

Typology of Mentoring Relationship in Nigerian Universities

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Mentoring is defined as the process by which an experienced, productive and knowledgeable senior employee helps to develop a less experienced employee called the protégé. It is one of the approaches of staff career development. Since there are basically two approaches to mentoring relationships, the purpose of this paper is to examine the appropriate mentoring approach to be developed in Nigerian universities for performance improvement and organizational effectiveness. A critical review of relevant literature suggested that for the choice of a mentor, he or she should be able to remain objective to give good career advice to the protégé and therefore someone who does not have direct supervising responsibility is preferable. On this note we recommended that formal mentoring should be in place in Nigerian universities. This will effectively checkmate the output of the junior academics in term of quality research and good teaching.

1. Introduction

An academic is somebody making his or her career in a higher institution especially a university through teaching, researching and engaging in community service. To be effective in the discharge of their duties, junior academics need proper development through mentoring. Mentoring is a process whereby an experienced, productive and knowledgeable senior employee called the mentor helps to train and develop a less experienced employee called a protégé. According to Dressier (2006), mentoring is the process by which a senior person in an organization becomes a sounding board to a junior person for the career questions and concerns and can provide career-related guidance and assistance which can significantly enhance the career satisfaction and success of the junior person. Ahiewe (2010) revealed that the best approaches to mentoring relationship include-choosing an appropriate mentor who should remain objective to offer good career advice to somebody that does not have a direct supervisory responsibility of the protégé; making it easier for a potential mentor to agree to the request of the protégé by clarifying what the junior person expects in terms of time and advice; having an agenda and bringing an agenda to the first mentoring meeting that lays out key issues and topics for discussion; and finally respecting the mentor's time. The protégé has to be selective about the work related issues that he or she brings to the table.

Mentoring junior academics in Nigerian Universities is very necessary because Universities are institutions at the highest level of education in Nigeria where teaching those studying to get a diploma or degree is done, and both researching and engaging in community service are also done. WorldBank (2005) as reported by Ahiewe (2010), revealed that the Human Development

Index of Nigeria is at 0.466 and so Nigeria is in the low Human Development category and is ranked 151 out of 171 countries.

So mentoring young academics in the Nigerian Universities to prepare them for the future to have the right attitude towards research, teaching, and community service is very essential. Many young men and women leave the Universities and Polytechnics every year with very little hope of securing jobs. The young Nigerian academic has a very important behavioural role to play. Both the protégé and the mentor have to develop the right attitude to advice the graduating students on what to do after graduation. Researchers such as Kaye, Jordan-Evans, and Sharon (2005), suggest two typology of mentoring relationships: formal and informal. While formal mentoring refers to assigned relationships between a senior and a junior employee in the organization, informed relationships develop on their own between partners. In Nigerian universities we observe a situation where mentoring develops informally and in other cases it develops formally. It is on this premise; we intend to theoretically examine the appropriate typology of mentoring relationships in universities.

2. Literature Review

Alliance for Excellent Education (2005), described mentoring as an activity that can potentially promote spiritual development. There are two types of mentoring relationships- informal and formal. Informal relationships develop on their own between partners while formal mentoring on the other hand refers to assigned relationships.

In many universities particularly in advanced nations of the world, mentorship programmes are offered to support junior academics in confidence building and transitioning to a higher level (Adebayo, 2006). In Nigerian Universities, however, it is difficult to state categorically the typological classification of mentoring structure either conceptual bases or even on basis of taxonomical classification.

Research suggests that employees with certain personality characteristics (e.g. high needs for power and achievement, emotional stability, ability to adapt their behaviour based on the situation) are more likely to seek a mentor and be an attractive protégé for a mentor (Kaye, 1995).

Mentoring relationships can also develop as part of a planned organizational effort to bring together successful senior employees with less experienced employees. KLA-Tencor, a supplier of process control solutions for the semiconductor industry, uses mentoring to improve senior manager's skills. The senior managers receive mentoring from company board members as well as retired company executives. The senior managers are expected to increase their functional expertise, identify specific performance goals and developmental activities to address job-related weakness, and increase their understanding of the company's culture, vision, and political structure KLA-Tencor also has an online.

