

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

By

MICHAEL YIL'EP DEMI, (CLN, CMLN)

FAROUQ OLAKUNLE MALIK,

EUCHARIA EBUBECHI AMADI,

And

PHANUEL UMORIYA PATRICK,

Abstract

This study examined the contributions of mentorship practices to efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North-Central, Nigeria. The purpose identified the contributions of mentorship practices to career growth of librarians. Two research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised of 428 librarians in public academic libraries. Self-structured questionnaire and interview method were constructed. The study employed the use of a four-point rating-scale questionnaire for data collection from respondents. 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. It recommended that the administrators of academic libraries should ensure 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, Contributions, Challenges, Academic Libraries, Career Growth, Librarians

Introduction

Mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries comes with lots of benefits and contributions 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, it enhances collaborations between senior and junior librarians and giving greater knowledge of career success to librarians Demi (2023). Mentorship practices contribute to more qualified librarians, increase remunerations for librarians, it provides incentives to keep up-date- with professional development of librarians, improved skills of librarians, improves team work among librarians and formulation of viable library policies for librarians. Mentoring helps mentees to improve particular career areas and explore their potentials in development areas yet untapped as well as acquaint them with the organization if newly hired. Mentoring has been acknowledged to orient younger librarians in the field as well as address diverse questions of mid-career librarians etc.

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. 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 Ezema et al, (2022) 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.

Academic librarian as defined by Omokaro (2022) refers to that person who acquired professional/specialist qualifications in library and information science and is involved in the teaching and researches on library and information science. 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 (information professionals) who work with colleges and universities libraries. Librarians are of various categories, including academic, public, special, or school librarian.

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). 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). 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). It is regarded as a process and key to personal growth and career development (Akintunde, 2015). Consequently, 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).

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. Career growth according to Woll (2022) is seen as the journey towards the big picture career vision. Career growth as defined by Dewar (2023) 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. The concept of career growth simply occurs when the person uses his resources, skills and background to create and reach professional goals or gain new employment in challenging positions (Career Guide, 2021).

The extent of challenges associated with mentorship practices 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.

Statement of the Problem

Contributions and challenges associated with mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries comes with lots of benefits and contributions 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, hence, result into low productivity, reluctance, brain drain, discouragement, dissatisfaction, staff turnover, stagnation etc.

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. On further enquiry, the researcher discovered that many of them 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, there is also issue of employees' turnover, as a result, a prompting question is raised, as to why are other librarians at the peak of the ladder whereas others are not? Bearing in mind the place of a librarian in an emerging trend of artificial intelligence and machines? It is on this scenario that the researcher decided to embark on this study. Based on the reasons raised above, prompted the need to conduct this current study to fill in the gap.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. To what extent does mentorship practices contribute to efficient career growth of librarians in the academic libraries?
2. What are the challenges associated with mentorship practices and career growth of librarians in academic libraries?

Review of Literature

Librarians

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. 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.

Mentorship Practices

Mentorship can be described as 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). Furthermore, 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. The 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. In organizations, especially the academic libraries, for new intake 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.

Efficient Career Growth

Career growth can be seen in the argument raised by Half (2022), where it stresses that managers 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 or competitors. 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 of librarians is sacrosanct and therefore need to be employed for efficient career progression for the greater good of the academic organization. Henrich (2010) who gave the notion that the utilization of mentoring activities by library administrators are undermined as most of these activities are not known and not put to use, this remains a fact that there must be awareness before utilization can take place.

Contributions or benefits of mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries

Mentorship practices contribute to career growth of librarians in academic libraries in the area of improving effectiveness in delivery of duties, giving confidence to librarians, increased headship positions for librarians, enhances collaborations between senior and junior librarians and giving greater knowledge of career success to librarians mentorship practice contributes to career growth in improving effectiveness in delivery of duties, giving confidence to librarians, more headship positions for librarians, it enhances collaborations between senior and junior librarians and giving greater knowledge of career success to librarians.

The practice contributes to more qualified librarians, increase remunerations for librarians, it provides incentives to keep up-date- with professional development of librarians, no delay in promotion of librarians, improved skills of librarians, improves team work among librarians and formulation of viable library policies for librarians. This supports the position of Triple Creek Association (2009) which gave the view that mentoring helps mentees to improve particular career areas and explore their potentials in development areas yet untapped as well as acquaint them with the organization if newly hired. Also, Nwanchukwu, Ike and Chinedu (2017) opined that mentoring has been acknowledged to orient younger librarians in the field as well as address diverse questions of mid-career librarians.

