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Mentoring For Professional Development Of Academic Librarians In Nigerian University Libraries

Abstract

Librarianship as a profession engages in mentoring in order to sharpen and sustain professional practice and be abreast with new development on the job. The study is on mentoring for professional development of librarians in Nigerian university libraries. This present study is a survey of 250 professional librarians from Nigerian university libraries. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The percentages of the responses were tabulated. The findings showed that mentoring programmes through which librarians are mostly mentored are sponsorship to conferences, seminars and workshops and individual mentoring. Mentoring is beneficial to academic librarians in that it equips young librarians for more challenging tasks ahead of them. Mentors use the opportunity to gradually handover to younger librarians. The study also revealed that non availability of facilities required for the mentorship and lack of awareness on the need to mentor subordinates are the major problems associated with mentoring of academic librarians in Nigerian university libraries. The following recommendations were made based on the findings, that adequate facilities should be provided by the heads of university libraries to make the job of both mentor and mentee easy; and parent institutions should be willing to release funds to libraries for the procurement of facilities.

Keywords: Mentoring, Professional, Development, Academic, Librarians, University, Libraries

Introduction

As with other professionals, librarians face the question as to how they should pursue their continuing professional development. Mentoring relationships typically are supportive of individuals learning in that they create a 'safe' learning environment. Ideally, norms that are supportive of individuals are consciously reinforced by mentioning in all its various forms by targeting individual learning needs, addressing both the career and psychosocial development needs of the mentored (Ritchie and Genoni, 1999).

The concept of mentoring is an evolving one, because of recent developments in the field of mentoring programmes and activities. It is not easy to provide a concise and all-encompassing definition of mentoring. Though there are themes and aspects of mentoring that are common in the universe. For the purpose of this study mentoring could be seen as relationship between two people in which a more knowledgeable person co-ordinate the other persons to facilitate them to maturity. Recent mentoring progammes and studies have brought about flexibility of mentoring as a continuing professional development activity. Every librarian carries out a critical role in the achievement of group organizational goals and objectives. Starting from the head librarian to the least librarian, every one of them has specific role to play. The extent to which the group goal is achieved depends on the professional competence and performance of each of them. It is for this single purpose they need systematic professional development so as to prepare themselves more with the necessary skills needed to carry out their duties in this information age. One positive way of achieving this could be in the course of mentoring (Ozioko, Echezona and Osadebe, 2012).

Purpose of the study

1.	To identify the different types of mentoring available for professional development of academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria.

2.	To determine the mentoring programmes that could be used for professional development in university libraries in Nigeria.

3.	To find out the benefits in mentoring in professional development of academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria.

4.	To identify the various challenges associated with mentoring in university libraries in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided with the following research questions:

1.	What are the different types of mentoring available for professional development of academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria?

2.	What are the mentoring programmes that could be used for professional development in University libraries in Nigeria?

3.	What are the benefit of mentoring in professional development in university libraries in Nigeria?

4.	What are the various challenges associated with mentoring in university libraries in Nigeria?

5.	**Literature Review**

Mentoring is a method of learning and development based on individual relationship in which an experienced librarian called a mentor helps a new librarian called mentee to develop as a professional and achieve professional goals. Mentoring relationship plays a vital role in

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professional development (Nwabueze and Anike, 2016). According to Idoko, Ugwuanyi and Osadebe (2016) no institution can exist without older and more experienced members transferring wisdom acquired over the years to new members.

Mentoring is a two-way learning relationship that draws upon the knowledge and wisdom of suitably experienced practitioners. Mentoring is designed to fulfil two broad purposes of career and psychosocial development, with the specific goals of the relationship being determined by the individuals involved. Mentoring relationships develop over time, that is, there is more than just a short-time or passing interest on the part of the mentor in the mentee, and the relationship passes through a series of development stages (Ritchie and Genoni, 1999).

Mentoring programme in university libraries boosts individuals and team commitment and permits individuals to gain greater insight into the library's workings; help increase communication within the library. It also helps to change organizational culture to better level, give individual the chance to meet different people within the library and network, and improves levels of performance success. However, mentoring is not complete without effective mentoring evaluation and feedback. The feedback is usually an improved job performance (Njoku, 2017).

