EXTENT OF MENTORING SERVICES PROVIDED FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF BUSINESS EDUCATORS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA.

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Abstract
*This study sought to determine the extent of provision of mentoring services for the professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. One research question guided the study and one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The population consisted of 188 business educators of colleges of education and universities in South East, Nigeria. There was no sampling as the entire population was studied. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Mentoring Services for Professional Growth of Business Educators Questionnaire" (MSPGBEQ**)**. The instrument was validated by three experts.Method of internal consistency was used to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha with SPSS and reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation in answering the research question and inferential statistic of z-test for testing the null hypothesis. Data analysis revealed that academic mentoring services were provided at a low extent. The result also revealed that gender was not a significant factor influencing the extent academic mentoring services were provided for business educators' professional growth in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the provision of mentoring services for business educators' professional growth in South East, Nigeria was inadequate and it was recommended among others that institutions and departments should endeavour to engage the services of research institutions and individual researchers in human resources development for the purpose of acquainting business educators with various mentoring services that would enhance business educators' professional growth.*

Key words: Mentoring Services, Professional Growth, Business Educators and Tertiary Institutions.

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Introduction

Education lies in the heart of every society. It is a key and vital element in the broad development of a nation's capacity to address and solve problems. Education forms the basis for the proactive and positive economic, social and political changes in the society. This is because it remains the key to empowerment of the people and the nation as a whole (Olawolu & Kaegon, 2012). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) stated that education is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. Thus, the FRN outlined in her national policy on education, the cardinal aims of education which include among others is the development of the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment, and the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community. These skills could undoubtedly be acquired through various educational institutions including the tertiary institutions.

Tertiary institutions are institutions of higher learning like universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics, where degrees and corresponding higher academic qualifications are awarded after an individual passes through rigorous moral and academic training. These tertiary institutions have the aims of awarding higher degree as well as other goals through teaching, research, development, generation and dissemination of knowledge so as to empower the populace. One way to empower individual in the country through education is by exposing the youth to the rudiments of skill acquisition, knowledge and competence which can be obtained through business education programmes offered in tertiary institutions.

Business education is an educational programme which involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competences which make the recipients/beneficiaries proficient in business skills/endeavours (Aquah, 2014). It is an umbrella under which all business programmes such as marketing, business administration, office technology and management and accounting take a shield. Business education as a discipline is expected to expose its recipients to diverse curricula contents, hence, it is that type of education that inculcates in its recipients attitudes, knowledge, skills and values that are required in the business world (Baugh & Sullivan, 2005). It is a means of producing a healthy, literate, self-reliant citizenry that would create wealth for human development, when they become self-employed.

Business education is aimed at providing individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to take up readily available job openings in the global job market. To achieve these aims, the educational system must function optimally and the teachers be professionally equipped to provide the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude that will enable the individuals avail themselves of the job openings and opportunities in the global market. It is against this background that Acquah (2014) lamented that the world has undoubtedly become a global village and the present economic realities and technological advancement in education has made the teaching

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profession a herculean task. To this note, there is the need to ensure professional growth of teachers, business educators inclusive.

Teacher professional growth according to Glatthorn in Olawolu and Kaegon (2012) broadly refers to the growth that a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. Olawolu and Kaegon further noted that professional growth includes both formal and informal experiences. The formal experiences include activities such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring and so on. Informal experiences on the other hand relate to reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline and so on. It refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal and career advancement of an individual. Undoubtedly, for business educators to maintain a continuous growth in their profession, they must undertake a lot of effective professional activities either individually or in groups through professional growth strategies including study groups, peer-coaching, action research, mentoring, teaching portfolios, team teaching, and in-service training (Okurame, 2008). One way of ensuring professional growth of business educators is through mentoring.

Mentoring is a process where one person (a mentor) offers help, guidance, advise (counsels) and support to facilitate learning and (professional) development of another person (mentee or protégée) (Olorunleke, 2015). Smith (2007) defined mentoring as a particular mode of learning wherein the mentor not only supports the mentee, but also challenges them productively so that progress is made. However, Fairbanks, Freedman and Kahn in Olorunleke defined mentoring in teacher education as complex social interactions that mentor teachers and student-teachers' construct and negotiate for a variety of professional purposes and in response to the contextual factors they encounter.

In this study, mentoring refers to the act of professional support (knowledge, psychological and social support) experienced between or among business educators. It involves an experienced business educator giving professional support to a less experienced business educator. It is a formal programme whereby a senior business educator, that is the mentor, take the responsibility of mentoring, advising, counseling and giving help to a junior colleague in so as to help the mentee grow in the profession. Mentoring in business education is a carefully planned programmed which focused on developing the mentees capacity by transmitting in him, knowledge, self-confidence and experiences required for professional growth. It provides the mentee with improved self-confidence, increased personal support, improved effectiveness and awareness of the philosophy of business education which help the mentee in career development and professional growth. Okurame (2008) identified four basic dimensions of mentoring services which include academic, psychological, social and guidance mentoring services. This study focused exclusively on academic mentoring services. This is in view of the fact that the crux

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of mentoring in teacher education is to enhance the professional growth of the educators which would on the long-run improve the professional performance of the educators and students' academic achievements as well.

