Mentoring, Knowledge Sharing, ICT Versatility as Influencing Factors on Research Productivity and Career Advancement of LIS Educators

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Abstract

The paper examined the importance of mentoring, knowledge sharing and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) versatility as influencing factors on the research productivity and career advancement of Library and Information Science (LIS) educators. The nexus among knowledge sharing, mentoring and ICT versatility as influencing factors on research productivity and career advancement of LIS educators was equally established. Promotion, career advancement and job progression of faculty including Library and Information Science (LIS) educators is usually hinged on their research productivity amongst other factors. In this digital age, the worth of an institution could easily be measured by accessing her productivity. The major currency that is well known in the digital economy is ICT. ICT versatility and proficiency will be a great advantage for all who possess it in the age. Sharing of knowledge could be horizontal, vertical and circular. Knowledge sharing leads to inculcation of eye opening ideas, gems of doing things better, and creativity. A very useful platform where knowledge sharing and ICT versatility could serve as influencing tools to the research productivity and career advancement of LIS educators is mentoring. Mentoring is a way of showing others how things are done properly so that when the mentor is not around the mentees can act in the same way that their mentor would have acted. With proper mentoring, effective knowledge sharing would fall in line and if coupled with ICT versatility would under normal circumstances influence the research productivity and career advancement of LIS educators.

***Keywords**: Career Advancement; ICT Versatility; Knowledge Sharing; Mentoring; Research Productivity; LIS Educators.*

Introduction

Career progression and advancement of faculty including Library and Information Science (LIS) educators would be a mirage if such members of the faculty are not productive in terms of their physical contribution in form of research productivity (output). Effective knowledge sharing coupled with ICT versatility under the guidance of a genuine, focused, pro-active and productive mentor would go a long way in accentuating the research

productivity of both the mentee and the mentor. Research productivity, put concisely could be defined as the physical contribution of the members of faculty in terms of publication. This could be measured in terms of: number of articles published in referred journals; number of conferences/workshops attended; number of articles published in conference/workshop proceedings; chapters in book; and number of book published. The term research productivity is most often interchanged with research output and knowledge productivity. It comprises all researches carried out by the faculty including academic librarians in higher institutions of learning and research institutes. This is usually measured over a given period of time (Konedo et al, 2015). Productivity in research is concerned with the amount of research output of educators which can improve reputation and teaching skills of the educators; it upgrades educators' proficiency and also the grooming of their students (mentees).

Ranking of higher institutions which have been accredited should be dependent on ability to generate new knowledge as output of the institution and new knowledge creation would be possible if the educators are involved in research activities and publish new knowledge periodically for the benefit of society and their respective institutions. Therefore, the effectiveness of higher institutions of learning is measured on the premise of research productivity of the institutions concerned (Aithal, 2016).

Similarly, career advancement of educators in most institutions is to a large extent dependent on research output of the concerned educators. The field of library and information science also regard this as a major criterion for career advancement. Increase in research output (productivity) will definitely result in career advancement, job progression, promotion and career lifting of LIS educators. Hence, research productivity is directly proportional to career advancement of LIS educators. The paper examined the ways in which mentoring, knowledge sharing and ICT proficiency can influence research productivity and career advancement of LIS educators.

Mentoring is an important aspect of growth to an individual, organisation and society by extension, and should be the concern of the management of such organisation. Through mentoring, an individual is provided with the basic knowledge of what is expected in the organisation and which would transcend into making such a fellow become a veritable asset to self and to the organisation at large. It can occur among individuals from different works of life as long as they share a similar interest, but the study focuses on Library Information Science (LIS) Instructors. Therefore, mentoring can enhance the quality of teaching as well as research productivity of LIS Instructors. Mentoring, as defined by Castanheira (2016), is the developmental relationship in which the mentor shares knowledge and expertise to support the mentee's learning and professional development. He argued further that mentoring poses some benefits to both mentors and mentees, and these benefits encompass professional, social and psychological aspects such as: career advancement, increased confidence and improved sense of organisational culture and loyalty towards the organisation.

