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**THE IMPACT OF MENTORING ON COMPETENCY, CAREER GROWTH AND
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION
PROFESSIONALS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN OSUN AND ONDO STATES
NIGERIA**

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“Show me a successful individual and I’ll show you someone who had real positive influences in his or her life. I do not care what you do for a living—if you do it well I’m sure there was someone cheering you on or showing the way. A mentor.”

— Denzel Washington

“Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flow charts. It is about one life influencing another.”

—John c. Maxwell

Abstract

Mentoring is one of the approaches of training and developing people, where a more experienced persons (mentors) share their vast accumulated understanding and experience with the less experienced persons (mentees, protégés). Mentoring is crucial to the success, competency, leadership development and accomplishment of a career in librarianship in contemporary era. This paper aims to investigate the impact of mentoring on skill competency, career growth and leadership development of library and information science professionals and the challenges besetting mentoring in librarianship with specific focus on academic libraries in Osun and Ondo States, Nigeria. This study affirms that through mentoring librarians can meet their job demands. Mentoring should therefore be stimulated to boost the professional and administrative skills of librarians. Four objectives and four research questions guided this study. The population for the study comprises librarians cum library officers totaling 750 from academic libraries in Osun and Ondo States, Nigeria. Three hundred respondents from the population with more than six years work experience irrespective of gender were selected using the simple random probability sampling technique. The collection of data was through a questionnaire – “Mentoring, An essential tool for skill acquisition, leadership development and career growth in library and information science profession”. The instrument’s reliability

coefficient was 0.87 using Cronbach Alpha. The data was analyzed using tables, simple percentages and mean. The results indicate that one-on-one mentoring and role model are the most popular methods that are used to mentor newly recruited library staff. The study establishes that through mentoring young graduate librarians acquire competency, career growth, job satisfaction, leadership qualities and promotes the image of the profession. The problems facing mentoring include compatibility of mentors and mentees, mentees' insubordination, and reluctance of the old experienced workforce to groom the younger ones and their inadvertently attitude of taking undue advantage of the mentees. The study recommend that mentors should be patient with the mentees and the mentees to develop positive attitude towards mentoring in order to have a successful and fulfilling career.

Keywords: *Librarianship, Mentoring, Mentees, Mentors*

Introduction

The concept of mentoring is universally apprehended to stem from the role of Odysseus as "mentor" in Homer's classic poem. In this primordial Greek classic dating back to 12th and 8th centuries BC, Odysseus trusts his young son Telemachus to the care of his faithful companion Mentor on his mission away to fight in the Trojan War. After the war, Odysseus was condemned to ten years in which he could not return home. During this time, Telemachus grew up and was catered for and sustained by his mentor. Roberts (1999) argues that Homer does not endow Mentor with the qualities associated with mentorship, but merely describes him as Odysseus' old friend. Instead, he posits that the French writer François Fenelon is responsible for the popular conception of mentor. He established the character of Mentor in his 1699 novel *Les Aventures de Telemaque*, where he called Mentor "a guide, a teacher" and "another father". McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2000) refer historically to the middle ages and explain that mentoring 'became a common practice during the period of guilds and apprenticeships, when young men with practical skills often profited from the patronage of more skilled and reputable professionals. In the 1970s, employers and researchers began to recognize the important role of mentors in developing leaders in organizations (Roche, 1979). Mentoring has been increasingly used in the workplace since the 1970s - traditionally to support the progress of younger employees.

