

**CHALLENGES AND AND ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES OF MENTORSHIP
PRACTICES FOR EFFICIENT CAREER GROWTH OF LIBRARIANS IN ACADEMIC
LIBRARIES IN NORTH-CENTRAL, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study examined the challenges and enhancement strategies on mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North-Central, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised of 428 librarians in public academic libraries. The instruments used were self-structured questionnaire and interview method. The study employed the use of a four-point rating-scale questionnaire for data collection from respondents. The copies of the questionnaires 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, contributing to their professional development. The study recommended that the administration of the academic libraries should make sure that maximum attention is paid to the areas of librarians' professional growth that call for mentoring practices; as technology develops, librarian should engage in virtual mentorship as it is a useful tool; they should communicate online with mentors or mentees through virtual mentorship, bypassing geographical limitations.

Key Terms: Mentorship, Challenges, Strategies, Academic Libraries, Career Growth, Librari

Introduction

In the global context, academic libraries, especially the ones that employed mentorship practices are seemingly commonplace. Ezema et al., (2022) buttressed those higher educational institutions are critically in the developmental agenda, particularly the present knowledge economy propelled by digital technology. Challenges are part of human life, man's quest for survival in his endeavour, is always confronted with some kinds of hurdles hence, the basis of carrying out research to proffer solutions as strategies. Consequently, education managers are currently repositioning these institutions to mitigate the globalization challenges to address the needs of the local communities and above all, to favourably compete with other academic institutions across the globe Ezema et al, (2022). Therefore, academic libraries have always been the vintage position to support these institutions in teaching, learning, research and community services which are the core mandates of higher educational institutions to achieve their missions and visions as they posited. Similarly, academic libraries as affirmed by Ugwuanyi, Ojobor and Ugwu (2022) are those libraries established to serve tertiary institutions and are central to their learning, teaching and research enterprises.

A librarian according to the University of Iowa (2023), is someone who collects, records, organizes, stores, preserves, retrieves, and disseminates printed or digital information. Mole (2023) also sees a librarian as a generalist, who does not know everything about something but knows something about everything. There are several different kinds of librarians with unique roles within their community and one example is the academic librarians who work with colleges, polytechnics and universities libraries. Librarians are of various categories, including academic, public, special, or school librarian. Omokaro (2022)

defines an academic librarian to refers to that person who acquired professional/specialist qualifications in library and information science and is involves in the teaching and researches on library and information science. Furthermore, a librarian should be skilled in planning and using relevant systems, in capturing and securing information, and in accessing it to deliver service whenever the information is required. These librarians need to be trained and acquire skills of organizing the resources and to grow up the ladder (career growth) to ensure high productivity and efficiency in their service delivery.

Mentorship is regarded as a process and key to personal growth and career development (Akintunde, 2015). It 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). The focus of mentoring is to help the other person climb the ladders of success. Most of the time, it takes place informally without needing any guidelines or a certain structure such as in formal education. The role of a mentor can vary depending on the position and the mentee's needs. EWOR Team, 2022 sees a mentor as anything from guidance to emotional support and is someone who shares the story behind their personal development with someone who is less experienced or new in a field and guides them.

Career is a field for or pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement especially in public, or business life (Greenhaus, 2020). It 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 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.

Statement of the Problem

Consequent upon the implementation of the required mentoring programmes in the academic libraries, the growth of librarians leaves to be desired as expected and desirable professional career growth will be achieved. Challenges associated with mentorship practices are employed for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria is low, given that, career growth of employees is natural in any work place through acquiring mentoring training and other requisite training/skills from experienced person where it is practiced but as observed by the researcher it seems the reverse is the case which in most cases result into low productivity, reluctance, brain drain, discouragement, dissatisfaction, staff turnover, stagnation etc. hence, the need to carry out this study to fill the gap.

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, the implication is that, low productivity, reluctance toward work, discouragement, dissatisfaction, stagnation, staff turnover and brain drain seem to be experienced in the organizations. Hence, the need to devise strategies for the enhancement of mentorship practices for career growth of librarians in academic libraries in the area covered.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What are the challenges associated with mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians?
2. What are the strategies for enhancing mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria?

