

Mentoring: A Collaborative Tool for Professional Development of Library and Information Science Professionals in Imo State.

By

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Abstract

This paper examined mentoring as a collaborative tool for professional development of library and information professionals in Imo State. It was guided by four (4) objectives and four (4) research questions. It adopted the survey research design. The population of the study was the 132 library professionals registered with the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Imo State Chapter. The instrument used to collect data for this study was researcher-made rating scale titled Mentoring: A Collaborative Tool for Professional Development of Library and Information Professionals (MCTPDLIP). Data collected were analysed using mean scores using 2.5 as the criterion mean. Findings showed that Library and Information Science professionals in Imo State have benefited through the various ways of mentoring; factors that encourage mentorship are: submission to be mentored, organized mentoring programmes (pairing of mentors/mentees), identified needs, reputation/fame building and a way of further learning; research productivity is the area of professional development that mentoring impacts most. The challenges of mentoring include: absence of mentoring orientation in librarianship, lack of openness/confidence, inadequate facilities, time factor, lack of policy on mentoring and lack of interest. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that: mentoring Library and Information Science professionals in Imo State should be sustained; Mentors should also be on the lookout for other evolving ways; newly employed and upcoming Library and Information Science professionals should always submit themselves to be mentored by their older colleagues; and awareness should be created on the relevance of mentoring.

Keywords: Mentoring, Library, Professional, Development,

Introduction

The most valuable resources in Nigerian tertiary institutions are the human resources. The success or failure of these citadels of learning depends to an extent on the contribution of the personnel employed. These human resources co-ordinate the other resources to achieve the goals of the organization in this case, the library. The achievement of library goals according to Onwubiko (2014) is fundamentally dependent upon the effective training of its human resources. To be effective, the

human resource needs to be developed. The development of human resources is referred to as professional development. One major way of doing this is through mentoring.

Mentoring is a learning process that leads to development and it is based on a personal relationship where an experienced person acts as a mentor and helps another less experience person referred to as mentee to develop as a professional in a bid to achieving professional goals. Mentoring in librarianship is a learning process that leads to development and it is based on a personal relationship where an experienced librarian acts as a mentor and helps a new librarian referred to as mentee to develop as a professional librarian in a bid to and achieving professional goals. Ozioko, Echezona and Osadebe (2012) opine that sometimes mentoring is a process where a senior librarian referred to as mentor in this context and a junior librarian referred to as a mentee build a healthy professional relationship with the aim of helping the junior librarian to grow in the career.

Despite the benefits that accrue from mentoring, libraries have not actually imbibed this culture. This situation is not farfetched as there are challenges that militate against it. The basic need of mentoring programme is vital for the enhancement of professional development in the academic libraries in Nigeria (Abraham, Sambe & Aba, 2014). Be that as it may, there is a strong belief that adequate provision of mentoring programmes, to library professionals is vital for the enhancement of professional development in the academic libraries in Nigeria, hence the need for this study.

Statement of the Problem

Every library and information science professional needs to develop professionally in order to fit in to the work environment and grow in the career. One of the ways of achieving this is through mentoring. It however appears that mentoring has not been fully adopted in the library profession. No wonder Nwabueze and Igwesi (2013), state that librarians more especially the newly employed ones in academic libraries have challenges in getting to know their expectations, routines, standards and organizational culture. This could be resolved through a well-organized mentorship programme. This study is therefore carried out to ascertain the place of mentorship in the professional development of library and information science professionals in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the ways of mentoring library and information science professionals in Imo State?
2. What factors encourage mentorship of library and information science professionals in Imo State?
3. What areas of professional development do mentoring impact most?
4. What are the challenges of mentoring library and information science professionals in Imo State?

Literature Review

Mentoring is focused primarily on the career development of someone less experience in field such as business and academic, (Chopra, Arora & Saint 2018). Mentorship is the experience of a skilled and competent employee through a working relationship between less experienced staff and a very experienced one.

