

## MENTORING STRATEGY AND ITS ROLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The paper discussed mentoring as a potent strategy for the effective management of Business Education programme in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. For Business Education programme to be able to actualize its set goals of producing skilled and competent graduates for the nation's workforce, there is the need for effective and strategic mentorship. Therefore, this paper focused on the concept of mentoring; different mentoring practices; and areas of mentoring for the management of Business Education programme. The paper also examined the theory of mentoring phases and show how to successfully initiate mentoring strategies that could be applied by mentors and mentees in Business Education programme in tertiary institutions in order to foster the quality of the programme and the quantity of competent manpower in the programme. From the literature review, mentoring practice is seen to be the surest way to provide ideal opportunities to senior and experienced business educators to share meaningful information and experience to the next generation of Business Educators. The authors recommended, among others, that availability of competent mentors is a key in successful mentorship.*

**Keywords:** *Business Education, Effective Management, A Mentee, A Mentor, Mentoring Strategy.*

### **Introduction**

Mentoring is a learning relationship in which a more experienced individual (a mentor) acts as a guidance, counselor, role model, teacher, and helper to a less experienced individual (a mentee). The practice of mentoring involves sharing advice, ideas, knowledge, and guidance and offering support for the mentee's personal and professional development. Mentoring is a collaborative relationship between two or more individuals that supports career and/or personal development throughout one's career (Ojeaga, 2018). Educators in tertiary institutions including business educators need effective mentoring for excellence in the performance of tasks, namely, research, teaching and administration. This is because the practice of mentoring appears to be a sure way to provide ideal opportunities by superior and experienced business educators to share and provide tacit career, teaching and professional information, skills and experience to the next generation of business educators.

Educational qualifications alone without experience, knowledge, skillfulness and resourcefulness cannot guarantee success in the performance of specific job activities, namely research, teaching and administration. Consequently, for a business educator to be adjudged successful on the job, there must be excellence in many areas apart from teaching such as research/publication, career/professional development and community service to mention a few. Skillfulness and growth in all these specific domains of the educator's job to a very large extent determines whether a business educator is an achiever or an underachiever. Hence, there is a need for effective and strategic mentorship by superior and experienced business educators to provide effective and strategic mentorship to junior and less experienced business educators in tertiary institutions Nigeria. Mentoring as an on-the job training

practice may be the surest way for Business Education programme to be able to achieve its laudable goals of producing competent graduates for the nation's workforce. According to Emoeke (2016), mentoring helps the academic staff to develop natural strength and potentials for advancement in performance of educational services including teaching, research and publications, and community service. Besides, mentoring provides supportive supervision, feedback and positive encouragement that enhances business educators' satisfaction, engagement, commitment and performance on the job. With effective mentoring, both the mentor and the mentee derive mutual benefits that are capable of helping them to be satisfied, engaged and committed to their jobs and consequently improve in their overall job performance (Ojeaga, 2018).

The practice of mentoring in Business Education programme may be needed in the areas of research and publications, practical instruction method, career and professional development, psychosocial support and community service. Research and publication is a major task expected to be performed by business educators. In fact, without a sound knowledge in the area of research and publication, a business educator may be prone to risk of being flushed out of the teaching profession. It is often said that educators in tertiary institutions in Nigeria must 'publish or perish'. A business educator who wants to advance and grow in the teaching profession must know how to successfully identify a research problem and conduct scholarly research. Besides, successful educators need to be able to write meaningful and acceptable proposals, publishable papers for conferences and journals. According to Olasupo (2013), the bulk of educators' work lies in research areas with emphasis placed on ability to supervise projects, dissertations and theses. Hence, the author noted that the educators need to know how to conduct good quality of thesis or dissertation, current departmental or technical reports and paper presentation at conferences or exhibitions. Success in each of these areas requires that junior educators work closely with superior educators through a collaborative mentoring practice.

Teaching is another critical part of educator's job performance. Thus, business educators need not just qualifications and teaching aids to be able to impart knowledge successfully but also a good pedagogical skill. A good business educator ought to be able to meet the needs of their students. It is a common knowledge that many young graduates from Business Education enter into the teaching profession without adequate possession of practical teaching skill. For this reason, the young and inexperienced educators need mentors who can guide them to improve their teaching or pedagogical skills irrespective of the teaching qualifications at the point of entering the teaching profession. Apart from mentoring practice in teaching, business educators also need mentoring for their career/professional development. Career and professional mentoring provided by the experienced business educators to the less experienced business educators may provide the mentees with understanding, support, knowledge, advice, encouragement and counsel needed for successful career/profession growth and development. The practice of professional mentoring in a tertiary institution can help the young and novice mentees to grow as junior educators because mentoring is one of the veritable means for one generation of academia to impart their knowledge to succeeding generations (Columbia University, 2016) as it may provide the junior educators with diverse opportunities to excel in their research and publications through joint or collaborative efforts.