In recent times, mentoring has been an important tool for employee development in many organizations. A mentoring programme facilitates the relationship between mentor and mentee. The mentor supports the mentee's development needs by sharing his or her experience, and the mentee learns from the mentor's experience and plans his or her own personal development. Mentoring is usually part of corporate programmes such as career planning, talent management and succession planning. In the library profession, mentoring plays a key role in maintaining trained, informed and motivated employees. Pan and Hovde (2010) observe that it is a universal requirement of all librarians in order to keep up with the rapid changes in the library field and to maintain professionalism. Mentoring in librarianship is a process of learning and development based on a personal relationship in which an experienced librarian called a mentor helps a new young librarian called mentee to develop as a professional and achieve professional goals. Mentoring prospective young professional provides opportunity for both the young and the seasoned professionals to develop and refine the necessary skills to be successful in the diverse and rapidly evolving library and information science profession. Mentoring assist the young librarians put theoretical knowledge into practice, apply generalized concepts to specific responsibilities and become familiar with given job situations. Mentoring is also used as gimmicks for professional socialization, which encompasses processes and structures related to the workplace. Edwards and Hunchliffe (2009) believe that it is the process of internalizing the culture, values, beliefs, and norms of a profession and thereby becoming part of it. Mentoring relationships play a vital role in professional development. Nwabueze and Ozioko (2012) observe that no institution can exist without older and more experienced members passing on wisdom acquired over years to new members. Mentoring relationship is usually encouraged in order to provide a method of introducing and encouraging young librarians and other library personnel to work together. It also improves employee motivation, provides succession planning and enhances network and learning about the profession. The underlying philosophy of any mentoring programme is to allow the mentees find the best in themselves, live up to their personal visions and enhance their potentialities and skills. Since it has been established from literature that mentoring is all about the transmission of knowledge and skills, especially the process that supports professional learning and skills development usually between more experienced individual who is willing to learn and share his professional and personal skills and experiences with a less experienced individual who is also willing to learn and grow in the same

profession, and that mentoring relationships play a vital role in professional development, there is therefore need to determine mentoring methods necessary for professional development and career growth of librarians, mentoring programmes through which the librarians can excel professionally, benefits of mentoring among librarians; challenges to effective mentoring among librarians and the appropriate gimmicks to overcome mentoring challenges.

Statement of the problem

Though the library and information science programme places values and emphasis on fieldwork practice and mandates students librarians to carry out hands-on work during their studies, the LIS programme differs from other professional degrees for illustration medicine and law in that student librarians are not required to partake in internship to qualify for the award of their degrees. It is conceivable for library and information students to complete their programme without having ever to interact with a seasoned professional in the field. In the absence of the guidance of an old professional, their insight of librarianship and outlooks of workplace can become lopsided, leaving them improvised for the realities. Library schools also cannot offer every understanding of the profession; some knowledge is inclusively distinctive to specific situation and comes only through on –the job experience. One method of transferring this tacit knowledge in the library profession is through mentoring. This current study is therefore an effort to investigate mentoring as an essential tool for building competency and career growth in librarianship by identifying the different forms of mentoring methods and the strategies that are best applicable to the library .profession and the benefits and challenges of mentoring

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate mentoring as an essential tool for competency, leadership development and career growth in librarianship profession. Specifically, the study aims to

- a. Identify the various forms of mentoring method
- b. Identify the benefits of mentoring to librarianship
- c. Determine the mentoring method and strategy that that could be used for the development of competency, leadership qualities and career growth among the library and information science professionals

d. Identify the likely problems and challenges in the use of mentoring among library practitioners in Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions guided this study

a. What are the various forms of mentoring known to library professionals?

b. What are the benefits of mentoring to library and information science professionals in academic libraries?

c. What are the mentoring strategies that could be used for the development of competency and career growth among the library and information science professionals

d. What are the problems and challenges related to the use of mentoring among library professionals in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the management of academic institutions, the library administrators, the library staff and researchers. The findings of the study will open up the need for the management in academic institutions to foster decision in encouraging the establishment of mentoring relationships in their libraries that will enhance staff development and training internally and invariably save cost on staff development. The study will also be beneficial to library administrators. The analysis of the findings will highlight the essentiality to create an environment to enhance staff development through professional relationships among staff. This will foster increased competencies and a healthy work environment. Lastly, this work will be of immense value to library personnel as it will guide them in defining their specific goals and expectations in the profession, enable them to have equal access to more experienced librarians and provides immense information to researchers for further studies on mentoring and professional growth of librarians

Scope of the Study

This study examines the impact of mentoring on competency, leadership development and career growth of library and information science professionals in academic libraries situated in Osun and Ondo States, Nigeria. It focuses on finding out the mentoring methods and strategies in use by these libraries, the benefits and advantages derived from mentoring and the problems

associated with mentoring. The study is limited to academic libraries, as they constitute the highest number of libraries in the states.

