#### MENTORING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A REVIEW

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#### Abstract

The paper focused on mentoring in academic libraries with emphasis on the types and its benefits. The purpose of this paper is to assemble selected literature reports on mentoring, types and benefits of mentoring. The researchers conducted a review of existing related literature on academic libraries through library research. Newly recruited academic librarians and pre-tenured librarians need the guidance, supervision and the coaching of the highly experienced and tenuretrack librarians to grow professionally in their chosen career, improve in job performance and to prepare them for future leadership. The paper identifies and discusses the types of mentoring in academic libraries. The researchers also highlighted the benefits of mentoring which include: nurturing of occupational identity towards career goal attainment, enhance communication and productivity, improves retention and reduces turnover intention, of librarians and development of new librarians, plays transitional role of assisting librarians to navigate among others. The paper further identifies the challenges of mentoring in academic libraries in Nigeria as comprising; unrealistic expectations and assumptions, lack of commitment by mentees or mentors, poor internet connection during e-mentoring among others. The paper concludes that despite the numerous literature that exists on this subject, mentoring programmes in academic libraries have been inadequately studied by many researchers. Ongoing investigation on other areas of mentorship are required to determine the importance of mentoring programmes in the career development of academic librarians.

**Keywords**: Mentoring, mentee, mentor, mentoring programmes and academic libraries.

### Introduction

Mentoring is a training and service-oriented activity which academic librarians need to engage in to ensure professional career advancement, improvement in job expectations and preparation for future managerial/leadership positions. Mentorship is very effective, a driver, and very strategic in improving job performance in academic libraries. The newly recruited staff requires guidelines, directives, supervision, and orientation on the new environment as well as their job requirements so as to attain the library and institutional objectives coupled with organizational performance.

In addition, in a knowledge-driven society coupled with tremendous technological changes, resulting to changes in the demands of the digital users, academic libraries therefore, need to equip their employees with all around guidance and coaching concerning their organisations' job expectations beyond their initial training at the library school. Nevertheless, there are varieties of mentorship practiced in academic libraries, today. Although, each library uses either one type or a combination of the mentoring programmes to orient and guide the new and pre-tenured librarians in order to acclimatize them to the ongoing processes in the work environments.

Moreover, mentorship does not have a standard conventional practice rather, it depends on the organization or the size of the organization. However, mentorship in academic libraries can occur formally or informally. This is because, there are unconscious and unplanned mentoring practices that take place in academic libraries and also, in other institutions. Mentorship has long been a means of facilitating both emotional and behaviour resiliency, and academic and career development (Lorenzett & Powelson, 2015), Mentoring is an investment to the professional advancement of new librarians which does not require money for outside training.

#### **Mentoring Programmes in Academic Libraries**

With the introduction of new technologies and ways of interacting with information, librarianship faces increasingly rapid changes and new demands in order to satisfy the current information needs. It is in these unsteady circumstances that novice librarians in some tertiary institutions find themselves often facing the uncertainties of the new information environment with little or no guidance beyond their initial library school training. Additionally, the positions which new librarians occupy may also be more challenging and require more responsibilities than originally anticipated upon graduation from the library school. The totality of these factors contributes to an increasing need for libraries to establish mentoring programmes for new librarians. Alala, Aguwa and Onyegbula (2022), define mentoring as a formal and informal

relationship that exists between a mentor, believed to have vast experiential and theoretical knowledge, guidance, useful connections, to advise and to lead the mentee - a beginner, in a specific area for more advancement and productivity. In the words of Oshinkale (2019), mentorship is a relationship between two people where the individuals with more experience, knowledge, and connections, is able to pass along what they have learned to a more junior individual within a certain field.

Mentoring could be seen as a means of using a well-experienced and versatile role model to impact knowledge and to direct a newly recruited and less experienced worker in his chosen career. A mentor is a role model that assists in developing the potentialities and skills in another individual called the mentee and try to sustain the growth and development of that individual library staff is mentored by an experienced mentor in librarianship so as to spur bagged innovative and positive changes in the library. Studies in the recent past have also shown that most academic libraries in Nigeria, Africa and developed countries have developed effectual mentoring programmes. Gill and Gosine-Boodoo (2021), identify the absence of a structured mentorship style as obstacles to effective service delivery in the academic library. Ugbogu (2019), also, in his study, found out that mentoring programme through which librarians are mostly mentored are sponsorship to conferences/seminars and workshops and individual mentoring. This individual mentoring is the traditional or one-on-one mentoring which directly reaches and coaches the mentee. In a study conducted by (Shafi & Olorunsola, 2019), and Azubogu (2019), there is a downward trend in the quality of staff and inability to attain the stated goals which also, causes a flattening of the organisations and loss of growth opportunities. This has been traced to poor mentorship and lack of qualified personnel to mentor the librarians in the academic libraries.

