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Improving the Performance of Librarians Through Mentoring: The Case of Academic Libraries in South-East and South-South Zones of Nigeria

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IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF LIBRARIANS THROUGH MENTORING: THE CASE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-EAST AND SOUTH-SOUTH ZONES OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to determine the extent to which mentoring programmes can encourage job task output of librarians which improves productivity. The study provides a conceptual and theoretical framework based on previous researches. The study adopted the survey method of research to sample opinion of respondents for the study. The population of the study is made up of 661 from 53 academic libraries consisting of federal and state owned universities, polytechnics and colleges of education libraries in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria. Since the population of the study is small, census method was adopted. Data collection was done with the use of a questionnaire. The size of the population is 661. The questionnaires were distributed to all the librarians and only 501 librarians responded. The response rate is 75.7%. The Z-test and regression analysis were used to answer the research question and test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The finding shows that there is a significant influence of mentoring on performance improvement of librarians in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria (F-cal = 58. 62; P<0.05). The research concludes that mentoring programme has become a roadmap to fostering positive work change that enhances job performance. The study recommends that academic libraries should be encouraged to design and adapt to mentoring programme strategy and guidelines that will not discriminate among staff but offer the right approach and method for acquisition of skills and competencies necessary for job productivity.

Key Words: Professional Development; Mentoring; Job Performance; Performance Improvement; Librarians; Academic Libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is a holistic approach relating primarily to the identification and nurturing of potentials in a long relationship where the goals may change but always set by the learner, the learner owns both the goals and the process (Koontz and Weihrich, 2004; Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2005). Mentoring functions at work places can be performed by someone other than the immediate supervisor (Torrington and Hall, 2005). Mentoring in organizations have been described as a viable vehicle for effective management of employees' capabilities, time and talent as well as a tool for grooming new and junior employees for future leadership roles (Ogunrewo and Ngema 2013).

Since mentoring programmes result in enhancement of job skills and competencies in organisations, this technique can help empower librarians to become more productive in their jobs and provide quality services. Mentoring is not a new concept in librarianship but has recently been emphasized in academic libraries as there is a growing need for high job performance standard and the desire for academic libraries in Nigeria to compete comparatively with other academic libraries in the world. Libraries are in a flux, shifting to a Post-Fordist paradigm, leading to a fundamental re-conceptualization of the libraries in the market society (Mason, 2016). This re-conceptualization engendered new methods and technologies in modern librarianship. Technological changes according to Harris (1997) are resulting in marked changes in organizational structures and work patterns in libraries and one of the major ways to expand librarians individual and collective skills and maintain positive work attitudes and behaviours through mentoring - a development relationship that enhances individual and professional growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATIONS

Mentoring is defined as a process whereby an experienced senior staff member helps to develop technical, interpersonal and organisational skills of a less experienced junior staff member, who is called the protégé (Darwin and Palmers, 2009). It is the idea of an older manager choosing a younger manager for whom he will act as a coach, counsellor or sponsor (Beverly and Jacobson, 1995 and Kuyer-Rushing, 2001). Mentoring also is a personal relationship between a supervisor and a subordinate that emphasizes on teaching and learning and facilitating improved job performance (Bonnette, 2004; Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson, 2008). Mentoring consists of, the process of forming and maintaining intensive and lasting developmental relationship between a variety of developers (that is people who provide

career and psychosocial support mentor) and a junior person (the protégé, if male; or protégée, if female (Daloz, 1990; Dansky, 1996; Bolye and Boice, 1998; Boseman and Feeney, 2007; Kreitner and Kinicki, 2007). It is also a managerial process or technique that aims at improving the organizational working relationship, culture and philosophy, identification and nurturing of potentials. (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2005:37). Mentoring can be formal or informal but relates primarily to a long term relationship where the goals can change but are always set by the learner. The learner owns both the goals and the process and the feedback comes from within the mentee; the mentor helps them to develop insight and understanding through intrinsic observation, that becoming aware of their own experiences. Mentoring seeks to build wisdom the ability to apply skills, knowledge and experience to new situations and processes.

