

# 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 they 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

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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 Igiomoh (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, Owioye 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.

## Statement of the Problem

Every LIS educator strives to reach the apex of their career, which indicates professional development, but most people are unable to climb the ladder on their own, especially because there is a combination of academic, administrative and community service chores hanging on each educator's neck. These chores place too much demand on them leaving them with insufficient time to read, research, write and publish. However, participation in research is a professional obligation if LIS educators are to make any progress regardless of the multiple activities they are involved in, especially in this era of "publish or perish" syndrome. Being that it has been established in literature that mentoring supplements professional training that boosts successful skill acquisition for improved performance and there are no empirical studies on LIS educators, this article seeks to find out the effect of and extent of mentoring for successful collaboration.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring for successful collaboration in any profession cannot be over emphasized because of the intricacies of sharing and connecting. The foundation for sharing and affiliating is acceptance, which is love for the partners and the profession. Goodyear (2006) defined mentoring as a process whereby two or more individuals work together to develop the career and abilities of a single individual, and it can focus on a career or personal context. Ozioko, Nwabueze and Igwesi (2012) presented mentoring as a strategy for continuous staff development which describes a relationship between a less experienced individual called a mentee and a more experienced individual known as a mentor. It is an informal relationship that develops naturally in the work place between professional colleagues to benefit individuals with regards to the profession and psychologically. It allows the mentee to learn to define professional and personal responsibilities that could generally be perceived as staff development. For example, a recent study by Inyang and Agwunobi (2016) discovered that catalogers were very few in number at the University of Calabar as it is in most academic libraries. In fact, among the identified 21 catalogers, 17 had already worked more than 15 years while the remaining 4 staff had worked for only 4 years. Analyzing the vast gap in experience, it is apparent that if nothing is done to seriously mentor librarians in this regard, there shall come a time where cataloging knowledge would be in extinction among staff and posterity require continuity in molding younger professionals to continue where their predecessors stopped.

Sodipe and Madukoma (2013) presented mentoring as supplements of professional training of librarians as it promotes skill acquisition for improved performance and success in one's career. Ilevbare (2011) stated that while mentoring can be applied to a variety of people, purposes and situations, it is a developmental relationship between a more experienced individual (the mentor) and a less experienced partner (the mentee) for the purpose of sharing technical information, institutional knowledge and insight with respect to a particular occupation, profession, organization or endeavor.

Ayinde (2011) posited that mentoring creates a supportive environment that is non-judgmental and non-competitive because it fosters trust, facilitates the sharing of information and bases its foundation on mutual respect. Adeyanju (2011) averred that mentoring occurs when a senior member in an organization elects to initiate a relationship with a younger member whom he recognizes as having potentials for growth and is talented. The author also noted that there is formal or institutional mentorship, which is part of management practice and where it is taken as a policy for senior staff members to compulsorily train the junior ones on the job routines. It is understood differently from the traditional or informal mentorship where the selection of a mentee is a personal choice of the mentor. This is because, in the later, mentors are significant to others who use their knowledge, power and status to assist a mentee to improve their career (Sodipe and Madukoma, 2013).

Goodyear (2006) revealed that mentoring is multifaceted, hence the current trend differs from what had been obtainable in previous researches. The author revealed that career mentoring alone can be sub-divided into career assistance, psychological support and role modeling with diverse focal

points. Again, mentoring is done by formal relationship which involves seniors and junior colleagues, developmental (career professionals) which has a combination of not only senior persons but also peers, and junior professionals and the modern concept of mentoring centers on mentees ability to search out mentors who offer what they want: supervisors, professional seniors, peers, professional juniors, or family members. Invariably, the mentorship in vogue presents mentees to reach out to people they believe to have valuable potentials to assist them (i.e. mentees).

Kahle-Piasecki (2011) revealed that one type of relationship that can be very beneficial in an organization to the extent of advancing an individual's career is the mentoring relationship. The author further explained that both parties would offer support to each other, critically analyze issues through double knowledge that would yield increased performance while managing the politics of the organization. A study on the impact of mentoring during postgraduate training on doctor's career success by Stamm and Buddebery –Fisher (2011) showed a positive impact. The study went on to confirm the saying that “two can work together when they agree” (Amos 3v3) and mentorship functions in the agreement of the mentor and the mentee.

Axalsson, Sonnenwald and Sapante (2006) presented the term collaboration as human behavior among two or more individuals, which facilitates the sharing of meaning and completion of task with respect to a mutually shared super ordinate goal, which presupposes the accomplishment of a task that would not have been possible without joint effort. The study of Moahi (2007) specified that shortages of funds, lack of time and insufficient research skills were major setbacks to research which collaboration can curb. Huang (2014) inferred that collaboration is necessary for researchers to address complex research issues that otherwise cannot be addressed by individual researchers. Owing to the increased specialization in science, there is a need for individual researchers to keep their own activities focused and specialized. Such focus and specialization would allow researchers to make significant knowledge advancement in their respective fields (Bukvova, 2010). While it is possible for individual researchers to learn all the knowledge and skills needed to solve a complex research problem, this learning process can be very time-consuming and may prohibit an individual from being specialized. Consequently, researchers, when addressing complex problems, need to pool expertise together and obtain cross-fertilization through interdisciplinary collaborations (Johari, Zaini, & Zain, 2012).