The purpose of academic mentoring of staff is to enhance the quality of human capital for maximum capacity utilization within and outside the tertiary institution community. Tertiary institutions are committed to a working environment where professional improvement is seen as a continuous process which enables all members of staff to develop their professional skills and effectiveness in support of the goals and priorities of the institutions (Megbo & Akor, 2015). Every institution should recognize the value of staff development to the achievement of academic excellence for the efficient and effective operation of the institution. This equally applies to the work, career and personal development of individual members of staff.

Staff academic development includes everything that is done to warrant and extend the knowledge and skills of academic staff so that they can contribute fully towards the achievement of the mission and vision of the institution. Academic staff development supports the personal and professional improvement of academic staff as well as the organizational development needs of the university. Successful programme implementation in universities depends on individual and collective operational capacities of academic and non-academic staff of the universities.

Gender is a variable that could easily influence the extent of provision of mentoring services for professional growth of business educators. In the context of this study, gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in families, societies and cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and behaviours of both men and women (masculinity and feminity). Gender in its narrowest sense means socially constructed sex roles of male or female. Consequently, there might be differences in male and female rating on issue concerning the extent of mentoring services on professional growth of business educators. This is partly as a product or outcome of gender roles and orientation in social construction of the environment in which they belong to.

Although, findings on the relevance of mentoring for employee development are mainly from industry, they are no less important in the academia (Payne, 2006). However, despite considerable empirical support for the importance of mentoring in the professional development of individuals and the quest for the latter among Nigerian academia, the dearth of empirical exploration of mentoring activities subsists. The extent of mentoring services provided for the professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East of Nigeria remains unclear.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of mentoring in tertiary institutions has been worrisome to stakeholders (including Business Educators). A conversation with most business educators seem to reveal that many of them are not unlocking their potentials as a

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result of lack of mentoring. This could be that those that are supposed to mentor them are saddled with too many responsibilities. This therefore could affect the educators in teaching. Many stakeholders feel that the issue of mentoring in business education are neglected and therefore could affect the objective of her graduates. This is seen with the unemployment among graduates in Nigeria. One begins to wonder if mentoring of business educators could affect their professional growth and the discharge of their duties.

Supporting the above observation, Okurame (2014) reported that one of the major problems in the school system today is lack of progressive teachers' professional growth. This according to Okurame is attributed to inadequate provision of mentoring services arising from the inability of the teachers to perceive its relevance to their professional growth. . In fact, the poor provision of mentoring services would impact negatively on the professional growth of business educators. These negative effects could be reflected among business educators in the areas of poor quality teaching, poor quality of research and publications, inappropriate use of students' assessment procedures, inability of keeping abreast with emerging issues in business education and so on. Undoubtedly, similar situation may be obtainable among business educators in tertiary institutions in South-east, Nigeria. The present researcher is worried by this disturbing situation because of its effects on the professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. It appears that the extent of mentoring services provided for professional growth of these business educators is inadequate and if an empirical study of this nature is not carried to investigate the actual situation, the goals of business education programmes in tertiary institutions in the area may not be achieved. This study thus became imperative as it x-rayed the actual situation in the area so as to proffer dependable solutions.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent mentoring services are provided for the professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the extent to which:

1. academic mentoring services are provided for professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East States of Nigeria.

Research Question

The research question below guided the study:

1) To what extent are academic mentoring services provided for the professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The null hypothesis below was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

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1. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female business educators on the extent to which academic mentoring services are provided for their professional growth in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria.

Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of this study consisted of 188 (78 male and 110 female) business educators from 16 tertiary institutions (seven colleges of education and nine universities) in South East Nigeria that offer business education courses. The instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire titled "Mentoring Services for the Professional Growth of Business Educators Questionnaire "(MSPGBEQ). The instrument was structured on a five- point response option of very high extent (VHE), high extent (HE), moderate extent (ME), low extent (LE) and very low extent (VLE). Face validity of the instrument was established using the opinion of three experts. To establish the internal consistency of the items in the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha formula was used to analyze the data and a reliability coefficient value of 0.79 was obtained.

Out of the 188 copies of the instrument distributed, only 182 (96%) copies were retrieved from the respondents and were used for data analysis.

