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Mentoring: A Tool for Career Development in Academic Libraries

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MENTORING: A TOOL FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

Every organization have new intake of junior staff and senior staff to achieve a common organizational goals. The new intakes need to be shown what it takes to have a successful career. The senior (mentors) need to assist, direct and counsel the junior (mentees) working under them to grow and advance in the job. Mentoring is a tool in career development and advancement of library staff it gives individuals the opportunity to be mentored in order to develop their career and makes them feel like they are valued by the organization. This makes the mentees to be more involved in the job for effective and efficient performance. This study examines the roles of mentors and mentees, on how mentors promote and improve mentees job performance for career development and advancement. The study also focus on the approaches to mentorship. In conclusion mentors need the right environment to carry on their role of mentoring to the mentees on both research writing and their job duties to achieve the desired goals of the library. Mentoring increases confidence and motivation of librarians and help in the career development and advancement within the library. It was recommended among others that mentoring tools should be well defined and fit in handling mentees for attainment of optimal educational and objectives aimed at learner's behavioural change. Mentoring programme that are very specific to the needs especially to the career development needs should be put in place.

Key words: mentoring, tools, career, development, libraries.

Introduction:

Mentoring holds both the great potential for enhancing career success as well as the possibility of contributing to career blunders. Mentoring is focused primarily on the career development of someone less experience in field such as business and academic, (Chopra, Arora and Saint 2018). It is therefore characterized by the relationship between a more knowledgeable individual and a less experience individual. When there is a good mentoring relationship it will bring about career development and advancement within academic libraries.

Mentoring would encompass a variety of activities, including advising, teaching, coaching, advocacy, sponsoring and role modeling as well as assistance with personal development and achieving a work life balance, (Geraci and Thypen 2017). In every career training, guidance and advice are integral part of professional and career development. Mentoring is one of the most effective strategies that is a standalone programme as part of an existing work force development programme.

Career development is characterized as a continuous process which is developed throughout an individual life. (Zanpantis et al 2017). It is therefore necessary for new intakes to receive mentoring in order to successfully cope with new challenges through career development. The transmission of knowledge between mentors and mentees, can be through both formal programme and informal relationship, which can foster the growth of staff to meet with current trends in librarianship. According to Sodipe and Madukoma (2013) formal and informal mentoring is one on one relationship where selection is dependent on personal choice of mentor or the mentee. It happens spontaneously based on mutual respect and rapport. Sometimes organization offer employees the

opportunity to learn from another employee through the formal mentoring programme. Also employees choose their own mentor to counsel them and guide their career development process which creates an informal mentoring relationship.

Promoters and career success are related to mentoring. It helps individuals develop through a goal driven process in academic libraries. Mentors should ensure that they guide their mentees set and achieve their career goals in order to achieve career success. This motivates the mentee to achieve higher heights in the workforce. Several literature has documented the benefits of mentorship, which include increased research productivity, faster academic promotion and career satisfaction (Tjan 2017). In the process of mentoring the mentee learns lessons that she/he can apply on their job in order to achieve career success. It is an experience that can lead to an emotion, which leads to self-transformation and development for both the mentor and the mentee (Allen and Eby 2011).

The relationship between a mentor and mentee influences skills development for the mentees. For a new librarian, professional training begins from the moment he steps into the profession (Nsala 2013). The professional training will help build the librarian's depths of knowledge required overtime. Mentoring relationships play vital role in professional development. Nwabueze and Ozioko (2013), observed that no institution can exist without order and more experienced members passing on knowledge acquired over years to new members. Mentoring in academic libraries 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). Academic libraries should have mentoring programmes to help meet the developmental needs of staff.

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 and Keenan 2017). According to Gray and Garvey(2016) mentoring promote greater self- awareness and more informed in decision making and solution. It seeks to build wisdom and the ability to apply skills, knowledge and experience to new situations and processes. An effective mentoring programme in academic libraries should be put in place to increase the capacity of an individual and also commitment to an organization and its goals.