Mentorship in the research arena entails meeting regularly with mentees to provide assistance with activities including grant funding and publishing in high impact journals (Byington & Keenan, 2017). Mentoring would encompass a variety of activities, including advising, teaching, coaching, advocacy, sponsoring and role modelling as well as assistance with personal development and achieving a work life balance, (Geraci & Thyphen 2017). The underlying philosophy of any mentoring programme according to Adeniji and Adeniji, (2010) is to allow the mentees find the best in themselves, live up to their personal visions and enhance their potentialities and skills.

With advancement in technology, mentoring can be carried out electronically. This is referred to as e-mentoring. E-mentoring may employ blogs, e-mail and real-time technology like chats and instant messaging. Enrich (2013) views e-mentoring as the one that relies on computer-mediated communication such as email and other electronic communication technologies to enable mentoring to take place.

Mentoring strategies is however categorized into formal and informal mentoring. Sodipe and Madukoma (2013) categorized these strategies into two: traditional form which is informal in nature and the formal mentoring which assumes different forms such as: peer group and electronic mentoring. In informal mentoring,

the pairing process relies completely on a process of natural selection. It also the individual participants that decide the terms of their relationships and the activities they will undertake. Formal mentoring on the other hand is usually initiated by an organization with the expectation that both mentees and mentors will participate and benefit. It is usually geared towards achieving an organisational goal. Idoko, Ugwuanyi and Osadebe's (2016) study discovered that informal mentoring strategy is the main strategy in use for professional development of librarians in the universities they studied.

Formal mentoring takes place when the relationship is facilitated by the organization or professional association. In the view of Asadu (2010), mentees are systematically matched with mentors based on parameters set by administrators who have little personal knowledge of mentors and mentees. Informal mentoring refers to one-to-one relationship where selection is dependent on the personal choice of the mentor or the mentee. According to Sodipe and Madukoma (2013), it happens spontaneously based on mutual respect and rapport. It can occur when someone with more experience takes a special interest in the career of a less experienced colleague who he recognized as having potentials or talent. It can also happen when a less experienced individual approaches an experienced senior colleague who he believes can help him gain new knowledge and skills. It is usually unplanned, unstructured and without the involvement of any organization.

Several literature have documented the benefits of mentorship, which include increased research productivity, faster academic promotion and career satisfaction

(Tjan 2017). While learning, growth and development may occur in many different types of work and close personal relationships, mentoring relationships are unique because their primary focus is on career growth and development (Ragins & Kram, 2019). For Bello and Mansor (2013) mentorship has been proved to be very excellent in putting library staff back to the development of their talents, skills and career advancement thereby enhancing service delivery in the library. Freedman (2019) concludes that a mentoring programme can bring about a general atmosphere of productivity and engagement for a library. Lee (2019) posits that librarians usually meet up with promotional requirements and achieve promotion despite their heavy loads after a session of mentoring activities.

Despite the benefits of mentoring, David-West and Nmecha (2019) identified lack of sincere desire to share knowledge by the mentor and inability of both mentor and the mentee to keep to goals and objectives of the relationship as challenges of mentorship. The challenges to effective mentoring among librarians as identified by Nwabueze and Anike (2016) include unconstructive criticism by the mentor to the mentee, broken confidentiality by both the mentor and the mentee, absence of mentoring orientation in librarianship. Fasola and Mamudu (2020) revealed in their findings that the challenges of mentoring were the issue of broken confidence in both mentor and the mentee, absence of mentoring orientation in the practice of librarianship, lack of orientation of librarians on the need for mentoring. Brewerton (2010) posited that as with any staff development programme, there will always be challenges which include: inability to keep to plans, the mentee becoming too

dependent on the mentor for all decisions, development of inappropriate emotional feelings as a result of the close nature of the relationship as well as professional jealousy from colleagues.

Research Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study was the 127 library professionals registered with the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Imo State Chapter. The instrument used to collect data for this study was researcher-made rating scale titled Mentoring: A Collaborative Tool for Professional Development of Library and Information Professionals (MCTPDLIP). Data collected was analysed using mean scores using 2.5 as the criterion mean.