Review of Literature

Academic Libraries

Academic institutions are operated based upon the reservoir of information and knowledge the libraries provide. Moreover, in support to the propositions above, Agbo, Echezona, and Ozioko (2022) defined academic libraries as libraries established in institutions of higher learning such as universities, polytechnics, mono-technics and colleges of education. Consequently, Ozioko (2022) outlined the general objectives of academic libraries to include; conservation of knowledge amassed from time immemorial, dissemination of knowledge through teaching, learning, publication and extension programmes, helping the faculty and students to achieve highest academic honour, adopting new techniques, and establishing information centers.

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. 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.

Mentorship Practices

Mentorship practices can be seen as important in succession planning and equipping the next generation of librarians with the tools necessary to ensure the survival of the profession in achieving organizational target in conformity with what Unika and Dionne (2021), stressed and maintained that, it is not a novel concept to professional institutions of which libraries are a part. Mentorship programs have been either formal or informal based on institutional needs. It 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 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 therefore, need to have eye on those aspiring librarians who have distinguished themselves in the desired position of office. It is also 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). Traditionally, mentoring is viewed as a dyadic, face-to-face, long-term relationship between a supervisory adult and a novice student that fosters the mentees' professional, academic, or personal development (Shehu, 2018). Mentoring relates primarily to the identification and nurturing of potential for the whole person.

Challenges Associated with Mentorship Practices and Career Growth of Librarians in Academic Libraries

The inadequate allotment of time throughout the work and absence of a structured mentorship style have been identified as obstacles and challenges. The librarians according to Nwankwo, Ike & Anozie (2017) believed that most times the mentee's inability to open up during interaction, and unconstructive criticisms from mentors to their mentees; are serious challenges to successful mentoring for improved scholarly publications. They also reiterated that, research studies focusing on mentoring young librarians on research and scholarly publications in Nigeria, are rare. However, librarians are not conversant with the concept of mentoring and which mentoring practices and programmes are currently in place in their

libraries to boost their research prowess. Also, they maintained that, adopting a mentor and what to expect from both mentors and mentees concerning research publications are salient areas explored in the work that project and required skills which are sometimes posing lots of hinderances. In the same vein, (Ugwu, (2018) also projected university libraries in Nigeria to be facing challenges arising from poor funding, increasing user demands, and a competitive information environment. Supporting the above assertion, Amaechi, Enweani and Eke (2018) added that “the challenges to effective transformation of academic libraries in the 21st century include: poor funding, indifferent attitudes of library managers, absence of well-defined and uniform library policies and non-compliance with the demands of ICT.

While looking at the challenges associated with mentorship practices and career growth of librarians in academic libraries Otsonu, et al., (2016) affirmed that, the challenges associated with staff development in the special libraries are similar to that of academic libraries which include lack of fund for developing library programmes, poor budgetary allocation to academic libraries, lack of more sponsored programmes for staff development, discrimination against library staff by the management of parents’ organizations and lack of due process in staff selection for trainings.

Strategies for enhancing mentorship practice for efficient career growth of Librarians in academic libraries

Strategies for enhancing mentorship practice for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries among other benefits, are to enhance the capability of academic libraries to contribute positively to the reality of knowledge society in contemporary Nigerian society Achebe (2009). The author identified the practical implications of these to include: retraining of librarians through the provision of adequate funding; provision of relevant and functional

ICT facilities relevant to the Nigerian libraries and formulation of viable library policies which are practical steps that can be taken to transform Nigerian libraries by relevant bodies.

In confirmation, Amaechi, Enweani and Eke, (2018) stressed that the transformation of library and information centers is all about improving product and services offered in Nigerian libraries including academic libraries to meet the needs and demands of knowledge society, transforming academic libraries enhances the capability of libraries to contribute positively to the reality of knowledge society in contemporary Nigerian society. Some of the strategies for the enhancement of mentorship and career growth as asserted and discussed extensively by (Otsonu, et al., 2016) were, lecture method, job rotation, coaching method, mentorship, among other methods used for staff development in academic libraries, it can be used for enhancing career growth of librarians. In a similar way, Demi (2018) agreed that, mentoring strategies for librarians' career growth in academic libraries can be of various types that takes place in an organization depending on the structures, goals and policies in place.

