

**RELEVANCE OF MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS IN SUSTAINABLE CAREER  
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMICS IN AKWA IBOM STATE  
POLYTECHNIC, IKOT OSURUA, IKOT EKPENE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study was conducted to ascertain the relevance of mentors and role models in sustainable career growth and development of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua. The specific objectives of the study were to: find out the extent academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua have mentors and role models to help their career growth and development; ascertain the perception of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, towards the contribution of mentors and role models to their sustainable career growth and development, and to determine the contribution of communication in the mentoring and role modeling process of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua. To achieve these objectives, the survey method was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 486 academic staff of the institution. And using Philip Meyer's sampling procedure, 248 respondents were selected for the study. The study was anchored on three theoretical frameworks –the Revised MELDS Model of Development Communication, Social Learning Theory, and the Corruption Likelihood Model. Findings of the study revealed that all the participants in the study either have a mentor and/or role model, or see themselves as one. Further finding showed that majority of the respondents, especially the lower ranking ones, perceived that mentors and role models can help or contribute to their career growth and development to a great extent. Additional finding revealed that majority of the respondents believed that interpersonal communication can help them, to a great extent, to learn from their mentors and role models. The work, therefore, recommended that to achieve speedy career growth and development, it is pertinent for every academic in the institution, especially the newly employed, to adopt a mentor and/or role model, whom they can submit to and learn from.*

**KEYWORDS:** Mentors, role models, mentees, protégés, perception, career growth and development.

**Introduction**

A mentor is generally seen as a person who offers expert knowledge for a novice and helps to grow and bring out inherent or inborn or undeveloped talents to become more explicit. Mentoring is basically described in two ways i) it is seen as a professional development relationship in which a more experienced person assists a less experienced one in developing and growing in a chosen career; and ii) it is viewed as a guiding relationship between an adult and a young person with the main focus of helping the younger person to realise his or her potential and perhaps overcome some barriers or challenges. In both instances, it is the

mentor who provides advice and support, and may also serve as a role model to the mentee (Ganesh, Bozas, Subban and Munapo, 2015).

Whereas these examples generally imply long-term relationships, mentoring can be used as an instructional strategy on a smaller scale. In a phenomenological viewpoint of the mentoring literature, there are eight attributes of mentoring that commonly appear. These include: an active relationship between the mentor and the mentee; a helping process where the mentor intentionally helps the mentee or protégé to grow and develop; a teaching-learning process where the mentee willingly surrenders himself/herself to learn from the mentor; reflective practice where both parties, from time to time, sit down to reflect on the progress so far made; a career and personal development process where the mentor helps the mentee to grow and develop on the career; a formalised process where both parties formally set the boundary for the relationship; and a role constructed by a mentor for mentee to model after (Ganesh et al., 2015).

Mentors give us the magic that allows us to enter the darkness; a talisman to protect us from evil spells, a gem of wise advice, a map, and sometimes simply courage. Mentors are people with advanced experiences and knowledge who are willing and, in most cases, committed to providing upward mobility and support to their protégés' career development. They are professional guides who nurture and promote the learning and success of their protégés.

The differing definitions of mentors reflect the various characteristics that seem to define informal and formal mentoring relationships. Informal mentoring relationships are psychosocial mentoring relationships, enhancing protégés' self-esteem and building confidence through interpersonal dynamics, emotional bonds, mutual discovery of common interests, and relationship building. Formal mentoring relationships, in contrast, are generally organized and sponsored by work-places or professional organisations; a formal process matches mentors and protégés for the purpose of building careers (Ganesh et al., 2015).

### Objectives of the Study

Mentoring is very important to organisations that have the success of its future in mind. Such organisations intentionally organize mentorship programmes for their employees since they know the benefits they would derive in the long term. UN Women (2020 p.1) notes that serious minded organisations all over the world engage in mentoring programmes due to the fact that:

mentoring provides employees with an informal opportunity for education and learning; increase staff morale and job satisfaction, thereby reducing turnover; enables organisations to transfer leadership and management skills to newer staff; saves time when solving a problem, and when recruiting new employees; and keeps the employees focused on project-oriented tasks.

Further research revealed that organisations which practice intentional mentoring of their employees report a revenue increase averaging about 47,000 US Dollars, (about 106 per cent increase). Organisation with no intentional mentoring programmes increased their revenue by an average of 6,600 US Dollars, (about 14 per cent). Another study found that about 92 per cent of small business owners agreed that mentors had a direct impact on the growth and survival of their businesses. In the United States of America, organisations whose founders were mentored by top-performing entrepreneurs were three times more likely to become top

performers themselves. And around 75 per cent of top managers in the USA reported that mentoring played a huge role in their careers (UN Women, 2020).

On the part of the employees who were intentionally mentored, they enumerated the benefits they derived from such mentoring experiences to include: higher financial compensation; greater number of promotions; having more confidence in career advancement opportunities; more job satisfaction; greater commitment to a career within the organisation.

Equally, it should be noted that by improving employee satisfaction and engagement, mentoring can also improve an organisation's performance. According to Ghosh and Reio (2013) about 95 per cent of employees with mentors noted that their level of productivity has increased. On the other hand, employees without mentoring support were 35 per cent more likely to leave their jobs than employees who had participated in mentoring programmes, and 77 per cent of organisations surveyed reported that mentoring programmes decreased brain drain from their employees.

Unfortunately, it is observed by the researchers of this study that in spite of the level of importance attached to mentoring in most develop countries, many organisations in Nigeria do not pay much attention to the idea of intentionally exposing their employees to be mentored. The management of the Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic deserves some commendations in this regard. This commendation is born out of the belief that the idea of attaching newly employed staff of the institution to older and more experienced ones to co-teach a course is a way of matching them for mentoring.