Mentoring Tools for Career Development in Academic Libraries

Mentoring conversation is a practical demonstration of problem solving and decision making process that can be applied in any situation. Mentoring assist with immediate needs and equips the mentor to deal with future issues. Mentoring tools help mentees identify what success look like. In this era of global competition restructuring rapid technological changes and constrained resources, organizations are searching for what to do more with less, expertise in the area of human resources development (Dominguez and Hager 2013).

a. **Identification of Mentees and their Specific Needs:** To understand the interest of the mentees, the organization will conduct a need assessment. This can be through the performance appraisal system or a survey, which will highlight what the mentee requires both professionally and personally. Mentees may also express to the mentor to be mentored in a given area. Also the library management should identify a number of mentors. The mentors will be identified based on their qualification highlighted in the mentoring fundamental.

b. **Orientation for Mentors and Mentees:** Mentoring programmes can benefit the library organization as a whole through orientation (Lee, 2011). The programme is most successful when mentors and mentees receive thorough orientation before they are given mentors/mentees. They should be allowed to make informal decisions about whether or not to participate in the programme or not. The prospective mentors / mentees should clearly understand the goals of the programme as well as their roles and responsibilities. There should be an overview on the mentorship programme including goals, mission, commencement date and duration. There has to be a level of commitment on the both sides.

c. **Matching Mentors and Mentees:** The senior person acts as a mentor to provide a variety of functions that support, guides, protect, expose and counsel the young adult to get work done effectively. Permbridge and Paretti(2011). Matching mentors and mentees is very crucial for the success of the overall programme. The matching procedure will help in understanding the process of properly matching the senior as mentor and the junior as mentee based on the needs identified factors to consider, will include the knowledge skill experience of the mentor and the needs of the mentee preferences of the mentor and mentee compatibility of common interest among others. It is more effective if a mentee chooses his/her mentor than if they are matched by administration. However there is some indication that matching mentee with mentor on interest may yield stronger programme benefits Dubois et al (2011).

d. **Evaluation of the Programme:** Effective database evaluation of mentoring is important to help overcome biases and make good decision about mentoring relationship changes. It also enables appropriate allocation of departmental resources and effects towards supporting the most effective

elements of mentoring. It allows sharing of success with stakeholders and participation. Evaluation is an important tool in mentoring programme tool box.

The mentoring objectives help participants to identify and achieve career development and personal growth goals that support building a bench of leaders who have knowledge, skills and abilities. It also foster higher level of engagement and career vision. Mentoring is an effective way of developing individuals.

Role of Mentoring in Career Development

Mentorship has long played a critical role in training and career development of library staff. Mentoring programmes are emerging as tools for redefining professional values. Mundia and Iravo (2014) states that the role of mentoring helps in human resources development. These benefits have the potential to enhance productivity in academic libraries. Mentorship is essential to the success of every library. Mentoring helps to share knowledge vertically between individuals at all stages of their career. It can automatically reduce the learning curve and help revitalize the work force.

The strongest mentoring programme have mentors who take their role seriously to serve as role model and instructor and they work side by side with the mentees which often goes hand-in-hand with an institutional attitude that holds mentor's position as a value and professional responsibility. A good mentor will both support and provide honest criticism to mentee in an effect to guide him/her from making unwise professional decisions. Mentoring helps in the transition of new library staff into the work of research and service.

Mentorship is especially important in today's rapidly changing environment which has extended the period of learning and training across the career span of

library staff. Mentorship is essential to the success of every library, it should therefore be elevated to the level of a major strategic priority. It will also capitalize on an institution's intellectual resources that seek to develop professionals. Successful mentoring nurture mentees who eventually develop into leaders and become mentors themselves.