### **Types of Mentoring programmes in Academic Libraries**

Scholars in management and librarianship have developed and adopted various mentoring programmes which are obtainable in some institutions including the academic libraries in Nigeria and globally. These programmes include:

- 1. Traditional/Single Mentoring: Traditionally, a mentoring programme comprises a single or one-on-one mentor with more professional experiences guiding and supporting a single mentee in an effort to overcome professional challenges. However, for some decades now, there is a drift from traditional mentoring models to formal mentoring. Traditional mentoring theory encompasses skills-based, goals-oriented learning passed down through the mentors who are experienced, to the mentees who are less experienced. Most libraries in Nigeria and Western worlds per say, have also adopted the modern, non-traditional models of mentoring programmes. Academic libraries, such as Imo State University Owerri; Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State among others have embraced the non-traditional mentoring programmes as well.
- 2. Peer/Group Mentoring: Academic libraries have also adopted peer/group mentoring in the professional development of their staff. The peer or group mentoring is also, known as the team mentoring or the resource team mentoring. The peer mentoring is a relationship between two people of equal standing who engage in reciprocal mentoring activities, each adopting the roles of Mentee and Mentor (Naiyeju et al, 2021). In similar definition, the peer/group/ team mentoring is a situation where an individual serves as a mentor overseeing multiple mentees. It can also be in the reverse, It is a meeting of participants in a mentoring relationship usually at fixed time interval. Peer/group mentoring consists of a collaborative relationship which perceives and realizes each participant (mentee and mentor) as a unique valuable contributor and rich source of knowledge, coupled with experiences, to share with one another. In other words, group mentoring is a symbiotic relationship that exists between the mentor and mentee which

acknowledges the relevance of both participants as contributors to knowledge. This therefore, means that the mentor is not perceived as the only one possessing ample knowledge and professional experiences to impact into the mentee, but the mentee is as well, recognized as a major contributor, as well as the mentor. Here, everyone is very unique and relevant in the contribution to knowledge in the library. In some academic libraries in Nigeria, tenure-track/long-aged librarians possessing professional experiences together with the young librarians, possess their own unique knowledge and ideas that will assist in teaching and nurturing one another.

**3. Psychological Mentoring**: Another aspect of this programme is psychological mentoring that involves the support and the promotion of behaviour and emotional state of an individual worker. This psychological mentoring is the core area that determines the impact of all other factors necessary for nurturing and learning in an academic library environment and other organizations where there should be a viable and staring emotional support for library staff in all ramifications. This will go a long way in bringing out the best from an individual worker if his career and emotional concerns will be attended to positively. That is why Marshall and Harrington (2011), suggested psychological support as an aspect of mentoring which consists of the following: show interest, listen to mentees' professional concerns, provide encouragement, provide candid feedback and offer solution to challenges. He also included role model, expertise experience and career assistance. In support of Marshall and Harrington, in the Sage Handbook of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, (2012), Katty Kram's theory of mentoring, cited in Sage Handbook of Mentoring, recognized two aspects of successful mentoring as comprising functions that enhance the mentee's career goals and functions that are psychological, such as emotional support and role-modeling behaviour. This implies that academic library, being an educational institution, applies psychological mentoring since their staff exhibit patience, compassion and understanding in their job performance. This also shows some level of cooperation among the library staff having been mentored psychologically to accept and tolerate some situations. In response to this, Gordon (2014) also, included the ability to interpret accurately the mentee's frame of mind and mood as one of the excellent listening skills. This indicates that a mentor should be a good listener, who has concern over the mood and emotional state of his workers to improve on service delivery.

4. Career/Promotional Mentoring: Career mentoring is another type of mentoring programme that exposes the mentees to their rights, procedures and requirements for promotional and long-service, together with more opportunities of professional growth through research and collaborative works with experienced professional colleagues (mentors). Career mentoring is a specific kind of education mentoring that focuses on assisting the mentees navigate their career path and strategize to achieve development, promotion and growth in the chosen career. It is the ability of a mentor to advise, guide and coach a mentee with vast knowledge and experiences towards a successful career path. In other words, it is a formal or informal experiential, professional advise, coaching and guidance to mentees or young people in a given field, to choose and attain a successful career path or goals. Hussey and Campbell-Meier (2020) opine that new library and information science professionals, without previous experience in information organisations are often left adrift, unsure how to apply theory or best practice to a new work environment.