Research Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey research design to explore and describe the views, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, etc. on a phenomenon, event or practice to determine the characteristics, features or facts about the population. Two research questions guided the study. The population of the study covers all the four hundred and twenty-eight (428) librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria. The study employed the use of a four-point rating-scale. The copies of the questionnaires 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.

RESULTS

The Findings of the Study

Research question: What are the challenges associated with mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians?

Table 1: Mean responses of respondent on the challenges associated with mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians.

n=346

		SCHOOL OWNERSHIP				OVERALL		R	D
		STATE MEAN	SD	FEDERAL MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD		
1	Lack of fund for developing library programmes	3.41	.72	3.33	.79	3.36	.77	5 th	A
2	Poor budgetary allocation to academic libraries	3.41	.76	3.39	.69	3.40	.71	3 rd	A
3	Lack of more sponsored programmes for staff development	3.58	.71	3.58	.74	3.58	.73	1 st	A
4	Indifferent attitudes of library managers	3.62	.55	3.55	.66	3.57	.63	2 nd	A
5	Absence of well-defined and uniform library policies	3.35	.79	3.32	.79	3.33	.79	7 th	A
6	Non-compliance with the demands of ICT	3.45	.76	3.29	.80	3.35	.79	6 th	A
7	Discrimination against library staff by the management of parents' organizations	1.82	.93	3.28	.78	2.78	1.09	15 th	A
8	lack of due process in staff selection for trainings	3.24	.73	3.13	.87	3.17	.83	9 th	A
9	Turnover/turnover intentions (librarians leaving the profession)	2.13	.96	3.37	.81	2.94	1.04	13 th	A
10	Lack of well – trained manpower	3.66	.63	3.24	.86	3.38	.82	4 th	A
11	Some library administrators do not know their workers' professional needs	3.08	1.05	2.91	1.10	2.97	1.08	12 th	A
12	Absence of immediate and requisite reward after training	2.12	1.16	2.09	1.09	2.10	1.12	18 th	D
13	Inability to do transfer of knowledge after training	3.12	.92	2.84	.83	2.93	.87	14 th	A
14	Absence of training policy guidelines	3.03	1.09	2.25	.94	2.52	1.06	17 th	A
15	Training curriculum may not be properly aligned with the work demands	3.35	.90	2.78	1.12	2.98	1.08	11 th	A
16	Non-challan attitudes of some library administrators toward librarians	3.25	1.01	3.34	.86	3.31	.92	8 th	A
17	Not returning to school for further course of study	2.74	1.14	3.11	.97	2.99	1.04	10 th	A
18	Not allowing rotation of workers from one section of the library to another	2.43	1.14	2.70	1.17	2.61	1.17	16 th	A
	Cluster Mean	3.04	.89	3.08	.88	3.07	.92		

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

Using the criterion mean of 2.50, the result revealed that the respondents agreed that the challenges include lack of more sponsored programmes for staff development ($\bar{X}=3.58$, $SD=.73$); indifference attitudes of library managers ($\bar{X}=3.57$, $SD=.63$); Poor budgetary allocation to academic libraries ($\bar{X}=3.40$, $SD=.71$); lack of well – trained manpower ($\bar{X}=3.38$, $SD=.82$); lack of fund for developing library programmes ($\bar{X}=3.36$, $SD=.77$); Non-compliance with the demands of ICT ($\bar{X}=3.35$, $SD=.79$); absence of well-defined and uniform library policies ($\bar{X}=3.33$, $SD=.79$); nonchalant attitudes of some library administrators toward librarians ($\bar{X}=3.31$, $SD=.92$); and lack of due process in staff selection for trainings ($\bar{X}=3.33$, $SD=.79$). All the items had their mean values above the criterion mean of 2.50 set for decision rule. The standard deviations of the 10 items ranged from .63-1.17; indicating that the respondents were homogenous in their response. The results of oral interview indicate that majority of the interviewees were of the view that mentorship is crucial for the career development of librarians, but it's not without its challenges.