However, it is not yet certain whether the new employees make adequate use of such mentoring opportunities, on one hand, and whether the old and more experienced staff see themselves as mentors, who should conduct themselves as role models, for the new employees attached to them to emulate, on the other. This study is conducted to fill this noticeable gap, with the aim of providing answer to this pertinent question: What is the relevance of mentors and role models in the sustainable career growth and development of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene?

### Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to ascertain the relevance of mentors and role models in sustainable career growth and development of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua. However, the specific objectives are as follows:

- a. find out the extent academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, have mentors and role models to help their sustainable career growth and development;
- b. ascertain the perception of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, towards the contribution of mentors and role models to their sustainable career growth and development;
- c. ascertain the relevance of communication in the mentoring and role modeling process of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Mentorship**

Mentorship entails the voluntary, developmental relationship which exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience, characterised by mutual trust and respect. Such relationships nurture principles of professionalism, moral development, and moral judgment. Professions such as dentistry, law, and education administration utilise mentorship as a means to foster, not only professionalism, but also moral judgment and character (Thompson, 2019).

Mentorship is also a pillar of leadership and career development in an organisation. Mentoring relationships help junior employees in an organisation to develop strengths, improve weaknesses, and become a better person. Mentorship is necessary in any organisation due to the fact that it strengthens the values and beliefs of the organisation and grounds mentees ethically and morally. Also, mentoring is essential for the growth and development of future leaders in any organisation. Thevenin (2014, p14) states that:

A mentor is an experienced employee who serves as a role model, provides support, direction and feedback regarding career plans and interpersonal development. He is also seen as someone who is in a position of power, who looks out for you, gives you advice and/or brings your accomplishments to the attention of people who have power in the company. A mentor is also a person who has influenced your career decisions by actively giving advice, encouraging (or discouraging), supporting, providing information, or helping you make decisions.

In the psycho-social sphere, the mentor offers role modeling, counseling, confirmation, and friendship, which can help the younger generation to develop a sense of professional identity and competence.

Mentorship has to do with a personal developmental relationship in which a more exposed or experienced individual, who helps a less experienced person or a beginner to advance and acquire relevant knowledge that helps him to become better than he/she was. The recipient can be a male (protégé), or a female (protégée). Mentorship is part of many societal culture and way of life (Uma, Onwusogbolu and Obidike, 2015).

Mentoring relationships contribute to the psycho-social development of individuals. For the protégés, involvement in a mentoring relationship has been associated with career enhancement, promotions, higher job satisfaction, and larger incomes. Mentors also seem to gain from these relationships. Psycho-social functions of mentoring include those aspects of a relationship which enhance an individual's sense of competence, identity and effectiveness; while the career functions are those aspects of a relationship which enhance the individual's advancement in an organization (Mertz, 2004, p549). Based on this description, career functions of mentoring is divided two categories of professional development, which pertains to activities designed to help individuals grow and develop professionally; and career advancement which has to do with activities designed to help individuals advance professionally.

Mentoring is a factor that promotes guidance on career development, as well as role modeling where both contribute significantly to employee's development. Mentoring relationships can have significant effects on the career development and advancement of employees in an organisation. Both the mentor and the mentee can benefit from such a

relationship. Whatever the term, a mentor usually represents the superior characteristics, accomplishments, skills, and virtues to which the protégé aspires as a result of the mentoring relationship.

Dada (2020) notes that the generic meaning of a mentor is a ‘father’ figure that guides and instructs a younger person. Traditionally, certain types of institutions such as the family churches, neighborhoods, schools have provided opportunities for the younger generation to connect with natural mentors.

### Role Modeling

The traditional idea of a role model is that of a person in an influential role position, such as a parent, teacher, supervisor or mentor, who provides an example for individuals to imitate. A role model is a person you know personally, or know of, who has influenced your career decisions by being admirable in one or more ways. He or she is someone to whom individuals look up, or whom they turn to for social and emotional support and affirmation or from whom they seek to learn something related to their ‘personableness.’

Role models are people who, either by doing something or by being admirable to you in one or more ways, have had an impact on the academic and career decisions you have made in your life. Role models may be people you know personally, or they may be people you simply know of. They may have a positive as well as a negative influence (James and Sam, 2023).

Thompson (2019) differentiates role models from mentors and other types of developmental relationships. According to him, role model relationships influence self-concept and provide learning, motivation and inspiration. Self-concept, as defined in Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory, is the evaluation of oneself formed through experiences and evaluations of performances from significant others. A person’s self-concept can be positive by judging oneself favorably; or negative by devaluing oneself, and these perceptions may vary across activities.

Hence, mentors, role models, and other supportive relationships generally fall into categories such as: family members (father, mother, uncle); significant other (friend, peers, partner); educational (teacher, instructor, advisor); career (co-worker, supervisor), and others (acquaintances, public figures, media personalities) (Thompson, 2019).

According to Hansmann (2012) other words that are sometimes synonymously used in place of mentors are: coach; teacher; guide; pathfinder; leader; pilot; advisor; supporter; counselor; director; sponsor; conductor; caretaker; and friend. All these words reflect notions that seem to fit various definitions and ideas of a mentor. Just uttering the word “mentor” may bring to mind images of supportive people in the past or present that have assisted people and continue to sustain them in their professional and personal lives.

In many instances, the words protégé and mentee are used interchangeably. But for the purposes of clarification, it is important to differentiate between these terms. The term protégé has a clear history in mentoring research, and primarily applies to individuals engaged in senior-junior, or mentor-protégé relationships within an organization, where the protégé is seen as being “under the wing” of a mentor, whose duty it is to protect and nurture over time. Whereas, the term mentee is used here to refer to the broad range of individuals who may be in the role of “learner” in mentoring relationships, regardless of the age or position of the mentor and mentee.



Mentoring is seen as a process of serving as a mentor, or someone who facilitates and assists another person's development. The process of mentoring includes modeling, because the mentor must be able to model the messages or the desirable behaviour. Ganser (2016), states that mentoring is a tool which had remained very significant in improving management skills and staff development. Therefore, mentoring is a dynamic relationship that leads to the creativity, professional growth, and mastery over problem-solving techniques.