Many graduates of library and information profession are not in anyway conversant with the trends in their own field neither are they aware of entrepreneurial windows in their profession due to poor career mentorship. The researchers add that career mentoring is very necessary in academic libraries because diversification of librarians are needed and career mentors are also

required to direct the young librarians in their chosen careers and specialization. This will also be beneficial to the growth and survival of the library.

However, career mentoring is necessary and needs to be encouraged in all organizations especially in tertiary institutions, where some academic librarians are educators in library instruction courses in General Studies and in Library Schools. The mentors' failure to expose other junior library staff to career mentoring, will keep many staff static in their professions and no improvement in delivery of library services. To this, Marshall and Harrington (2011), recognize career assistance as part of training for workers as they expose the need for career mentoring which comprises: advice on preparation of promotion and tenure materials, opens doors for opportunities, helps with certain professional goals and assists with networking. In all, career mentoring is necessary and needs to be encouraged in all organizations especially in tertiary institutions where the academic library is attached for improvement in the delivery of library services (Goodsett, 2015).

5. Resource Team Mentoring: The resource team mentoring has been perceived by many scholars to be the same as the group mentoring programme. Zubair (2020) (NR). perceives team mentoring to be the same as group mentoring. According to Zubair, team mentoring is a situation where an individual serves as a mentor overseeing multiple mentees. It can also be in the reverse order, when a mentee has several mentors and participants meet at a fixed time (Reeves, 2023). The team mentoring encourages collaboration among mentees and mentors for the achievement of their common goals of learning and development. This means that resource team mentoring involves a symbiotic relationship that benefits both mentee and the mentor and it also means that resource team mentoring accepts that mentors can also, tap a modern knowledge from a younger mentee. From the foregoing, the researcher agrees that the group mentoring and the resource

team mentoring are closely the same because they share the same characteristics and work as a team which means they can be used interchangeably.

**6. E-Mentoring:** E-mentoring is also referred to as tele-mentoring that provides flexibility and easy access, benefits those who may face barriers to being mentored because of their gender, ethnicity, disability or geographical location (Naiyeju et al, 2021). The e-mentoring has become one of the latest types of mentoring obtainable globally due to rapid technological changes which has broken the four walls of physical boundaries and it encourages training, directing, advising, and transferring the experiential knowledge of the mentee through the medium of information communication technology or network of computers (Internet). Participants can receive the mentor's coaching, guidance and experiences through online connection or zoom due to rise in distant or remote jobs especially, in this 21st century era. It has been observed that many people can easily connect to their mentors virtually, globally at the same time and receive training and mentorship from their mentees. This will increase the number of participants in electronic mentoring than in the physical traditional or face-to-face mentoring. In addition, the e-mentoring has no geographical boundary for the participants to benefit from each other.

Mentors and mentees use tools such as e-mail, instant messaging, video communication and social media to communicate. The most effective way to promote self-efficacy among commuters was maintaining strong relationships between the e-mentor, telecommuters, management and the families of telecommuters (Levine, 2019).

**7. Reverse Mentoring:** This type of mentoring in academic libraries is not common here in Nigeria but in some advanced countries, such as New York. Two universities such as Wake Forest University and City University of New York adopted reverse mentoring as a component part of peer-group mentoring model. Reverse mentoring is a collaborative relationship which exists between the young technologically-driven librarian who exchanges his modern ideas and

digital library practices with the long-aged librarians who in turn, enculturates him with institutional knowledge and culture, together with career development and shares knowledge of the institutional culture and how to navigate the professional world. It increases job satisfaction and improves morale; improves work and leadership capabilities; results in improved teamworking and a better ability for employees to understand the perspective of others in the organization, and may even benefit recruiting and retention efforts.

**8. Community of Practice (CoP)**: A Community of Practice provides a place and space for mentors and mentees to share experiences, seek advice on any challenges they are having in the library or any organisation. CoP is a group of people who share a common interest in a topic and/or, practice who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals. CoPs often focus on sharing good practice and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of a CoP. Successes, challenges are shared, notes swapped and approaches and resources are shared that are beneficial to mentees as well as mentors. In a study on Mentoring Community of Practice by Holland (2018),,findings revealed that mentoring CoP engagement through workshops leads to effectiveness and sustainability of continuing professional development and learning process.

