

Mentoring and Academic Productivity of Beginning Lecturers in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This study investigated mentoring in Nigerian Universities with the aim of diagnosing the type of mentoring prevalent in the universities, its effect on mentees' performance of academic duties and ascertaining whether any relationship existed between mentoring and academic productivity of beginning lecturers. The investigation was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. A sample of 56 beginning Lectures was selected through stratified sampling technique from three universities in Nigeria. Data for the investigation was collected through interview and questionnaire. Analysis of data to answer the questions asked was through the use of mean and standard deviation. The hypothesis was tested by using Pearson rho. The findings revealed that informal mentoring is the type mostly prevalent in universities where this study was conducted. In addition, mentoring had numerous effects of the academic productivity of Lecturers. The testing of hypothesis revealed that a very significant relationship ($r=0.677$, $P 0.05$) between mentoring and academic productivity of beginning Lecturers in Nigeria. The study recommended that Nigerian university administrators should ensure that they make formal mentoring a culture of practice for improving standards.

Keywords: Academic, Beginning Lecturers, Effect, Mentoring, Productivity, Type.

INTRODUCTION

Most organizations focus their objectives towards achieving optimal level of productivity. Every employer of labour wants the best of performance from employees. On the contrary, employees strives to put in their best in the performance of the duties assigned to them, though limited in knowledge, ideas, strategies and methodologies of performing their responsibilities. The limitations of new employees largely emanates from the inadequacy of the education and training they received from their institutions of learning which did not empower them sufficiently to withstand the exigencies of their new job. Consequently, new employees need to be updated in knowledge and relevant skills through mentoring.

The university as a social organization directs the efforts of staff towards attainments of the goals of excellence in performing academic duties like teaching and learning, research and community services. Among the academic staff of Nigerian universities, three categories are recognized as lecturers, senior lecturers and the professorial cadre. Efforts at improving the productivity of lecturers and quality of products of the universities must focus on mentoring. The ability of an organization to exist and function properly is largely dependent on its effectiveness

and efficiency (Adebisi, 2000). The productivity of any institutions can be judged by its' capability of using the available resources effectively to achieve its' goals. Academic staffs are the most critical components of any university. Therefore their continued training and growth should be a priority to improving quality of delivery of academic duties such as teaching, learning, research and others. According to Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007) it is through the academic staff of universities knowledge expansion, intellectual culture of innovation in arts, science and technology is attained.

Through mentoring, an organization can enhance employee's knowledge, skills and abilities for improved performance and achievement of organizational goals (Harvard Business Essentials, 2004). Arugu and Nweake (2014) noted that through mentoring, a knowledgeable, experienced and productive employee could help in the training of new or novice employees so as to enhance their growth in the profession. Vance and Olsen in Bette (2012) sees mentoring as being developmental, empowering and nurturing, requiring self-commitment and self-confidence, occurring for a long time, involving mutual sharing, learning, growth, respect and collegiality. Yoder in Bette (2012) identified aspects of mentoring to include "assignment, challenging, coaching, competence, exposure, and friendship with two dimensions". Kasowe (2013) and Maunganidze (2015) asserted that to avoid theorizing of ideas that beginning teachers are exposed to real teaching through mentoring. Through mentoring teachers can be properly integrated and developed so that they can be capable of coping with the numerous challenges they would be confronted with in their profession. They learn effective teaching principles and develop teaching skills. Maunganidze (2015) identified mentoring modes as school-based mentoring, group mentoring and peer mentoring.

Mentoring is an effective strategy needed by organizations for effective performance of younger or beginning employees. A mentor is a role model, guiding, advising, directing and supporting novice workers for the purpose of ensuring that they get properly groomed with all that is needful and could enhance their integration into the profession. A mentor helps young employees to grow professionally. Mentoring is a win-win relationship in which no one loses. The most fulfilled members of any organization are those persons who successfully reached out to others. Mentoring could be formal or informal. Formal mentoring is organized mentoring which is the usual practice of the organization. It is well instituted in such organizations as its culture or way of best practice towards ensuring improvement and maintenance of set standards of performance. Informal mentoring is not formally instituted in an organization, although it exists in such organization. Informal mentoring occurs in an "ad hoc" manner between the persons involved in the relationship in such a way that there is no well-organized or systematic arrangement between them. Sometimes, the two persons involved in the informal mentoring may not be employees working in the same organization. In this informal mentoring, a lecturer may be working in a northern university yet is being mentored by an expert in a southern university. Mentoring relationship benefits in three ways such as: to the mentee, mentor and to the organization. The purpose of mentoring is to acquire skills which underlie the values, traditions and behavioral codes, for effective management of a productive career in academics as well as establishing and maintaining a pull of professional colleagues. Ojokuku and Sajuyigbe (2012) study on mentoring and career development of staff established that informal mentoring positively influenced career development of academics.

