STRATEGIES FOR TEACHER MENTORING IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The study investigated the strategies adopted for mentoring in public universities in Rivers state. one (1) research question and one (1) hypothesis guided the study. The design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey. The population of the study was two thousand two hundred and twenty-two (2,222) university lecturers in the three public universities in Rivers state, out of which a sample size of six hundred (600) lecturers were drawn using stratified random sampling technique. An 8-item instrument titled Strategies for Mentoring Questionnaire (SFMQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisors as well as three (2) experts in the same Department. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha with an index of 0.71. The research questions of the study were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that the strategies adopted for Mentoring were not effective and efficient. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that university administrators should adopt effective strategies like collaboration and documentation. This according to the study can be achieved by adequate planning and funding of mentoring programme.

Keywords: teacher mentoring, public universities, efficient and effective teachers, efficient and effective students

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1. Introduction

It is a known and acceptable fact that a nation's development is dependent on her products which is dependent on the concepts taught by the teachers, efficient and effective teachers produce efficient and effective students and vice versa. If teachers are expected to improve teaching strategies, they must be given the required knowledge and skills. Reeves (2011) stated categorically that there is need to equip teachers with the right knowledge and skills, in the past years, teachers have lived under the premise that professional development is good just by definition. However, in today's educational world, which is focused on accountability, a higher standard of evidence is needed as suggested by Guskey (cited in Oke, 2021). Most teachers enter the teaching profession with confidence and the anticipation of teaching and making a difference in the lives of their students but when faced with frustrating and discouraging issues, it results in feelings of stress, isolation and failure. The less experienced teachers are often presented with unique challenges, which usually start when they encounter difficulty in transferring theory and knowledge into practical application within the classroom. Learning how to manage a classroom, teaching and evaluating a diverse group of students with varied needs and abilities, developing paperwork strategies related to teaching and effectively dealing with parents and the environment takes time (Nwafor & Nwafor, 2012).

Going forward, Moir (2009) stated that there are many responsibilities that come with the job of being a teacher, hence the less experienced teachers must receive the necessary help and training to develop and become acclimated to the particular settings in which they work. Development and training are strategic ways of ensuring competence in a profession because training improves an individual. Training is a continuous exercise in response to the dynamic nature of the environment. It enhances the capacity, productivity and performance of a person (Mackenzie & Nwafor, 2019). Training entails the acquisition of knowledge and skills that help to improve an individual in a particular job. Professional development which involves training of people in a particular profession; the how, dos and don'ts in the profession has the capacity to equip professionals with necessary skills and knowledge needed for quality production.

Professional development is a continuous upgrading through the training of an individual to enable him work with current demands of his profession and the society at large (Nwokedi, Amaewhule, & Nwafor, 2018). Following the dynamic nature of the world and several systems, there is a need for a relative development and growth of professionals in their profession. Nwachukwu as cited in Obasi (2008) stated that *"training is a process of increasing human efficiency through which people are offered the opportunity to acquire new skills and current knowledge required in carrying out various specialized tasks in their place of work"*. Richard and Farrell (2005) stated that expert improvement is a procedure of general development and incorporates long haul objectives while Iloabuchi as cited in Obasi and Asodike (2014) posited that improvement is a continuous, general and element extension of aptitudes and information for long haul

professional development. This is an indication that a worker who may not be very efficient in his work with professional development over a period of time, becomes more efficient and effective because the effect of professional development programmes is seen over time when the worker begins to achieve organizational goals (Nwafor, 2012). A veritable tool for effective professional development that has been identified is mentoring, for mentoring to be successful, the right strategies must be adopted (Oke, 2021).

Mentoring is a relationship that involves a less experienced individual and a more experienced one (Oke, 2021). The essence of the relationship is for the more experienced person to advise, coach and support the less experienced person for growth and development. One of the ways by which an individual learns or gains new knowledge is by strict observation and patterning of one's life towards a particular person who could be referred to as his role model. This is easily seen in a family setting where the children look up to their parents for advice, direction and leadership. The male children learn and desire to be like their fathers, the female children also learn and desire to be like their mothers, all these are done by observation and imitation. The parents in turn advice, counsel, guide and direct their children (Oke, 2021).

Eby, Butts, Lockwood and Simon (2004) remarked that mentoring is a serious advancement relationship whereby exhortation, guiding and improvement opportunities are given to a mentee (Protégés) by a mentor which enhances the mentee's (protégé's) professional experience. Mentoring gives the less experienced person the opportunity to learn from the more experienced one through direct and first hand training (Amesi & Ndukwe, 2018). Many countries like the United States of America and Austria have introduced mentoring as a major form of professional development programme. This is because if mentoring is carried out effectively, the quality of teachers will be quite good which will directly influence their products who serve as tools for nation building and development (Oke, 2021).