1.	
2.	Mentor-protégé matching process does not limit the ability of formal relationships to develop. For example, a mentor pool can be established to allow protégé to choose from a variety of qualified mentor.
3.	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,
4.	The purpose of the program is clearly understood. Projects and activities that the mentor and protégé are accepted to complete are specific.
5.	The length of the program is specific. Mentor and protégé are encouraged to pursue the relationship beyond the formal time period.
6.	A minimum level of contact between the mentor and protégé is specified.
7.	Protégé are encouraged to contact one another to discuss problems and share success.
8.	The mentoring program is evaluated and interviews with mentors and protégé are used to obtain immediate feedback regarding specific areas of dissatisfaction. Surveys are used to gather more detailed information regarding benefits received from participating in the program.
9.	Employee development is rewarded, which signals managers that mentoring and other development activities are worth their time and effort.

Table 1: Below shows the characteristics of successful formal mentoring programme

Source: Noe, R.A. (2005) *Employee training and development*; Boston: McGraw-Hill, page 388.

Mentoring program for managers identified as having high potential for upper-level position includes an automated relationship pairing function and a 360-degree assessment that is used in the mentoring relationship to improve skill weaknesses (Solomon, 1995).

Although many mentoring relationships develop informally, one major advantage of formalized mentoring programs is that they ensure access to mentors for all employees, regardless of gender or race. An additional advantage is that participants in the mentoring relationship tend to know what is expected of them. One limitation of formal mentoring programs is that mentors may not be able to provide counselling and coaching in a relationship that has been artificially created (Kaye, 1995). Table 1 presents characteristics of a successful formal mentoring program. A key to successful mentoring programs is that the mentor and protégé actually interact with each other. Face-to-face contact can be difficult, but with e-mail videoconferencing, virtual mentoring is possible (Murray, 2000).

According to Douglas and Macaulay (1999), Cardinal Health's mentoring program was designed to expose mentors and protégé to the company's different business units (e.g., pharmaceutical formulation, manufacturing, packaging and distribution) for the purpose of developing managers who have a broad understanding of the Cardinal Health businesses. This cross-unit perspective is especially important because Cardinal Health has grown to be a global business through acquisitions. To ensure that mentors and protégé interact, Cardinal Health's program includes four formal sessions in which mentors and protégé meet at a business locations. Both mentors and protégé are expected to make a specific time commitment to the program each month.

Mentors should be chosen based on interpersonal and technical skills. They also need to be trained. For example, New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Centre developed a mentoring program for housekeeping employees. Each mentor has 5 to 10 protégés who meet on a quarterly basis. To qualify as mentors, employees must receive outstanding performance evaluations, demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, and be able to perform basic cleaning tasks and essential duties of all housekeeping positions including safety procedures (such as handling

infections waste). Mentors undergo a two-day training program that emphasizes communication skills. They are taught how to convey information about the job and give directions effectively without criticizing employees (Jossi, 1997).

Fannie Mae provides financial products and services that make it possible for families to purchase homes. At Fannie Mae, the company's mentoring program is designed to encourage the advancement of high-potential employees, especially women and minorities. To ensure that the mentor and protégé are compatible, a pairing committee conducts detailed screening and matching based on the mentor's and protégé interests and expectations (e.g., what skills, experiences, and knowledge would you like your mentor to possess?). Fannie Mae provides guidelines to both mentors and protégés that identify what is expected of the relationship. Orientation sessions help the mentor and protégé become acquainted with each other. Both mentor and protégé sign a confidentiality agreement to build trust between the parties. To help ensure the success of the mentoring program, Fannie Mae uses surveys to conduct formal and informal evaluation that help the company understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

Both mentors and protégés can benefit from a mentoring relationship. Ahiewe (2010) suggests that mentors provide career and psychosocial support to their protégés. Career support includes coaching, protection, sponsorship, and providing challenging assignments, exposure, and visibility. Psychosocial support includes serving as a friend and a role model, providing positive regard and acceptance, and providing an outlet for the protégé to talk about anxieties and fears. Additional benefits for protégé include skill development, higher rates of promotion, larger salaries, and greater organizational influence (Kaye and Jackson, 1995).

Mentoring relationships provide opportunities for mentors to develop their interpersonal skills and increase their feelings of self-esteem and worth to the organization. Adobe Systems, located in San Jose, California, provide digital imaging, design, and document technology for consumers and businesses (you may have read a document using Adobe's PDF file format). For example, Melissa Dydahi, a manager at Adobe Systems, and Bruce Chizen, a senior vice president at Adobe, have multiple mentors that they benefit from. Chizen considers the founders of Adobe as mentors. The founders have taught him how to preserve the company's culture by hiring people smarter than himself. The founders' technical creativity has inspired him to offer new ideas to engineers at the company. He knows that the founders care about him personally but are honest in their opinions. Dydahi considers one of the Adobe board members a mentor, she asked the mentor for career advice and exposure to new ideas without changing jobs. Her mentor encouraged her to pursue a seat on a public company board of directors, especially a company needing her marketing skills. Another Dydahi's mentor, who works for a marketing agency, has encouraged her to advance her career by highlighting her accomplishments to others (Douglas and Macaulay, 1999).