Apart from what has been discussed above, business educators also need psychosocial support and community service mentoring in the course of their performance of teaching task. Psychosocial mentoring involves helping a mentee in building confidence, overcoming work pressures and strains, assisting their personal life, getting their opinions heard and valued, sharing dreams, providing feedback, creating awareness of contribution to relationship, and teaching with examples (Ojeaga, 2018). While community service mentoring involves helping the young and novice business educators for example to expand their network beyond Business Education department. Through community service, academics apart from teaching and research seek to make relevant contribution to his field, his department, faculty, university and community at large (Olasupo, 2013). Hence, community service mentoring may help the less experienced business educator to gain insight into opportunities outside the immediate department or school circle and make contributions to the development of their institutions or society on a wider level. Therefore, if mentoring is effectively and adequately practiced and implemented, it will yield massive

benefits for both parties (that is the mentors and mentees). Mentoring as an on-the-job training programme is being successfully used by various organizations including educational organizations to enhance the satisfaction, engagement and commitment level and job performance of employees. With effective mentoring, both the mentor and the mentee can derive mutual benefits that are capable of helping them to be satisfied with, engaged and committed to their jobs, improve in job performance and successfully achieve the goals of Business Education in the nation's tertiary institutions.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

Kram (1985) developed a theory on phases of mentoring that could be applied for successful Business Education practice in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. They include: initiation phase, cultivation phase, separation phase and redefinition phase. The initiation phase according to Kram (1985), is the beginning of the mentoring relationship. For instance, the experienced and less experienced business educators initiate mentoring practice either formally or informally. Informal mentoring relationships may develop intentional or coincidental networking or social gatherings. Therefore, the potential business educator mentee searches for experienced, successful senior colleagues whom they admire and perceive as good role models or a potential business educator mentor searches for talented young colleagues who are "coachable. Both parties seek a positive, enjoyable relationship that would justify the extra time and effort required in mentoring. Then, the goals of such mentoring become more concrete and opportunities for interaction around work tasks are realized. Literature shows that formal mentoring practices are not common in Business Education in Nigeria however, when they exits, the department makes the match process instead of letting these relationships emerge on their own. Good matching process are sensitive to demographic variables as well as common professional interests. Mentors may review mentee profiles and select their mentees or programme administrators may match mentors and mentees. Regardless of the method, a good mentoring programme would require both parties to explore the relationship and evaluate the appropriateness of the mentor-mentee match.

Cultivation phase is the phase in which the mentor and the mentee learn more about each other's talents and interests (Kram, 1985). The mentor and mentee's psychological and emotional bond deepens, intimacy increases, and opportunities for meaningful interaction and learning increase. This is the primary stage of learning and development (American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force, 2012). If the mentor and mentee successfully assume the initiation stage, during the cultivation stage, the mentee learns massively from the mentor. According to Kram (1985), two broad mentoring functions are at their peak during this stage. They are the career-related functions and psychosocial functions. The career-related function often emerges first when the mentor assigns challenging assignments to the mentee, maximizes the mentee's exposure and visibility in the organization, and actively sponsors the mentee through promotions and recognitions. The psychosocial function emerges after the mentor and mentee have established an interpersonal bond. Within this function, the mentor accepts and confirms the mentee's professional identity and the relationship matures into a strong friendship. The cultivation stage is generally a positive one for both mentor and mentee. The mentor teaches the mentee valuable lessons gained from the mentor's experience and expertise. The mentee may also teach the mentor valuable lessons related to new technologies, new methodologies, and emerging issues in the field.

