

MENTORSHIP PRACTICES FOR EFFICIENT CAREER GROWTH OF LIBRARIANS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NORTH-CENTRAL, NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The study examined mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North-Central, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. Three research questions guided the study, and were on the extent to which mentorship practices are required and employed for efficient career growth of librarians and areas of career growth where mentoring practices are required. The population of the study is 428 librarians in public academic libraries. Self-structured questionnaire and interview method were used. The study employed the use of a four-point rating-scale. The copies of the questionnaire were administered with the help of research assistants. A total of 346 copies of questionnaire were returned representing 80.8% of the population. An interview was also conducted on some selected institutions' management staff using an interview schedule. The data collected for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The research used mean score and standard deviation employing the use of SPSS for the data analysis. The Major findings of the study showed that mentorship plays a significant role in the career growth of librarians in academic libraries. Findings revealed that mentorship practices are highly required in coaching among others. It recommended that the administrators should make sure that maximum attention is paid to the areas of librarians' professional growth that call for mentoring practices.

Introduction

Mentorship practice is an important activity in succession, planning and equipping the next generation of librarians in academic libraries for efficient career growth of librarians in academic library. It is a tool necessary to ensure the survival of the profession in achieving organisational objectives or targeted goals and career growth of librarians. Academic libraries as posited by Ezema et al., (2022) are libraries situated in tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, and also nursing and other mono-technic libraries mainly to carry out teaching, learning, research and community services. In the global context, academic libraries, especially the ones that employed mentorship practices are seemingly commonplace. The collections in academic libraries include not only books but other resources

such as general and specialized reference collections, made up of journals, newspapers, manuscripts, historical maps, government publications, clippings, letters, thesis, and audio-visual materials.

Librarian is a person who is engaged or qualified in library and information science profession. A librarian according to the University of Iowa (2023), is someone who collects, records, organizes, stores, preserves, retrieves, and disseminates printed or digital information. There are several different kinds of librarians with unique roles within their community and one example is the academic librarians who work with colleges and universities libraries. Librarians are of various categories, including academic, public, special, or school librarian. Omokaro (2022) defines an academic librarian as that person who acquired professional qualifications in library and information science and is involved in the teaching and researches on library and information science. They are employed in tertiary institutions of training like the university, polytechnics or college of education in Nigeria and must have Masters or PhD degree to be employable. Librarians played vital role in learning and research as outlined by Demi, Longben and Dungse (2019) to include: Practical role of acquiring and sharing expensive information resources; cultural role of organizing and preserving artifacts and ideas and also, social and intellectual role of bringing people together and ideas for the fertilization of knowledge.

Mentorship is defined as a relationship between two individuals where one of them is a good role model due to experience, success or knowledge, and the other is less experienced or knowledgeable (EWOR Team, 2022). Mentorship practice is a relationship entailing formal or informal processes whereby a mentor provides intentional guidance, motivation, and encouragement that allow mentors to also share knowledge, experiences, and perspectives to empower the mentee in the advancement of specific goals that improve their lives and careers of

others as reported in ASU Report (2023). Mentoring is a term generally used to describe a relationship between a less experience individual, called a mentee and more experienced individual known as a mentor (Shehu, 2018). Mentoring is said to be known as an invaluable tool for career progression of librarians, the programmes offer an established, proven best practice to enhance organisational and individual learning (Demi, 2018). Creighton (2018) outlined six different types of mentoring to include: one-on-one mentoring; developmental and career mentoring; reverse mentoring; organisational and group-based mentoring among others.

Career can be defined as a profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a permanent calling e.g., a career in librarianship. It is a field for or pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement especially in public, or business life Greenhaus (2020). It is everyone's dreams to grow in his/her career, to achieve this, one need to acquire professional career progressive skills. Adewuyi and Makinde (2018) stated that, variables such as mentoring, job performance, motivation, job satisfaction, are important constructs in organizational and professional career growth study that can be perceived as critical predictors of improving organizational performance particularly in the chosen area of concern. Career growth according to Woll (2022) is seen as the journey towards the big picture career vision, similarly, as defined by Dewar (2023) it encompasses all the steps a librarian takes on the journey to achieve professional goals and attain higher position in an environment. It also involves movement from usually a lower rank to the higher rank. Moreover, in order to achieve efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries, some measures need to be put in place as predicators to direct, orientate, train, help and inspire new recruits by an experienced personality through a process called mentorship practice hence the need for this current study.

