitive mentoring programs to promote faculty success and align with national education goals.

Implementation of Mentoring Programs

Implementing mentoring programs involves executing the mentoring framework, including delivering activities, following protocols, and adjusting based on feedback (Hairon et al., 2020). It requires effective mentor-mentee pairing, scheduled interactions, and ongoing support. Research in Malaysia highlights strategies and challenges, such as the need for a well-defined structure and ongoing mentor training to ensure consistency and quality (Muslim et al., 2021). In Malaysian HEIs, the effectiveness of mentoring programs often hinges on the degree of alignment between the program design and the actual implementation, and some programs need more training, clearer objectives, and limited resources (Albakri et al., 2021).

Traditionally, mentoring pairs a senior and junior colleague to support career advancement and psychosocial development (Sarabipour et al., 2022). Modern mentoring includes diverse types such as formal, informal, electronic, co-mentoring, group, peer, multilevel, and cultural mentoring (Mullen, 2020; Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). These approaches emphasize the need for adaptable, inclusive strategies in higher education. Effective mentoring should account for the mentor and mentee's personality, attitude, and background and involve support from specialists and program experts (Deng et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2021).

Effective mentoring programs require continuous improvement and a solid foundation. Well-designed programs boost new faculty retention by enhancing their skills and effectiveness (Hieker & Rushby, 2020). These programs follow a phased process: recruitment, matching, training, implementation, and completion (Treasure et al., 2022). Successful recruitment of suitable mentors and mentees is crucial, as good selection can lead to success (Bachkirova et al., 2020). Effective mentors should be dedicated, experienced, and supportive, considering individual characteristics and expectations (Wexler, 2020). Both mentors and mentees must fulfill their roles and engage actively to achieve program goals (Goldhaber et al., 2020; Sarabipour et al., 2022).

Effective matching in mentoring programs aligns objectives, expectations, interests, and needs to prevent incompatibility (Deng et al., 2022). Key factors include training content, location, objectives, and mentor availability, often assessed through questionnaires and meetings (Hee et al., 2020). Proper implementation according to the design is crucial, with personal contracts outlining responsibilities and expectations (Hairon et al., 2020). Adherence to rules, confidentiality, and evaluation planning are essential for success (Stoeger et al., 2021). The final step, completion, involves evaluating the program's success based on achieved objectives (Hayes & Mahfouz, 2020).

Mentoring programs aim to motivate new faculty members, enhance their effectiveness, and build trust-based relationships with experienced colleagues (Shanks et al., 2022). These relationships boost professional development, improve teaching, and enhance classroom management (Kearney, 2021). They also increase self-confidence and academic growth, ensuring sustained success (Wilcoxon et al., 2020). Both formal and informal mentoring offer critical support, aiding in navigating the educational system and improving academic satisfaction (Ewing, 2021). Effective implementation requires clear guidelines, mentor training, and regular evaluations to adapt to evolving needs (Stelter et al., 2021; Keiler et al., 2023).

Overall, Mentoring programs are crucial for new faculty development and retention but face challenges such as resource constraints, mentor-mentee mismatches, and cultural barriers. Current research often needs longitudinal data, and more empirical studies are needed to assess the long-term impacts and sustainability of these programs. Future research should explore innovative models like virtual mentoring to support diverse, geographically dispersed faculty. By addressing these gaps, studies can enhance mentoring effectiveness and contribute to continuous improvement in higher education. This review underscores the evolving benefits and strategies of mentoring programs and emphasizes the need for ongoing research to ensure their success and relevance.

Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs

Mentoring in higher education is vital for the successful transition of new faculty members (Ismail et al., 2021). It involves mentors and mentees, with mentors providing guidance to address challenges and enhance academic performance, psychosocial development, and career prospects (Popova, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). Effectiveness in mentoring programs is measured by how well they achieve goals like enhancing new faculty development, improving teaching skills, and increasing retention (Bachkirova et al., 2020; Schwan et al., 2020; Shanks et al., 2022). Key aspects include the quality of mentor-mentee relationships, the relevance of support, and its impact on career progression and job satisfaction (Abetang et al., 2020; Deng et al., 2022; Falola et al., 2020). Evaluating these factors provides feedback for improving mentoring initiatives in higher education.