In order to determine the extent of provision of academic mentoring services for professional growth of business educators, a decision rule based on mean ratings between 4.50-5.00 were regarded as very high extent, items with mean ratings of 3.50-4.49 were considered as high extent and items with 2.50-3.49 were regarded as moderate extent. Furthermore, items with mean ratings of 1.50-2.49 and 0.50-1.49 were considered as low extent and very low extent respectively. In testing the null hypothesis, where the z-calculated value was less than the z-critical table value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Conversely, where the z-calculated was greater than or equal to the z-critical table value, the hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Research Question

To what extent are academic mentoring services provided for the professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria?

Table 1

Mean ratings on extent academic mentoring services are provided for the professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions. N = 182

S/N	Academic services provided	π	SD	Remarks
1.	encouragementof business educatorstoattend professional conferences	1.56	.46	Low Extent

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2. granting of study leaves	1.53	.40	Low Extent
3. sponsoring of research and academic publications	1.70	.46	Low Extent
3. organization of in-service workshops and seminars	2.70	.46	Moderate Extent
4. organization of induction/ orientation for new staff	1.53	.53	Low Extent
5. staff for ICT trainings	1.73	.46	Low Extent
6. professionaldevelopment programmes in research methodology and pedagogy	2.80	.40	Moderate Extent
7. training of staff on the usage of model instructional facilities	2.50	.50	Moderate Extent
Cluster Mean		**2.01**	**Low Extent**

Information in Table 1 shows that item numbers 4, 7, and 8 have mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 2.70 showing that business educators are moderately provided with academic services for their professional growth, while items 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 have mean scores ranging from 1.53 to 1.73 showing that academic mentoring services are provided at low extent. The standard deviations of 0.40 to 0.53 show that business educators are not different in their responses which indicate homogeneity. The cluster mean score of 2.01 shows that academic mentoring services for professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria are provided at low extent.

Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent to which academic mentoring services are provided for their professional growth in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria.

Table 2

Z-test comparison of the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent to which academic mentoring services are provided for their professional growth in tertiary institutions. N=182

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	α Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	70	3.50	.12	0.05	1.43	1.96	Not
Female			.13	180			Significant

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	112
	3.52

Data in Table 7 show that the z-cal value of 1.43 is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 180 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is not rejected. This implies that male and female business educators do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which academic services are provided for their professional growth in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that academic mentoring services are provided for the professional growth of business educators in South-east, Nigeria to a low extent. The results revealed the major aspects of academic services which the respondents indicated that were provided for their professional growth to a low extent. These include encouragement and sponsoring of business educators for professional conferences, granting of study leaves, sponsoring of research and academic publications, organization of induction/orientation for new staff, sponsoring of staff for ICT trainings and so on. This finding is supported by Megbo and Akor (2015) who noted that provision of mentoring services among academic staff is essential for building work role effectiveness, career advancement, self-confidence and address other interpersonal concerns of the relationship.

This finding disagreed with Eyitayo, Bamidele and Aremu (2015) who carried out a study to assess the perception of developmental impact of mentoring by academic staff of the Obafemi Awolowo University. The findings of the study showed that 86.5% of academic staff were involved in academic mentoring relationship and 93.5% of academic staff had favourable perception of mentoring. This finding also corroborates the conclusion of Aladejana, Aladejana and Ehindero (2006) and implies a tendency for mentor to enjoy in carrier development function which facilitates academic advancement.

The findings of the study also revealed that male and female business educators did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which academic services are provided for their professional growth in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. This is in agreement with Okurame (2014) whose study revealed no significant difference in the opinions of the respondents on the extent of provision of academic mentoring services on the basis of gender. This implies that academic staff who are senior members irrespective of their gender share resources and utilize mentoring opportunities by making personal decisions and conscious effort to establish a link with potential mentees. There is no doubt that the provision of these academic services would enable business educators to be fully competent and completely equipped to discharge their professional duties as required.

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Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that provision of mentoring services is essential for enhancing professional growth of business educators. The study however concluded that the provision of academic mentoring services provided for professional growth of business educators in tertiary institutions in South-east, Nigeria is inadequate. The professional growth of business educators can only be achieved through adequate provision of academic mentoring services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Nigeria government (federal and state) should establish a mentoring programme office as a department in the Ministry of Education. The department should be saddled with the task of coordinating and evaluating the program and ensuring that mentoring services are provided in various tertiary institutions across the country.
2. Institutions and departments should endeavour to engage the services of research institutions and individual researchers in human resources development for the purpose of acquainting business educators with various mentoring services that would enhance business educators' professional growth.
3. Administrators of universities and colleges of education and heads of departments of business education programme should endeavour to mentor their staff (both old and new) to aid their professional growth and to avoid stagnation and burn out. This can be done via induction programmes, workshops and public enlightenment programmes.
4. Workshops and seminars should be regularly organized for business educators so as to enable them see the need to provide for themselves various mentoring services to aid their professional growth.

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