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ENTREPRENEURS' MENTORING STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES ADOPTED FOR IMPROVED BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

There are different mentoring strategies and approaches that can be adopted by entrepreneurs for improved business performance across board in general and in Imo State in particular. The study x-rayed entrepreneurs' mentoring strategies and approaches adopted for improved business performance in Imo State. The researchers adopted two research questions inline with the two specific purposes to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was used by the researchers to structure the study, while the hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study comprised four hundred (400) entrepreneurs within Owerri metropolis of Imo State and the entire population was administered with questionnaire items where a total of three hundred and fifty-six (356) entrepreneurs returned their questionnaire which formed the sample of the study. The researchers used structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents with the aid of three research assistants, while the test-retest method was used to test the reliability of the instrument which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.78. The researchers also used the mean and standard deviation to analyse the research questions, whereas z-test was adopted to test the hypothesis formulated. The researchers' findings among others revealed that entrepreneurs adopted some of the strategies and approaches raised as the null hypothesis proved that there was no significant difference in the strategies and approaches used by the entrepreneurs in Imo State. Following the findings, it was recommended among others that entrepreneurs should adopt effective mentoring strategies and approaches that will help them succeed in their day-to-day operations. Enlightenment and sensitization for mentoring should also be effectively carried out by entrepreneurs for improved business performance.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Mentoring, Strategies, Approaches, Entrepreneurship, Business Performance

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Introduction

Entrepreneurs across board should understand that mentoring, it strategies and approaches should form the bases of effective business performance. Intending entrepreneurs need to understand the involvement of mentoring through guided discovery of tutoring and learning with strong focus on what constitute effective entrepreneurship practices. Entrepreneurs' knowledge of tutoring and the knowledge of effective mentoring can provide pre-service tutors (mentees) with valuable directions for advancing their entrepreneurship business development. Mentoring could be haphazard as mentors need to develop technical knowledge and practices to assist them in their roles (Hudson, 2013). The term mentoring first appeared in Homer's *Odyssey,* a Greek mythology in which a wise and trusted guide, Mentor, looked after and guided Telemachus, son of Odysseus, who had left home to fight in the Trojan war. To a major degree, Mentor was responsible for the boy's education as well as the shaping of his character, wisdom of his decisions and the clarity and steadfastness of his purpose (Barondess, 1991). This historical context has informed the meaning of mentoring across decades. Mentoring is sometimes considered as a relationship between an older/more experienced person and a younger/less experienced person for the purpose of developing the younger person professionally, academically or personally (Levinson, 1978; Kram, 1985; Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000 and McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2007). According to Megginson and Clutterbuck in McKimm, et al. (2007), mentoring is 'offline' help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking.

Wong and Prekumar (2007) argue that mentoring is an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the beneficiary. McKimm, et al. (2007) were more descriptive in their definition of mentoring as the process by which an experienced, highly regarded, empathic individual (The mentor), by listening and talking in confidence, guides another individual, often but not always working in the same field (the mentee), in the development and re-examination of the mentee's own ideas, learning, personal and professional development. Mentoring is a highly interactive and nurturing process between a more experienced professional (mentor) and a less experienced person (mentee) in which the mentor provides direction and guidance with a view to helping the mentee develop necessary skills, navigate work place politics and improve performance. Mentoring can be formal or informal. Formal mentoring relationships are usually organized in the workplace where an organisation matches mentors to mentees for developing careers (Wong and Prekumar, 2007). They are characterized by agreed appointments, venues and timing (Aired, Garvey and Smith, 2003). Informal mentoring relationships, on the other hand, occurs spontaneously and are usually casual. Here, the mentee visits the mentor on 'anytime' basis (Aired et al 2003). Mentoring relationships can be managed electronically or face-to-face (Kasprisin, Boyle Single, Single, and Muller, 2003). It can also be one-to-one or one-to-a group and can take the form of senior-to-junior, peer or reverse. Deciding which structure entrepreneurs should adapt to achieve better results is important. This is because each structure of mentoring may be better suited to support particular mentoring functions or desired outcome (Wai-packard, 2000; McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2007).