Cop involves updating one another with hopes, fears, challenges, barriers, successes and triumphs (Chevaker & Buckers, 2013). A time committed to planning, evaluation, reflection, and speculation is typically demonstrated in CoPs (Uoyd & Beard, cited in Keay, 2006) CoPs provide members with the community space to participate in the shared activities which prompts them to assist each other with identifying solution (Wenger, 2008).

### **Benefits of Mentoring in Academic Libraries**

The presence of a mentoring programme can be especially beneficial for a mentee in the first stages of his/her career, when the individual is forming an "occupational identity" and

envisioning long-term career goals. A mentoring programme can greatly nurture that investment and ensure that new employees are satisfied in their positions. In addition to improved retention and integration of new employees, mentoring programmes can enhance communication and productivity in the workplace. In an exploration by Harrington and Marshall (2011) on formal and informal mentoring in Canadian academic libraries, most participants agreed that mentoring programmes that focus on psychological support, career help and role modeling are effective and important to the development of new librarians. Freedman (2009) agrees that a mentoring programme can bring about a general atmosphere of productivity and engagement for a library.

Similarly, Osif (2009) confirms the value of mentoring programme in a variety of academic libraries while stressing on the effectiveness on the library staff. Lee (2009), in the same vein added that librarians usually meet up with promotional requirements and achieve promotion despite their heavy loads after a session of mentoring activities. Wake Forest University library (2013), which adopted reverse mentoring maintains that it allows the new librarian to feel like a valuable contributor to the relationship and provides opportunities for professional development of librarians. Librarians from California State University affirm that mentoring ensures continuity successful team collaboration. Mentoring programmes serve as a platform by which ideas can be shared and other activities that help retain the momentum of the team in the library.

Mentoring programmes play transitional role of assisting librarians to navigate, leading to long-aged expertise in the profession. Mentoring programmes have changed the traditional perspective of librarians to a modern interactive way, through training on new technological facilities that ease information service delivery. Administratively, mentoring programmes play futuristic role by preparing library and information professionals to take up managerial responsibilities after sessions of mentoring activities. If a role model (mentor), possessing varied experiences in librarianship should mentor other staff timely, from the period of recruitment, by

providing necessary veritable knowledge and information to the mentees there would be an allround change in the discharge of functions thereby, rendering effective library services for optimum satisfaction of users.

The goal of mentoring in tertiary institutions' library is to nurture, train, teach, coach and help mentees to acquire skills among other capabilities (Zhang, Deyoe & Matveya, 2007). Hall (2009), noted that mentoring programmes have produced additional knowledge, experiences, education to the mentees in the library in order to discharge their roles and improve the quality of library services delivered to users of information. Mentoring in academic libraries reflect on one's expectations and gains exposure to changes in the profession that new librarians may learn from.

### **Challenges to Mentoring Programme in Academic Libraries**

Academic libraries, just as other organisations, face mentoring barriers. These barriers deter the successful application and implementation of mentoring. The following challenges may likely be a barrier to mentoring in academic libraries:

1. Unrealistic Expectations and Assumptions: Mentees who may be given excessive information may experience difficulty in assimilating the information at once. In addition, over expectations from the mentees can be a barrier to the smooth relationship between the mentees and the mentors. In relation to this assertion, Accipio (n.d) in her contribution to the barriers to coaching and mentoring, noted that unrealistic expectations and assumptions can wreak havoc on a mentee - mentor relationship. Furthermore, overloading the mentee with information and expecting the mentee to become the mentor's clone are the two examples of unrealistic expectations that can have a negative impact on the relationship of both parties. In academic libraries, the mentor should weigh the amount of information given to the mentees so as to be equal to the capability of the mentee. It is therefore, needful for mentees to call the attention of

the mentors if overloaded with unexpected information during mentoring as well as define their set goals before mentoring programmes begin.

- 2. Ineffective Mentoring Pairs: Obviously, the work team in mentorship can pose a barrier to mentoring programmes. Not all mentoring pairs agree in the discharge of duties and attainment of objectives. When improper march is made in mentoring programme, little or no progress will be achieved. Guider (2021), opines that improper match may occur for many reasons and job reassignments may come up which affects the mentoring pair programme. The library administration, should be quick to discover such barrier and proffer solution to it if the pair is not working, otherwise, a balanced change should be made for work effectiveness in the library. Guider further suggests the use of algorithm to create a perfect match for mentees and mentors.
- 3. Resentment or Jealousy from Others: In some organizations, selection of mentors may affect the progress of the mentoring programme because workers may feel cheated or ignored in the selection of mentees or mentors depending on the organizational size. This in turn, breeds jealousy or resentment thereby, preventing the goal attainment of the academic library. Smith, Jones and Brown (2019), highlight that resentment and jealousy are part of the challenging factors to mentoring programmes.
- 4. Lack of Commitment by Mentees and Mentors: One of the major challenges that pose a barrier to mentoring relationships is lack of commitment by mentors and mentees in keeping to their meeting schedules. There are inadequate experienced and dedicated mentors across all professions. Udo-Anyanwu (2022), states that the lack of mentors in various organizations such as academic libraries has resulted to self-mentorship whereby the mentee learns by himself without any mentor to guide him rather, he learns through trial and error. Johnson and Smith (2020) emphasized on the issue of lack of commitment among mentees and mentors in academic libraries as a challenging factor to mentoring programme. There may be a failure in meeting up