Statement of the Problem

Mentorship practices in career growth of librarians in academic libraries come with lots of benefits such as improved effectiveness in delivery of duties, higher job specification, higher educational qualification, no delay in promotions, better higher appointments, giving confidence to librarians, more headship positions for librarians, enhance collaborations between senior and junior librarians ,and giving greater knowledge of career success to librarians. Mentoring has been acknowledged to orient younger librarians in the field as well as address diverse questions of mid-career librarians however, the researcher observed that, the practices have been given less attention in most academic libraries and also the extent mentorship practices required and employed in most of the academic libraries seem not to have been put into practice. Consequently, low productivity, reluctancy, discouragement, dissatisfaction, stagnation, staff turnover and brain drain seem to be experienced in the organizations.

On further enquiry, the researcher discovered that many librarians do not have the prerequisite requirement for their promotions, some are denied opportunity for studies, others are operating on shuttling bases which hindered career growth. Based on the reasons, this study was designed to examine mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North-Central, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What is the extent to which mentorship practices are required for career growth of librarians in academic libraries?
2. What is the extent to which mentorship practices are employed for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria?

3. What are the areas of career growth where mentoring practices are required in academic libraries?

Review of Literature

Librarians

Librarians are professionals who possess basic qualifications in librarianship. Dirisu, Onoja and Salifu, (2013) identified them as those graduates with basic professional qualifications such as post-graduate diploma in library and information science, masters in library and information science, and /or a doctorate degree working in university, polytechnic, and colleges of education libraries. Dirisu, Onoja and Salifu further see academic librarians as those who are graduates working in university libraries. Two things are crystal clear of who is a librarian. Firstly, as asserted by Nwankwo, Ike & Anozie (2017), librarian must possess at least a first degree in library and information science or technology from a reputable university or a post graduate diploma holder but not national diploma or higher national diploma holders. Those with such qualifications are rather referred to as library officers. Secondly, such librarians should possess the same or are expected to possess the same qualification with their counterpart class or faculty-lecturers. Nwankwo, Ike & Anozie grouped librarians into (assistant librarian and librarian II) and higher librarians (librarian I, senior librarian, principal librarian, deputy university librarian and university librarian); for a comprehensive analysis which among others reveals that young librarians are a bit knowledgeable and conversant about the term “mentoring” but not equitable when compared to that of other higher librarians in matters of scholarly publication. Career growth of librarians is sacrosanct and therefore need to be employed for efficient career progression for the greater good of the academic organization.

Mentorship Practices

Mentorship is the practice of guiding, counselling, modelling, coaching an inexperienced personality on certain skills and training activities particularly in one's area of interests or field by an experienced personality usually from same field of specialization as asserted by Anunobi (2022). The author also maintained that, mentorship is a "veritable source of education, ideas and advice for successful and effective progress in path to leadership position". There is need to have eye on those aspiring librarians who have distinguished themselves in the desired position of office. Mentoring is a term generally used to describe a relationship between a less experience individual, called a mentee and more experienced individual known as a mentor (Shehu, 2018).

In academic libraries, for new intake (junior and senior) librarians to achieve a common organizational goals and objectives, they need to be shown what it takes to have a successful and efficient career growth. The mentors need to assist, direct and counsel the mentees working under them to grow and advance in their work this position is agreed by David-West & Nmecha (2019) who also asserted that mentoring is a tool in career development and advancement of librarians. According to Southeastern Library Association (2009), mentoring relationship is usually encouraged in order to provide a method of introducing and encouraging young librarians and other library personnel to work together.