It is a developmental partnering of two professionals, in which one individual is sharing his knowledge and expertise to inform or support the professional learning and career development of another (Parylo et al, 2012).Mentoring can be in an electronic format known as e-mentoring which is a new dimension far away from the traditional face-to-face mentoring. This eliminates barriers posed by physical location of the individuals concerned (Butler et al 2013).

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 unequivocally and explicitly indicates a seamless association among mentoring, knowledge sharing and ICT versatility. Under normal circumstances, mentoring would influence the research productivity and career advancement of LIS Educators. The same goes for knowledge sharing and ICT versatility. Furthermore, proper mentoring, knowledge sharing and ICT versatility could cumulatively and positively influence each other with a view of influencing the research productivity and career advancement of LIS Educators. In other words, a combination of mentoring, knowledge sharing and ICT versatility could influence the research productivity and career advancement of LIS Educators. Each of the independent variables (mentoring, knowledge sharing and ICT versatility) could as well influence the dependent variables (research productivity and career advancement of LIS Educators).

Figure 1: Conceptual Model
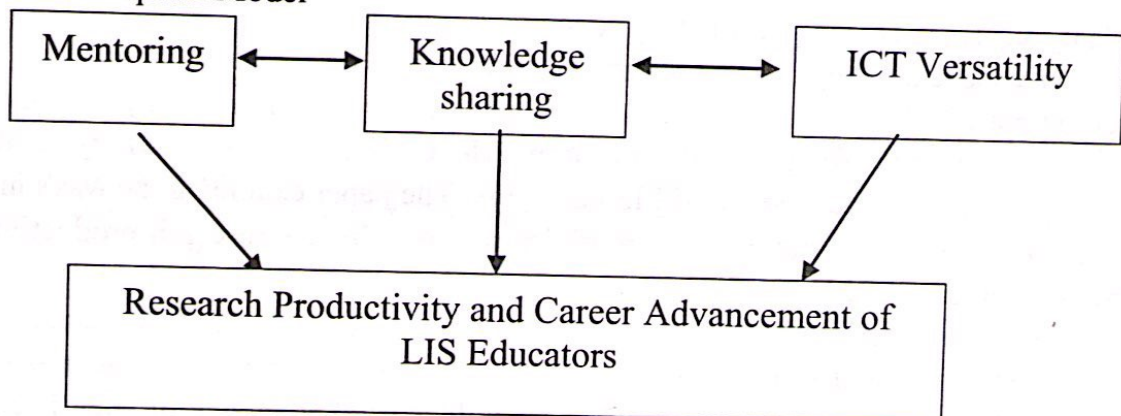
Source: Authors original Construct (2019)

Importance of Mentoring and Knowledge Sharing

Lunsford (2014) highlighted the indispensability and the significance of mentoring to the growth and overall development of the mentee to include the following amongst others.

- Increased networking skills
- Higher level of self confidence
- Increased level of job satisfaction
- Reduced level of job turnover
- Better problem solving skills

In addition to mentoring, knowledge sharing is a crucial resource for any organisation most especially an institution and helps to improve communication among LIS Instructors. Knowledge could either be explicit or tacit; the latter is usually more valuable than the former because it is intuitive. Knowledge sharing among LIS instructors can help improve research, innovation, creativity and quality of teaching. Knowledge sharing provides opportunity to exchange ideas, thoughts, experiences and know how among employees and maximises co-operation in such a way that the performance and the success of the organisation can be maximised without compromising standard (Ramayah et al, 2013). Effective knowledge sharing is evident in quality research, teaching, and curriculum development and management activities. It is not limited to people in the same geographical area but can occur between individuals in largely different geographical location deploying the instrumentality of ICT and associated devices such as: emails, Skype and other social media which have greatly improved knowledge sharing practises.

Kumaravel & Vikkiraman (2018) opined that lack of time and recognition/reward, fear of losing importance, lack of interest are factors affecting knowledge sharing. He added further that lack of time and recognition/reward, were the major factors affecting knowledge sharing. In order to encourage knowledge sharing among instructors, management should be able to create an environment that allows and enforces knowledge sharing in the institution. Instructors should be allowed to engage in knowledge sharing for some personal benefits; such as having a sense of self-worth, anticipated reward and reciprocal relationships (Fullwood & Rowley, 2017).