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

Findings of the study

Research question: To what extent does mentorship practices contribute to efficient career growth of librarians in the academic libraries?

Table 1: Mean responses of respondent on the extent to which mentorship practices contribute to efficient career growth of librarians in the academic libraries.
n=346

		SCHOOL OWNERSHIP				OVERALL		R	D
		STATE		FEDERAL					
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD		
1	Improved effectiveness in delivery of duties	3.64	.52	3.69	.48	3.67	.49	1 st	VHE
2	No delay in promotion of librarians	3.36	.82	3.33	.81	3.34	.81	9 th	HE
3	More headship positions for librarians	3.53	.80	3.62	.60	3.59	.67	3 rd	VHE
4	More qualified librarians	3.41	.81	3.47	.72	3.45	.75	6 th	HE
5	Increase remunerations for librarians	3.34	.79	3.47	.72	3.42	.75	7 th	HE
6	Improved skills of librarians	3.41	.71	3.26	.84	3.31	.80	10 th	HE
7	Improves team work among librarians	3.31	.74	3.28	.74	3.29	.74	11 th	HE
8	It enhances learning culture of librarians	3.14	.83	3.15	.86	3.15	.85	12 th	HE
9	Formulation of viable library policies for librarians	3.18	.97	3.10	1.03	3.12	1.01	13 th	HE
10	It provides incentives to keep up-date- with professional development of librarians	3.35	.87	3.43	.83	3.41	.84	8 th	HE
11	It enhances collaborations between senior and junior librarians	3.61	.78	3.55	.83	3.57	.81	4 th	VHE
12	It gives greater knowledge of career success to librarians	3.60	.56	3.53	.64	3.56	.62	5 th	VHE
13	It gives confidence to librarians	3.62	.55	3.63	.55	3.62	.55	2 nd	VHE
Cluster Mean		3.43	.75	3.42	.74	3.42	.75		

Keys: (VHE): Very High Extent, (HE): High Extent, (LE): Less Extent; (VLE): Very Low Extent.

Using the principle of real limit of numbers, responses as presented on Table 4 indicated that improved effectiveness in delivery of duties ($\bar{X}=3.67$, $SD=.49$); it gives confidence to librarians ($\bar{X}=3.62$, $SD=.55$); more headship positions for librarians ($\bar{X}=3.59$, $SD=.67$); it enhances collaborations between senior and junior librarians ($\bar{X}=3.57$, $SD=.81$), and it gives greater knowledge of career success to librarians ($\bar{X}=3.56$, $SD=.62$) ranked highest as contributions and were to a great extent. Others that contribute to a high extent include more qualified librarians ($\bar{X}=3.45$, $SD=.75$); increase remunerations for librarians ($\bar{X}=3.42$, $SD=.75$); it provides incentives to keep up-date- with professional development of librarians ($\bar{X}=3.41$, $SD=.84$); no delay in promotion of librarians ($\bar{X}=3.34$, $SD=.81$); and improved skills of librarians ($\bar{X}=3.31$, $SD=.80$). Also, the overall mean showed that improved effectiveness in delivery of duties ($\bar{X}=3.67$, $SD=.49$) and formulation of viable library policies for librarians ($\bar{X}=3.13$, $SD=1.01$) are ranked lowest with regards to extent to which mentorship practices contribute to efficient career growth of librarians in the academic libraries.

Through the oral interview, majority of the interview expressed that, librarians can benefit from mentors' experience in navigating the academic library landscape. Mentors can help mentees set career goals, identify suitable career paths, and make strategic decisions that align with their professional aspirations. This guidance ensures that librarians are on the right track and can efficiently advance in their careers.

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

Table 2: 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		FEDERAL					
		MEAN	SD	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	3.35	.90	2.78	1.12	2.98	1.08	11 th	A

	work demands									
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. One common challenge is finding the right mentor. Librarians often have

diverse specializations and career goals, so matching them with mentors who can provide relevant guidance can be tricky. According to a librarian from Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi State, "Cultural and generational differences can also present challenges. Mentors and mentees may come from different generations or cultural backgrounds, which can affect communication and understanding. Bridging these gaps is essential for successful mentorship.

Recommendations

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

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.

Conclusion

The general purpose of the study is to determine the contributions and challenges associated with mentorship practices for efficient career growth of librarians in academic libraries in North Central, Nigeria. The Challenges can be 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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