Mentoring has been proven to be an effective and efficient means of improving the competence and commitment of a workforce. Clutterbuck in Aired, Garvey and Smith (2003) argues that

mentoring is probably the most powerful developmental process people can experience; and when it works, it develops two for the price of one. For many years, organisations have used mentoring to increase job satisfaction, improve employee commitment and reduce turnover intentions (Spitzmuller, Neumann, Spitzmuelia, Rubino, Keeton, Sutton and Manzey, 2008: Payne and Huffman, 2005). Thus, mentoring is a powerful tool for facilitating knowledge, skill and attitude development for middle career employees and rookies. The benefits resulting from mentoring programmes within organisational settings have received much attention. However, empirical research is still inadequate. So far, little empirical studies have been done to describe and illustrate what is required to ensure a mentoring programme is optimally effective and successful. After articulating the programmes' structure, appropriate mentors and mentees would need to be selected. It is usually expected that mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the programme will be selected (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter and Tai, 2015). Daloz (1986) was expressive in his description of a mentor as one who guides or lead along the journey of our lives and cast light on the way ahead, interprets signs, warns us of lurking dangers, and points out unexpected delights along the way. Hence, a mentoring programme must identify and select mentors who will provide required guidance, opportunities and connections for the mentee. On the other hand, programmes are also expected to select mentees who can drive the mentoring process and stay committed to expanding their capabilities. Care must be taken to match the selected mentors and mentees in order to facilitate successful mentoring relationships between the two. This step is important because to achieve the objectives of a mentoring relationship, it is important that mentors and mentees remain in the relationship for the intended duration or, at least, up to a time that the mentoring objectives are achieved. Larose, Tarabulsy and Cyrenne (2005) stated that the most critical aspect of a mentoring relationship is that it lasts for the intended duration of the original commitment. To achieve this, there must be some chemistry (natural attraction) between the mentor and the mentee as lack of it may lead to untimely separation. Unlike in informal programmes where persons who have attraction for each other come together naturally, formal mentoring programmes require pairing people who can find the attraction. If bonding does not occur, and one or both of the two parties are not comfortable within the relationship, then neither learning nor mentoring will be sustained (McKJmm, et al, 2007). The expressed characteristics, personality and motivation of the participants may assist in pairing. Although some mentees may prefer a mentor who is close match along many demographic variables. An effective mentor may differ from the mentee in terms of gender, field of study, ethnic background, socio economic status or disability status (Blake-beard, 1999).

Mentoring is key in a bid to raise entrepreneurs and intending entrepreneurs and to promote entrepreneurship businesses. However, in small, medium and large scale business enterprises, high percentage of people are involved, but very few people or individuals from visible minorities occupy prominent or managerial positions. There is no doubt that anticipating entrepreneurial learning is the core business of entrepreneurship practices which contribute to their learning process. There has been a great deal of attention paid to the subject of entrepreneurship as a means of sustaining the economy of a nation. This has stemmed primarily from the findings of economic analysts that small firms contribute considerably to economic growth and development. Moreover, many men and women have chosen entrepreneurial careers because doing so seems to offer them greater economic and psychological rewards than does the large company route (Zahra and George, 2002). Entrepreneurship helps to develop a pool of

potential entrepreneurs who are well equipped with skills and technical know-how to manage small and medium scale industries (Amesi, 2011). Nwachukwu in Agbobi (2009) emphasized that entrepreneurship has a long history in Nigeria following the colonial era, and the concern of the British colonial administration was mostly commercial, and was aimed at promoting the transfer of agricultural commodities to Europe, and the industrialization policy at that time was modest in nature. As a result, after the transfer of power in 1960, Nigeria continued her dependence on imported European commodities. Technology and colonial policy then did not permit indigenous technological development (Amesi, 2011). Owing to the difficulty in running ever-larger factories efficiently and foreign debt crisis, the Nigerian government came to play an increasingly prominent role as investment allocators (Akpomi, 2008). Ottiin Okoye and Eze (2010), commented on the absence of a national and industrial development policy which caused considerable damage to the Nigerian economy. Also, market conditions such as competitors, improper attitudes (laziness, extensive vacating, over commitment and unethical behaviours) made it more difficult for private entrepreneurs to appreciate returns on new investments.

