



**KNOWLEDGE
SHARING
AND SUSTAINABLE
LIS EDUCATION
IN NIGERIA**

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UDO NWOKOCHA

Knowledge Sharing and Sustainable LIS Education in Nigeria

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I. Nwokocho, U.

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Zeh Communications

Adebowale House,

150, Ikorodu Road,

Onipanu, Lagos, Nigeria

+234 7034909274, +234818884921

e-mail: zehcommunications@gmail.com

49. **Osisanwo, Temitope A. (Dr)**
Department of Library and Information Science
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun
50. **Owate Comfort N. (Dr)**
Department of Library and Information Science
University of Port Harcourt
51. **Owunezi, Margaret K.**
The Polytechnic Library
Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana
52. **Ozioko, Reuben E. (Professor)**
Department of Library and Information Science
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike
53. **Rahman, Rajib**
Department of Information Science and Library Management
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
54. **Saidu, Amina Abubakar**
Department of Library Information Technology
Federal University of Technology, Minna
55. **Saka, Katamba Abubakar (Dr.)**
Department of Library and Information Technology
Federal University of Technology, Minna
56. **Salubuyi, Miriam A.**
Department of Library Information Technology
Federal University of Technology, Minna
57. **Simisaye, Ahmed O. (Dr)**
Department of Library and Information Science
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun
58. **Sulciman, Ismail Onuruoiza**
University Library
Sokoto State University, Sokoto
59. **Tsado, Leah Yebo**
Department of Library Information Technology
Federal University of Technology, Minna
60. **Tauheed, Halimah N.**
Department of Library Information Technology
Federal University of Technology, Minna

Mentoring: A process for Successful Collaboration and Capacity Building for Library and Information Science (LIS) Educators

Katamba Abubakar Saka

Abstract

The paper explore stages and forms as well as rationale for mentoring leading to successful collaboration and capacity building of Library and Information Science Educators; stages for mentoring include setting goals and objectives; actualization and termination while forms of formal mentoring includes: individual, peer and group. Rationale for mentoring lies on transfer of good qualities, retirement and death old generation of LIS educators; leadership role as well as empirical evidence. Mentoring takes place through collaboration such as collaborative teaching and learning, research and publication, community services and staff exchange programme. As for capacity building, mentoring can take place through participatory management, delegation, continuing professional development and project supervision. Mentoring is a one-way traffic characterized by lack of encouragement by mentor as well as misplacement of priority is regarded as obstacles to mentoring. The paper concluded that mentoring is a universal and general field of human endeavour regardless of one's field of study. The paper recommended amongst that: working tools and enabling environment be provided for enhancement of good and successful mentoring

Keywords: *Knowledge sharing, Mentoring; Collaboration; Capacity Building; LIS Educators; Library schools.*

Introduction

Majority of highly placed individuals and of course public figures today have passed through various levels of mentoring through the efforts of certain individuals who serve as either godfathers, guardians, teachers etc. No single individual can claim to be hero without the support of others or institutions. In organizations such as schools or informal such as villages, communities or people are faced with challenges in their daily activities and thus look back to seek for solution(s) from fellow human beings most of whom could be the most senior or learned individuals. Provision of solution to individual's personal problem(s) or difficult situation by learned or experienced person connotes the concept and process known as "mentoring". In the process of mentoring, knowledge sharing comes into play which could be face – to – face or through social media platforms.

Mentoring is an extrinsic motivation and is also part of management, and to be specific an aspect of staff development programme, personnel development professional development, capacity building or human resources development. Mentoring is an aspect of management and of course, an extrinsic motivation and can efficiently be enhanced through knowledge sharing. For example, senior employees guide and put the new ones through by

attaching them to senior colleagues for training and guidance more so that in registry, staff undergo mentoring as subordinate work under a superior or supervisor who train the subordinate(mentee) to minute documents such as memo and give report to the superior employee (FUTMinna Newsletter, 2018).