In Malaysia, research shows that effective mentoring programs enhance teaching practices, faculty member satisfaction, and retention (Schwan et al., 2020). Success is linked to well-designed programs with clear objectives, regular feedback, and tailored support. Kamarudin et al. (2021) stressed the need for programs to adapt to new faculty's evolving needs through personalized training, peer support, and regular evaluations. However, Nor et al. (2020) noted that many programs lack structure and resources, recommending improved mentor training, better matching, and ongoing evaluations to address these issues.

Studies on higher education mentoring emphasize that the effectiveness of programs largely depends on the quality of mentoring support rather than mentees' traits or environmental factors (Arslantas & Kocagoz, 2021; Tinoco-Giraldo et al., 2020). Despite this, recent research on the impact of mentoring support is limited (Giacumo et al., 2020). Effective mentoring, both formal and informal, is crucial for achieving program goals (Jones & Smith, 2022). To address gaps and criticisms in current mentoring practices, ongoing efforts aim to develop a

sustainable mentor training curriculum by involving mentors in program design and evaluation (Parker et al., 2021).

In brief, enhancing the effectiveness of mentoring programs in higher education requires a strategic focus on mentorship quality, program structure, and stakeholder engagement. The Texas Teacher Mentor Advisory Committee (TTMAC) identified seven critical components of a successful mentoring program: mentor selection, mentor assignment, mentor training, mentor roles and responsibilities, program design and delivery, funding, and accountability (TTMAC, 2015). Specific goals improve program value (Barrera, Austin, et al., 2020), and highly qualified mentors boost retention, achievement, and enthusiasm (Waljee et al., 2020; Jacobson et al., 2020). Strengthening these elements helps institutions support new faculty development and retention, enhancing the program's effectiveness.

Recommendations for Improvement

To enhance mentoring programs, focus on rigorous mentor selection, emphasizing substantial teaching experience, strong interpersonal skills, and a commitment to lifelong learning (Parker et al., 2021). Highly qualified mentors drive mentee success, improving student achievement and faculty member enthusiasm. However, effective matching based on personality traits and professional goals is often overlooked, impacting the mentoring relationship's success. Meanwhile, the structure of mentoring programs is crucial for their success. Programs need clear objectives, defined roles, regular check-ins, and assessments to monitor progress and address challenges (Treasure et al., 2022).

To support the mentoring partnership, mentors also need specific training in communication skills for supporting adult learners. Current research does not sufficiently address the long-term impact of such training on mentoring effectiveness. Parker et al. (2021) recommend that mentor preparation should develop skills like working with adult learners, providing emotional support, engaging in feedback cycles, and scaffolding reflection. These skills are crucial for supporting new faculty member development. However, the lack of standardized training programs leads to inconsistent mentor preparedness across institutions. This preparation is particularly important as mentors need to navigate difficult conversations that may arise when a new faculty member struggles during the internship experience (Albakri et al., 2021). Ongoing professional development for mentors is essential. Workshops, seminars, and peer learning sessions help mentors stay current with educational trends and techniques, fostering continuous improvement (Weimer, 2021). These opportunities refine mentors' skills and promote best practices, enhancing the program's effectiveness. However, many institutions lack the resources to implement these initiatives effectively.

Increasing funding and resources dedicated to mentoring programs is also essential for their sustainability and enhancement. Adequate funding supports comprehensive training, provides necessary materials, and offers incentives for mentors, all of which contribute to the overall quality of the program (Giacumo et al., 2020). Without sufficient resources, mentoring programs risk becoming fragmented and less effective. Further research into the economic benefits of investing in robust mentoring programs is needed, as this could support arguments for increased funding.

Engaging mentors in the design and evaluation of mentoring programs ensures that these initiatives are relevant and impactful (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Collaboration helps to align the goals of educational institutions with the needs of mentors and mentees, creating a cohesive and supportive learning environment. However, there needs to be more research on the best practices for involving mentors in these processes, highlighting a gap that future studies should address.