Librarians' mentoring in university libraries is an innovation to empower and improve quality service delivery to users. Academic mentoring in libraries seems to favour library patrons. During the last decade, academic mentoring has expanded and is found in most colleges and universities frequently as a means of outreach. Academic mentoring is used extensively in library for several reasons. Mentoring relationship can be viewed from different perspectives not only the potential benefit to the young librarian but also the professional development of the experienced librarian has to be taken into consideration. (Ekechukwu and Horsfall, 2015).

Over the years different people have perceived mentoring in different ways. According to Yusuf (2011) mentoring is a supportive one-on-one relationship between an accomplished individual and an aspiring individual to facilitate the aspirant's growth. It is a supportive relationship between an experienced, successful, mid-career employed and a beginner. The further stated that it is a time of sharing expertise and connections towards promoting rapid, upward mobility. No one is truly self-made, but that people give their best so that others could learn to give their best. It is said that, mentoring relationships in academics can either be formally or informally contracted. Odusanya and Amusa (2006) stated that informal mentoring relationship is one that develops on its own between partners, while the formal mentoring is administratively assigned relationship.

There is a strong belief that effective use of mentoring is important. It has been said that one will be mentally more powerful, if one concentrates on how to find knowledge rather than try to remember everything one has learned. It is also widely recognized that the ability to use information is extremely important in today's society and will continue to become more so. Thus, the basic needs of mentoring programme is vital for the enhancement of professional development in the university libraries in Nigeria (Abraham, Sambe and Aba, 2014).

Mentoring can be achieved by pairing experienced employees with new or less experienced ones and it is an often overlooked method of providing staff development opportunities within libraries. The very best type of mentoring occurs when the relationship between new and experienced employees develops naturally. The Chemistry between them makes them "click", and supportive relationships develop as a result. Modern trends in many organizations, however, include the institution of proper mentoring programmes because they are so effective that the organizations cannot afford to wait for these relationships to happen by

chance. One reason this type of programme is very effective is the importance of role-modelling. Exhibiting desirable behaviour is one of the very best ways to encourage similar behaviour in other employees. Another reason for the success of mentors is that the process provides employees with a improving dimension that makes a difference in the long-term development of organizational team work. Employees lean on who they can approach for assistance in difficult situations or when they need answers to questions. Introductions and making contacts are other aspects of the mentoring situation. (Trotta, 1995).

Yusuf (2011) writing on mentoring in the academic library, described the mentoring relationship as one that allows new people to observe organizational and unit activities, functions, goals, policies and procedures. It is described as the process of becoming involved in a mentor-mentee relationship and consists of four phases. Initiation is the first phase which Yusuf described as a scenario where mentor and mentee select each other and begin to learn about the other's style and habits the second phase is cultivation, which leads to increases in mentoring behaviours and the development of a strong relationship between mentor and mentee. The third phase of redefinition occurs when the mentoring relationship changes into what more closely resembles a peer relationship. The final phase, separation, is when the mentoring relationship ends, often as a result of geographical separation. A mentor's role involves providing support and resources to his or her mentee. He is also expected to facilitate a supportive and developmental relationship with the mentee.

According to Hansen (2003) university libraries are moving. Effective team involvement necessitates flexibility, patience and empathy for humour will only ensure continued success and help the librarian to avoid burnout. Additionally, academic librarians in this same team spirit, should be eager and willing to mentor junior colleagues and peers. Mentoring allows the

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individual to give something back to the profession while strengthening the organization and ultimately the profession.

Ozioko, Echezona and Osadebe (2012) indicated that mentoring can be adapted to a number of different learning needs and situations. Recently, organizations and business no longer simply rely on mentoring to occur spontaneously, but have taken the initiative in instituting formal programmes designed to capture the benefits of informal mentoring arrangements and transpose them into a formal structure and a wider variety of learning situations. The success of formal mentoring arrangement depends on appropriate matching of mentoring partners. For effective mentoring to take place, the mentor should possess a wide variety of characteristics to facilitate a positive mentor-mentee relationship. Some of these characteristics according to Ozioko, Eche Zona and Osadebe (2012) include patience, enthusiasm, knowledge, sense of humour, and respect. Though mentoring is an exciting experience and of benefit both to the mentor and the mentee, it has its own problems.

➢ Lack of designated staff committee or personnel to carry out continuous staff development

➢ Many librarians work in one person libraries where mentoring is not available from a senior professional within the organization

➢ Younger librarians may be reluctant to fully disclose their circumstances and learning needs to senior staff, whether or not that senior staff members have direct supervision responsibility for them.