Nexus Between Mentorship and Entrepreneurship

Allen, Eby and Lentz (2006), view mentorship as a process of gaining informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psycho-social support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development. Mentorship is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialogue, and challenge. Mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protege) (Pompa, 2012; Nwanewezi and Akpomi, 2009).According to Schlee (2000), mentoring involves putting yourself into multiple roles to improve a younger person's life. Whether helping someone to cope with a difficult situation, survive school or achieve a personal goal, mentors serve the role of being caring, a friend and a confidant. Mentoring is also concerned with creating an informal environment in which one person can feel encouraged to discuss one's needs and circumstances openly and in confidence. Pompper and Adams (2006) viewed mentoring as when one person is helping another to achieve something, more specifically, something that is important to them.

Entrepreneurship on the other hand is a process of thinking, reasoning and acting that is opportunity based and holistic in approach (Wikipedia, 2008).). Akpomi (2008) sees entrepreneurship as an instrument that stimulates and promotes the economy, while entrepreneurs are innovators and job creators. Amesi (2010) saw entrepreneurship as a mission for self-employment and poverty alleviation, which is the hope of many Nigerians in entrepreneurship businesses. Entrepreneurship is the ability to create and build something from practically nothing as it has to do with doing, achieving, and building an enterprise or organization, rather than just watching, analysing, or describing one. Entrepreneurship is the distribution of goods and services, organization and management of the human and material resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprise, risk bearing and innovation (Agbaeze, 2007). David (2008) views entrepreneurship as the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed. This should be acquired and should differ in some

respects from the abilities required to enable a person obtain an employment. It involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for self-reliance. Agbaeze (2007) conceives entrepreneurship as that which is associated with different kinds of activities that have to do with the establishment and operations of business enterprises and such activities may include identification to exploit for profit, promotion and establishment of business enterprise for economic sustenance.

Mentoring Strategies for Improved Business Performance

There are standards to attain and knowledge to acquire, taking into consideration different forms of businesses. Bozeman and Feeney (2007) admitted that a good mentor must commit the time, have the patience and willingness to provide one with insights and get one started on the right track. The ideas can be designed to help entrepreneurs or intending entrepreneurs to gather information and acquire knowledge in relation to their businesses and also assist new or intending entrepreneurs by giving those insights on the right track. Hobson, Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson (2009), viewed mentoring as an approach to one's development that introduces an independent and objective source of help outside of the individual's relationship. Below are some mentoring strategies attributed to entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship for improved business performance:

Finding the Right Entrepreneurs to be Mentored. Here, most entrepreneurs including small and medium scale organizations do not have the structures in place to assess who their most skilled entrepreneurs are, or who among their progressive entrepreneurs have a strong, positive impact on new and intending entrepreneurs' outcomes. Even in business organizations like small and medium scale ones that are able to identify their high-performing entrepreneurs, there can be resistance to recruiting the intending or new entrepreneurs from their businesses (Allen; Eby, and Lentz, 2006).

Partnering with Progressive Entrepreneurs: This is a situation where progressive entrepreneurs operate, manage and become entrepreneurship business leaders. Mentors can support the progressive entrepreneurs' understanding of effective observation and coaching strategies to use with intending entrepreneurs, while they also learn about and create action plans for applying the progressive entrepreneur's instructional vision and priorities in the business (Parsloe and Wray, 2000).

Aligning Business-Support Efforts: This strategy is important in that, business support as a communal tree is supposed to be watered once a week as it is a way to help a new entrepreneur close the "knowing- doing" gap by learning to apply knowledge of best practices to daily entrepreneurship business routines (Cindy, 2004). Additional strategies for mentoring mentorees or mentees include: being of a good example, offering problem solving strategies, encouraging excellence, listening and supporting, confronting unprofessional behaviour, and offering challenging opportunities.

Mentoring Approaches for Improved Business Performance

The aim of mentoring is to develop the entire individual and in doing so, the approaches are broad and require wisdom in order to be used effectively. The five most commonly used approaches adopted by entrepreneurship mentors are:

Accompanying: This has to do with making a commitment in a caring way, which involves taking part in the learning process side-by-side with the mentee/mentoree.

Sowing: This approach is necessary when one knows that what he or she say may not be understood or even acceptable to mentees at first but will make sense and have value to the mentees when the situation requires it.

Catalysing: Using this approach, the mentor chooses to plunge the mentee right into change, provoking a different way of thinking, a change in identity or a re-ordering of values.

Showing: This is making something understandable, or using your own example to demonstrate skill or activity. You show what you are talking about, you show by your own behaviour and approaches.