Statement of the Problem

It has been alleged that products of Nigerian universities are not meeting up to standards by employers of labour. The investigator observed casually that majority of meetings held between university management and staff unions the focus have been on declining standards and ways of improving quality of delivery of academic activities. It is hoped that if quality delivery is offered in universities, students' learning may drastically improve and they may be more useful to themselves and the society. Researchers uphold that mentoring could help in improving quality delivery of educational services. It is not quite clear to the researcher the perceptions of beginning lecturers of South-East Nigerian universities regarding their mentoring experiences. Though there are studies on mentoring in tertiary institutions in South-West Nigeria attention is yet to be concentrated in the South-Eastern part of the country. This study investigated mentoring in universities in South-East Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study investigated mentoring and productivity of lecturers in universities in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the intensions of the study are:

- To ascertain the type of mentoring prevalence in Universities in South-East Nigeria;
- To ascertain through interview, the perception of lecturers (mentees) regarding their mentoring relationship;
- To ascertain how mentoring affect the academic productivity of lecturers (mentees) in universities in South-East Nigeria; and
- To ascertain if there is any relationship between mentoring and academic productivity of lecturers (mentees) in universities in South-East Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study provided answers to two questions thus:

- What type of mentoring relationship do you have in your University?
- What is the perception of lecturers in South-East Nigeria regarding how mentoring affected their academic productivity in terms of gender?

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested in this study. They are:

- There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of male and female lecturers (mentees) regarding how mentoring affected their academic productivity.
- There is no significant relationship between mentoring and academic productivity of lecturers (mentees) in South-East Nigerian universities.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed descriptive survey of an ex-post-facto type. The population comprised all the lecturers employed within 2-5 years who are presently serving in three universities in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria (Abraka, Port Harcourt and Ekpoma). They were fifty six of such lecturers during the 2015/2016 academic section. The breakdown of the respondents is 14, 26 and 16 respectively. The respondents were selected from two faculties: Faculty of Education and Faculty of Social Sciences in each university. Sampling was not carried out for this study because the population of beginner lecturers was few so all of them participated as sample for the study. Twenty of the lecturers were graduate assistants while twenty six were assistant lecturers. Male lecturers were 28 while female lecturers were 18. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire which comprised two sections. The first section is concerned with demographic information about the respondents. It sought information about the name of university, gender and status. The second section contained 15 items structure on four point-Likert scale which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagreed. The scoring scale ranged from the highest score of 4 point to the lowest score of 1 point. The summation of the scores is $4+3+2+1=10$ divided by 2 gives 2.50, the mid-point of the score. The decision rule is that items with mean score from 2.50 and above is taken to mean agreed while items with mean score from 2.49 to 0 is taken to mean disagreed. Interview was also used as a method of data collection.

RESULTS

Findings resulting from the oral interview and quantitative analysis of data based on the questionnaire are presented below

Summary of Response from Interview

In each of the university, five mentees were interviewed by the researcher. The interaction is reported thus:

Question: Have you been involved in any mentoring by a senior colleague in your institution?

Response: For this question, most of the respondents expressed affirmatively that they have often been mentored though in an informal manner. Only ten of them said they were in a formalized mentoring relationship.

Question: How would you describe the mentorship experience between you and your mentor?

Response from mentees in Institution A: It was a cordial relationship. My mentor was very helpful in providing guidelines and directions on how to go about performing academic tasks. My mentor was very challenging, pushing me to do difficult tasks under his guidance which made me to learn more on how to perform difficult tasks.

Response from mentees in Institution B: My relationship with my mentor was very interesting. My mentor guided me all the way, advising me and was interested in my academic growth in my area. We worked together as a team collaboratively. It helped me to get integrated into the academic community with the wealth of experiences I gathered while working with my mentor. My mentor nurtured me on positive academic values which helped me in performing my duties.

Response from mentees Institution C: It was a knowledge exposing and skills updating training working with my mentor. I learnt more competences about the academic world. It is very helpful in nurturing and socializing beginning teachers into their profession.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

Table 1: Percentage response on types of mentoring in South-Eastern Universities

Types of Mentoring Relationship Available	Frequency	%
Formal	19	33.9
Informal	37	66.1
Total	56	100

Result in Table 1 showed that 33.9% of the respondents expressed that formal mentoring exists in their University while 66.1% said informal mentoring exists in their University. The conclusion drawn is that the type of mentoring prevalent in Universities in South-East Nigeria is mainly informal.