with the time during mentoring training programmes. Madison (n.d.), while writing on the strategies to address mentoring challenges, noted that energy commitment in keeping to meeting times is a barrier to good mentoring relationships. The author further stresses that both mentees and mentors should recall their responsibility and commitment to their training programme, as failure to meet at the scheduled time, poses a threat to the mentoring programme/training. Both mentees and mentors should map out their meeting time and maintain commitment to it.

- **5. Lack of Motivation of Employees/Mentors:** When employees are inadequately motivated, they may not be eager and gladly mentor their junior ones or expose them to necessary knowledge and experiences. In academic libraries in Nigeria, where most librarians are poorly motivated, they may feel less concerned to pass their experiences and knowledge to the newly recruited library workers. Madison emphasized on the poor motivations of the mentors in work places which is a barrier to practicing a good mentorship programme.
- **6. Dealing with Conflicting Demands of Mentees and Conflicting Advice of Mentors:** The diversity of mentees can also cause diversity of demands from the mentees. In similar development, where you have diverse mentors mentoring the mentees, it can pose conflicting advice which may confuse the mentees as they may find it difficult to know which advice to take from each of the mentors. Contributing to this subject, Smith, Jones and Brown (2019), critically emphasized on the conflicting demands and advice of mentors as part of the challenges to mentoring relationships in organizations such as libraries. This also, affects the achievement of library goals.
- **7. Poor Communication:** Poor communication between the mentees and mentors is a challenging factor to mentorship programme. This is because each of the parties may find it difficult to be expressive to one another in terms of any need. Mentees and mentors are advised

to communicate effectively amongst themselves to avoid the barrier of lack of good communication in academic libraries.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted the Social Learning Theory. The Social Learning Theory was propounded by a Psychologist named Albert Bandura in 1977. This theory suggests that individuals learn through observing and imitating others, and it could be applied to understand how mentoring relationships influence learning and development. This means that academic librarians, through mentoring programmes such as single mentoring, career mentoring, Community of Practice, among others enhance learning and develop the librarians through their career paths. Mentors are models and individuals can learn through modeling by learning directly from their experienced mentors.

## Conclusion

The paper concludes that academic libraries and other organizations, make use of mentoring programmes and that traditional one-on-one mentoring is applied unconsciously on daily basis. However, other types of mentoring programs such as formal mentoring, ementoring, group mentoring, Community of Practice, are mostly practiced by academic libraries but most libraries are yet to be engaged in situational or workshop mentoring perhaps for lack of funding and experienced mentors.

#### Recommendations

1. Long-term and experienced mentors in academic libraries should be encouraged to mentor the young workers. Since almost all the jobs are learnt on the job, most young librarians lack the practical skills required in their profession. The long-aged librarians should not withhold their knowledge and skills from the young librarians for posterity.

- 2. There should be strong internet connection in all academic libraries during e-mentoring sections since many may be connecting to the program during the telecommuting mentoring programme.
- 3. Workshop mentoring should be introduced in academic libraries to practically learn the cataloguing and classification skills which most librarians are afraid of.
- 4. Care must be taken when relying on the mentors because some of them may fail in their duties to mentor the mentees. There should not be reliance on only one mentor to avoid delays and poor mentorship.
- 5. The mentors should not set unrealistic goals for the mentees but they need to be selective in picking the achievable goals within a time frame. It is pertinent to note that both mentees and mentors should practice good and proper time management each time they schedule for a mentoring program.
- 6. Mentees should learn to apply their personal knowledge in their discharge of duties and not to be dominated by the mentors 'initiatives. Mentees in academic libraries should learn to be an independent thinker.
- 7. Academic libraries and other organizations should develop a mentoring training program with policy back-up to enable proper and regular training program for the academic library staff or any other organization who may need mentoring programme for organizational job performance.

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