There is the need to understand the concepts: data, information, knowledge and wisdom. As cited in Rubbin (1998), Aina (2004) defines data as the raw and unprocessed facts, while information is the data that has been processed and meaning can be derived and communicated. Knowledge is the further processed information that is organized, interrelated, understood and applied. To Aina (2013:6) "knowledge is a combination of information, person's experience, intuition and expertise". The application of knowledge for the benefit of mankind is wisdom.

Mentoring as a concept and process can be viewed as a strategy by which a senior officer or leader train, direct, guide, instruct, educate, provide skills to the younger one(s) or subordinate(s) so as to develop and be able to tackle challenges ahead. However, different people perceive mentoring in different ways. To Dessler (2011) mentoring means advising, counselling and guiding while Nwalo and Babarinde (2016) perceive the concept as relationship based on personal development whereby a more experienced or knowledgeable assist the less experienced or knowledgeable individual through knowledge sharing within the context of work, career or professional development. By extension, work refers to the assigned job such as teaching; providing technical services in library. On the aspect of career, mentoring will involve telling the mentee the various fields of specializations in librarianship. For example, professional development connotes formal education programme, conferences and workshops attendance, skills acquisition, etc.

Above all, mentoring is a process by which senior colleague provide guidance and direction to junior one(s) so as to improve on his/her/their work career and profession thereby tackling future problems and tasks. Mentoring helps mentee to identify his/her/their area(s) of strength and weakness. These will help in addressing areas of lapses for further training programme. Mentoring is an extrinsic motivation which is also part of management as well as staff development programme, professional development or human resources development.

Basic Concepts

Mentoring

Mentoring refers to the process by which knowledgeable person provides guidance, training, direction or instruction to less knowledgeable person(s) in LIS field. Mentor is the most senior or knowledgeable individual(s) in the field of librarianship who gives guidance, direction, supervise teaching or counsel the junior or younger colleague(s). Mentee is the person that is being guided, trained, supervised, coached and directed by the senior colleague in LIS field. Mentor and mentee relationship can be between a professor supervising graduate students or postgraduate students supervising undergraduate students' research respectively and one of the ways by which institution can support librarians in universities in Nigeria is by senior colleagues mentoring the junior ones (Omuluabi-Idiodi, 2012).

Library and Information Science Educators

Library and Information Science Educators are trained LIS professionals that are employed to teach LIS courses and supervise LIS researches in library schools whether at polytechnic, monotechnics, colleges of education and / or universities. They are charged with the responsibility of training prospective LIS para-professionals and professionals leading to the award of Diploma, Higher Diploma, Degree, Post-graduate Diploma and Higher Degrees in LIS fields.

Stages and Forms of Mentoring

Literature search reveal that mentoring involves a number of stages and exists in various forms. According to Ugwuanyi (2011), mentoring exists in the following stages:

- i. Initiation
- ii. Setting of goals and objectives
- iii. Actualization Stage
- iv. Termination stage

The mentor and the mentee meet to establish rapport for mutual relationship and understanding with a view to focus on past experience. This stage involves planning for meetings. Above all there is interaction between mentor and mentee. There is growth and development of relationship between mentor and mentee. The development of mentee takes place by pursuing the assigned duties so as to achieve the set objectives. Finally, both mentor and mentee assess the extent by which goals have been achieved (Ugwuanyi, 2011). The forms of formal mentoring include:

- i. Individual mentoring, which involves the relationship between experienced mentors with less experienced individuals.
- ii. Peer mentorship which exist whenever professional colleagues with similar needs come together to support one another.
- iii. Group mentoring is a form of mentoring whereby a number of individual or mentee come together under the influence of one or more experienced group leaders (Ozioko, Echezona & Osadebe, 2012).

Mentoring and coaching are related but the later involves four steps/processes, namely, preparation, planning, active coaching, and follow-up. In preparation one need to understand the problem, and employer and employee's skills, formulate hypothesis. This step involves observational process. Planning to coach require agreement on the problem and the requirement for change. Active coaching involves educating, instructing and training the subordinates. There is the need to re-observe or re-evaluate the employees progress regularly (Dessler, 2011).

