Effect of Mentoring Practice on employee’s Performance: A Case Study of Abia State University Uturu, Nigeria

Author’s Details:
(1) Uchenna, Onyemaechi, Department of Management, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria (2) Nkechi, Ikpeazu, Department of Management, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria.

Abstract
This work examined the effect of mentoring practice on employees’ performance. The rate at which new universities are springing up and the attendant mobility of academic staff, the increasing demographic changes among lecturers, the falling standards of educations, increasing cases of staff disillusionment and disorientation made this study necessary. The objectives of the study were; to identify the nature of the relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers and to establish the nature of the relationship between the psychosocial functions of mentoring and career adjustment of junior lecturers. To achieve the objectives, a survey research design was adopted. The techniques employed in analyzing the data were descriptive statistics and the spearman rank correlation coefficient. The results indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers. It was also found that there is a positive and significant relationship between psychosocial functions of a mentor and career adjustment of junior lecturers. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that mentoring practice has an effect on employee performance. It was recommended among others that management of Abia State University should make mentoring an academic responsibility for certain categories of lecturers. That is making it mandatory through a policy instrument with associated incentives for Readers and Professors to engage in mentoring junior colleagues.

Keywords: Mentoring practice, employee performance.

Introduction

Mentoring is a familiar path traveled by many academics either as mentors, protégés/mentees or both. Essentially, it is a human resource strategy for promoting the professional development and career growth of institutional members through a focused dyadic relationship. Ordinarily, it occurs naturally, but it can also be cultivated and harnessed by an institution. In a traditional sense, mentoring involves a process that brings together inexperienced and experienced individuals in an attempt to enable the former to gain knowledge, self-confidence, skills as the other benefits from the latter as they transit through the process. Allen (2007) posits that mentoring is a system of semi-structured guidance where one person or a group of people share their knowledge, skills, and experience to assist others in progressing in their own lives and careers.

Over time, the definition of mentorship has evolved, with some theorists suggesting that mentorship must be a voluntary relationship of equality, openness, and trust between the mentor and mentee (Coppola, 2010). Mentorship further involves motivating and empowering the other persons to identify their own issues and goals, and helping them to find ways of resolving or reaching them. A mentor is a person who commands a certain degree of respect, either by virtue of holding a higher-level position or because of age, expertise or experience in doing the job. It also refers to someone who takes a special interest in a person and in teaching that person skills and attitudes to help that person succeed.

There are essentially two major types of mentoring – informal and formal. Informal, also known as traditional or natural mentoring represents the default model of mentorship. According to Freedman (2009:177), the informal mentoring relationship is one that happens spontaneously based on mutual respect, rapport and relationship. On the other hand, formal mentoring is organized by the organization. Formal mentoring makes “mentorship a systemic policy issue and a standard part of management practice,” (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999:95).

Statement of the Problem
There is no doubt that mentoring is deep rooted in academia. In fact, it is so deep rooted that the descriptor, mentor, commands a special appeal among academics. From graduate studentship to employment, the academic staff serves as role models to their students and as mentors to junior colleagues. This, however, is the informal
type which nevertheless has its benefits both to the institution and individuals. But given the rate at which new universities are springing up and the attendant mobility of academic staff, the increasing demographic changes among lecturers, the falling standards of education, increasing cases of staff disillusionment, disorientation, career maladjustment, one wonders if there is still a mentoring relationship in our universities and if such mentoring practices are yielding the desired results.

Objectives of the Study
The broad objective of this study is to assess the effect of mentoring practice on employee’s performance. However, the specific objectives are to:

i Identify the nature of the relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers.

ii Establish the nature of the relationship between the psychosocial functions of mentoring and career adjustment of junior lecturers.

Research Questions

i What is the nature of the relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers?

ii What is the nature of the relationship between the psychosocial functions of mentoring and career adjustment of junior lecturers?

Research Hypotheses

H01: There is no positive and strong relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers.

H02: There is no positive and significant relationship between the psychosocial functions of mentoring and career adjustment of junior lecturers.

Review of Related Literature

An organization’s most important asset consists of the skills and abilities of its employees and their ability to apply these in the achievement of organizational goals (Soosay, 2005). Mentoring remains one of the most important developmental tools for the progression of any professional in training, and managers in organizations play a crucial role in developing employees (Coleman, Power, Williams, Carpentieri, & Schulkin, 2005). Hegstad (1999) reports that two thirds of the 1,250 top executives surveyed developed relationships with mentors who cultivated their personal and professional skills early in their careers. Any feedback that employees receive from their managers significantly impacts the employees’ job, career, and life satisfaction, including their performance in the workplace (Young & Perrewé, 2000). Various options are available to managers to yield improved job satisfaction in the workplace, such as coaching, advising, teaching, counseling, guiding, and training: each option is a characteristic of mentoring (Dodds, 2005). In a competitive business environment, organizations must find creative ways to reinvent their organizations to align with and react to various customers and stakeholders within the industry. Mentoring emerges as a basic leadership function and leaders who do not develop their employees or promote development within their organizations consequently damage their own efforts to lead effectively (Zachary, 2003).

