Mentoring:
A Tool for Successful Collaboration for Library and Information Science (LIS) Educators

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed mentoring, a tool for successful collaboration for Library and Information Science (LIS) educators, in the University of Calabar. For reasons why LIS educators collaborate, respondents revealed, among others, a sense of belonging, motivation, the challenge of management, witch-hunting, and reduction of cost of conducting research, among others. The results from mentoring for collaboration indicated that 19 respondents published 8 articles out of their first 11 published articles through collaboration efforts. Six respondents published six and two respondents had four through collaborative efforts. These represented 70.4%, 22.2%, and 7.41% of the results of mentoring for collaboration. The result show that LIS senior educators mentor young academics for collaboration. The paper identified some challenges of mentoring and the researcher suggested that mentors should be straightforward with the mentees because it is only by trust that people can work together irrespective of their profession.

KEYWORDS

Academic Librarians, Career Success, Collaboration, Counseling, Developmental Stages, Information, Knowledge-Based Service, Library Educators, Mentees Grooming, Mentoring, Professionalism

INTRODUCTION

Library and Information Science (LIS) are library professionals who work in the library schools of the universities that offer Library and Information Science in the curriculum. They face challenges like other professionals in other fields in the bid to pursue their professional development. Hence, it is imperative to find solutions to these barriers as the have direct bearings on career development. As with other professionals, LIS educators face the scenario of how to pursue their continuing professional development, and mentoring, incorporating all categories of facilitated learning opportunities ranging from course work, conferences, and formal degree programs to informal learning prospects surrounded in practice.

Mentoring had been defined by Sage VII dictionary and thesaurus as the present participle of the verb, to mentor. To mentor means a wise and trusted guide and advisor serving as a teacher or trusted counselor. In an ideal world, norms that support individual developments are consciously

reinforced through mentoring by targeting learning needs, addressing both career and psychological issues of mentees, guaranteeing confidentiality, personal recognition of individual success and achievements (Genoni, cited in Ozioko, Echezona & Osadebe, 2012). There are evolving themes and dimensions of mentoring, but for the purpose of this research, mentoring is conceived as a relationship between two people in which one who is more experienced inspires and facilitates the other's renovation to accomplishment.

Considering the need for continued sophisticated library services, its transparency on the emerging new roles placed on librarians in our contemporary society, mentoring cannot be over emphasized. Conversely, we know that if we purchase any appliance, we just have to adhere strictly to the producer's instructions if we would enjoy the durability and better use of such machine. In the same way, the researcher points to two portions of the Bible as God's verdict for mentoring human beings. In Genesis 1v27-28, He said "…be fruitful, multiply, replenish, subdue, and have dominion …." This means that humans should bear children, multiply the children, fill the space as some die, correct them by punishment and discipline, get them to realize their potential, and deal with them successfully, as they are held within the limits and control that makes for continuity on earth. Secondly, the Bible enjoins parents to "train up children in the way they should go and when they are old, they would not depart from such training they had received" (Prov.22 v5).

The noun form of train indicates a sequentially ordered set of things, events and ideas in which each successive member is related to the preceding (and parents, biologically or professionally must take their children through these). As a verb, to train is an exercise in order to prepare somebody for an event, competition, role, function or profession. It involves acts of energizing and arousal of the mentees intrinsic aptitudes to accept teaching and supervision from the mentor. It causes someone to grow in a certain way by tying and pruning him or her to develop behavior by instruction and practice. Invariably, mentoring has been in existence for many centuries, and all who believe in a profession must strive to continue in the tenets that had been held thus far. The analysis above also supports that the pattern for continued professionalism can be achieved through mentoring.

Collaboration on the other hand can simply be described as the act of working together. This means that there are jobs that can be better handled if there is a paired effort. Omotoso and Igiamoh (2012) point out that the need for collaboration is needed to meet the current challenges in library and information science sector among developing countries. This is especially true because no library or information center regardless of its size, equipment or collection is able to completely meet the needs of its patron as required since there are marks of constraints and limitations. To alter the concept of this lack, a new revolution emerged as shared cataloging, for library cooperation, loans and union catalogue.

Hence, in contemporary librarianship, there exist some interchangeable words used to explain library cooperation (formal/informal), partnership and resource sharing activities. They include library networking, library linkages, library collaboration, library cooperation, library consortia, interlibrary loan, document delivery, access services, and document supply (Ali, Owoeye and Anasi, 2010). Again, the challenges revealed above also affect the professionals in the library, especially issues concerning research efforts which are paramount for continued professional development. More so, the author believes that a successful career in librarianship may come as a result of some measure of advice and counseling from experts which is commonly known as mentoring. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to explore mentoring, a tool for successful collaboration among LIS educators with the following specific objectives:

1. To ascertain the various forms through which mentoring for collaboration exist among LIS educators;
2. To ascertain the various reasons why LIS educators, participate in mentoring for collaboration;
3. To examine if there are any results from mentoring for collaboration;
4. To find the challenges faced during mentoring for collaboration.

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