Results

The research instrument was forwarded to all the members of the Association but 91 members completed the instrument showing a 72% return rate. Analyses were done based on that.

Table 1: Ways of Mentoring Library and Information Science Professionals in Imo State.

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Individual mentoring	43(172)	31(93)	10(20)	7(7)	3.21	Positive
2.	Group mentoring	28(112)	31(93)	22(44)	10(10)	2.85	Positive
3.	Career mentoring	28(112)	40(120)	15(30)	8(8)	2.97	Positive
4.	Informal mentoring	18(72)	56(168)	17(34)	-	3.01	Positive
5.	Sponsorship to conferences/seminars/workshops	13(52)	46(138)	22(44)	10(10)	2.68	Positive
6.	Practical training	25(100)	34(102)	27(54)	5(5)	2.87	Positive
7.	e-mentoring	13(52)	37(111)	28(56)	13(13)	2.55	Positive
8.	Participation in professional associations	31(124)	43(129)	10(20)	7(7)	3.08	Positive

Analyses in Table 1 indicate that Library and Information Science professionals in Imo State have benefited through the various ways of mentoring. This is evidenced in all the items having mean scores above the 2.50 criterion mean. Ranking highest is individual mentoring with a mean score of 3.21. This is followed by participation in professional associations (3.08), informal mentoring (3.01), career mentoring (2.97), practical training (2.87), group mentoring (2.85), sponsorship to conferences/seminars/workshops (2.68) and e-mentoring (2.55).

This finding is in tandem with that of Idoko, Ugwuanyi and Osadebe's (2016); Nwabueze and Anike (2016); Fasola and Mamudu (2020) and Ubogu (2019) who discovered that various ways of mentoring to include; informal mentoring, participation in professional association and provision of sponsorship for conferences, and seminars.

Table 2: Factors that Encourage Mentorship of Library and Information Science Professionals in Imo State.

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Submission to be Mentored	46(184)	36(109)	9(18)	-	3.42	Positive
2.	Organized mentoring programmes (Pairing of mentor/mentees)	21(84)	46(138)	24(48)	-	2.97	Positive
3.	Mentorship as a criteria for promotion	-	37(111)	38(76)	16(16)	2.23	Negative
4.	Identified needs	28(112)	51(153)	12(24)	-	3.18	Positive
5.	Reputation/Fame building	13(52)	46(138)	25(50)	7(7)	2.71	Positive
6.	A way of further learning	24(96)	54(162)	13(26)	-	3.12	Positive
7.	Giving incentives to mentors	12(48)	35(105)	29(58)	15(15)	2.48	Negative

Analyses in Table 2 clearly reveal the factors that encourage mentorship of Library and Information Science professionals in Imo State. The factors are: submission to be mentored (3.42), organized mentoring programmes (pairing of mentors/mentees) (2.97), identified needs (3.18), reputation/fame building (2.71) and a way of further learning (3.12). However, mentorship as a criteria for promotion and giving incentives to mentors were not seen as positive factors that encourage mentorship as both of them got 2.23 and 2.48 mean scores respectively which are below the 2.50 criterion mean score. It is of note that submission to be mentored ranked highest.

This finding corroborates that of Asadu (2010) that mentees are systematically matched with mentors based on parameters set by administrators who have little personal knowledge of mentors and mentees. Informal mentoring refers to one-to-one relationship where selection is dependent on the personal choice of the mentor or the mentee, and the assertion of Sodipe and Madukoma (2013), that it happens spontaneously based on mutual respect and rapport. However, giving incentives to mentors not chosen as a motivating factors does not agree with the opinion of Attebury (2018) that incentives can be offered for librarians to share their PD experiences with.