Objectively mentoring programme sets to achieve results either individually or in teams, assist managers within team building, helps individuals gain clarity in their thinking, commitment, challenge and help individuals to change limited beliefs, helps managers to become a source of support rather than a threat, for example, to assist them in bringing out the talent and potentials of their team, and identify and solve problems (Mentoring and Coaching Gateway Series No. 50). This agenda according to Gray and Garvey (2016) promote greater self - awareness and more informed decision making and solutions. They highlight that the aim is not inflexible but may change as the protégé reaches its set goals and learns new behaviour and the process continues until everybody is satisfied that the objectives have been achieved.

In today's knowledge environment, with the advent of technology more mentoring relationships are being provided by electronic format. Electronic mentoring (E-mentoring) has also been called online mentoring, virtual mentoring or tele mentoring. It involves the mutually beneficial relationship between a mentor and protégé which occurs primarily through electronic means (e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms and social networking spaces); it can occur as part of formal or informal mentoring programmes (Bernardin, 2010). Although informal mentoring occurs daily in all types of organisation, higher educational institutions are making mentoring more comprehensive and reachable by introducing formal and group mentoring programmes (Darwin and Palmer, 2009:126). According to Turban and Dougherty (1994), these developments have increased mentoring sustainability to being offered as part of structured programmes of continuing professional development. Successful formal mentoring is based on the fact that (i) mentor and protégé participation is voluntary; (ii) mentors are chosen on the

basis of their past record in developing employees willingness to serve as a mentor and evidence of positive coaching communication and listening skills; (iii) the purpose of the programme is clearly understood; (iv) the length of the programme is specified; (v) mentor and protégé are encourage to pursue the relationship beyond the formal period; (vi) protégés are encouraged to contact between the mentor and protégé is specified; (vii) protégé's are encouraged to contact one another to discuss problems and share successes; (viii) the mentor programme is evaluated; and (ix) employee development is rewarded, which shows managers that mentoring and other development activities are worth their time and effort (Neo, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright, 2003). Mentoring programme can benefit both mentors and mentees. A mentor will receive extrinsic rewards such as "enhanced professional" recognition when mentees perform well, and for a mentee it provides a great opportunity for career support, networking, collaboration and interpersonal skills (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2004); Young and Perrewe, 2004). Similarly, Leslie, Lingard and Whyte (2005) enumerate the advantages as *"understanding the underlying values, traditions and unwritten behaviour codes of academics; effectively managing a productive career in academics; establishing and maintaining a network of professional colleagues."*

For mentoring the programme to succeed it should be linked to organisational purpose and strategy. Most developmental programmes that are linked to strategic goals and the business strategy of an organisation can yield positive results for the organisation (Dierdorff and Surface, 2008). By linking organisational strategy and development programmes, an organisation can determine needs that are essential for meeting organisational goals. Only an integrated, facilitated process which is linked to current and future mission or business imperatives can be expected to stand the buffeting of the winds of change. Of course, mentoring must be monitored and tracked to measure its impact (Murray 1995). Mentoring programmes indicating standard, target and evaluation and feedback in form of questionnaire, discussions, reports, recommendation which could be used to determine development needs evaluation so that problems of protégé can be addressed for potential future opportunities.

Effective Mentoring programme can also increase individual and team commitment to an organisation and its goals; allow individuals to gain greater insight into the organisations workings; help increase communication within the organisation; help to change organisational culture for better; give individuals the chance to meet different people within the organisation

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and network; and improve levels of performance success (Mentoring and Coaching Gateway Series No. 50).

MENTORING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Effective Mentoring programme in academic libraries can also increase individual and team commitment to an organisation and its goals; allow individuals to gain greater insight into the library's workings; help increase communication within the library; help to change organisational culture to better level; give individuals the chance to meet different people within the library and network; and improve levels of performance success.

Benefits of mentoring to the overall organisational growth include early identification of talent that might otherwise go unnoticed, changing employee attitudes and morale, and transmission of informal organisational expectations (Higgins, 2000). Also, Bryant and Terberg (2008) enumerate the advantages of mentoring to include increased success, increased publication rate, professional friends and networking. There could be challenges when implementing a mentoring programme such as where the organisational culture does not it or does not support it, lack of library management support, favouritism and resentment from those not chosen to participate in the programme, unrealistic expectations of the mentoring programme, personality conflict and poor matching of mentors and protégés. Such challenges could be cross cultural issues, especially when the mentoring programmes adopt a traditional approach (Kalamas and Kalamas (2004). Also, not everyone identified as a mentor is a competent mentor (Darwin and Palmer, 2009:126). However, Ike (2007) recommends that mentoring programmes should be encourage across the country as it provides training grounds for grooming future leaders as well as for providing for succession within the profession.