Furthermore, a role model is a person who individuals in the society look up to, or to whom they turn for social and emotional support and affirmation or from whom they seek to learn something related to their person-ness. However, Thevenin (2014, p 15) states that:

The traditional idea of a role model is that of a person in an influential role position, such as a parent, teacher, supervisor or mentor, who provides an example for individuals to imitate. Role models are people who, either by doing something or by being admirable to you in one or more ways, have had an impact on your life. They may be people you know personally, or they may be people you simply know of. They may have had a positive influence on you, or they may have had a negative influence.

Thevenin (2014) further notes that the term role model has also been inconsistently used and vaguely defined in literature. For instance, Gibson (2003) states that role model relationships influence self-concept and provide learning, motivation and inspiration. Self-concept here refers to an evaluation of oneself, formed through experiences and evaluations of performances from significant others; a person's self-conceptions can be positive (a person judges oneself favorably) or negative (a person devalues oneself) and these perceptions may vary across activities.

### **Importance of mentorship and role modeling in career growth and development**

The act of mentorship is often done consciously or unconsciously. However, the outcome is always helpful to the mentee or protégé. In order to delve into the importance of mentorship, it is pertinent to have a good understanding of the word mentor. Microsoft Encarta Dictionary (2009) defines a mentor as an experienced adviser and supporter: somebody, usually older and more experienced, who advises and guides a younger, less experienced person. A mentor can also be seen as a trainer: a senior or experienced person in a company or an organisation who gives guidance and training to a junior colleague. A mentor as a person who oversees the career and development of another person, usually a junior, through teaching, counseling, providing psychological support, protecting and at times, promoting or sponsoring.

Indeed, mentorship is like a master/student relationship. A master has acquired the necessary knowledge, experience and skill. Out of love, he spends time and energy to teach, encourage, motivate, direct and lead others to come up and become mature to forge ahead. Some products of mentorship often adopt the same procedure by being there for others. This is why mentorship is a continuous process. Suffice it to say that without mentorship some people would not have opted to do certain things they have done which helped to repackage them to become what they are today and also be the source of their life sustenance at present.

Some benefits of mentoring are efficiency and professional growth. This is because mentors sharpen their coaching, leadership and communication skills as they advise and motivate their mentees, which they can in turn apply to their day-to-day work. It often reenergizes the mentors by empowering them to come up with new business ideas. Besides, mentoring does

increase knowledge and insights about other workers. Mentoring makes it possible for mentors to work with employees of different ages, backgrounds, values, styles of working and professional expertise. The established contact between a mentor and the mentee breaks down barriers and gives mentees information about other areas of business venture.

Fresh perspective on performance is acquired by both the mentor and mentee. This is achieved when mentees' question compel the mentor to re-examine his advice, take a critical look at how he has performed as a leader, and possibly consider areas in his operation to adjust for improvement. The success of mentees based on mentor's advice does boost the mentor's morale. Mentees gain more self-confidence from mentoring and get advancement in their aspiration.

James and Sam (2023) supporting this assertion note that a mentor is like a traveler who has already traveled the road of success in life before arriving at where he is. This means that he had already made the mistakes and that, through experience, has learnt how to navigate through what would have constituted a barrier. To this end, a young lecturer who is under the mentorship of a senior can avert some of the pitfalls that the mentor had gone through in his earlier stage of the career.

Undoubtedly, both the mentor and mentee or protégé do derive gains from mentoring. It is like learning in the course of teaching and yet the learner acquiring knowledge. In actual fact, each party is improving in ability and capability in this respect which helps the society in general in repositioning production and service delivery, thereby contributing in a way to the development of the society.

### Mentoring Models in Organisations

There are basically six models of mentoring as identified by UN Women (2020). These include one-to-one mentoring, peer mentoring, mentoring circles, inter-agency mentoring, reverse mentoring and reciprocal mentoring.

- **Traditional or one-to-one mentoring:** This is a traditional hierarchical mentoring process in which one person is more experienced and is mentoring the one with less experience. This type of mentoring can also be understood as more of a “teacher” or “guru” style; the mentor is taken more as an expert who has the answers due to experience or knowledge.
- **Peer mentoring:** Individuals with a similar status or position in a company can mentor each other. Here, the focus falls more on mentoring skills, relationships and organizational development than in the traditional approach. This type of mentoring still requires one mentor and one mentee, even though they may be peers. Mentoring sessions can be conducted in pairs or small groups.
- **Circle mentoring:** In an effort to create safe mentoring opportunities for all employees, many companies are turning to mentoring circles. This is a form of group mentoring that may encourage participation from all levels, demographics and genders within an organization. Sometimes, the mentoring circles target a specific group of employees, such as women. The mentoring circle proposes topics of interest for group discussion and growth. By initiating mentoring circles, organizations can create intentional networks to help employees grow, share experiences and develop in a number of ways.