In this digital (information driven) age, the indispensability of ICT as a potent tool for efficient mentoring and knowledge sharing cannot be over-emphasised. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can be used in education as it has been applied to other sectors to help make some of the education processes faster, easier and accurate leading to increased reliability. It serves both the lecturers and the students by providing tools to aid teaching and learning processes, besides these functions, ICT has also been effectively used in carrying out research. It has made the research process more convenient through availability of digital libraries, Internet resources, databases and statistical software packages for analysing data. ICT serves as an analytical tool, medium for data collection, dissemination, and networking, all of which serves as pivots upon which enhanced research productivity is hinged. It refers to technologies that provide access to information using telecommunication. It is primarily concerned with communication technologies such as cell phones, Internet, and wireless network (DaCosta, Nasah, Kinsell & Seok, 2011).

Nexus among Knowledge Sharing, Mentoring, and ICT Versatility

Knowledge sharing, mentoring and ICT versatility are inseparable and indivisible team geared towards improving values and performance of individuals in the workplace which equally accentuate personal growth and development. ICT efficiency could serve as bedrock for enhancing mentoring and knowledge sharing activities among individuals. Facilities such as emails, Skype, Internet resources and databases could make it possible for individual to share ideas and support each other to grow in their fields. Knowledge sharing is a form of mentoring; as knowledge is shared amongst individuals, it improves and develops the individual which is the sole aim of mentoring. It widens understanding of concept and brings about new ideas. In the same vein, mentoring brings about exposure in a given field. Therefore, mentoring births knowledge sharing and the process is made easier, faster and cost effective through ICT versatility.

Knowledge sharing, Mentoring and ICT Versatility as Factors Influencing Research Productivity of LIS Instructors

The quality of research productivity has added value to both instructors and institution; the higher the quality of the research, the more the recognition the institution and instructors get. Research productivity as stated by Okiki (2013) is essential to university success and promotion prospect for academic staff. Okonedo & Popoola (2012) opined that information acquired during knowledge sharing would have a highly positive input to research productivity. Hence, the more useful the knowledge shared the more the quality of the research. Knowledge sharing does not only enhance the research activity but its quality. Sharing of knowledge alone does not improve research productivity but rather the utilisation of knowledge acquired.

Mentoring occurs directly or indirectly and could be in form of grants, collaboration, knowledge sharing, either of which is intended to develop an individual's performance. Banerjee-Batist (2014) carried out a study on the effect mentoring had on mentees' development; it was observed that mentees' with mentors experienced development in their personal life, career and had job satisfaction. Although, this was achieved through proper attachment styles and implementing other developmental activities and mentors development of social competencies.

ICT has been of immense benefit in carrying out research as it has helped in carrying out analysis, reduce distance barrier through social network and web portals and reduces cost of gathering information from thousands of sources. ICT is very important in research especially in this 21st century and to academic staff who are constantly involved in researches due to the vast growth of information and a need to filter this information for productivity (Ankamah, Akussah, & Adams, 2018).

Electronic information resources (EIR) are time saving and current in its supply of information, which forms basic requirements to maximise research productivity. An under-utilisation of EIR will result in low level of research among instructors and factors such as: lack of funds, emphasis on academic staff research output and provision of capacity building would bring about low utilisation of EIR, which can also result in low productivity (Iroaganachi & Izuagbe, 2018).

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it is apt to conclude that proficient mentoring, knowledge sharing and ICT Versatility when taken together as complementary and mutually interrelated indivisible constructs would go a long way to accentuate the research productivity and career advancement of LIS educators. Research productivity is germane and central to the career advancement of all educators including LIS professionals in institutions of higher learning and allied research Institutes including universities. The university system is an organisation where research is an integral part of its growth, development and relevance in the society. The advancement of instructors is largely dependent on their research productivity; and this productivity is more likely to occur when mentoring, knowledge sharing and ICT versatility are properly and adequately put into play. Although, any of these variables can improve the productivity of LIS instructors, researches have proved that a combination of all three variables can greatly enhance research productivity, career progression of educators generally including LIS professionals. Mentoring and knowledge sharing can go hand in hand because knowledge sharing is also a form of mentoring and ICT versatility can be a platform to broaden the scope and increase the impact thereby enhancing research productivity and career advancement of LIS instructors.

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