Literature review

The art of mentoring has its origin in ancient history and traceable through generation. In the early years, mentoring was referred to as apprenticing where an apprentice, the protégé learns from a master, the mentor in order to learn a craft example blacksmith with the expectation of taking over the craft or establish his/her own craft shop (Allen et al 2008). In contemporary times, mentors have played a vital role in the development of organisations. Abolarinwa and Yaya (2016) describe mentoring as the method by which someone who has accumulated a vast understanding over the years through experience understands the needs of others who are desirous of acquiring similar knowledge and is willing to pass such knowledge to them. Munro (2009) defines a mentoring relationship as a developmental relationship in which a more advanced or experienced person, a mentor provides career and personal support to another individual, the protégé. A mentor can be an adviser, guide, counselor, tutor, confidant or a role model (Dymock 1999) and (Allen, Lentz 2008). According to Udeh & Omar (2009), a mentoring relationship is an intensive caring relationship in which persons with more experience work with less experienced persons to promote both professional and personal development. Ragins and Cotton (1999) were more expressive in their description of mentors as guides who lead us along the journey of our lives, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, and warn us of lurking dangers and point out unexpected delights along the way. Wikipedia (2021) describes mentoring as a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development. Mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé). Mentoring is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The mentors may be older or younger, but have a certain area of expertise. It is a learning and development partnership between someone with vast experience and someone who wants to learn. Mentoring is a powerful personal development and effective empowerment tool, which directs and help people especially new comers to progress in their career. It is becoming increasingly popular as its potentials are being realized. For the

purpose of this study, mentoring in the library is a relationship in which a more experienced librarian, the mentor of not less than six years work experience uses his or her greater knowledge, skills, ethics, values, practices and understanding of the work of the library to support the development of a more junior or inexperienced librarian, the mentee in order to foster the mentee's professional, personal and career development. It is a process where a senior librarian and a junior librarian build a healthy professional relationship with the aim of helping the junior librarian to grow in the career (Ozioko, Echezona and Osadebe, 2012). The emergence of new technologies and ways of interacting with information means that librarians are faced with a changing world of information and must adapt in order to be relevant to the system because users are making new demands that have to be met for effective service delivery. With this changing work environment and growing wants of the user, there is the need for effective mentoring that will allow the librarians fit into its role thereby building its capacity to effectively carry out its duties. The primary goal of mentoring in library is to achieve career excellence, thus meeting professional goals. Mentoring in the library setting is more than just a question and answer sessions and more than a short-term induction between the mentor and the mentee. Mentoring is an intentional process, a nurturing process that fosters the development of the young librarian towards his full potentials and understanding process in which the wisdom of the senior librarian is acquired and applied by the beneficiary. It is a structured and trusting relationship that brings people together with caring librarians who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing competency and values in mentee. It is a fast way of preparing the new incumbents to imbibe the values and ideals that have grown to shape the library and being able to become productive members of the library. In order to develop an effective mentoring program among library staff in any library; a variety of models can be used. The key is to ensure that the experienced librarians, the mentors select an approach that aligns with the operational goals of the library, promotes efficiency and has specific strategy for both purpose and implementation. Mentoring can involve distance or e-mentoring. This is a situation where the mentor and mentee librarians are located in different departments or branches of the library within the institution. With the use of variety of communication and virtual tools like e-mail, audio/video-conferencing and social media mentees can find a perfect match no matter what the location of the mentor. There is also one-on-one mentoring relationship (Caela 2006 & Ozioko et 2012). This approach to mentoring provides platform where a mentee is assigned to a