However, mentoring is not complete without effective monitoring, evaluation and feedback. The feedback is usually an improved job performance.

THEORETICAL CONCEPT

Whether mentoring is conceptualized as a process or set of activities, the overarching role is that it helps learners build wider networks from which to learn and influence; it acts as counsellor, advocator, emotional support and role model. Good work environment and productivity are built on human relationships and interactions. This is copiously explained by social cognitive theory.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) started as the **Social** Learning **Theory** (SLT) in the 1960s by Albert Bandura. It developed into the **Social Cognitive Theory** (SCT) in 1986 and posits that learning occurs in a **social** context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour (Bandura, 1986).
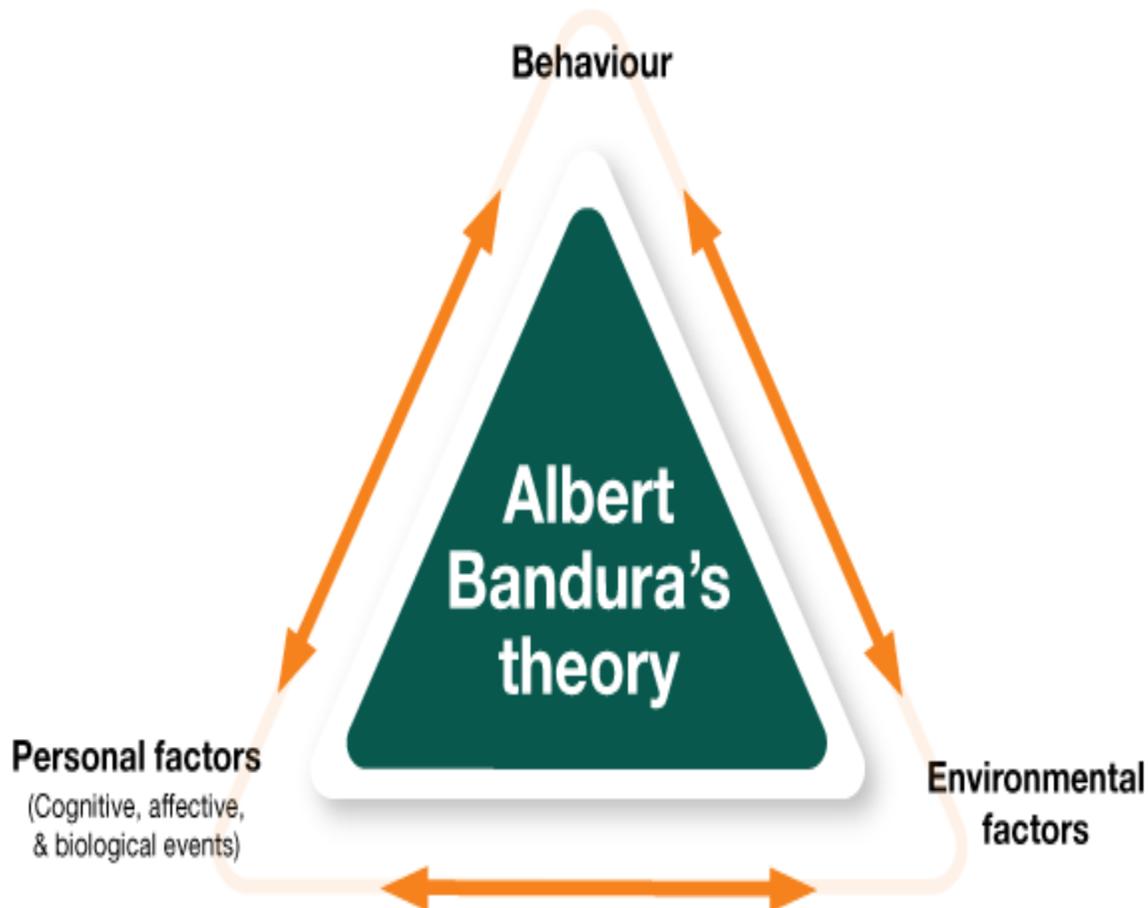
Source: Bandura, A. (1987). Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.