Reasons for Mentoring

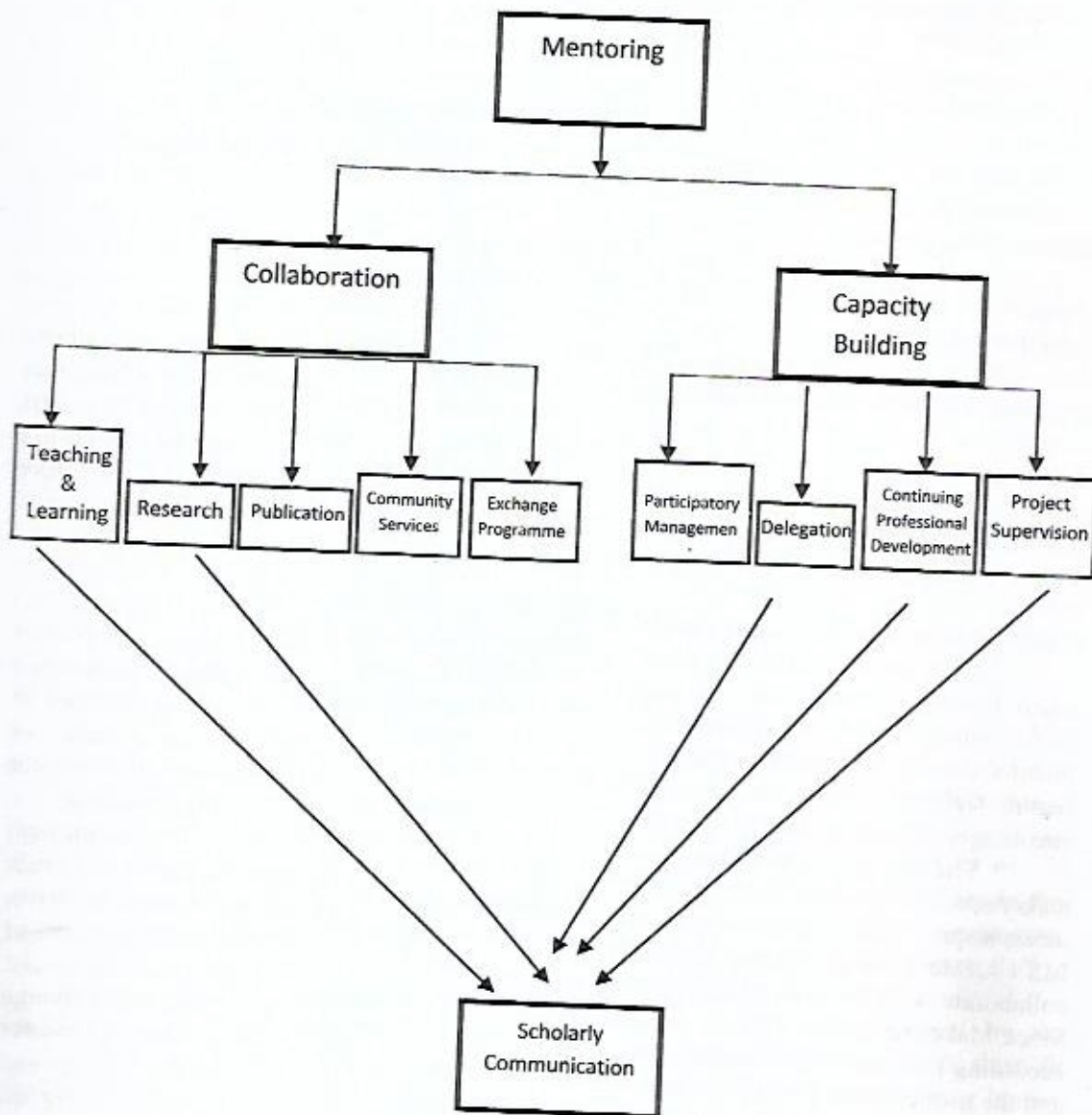
Mentoring in LIS profession is very crucial most especially in this modern world which involve not only technological and knowledge economy but also the complexity in the use of ICT in the information service delivery. There is the need for mentorship because of the following reasons:

- i. Transfer of Good Qualities: With the interpersonal relationship between the mentor and mentee, there is that cross-fertilization of ideas most especially when the expert with his or her wealth of knowledge and experience will provide guidance, advice

and direction to the mentee. Good qualities are then transferred from the mentor to the mentee (Nwalo & Babarinde, 2016).

- ii. Old Generation of LIS professionals are retiring/have died. There is need for professors and Heads of libraries and library schools to mentor the younger ones as most of the old ones are not only retiring but have died of recent were Prof. Ibrahim Haruna (University of Maiduguri), Prof. C.C. Aguolu (University of Maiduguri) as well as Prof. O.O. Olat (University of Calabar). On the other hand, Prof. Ifidon and Prof. Iyabo Mabawonku just to mention but few have retired from the services of Prof. Iyabo Mabawonku just to mention but few have retired from the services of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma and University of Ibadan (and are living). The wealth of knowledge of these erudite scholars has gone with them, only those who are able to tap their ideas and experience from them. These two retired Professors were honoured with Festschrifts namely: Trends in Library and Information Science in Nigeria (2012). Festschrift in honour of Prof. Sam .E. Ifidon; and, Research and Contemporary Issues in Media Resources and Information and Communication Technology Use (2019): A Festschrift in honour of Prof. Iyabo Mabawonku. Recently, the researcher was engaged in a conversation with a LIS educator and of course, a professor who said that, "there is need for me to mentor the younger ones because soon I shall retire...there is need for replacement" (Dawha, 2019).
- iii. Leadership Role: Children of today are to become leaders of tomorrow. The younger ones in LIS schools (graduate assistants and those below the rank of senior lecturer) need to be provided with leadership skills such as delegation of duty, opportunities to contribute to decision-making process in the organization.
- iv. Empirical Evidence: Various researches conducted in LIS field revealed dominant position of mentoring among LIS professionals. Ozioko, Echezonna and Osadebe (2012) conducted a study to determine the strategy for continuing professional development (CPD) for librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria revealed that sponsorship to conferences, seminars and workshops as well as participating in professional associations formed the major mentoring methods. In another study to determine the influence of continuing professional development and skills acquisition on librarians' performance within two states in Northern Nigeria, it was revealed that publications, mentoring and conference attendance formed the majority (Saka, Oyedum & Song: 2016). This paper focuses on mentoring as a concept and as a tool for successful collaboration and capacity building for LIS educators.

Mentoring: Conceptual Model



Source: Author's Developed Model

Researches are conducted and findings are communicated or disseminated through seminars, conferences and workshops, and the research reports are published in technical reports, annual reports, journals, textbooks, chapters in textbooks and conference proceedings, etc. Mentoring can occur through knowledge sharing and results in:

A: Collaboration

Teaching and Learning
Research
Publication
Community Services
Exchange Programme

B: Capacity Building

Participatory Management
Delegation
Continuing Professional Development
Project Supervision

Collaboration

This is the type of mentoring whereby two or more LIS educators particularly professor (mentor) and graduate assistant (mentee) coming together to make intellectual contribution in the form of teaching, research, publication, community services and staff exchange programme within LIS schools and are reported to be among mentoring methods/programmes which are to be adopted in professional development. Collaborative mentoring can be in the form of teaching, research, publication, community services and staff exchange programme

Collaborative Teaching and Learning

It has been a tradition in most institutions of higher learning particularly universities where by one graduate assistant is attached to a professor, with the aim of mentoring him/her in the course of delivering lecture. The mentee (graduate assistant) is further directed or instructed to offer tutorial to the undergraduate students. In the same vein, a professor or senior lecturer collaborates in teaching with assistant lecturer whereby the mentor encourages the mentee by instruction or guidance to carry out major part of the teaching.