Research question: What are the strategies for enhancing mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean responses of respondent on the strategies for enhancing mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria.

n=346

		SCHOOL OWNERSHIP				OVERALL		R	D
		STATE	SD	FEDERAL	SD	MEAN	SD		
	MEAN								
1	Provision of funds for developing library programmes	3.66	.51	3.54	.62	3.58	.59	1 st	VA
2	Provision of adequate budgetary allocation for academic libraries	3.53	.67	3.49	.65	3.50	.66	4 th	VA
3	More sponsored programmes for development	3.60	.53	3.50	.66	3.53	.62	2 nd	VA

	of librarians									
4	Creation of conducive environment for librarians by library managers	3.47	.69	3.46	.65	3.46	.66	9 th	A	
5	Provision of well-defined and uniform library policies	3.57	.62	3.46	.77	3.49	.72	5 th	A	
6	Full compliance with the demands of ICT	3.37	.82	3.41	.82	3.40	.82	12 th	A	
7	No discrimination against library staff by the management of parents' organizations	3.36	.75	3.36	.71	3.36	.72	16 th	A	
8	Observation of due process in staff selection for trainings	3.36	.68	3.42	.61	3.40	.64	13 th	A	
9	Improved remunerations for librarians	3.30	.78	3.39	.71	3.36	.73	17 th	A	
10	Provision of well – trained manpower	3.42	.72	3.37	.82	3.39	.79	14 th	A	
11	Library administrators should know their workers' professional needs	3.45	.75	3.50	.67	3.49	.69	6 th	A	
12	Provision of immediate and requisite reward after training	3.21	.90	3.39	.69	3.33	.77	18 th	A	
13	Ability to do transfer of knowledge after training	3.45	.65	3.40	.64	3.42	.64	11 th	A	
14	Provision of training policies and guidelines for librarians	3.46	.57	3.42	.67	3.43	.64	10 th	A	
15	Training curriculum should properly align with the work demands	3.54	.68	3.45	.67	3.48	.67	7 th	A	
16	Use of participation or inclusive management	3.44	.65	3.36	.78	3.38	.74	15 th	A	
17	Returning to school for further course of study	3.46	.73	3.47	.72	3.47	.72	8 th	A	
18	Rotating workers from one section of the library to another	3.53	.73	3.50	.73	3.51	.73	3 rd	VA	
	Cluster Mean	3.45	.69	3.44	.70	3.44	.70		A	

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

Using the real limits of numbers, the result revealed that the respondents agreed that provision of funds for developing library programmes, provision of adequate budgetary allocation for academic libraries, more sponsored programmes for development of librarians, and rotating workers from one section of the library to another all are very appropriate strategies for enhancing mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria. The standard deviations of the entire 18 items ranged from .91-1.07; indicating that the respondents were homogenous in their response.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the recommendation was therefore made:

1. The study suggests that in order to overcome obstacles to librarians' professional development, academic administrators and library management should implement the following strategies: provide sufficient space and funds for librarians to mentor one another, establish library policies and see to them through to implementation, eliminate any sense of superiority or inferiority among mentees and mentors, and support mentors' willingness to share their knowledge.
2. There is the need to implement a system for regular monitoring and evaluating the progress of mentorship relationships. This can include regular check-ins, feedback sessions, and surveys to assess the effectiveness of the program. There is also need to ensure that mentors and mentees have access to resources and tools that can facilitate their growth and learning. This may include access to training materials, workshops, and networking opportunities

Conclusion

The general purpose of the study is to determine the challenges associated with mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria. The Challenges associated with mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarian are both structural and non-structural factors. (poor budgetary allocation, lack of well-trained manpower, lack of more sponsored programmes for staff development, non-compliance with the demand of ICT, absence of well-defined and uniform policies, indifferent attitudes of library managers etc.) and the strategies for enhancing mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries to include: provision of funds for developing library programmes, more sponsored programmes for development of

librarians, rotating workers from one section of the library to another, provision of adequate budgetary allocation for academic libraries and among others. The major findings of the study conclude that mentorship plays a significant role in the career growth of librarians in academic libraries, contributing to their professional development. The researcher therefore advocates for extensive mentor-mentee relationship. The study therefore contributes to knowledge in this regard, especially in the field of Library and Information Science.

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