Knowledge Transfer Mentoring

In the view of DeLong (2004), knowledge transfer mentoring is a key mechanism for organization success. Similarly, Von Krogh, (2000) emphasizes the importance of knowledge sharing. Becerra, Fernandez, and Sabherwal (2001) found that social processes played an important role in the transfer of tacit knowledge among members in an organization. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (2001), workplace relationships such as
mentoring should be fostered to promote the transfer of tacit knowledge. Mentoring is such a factor that promotes guidance on career development and role modeling which both contribute greatly to employee’s development. While citing Kram (1985), Ojedokun (2011) saw mentoring as helping the protégés work out personal problems thereby enhancing the protégés’ self-image. The existence of interpersonal bond that fosters mutual trust enables the protégés to identify with their mentors to offer the support and counsel needed. The mentor applies active listening and rapport skills that enable both individuals to address their concerns. The mentor reinforces with the protégé that both of them are highly valued employees and contributors to their organization. Career support is a lifelong series of activities that contribute to a person’s career exploration, establishment, success and fulfillment (Dessler, 2011).

Certainly, there are many methods to transfer knowledge. Companies which recognize the challenges of shifting workforce demographics are utilizing an assortment of knowledge management strategies to transfer knowledge from aging experts to members of the new generation. While a variety of knowledge management strategies have been successfully implemented setting the stage for knowledge to be captured and shared, companies must design knowledge transfer strategies conducive to multi-generational workforce dynamics keeping in mind the generational diversity that exists in the workplace. Indeed, Lahaie (2005) states that effective knowledge management and knowledge transfer within the organization are fundamental for ongoing organizational effectiveness. However, effective knowledge transfer requires planning in terms of identifying the best available knowledge, who holds it and how it can be transferred. More importantly, planning knowledge transfer protocols enables the firm to prevent knowledge loss. Piktials & Greenes (2008) examine knowledge loss gaps and stress that two of the best methods to capture and pass knowledge cross-generationally are to customize knowledge transfer methods with regard to the present needs and to be clear as to how each generation prefers to learn. Similarly, Wagner (2009) states that knowledge transfer methods need to be varied due to the existing age diversity of the workforce.

Further, Wagner (2009) suggests that because of the diversity of learning styles among generations represented in the workforce, various methods of transfer such as formal education and training, apprenticeships, simulations and games, storytelling and conferences, blogs and papers should be adopted. Technology has further highlighted the need for the diversity and presents opportunities to make use of what would be more appealing to the present generation of workers.

**Talent Development Mentoring**

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) consider talent and intellectual capital as a company’s primary source of production and value. Human capital, recognized by organizations as the strategic value of the human assets, is the collective value of the workforce. Human capital is not the worker in a company- it is what that person brings and utilizes in working towards the success of the organization. Human capital refers to the collective value of the capabilities, talents, knowledge, skills, life experiences, and motivation of the workforce (Aldisent, 2012). It is also called intellectual capital to reflect the thinking, knowledge, creativity, and decision making that people in organizations contribute towards the success of the organization (Kaplan & Norton, 2004). Talent and knowledge are recognized as valuable corporate resources in the same vein as land, buildings, financial resources, people, capital equipment, and other tangible assets (Kipley, Lewis & Helm, 2008). As employees in organizations progress with age, they acquire a set of talents and knowledge that is customized to the firms’ operations, structure and culture. More importantly, it is the unique insights and understood idiosyncrasies about the institution that is developed over time which make the learning difficult to replicate or replace when aging employees transfer out of their positions (Lesser, 2006). It is this combination of explicit and tacit talents and knowledge that mature workers possess which has become the most ‘strategically significant resource of organizations’ that must be transferred to a younger employee in order to maintain the sustainability of the organization.