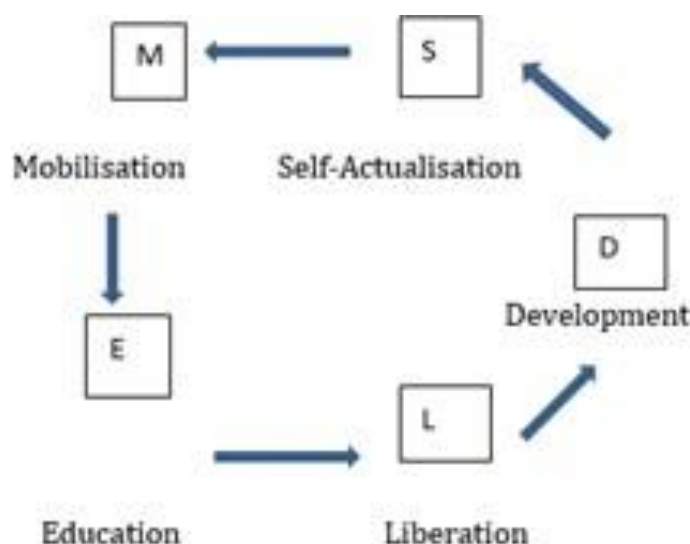
- **Inter-agency mentoring:** This is when companies establish mentoring programmes with like-minded companies or partners. Mentors or mentees can be selected from different agencies. The strength of this model is that mentees are exposed to mentors they do not know and who may have different career paths and broader networks.
- **Reverse mentoring:** In this model, cross-generational collaboration is supported through the mentoring process, in which junior employees assume the responsibility of mentoring senior mentees. For example, junior staff may provide mentoring support to senior staff on technology-related topics.
- **Reciprocal mentoring:** As the name suggests, reciprocal mentoring involves guidance and transfer of knowledge bilaterally within organizations. This productive way of mentoring allows participants to play the role of both mentor and mentee at the same time. The strength of this approach is that both parties have the opportunity to experience the benefits of the mentoring process. Some companies are using this approach when working with staff from different generations, while some larger companies use this with staff across different departments.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theoretical principles of Cyclical MELDS Model of Development Communication, and Corruption Likelihood Model.

#### Cyclical MELDS Model of Development Communication

The M in the model stands for Mobilisation; E = Education; L = Liberation; D = Development; and S = Self-Actualisation. The revised model is presented graphically thus:



**Figure 1: Cyclical MELDS Model of Development Communication by Sam (2023)**  
adapted from Wilson (2005)

The MELDS Model of Development Communication as propounded by Wilson (2005) is linear in nature, and does not make provision for an individual to act as an agent of change in the society. On the other hand, the Cyclical MELDS Model of Development



Communication by Sam (2023) postulates that apart from the mass media, it is possible for an individual, who sees himself as mentor or role model, to be an agent of change. Another postulation of the redesigned model is that once a cycle of change occurs, it could be repeated in the sense that a person whose attitude towards the change object has been positively influenced could himself become an agent of change, and the cycle continues. For instance, an individual who has been *mobilised*, and *educated*, and who is *liberated* to attain a certain level of *development*, and who has achieved *self-actualisation*, can set the whole process in motion all over again. This could be seen in a situation where someone who has been mentored, grows to the point where he becomes a mentor to someone else in the future, and the cycle continues. The postulations of the model are expatiated in the following segment of this study as follows:

- (i) **Mobilisation:** This is the state of readiness which the individual or group is placed as a result of the message that has been available in the open society. This active state of psychological and social motivation is also a product of social rewards, which the participants receive from the mobilisers. The participants in a communication mobilisation process can be motivated for good or evil depending on the social structure and the message content. The postulation of the Cyclical MELDS Model is that the process of talking to someone, or being talked to is mobilisation. Additionally, the real process of mobilisation may not have to be verbal, but learnt and adopted through observation, mentorship, and role modeling. In this context, a mentor can mobilise his mentee by showing him/her what to do. This can only be effective when the mobiliser (mentor) is seen by the person being mobilised (mentee) as a worthy role model who does not tell the mentee “do as I say, not as I do” but himself practices what he preaches.
- (ii) **Education:** Some of the functions of communication include provision of education, enlightenment, and ethicisation to the society. Education as a communication objective, once provided for, would ginger society to higher levels of development, and through it people acquire the knowledge for better ways of doing things. In a mentoring relationship, the mentor educates his protégé or mentee by inculcating in them the values and social norms of the society. When the protégé is thus educated, he is enlightened on the ethics of the chosen profession. Such enlightenment would help to eliminate illiteracy, mental serf dom and ignorance. The ripple effects of such education/enlightenment would then lead to the change that the society desires, and brings about sustainable career growth and development.
- (iii) **Liberation:** In the context of mentoring, liberation comes when a mentee learns the rudiments of the chosen profession from the mentor, and uses the knowledge so acquired to better himself on the job. Such betterment would attract higher financial compensation; greater number of promotions; having more confidence in career advancement opportunities; more job satisfaction; greater commitment to a career within the organisation. These outcomes of education, in themselves, liberate the mentee from financial stress, stagnation on the job, and low self-esteem.
- (iv) **Development:** Communication for development can only succeed if democratic principles are upheld in society. Communication that would bring

meaningful change should provide information, which can lead to positive change in our homes, villages, towns, cities, nations and the African continent at large. Such positive change would then lead to development. The position of the Cyclical MELDS Model of Development Communication is that the process of disseminating change-oriented information must be participatory in nature. This means that the mentor should give a listening ear to the mentee and give them the opportunity to express themselves freely in the course of the mentoring process as much as possible. It is through such democratic information practice that true development can be achieved. Development in this context could mean advancement on the job, regular promotions, and avoidance of mistakes which could lead to queries, stagnation, and sack.

- (v) **Self-Actualisation:** According to psychology, self-actualisation is at the highest level of human needs attainment. But the point of its attainment varies from one individual to another and from one society to another. Self-actualisation entails having a healthy confidence in one's own abilities; which include possession of independent, self-supporting, self-satisfying and self-propelling abilities. When mentoring is properly executed, the mentee will be able to benefit through a reduction of uncertainties around him. This situation will, in turn, lead to the attainment of the much-desired goals or a considerable part of it. The desired goals of mentoring in a job environment vary from getting promoted on the job, to the mentee eventually becoming a mentor to others in the future. At this point it can be said that the mentoring process which began in mobilising in order to educate and liberate, has led to development, which has brought about self-actualisation. And the cycle can be put in motion all over again.

The position of the revised model is that as far as majority of Nigerians, and by extension Africans, are not individually self-actualised, the country and continent would still be seen as not having developed yet. It therefore behooves moral-minded mentors to ensure that they perform their duty of mentoring and role modeling function, whether through verbal means (as in the use of words) or non-verbal means through upright living (modeling behaviours) till true development and self-actualisation is achieved, by individual mentees, the organisation, and for the country as a whole.