Harvesting: In Harvesting, the mentor focuses on "picking the ripe fruit", which is usually used to create awareness of what was taught or advice by experience and to draw conclusions. Setting goals, providing feedback, celebrations, rewards and collaborations are other mentoring approaches used by mentors to improve business performance.

Mentoring Models for Improved Business Performance

A major advantage of mentoring is that it can be used by any organization and entrepreneurs for culture and resources. There are several mentoring models to choose from when developing a mentoring programme such as:

One-on-one Mentoring: The most common mentoring model, one-on-one mentoring matches one mentor with one mentoree. Most entrepreneurs prefer this model because it allows both the mentor and mentoree/mentee to develop a personal relationship and provides individual support for the mentoree. Availability of mentors is the only limitation of this model.

Resource-Based Mentoring: This offers some of the same features as one-on-one mentoring. The main difference is that mentors and mentorees are not interviewed and matched by a Mentoring Programme Manager. Instead, mentors agree to add their names to a list of available mentors from which a mentoree can choose. It is up to the mentoree to initiate the process by asking one of the volunteer mentors for assistance. This model typically has limited support within the organization or business and may result in mismatched mentor-mentoree pairing.

Group Mentoring: It requires a mentor to work with four to six (4-6) mentorees at one time. The group meets once or twice a month to discuss various topics. Combining senior and peer mentoring, the mentor and the peer's help one another learn and develop appropriate skills and knowledge. Group mentoring is limited by the difficulty of regularly scheduling meetings for the entire group. It also lacks the personal relationship that most entrepreneurs prefer in mentoring. For this reason, it is often combined with the one-on-one model.

Training-based Mentoring: It is connected directly to a training programme. A mentor is assigned to a mentoree to help that individual or entrepreneur develop the specific skills being taught in the programme. Training-based mentoring is limited, because it focuses on the subject at hand and doesn't help the mentoree develop a broader skill set.

Executive Mentoring: It is a top-down model which is most often considered as the most effective way to create a mentoring culture and cultivate skills and knowledge throughout an organization. It is also an effective succession-planning tool, because it prevents the knowledge "brain drain" that would otherwise take place when senior management retires.

Statement of the Problem

This research was informed by the difficulty in regularly scheduling meetings for different mentorees/mentees. It has been observed that effective mentoring is lacking among male and female entrepreneurs. Consequently, the researchers need to ascertain the mentoring strategies and approaches adopted by entrepreneurs in Imo State for improved business performance.

Purpose of the Research

The major purpose of this study was to x-ray entrepreneurs' mentoring strategies and approaches adopted for improved business performance in Imo State. Specifically, the study was out to:

1. Examine the extent to which mentoring strategies are used by entrepreneurs to improve business performance in Imo State.

2. Ascertain the extent to which entrepreneurs use mentoring approaches to improve business performance in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following two research questions were raised by the researchers to guide the study:

1. To what extent are mentoring strategies used by entrepreneurs to improve business performance in Imo State?

2. To what extent do entrepreneurs use mentoring approaches to improve business performance in Imo State?

Hypothesis

The below null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female entrepreneurs in Imo State in line with mentoring strategies and approaches used in improving business performance.

Method

The studied area examined by the researchers was Owerri Metropolis, Imo State. The design of the study was the descriptive survey and the population was four hundred (400) entrepreneurs within the scope of the research. The sample size was a total of three hundred and fifty-six (356) entrepreneurs within Owerri Metropolis who returned the answered questionnaire administered to them. Data for the study were collected by means of questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire has two parts - "A" and "B". Part A sought information on the selected personal background of the respondents, and it contained four items. Part B sought information on the view of the entrepreneurs regarding the topic of the study with ten questionnaire items. The questionnaire adopted by the researchers was a modified four-point Likert scale as follows: Very High Extent (VHE = 4 points); High Extent (HE = 3 points); Low Extent (LE = 2 points) and Very Low Extent (VLE = 1 point) where any value below 2.5 was to be rejected. The researchers and four research assistants briefed by the researchers personally administered the 400 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. Overall, 356 copies out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire items administered to the respondents were retrieved, which

amounted to 78 percent return rate. Test-retest method was used to test the reliability of the items and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions, whereas the z-test was used to test the null hypothesis formulated.

Results

The results obtained from the respondents are shown below:

Research Question 1: To what extent are mentoring strategies used by entrepreneurs to improve business performance in Imo State?