A significant difficulty to the members of any profession is the need to stay current on issues and trends confronting the field, as well as the concept, tools techniques, skills and

theories connected with the subsidiary discipline of one's subject area. Mentoring offers itself as one continuous professional development technique that can offer organizations all these (Ozioko, Echezona and Osadebe, 2012).

Mentoring is beneficial to both the mentor and the mentee. The fact is that the relationships are mutually beneficial if they are based on respect. The mentors begin to build power bases as individuals look up to them and as their knowledge and experiences are valuable. Mentoring gives us the occasion to sit back and reflect on what we have learned and accomplished and to pass it on to another. This fits in with the classic definition of mentoring, which is the mutually beneficial relationship between two people which is based on the needs of both. It is a relationship that idyllically the mentor wants her mentees capabilities. Mentorships present opportunities for people to shape themselves and to look within themselves for answers (Trotta, 1995).

Yusuf (2011) opined that learning, developing personal relationship and enhancing managerial skills are some of the benefits of mentoring to the mentor. The author stressed that the following benefits of mentoring are for both parties:

➢ It assists in the process of understanding formal and informal structures of the organization.

➢ It helps to provides an opportunity for a new member of staff to reflect on his/her own progress and resolve his/her own problems.

➢ It improves professional and personal networks.

➢ It broadens ones skills and knowledge.

➢ It enables one to demonstrate additional skills in developing other individuals.

➤ It consolidates and extends professional network.

Methodology

The descriptive survey method was used in the study. The population of the study consists of 250 librarians from university libraries in Nigeria. A questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument in the study. Two hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were distributed by hand and through research assistants. Two hundred and twenty seven copies of the questionnaire were returned but only two hundred and nineteen were found usable which gave the return rate of 87.6% percent, as detailed in table 1. The responses were tabulated and their percentages were computed.

Table 1: Response Rate

Response rate	Frequency	Percentage
No of questionnaire distributed	250	100
No of questionnaire Retrieved	219	87.6

Results

Table 2: Types of Mentoring

Mentoring Programmes	Frequency	Percentage
Staff development	27	12.3
Orientation	25	11.4

Conferences, seminars and workshop	78	35.6
Individual mentoring	71	32.4
Training	28	12.8

Table 2 shows the types of mentoring programmes in which the respondents participated for continuing professional development in university libraries in Nigeria. The table reveals that the type of mentoring mostly appreciated are conferences, seminars and workshop 78 (35.6%). Also 71 (32.4%) of the respondents stated that they have flair for staff development. The least in the distribution mentoring is orientation 25 (11.4%).

Table 3: Mentoring Programme for Professional Development

Professional Development	Frequency	Percentage
Supervisory mentoring	97	44.3
Coaching	82	37.4
Group mentoring	63	28.8
Situational mentoring	8	3.7

Table 3 above shows that 97 (44.3%) of the respondents agreed that "supervisory mentoring" is mostly used by the majority of the librarians in professional development, followed by coaching method 82 (37.4%). Also 63 (28.8%) of the respondents stated that they used group mentoring for professional development.

Table 4: Benefits of Mentoring

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Mentoring equips young librarians for more challenge tasks ahead	72	32.9
It strengthens younger librarians' knowledge	53	24.2
It provides for succession planning	2	0.9
Mentors are relieved of some duties	8	3.7
Mentors use the opportunity to gradually handover to younger librarians	4	1.8
Mentoring aids induction into a new job culture	11	5.0
It improves professional and personal networks	16	7.3
It improves the quality of library services	7	3.2
There is improvement in the inter-personal relations	9	4.1

Table 4 above shows the benefits of mentoring. The table shows that 72 (32.9%) of the respondents indicated that mentoring helps to equip young librarians for more challenging tasks ahead. Fifty –three (24.2%) of them agreed that mentoring strengthens younger librarians' knowledge. Only 4 (1.8%) affirmed that mentors use the occasion to gradually handover to younger librarians.