**Theoretical Framework**

There are several theories that explain mentoring in the workplace. However, this study considers social cognitive theory very appropriate and has therefore utilized it as the basic theoretical framework.
Social Cognitive Theory was postulated by Bandura (1989). In his work on the social cognitive mentoring theory, he posited that the mentor is able to help the protégé develop a sense of competence, confidence, and self-esteem through the provision of psychological support (Allen & Day, 2002). This view is clarified by the principles of social learning theory. According to Bandura (1997), learning would be laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them on what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action. Simply put, the process of mentoring is facilitated by the protégé observing and modeling the behavior of the mentor in the relevant social context. Merriam and Carafarella (1999) further identify the relevance of the social learning theory in reference to mentoring by stating that social learning theories contribute to adult learning by highlighting the importance of social context and explicating the process of modeling and mentoring. In the same vein, the social cognitive theory supports the understanding of the mentoring theory. It states that knowledge can be enhanced by a close identification between the observer and the model as obtained between a protégé and a mentor. With adequate identification, a connection that enables imitation is initiated. Bandura (1989) explains that behavior, cognition and personal factors interact to produce the desired behavior. The mentoring relationship is thus a reflection of how observation, imitation, and identification of the mentor by the protégé are directed expertly to bringing about a change in attitude, outlook, and values in the protégé.

**Empirical Review**

Mubashar (2016) carried out a study on the impact of training and mentoring on employee performance – Empirical analysis of Public and Private Universities ’members of Islamabad. The study had one major objective which was to examine the relationship between training, mentoring and employee performance. The research made use of data from two hundred and fifty staff members chosen from different public and private sector universities of Islamabad. The research made use of survey research method and data were analyzed using regression method of data analysis through SPSS. The study finding shows that employee training and mentoring influence employee performance.

Carla (2008) researched the effects of mentorship on job satisfaction among military academicians in the United States of America. The study examined the effect of mentoring relationship on job satisfaction and faculty members’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. The study made use of primary data sourced through questionnaires. The study sample was drawn from military and civilian faculty located at the United States Air Force Academy. Out of the six hundred and fourteen solicited participants, one hundred and sixteen responded. Correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Findings suggest that faculty members with mentors had higher levels of job satisfaction than faculty members without mentors. The perceptions of protégés with regard to the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship on job satisfaction did not reveal significant results.

Cherono, Towett, and Njeje (2016) studied the influence of mentorship practices on employee performance in small manufacturing firms in Garissa County, Kenya. The broad objective of this study was to determine the influence of mentorship practices on employee performance in small manufacturing firms. A cross-sectional survey design was used in the study and questionnaires were administered to collect data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to arrive at conclusions on the relationships between study variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the set hypotheses and construct the model of interest. The study established a significant relationship between leadership mentorship, innovative mentorship, knowledge transfer mentorship, talent development mentorship and the performance of the employees. The study recommends that mentorship practices be considered as part of the organizations strategy to improve the performance of the employees.
Ofobruku and Nwakoby (2015) researched on effects of mentoring on employee’s performance in selected family businesses in Abuja, Nigeria. The study objective focused on the effects of mentoring on employee performance in family businesses. The construction Industry in Abuja was critically investigated. The study employed a survey research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Responses from three hundred and sixty-seven construction employees were analyzed. The data collected were analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient statistics technique. The findings of the study revealed that mentoring had positive effects on employee performance and that career support had a more positive effect on employees’ performance than psychosocial support. This research concluded that performances among employees are based on the degree of mentorship program put in place in the organization. Employees respond better to career support in terms of performance. The study concluded that mentorships had a significant relationship with employee performance. The study recommends that for a family business to sustain better employee performance, the organization should be encouraged to have a mentorship program for the employees of the organization, which will result in better employee performance for the business to achieve its objectives.

Research Methodology

A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the targeted population which comprised of lecturers from the rank of Graduate Assistant to lecturer 1 in Abia State University Uturu which gave us three hundred and ninety six (396) and Taro Yamane formular was used to derive the sample size, which is one hundred and ninety nine (199). Bowley’s formula was further used to determine the number of a questionnaire to administer to each faculty. The instrument, made up of thirteen (13) items was subjected to reliability test using the cronbach’s alpha, and the result is as shown below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach's Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, the Spearman rank correlation coefficient in SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) was used in testing of the hypotheses.

Results

A total of one hundred and ninety-nine copies of the questionnaire were administered, but only one hundred and twenty-two were returned. This represents a sixty-one percent response rate. The mean weighting of responses gathered from the questionnaire was computed and interpreted from the data and are presented in tables.

Research question 1: What is the nature of the relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers?

This question sought to identify the nature of the relationship – positive or negative – between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of lecturers. We utilized the responses to two key questions that predict knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Responses as on whether the mentor shares his experiences and knowledge with mentee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fieldwork, 2019
Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (eighty-nine percent) agreed that their mentors freely shared their experiences and knowledge. Conversely, only eleven percent of the respondents expressed a contrary view. Since the responses were Likert-based, we further calculated the weighted average value of the responses which showed a high positive value of 4.02.