Mentoring is rapidly becoming worldwide; a highly effective human resource development process, many organizations have gone through and are currently going through increasing significant change because of the introduction of mentoring (David-West & Nmecha, 2019). Generally, people in any organization react positively to change when they take responsibility for their own development (Oke, 2021). Good organizations also recognize the importance of the role they play in offering assistance to people during the period of change. Mentoring is one way in which organizations can provide this assistance as there is a high degree of trust and mutual regard which will enable the person to become what he aspires to be by realizing his or her potential. Mentoring is recognized as an important contributor to building team capacity within organizations.

In mentoring, there are the more experienced and the less experienced professionals as earlier mentioned. The more experienced professional is referred to as the mentor while the less experienced professional is referred to as the mentee. The mentor is the more experienced professional or person, who has been in the system for a reasonable period, thus has gathered enough knowledge and experience that will benefit

and improve the mentee who understudies him (Ugwu & Ikechukwu, 2015). Note that a mentor is a coach who facilitates the development of the skills of the junior person, his duty is to guide, lead, direct and teach the less experienced person. They ensure that the skills and knowledge of the mentee in the profession is improved through sharing quality time and experience with the mentee (Oke, 2021). Mentors need to recognize the fact that in the programme of mentoring, the mentor is at the giving end and they are there to counsel, share experience on personal mistakes and achievements with the mentee all with the aim of making the mentee more efficient and productive. While the mentor is at the giving end, the mentee is at the receiving end (Oke, 2021).

A mentee can be described as a less experienced person in a profession who is under the tutelage of a mentor for the purpose of learning for self-improvement. The mentee is likewise alluded to as the apprentice whose career experience is being sharpened by the mentor (Obasi & Ohia, 2018). With adequate supervision by the mentor, the mentee tends to avoid errors made by the mentor in the past-- making the job easy and interesting for the mentee. Little wonder, McKenzie (cited in Uche, 2008) acknowledged that individuals without coaches are inadequate with regards to learning in a few key ranges when compared with others who have coaches.

Mentorship is an intense work relationship between the experienced and the inexperienced person, where the quality of the outcome of the programme tells if it is successful or not (Obasi, *et al.*, 2018). Both the mentors and the mentees benefit from a successful mentoring relationship because the mentors will derive joy and satisfaction from helping to develop the next generation of professionals, feeling rejuvenated in their own career development and learning how to use new technologies. While the mentees will become aware of teaching profession issues, methods, strategies, tactics and perspectives that are vital to their field (Oke, 2021).

Strategies can be referred to as the planned methods of carrying out a mentoring programme for effective delivery of the benefits of mentoring (Oke, 2021). Teaching is a process of imparting knowledge and skills to learners in order to achieve predetermined objectives which is learning. Learning takes place resulting in a relative permanent change in students' behaviours. Such a change may be a cognitive aspect (ability to think and reason), in the affective aspect (attitudes, values, character, interest) and the psychomotor (hands on activities). Teaching is also viewed as a process of getting learners to become really educated in a way that they become useful to themselves and their immediate environment (Oke, 2021). It is important to point out here that quality teaching is eminent if the above is to be achieved. Quality in its domain refers to the standard of something inconsideration of other things in similar nature. Ciwar (as cited in Oke, 2021) averred that the international community defines quality performance in reference to education, as the setting of standards for the various processes and activities that lead to the production of teachers by the training institution. Note that to achieve effective mentoring, there must be open communication, accessibility, caring (a form of personal relationship), mutual respect and exchange of knowledge, collaboration, role modeling, passion, inspiration and trust.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The teachers in the universities are involved in teaching, research, development and administration, thus it is critical to pay attention to the quality of lecturers in the universities because research has shown that an informed teacher is a vital tool in any school. To achieve the aim of having quality lecturers, it is important to improve their skills, this can be done by regular professional development programmes, these programmes keep lecturers abreast with improved curriculum and instructional teaching styles. Haven identified mentoring programme as an efficient and effective professional development tool, it is important to ensure that the right strategies are adopted for the programme. To this end, this study sets out to investigate the strategies adopted for teacher mentoring in the public universities in Rivers state are effective.

1.2 Aim and Objective of the Study

The study was aimed at assessing the strategies adopted for teacher mentoring in Public universities in Rivers state. Specifically, the objective was to:

- Examine the strategies adopted for teacher mentoring in universities in Rivers state.

1.3 Research Question

- What are the strategies adopted for teacher mentoring in universities in Rivers state?

1.4 Hypothesis

$H_{01:}$ There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the more experienced lecturers and that of the less experienced lecturers on the strategies adopted for teacher mentoring in public universities in Rivers state.

2. Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted to guide the study. The population of the study was 2,222 (two thousand two hundred and twenty two) lecturers, the sample size of the respondents was 600. Stratified random sampling technique was used with each university as a stratum. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Status of Mentoring Questionnaire (SOMQ). Mean and standard deviation statistics was used to answer the research question and z – test statistics was used to test the hypothesis. The instrument was validated and a reliability index of 0.71 was obtained.

Research Question: What are the strategies adopted for teacher mentoring in universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Mean Set and Rank Order of
Respondents on the assessment of strategies adopted for teacher mentoring

S/No.	Questionnaire Items	Mentors (N₁= 200)		Mentees (N₂= 400)		Mean Set	Rank Order	Decision
		X_1	SD_1	X_2	SD_2	X_1X_2		
1.	Experienced lecturers are made to share their experiences during the induction of the beginning teachers.	2.48	1.43	2.40	1.38	2.44	4th	Disagreed
2.	Every less experienced lecturer has a mentor.	2.42	1.39	2.40	1.38	2.41	6th	Disagreed
3.	Less experienced lecturers are not allowed to independently be in charge of a course until they have been mentored.	2.48	1.43	2.48	1.48	2.48	2nd	Disagreed
4.	Less experienced lecturers are made to keep log books to record new learning points from their experience with their mentors	2.35	1.35	2.30	1.30	2.33	7th	Disagreed
5.	The experienced lecturers take time to assess the growth of their mentees over a period of time.	2.23	1.18	2.20	1.27	2.22	8th	Disagreed
6.	Teamwork among the Mentors and the Mentees is encouraged by the school Administrative structure.	2.55	1.47	2.54	1.46	2.55	1st	Agreed
7.	Less experienced teachers are rewarded based on their ability to learn fast from their mentors	2.50	1.44	2.45	1.41	2.48	5th	Disagreed
8.	After seven years, less experienced teachers become mentors hence assigned mentees.	2.48	1.43	2.45	1.41	2.47	3rd	Disagreed
	Cluster Mean	2.44	1.41	2.40	1.38	2.42		Disagreed

Table 1 showed that the strategies adopted for mentoring in the universities in Rivers state is not very productive. This is because the average mean score of the lecturers' responses of 2.42 is below the criterion mean of 2.5 hence confirms that the lecturers disagree that the right strategies are adopted for mentoring. Out of the 8 items, the respondents disagreed with the strategies suggested but agreed that the school administrative structure supports teamwork among the mentors and the mentees, this is revealed by the item having a mean score of 2.55 which is above the criteria.

2.2 Hypothesis

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of the more experienced lecturers and that of the less experienced lecturers on the strategies adopted for teacher mentoring.

Table 2: z – test on mean responses of lecturers on the strategies adopted for mentoring

Respondents	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	z- cal	z- critical	Level of significance	Decision
Mentors	200	2.44	1.41					Not significant
				598	0.33	1.96	0.05	
Mentees	400	2.40	1.38					H$_{01}$ Accepted

Table 2 showed mean scores 2.44 and 2.40 for the Mentors and Mentees respectively, these mean scores suggest closeness. Also, the z-calculated which is 0.33 is less than the z-critical of 1.96 hence the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of the more experienced and less experienced lecturers on the strategies adopted for teacher mentoring is accepted.

3. Discussion of Findings

The data collected reveals the fact that the strategies adopted for mentoring are not very effective, this is seen from the response of the lecturers; less experienced lecturers are not assigned to mentors, they are made to be in charge of courses (subjects) without being mentored. They also do not keep records of new learning nor do the more experienced teachers assess the less experienced teachers. The data also shows that the less experienced teachers hardly become mentors as they themselves were not mentored, they take a long time to adjust to the demands of their jobs. All these are indicators that the right strategies are not adopted for an effective mentoring programme. However, the data indicated that teamwork is encouraged amongst the lecturers.

This study reveals that the strategies adopted for mentoring have a significant effect on the success of mentoring programme in public universities in Rivers state. It also exposes the fact that there are no specific plans for mentoring as there is no adequate funding, lack of documentation, it is also evident from the study that the strategies adopted do not encourage effective coaching and follow-up by the Mentor hence the Mentees are left to figure things out by themselves.

4. Conclusion

The paper has examined the strategies adopted for mentoring in universities in Rivers State, it categorically stated that the strategies adopted for mentoring are not efficient and effective hence the schools do not enjoy the full benefits of mentoring for the development of their teachers.

4.1 Recommendations
The paper recommends that:
1) School administrators should recognize mentoring as a veritable tool for teacher development and growth, hence make adequate plans for an effective mentoring.
2) The Government should provide adequate funds for the programme.
3) Mentors and Mentees should be committed to the mentoring programme.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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