This explains Moemeka and Onyeagwu (2012) citing Bandura (1976) social learning theory that new patterns of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others. Social learning system provides an explanation for understanding the social relationship in learning: it states that learning would be laborious if not hazardous if people had to rely solely on the effect of their own action to inform than what to do. Moemeka and Onyeagwu (2012) maintain that most human behaviours are learned the idea of how new behaviours are formed and on later occasions, it is coded. The social cognitive theory also

acknowledges observation as an important modelling behaviour as that found between mentor and mentee. Invancevich, Konopaske and Matteson (2008) have pointed out that for an employee to seek and attract a mentor, he should possess certain characteristics namely emotional stability, ability to adapt their behaviour to the situation and high need for power, achievement and performance improvement.

The AMO (Ability + Motivation + Opportunity to participate) **theory** of performance as proposed by Eileen Appelbaum, Thomas Bailey, Peter Berg and Arne Kallerberg, (2000) state that organisational performance is a function of employees' ability, motivation and opportunity to participate. Organisations can generate competitive advantage through improving employees' ability, motivation and provide opportunities to participate in value creation which will result in higher productivity and better organisational performance.

The AMO theory formula P=f (A, M, O) as set out by Bailey, Berg and Sandy (2001) and Boxall and Purcell (2001) focus on the importance of taking into account variables at the individual level like employees' skills and competencies (A= abilities) , their motivation (M= motivation) and their opportunity to participate (=O). The theory highlights that within the framework, employees capabilities sets the upper limit of performance, motivation and influences the degree to which capability is turned into action and opportunity refers to enhancing avenue for the capability of employees to be expressed and the removal of barriers that may prevent workers from utilizing their capacity for labour (Boxall and Purcell 2003; Macky and Boxall, 2007).

AMO theory presents a certain commonality on the influence of staff development on job performance. The theory maintains that employees or human resources are manageable and developmental. Hence, provides the basis for developing human resources system that attends to employees' skill requirements and the quality of their job. In order words, the organisations can (i) increase the value of its employee through development (for example skills training, general training, job rotation, coaching, mentoring; and (ii) influence employee behaviour in the desired direction in terms of 'best practices' or 'best-fit practices' that ultimately result in sustained competitive advantage of the organisation (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003).

Regarding to the theory about how staff development and job performance are linked, it is acknowledged that there is a positive mechanism through which staff development influences job performance. AMO theory proposes that high-level training and development processes

provide employees with the desired knowledge and abilities required for high job performance. The knowledge and abilities provided by development processes together with the organisation generate sustained competitive advantage through enhancing skills and human capital (Barney, 2001). This theory explains how performance functions from individual employees' perspective to organisational productivity. Therefore, it is important for professional development processes to be linked to academic library strategy; however, for this to be effective it has to be paired with reliable and valid formal and informal programme such as mentoring to develop the workforce, therefore, increasing the chances of performance improvement such as high standard of library service delivery.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey method of research. The population of the study consists of 661 from 53 academic libraries consisting of federal and state owned universities, polytechnics and colleges of education libraries in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria. Data has been collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to all the librarians of the chosen field area. Amongst, 501 librarians were responded. The response rate is 75.7%. Z-test and regression analysis were used to answer the research question and test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question: How does Mentoring Influence Librarians Performance Improvement in Academic Libraries in South-East and South-South Zones of Nigeria?

Table 1: Z-Test Analysis of Influence of Mentoring on Performance Improvement of Librarians

S.No	Description	Mean	Std Dev	Obs	t-value	Prob	Decision
	Influence of mentoring on performance improvement						
(i)	Enhance your job potentials	3.94	0.24	501	77.543	<0.0001	Significant
(ii)	Enhance your interpersonal relationship with your superiors	3.13	0.84	501	16.738	<0.0001	Significant
(iii)	Expand knowledge of your career path and options	2.12	1.19	501	-7.169	1.0000	Not Significant
(vi)	Develop an intimate relationship with your mentor/ mentee or coach	1.91	1.23	501	-10.746	1.0000	Not Significant
(v)	Gain more clarity of job task	3.77	0.50	501	56.512	<0.0001	Significant
(vi)	Improve networking and collaboration at workplace	3.51	0.71	501	31.929	<0.0001	Significant
(vii)	Attract relevant influence and attention on your job and career path	2.63	1.05	501	2.859	0.0022	Not Significant
(viii)	Develop initiatives and working under minimal supervision	3.69	0.68	501	39.474	<0.0001	Significant

*=Significant at 3.09 mean value.