more experienced peer who has the same job description. It allows for individualized attention for the mentee, builds a consistent relationship, encourages acquisition of deeper knowledge, quicker access to the mentor and ensures reciprocal learning environment that allows for immediate solution to challenges as well as promote deep interpersonal relationships. Group or team mentoring is another model (Burke McKeen & McKenna, 1994). In this model, an experienced librarian mentors multiple mentees at the same time or conversely one mentee has multiple mentors. This style of mentoring moves away from the traditional one-on-one approach. Group or team mentoring strengthens relationships between all the participants involved and encourages a natural exchange of information, allows for quick acquisition of knowledge, skills and adaptation to the library work environment. Mentoring relationship can be informal or formal. Informal mentoring develop naturally from shared admiration, aspiration, values and interest (Sullivan 1992). It occurs when a newly engaged librarian identifies and approaches a possible mentor and agrees to form a mentoring relationship of vice versa. The formal mentoring types are shaped through a planned matching or assignment of mentors and protégés by the library (Ensher & Murphy 2010). This means that a newly recruited librarian is positioned under the watch and tutelage of an experienced librarian by the management of the library for induction, training, developing skill and career (Jonathan & Uwannah 2012). Irrespective of the model, an effective mentoring relationship requires several key ingredients, including commitment from both parties, clear bi- directional communication, consistency, trust from both parties, cordiality, including mutual understanding of the goals and a commitment to working towards them, feedback which allows both parties to engage in honest and constructive dialogue that is mutually beneficial. Mentoring is an improved self-worth and result driven in all corollary of librarians' life. Additionally, the mentors should possess some qualities to ensure a positive mentor-mentee relationship. Some of these characteristics according to Smith (2011) are a good listening ear, an excellent counseling ability, ability to lead by example, someone who admits to his or her limitations and someone who motivates with a sense of respect and humor.

Methodology

The study was carried out to investigate mentoring as an essential tool for building career growth and leadership among young librarians. The population of the study consisted of 750 library and information science staff from academic libraries in Osun and Ondo States, Nigeria. Three hundred respondents with above six years work experience were selected using a simple random

probability sampling technique. The descriptive survey was adopted while the data collection instrument was a questionnaire titled “Mentoring, An essential tool for skill acquisition, leadership development and career growth in library and information science profession”. Three hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The questionnaires were retrieved through the assistance of Library Assistants in these libraries. The instrument was validated and the reliability co-efficient of 0.87 was obtained using cronbach alpha. The respondents were required to freely respond to the questions as much as they like. The data for the study was analyzed using frequency tables, percentages and mean methods.

Results analysis

The findings of the study are given in tables in accordance to the research questions

Research Question 1

What are the various methods of mentoring known to library and information science professionals?

Table 1

| S/ No | Methods of mentoring | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | One-on- One Peering Mentoring | 167 | 56% |
| 2. | Electronic/Distance mentoring | 12 | 4% |
| 3. | Group mentoring | 15 | 5% |
| 4. | Role modeling mentoring | 100 | 33% |
| 5. | Coaching | 6 | 2% |
| 6. | Reverse mentoring | - | - |
| | Total | 300 | 100% |

The table 1 above shows the methods of mentoring known to the respondents, which can be used for building competence acquisition, leadership development and career growth in young librarians and library officers in academic libraries. The most widely acknowledged method includes the one-on-one peering mentoring (56%) and the role modeling (33%). The respondents are not aware of the reverse mentoring where the younger librarians mentor the older colleague.

Research Question 2

What are the benefits of mentoring to library and information science professionals in academic libraries?