Mentoring Approaches

Mentoring approaches are the yardstick to drawing and dealing with mentoring in career development. In mentoring, the mentor stands out in lifting the mentee in the development of his chosen career. It does not matter whether the mentor is a young person to the mentee, what matters is the expertise in which the mentor has to take the mentee to a greater height in a career that he (mentor) has mastery of the subject matter. Mentoring approaches require an ability to see the needs of mentee and the dynamics of the surrounding environment while using skill to empower the mentee's voice.

In mentoring approaches, Russell (2017) identified approaches to mentorship. He further pointed out that it is so rewarding getting to be mentored and provider being a mentor. In this vein, the approaches to mentorship is ideal and worth emulating.

The approaches are **Process of Reflection**, this process cuts across questions, sign posting, challenge, advice and feedback which allows the mentee a to come to their own decision in academic library. Through their decisions they learn faster and aspire to different height. In mentoring approaches helping each other is very vital. This is important because social relationship is emphasized in order to gain the expected reward of learning very well from the mentor and getting connected very well on issues of great importance moreover, when it has to

do with the academic libraries. According to Dick (2015) when a mentee is closely connected to the mentor, learning becomes easier and faster. In other words the mentee get exposed to facts in his area of career development.

Russel further expatiated on the approach of ' you remind me of me' which leads to the recognition of something in the mentee that resonates with them in some way, this will lead to a continued success Ragins and Kram (2008). In an approach that Russel tagged 'really can't be bothered', many academics concur that mentoring can vary significantly in quality, and that quality can change over time. When a mentor perceive that the mentee has not reciprocated for the time and energy that has been poured into the relationship the mentor can have feelings of betrayal or anger.

According to the emerging leader mentor course (n.d) some approaches were identified to foster mentorship skills and professional development in career. In building authentic relationship in the words of Sambunjak, Straus, Marusic (2009) is the heart of mentoring, this is so because a strong relationship is the vehicle through which mentors help others learn and grow in a good pace. In a relationship between a mentor and a mentee, clarity is achieved and great expectations about the role, needs and what the mentor and mentee shared will lead to agreeing on common values and norms that they both commit to upholding their relationship for a better and fruitful career.

The stronger the relationship the more confident the mentee grow in building practical skills towards a greater career. The approaches in essence sees the mentor as playing the role of starting a relationship and maintaining them overtime which involves being real self, natural, genuine and honest. When these qualities are

showcased the need for open doors and links are easier and faster to grab by the mentee which will help promote his talent in a chosen career.

The approaches of **communicating openly** is another important and salient approach to mentoring and thus it is termed 'te fule for the relationship (Jaman 2016). The mentor and mentee in this approach needs trust, safety, understanding and control of conflict in order to share in better information that will propel the career and eliminate differences that might arise in cause of exchanging ideas in a chosen field and in their relationship generally.

There is the approach of **magnifying the positive core** where the mentor tries to encourage in many ways such as praising, building confidence, gently pushing, motivating and inspiring. They also put up feedback which is an enabling tool throughout the mentoring process which most times lead to constructive criticisms on how the mentee is coping on instructions meted out. On this, Covey(n.d) stated that:

> ...everyone has a unique thumbprint he asks,
> "who will listen and validate that uniqueness?"
> The answer of course is – Mentor! To foster an
> emerging leader's transformation from "on the
> margin" to "in the center," the mentor must, like
> a powerful zoom on a camera, focus in, on and
> bring forward a mentees qualities, values, strength,
> capacities, experiences, possibilities and potentials...

In **fostering possibility thinking approach**, how to tackle challenges and issues are taught to enable a mentee develop the right thinking which encourages them to use questions to think out of the box. This approach according to Cho, C. S., Ramanan, R.A, Fieldman, M.D (2011). Defining the ideal qualities of mentorship: A qualitative analysis of characteristics of outstanding mentors. *The*

American Journal of Medicine, 124,453-458. Is a power approach because it puts emerging career seekers in the driver's seat when assessing issues, challenges, and problems, which will eventually lead to solution finding from the mentee than the mentor who has provided the needed assistance in the solution finding process which means the goal is to guide that process rather than provide the answer.