Table 2: Instrumentality of knowledge transfer in engendering career growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fieldwork, 2019

Table 2 focused on the relationship between the core function of the mentor - knowledge transfer and career growth - showed that one hundred and five respondents (representing ninety percent) of the respondents affirmed that knowledge transfer mentoring engenders career growth. However, ten percent of the respondents (twelve respondents) expressed a contrary opinion. In terms of the weighted average index, it showed a high positive value of 4.51.

Research question 2: what is the nature of the relationship between psychosocial functions of a mentor and career adjustment of junior lecturers?

This question focused on the effect of the psychosocial functions of a mentor on the career adjustment of junior lecturers. The psychosocial functions cover counseling, friendship, and role modeling – which enable a new employee to easily overcome the shock of a new environment and therefore achieve a better organization-employee fit. We sought the views of respondents in terms of how their mentors facilitated their career adjustment. The responses are shown in tables 3

Table 3: Instrumentality of psychosocial functions in engendering career adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Disagree</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fieldwork, 2019

Psychosocial functions of counseling and role modeling enabled the lecturer to settle down to his/her work, table 3 shows that ninety-two respondents (seventy-seven percent) confirmed that these psychosocial functions engendered a positive work adjustment. On the other hand, twenty-seven or twenty-two percent of the respondents expressed a contrary opinion about the usefulness of these psychosocial functions to work adjustment. The weighted average index showed a high value of 4.0 which means that the relationship is positive.

Table 4: Instrumentality of emotional support in engendering work adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fieldwork, 2019

http://www.ijmsbr.com
Table 4 revealed that majority of the respondents (eighty-three percent) confirmed that the emotional support they received from their mentors proved useful in their work adjustment. On the other hand, twenty-one respondents or eighteen percent disagreed with the view that the emotional support of a mentor was necessary for a positive work adjustment. The weighted average index of 4.12 showed a high and positive value.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no positive and significant relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers.

Table 5: Correlation output of knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Knowledge transfer</th>
<th>Career growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.722**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The value of the Spearman’s rho is .722 which shows a moderate relationship between the variables. However, given that the p-value .021 < 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is a positive and significant relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers.

Hypothesis Two

Ho2: There is no positive and significant relationship between psychosocial functions of mentoring and career adjustment of junior lecturers.

Table 6: shows the correlation output of psychosocial functions of a mentor and career adjustment of junior lecturers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Psychosocial functions</th>
<th>Career adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.806**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Spearman’s correlation coefficient is .806 which means that there is a strong relationship between the two variables. Given that the p-value of .000 < 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate which states that there is a positive and significant relationship between psychosocial functions of a mentor and career adjustment of junior lecturers.

Discussion of Findings

The Spearman correlation coefficient of hypothesis one indicates that there is a positive relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and career growth of junior lecturers. There is no doubt that junior lecturers require expert knowledge not only about their field and area of specialization but also about the modalities for launching into the trajectory of growth. Such knowledge is both tacit and codified, and tacit knowledge is not easily and openly transferred. It requires the confidence of a mentoring relationship for certain types of tacit knowledge to be transferred. The relationship between knowledge transfer and career growth has been established by such researchers like Kram (1983), Levinson et al., (1978), Cherono, Towett, and Njeje (2016).
and Mubashar (2016) who confirmed that knowledge transfer mentoring enhances the career advancement and performance of employees. The Spearman’s correlation output for hypothesis two showed a positive relationship between psychosocial functions and career adjustment. Career adjustment remains a major concern to human resource professionals because it has very serious implications for employee integration and performance. It is at the foundation of organization-employee fit. The study established that there is a positive relationship between the psychosocial functions and an employee’s career adjustment. Career adjustment is the focus of organizational socialization processes and Gunn (1995), Gerger–Dumond & Boyle, (1995) and Murray (2001) show that mentoring enhances rapid assimilation into organizational culture and climate.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that mentoring is an effective strategy for not only developing the worker but also actualizing organizational socialization and employee performance. Unfortunately, in spite of its manifest benefits, a good number of organizations including Abia State University prefer to leave it to happenstance which begets the informal variant that grows naturally but has limited coverage. As a result, a good number of junior employees who desire to be mentored in order to actualize their full potentials are left to “learn the ropes” by themselves.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made.

1. The management of Abia State University should adopt a full-fledged formal mentoring program with the necessary structures, guidelines, and incentives. There is no doubt that formal mentoring has a lot of challenges, but in the long run, the benefits far outweigh the costs.

2. The management of Abia State University should make mentoring an academic responsibility for certain categories of lecturers. That is making it mandatory through a policy instrument with associated incentives for Readers and Professors to engage in mentoring junior colleagues.

REFERENCES