Table 2

| S/No | Advantages | N | Mean | Decision |
|------|---|-----|------|----------|
| 1. | Allows for the acquisition of professional librarianship skills which protégée can apply in diverse circumstances with fewer errors | 300 | 3.75 | Accepted |
| 2. | Fosters professional development, career growth and job satisfaction of both the mentors and the mentees | 300 | 3.50 | Accepted |
| 3. | Builds in new librarians confidence in dealing with challenges | 300 | 3.26 | Accepted |
| 4. | Equip new librarians for leadership role | 300 | 3.33 | Accepted |
| 5. | Enables new librarians to cope with career stress and proper orientation towards workplace values | 300 | 3.26 | Accepted |
| 6. | Encourages the acquisition of desired competencies | 300 | 3.33 | Accepted |
| 7. | Helps in the understanding of specific library culture and unspoken rules | 300 | 3.37 | Accepted |
| 8. | Shows that university libraries value their members /employees | 300 | 3.45 | Accepted |
| 9. | Promotes the image of librarianship profession | 300 | 3.40 | Accepted |
| 10. | Enhances collaboration between the senior and junior librarians | 300 | 3.29 | Accepted |
| 11. | Promotes sense of harmony and creates positive work environment in libraries | 300 | 3.27 | Accepted |
| 12. | Promotes mentors satisfaction in helping younger ones to grow | 300 | 3.33 | Accepted |
| 13. | Allows a smooth and gradual handover of leadership to mentees in times of change and transition` | 300 | 3.11 | Accepted |
| 14. | Assists in the attraction, retention and reduction in labour | 300 | 2.75 | Accepted |

| | | | | |
|--|----------|--|--|--|
| | turnover | | | |
|--|----------|--|--|--|

Table 2 shows the benefits of mentoring to the mentees, the mentors and the library as a whole. The respondents accept all the fourteen items benefits. The results show that mentoring is beneficial to all the parties, the mentees, the mentors and the library organization.

Research Question 3

What are the mentoring strategies that could be used for the development of career competence, leadership development and career growth among the library and information science professionals? **Table 3**

| S/No | Mentoring technique/Strategies | N | Mean | Decision |
|------|---|-----|------|----------|
| 1. | On the job training | 300 | 3.00 | Accepted |
| 2. | Seminar and conferences | 300 | 3,25 | Accepted |
| 3. | Joining professional association | 300 | 3.11 | Accepted |
| 4. | In service training | 300 | 3.19 | Accepted |
| 5. | One on one mentoring | 300 | 3.41 | Accepted |
| 6. | Staff rotation among Library departments and sections | 300 | 3.05 | Accepted |
| 7. | Orientation programmes | 300 | 3.30 | Accepted |
| 8. | Role playing | 300 | 2.50 | Accepted |

Table 3 shows the strategies that can be applied and adopted for mentoring librarians and other information science professionals for enhanced skill competence, leadership development and career growth. The table indicates that the respondents accepted all the strategies

Research Question 4

What are the problems related to the use of mentoring among library professionals in academic libraries in Nigeria?

Table 4

| S/No | Problem | N | Means | Decision |
|------|----------------------------|-----|-------|----------|
| 1. | Compatibility | 300 | 3.40 | Accepted |
| 2. | Insubordination of mentees | 300 | 3.40 | Accepted |

| | | | | |
|----|---|-----|------|----------|
| 3. | Unwillingness of old experienced librarians to mentor young librarian | 300 | 3.40 | Accepted |
| 4. | Non commitment by the mentees | 300 | 3.30 | Accepted |
| 5. | Nonexistence of mentoring training for the old librarians | 300 | 3.27 | Accepted |
| 6. | Absence of adequate structure and facilities needed for mentoring | 300 | 3.28 | Accepted |
| 7. | Dearth of virtual technology for e-mentoring | 300 | 2.50 | Accepted |
| 8. | Taking undue advantage of the mentees | 300 | 3.11 | Accepted |

