

SCHOOL BASED MENTORING PROGRAMME AS A CATALYST FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

This paper was carried out to x-ray school based mentoring programme as a catalyst for quality education in Nigeria. This is because the declining in the outcome of secondary schools in Nigeria has been attributed to a number of factors, some of which are blamed on the quality of teaching personnel. It has been observed that this challenge is as a result of lack of mentoring for teachers. Consequently, this paper examined the challenges and prospects of mentoring programme. The central question guiding us in this study focuses on what school based mentoring programme is. Many contemporary authorities believe that an effective teacher training programme can be ensured when both the school and department of teacher's training work is in tandem. The paper concluded that if the quality of education outcome must be achieved, mentoring programme must be institutionalized to improve the quality of information teachers are providing for the students. The paper suggested among others that mentors must be trained, acquire relevant skills and be committed in the course.

Keywords: *mentoring, quality education, school based.*

Introduction

The motive of education is to build individuals who are balanced socially, morally, emotionally, and academically. As such the services of well-informed teachers are definitely needed. The supposed teachers too must also see continuous leaning as a Core requirement. This therefore called for a structured professional development programme, both within and outside the teachers' place of work. Mentoring is one of these numerous programmes which are similitude to coaching and instructional supervision. This definitely improved teaching and learning (Mukoro & Pupu, 2013) and help teachers develop a new set of instructional methodologies.

Mentoring is a leadership process to stimulate, guide and assist teachers. However, mentoring of teachers is lacking today in schools especially primary and secondary levels. This may be attributed to a number of factors especially teacher's workload and erroneous understanding of mentoring. In fact, studies have found that 81% of respondents are considering leaving teachers profession because their workload in the past has not been manageable (National Education Union, 2018). Instead; teachers get queried for not being up to task especially during the inspection visit either internally from the principal, or externally from the inspectorate. In the study carried out on some early career teachers, it was found that no specific training or orientation was given to them on workload management (Department for Education (DfD), 2018). Today, the poor performance of students in external examination and teachers' failure in promotional examination is at alarming rate. It was reported that more than 20,000 teachers failed competence test meant for primary for pupils in Kaduna State, Nigeria in the year 2017 (Smith, 2017). It was also reported that 51 out of 412 teachers who sat for the professional qualifying examination conducted by Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) in Lagos State failed (TRCN, 2017). It implies that instructional supervision and teachers mentoring is not only imperative but requires immediate attention from the government. Mukoro and Pupu (2013) observe that teachers performance is enhanced by correction, encouragement and in-Service training. The focus of this paper is on the challenges and prospects of school of based mentoring programme as a catalyst for quality education in Nigeria.

Understanding Mentoring

Mentoring is not a new concept in academic arena and other professionalism as an essential tool to raise the quality of services delivery. But, it has been rendered redundant in school due to a number of factors, ranging from teacher centered to students centered factors, Thus, the call for restoring of full mentoring programme cannot be over emphasized, according to Okurame (2008), for Nigeria education institutions to be able to compete favorably with their counterparts in other parts of the world, and because of the growing concern for education standard to be raised, mentoring must be fully restored. According to Sweeney Eyitayo, Bamidele and Aremu, (2015) mentoring is regarded as a special tool meant for stress reduction for novice teachers, orientation to curriculum and promoting the creation of better norms of collegiality and collaboration, this implies that mentoring helps to break the barrier that may make it difficult for mentees to Achieve personal and organizational goals.

Chukwu, (2014) defines mentorship as a process of informal transmission of knowledge, social capital and the psycho-social support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development. This entails informal communication, usually face to face and enduring a sustained period of time between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom or experience (the mentor) and the person perceived to have less (the mentee). This presupposes that mentoring requires time and readiness for self-development to be relevant. Mentoring can be role model and provide support for that youth.

School-Based Mentoring

Mentoring is a specially designed tool to avert fear, reduce stress and simplify task for new entrants into teaching profession. School-based mentoring refers to a developmental relationship between a more experienced person referred to as mentor, and a less experienced partner, referred to as a protégé. According to Olu-Ajayi (2016), mentoring is a supportive relationship established between two individuals where knowledge, skills and experience are shared. It is a form of an interaction with another that facilitates the process of cognition, achieving more than each could achieve alone.