Kram (1985) depicted that the separation phase happens when a structural or emotional separation occurs. The theorist argued that during separation, the mentee works more autonomously and the mentor is less available to serve in mentoring functions. The separation stage generally describes the end of a mentoring relationship. According to the National Institution for Health and Care Research (2022), this phase of mentoring practice involves reformulating the relationship, whereby the mentee and mentor close the formal mentoring relationship and may move on to become friends and colleagues. Kram (1985) depicted that the redefinition phase transpires as the relationship takes on a new dimension or terminates (Kram, 1985). Here the tensions from the separation phase disappear and a new relationship is formed. During the redefinition stage, both mentor and mentee recognize that their relationship can continue but that it will not be the same as their mentoring relationship (American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force, 2012). If both parties successfully negotiate through

the separation stage, the relationship can evolve into a collegial relationship or social friendship. Unlike the cultivation stage, the focus of the relationship is no longer centered on the mentee's career development. The former mentor may establish mentoring relationships with new mentees. Likewise, the former mentee may serve as a mentor to others.

### **Types of Mentoring Practices**

Mentoring practices could be provided for business educators formally or informally. Kehinde (2013) opined that formal mentoring has only recently emerged as a staff development strategy while informal mentoring has long been a feature of many work environments. The author added that formal mentoring occurs when an institution/department takes a decision to implement a scheme of mentoring which will have formal recognition within the institution/department even if there are no tangible rewards for being involved as a mentor or mentee. The main purpose of formal mentoring is to help new business educators settle into the institution, to create a knowledge sharing environment, to develop mission critical skills and to help accelerate a mentee's career growth (Adesina, 2013). One of the major advantages of formal mentorship is that it ensures that mentorship is extended to individuals and minorities who would not have been considered previously within the organization (Adeyanju, 2013).

Informal (traditional) mentorship on the other hand is the oldest form of mentoring and has been a common source of knowledge and patronage in the arts and sciences throughout history (Adeyanju, 2013). This type of mentoring is void of a precise structure and the rules are often at the discretion of the mentor who defines the parameters, expectations and approach (Bilesanmi, 2013). Usually, informal mentoring relationships in Business Education like in any other programme develop on their own, such as when a mentee approaches a possible mentor and they both agree to form a mentoring relationship. For example, when a new academic staff is brought into Business Education department, an older colleague could have a likeness or interest to mentor the new educator and approach that person for that purpose without any formal arrangement by the department (Wake Forest University, 2012). Alternatively, the new staff can approach a senior or a more experienced colleague for a necessary guidance and encouragement. One of the major disadvantages of informal (traditional) mentoring is that it is highly selective and elitist in nature (Adeyanju, 2013). Thus, individuals elect to initiate a relationship with each other members who are recognized as having potentials or talents. Consequently, there are natural likeness or biases towards some individuals and not others.

### **Areas of Mentoring Practice**

Mentoring practices take place in many contexts in tertiary institutions including Business Education programme. These areas according to Johnston (2016) include teaching, research and publication, instruction-oriented, career and professional development and community service.

### **Research and Publications**

Research is a major work expected to be performed by the academics in tertiary institutions including business educators. The extent to which business educators can grow and progress as educators depend on their ability and competence in research and publications. The practice of research mentoring may be provided for business educators on writing acceptable articles for journal publication, developing research proposals, academic conferences and seminars, accessing research grants from grants awarding bodies, understanding ethical practices in the teaching profession and going through research manuscripts for quality publications. According to Olasupo (2013), the bulk of educators' work lies in research areas with emphasis placed on ability to supervise projects and theses. Hence, business educators need to know how to conduct good quality thesis and dissertation, review departmental and technical reports, prepare acceptable papers for conferences and exhibitions and referenced journals. They also need to be skillful in contribution to referred book, books review, book editing amongst others. Success in each of these areas requires that junior educators work closely with senior educators through a collaborative mentoring process.

According to the USA National Institute on Drug Abuse (2009), the following are some research

and publication mentoring functions that senior or experienced educators could provide to the young and inexperienced educators: shows the mentee how to assess journal articles critically, write technical manuscripts, and critique and revise manuscripts; teaches the technology and train the mentee to be one of the next leaders in the field; teaches how to conceptualize a study; design a study; and collect, analyze, and interpret data; reviews research analyses with the mentee, assists the mentee in writing grant applications; supports the mentee in research arenas and provides recommendations for high-profile committees, journal reviews, and grant reviews and; encourages the mentee to present papers and posters as first author.