In conclusion, effective mentoring programs are crucial for new faculty member development and retention. Key components include rigorous mentor selection, focused preparation, communication skills training, structured programs, ongoing professional development, adequate funding, and collaborative design. However, gaps still need to be in understanding the long-term impacts of mentor training, elements of successful structured programs, and best practices for mentor involvement in design and evaluation. Future research should identify best practices in mentor-mentee matching and address the needs of diverse faculty. Practical recommendations include developing standardized mentor training, establishing ongoing support and evaluation mechanisms, and incorporating mentor and mentee feedback to optimize mentoring programs for better faculty support and retention.

Discussion and Conclusion

Current literature highlights the benefits and challenges of mentoring programs for new faculty members in Malaysian HEIs. A major area for improvement is the consistency in program implementation and evaluation methods, making it difficult to assess their overall effectiveness. Additionally, there is a scarcity of longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impacts of these programs on academic staff development (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). This gap suggests the need for comprehensive, long-term studies better to understand the sustained benefits and potential drawbacks of mentoring. The reliance on short-term studies limits the ability to capture mentoring's full impact over time, inhibiting the development of robust, evidence-based practices.

Comparative analysis of various studies reveals both consistent findings and significant differences. Research consistently shows that well-structured mentoring programs improve job satisfaction, teaching practices, and research productivity among new faculty members (Abetang et al., 2020; Khojah & Asif, 2020; Zarghoni & Rasool, 2021). However, effectiveness varies widely based on context and implementation strategies. Studies by Kamaruddin and Boon (2020) and Badiozaman (2021) emphasize the importance of structured support and clear communication. Conversely, other research highlights challenges posed by cultural and institutional differences, which can hinder program effectiveness (Ismail et al., 2022). These variations underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of how different contexts influence mentoring outcomes.

The limitations of current research on mentoring programs for new faculty members in Malaysian HEIs include small sample sizes and a focus on specific institutions or disciplines, limiting generalizability. Moreover, while some studies examine short-term impacts, there needs to be longitudinal data on career trajectories. Additionally, diversity and inclusivity are insufficiently addressed, with little research on cross-cultural mentoring despite its growing importance. Sustainability issues, such as resource constraints, further challenge effective program implementation. Despite these limitations, mentoring programs significantly benefit

new faculty members by enhancing their teaching, research skills, and overall job satisfaction (Hakro & Mathew, 2020; Dorner et al., 2021; Redding & Nguyen, 2020).

Future research on mentoring programs for new faculty members in Malaysian HEIs should focus on several key areas: conducting longitudinal studies to assess long-term effects on career trajectories, comparing different mentoring types (formal vs. informal, peer vs. hierarchical) to identify effective strategies, and exploring cultural and contextual factors to tailor programs for diverse academic environments. Emerging directions include developing digital and hybrid models using online platforms and virtual tools, personalizing mentoring to individual needs and career goals, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, there is a growing emphasis on mentor training and development to enhance skills and job satisfaction and on examining the impact of mentoring on job satisfaction and psychological well-being. Addressing these areas can bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring mentoring programs are effective and contextually relevant.

For policymakers and HEI administrators, this literature review offers insights into optimizing mentoring programs for new faculty members. Understanding the key components of successful programs and common pitfalls can help design more effective support structures, enhance faculty member development, improve educational outcomes, increase staff retention, and foster a positive institutional culture. Practical steps include: (1) Rigorous Mentor Selection: Ensuring mentors have substantial teaching experience, strong interpersonal skills, and a commitment to lifelong learning (Parker et al., 2021); (2) Focused Mentor Preparation: Developing key skills in mentors, such as working with adult learners and providing emotional support (Parker et al., 2021); (3) Communication Training: Equipping mentors with the skills to navigate difficult conversations and support adult learners effectively (Albakri et al., 2021); (4) Structured Programs: Establishing clear objectives, well-defined roles, and regular assessments to ensure consistency and address challenges (Treasure et al., 2022); (5) Ongoing Professional Development: Offering workshops, seminars, and peer learning sessions to foster continuous improvement (Weimer, 2021); (6) Adequate Funding: Ensuring sufficient resources for comprehensive training and incentives for mentors (Giacumo et al., 2020); (7) Collaborative Design and Evaluation: Involving mentors in program design and evaluation to align institutional goals with the needs of mentors and mentees (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021).

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