The table 4 above shows the problems that obstruct effective mentoring of library and information science professionals. This includes incompatibility between mentors and mentees, insubordination of mentees, unwillingness and reluctance of old experienced professionals to groom younger ones. The other identified hindrances are non-commitment of the mentees, non-existence of mentoring training programme for the old librarians, absence of adequate structure and facilities for mentoring, dearth of virtual technology for e-mentoring, and mentors taking undue advantage of the mentees

Discussion

The results from the study show that the one-on- one peer tutelage is the prevalent mentoring technique followed by the role modeling type of mentoring. This is because it allows multiple mentees to be assigned to one mentor who act as a model or facilitator for a particular purpose or a mentee to many mentors for multiple competency and skill acquisition. According to Ozioko et al (2012) mentoring can be a single or one relationship or a network of multiple mentors. This also corroborates with the assertion of Alison (2014) that one on one tutoring is the most common approach as it offers both parties the potential of deeper insights and more effective

communication. The study revealed many advantages linked to the use of mentoring tool in promoting competency and professional career in the library and information profession. All the 14 items advantage of mentoring were accepted. Mentoring enhances professional skill acquisition, career growth, job satisfaction confidence building. It also equips new librarian for leadership positions, promotes the image of the library and the profession. It provides a powerful growth experience for both the mentor and mentees. This results are in acceptance to the findings of Okurame & Balogun (2005) where they assert that mentoring gives the transfer of skills that mentees can apply in different professional instances. Also, Jonathan & Uwannah (2012) posited that effective mentoring provides mentees with opportunity to meditate about career progress, promotes enthusiasm and increase quality of job performance. Simon & Russel (2000) opine that mentoring is a fast way of preparing new incumbents to ascend the professional and leadership ladder. Overall, the positive outcomes of mentoring are capable of fostering a satisfied and well-groomed professional workforce for leadership. There are many methods of mentoring for competency and professional development of librarians. The most widely accepted are the one-on-one mentoring, attendance of seminars and conferences, joining the professional library associations, on the job training, in-service training, orientation programmes and staff rotation in the various department of the library. These methods can bring about effective results on building competency and career growth. It can also bring about promotion, increased wages, status and prestige. This finding is in line with Jacqueline (2013) who asserted that mentoring through professional associations benefit the mentees by acquiring broad knowledge and skills which does not only help in the long run but put the mentee one step ahead of the others. RHMR (2016) also posits that staff rotation accelerates professional development, which helps employees to grow and strengthens succession planning. Although mentoring has benefits to the mentees, mentors and the organization library, the study shows that the tool has challenges that prevent its smooth and effective implementation. The problems identified by the respondents are compatibility of mentor and mentee, mentees insubordination, reluctance of the experience library members to groom the younger ones and the mentors inadvertently taking undue advantage of the mentees

Conclusion

Mentoring is an effective tool for building the capability of mentors and the mentees. It is also beneficial to the library in fostering its image and objectives. Mentoring has the capacity of driving young librarians in discovering abilities and options they think they cannot. The adequately mentored young librarians contribute significantly to the decision making and provide better alternatives in fostering the aims and objectives of library. Therefore, in order to maximize the skills and library workplace competencies and efficiency, the older professionals must put mentoring programme to work in order to build strong relationship and help groom the future leaders in librarianship, foster professional development, and promote the image of the profession and to sustain competency, effectiveness and timely delivery of library services

Recommendations

In view of the outcome of this study, the following suggestions are made:

- a. Old librarian are enjoined to adopt mentoring strategies in their libraries.
- b. The Nigerian Library Association should continually remind members at annual conferences on the need for mentoring to improve the efficiency of the upcoming librarians.
- c. Mentors are encourage to be patient with the mentees as positive changes may not show up for several months in them.
- d. Mentors should be careful about the request they make from their mentees, since the mentees are inclined to please their mentors and may perceive a request as a demand.

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