Table 5: Challenges Associated with Mentoring

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Non-availability of facilities required	85	38.8
Lack of sincere desire to share knowledge by the mentor	35	16.0
Lack of awareness on the need to mentor subordinates	65	29.7

Lack of interest on the part of the mentee	6	2.7
The mentee becoming too dependent on the mentor	28	12.8
Lack of professional orientation	33	15.1

Table 4 above shows the challenges associated with mentoring for continuing professional development of academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria. The table reveals that the four most agreed challenges are non availability of amenities required 85 (38.8%), lack of awareness on the need to mentor subordinate 65 (29.7%) insubordination on the part of mentee 35 (16.0%) and lack of professional orientation 33 (15.1%).

Discussion of results

Findings were discussed based on the following sub-headings types of mentoring, mentoring programmes, benefit of mentoring, challenges associated with mentoring

Type of mentoring programmes for academic librarians in Nigerian University libraries

The result of the study indicates that the type of mentoring programme mostly appreciated by academic librarians are conferences, seminars and workshops. This is in line with the study of Nwabueze and Anike (2016) who reported that sponsorship to conferences, seminars and workshops and participation in professional associations and orientation programmes for newly employed librarians are among the programmes through which librarians are mentored. The finding also supports the study of Eruvwe, Urhefe and Shehu (2017) who found that self development, in-service training, conferences and workshops are the various ways in which staff develop themselves in university libraries. The study revealed that individual mentoring is used by academic librarians for professional development in Nigerian university libraries. The finding

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is in support of the study of Ozioko, Echezona and Osadebe (2012) who reported that the forms of mentoring mostly cited are individual mentoring.

Mentoring programme for professional development

The study shows that supervisory mentoring is mostly used by the majority of the librarians for professional development. This is in line with the study of Bello and Mansor (2013) who reported that supervisory modelling was the most generally used by the most librarians. The result of the study also revealed that librarians also use coaching as a method of mentoring for the professional development of librarians in Nigerian university libraries. This is also in agreement with Ozioko, Eche Zona and Osadebe (2012). They reported that coaching could be used as method of mentoring.

Benefits of mentoring academic librarians in Nigerian University libraries.

The study revealed that mentoring equips young librarians in Nigerian University libraries for more challenging tasks ahead. This finding agrees with that of Yusuf (2011) who reported that 75% of the respondents affirmed that mentoring has developed their abilities to conceptualize research topics and public articles in reputable journals. The study also showed that mentoring strengthens younger librarians' knowledge and mentors use the opportunity to gradually hand over to young librarians. The result supports the study of Nwabueze and Anike (2016), who also highlighted that mentoring improves team work and cooperation in the library, accelerates career advancement in librarianship and enhances learning culture in library. Therefore, the result of the study is important for the fact that mentoring gives room for professional development of librarians.

Challenges associated with mentoring of academic librarians in Nigerian university libraries

The study showed that non-availability of facilities required is the major challenge associated with the mentoring of academic librarians in Nigerian university libraries. The findings agrees with the study of Nwabueze and Anike who reported that inadequate facilities required for e-mentoring, unconstructive criticisms by mentors to the mentees, broken confidentially by both mentor and mentee, lack of sincere desire to share knowledge by the mentor and inability of both the mentor and the mentee to keep to goals and objectives of the relationship are the major problems militating against mentoring strategies in use for professional development of librarians. The study is also in line with the findings of Njoku (2017) that mentoring had influence on the performance of librarians by making them to gain clarity of their duties, develop initiatives and make them work under little or no supervision and enhanced their job potentials. This shows that librarians who had the opportunity of being mentored by experts in librarianship had better performance on their jobs.

Conclusion

Academic mentoring has to do with training of librarians to enhance better performance on the job. The training may be difficult but is a way of rebranding the mentee. From the findings it was clearly shown that the mentoring programmes through which the librarians are mostly mentored are: individual mentoring and participation in conferences, seminars and workshops. The study also revealed that mentoring is beneficial to both the mentor and the mentee. The younger librarians learn from the older or more experienced librarians on the job. Finally, the study has brought to light that there are some challenges militating against the mentoring of academic librarians in Nigerian university libraries for professional development.

These include: non-availability of facilities required and lack of awareness on the need to mentor the subordinates. The study therefore concludes that mentoring programmes is necessary and should be encouraged for the development of academic librarians in Nigerian university libraries in their professional development. This will assist to improve the performance of the librarians in their day to day activities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings, that adequate facilities should be provided by the heads of university libraries to make the job of both mentor and mentee easy; and parent institutions should be willing to release funds to libraries for the procurement of facilities.

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