Table 2: Perception of mentees regarding how mentoring affected their academic productivity

S/N	Items	Male		Remark	Female		Remark
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The mentoring I received from my mentor was very useful to me in performing my academic duties	2.86	0.55	+	3.10	0.62	+
2	I got enough exposure to pedagogical strategies through mentoring	3.20	0.39	+	2.70	0.55	+
3	My mentor was very helpful in guiding me in result compilation	2.64	0.66	+	2.75	0.70.	+
4	My effectiveness in teaching has improved due to my mentorship from my mentor	2.88	0.90	+	2.90	0.72	+
5	Through my mentorship I have learnt how to write professional papers in my area	2.92	0.48	+	3.20	0.52	+
6	The academic support I received from my mentor has improved my conduct of academic duties	3.00	0.57	+	3.08	0.92	+
7	I got adequate exposure in my subject area from my mentor as such I am able to overcome my initial fears about lecturing	2.88	0.88	+	3.30	0.66	+
8	I have been carrying out my duty as a course adviser effectively because of my exposure from my mentor	2.90	0.44	+	3.20	0.63	+
9	I have gained a lot of knowledge from my mentor in research supervision	2.85	0.46	+	2.77	0.91	+
10	My mentor was not supportive in guiding me to perform my academic duties effectively	1.40	1.27	-	2.00	1.08	-
11	Through my mentorship I have learnt strategies for conducting semester examinations effectively	3.20	0.67	+	3.00	0.44	+
12	The various assignment given to me by my mentor have helped me in developing skills for performing academic responsibilities creditably	3.45	0.81	+	2.82	0.67	+
13	The questioning techniques I learnt from my mentor has helped to improve my teaching effectiveness	2.94	0.38	+	2.60	0.58	+

14	I can say that the improvement in the quality of my teaching and research is attributed to the mentoring exposure I received	3.10	0.63	+	3.25	0.49	+
15	I can say that I am more capable of performing academic responsibilities due to my regular interaction with my mentor	2.90	0.59	+	3.00	0.65	+

The results in Table 2 shows that for majority of the items irrespective of gender, respondents expressed positively that mentoring contributed immensely to effective performance of their academic duties. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 had mean scores above 2.50 the cut off point for agreeing with the items. Only item 10 had mean score below 2.50

Table 3: Relationship between Mentoring and Academic Productivity of Mentees

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	r-Cal	P	Decision
Mentoring	58	43.12	9.70	56	0.677	0.046	Significant
Academic Productivity	58	43.62	10.14	56			

The result obtained in Table 3 revealed that r-calculated value of 0.677, $P < 0.05$ indicating a significant relationship between mentoring and academic productivity of beginning Lecturers in South-East Nigerian Universities. This implied that mentoring enhances the academic productivity of Lecturers in South-East Nigerian Universities. Therefore, it can be concluded that a positive relationship existed between mentoring and academic productivity of lecturers who were mentored. The academic productivity of beginning Lecturers (Mentees) in South-East Universities improved when they were mentored.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed the type of mentoring prevalent in South-East Universities in Nigeria as majorly informal. Only a very insignificant proportion (0.33%) of respondents expressed that formal mentoring existed in their University. Regarding how mentoring affected mentees in performing their responsibilities, the finding showed that mentoring improved the academic productivity of beginning Lecturers in South-East Universities in numerous ways. Beginning Lecturers who were mentored expressed that mentoring helped in improving their capability of performing the academic duties assigned to them as well as development of skills for performing academic responsibilities creditably well. This finding concurs with Ofovwe and Agbontaen-Eghafona (2011) that mentoring helps in fostering professional development and academic performance of staff. Mentees also said that their exposure through mentoring resulted in effective conduct of academic duties such as course advising and result compilation. Mentoring further helped in overcoming initial fears about lecturing in addition to exposure to pedagogical strategies, questioning techniques and writing professional papers in their disciplines. The Mentees (Lecturers) also said that their mentoring relationship helped in exposing them to how to supervise research and conduct semester examination. The finding lends credence with Kasowe (2013) and Maunganidze (2015) that mentoring help beginning teachers to avoid theorizing of ideas as well as exposure to real teaching. The finding is also in line with Ofobruku and Yusuf (2006) who noted that mentoring helps in strengthening organizational capabilities, build the organization and help in ensuring the sustainability and it's

competitive advantage. The testing of hypothesis revealed a significant relationship between mentoring and academic productivity of beginning Lecturers in South-East Universities in Nigeria. The Lecturers (Mentees) became more productive in performing academic responsibilities as they were mentored.

CONCLUSION

This study employed descriptive survey research design to examine mentoring and academic productivity of beginning lecturers in South-East Nigerian Universities. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that informal mentoring is predominant in the universities in South-East Nigeria. It is clear that mentoring could help in improving the academic productivity of novice Lecturers who are entering the profession. This is so because the study has been able to establish that a significant relationship existed between mentoring and academic productivity of beginning Lecturers.

Recommendations

The study recommended that university administrator should map out strategies to ensure that mentoring is formally established in each university since the findings have revealed a significant relationship between mentoring and productivity of lecturers.

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