The emergence of ICT has revolutionized the mode of learning in libraries through maker-space. This is collaborative learning environment where people converge to learn new ideas, acquire skills and exchange ideas through the use of ICTs (Kalu and Chinyere, 2019). LIS educators can also create learning environment (maker-space) within library schools or collaborate with the institutions' libraries to acquire new skills and cross-fertilize ideas, etc. Since Maker space involves the use electronic gadgets, it is related to e-mentoring although according to Ajuar (2019) e-mentoring can enhance knowledge transfer between the mentor and the mentee through the use electronic gadgets.

Research and Publication

The entire world is geared towards multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and publication. Librarianship is a multidisciplinary field having relationship with related fields such as ICT, records and archive management, management information systems, etc. There is the need to not only conduct research in these related fields but also for publication. The mentor and mentee conduct research and publish the research findings through various outlets. However, researches are conducted and findings are disseminated through seminars,

conferences, workshops and publications in journals, technical reports, conference proceedings, textbooks etc. and thus Aina (2013) is of the opinion that findings of researchers conducted must be communicated to users on regular basis. One way of mentoring the younger LIS educators is for the mentor or professor to encourage or permit them to present the collaborative research findings in seminars and conferences and also to allow the mentee to serve as lead author in article write-up or journal publication.

Community Services

Community services within the context of LIS profession is the provision of services by LIS professionals in their areas of expertise. The mentor (Professor, head of library school, projects supervisor, etc) and mentee (graduate assistant, young LIS academics, etc) can collaborate or partnership to provide LIS services in their areas of expertise. The areas they can collaborate and render community services include but not limited to: building of libraries, community libraries, resource donation of learning resources to schools as well as professional development (evening lessons for para-professional staff, etc).By doing so, the less experienced or junior LIS educator is not only acquiring skills but also creating a sense of belonging to the community and to become future leaders.

Staff Exchange Programme

The LIS schools can collaborate in the area of staff exchange programme since no organization is self- sufficient in terms of human resources. Staff exchange programme can be conducted among LIS schools or between LIS schools and other organizations (Ozioko, Echezona and Osadele, 2012; Omuluabi-Idiodi, 2012).

Capacity Building

The second component of mentoring in LIS education and training as proposed by the writer is capacity building. It is a phrase or concept that connotes or is synonymous to staff training and development, professional development, human resources development and continuing professional development (CPD). The mentor being the knowledgeable and experienced person in LIS field can assist the mentee (less experienced person) in LIS education through a number of ways; Participatory management, delegation, continuing professional development (CPD) and project supervision. Thus, Adekunjo, Tomomowo-Ayodele and Bamidele (2019) reported that the level of capacity building for library staff in selected universities in south west Nigeria was at moderate level.

With the complexities involved in the service delivery being caused by the introduction of ICT, there is the need for LIS educators to acquire skills to enable them fit into the new era of information generation, acquisition and use as well as managing human resources in libraries, information centers and library schools. All these strategies can be achieved through the process of mentoring (Uguwuanyi, 2011). Mentoring is synonymous to capacity building and can be used interchangeably as Ajuar (2019) maintain that capacity building can take place through a number of strategies such as organizing and attending conferences, seminars and on the job training as well as mentoring. Based on this perception, mentoring can be enhanced through capacity building and at the same time capacity building can be enhanced in the process of mentoring.

Participatory Management

This is an aspect of capacity building which is more than mere training programme offered to staff but it is a management technique whereby staff are given opportunity to participate in the affairs of organization particularly in decision – making process. Although it is one form of staff development it however creates a sense of belonging among mentees (subordinates). Participatory management according to Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) is library management field whereby head of library encourages library staff members to participate in team work; represent him/her at various meetings. However, the system of leadership broadens library staff horizon but it is also a democratic style of personal development (Ifidon and Ifidon, 2007).