Efficient Career Growth

Managers of academic libraries shouldn't minimize the importance of supporting their employees' career advancement. If they do, they risk undermining morale and productivities by leaving talented workers feeling like they aren't valued and in the longer term, the organisation could face the loss of these dispirited employees to other organisations Half (2022). Half, further outlined (7) strategies to promote the efficient career growth and development of employees to include: taking a personal interest in employee career goal, promote training and development of

employees, encourage mentoring and job shadowing, rotate employee roles, support work life balance, paint the big picture and create a succession planning programme. Career growth according to Woll (2022) is seen as the journey towards the big picture career vision, similarly, as defined by Dewar (2023) it encompasses all the steps a librarian takes on the journey to achieve professional goals and attain higher position in an organization. It also involves movement from usually a lower rank to the higher rank. Every professional librarian in a university or related institution is a prospective university librarian. Stepping into the career on graduation from the university opens vista of opportunity to ascend onto the position of the university librarian. The position is situated at the highest level in the career structure for management of university library by way of qualification, Anunobi(2022) stressed, that the aspirant must have a PhD in the field with fifteen years post MLS working experience in an academic library, PhD from a recognised university with twelve years working experience in academic library, LRCN certificate and as required in individual university for appointment/promotion to the rank plus favourable external assessment. Moreover, in Affirming the above position, Ezeani (2022) also pointed out that, a work climate with opportunities for growth must be provided for all library staff, their status, be they professionals or para-professionals.

Research Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted to explore and describe the opinions, feelings, views, preferences and attitudes of the respondents from the population. Four research questions guided the study. The population of the study covers all the four hundred and twenty-eight (428) librarians in public academic libraries in N.C.N. Self-structured questionnaire and interview method were used. The study employed the use of a four-point rating-scale. A total of 346 copies of questionnaire were returned representing 80.8% of the population. Interview was also conducted on some selected institutions using an interview schedule. The data collected for

the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The research used mean score and standard deviation employing the use of SPSS for the data analysis.

Results

Table 1: Mean Responses of Respondent on the extent to which Mentorship are practices required for Career Growth of Librarians in Academic Libraries.

n=346

		SCHOOL OWNERSHIP				OVERALL		R	D
		STATE		FEDERAL					
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD		
1	One on one mentoring	3.66	.55	3.60	.65	3.62	.62	2 nd	HR
2	Situational mentoring	3.03	1.20	2.93	1.16	2.96	1.17	6 th	R
3	Developmental mentoring	2.74	1.01	2.74	1.20	2.74	1.14	7 th	R
4	Reverse mentoring	3.23	1.07	3.19	1.07	3.20	1.07	3 rd	R
5	Group-based mentoring	2.59	1.19	2.66	1.14	2.64	1.15	9 th	R
6	Peer-based mentoring	2.62	1.15	2.49	1.07	2.53	1.10	10 th	R
7	Distance-based mentoring	3.07	1.05	2.97	1.07	3.00	1.06	5 th	R
8	Formal mentoring	2.74	1.12	2.64	1.23	2.68	1.20	8 th	R
9	Informal mentoring	3.16	.93	3.05	.94	3.09	.94	4 th	R
10	Coaching	3.63	.58	3.54	3.63	3.63	.58	1 st	HR
Cluster Mean		3.05	.99	2.98	1.32	2.71	1.00		

Keys: (HR): Highly Required, (R): Required, (LR)Less Required, (NR): Not Required.

Using the principle of real limit of numbers, responses as presented on Table 1 indicated that, the overall mean showed that coaching ($\bar{X}=3.63$, $SD=.58$) is ranked highest, while peer-based mentoring ($\bar{X}=2.53$, $SD=1.10$) is lowest with regards to extent to which mentorship practices are required for career growth of librarians in academic libraries. Furthermore, through the oral interview, it was demonstrated that mentorship practices are required for career growth of librarians in academic libraries.