School-based mentoring is often administered by established mentoring charities like Big brothers or Big sisters that recruit and screen community volunteers, pairing them with youth (Okurame 2008). Other school-based programme may be organized by school or by social workers. School-based mentoring accounts for a large part of new mentoring schemes (Noe, 2012) and may have distinct advantages and benefits over other community-based programmes. By comparison, organization and procedures may be simplified: some meetings can take place on school grounds, which is believed to be a safer environment. Teachers may strategically select youth who are likely to benefit from mentoring, and teachers can check that meetings occur and the programmes objectives are being accompanied along with the needs of the meetings. Mentors may be novice or experienced teachers or other adolescents serving as mentors to youth in the same school. Adolescence is characterized by increasing significance of peer relationships, and several studies identify harmful effect of deviant peer relationship that undermine prosocial behavior at school and in communities strong mentor relationships with adult or other student may replace or negate negative influence (Oladipo, 2016).

Mentoring relationship can be done in two ways. These are informal mentoring relationship and formal mentoring relationship. Informal mentoring relationships are those that develop naturally from shared admiration, aspiration, values and interest. Formal mentoring relationships on the other hand are formed through a planned matching or assignment of mentors and protégé (the younger and less experienced in the union) (Ragings & Cotton 2009).

Mentoring as a Quality Assurance Tool in Secondary School Education

Quality is something considered good that every individual wants to have. Mukoro and Pupu (2013) assert that quality implies that there is a standard set by which it is measured. Ijaiya (2001) feels that the idea of quality assurance is however not totally strange to Nigeria schools. Quality in education is measured in terms of its relevance to the needs of the immediate community or society at large, relevance, functionality, needs of daily life and life challenges (Ogunu & Momoh, 2011). To ensure quality of teaching and learning activities in schools at all levels, education ministries both at federal and state levels, a department is christened 'quality assurance'. Thus, school heads must also collaborate with quality assurance department to institutionalize mentoring of teachers in schools.

School based mentoring activities would yield a positive result and guarantee quality in teaching and learning environment. In the study carried out by Musingati and Mafunbate (2014) on school based mentoring in Zimbabwe, it was found that mentors will not act as strangers to mentees when the mentee teachers are teaching. This will therefore restore confidence in mentee and eliminate fault-finding mission of external mentors from the ministry. Mentoring as quality assurance tool afford the transfer of skills which mentees can

In education, mentoring emerges from the concept of traditional teaching practice, which has an important component of becoming an efficient (Musingafi & Mafunbate, 2014). This grants the would-be teachers experience in teaching and learning environment. It avails the mentees to first observe the mentor while carrying out the core school assignment and later mentees will put the required skills into practice and then be observed. It is therefore critical that the experienced mentor teachers effectively work to prepare the mentee teachers for the varied challenges they will be facing within and outside the four walls of classrooms.

Challenges of Mentoring in Secondary Schools

1. **Lack of Formal Training/ Orientation:** Training is an indispensable component of any effective mentoring. As such the mentor must be fully equipped with necessary information. However according to Okurame (2016: 4) further reveals that teachers lack requisite training for effective service delivery.
2. **Lack of Relevant Mentoring skills:** One can never give what he does not have. Thus a mentor must possess instructional, organizational and interpersonal skills to be able to guide his mentee effectively. Acquiring these skills poses a great challenge that must be contended with. Oladipo, Adebakin, and Iranloye (2016) lamented that the situation in Nigeria is that of overreliance on lone years of teaching service and seniority in the appointment and promotion to the post of school principal.
3. **Attitudinal Problem:** Attitude is germane to goal attainment. A mentor teacher should not only acquire conceptual and technical skills but be well equipped with human relation skill. Poor attitudinal disposition of some mentors to their mentees have negatively declined the quality of outcome of mentoring relationships.
4. **Workload of Staff (Time Factor):** The numerous tasks table before teacher is a challenge to mentoring relationship in secondary schools in Nigeria. Mentors are usually struggle to get themselves organize. Jaana, Tuija Stu, and Saila (2011) noted although permitted to use work time for the teacher training and mentoring discussions, the mentees workloads were not generally reduced. Consequently, the mentees needed to either reduce the time they spent on other tasks or attend teacher-training classes in their spare time.
5. **Lack of Commitment and Time:** The attention given to mentoring relationship and time if not adequate may be a hindrance to the success it records, Jaana, Tuija, Sstu and Saila (2011) posited that the commitment and time the mentors invested in the mentoring discussions facilitated the process and produced rewards for both the mentor and mentee. This presupposes that if the needed time to pour out one's mind is not provided, the benefit may not be realized.
6. **Trust Issue / Information Management:** The feeling of insecurity, vulnerability and tension also serve as challenge to successful mentoring. Mentoring relationship is similar to guidance counselling relationship which requires a high level confidence that your mentor will not mismanage your information.
7. **Gender issue / Imbalance in Pairing:** Gender composition of mentor-mentee may influence the effectiveness of the relationship. Noe (1988) observes that the development of successful cross- gender mentorships may be inhibited by perceptions that women

lack managerial skills and are unsuitable for challenging positions, preferences for interaction with members of the same gender in the work environment, and concerns that peers may perceive the mentoring relationships as sexual in nature, leading to resentment and malicious gossip.