#### i. Social Learning Theory

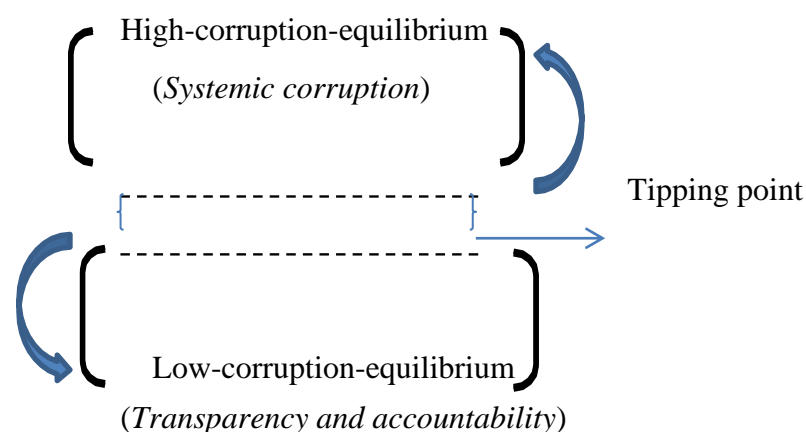
The Social Learning Theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory is predicated on the notion that learning occurs through social observation and subsequent imitation of the modeled behaviour. According to this theory, human beings learn from observing the actions and resulting consequences of others. By doing so, individual can learn to imitate the observed behaviour and, thus, reap the rewards. On the other hand, such individuals can learn not to imitate a particular action, and thereby, avoid disagreeable consequences. Social Learning Theory involves reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences.

Lyons and Berge (2012) state that through observing others, human beings have the capacity to develop ideas about how new behaviours are performed. This information is then coded, stored in memory, and serves as a guide for actions, either immediately after the observation, or for use on later occasions. The four major postulates of observational learning or modeling include the following:

1. **Attention:** In order for learning to take place during observation, individuals must pay close attention to the modeled behaviour.
2. **Retention:** If individuals are to learn from observed behavior, they must, in turn, remember the modeled activities. Retention and recall can be aided through the use of imagery and descriptive language, thus, increasing the likelihood that the modeled behavior can be reproduced by the observer.
3. **Reproduction:** At this stage, the observer translates the modeled behavior into their appropriate individual actions. Reproducing the observed behaviour involves converting the retained imagery and language, provided by the model, into a response that is in line with the modeled pattern. This process continues to improve as the observer keeps practicing the new behavior.
4. **Motivation:** Reproducing observed behavior requires some motivation to do so. Without some reason for imitating the modeled behavior, it is unlikely that the individual would make the required effort to perform the modeled action or behaviour.

## ii. Corruption Likelihood Model by Sam (2023)

The Corruption Likelihood Model as proposed by Sam (2023) is presented graphically thus:



**Figure 2: Corruption Likelihood Model by Sam (2023)**

The postulations of the model are as follows:

- The more citizens in a country perceive corruption to be prevalent in the society, the more likely that corruption will be pervasive in such a society.
- The more costly the consequence of being caught or uncovered for a corrupt act, the less likely members of the society would want to engage in corruption.
- In a country where there is systemic corruption, there is a high tendency for corruption to thrive. Such a country is termed *High-corruption-equilibrium country*.
- In a country where there is high level of transparency and accountability, there is the likelihood that the level of corruption in such a country will be marginal. Such a country is termed *Low-corruption-equilibrium country*.

- At the region known as Tipping Point, something significant can happen which can take a country from a High-corruption equilibrium country to *Low-corruption equilibrium country and vice-versa*.

There are certain individuals in the society who would never be tempted to engage in a corrupt act, no matter the potential benefits of such act, while others have no scruples, whatsoever, to offer and receive bribe. The higher the moral costs, the higher the corruption figure must be to compensate for the burden of violating the person's moral principles. Moreover, the thought of having to face public shame and reputational damage if the corrupt act is uncovered and publicised may also serve as a deterrent to morality-conscious individuals. This, therefore, suggests that the personal net benefit of corruption depends on the probability of being caught, as well as on the size of costs and benefits. However, this cost-benefit decision depends on the individual's perception of the magnitude or prevalence of corruption already present in the society (Moene and Soreide, 2019).

For instance, the likelihood of offering a bribe depends, to a very large extent, on the briber's expectation that he will be dealing with a corrupt (or corruptible) and "trustworthy" counterpart. A briber will be careful not to propose a corrupt deal to someone who might report the incident to a law enforcement agency. In a society with pervasive corruption, the estimated risk of being detected by an honest, non-bribeable citizen in the society is lower than in a society where corruption is not widespread. Moreover, the moral cost of corruption will be higher in a society where few are corrupt. Hence, the temptation to accept a bribe depends on the perceived extent of corruption, among other factors. These perceptions may matter more than the rigour of the laws or the law enforcement system.

When corruption is systemic in a country, such a country may find itself in high-corruption-equilibrium, which may be difficult to escape from the level of corruption in such country. On the other hand, some countries may experience low levels of corruption. This suggests that with little effort, such countries manage to keep the problem of corruption under control. A low level of corruption makes monitoring and supervision more effective, and honesty more valuable. This kind of country enjoys a low-corruption-equilibrium, which helps effectively deter some individuals from corrupt tendencies.

Meanwhile, somewhere in-between the low-corruption-equilibrium and the high-corruption-equilibrium, there must be a critical threshold, a tipping point. As long as corruption does not exceed this threshold, the country remains in the low-corruption state, and vice versa. But once the threshold is crossed from below, corruption approaches the level associated with a high-corruption-equilibrium level.