For individuals in management positions as well as technical fields such as engineering and health services, the protégé may help them gain knowledge about important new scientific developments in their field and therefore prevent them from becoming technically obsolete. For example, General Electric recently launched an initiative in e-business. However, many veteran

managers faced the challenge of trying to understand how to effectively use the Internet. John Welch then CEO of General Electric, created a mentoring program for his top 600 managers. Welch generated interest in the program by getting his own mentor, who was approximately half his age and had much less business experience than he does. However, she was a Web expert who ran the company's website! The purpose of the program was help managers to become familiar with competitors' websites, to experience the difficulty of ordering products online, and to understand what the best websites are doing well. Welch started the program believing that e-business knowledge is generally inversely related to age and position in the company hierarchy-younger employees at the lower levels of the organization are more Web-savvy. GE managers meet with their younger mentors for Web lesson, where they critique websites, discuss assigned articles and books about e-commerce, and ask questions. The sessions benefited both the mentor and the protégé. The protégé learned about the Web, and the mentoring sessions made the younger employees feel more comfortable talking to their bosses while learning about the skills that a manager needs to run a large business operation e.g., ability to communicate with different people(Poe, 2002).

The purpose of these programs varies. Mentoring programs are used to socialize new employees and to increase the likelihood of skill transfer from training to the work setting. It may also be developed specifically for women and minorities to enable them to gain the experience and skills needed for managerial positions. Mentoring programs can also be used to develop managers for top-level management positions or help them acquire specific skills. Consider the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Centre mentoring program just discussed. The program is designed to help new employees more quickly learn housekeeping duties and understand the culture of the hospital. One benefit of the program is that new employees' performance deficiencies are more quickly corrected, Although formal mentoring of new employees lasts only two weeks, mentors are available to provide support many months later (Solomon, 1995).

Steve Croft and Janet Graham have met at least once a month for the past two years to share problems, information, and advice at E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company corporate headquarters. He is a planning manager in the company's research division. She is an administrative assistant in the toxicology lab where Steve Croft used to work Croft and Graham is part of the DuPont Company's eight-year-old mentoring program. Mentees choose from a list of volunteer mentors (managers and executives) whose skills and experience they want to learn about. Croft, the mentor, has provided Graham, the mentee, with answers to her questions about corporate programs and has given her the opportunity to meet scientists and managers in the company. Graham has also learned more about other departments' roles in the company and about budgetary priorities. Croft has also benefited from the relationship. He has learned how management decisions affect employees. For example, when the toxicology lab was forced to begin to charge departments for its services (rather than being supported from the company's general fund). Croft learned about employees' reactions and anxieties from Graham. Group mentoring programs have been initiated by some organizations that lack potential mentors or a formal reward system supporting mentoring or that believe that the quality of

mentorship developed in an informal mentoring relationships is poor. In Group mentoring programs, a successful senior employee is paired with four to six less experienced protégés. One potential advantage of the mentoring group is that protégé can learn from each other as well as from a more experienced senior employee. The leader helps protégés understand the organization, guides them in analyzing their experiences, and helps them clarify career directions. Each member of the group may have specific assignments to complete, or the group may work together on an issue (Geiger, 1992).

Training refers to a planned effort by a company to facilitate employees' learning of job-related competencies. These competencies include knowledge, skills, or behaviours that are critical for successful job performance the goal of training is for employees to master the knowledge, skill, and behaviours emphasized in training programs and to apply them to their day-to-day activities. Recently it has been acknowledged that to gain a competitive advantage, training has to involve more than just basic skill development. That is, to use training to gain a competitive advantage, training should be viewed broadly as a way to create intellectual capital. Intellectual capital include basic skills (skills needed to perform one's job), advanced skills (such as how to use technology to share information with other employees) and understanding of the customer or manufacturing system, and self-motivated creativity. Keep in mind that traditionally most of the emphasis on training has been at the basic and advanced skill levels. But some estimate that soon up to 85 percent of jobs in the United States and Europe will require extensive use of knowledge. This requires employees to share knowledge and creatively use it to modify a product or serve the customer, as well as to understand the service or product development system (Poe, 2002).