Delegation of Duties

Head of libraries and library schools have so many issues to tackle at a time as they are pre-occupied with professional, administrative and management duties and commitment. Certain responsibilities and duties have to be delegated to the subordinates. In this case, head of library/library school is the mentor while subordinate is the mentee. Junior or young academics can be delegated to perform certain functions on behalf of the senior librarian or professors. It is in the list of the management concept that Stoner, Free man and Gilbert (2008:35) posits that:

The delegation of authority by managers to employees is necessary for the efficient functioning of any organization, because no manager can personally accomplish or completely supervise all of what happens at an organization.

Continuing Professional Development

One way of capacity building among LIS educators is through making provision for subordinates' professional development to enable them perform the current and future job efficiently. The mentor or head of organization can make provision to sponsor subordinate or junior staff to conferences and workshops; organize in-house training, seminars, etc. All these are geared towards LIS professionals particular the educators to acquire skills and knowledge for service provision/delivery in future (Ochogwu, 2015; 2016; Ozioko, Echezona & Osadebe, 2012; Adomi, 2012). Full-time study fellowship is the most form of staff development programme today as it is a formal professional education where young academics are offered scholarship to pursue either diploma, degree or higher degree programmes in relevant fields.

Scholarly Communication

The association with collaborative mentoring through research and publication and capacity building through delegation and continuing professional development among LIS educators can result to scholarly communication. Mentoring can come by encouraging the mentee to collaborate in terms of conducting research and publication. This can further be communicated or presented at conferences, workshops or published in journals, proceedings, books, technical reports or book chapters (Aina, 2013). In the same vein, senior academic can delegate junior one to present projector research findings at conference; mentee can present papers or hold discussion on professional matters on behalf of mentor.

Project Supervision

It is usually a tradition from senior academic to supervise the undergraduate and/or post graduate projects, more especially in the same field. The professor, senior lecturer or any senior academic is expected to supervise the junior academic (graduate assistant, lecturer II and I) in their fields of research). Project supervision is one form of mentorship as it involves directing and guiding the mentee. Thus Kamba (2016) is of the view that project supervision is the provision of scholarly assistance, the provision of guidance, to encourage, to teach and mentor, train, counsel, motivate and criticize the student work by the supervisor.

Challenges to Mentorship

In the process of mentorship, the challenges that usually surface include:

1. Mentoring is in most cases one-way traffic and the mentor dominates the entire lesson. Mentee i.e the less experienced one has little or no say during mentoring process.
2. There is misplacement of priority. A good number of mentee and mentor do not know or identify the areas of need and not to talk of agenda of interaction. They lack good goals and objectives, adequate knowledge etc (Ugwuanyi, 2011).
3. Lack of encouragement on the part of mentor. A good number of mentors provide negative and destructive conclusion and discourage their mentee instead of encouraging. This is with particular reference to attitude of some project supervisors to supervisees. This nonchalant attitude is far from what Kamba (2016) perceived project supervision as the process of providing teaching, mentoring to the supervisee by the supervisor.

Conclusion

Mentoring is a continuous process and it doesn't end at the same time it is not peculiar to specific field and thus it is a general and universal concept applicable to all field of human endeavors. To be specific within the context of this paper, successful mentoring can lead to efficient knowledge sharing for enhancement of teaching, research and publication, community services and efficient capacity building among LIS educators.

Recommendations

Based on the issues raised and enumerated on challenges to mentoring, the paper recommends that:

1. Heads of library schools and stakeholders in LIS profession should create avenue whereby senior academics (those at professorial cadre and senior lecturer) mentor the younger academics in the areas of collaboration and capacity building.
2. Working tools and enabling environment be provided so as to have good mentorship. Working tools such as demonstration facilities as well as maker-space recently introduced in libraries should not only be made available but also be fully/ effectively utilized in library schools.
3. Motivation by way of regular training and retraining programme for both mentors and mentees (experienced and less experienced LIS educators) be organized by library schools in conjunction with parent organizations and regulatory bodies (National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN)) respectively.

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