What might trigger a development toward more or less corruption – or shake a society to bring it out of an otherwise sustainable equilibrium situation, could be a major scandal in the country, or a huge rise in bribes paid by multinationals. Alternatively, a comprehensive anti-corruption programme initiated by a new government in an otherwise high-corruption equilibrium country might trigger a downward movement toward lower levels of corruption in such a country.

If these arguments about how corruption corrupts in a society are correct, it is, therefore, important to know what various stakeholders in the society perceive about the prevalence of corruption in such a society. Besides, the extent to which the society condemns corruption, and the sincerity in the anti-corruption fight of government, through the prosecution, and

subsequent punishment of offenders also go a long way to help reduce the level of corruption in a country.

It is pertinent to add here that if an individual in the society has a mentor or a role model upon whom he looks up to, there is the likelihood that the mentee will be moral or corruption-free to the extent that he sees or observes his mentor to be. If the mentor is corruption-free, the mentee will not engage in corrupt practices, but on the other hand, if the mentor is neck deep in corruption, the mentee will definitely want to outdo the mentor. This, therefore, suggests that mentors can have either positive or negative influence on the mentee.

Furthermore, if the mentor is not corrupt, the mentee would likely not want to disappoint his mentor, knowing full well that the mentor would not be pleased with him for bringing shame upon the mentor. So, the idea of bearing the shame in the face of the mentor would serve as a deterrent from engaging in corrupt practices. This assertion, therefore, justifies the selection of this model as one of the theoretical anchors for this study.

It is pertinent to state here that for the Corruption Likelihood Model to really fit into the study at hand, wherever the words “country” and “society” are used could be comfortably replaced with the word “organisation.” This, therefore, means where these words appear in the model, would be replaced them with the word “organisation.” For instance, where we have “high-corruption-equilibrium country” it would now read “high-corruption-equilibrium organisation.” Also, where the word “citizen(s)” appears could be replaced with the word “employee(s).” To this end, the first postulate of the Model would then read “the more employees in an organisation perceive corruption to be prevalent in the organisation, the more likely that corruption will be pervasive in such an organisation.

### Research Methodology

The quantitative research design was adopted for this study, with the survey method using the questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The population of the study comprised all the 486 academic staff in the Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene. Using Philip Meyer’s procedure for sample selection, 248 respondents were selected for the study. The questionnaire was placed on the ASUP WhatsApp platform in the institution. The first 248 persons who participated in the study were considered and the entry was then closed.

Data obtained through the questionnaire were presented in table and analysed using simple percentages, and used to answer that research questions set at the outset of the study. The findings are presented in the following segment of the study.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the 248 respondents envisaged as the sample size of this study, 239 academic staff in the institution, representing 96% of the sample of the study, successfully participated in the study by filling the questionnaire online and sending same to the data bank where the data were collated. Consequently, this number was then used for the presentation and analysis of the findings of the study as follows:

**Table 1: Rank of the Respondents in Akwa Ibo State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua**

Ranks	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Assistant Lecturer	44	18
Lecturer III	52	22



Lecturer II	47	20
Lecturer I	40	17
Senior Lecturer	29	12
Principal Lecturer	17	7
Chief Lecturer	10	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

Information in Table 1 reveals that the majority of the respondents (77%) who participated in the study were between the ranks of Assistant Lecturer (18%), Lecturer III (22%), Lecturer II (20%), and Lecturer 1 (17%).

**Table 2: Respondents having Mentors and Role Models They Emulate**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	202	84
No	9	4
Not sure	12	5
Can't say	16	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

The data presented in this table indicate that the majority of the respondents (87%) agreed that they have a mentor and/or role model they want to emulate at one time or another as a way to enhance their career growth and development. However, 9 of the respondents (4%) said they do not have anyone they look up to either as a mentor or a role model.

**Table 3: Respondents' Perception on Mentors and Role Models Contributing to their Career Growth and Development**

Perception	No. of Respondents	Percentages
To a very great extent	110	46
To a great extent	89	37
To a little extent	26	11
To a very little extent	14	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in this table reveal that the majority of the respondents (83%) either said they believed mentors and/or role models can contribute to their career growth and development to a very great extent (46%), or to a great extent (37%). However, 26 of the respondents (11%) said they believe mentors and/or role models contribute to their career growth and development to a little extent.

**Table 4: Extent of Respondents' Perception that Interpersonal Communication helps in the Mentoring and Role Modeling Process**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
To a very great extent	70	29
To a great extent	126	53
To a little extent	14	6
To a very little extent	29	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

The information presented in Table 4 shows that the majority of the respondents (82%) either said that interpersonal communication can help them to learn from their mentors and/or role models to enhance their career growth and development to a very great extent (29%), or to a great extent (53%). Twenty-nine of them (12%) however said interpersonal communication can help in the mentoring process to a very little extent.

**Table 5: Respondents' Perception that Observational Learning can help them to learn from Mentors and Role Models**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	200	84
No	9	4
Not sure	13	5
Can't say	17	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 5 reveal that 200 respondents (84%) said that apart from interpersonal communication, they can also learn from their mentors and/or role models by observing what they do and/or say. However, a small fraction of the respondents (4%) said "No" to this assertion.

**Table 6: Extent Respondents Believed they can learn from their Mentors and Role Models through Observation**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
To a very great extent	119	50
To a great extent	84	35
To a little extent	23	10
To a very little extent	13	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

Information in this table indicates that the majority of the respondents (85%) said that they believed they can learn from their mentors and/or role models through observation either to a very great extent (50%), or to a great extent (35%). However, 23 of the respondents (10%) said they believed they can learn from their models and/or role models to a little extent.

**Table 7: Respondents' Perception that they too can be Mentors and Role Models in Future**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	222	93
No	-	-
Not sure	7	3
Can't say	10	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

Information in Table 7 reveals that almost all the respondents (93%) said they saw themselves becoming a mentor and/or role model to someone else in the future. But 10 of them (4%) could not say if they would become a mentor and/or role model in the future.