Table 2: Mean Responses of Respondent on the Extent to which Mentorship Practices are Employed for Efficient Career Growth of Librarians in Academic Libraries in North Central, Nigeria. n=346

SCHOOL OWNERSHIP						OVERALL		R	D
STATE				FEDERAL					
MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD				

1	One on one mentoring	3.49	.70	3.57	.69	2.81	1.16	7 th	E
2	Situational mentoring	3.12	.99	3.13	1.00	3.12	.99	2 nd	E
3	Developmental mentoring	2.91	1.10	2.73	1.13	2.79	1.12	8 th	E
4	Reverse mentoring	3.09	.96	3.04	.93	3.06	.94	4 th	E
5	Group-based mentoring	3.51	.95	3.60	.85	3.57	.89	1 st	HE
6	Peer-based mentoring	2.97	1.25	3.15	1.15	3.09	1.19	3 rd	E
7	Distance-based mentoring	2.81	1.20	3.07	1.11	2.99	1.15	5 th	E
8	Formal mentoring	3.11	1.02	2.87	1.13	2.95	1.10	6 th	E
9	Informal mentoring	2.65	1.07	2.66	1.04	2.66	1.05	10 th	E
10	Coaching	2.71	1.18	2.82	1.06	2.78	1.10	9 th	E
	Cluster Mean	3.02	1.04	3.04	1.01	2.96	1.07		E

Keys: (HE) Highly Employed (E): Employed, (LE) Less employed (NE): Not Employed

Table 2 indicated that group-based mentoring (\bar{X} =3.53, SD=.89) is highly employed and the most employed. Informal mentoring (\bar{X} =2.66, SD=1.05) is ranked lowest with regards to extent mentorship practices are employed for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries. The results of the interviews showed that majority believed that its application depends on nature and standard of the library.

Table 3: Mean responses of respondent on the areas of career growth where mentoring practices are employed in academic libraries.

n=346

		SCHOOL OWNERSHIP				OVERALL		R	D
		STATE		FEDERAL					
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD		
1	Higher job specification	3.63	.65	3.62	.64	3.62	.64	2 nd	A
2	Higher educational qualification	3.49	.73	3.54	.64	3.53	.67	5 th	A
3	Increase remuneration	3.59	.67	3.59	.68	3.59	.68	3 rd	A
4	More popularity of librarians	3.58	.62	3.57	.61	3.58	.62	4 th	A
5	Improved satisfactions through motivation	3.65	.56	3.66	.57	3.65	.57	1 st	A
6	Promotion in rank	2.13	1.09	2.22	1.09	2.19	1.09	10 th	D
7	Better/higher appointments	3.47	.68	3.43	.69	3.45	.68	8 th	A
8	Headship positions in the library	3.38	.73	3.44	.66	3.42	.68	9 th	A
9	Supervision appointments	3.45	.77	3.56	.61	3.52	.67	6 th	A
10	Involvement in professional bodies' activities	3.53	.63	3.51	.68	3.52	.66	7 th	A
	Cluster Mean	3.39	.71	3.42	.69	3.41	.70		

Keys: (A): Agree, (D): Disagree

Using the criterion mean of 2.50, the result revealed that the respondents agreed that the areas includes improved satisfactions through motivation (\bar{X} =3.05, SD=.57); Higher job specification (\bar{X} =3.62, SD=.64); Increase remuneration (\bar{X} =3.59, SD=.68); etc. The standard deviations of the 10 items ranged from .58-1.09; indicating that the respondents were homogenous in their response. The oral interview session provided similar finding. The interviewees in one voice expressed that mentorship practices are the cornerstone of efficient career growth for librarians in academic libraries.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, these recommendations were therefore made:

1. The management should make sure that maximum attention is paid to the areas of librarians' professional growth that call for mentoring practices.
2. As technology develops, librarians should engage in virtual mentorship as a useful tool.
3. There have to be official mentorship programs in place at academic libraries.

Conclusion

The general purpose of the study is to determine mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central Nigeria. with three (3) specific objectives on mentorship practices required and employed for career growth of librarians in academic libraries and the areas of career growth. Coaching is ranked highest on the practices required for career growth of librarians in academic libraries. Others are group-based mentoring, peer-based mentoring, distance-based among others. The areas mentoring is employed for career advancement, include promotions and tenure, higher job specification, higher qualification, etc.

The major findings of the study conclude that mentorship plays a significant role in the career growth of librarians in academic libraries. The researcher therefore advocates for extensive mentor-mentee relationship.

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