### ***Instruction and Teaching Mentoring***

Ojeaga (2018) opined that instructional mentoring is a mentoring experience provided to new/inexperienced business educators by experts or experienced business educators in an authentic and experiential learning through modeling. On this note, Olorunleke (2015) remarked that in the university setting particularly for academic programmes like Business Education, the goal of mentoring is to improve the teaching and the research skills of the staff. Many business educators enter into their teaching career without much experience in practical teaching. Consequently, young and novice business educators need instructional mentoring that could coach and support them to improve their instructional performance irrespective of their skill level at the point of entering into the teaching profession. Hill, Ward, Seay and Buzenski (2022) noted that mentoring relationship is a hallmark of good instructional practice as it helps individuals to get benefits in diverse teaching areas such as advice on balancing teaching, research, committee work and other responsibilities. Instructional mentoring functions contribute to mentee's career advancement (Bartley-Daniele, 2014) because mentoring career functions promote mentee confidence and competency. Through their actions and articulated ways of thinking, superior or experienced business educators who act as mentors teach young or inexperienced business educators effective teaching skills and strategies. In Business Education, instructional mentoring could be provided in a formal or informal setting. Garvey (2000) in identifying the need for instructional teacher mentoring, stated that:

*Learning new curricula, dealing with classroom management and discipline, integrating students with special needs, using technology, individualizing student programs, coordinating extracurricular activities and being accountable to the various stakeholders of education are just a few of the jobs teachers do. Many of these duties are difficult for the most experienced professional, so one wonders how beginning teachers survive, since they are expected, on their very first day of employment, to do the job of a seasoned veteran. Many school districts, seeing a need to nurture the new generation of teachers, have put in place formal mentorship programmes (P. 2.).*

### ***Career Development Mentoring***

The term "career" can be defined in its traditional sense, as individual's progression up in an ordered hierarchy in an occupation or profession (Watts, 2013). Today, the term "career" is defined in a much more inclusive way as individuals' lifelong progression in education and in work (Lovšin, 2017; Edokpolor & Muritala, 2018). According to Johnson (2002), a good mentor provides the mentee with understanding, support, knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel, and needed to grow in a choosing career. During career or professional mentoring in Business Education, the mentor accelerates a mentee's access to colleagues and networks to nurture and develop the next generation (USA National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2009) or leaders in Business Education. Career mentoring provides the mentee the opportunity to learn the Business Education language and the skills needed to become a full member of Business Education profession. This becomes a reality as mentors assist mentees in giving birth to intellectual ideas, research methodologies, and professional practices that are transformative (USC Center for Excellence in Teaching, 2003). Career mentoring typically focused on career development and include aspects of the mentorship that enhance "learning the ropes" and preparing for advancement on the job.



### ***Professional Development Mentoring***

According to Kram (1985), professional mentoring is a type of mentoring that provides sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching, protection and providing challenging assignments to the mentee as all of which help the younger person to establish a role in the organization or profession, learn the rope, and prepare for advancement. Sponsorship function exposes the young or inexperienced business educators to job opportunities so that the mentee can build upon skills that will benefit their future career. Exposure-and-visibility is a socializing function; the mentor provides opportunities for the mentee to develop relationships with key individuals in the profession. Coaching involves the senior or experienced business educators passing on useful knowledge and perspectives as well as experience to the young or inexperienced business educators. The mentor provides access to information and advice to the mentee who has limited knowledge. Protection is provided by the mentor who shields the mentee from blame in negative situations. By intervening on a mentee's behalf, a mentor protects the mentee from unnecessary criticism or risk. Challenging assignments include training, work, and feedback that assist a mentee in mastering challenging tasks. The mentor may provide assignments that can assist a mentee in developing either technical and/or managerial skills; thus, this function provides an important learning opportunity. According to Johnson (2002), a good mentor provides the mentee with understanding, support, knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel, and needed to grow in a choosing career or profession. Professional mentoring in a tertiary institution helps young and novice mentees to grow as junior educators because mentoring is one veritable means for one generation of academia to impart their knowledge to succeeding generations (Columbia University, 2016) as it provides junior educators with diverse opportunities to excel in their research and publications through joint efforts.

### ***Psychosocial Development Mentoring***

One of the areas of mentoring in Business Education programme is psychosocial development of mentees. This involves helping mentees in building confidence, overcoming pressures and strains, assisting their personal life, getting their opinions heard and valued, sharing dreams, providing feedback, creating awareness of contribution to relationship, and teaching with examples (Azman, Muhammad & Sebastian, 2009). Psychosocial functions enhance young and novice business educator's sense of competence, identity, and work-role effectiveness (Johnson, 2002). More so, Kram (1985) noted that psychosocial functions are derivable from such mentoring relationship including role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling and friendship serve to enhance a mentee's (mentee's) sense of self-worth in an organization and a mentee's sense of identity, competence, and effectiveness in a professional role (Kram, 1985). Role modeling is provided by a senior or an experienced business educator who demonstrates the behavior, attitudes, and/or values that a young or inexperienced business educator may want to emulate. The mentee observes the mentor's example, identifies with aspects of it, and learns from these observations. Acceptance-and-confirmation generally involves a mentor communicating positive feedback and encouragement to a mentee. Such positive regard toward a mentee can foster the development of trust so that the mentee feels comfortable taking risks. Counseling is offered by a mentor who allows a mentee to discuss concerns that may impact the mentee's professional responsibilities.