Table 3: Areas of Professional Development that Mentoring Impact Most

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Talent/skill discovery	34(136)	49(147)	8(16)	-	3.29	Positive
2.	Meeting up with promotion requirements	31(124)	37(111)	14(28)	9(9)	2.99	Positive
3.	Role modeling	24(96)	43(129)	24(48)	-	3	Positive

4.	Networking	22(88)	52(156)	10(20)	7(7)	2.90	Positive
5.	Research productivity	51(204)	36(108)	4(8)	-	3.51	Positive
6.	Access to research grants	18(72)	22(66)	34(68)	17(17)	2.45	Negative
7.	Career satisfaction	43(172)	39(117)	9(18)	-	3.37	Positive

On the areas of professional development that mentoring impacts most, it is observed in Table 3 that research productivity has the highest mean score of 3.51 indicating that the respondents strongly agreed. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that mentoring impacts in career satisfaction (3.37), talent/skill discovery (3.29), role modeling (3), meeting up with promotion requirements (2.99) and networking (2.90). Access to research grants was not regarded as an area mentorship impacts with a mean score of 2.45 which is below the criterion mean of 2.50.

This finding is in line with Byington and Keenan (2017) who opined that mentoring provides assistance to mentees on publishing in high impact journals but the finding negates the aspect of grant funding. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that mentoring impacts in career satisfaction, talent/skill discovery, role modeling, meeting up with promotion requirements and networking. These agree with the findings of several authors such as: Ragins and Kram (2019), Freedman (2019), Lee (2019), Tjan 2017) and, Bello and Mansor (2013).

Table 4: Challenges of Mentoring Library and Information Science Professionals in Imo State.

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Time factor	34(136)	34(102)	23(46)	-	3.12	Positive
2.	Lack of interest	31(124)	40(120)	14(28)	6(6)	3.05	Positive
3.	Inadequate facilities	33(132)	40(120)	18(36)	-	3.16	Positive
4.	Lack of policy on	30(120)	40(120)	21(42)	-	3.10	Positive

5.	mentoring Absolute dependence on the mentor	19(76)	24(72)	35(70)	13(13)	2.15	Negative
6.	Lack of openness/confidence	36(144)	36(108)	19(38)	-	3.19	Positive
7.	Absence of mentoring orientation in librarianship	39(156)	40(120)	12(24)	-	3.30	Positive
8.	Lack of mentors	18(72)	20(60)	38(76)	15(15)	2.45	Negative

Table 4 reveals that almost all the factors listed with the exception of lack of mentors (2.45) and absolute dependence on the mentor (2.15), pose as challenges to mentoring of Library and Information Science professionals in Imo State. They are according to how they rank: absence of mentoring orientation in librarianship (3.30), lack of openness/confidence (3.19), inadequate facilities (3.16), time factor (3.12), lack of policy on mentoring (3.10) and lack of interest (3.05).

This finding is in agreement with that of Fasola and Mamudu (2020), Ubogu (2019), David-West and Nmecha (2019) and Nwabueze and Anike (2016) who identified the various challenges of mentoring library and information science professionals. The finding that the mentee becoming too dependent on the mentor is not a challenge, negates that of Brewerton (2010).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that:

1. The ways of mentoring Library and Information Science professionals in Imo State should be sustained. Mentors should also be on the lookout for other evolving ways so as to embrace it.

2. Newly employed and upcoming Library and Information Science professionals should develop interest and always submit themselves to be mentored by their older colleagues.
3. Apart from increase in research productivity, efforts should be made by mentors to search out areas where the mentees can access research grants as it will help to reduce the money spent in research by young professionals.
4. Awareness should be created on the relevance of mentoring and all strategies put on ground to make it work.
5. There is need mentoring orientation in librarianship, especially in Imo State
6. There is also need for openness/confidence between the mentor and mentee
7. Libraries should provide adequate technological facilities to promote mentorship
8. There should also be policy on mentoring in libraries and library schools in Imo State

Conclusion

Mentoring has been accepted as a way of professional development of library and information science professionals. To benefit from it effectively, the various ways of mentoring need to be explored and the younger ones need to realize that there are things they need to learn from the older professionals. When an enabling environment is created in library and information science, it will go a long way not only in ensuring professional development, extension of legacies but in maintaining standards.

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