**Table 8: Extent Respondents Believed Seeing Themselves as Future Mentors and Role Models Affect their Behaviour and Speech**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
To a very great extent	143	60
To a great extent	79	33
To a little extent	9	4
To a very little extent	8	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

Data presented in Table 8 reveal that majority of the respondents (93%) said seeing themselves as future mentors and/or role models affects the way they behave and speak, either to a very great extent (60%), or to a great extent (33%). However, 9 of the respondents (4%) said they believed seeing themselves as future role mentors and/or role models affect their behaviour and speech to a little extent.

**Table 9: Type of Influence Respondents think Mentors and Role Model have on their Career Growth and Development**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Positive	207	87
Negative	17	7
No influence	5	2
Can't say	10	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

Information presented in this table reveals that majority of the respondents (87%) said mentors and/or role models have a positive influence on their career growth and development. However, 17 of the respondents (7%) said their mentors and/or role models have a negative influence on their career growth and development.

## 4.2 Discussion of Findings

**4.2.1 Research Question One:** To what extent do academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, have mentors and role models to help their sustainable career growth and development?

Answer to this question is provided in Tables 1 and 2. The data provided in Table 1 revealed that the majority of the respondents (77%) who participated in the study were between the ranks of Assistant Lecturer (18%), Lecturer III (22%), Lecturer II (20%), and Lecturer 1 (17%). More finding in the table showed that 29 of the respondents (12%) were Senior Lecturers, 17 of them (7%) were Principal Lecturers, while 10 of them (4%) were Chief Lecturers.

Further finding provided in Table 2 revealed that the majority of the respondents (87%) agreed that they have a mentor and/or role model they want to follow and emulate, at one time or another, as a way to enhance their career growth and development. However, 9 of the respondents (4%) said they do not have anyone they look up to either as a mentor or a role model in their career; 12 of them (5%) were not sure of such a person in their career path; while 16 of them (7%) could not say if there is anyone they could point to either as a mentor or as a role model.

These findings are supported by the findings of Ganesh et al. (2015, p18) which states that in a phenomenological viewpoint of the mentoring literature, eight attributes of commonly appear. These include:

An active relationship between the mentor and the mentee; a helping process where the mentor intentionally helps the mentee or protégé to grow and develop; a teaching-learning process where the mentee willing surrenders himself/herself to learn from the mentor; reflective practice where both parties, from time to time, sit down to reflect on the progress so far made; a career and personal development process where the mentor helps the mentee to grow and develop on the career; a formalised process where both parties formally set the boundary for the relationship; and a role constructed by a mentor for mentee to model after.

The findings are also supported by UN Women (2020) that about 92 per cent of small business owners agreed that mentors had a direct impact on the growth and survival of their businesses. In the United States of America, organisations whose founders were mentored by top-performing entrepreneurs were three times more likely to become top performers themselves. And around 75 per cent of top managers in the USA reported that mentoring played a huge role in their careers (UN Women, 2020).

The findings are further buttressed by the mobilisation component of the Cyclical MELDS Model of Development Communication by Sam (2023), which postulates that apart from the mass media, it is possible for an individual, who sees himself as mentor or role model, to be an agent of change; and that once a cycle of change occurs, it could be repeated in the sense that a person whose attitude towards the change object has been positively influenced could himself become an agent of change, and the cycle continues.

**Research Question Two:** What is the perception of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, towards the contribution of mentors and role models to their sustainable career growth and development?

The answer to this question is prion Tables 3, 9, 7 and 8. Data provided in Table 3 pertaining to the perception of the respondents about the relevance of mentors and role models to their career growth and development revealed that the majority of them (83%) either said they believed mentors and/or role models can contribute to their career growth and development to a very great extent (46%), or to a great extent (37%). However, 26 of the respondents (11%) said they believe mentors and/or role models contribute to their career growth and development to a little extent; while 14 of them (6%) said they think that mentors and/or role models can contribute to their career growth and development to a very little extent.

These findings are supported by James and Sam (2023) who note that a mentor is like a traveler who has already traveled the road of success in life before arriving at where he is. This means that he had already made the mistakes and that, through experience, has learnt how to navigate through what would have constituted a barrier. To this end, a young lecturer who is under the mentorship of a senior can avert some of the pitfalls that the mentor had gone through in his earlier stage of the career.

More findings of the study provided in Table 9, which had to do with the type of influence that mentors and/or role models have on the career growth and development of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, revealed that majority of the respondents (87%) said mentors and/or role models have a positive influence on their career growth and development. However, 17 of the respondents (7%) said their mentors and/or role models

have a negative influence on their career growth and development; 5 of them (2%) said there is no such influence; while 10 of them (4%) said they could not point to any such influence.

These findings are supported by the Corruption Likelihood Model by Sam (2023). The Model postulates that there is the likelihood that a mentee will be moral or corruption-free to the extent that he sees or observes his mentor to be. If the mentor is corruption-free, the mentee will not engage in corrupt practices, but on the other hand, if the mentor is neck deep in corruption, the mentee will definitely want to outdo the mentor. This, therefore, suggests that mentors can have either positive or negative influence on the mentee.

Further findings of the study provided in Table 7, which pertained to the perception of the respondents seeing themselves as future mentors and/or role models, revealed that almost all the respondents (93%) said they saw themselves becoming a mentor and/or role model to someone else in the future. But 10 of them (4%) could not say if they would become a mentor and/or role model in the future; while 7 of them (3%) were not sure of being mentors and/or role models in future.

These findings are supported by the Cyclical MELDS Model of Development Communication by Sam (2023), which states that:

An individual who has been *mobilised*, and *educated*, and who is *liberated* to attain a certain level of *development*, and who has achieved *self-actualisation*, can set the whole process in motion all over again. This could be seen in a situation where someone who has been mentored, grows to the point where he becomes a mentor to someone else in the future, and the cycle continues.