Table 1: Mentoring strategies used by entrepreneurs to improve business performance in Imo State (N=365)

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Remark
1	Finding the right entrepreneur to be mentor(s)	3.17	1.06	Very High Extent
2	Offering challenging opportunities	3.33	0.66	Very High Extent
3	Confronting unprofessional behaviour	3.19	0.92	Very High Extent
4	Encouraging excellence	3.15	0.89	Very High Extent
5	Offering problem solving strategies	3.23	1.73	Very High Extent
	Grand Mean/S.D	**3.21**	**1.05**	

Source: Field Research, 2023.

Table 1 above shows that all the items regarding mentoring strategies were to a very high extent adopted by entrepreneurs in Imo State. This is based on the responses of the respondents as the grand mean and standard deviation of 3.21 and 1.05 affirmed the result. From the analysis, finding the right entrepreneur to be mentored achieved a mean of 3.17, offering challenging opportunities achieved a high mean of 3.33, confronting unprofessional behaviour with a mean of 3.19, encouraging excellence gave a mean of 3.15, and offering problem solving strategies achieved a mean of 3.23.

Research Question 2: To what extent do entrepreneurs use mentoring approaches to improve business performance in Imo State?

Table 2: Mentoring approaches used by entrepreneurs to improve business performance in Imo State (N=365)

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Remark
1	Providing feedback	3.22	1.83	Very High Extent
2	Making a commitment in a caring way through collaborations	3.31	0.86	Very High Extent
3	Setting goals through understanding	2.91	0.94	Very High Extent
4	Teaching through celebrations and rewards	2.76	0. 98	Very High Extent
5	Interacting with autocratic entrepreneurs	0.01	0.02	Very Low Extent
	Grand Mean/S.D	**3.21**	**1.05**	

Source: Field Research, 2023.

Table 2 above shows that the respondents considered all the items except item 5 as mentoring approaches adopted by them. Providing feedback got a mean of 3.22, making a commitment in a caring way through collaborations achieved the highest mean of 3.31, setting goals through understanding got a mean of 2.91, teaching through celebrations and rewards got a mean of 2.76, while interacting with autocratic entrepreneurs got the least mean of 0.01. The responses from the respondents show that the items in the table are mentoring approaches adopted by them. This was based on the grand mean and standard deviation of 3.21 and 1.05. respectively.

Table 3: Z-test of Difference of Male and Female Entrepreneurs Regarding Mentoring Strategies and Approaches Used to Improve Business Performance

Respondents	Mean	S.D	Num.	Df	Std. Error	Z-Cal	Z-Crit.	Remark
Male	12.20	3.61						
			356	354	0.94	4.12	1.6	Rejected
Female	16.07	5.26						

Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 3 above shows the calculated z-ratio of 4.12, whereas the critical or table z-value is 1.6. Since the calculated Z-ratio is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at 354 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Based on the test of hypothesis, the researchers concluded that there is a significant difference in the responses of the respondents on mentoring strategies and approaches adopted by male and female entrepreneurs in Imo State. Invariably, for entrepreneurs to effectively mentor, they must adopt effective mentoring strategies and approaches to their advantage and that of their mentees.

Discussion

The findings from research question one, proved that the respondents considered, finding the right entrepreneur to be mentored, offering challenging opportunities, confronting unprofessional behavior, encouraging excellence and offering problem solving strategies as strategies as effective in their mentoring activities. This finding is in agreement with the view of Bozeman and Feeney (2007) who opined that a good mentor must commit his or her time, have the patience and willingness to provide one, with their insights and get one started on the right track. This insights can be designed to help entrepreneurs or intending entrepreneurs to gather information and acquire knowledge in relation to their businesses and also assist new or intending entrepreneurs by giving those insights on the right track. In agreement with the views of Bozeman and Feeney, Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) depicted that mentoring is an approach to one's development that introduces an independent and objective source of help outside of the individual's relationship.