Many companies have adopted this broader perspective, which is known as high-leverage training. High-leverage training is linked to strategic business goals and objectives, uses an instructional design process to ensure that training is effective, and compares or benchmarks the company's training programs against training programs in other companies (Noe, 2005). High-leverage training practices also help create working conditions that encourage continuous learning. Continuous learning requires employees to understand the entire work system including the relationship among their jobs, their work units, and the company. Employees are expected to acquire new skills and knowledge, apply them on the job, and share this information with other employees. Managers take an active role in identifying training needs and help to ensure that employees use training in their work. To facilitate the sharing of knowledge, managers may use informational maps that show where knowledge lies within the company (for example, directories that list what individuals do as well as the specialized knowledge they Possess) and use technology such as groupware or the Internet that allows employees in various business units to work simultaneously on problems and share information (Solomon, 1995).

The emphasis on high-leverage training has been accompanied by a movement to link training to performance improvement. Companies have lost money on training because it is poorly designed, because it is not linked to a performance problem or business strategy, or because its outcomes are not properly evaluated. That is, companies have been investing money

into training simply because of beliefs that it is good thing to do. The perspective that the training function exists to deliver programs to employees without a compelling business reason for doing so is being abandoned. Today, training is being evaluated not to the basis of the number of programs offered and training activity in the organization but on how training addresses organization needs related to learning, behaviour change, and performance improvement. In fact, training is becoming more performance-focused; i.e training is used to improve employee performance, which leads to improved business results. Training is seen as one of several possible solutions to improved performance. Other solutions can include such actions as changing the job or increasing employee motivation through pay and incentives. Today there is a greater emphasis on providing educational opportunities for all employees (Noe, 2005). These educational opportunities may include training programs, but they also support for talking courses offered outside the organization, self-study, and learning through job rotation. An ongoing process of performance improvement that is directly measurable rather than organizing one-time training events. Medtronic is a good example of an organization that uses high-leverage training.

Medtronic is the world leader in medical technology, providing lifelong solutions for people with chronic heart and neurological disease. Medtronic has 30,000 employees in more than 120 countries. Medtronic has set a goal of 15 percent annual growth, a goal of doubling the size of the company in five years. To reach this goal, Medtronic believes that people development is important. Medtronic engages employees in learning and development, which links them to the company mission to restore many people to full and productive lives and make sure that products are available to patients who need them (Noe, 2005),

Training and development occur only after business strategies for achieving growth are identified by the company. For example, strong leadership skills include cross- functional, global job rotations as well as mentoring. To keep up with Medtronic's growth, training and development initiative must be flexible. The training and development staff are continually scanning the company and the broader medical device industry to understand the issues and prepare training solutions to meet them. Because Medtronic is a global company, certain skills are needed by all managers wherever they are in the world. But the various offices have the ability to adapt programs to their locations. In the Medtronic Asia/Pacific locations, for example, a developing manager's program placed more emphasis on cultural awareness because the managers were from many different locations and backgrounds. Training also supports new product launches to ensure that customers get a consistent message about the product. For example, Medtronic introduced a new heart therapy with a training event broadcast via satellite to salespeople located throughout the United States (Noe, 2005).

Measuring the return on investment in research and development, marketing, sales, and human resources is key to demonstrating the value to the business. Adebayo (2006) noted that each of Medtronic's businesses uses a scorecard to measure how training contributes to the company's success. This discussion is not meant to underestimate the importance of traditional training (a focus on acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities), but it should alert

you that many organizations' training is evolving from a focus on skills to an emphasis on learning and creating and sharing knowledge.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Mentoring is a training and development programme aimed at improving employee's performance by imparting knowledge, changing attitudes, or increasing skills on the employee. It involves in-house programs such as on-the job training, coaching, rotational assignments and professional programs such as Academy of Management, Nigeria (AMA) seminars. The ultimate aim of such programs is of course, to enhance the future performance of the organization itself. Both the processes and outcome of learning in universities through mentoring involve changes in the meaning that protégés apply to their job assignments; changes in feeling and value, knowledge and understanding, and skills that have relevance, for teaching, research and community services.

While formal mentoring program is evaluated and interviews with mentors and protégé are used to obtain immediate feedback regarding specific areas of dissatisfaction, informal mentoring program may not be properly evaluated though it creates more intimate relationship between the protégé and the mentor. Mentor and protégé participation is voluntary in informal relationship and as such, the relationship can be terminated at any time without fear of punishment but in formal mentoring, 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. In view of our discussion in the literature, it is observed that formal mentoring relationship seems to be more effective in career development of junior academics in Nigerian universities. It is therefore recommended that formal mentoring relationship should be encouraged and developed in Nigerian universities rather than informal mentoring.

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