Additional findings of the study provided in Table 8, pertaining to the perception of the respondents that seeing themselves as future mentors and/or role models would affect their behaviour and speech, revealed that majority of them (93%) said seeing themselves as future mentors and/or role models affects the way they behave and speak to a very great extent (60%), or to a great extent (33%). However, 9 of the respondents (4%) said they believed seeing themselves as future role mentors and/or role models affect their behaviour and speech to a little extent; while 8 of them said it affect their behaviour and speech to a very little extent.

The fifth postulate of the Corruption Likelihood Model by Sam (2023), which state that at the region known as Tipping Point, something significant can happen which can take an organisation from a *high-corruption-equilibrium organisation* to *low-corruption-equilibrium organisation* and vice-versa. The Model further notes that what might trigger a development toward more or less corruption – or shake an organisation to bring it out of an otherwise sustainable equilibrium situation, could be a major scandal in the organisation, or a huge rise in bribes paid by multi-nationals. Alternatively, a comprehensive anti-corruption programme initiated by a new administration in an otherwise high-corruption-equilibrium organisation might trigger a downward movement toward lower levels of corruption in such an organisation.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relevance of communication in the mentoring and role modeling process of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua?

The answer to this question is provided in Tables 4, 5 and 6. The information presented in Table 4 showed that majority of the respondents (82%) either said interpersonal communication can help them to learn from their mentors and/or role models to enhance their



career growth and development to a very great extent (29%), or to a great extent (53%). Twenty-nine of them (12%) however said interpersonal communication can help in the mentoring process to a very little extent; while 14 of them said it would help them to learn to a little extent.

These findings are supported by UN Women (2020) which state that employees who were intentionally mentored through communication (both verbal and non-verbal), enumerated the benefits they derived from such mentoring experiences to include: higher financial compensation; greater number of promotions; having more confidence in career advancement opportunities; more job satisfaction; greater commitment to a career within the organisation.

Further findings of the study provided in Table 5, which pertained to the perception of the respondents on the relevance of observation in the mentoring and role modeling process, revealed that majority of the respondents (85%) said they believe they can learn a lot by observing what their mentors and/or role models do; 17 respondents (7%) were not sure they can learn from their mentors and/or role models through observation, 12 of them could not put a finger on any such thing.

These findings are supported by Social Learning Theory used as one of the anchors of this study. According to Bandura (1977) learning occurs through social observation and subsequent imitation of the modeled behaviour. Human beings learn from observing the actions, and the resulting consequences of the actions taken by others. Through observation, individuals in the society can learn to imitate the observed behaviour of other people and, can reap the rewards of such lessons. Conversely, individuals can also learn to desist from taking negative actions after learning from the negative consequences of such actions taken by others.

Finally, findings provided in Table 6 which pertained to the extent that the respondents perceived observational learning to be relevant in the mentoring and role modeling process, showed that the majority of the respondents (85%) said that they believed they can learn from their mentors and/or role models through observation either to a very great extent (50%), or to a great extent (35%). However, 23 of the respondents (10%) said they believed they can learn from their models and/or role models to a little extent; while 13 of them (5%) thought they can learn from their mentors and/or role models through observation to a very little extent.

These findings are supported by the Corruption Likelihood Model by Sam (2023). The postulate of the Model which buttresses the findings states that if an individual in the society has a mentor or a role model upon whom he looks up to, there is the likelihood that the mentee will be moral or corruption-free to the extent that he sees or observes his mentor to be. If the mentor is corruption-free, the mentee will not engage in corrupt practices, but on the other hand, if the mentor is neck deep in corruption, the mentee will definitely want to outdo the mentor.

## Conclusion

Form the findings of the study as presented, analysed and discussed, it is safe to conclude here that academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene strongly perceive that mentors and role models are very relevant to their career growth and development. This conclusion drawn based on the fact that majority of them said they believe

mentors and/or role models can contribute to their career growth and development to a great extent.

Furthermore, it can also be said that because academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic think that mentors and/or role models are very relevant to their career growth and development, they themselves are ready to behave and speak in a way that would portray them as worthy future mentors and role models. It is the belief of the researchers of this study that this perception is born out of the fact that the academics see communication and observational learning as being very important in the mentoring and role modeling process.

It is safe to assert here that the high level of perception by academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic that they are future mentors and role models, with the corresponding perception and effects on their behaviour and speech could be attributed to the high level of morality brought about by the leadership of the institution, led by the Rector of the institution, Barrister Moses Umobong. His coming on board as the Rector of the institution could be the Tipping Point that has brought about the remarkable shift from the hitherto high-corruption-equilibrium organization to the low-corruption-equilibrium currently witnessed in the institution, which has emboldened the employees to see themselves as future leaders.

### Recommendations

Since mentorship and role modeling is seen as being very relevant to the career growth and development of academics in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, the researchers, therefore, offer the following recommendations:

- Management of Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, should be more intentional in pairing younger, and most importantly, newly employed staff, to teach with older and more experienced one as a way of exposing them to learn from the experiences of the older ones.
- Older academics who are expected to mentor the younger ones are advised to exercise their mentoring function with an open mind, not grudgingly, or doing it with the intent to exploit the mentees. They should also do the best they can to carry out their teaching function in the institution morally, knowing full well that they are being observed by others. This way, professionalism and morality would be handed down from one generation of staff to another, and the institution would stand to benefit from such mentoring and role modeling process.
- On the other hand, newly employed staff attached to the mentors should not grieve them, but encourage them to exercise the function happily. Especially, since they know that they too will become mentors themselves to others someday.
- Finally, without waiting to be paired by management, younger and newly employed staff are advised to intentionally observe and, subsequently, adopt moral and upright older colleagues, and then submit to them. They should not only adopt the mentors, but they should be ready to let go of their pride and submit in order to be able to learn from the chosen mentors. This is because no mentor would be excited to mentor a proud and heady mentee. This will help them to leverage on the experiences of the mentors, which will then enhance their career growth and development.

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