Findings from research question two also proved that the respondents considered providing feedback, making a commitment in a caring way through collaboration, , setting goals through understanding and teaching through celebrations and rewards as mentoring approaches adopted by them. This finding is in agreement with the view of Hudson (2013) who opined that the techniques mentors employ have the potential to motivate the mentees in entrepreneurship and increase productivity as it is to seek out mentors who are not afraid to be honest with the mentees

in the interest of improving the business. In consonant with the view of Hudson, the researcher opined that positive feedback as an effective mentoring technique reinforces strong behaviours in entrepreneurship and provides entrepreneurs with motivation to keep working hard as constructive criticism addresses areas of concern and offers suggestions for improving business performance. The test of hypothesis in table 3 proved that there was a significant difference in the responses of the respondents on mentoring strategies and approaches adopted by entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship in Imo State. In other words, it is very necessary and essential for entrepreneurs to adopt these strategies and techniques as providing feedback, making a commitment in a caring way through collaboration, setting goals through understanding and teaching through celebrations and rewards. Providing feedback as an approach for mentoring, reinforces strong behaviours in entrepreneurship and provide entrepreneurs with motivation to keep working hard as celebrations and rewards motivate entrepreneurs as they reach goals in their businesses and make improvements to their performance based on constructive criticism if adopted. Setting goals provides the mentee with something definite to work with and also have the potential to increase productivity in the business as the mentors may help the mentees to create realistic goals Teaching through celebrations and rewards as mentoring approaches help in building respect for the mentor and help the mentees to know that the mentor is not only there to criticize but also to share in their success if effectively adopted. Collaboration as a mentoring approach in entrepreneurship provides the individual an opportunity to collaborate with others as they begin their entrepreneurship activities. Mentors in adopting collaboration as a mentoring approach should help the mentees learn how to direct businesses and to complete tasks productively.

Findings also indicate the need to select mentors who are successful in their chosen professions. This is important as those who are not successful may not be competent mentors. Moreso, they may come into mentoring relationships with fear and eventually show inferiority complex; However, authors such as McKimm et al, (2007) advice mentors not to feel threatened by the mentee's potential for equaling or surpassing them nor by the mentee detecting their weaknesses and shortcomings. On the other hand, low mean scores for the qualities: "good humour" and "learning attitude" were unexpected and inconsistent with the recommendations of McKimm et al (2007). Just as in the case of mentor selection, results indicate that programmes should also have criteria for selecting mentees that is based on the programme objectives. Mentor should have more years of work experience than the mentee" and "Mentors should be older than mentees" and should be consistent with the historical context of mentoring - the Greek mythology as well as literature (Wong and Premkumar, 2007; Kremer and Cooper, 2014). Respondents' perception that mentors should not be line managers/appraisers of mentees and should also not be line manager/ supervisor of the mentee's line manager conforms with Mckimm et al (2007) which identified playing conflicting roles (acting as manager, assessor and mentor) as one of the problems in mentoring that can put the mentor in a dilemmatic situation.

An important attribute of a mentor in adopting effective approach is leading by example. After agreeing to take on a mentee, it is the responsibility of a mentor to demonstrate the excellence, professionalism, and business ethics that make one an accomplished. Problem solving strategies as effective mentoring strategy is the effort of a mentor to help a mentee address problems strategically and effectively. At this stage, the mentor adopting these approaches, offering strategies used to solve similar problems and issues. Mentors are usually in perfect position to

set the bar high and encourage their mentees to rise to the occasion as mentors who push the novices they work with to excel increase the competiveness of their mentees towards high business performance.

Conclusion

The paper centered on mentoring strategies and approaches used by entrepreneurs in Imo State for improved business performance. It discussed concept of mentoring and entrepreneurship, role of good mentorship, mentoring strategies and mentoring approaches. It concluded that adequate and effective mentoring strategies and approaches be used by mentors in entrepreneurship so as to enable them mentor effectively and also carry their mentees along in their business operations and opportunities targeted at raising skills and committed entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs should implement a public or transparent mentoring programme that allows other staff to be aware that mentoring is going on in the organization and requires preparation of a robust communication plan those details, among other things, messages that would be sent to major stakeholders such as mentees' line managers and other staff who are selected to be mentors or mentees.

Recommendations

The researchers made the following recommendations in line with their findings:

1. Entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship should adopt effective mentoring strategies and approaches that will help their mentees excel and succeed in their businesses.

2. Entrepreneurs should implement a public or transparent mentoring programme that allows other staff to be aware that mentoring is going on in the organization and requires preparation of a robust communication plan those details, among other things, messages that would be sent to major stakeholders such as mentees' line managers and other staff who are selected to be mentors or mentees.

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