### ***Community Service Mentoring***

Community service is a means to focus outside of oneself towards the needs of others or community, and in that way enrich oneself personally (Emoefe, 2016). Community service mentoring is a kind of mentoring given to expand the mentee's work outside his department or school community. Through community service business educators apart from teaching and research/publications learn to make relevant contributions to their field, department, faculty, university and community at large (Olasupo, 2013). Community service takes the form of intellectual, educational, cultural, scientific, religious and other services (Emoefe, 2016). Community service mentoring in Business Education programmes help to prepare business educators in the relationship for such roles as leadership and services in various community projects within and outside their schools.

### **Benefits of Mentoring Practice**

After reviewing mentoring outcome literature, Johnson (2002) concluded that the benefits of mentoring to the mentee can be so valuable that identification with a mentor should be considered a major developmental task of the early career. According to Johnson (2002), at the pre-doctoral level, benefits to mentored graduate students include development of professional skills, enhancement of confidence and professional identity, scholarly productivity, enhanced networking, dissertation success, and satisfaction with one's doctoral programme. Several studies show that mentoring has the potential to influence business educators' commitment and job performance irrespective of gender or type of institutions. According to Hill, Ward, Seay and Buzenski (2022), mentoring is a teaching and learning opportunity for the mentor and mentee alike and can serve to increase professional and personal satisfaction for both participants. For mentees, Hill et. al (2022) noted that the result of successful mentoring relationships is strategic career planning, career advancement and/or promotion, greater feelings of work satisfaction, increase in motivation to continue in academic medicine, and personal growth and improvement

As far back as 1989, Bullis and Bach in Ilesanmi and Lasisi (2015) found major reasons why organizations choose to establish mentoring programme which may still be relevant to Business Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to include: mentoring helps new recruits, trainees or graduates settle into the organization; mentoring enables experienced, highly competent staff to pass their expertise on to others who need to acquire specified skills; mentoring helps employees plan, develop, and manage their careers. It also helps them become more resilient in times of change, more self-reliant in their careers and more responsible as self-directed learners; mentoring encourages the development of leadership competencies. These competencies are often more easily gained through example, guided practice or experience than by education and training; mentoring helps bridge the gap between theory and practice. Formal education and training is complemented by the knowledge and hands-on experience of a competent practitioner; mentoring can help communicate the values, vision and mission of the organization; a one-to-one relationship can help employees understand the organizational culture and make any necessary changes among others.

### **Steps to Initiate Mentoring Practice**

Bilesanmi (2013) opined that an informal mentoring relationship can be initiated by a superior level business educator seeing something in a younger employee and taking a younger business educators under his or her wing and providing them advance and guidance to assist them with their current job career goals; young and novice Business Educators seeking out superior level business educators they admire and together they work to develop a relationship; or a superior level business educator recommends a specific young and novice business educator to another superior level Business Educator to receive mentoring.

### **Conclusion**

This paper discussed mentoring as a strategic tool for effective management of Business Education programme in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper focused on understanding the concept of mentoring, different mentoring practices and areas of mentoring in Business Education programme. It was concluded that for Business Education programme to be able to achieve its laudable goals of producing competent graduates for the nation's workforce, there is the need for effective and strategic mentorship. Mentoring is the surest way to provide ideal opportunities to superior and experienced business educators to share meaningful information and experience to the next generation of business educators.

## Recommendations

Based on the reviewed literature and the above discussions, the authors strongly recommended that:

1. Availability of competent mentors is a major key in successful mentorship. Therefore, both the experienced and less experienced business educators should make themselves more available as mentors and mentees for effective mentorship.
2. This paper strongly recommended mentoring policies in Business Education department in particular and tertiary institutions generally as a means of building a new generation of academics and responsible leaders of tomorrow.
3. Departments of Business Education should make formal mentoring a part of the institutional culture alongside the existing informal mentoring presently supporting business educators through departmental well-designed mentoring programmes with clear expected outcomes and assessment.

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