Mentoring Job Duties

Mentoring can lead to increased job satisfaction in librarians assigned duties and this will lead to the provision of better services to the library users,(Ramos and Green 2007). In concluding on what mentoring does to job duties they stated that mentoring improves job satisfaction, career advancement and professionalism in the life of the librarian mentored (the mentee). Since mentoring have two types amongst others which is formal and informal mentoring, job duties fall under formal mentoring which according to Tejup (2016), the mentor puts an eye on how the mentee will be trained, guiding, ensuring that the mentee gets all the moral support required and thus this gives the librarians (mentee) mentored assured confidence, skills and well-versed in library duties (Peterson, 2015).

Mentoring according to Howland (2018) provides many benefits to the library, its librarians and users. Hence, he stated that " in almost all professions, and certainly librarianship, the formation of mentoring relationship has been shown to be one of the most significant factors in contributing to retention, promotion and long-term success which are perfected through mentoring on job duties. When the job performed by the librarians in the academic libraries are closely supervised by a supervisor to the subordinates the tendencies of having a smart result is high. Mentoring job duties however, is a very sensitive area to behove in the daily activities of the librarian in academic library.

Mentoring for Research

Mentoring for research in academic library has been one area of concern in librarianship moreover, since librarians deal with human beings (users) and the information they seek for. The skills and professional development of the mentees (librarians) in the discharge of their duties calls for proper research mentoring in order to establish technical and thematic mentoring relationship between other librairans, experienced researchers and professionals across the globe.

Mentoring for research by the mentor is aimed at building up and supporting the mentee (librarian) in various research acumen which is aimed at knowledge generation and fast-tracking the quest for information seeking users, thus helping to know the users better and what areas to improve on in cases that concern their behaviour, resources, ability and targets. In all it shows that mentoring helps (https://sheffield.ac.uk.>ecr).

Challenges of Mentoring

It is not all relationships that are successful. An unsuccessful mentor/ mentee relationship may be due to lack of sensitivity, academic preparation and miscommunication, difficulty in establishing peer relationships and also lack of professional role models (Wilson, Andrew and Lesners (2006). There is bound to be problems if there is no commitment on both sides the mentor/ mentee (Billings and Kowalski(2008). The relationship will not survive if it is one sided or grossly imbalance. The both parties must participate and contribute to its success while maintaining a focus on the goal mentee's success.

Mentoring is an ongoing active process. A successful mentor-mentee relatiohship may be based on both a written contract. It is vital that the mentor and mentee communicate realistic expectation and goals. A successful mutually

beneficial mentor-mentee relationship requires reflection and mentors responsibility to examine the direction of the relationship to uphold a holistic positive and civil attitude.

Also 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. This is in line with the observation Adeniji and Adeniji (2010) that mentoring does not thrive when university libraries lack academic culture and their management does not believe in grooming new employees.

Conclusion

Mentors need the right environment to carry on their role of mentoring to the mentees on research writing and job duties. Objectives and goals must be clearly defined, both for the programme overall and for the individuals in the mentoring relationship. In order to improve career development, mentors should sharpen new skills, which will make the mentoring process effective for every new intake in academic library should be given equal opportunity to be mentored. Successful mentoring programmes would make the academic library better equipped for productivity and career development of library staff.

Recommendations

1. Mentoring tools should be well defined and fit in handling mentees for attainment of optimal educational objectives aimed at learner's behavioural change.
2. Academic libraries should adopt mentoring programme for staff in other to increase their skills for greater productivity.
3. Library management should educate both mentors and mentees on the benefits of mentoring to the profession.

4. Every new intake should be attached to a mentor who is not necessarily their job supervisor. It should be someone the mentee can be able to relate to on a personal level to ensure a close relationship that will promote knowledge and skills transfer as well as guidance and advice from the mentor.

5. Mentors and mentees should be given adequate training by the library management m other for them to know what is expected of them.

6. Mentoring programme that are specific to the needs, especially to the career development needs should be put in place.

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