Table 1 shows, that mentoring positively influenced the performance of librarians in academic libraries in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria, based on the calculated z-test mean value of 3.09 and probability value of 0.0001. They are: in enhancing ones job potentials (mean = 3.94); enhancing ones interpersonal relationship with superiors (mean = 3.13); gaining more clarity of job task (mean = 3.77); improving networking and collaboration at workplace (mean = 3.51) and developing initiatives and working under minimal supervision (mean = 3.69).

Table 2: Simple Regression Analysis for the Influence of Mentoring on Performance Improvement of Librarians

MENTORING

Number of Observations	Degree of Freedom (DF)	Sum of Squares	F-Value	R-Square	Probability Ratio (PR)
501	1	19.14372	58.62	0.1051 (10.51%)	0.0001

Table 2 shows, that at 5% level of significance and one degree of freedom, the F-calculated value was 58. 62 with a significance probability value of 0.0001 which is less than 0.05. It shows therefore, that there is a significant influence of mentoring on performance improvement of librarians. Hence, the hypothesis that states that there is no significant influence of mentoring on the performance improvement of librarians is hereby rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of mentoring on performance improvement of librarians in academic libraries in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria. Based on the independent variable, objective, research question and hypothesis were formulated to guide the conduct of the study. This discussion is based on the findings derived from the research question and hypothesis of mentoring on performance improvement.

Findings show that mentoring significantly influenced the performance improvement of librarians' in academic libraries in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria (F-cal value= 58.62; P<0.05). This is a confirmation that mentoring had influence on the performance of librarians by making them to gain clarity of their duties, develop initiatives and working under minimal supervision and enhanced their job potentials. It implies that librarians who had the opportunity of being mentored by experts in librarianship had better performance on their jobs than those who did not (**See Table 2**). This finding confirms the outcome of the research by Schmidt (2003) and Hamlin and Sage (2011) that mentoring provides better staff development opportunities for workers to learn on the job and to cope with challenges of their work schedule. It also makes workers to have a better understanding of their duties, enhances their output and operational efficiency.

CONCLUSION

The study, therefore, concludes that mentoring programme is increasingly and strongly emerging as one of the most valuable instruments for employees' development in organisations worldwide; academic libraries in Nigeria not left behind. It has become obvious that mentoring is advantageous to libraries and librarians as a development method used to determine career interest, values, aptitudes, attitudes and behavioural tendencies. The mentees' responsibility is to identify opportunities and personal areas needing improvement. While the mentors' responsibility is to provide assessment information for identifying strengths, weaknesses, interest and values. In fostering mentoring and coaching activities, evaluation and feedback at different stages of librarian's career is a powerful tool for determining learning and development needs. The research, therefore, concludes that mentoring should be adequately encouraged as an on-going learning activity in the library, since it is a long term learning process that has become a roadmap to improving job performance of librarians.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

Mentoring was found to have contributed significantly to the performance improvement of librarians in academic librarians by making them to gain more clarity of their duties and develop more working initiatives under minimal supervision. The implication is that librarians

have better tendency to act independently and have good judgment regarding their job challenges than those who had no mentoring exposure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mentoring as one of the avenues for professional development should be encourage in academic libraries in Nigeria for actualising and maintaining academic library vision and goals.

2. Academic libraries should insist that librarians share time, knowledge, skill and competences beyond the administrative, managerial, reference services and supervisor/supervisee relationship.

3. Mentoring should be encouraged in academic libraries to acclimatize new entrants into the profession to the academic environment of the library and the parent institution in order to provide a positive professional mode for mentors/mentees.

4. Academic libraries should be encouraged to design and adapt to mentoring programme strategy and guidelines that will not discriminate among staff but offer the right approach and method for acquisition of skills and competencies necessary for job productivity. Since the goal of every organisation is result-oriented. Mentoring of librarians would definitely improve and promote individuals and organizational productivity.

Finally, mentoring is recommended as a veritable means of handing over professionalism, change and organizational culture for improved job performance of librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria.

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