8. **Police Problem:** Lack of well- defined policy on the how mentoring activities should be done has a great challenge to institutionalizing mentoring in secondary school in Nigeria.

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9. **Poor Leadership:** The success of any school- based programme largely on the efficiency of the principal or the school head. Inability to domesticate mentoring at the secondary school level is due to poor leadership. Over the year, school head /principals in Nigeria schools have been accused of various offences. According to Arikewuyo (Oladipo, Adebakin, & Iranloye, 2016) they are said to be inefficient and accused of failing to provide direction and adequate leadership to their schools. The falling standard of education in the schools has also been attributed to the inefficiency of the principles.
10. **Subject/ Class Based Mentoring as a Challenge:** One of the fundamental obstacles to smooth mentoring relationship is paring mentor with mentees who are not familiar subject and class wise. The major challenge with mentor and mentee teaching different subjects and classes is that some mentors may fail to provide regular coaching and feedback to mentees (Musingafi & Mafunbate, 2014).

Prospects of Mentoring in Secondary School

Full adoption of mentoring of teachers will improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in Nigerian educational institutions. Mentoring guarantees continuous professional development, build confidence in teachers and goals attainment. Thus, Oladipo (2016) opines that the incorporation of mentoring practices into the system of education at secondary school would manifest in new principal motivation for job performance, creativity, and acceptance of responsibility with confidence, bring employees together to establish a network of professionals within the organization.

Teachers who take time to mentor novice teachers invariably fell revitalized within their own career. Many mentors report that mentoring not only energizes them, but also helps them to improve their skills, reflect on and improve their own decision-making abilities (Olu-Ajayi, 2016). Mentors motivate, challenge, and respond to new teachers. This could enhance their own professional knowledge and enable them to be updated with new developments in education. Mentors encourage new ideas, question the novice teachers, and help them to find effective ways to solve problems (South, 2017).

Conclusion

This paper has looked at how mentoring in secondary schools can serve as catalyst for quality of teacher and effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. Attempt was made to discuss the challenges facing mentoring of teachers in secondary schools while emphasis was also made on ways of enhancing mentoring as a quality assurances tool in secondary schools. Mentoring activities should jointly be seen as a collective responsibility by both mentor and mentee. As such, mentoring is a two-way or reciprocal process; it provides benefits also for the mentor.

The researcher assumes that mentees will accurately and honestly report the correct data on the appropriate instruments throughout the full duration of the mentoring relationship. The researcher also assume that the teachers and students will be able to participate in the mentoring programme with face full fidelity, contributing a solid, genuine

In today's society, there are many students who need someone to believe in them and show that they care. Without encouragement and support, students can easily get lost in school and put things such as sports and social standing ahead of their studies. Students today need positive role models who can explain the importance of getting quality education. This drive for an education is not something that many students intrinsically process, particularly the "at risk" youth. Therefore, mentoring activities should jointly be seen as a collective responsibility by both mentor and mentee. As such, mentoring is a two-way or reciprocal process; it provides benefits also for the mentor.

Recommendations

1. Relevant training must be given from time to time to mentor teachers on the what, how and when of mentoring relationship. This training would enhance mentors to fulfill his mission of developing younger members through mentoring. Both mentor and mentee should be able to sacrifice their time for mentoring activities. This could be achieved by having a day to-do-list to guide ones activities. An idea materializes if people believe in it and show a sincere commitment.
2. There is need for school heads to improve their instructional supervision techniques in order to offer necessary advice on the improvement of quality education through mentoring practices. This can be done if they practically visit their subordinates and the see things for themselves.
3. Mentees and mentor should have a good communication network between each other. This will improve their attitudinal disposition. Communication in this regard is very important because it enhances a smooth relationship between the mentor and the mentee.
4. Mentees and mentor should teach similar subject and avoid period clashes, so as for the mentor to be able to observe the mentee.
5. Feedback is important to the success of mentoring relationship. This will enable each of them to evaluate and improve.
6. Government should stipulate policy guideline to form a basis for school-base mentoring practices. So that at the end of the day, the mentee could be guided appropriately.

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