Subsequently, collaboration is important for researchers' sustainable development in knowledge creation. The United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (2012) argued that in a knowledge economy, knowledge and capacity might be substituted or restored at a very fast pace. So, continuous learning and knowledge transfer are critical for researchers to remain relevant in their respective fields in an ongoing knowledge creation process. Such learning and transfer may bring together researchers with culturally different ideas, which create conditions for new knowledge creation. Thus, learning and transfer through collaborations not only lead to research productivity (as indicated by grants- and publications, because of knowledge creation), but also help researchers to maintain their ability for sustainable development in a knowledge economy.

Again, collaboration may reduce research costs. Bukvova's (2010) review on research collaboration finds that experimentalists tend to collaborate more than theoreticians do. In experimental research, the instrumentation required is getting increasingly complex. Scientific instrumentation costs have jumped considerably with the successive generations of technology. By working together in collaboration, research costs can be shared and research facilities can be better optimized and utilized. Invariably, collaboration can help to curb these factors by brushing up those with low skills to improve and make advancements. Bahr and Zemon (2000) discoursed that collaboration is the standard in many disciplines and affirmed that increasingly, evidence shows that collaborative articles have a greater chance of being published. Talja (2002) reported that scholars usually form many kinds of networks with different levels of information sharing.

Online Writing Guide (2012) had explained that collaborative writing (whether for textbooks or articles) could lead to projects that are richer and more complex than those produced individually.

Hence, for LIS educators to flourish, researchers and practitioners in different groups need to forge closer working ties through research, writing and publishing (Joint, 2005). Shepherd (2004) presented some factors as those that encourage collaborative writing. These include; needs and perceived benefits, availability of resources, attitude of collaborators and established and effectual means of their communication. The author added that a shared vision is necessary as it builds a sense of commitment in a group, by developing shared images of the future that is being sought to be created and the guiding principles and practices by which the group hopes to get there. As a result, common goals will generate enthusiasm and a willing to solve problems collectively.

Tella, Akinboro and Hammed (2012) held that the term collaboration is used to depict all forms of agreement between not just the mentor and the mentee, but also, academic institutions, corporate, universities, and any combination of two or more parties who share the commitment to reach a common goal by using their available resources. Lomas, Burke and Page (2008) upheld collaboration as a “recursive process where two or more people... work together towards an intersection of common goals ... by sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus.” Shepherd (2004) added that frequent open communication is essential for the continuing success of a collaborative relationship and team building in a collaborative environment and its hard work, which requires commitment to a new approach. In furtherance therefore, a sense of stewardship emerges that considers the care of the whole against individual interest.

Cortz, Johannes and Isaac (2008) averred that a significant challenge to supporters of any profession is the need to stay current on issues and new trends confronting the field as well as the mastery of concepts, tools techniques, skills and theories associated with the subsidiary discipline of one’s subject area. This is where the practice of mentoring bargains itself as a technique to enable young devotees to lean on the knowledge of their senior counterparts for professional development. The above assertion is based on the premise that a mentor is a role model that explains the rudiments of a task and allows the mentee to accomplish it based on the knowledge already provided. However, mentoring does not involve spoon-feeding a mentee rather, the mentor is acquainted with the intellectual capability of the mentee and positions himself to let that grow.

Fawcett (2000) advocated that for effective mentoring to take place, the mentor possesses a wide range of characteristics to facilitate mentor-mentee relationship. These include; vast knowledge, respect, patience, sense of humor and enthusiasm. Holderied (2007) maintained that although mentoring yields an exciting experience while benefitting both parties involved, it still has some drawbacks:

1. There is lack of designated staff committee or personnel to carry out continuous staff development;
2. New professionals trying to gain experience may not be bold enough to disclose their inabilities and learning needs to their senior counterparts for fear of being laughed at;
3. Some managers may not want to pair staff for mentoring so that he may not be accused of favoritism or suspicion among colleagues.

Parkard (2003) explained that there are different structures of mentoring, and each is better suited to support peculiar functions or desired outcomes. Accordingly, the structure for peer mentoring may spread along psycho-social functions while supervisory mentoring may advance career functions and therefore, a structure that adopted multiple mentorship may yield a broader tutelage than a single structure.

Fine (2011) revealed that collaborative research happens in many ways and is more mutual in some fields than in others, but usually, the goal is to publish the results derived therefrom thus, researchers normally divide the writing into segments to the point of result and then navigate through the research process. This division takes into account areas of individual specialty so that the whole would produce meaningful and authentic information. Rogers (2003) further pointed out that interpersonal linkages among individuals in a social system could influence the communication

flow and promote the adoption and diffusion of innovations in the system. There is an increasing information that, researchers are working in collaborations to address complex research issues.

Again, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are giving incentives for their researchers to take part in international collaborative projects. Funding agencies also favors collaborative research because it can draw diverse expertise, promote creativity and innovation and therefore lead to scientific breakthroughs among professionals. However, only recently has mentoring for research collaboration remained the subject of both empirical and theoretical application as a norm (Woo, Kang, & Martin, 2013).

Apart from the basic benefit where collaboration helps to avoid duplication, Parnami and Bandyopadhyay (2008) outlined the following five benefits:

1. Increase the level of funding available for research;
2. Collaborative research is more likely to be funded;
3. A greater appreciation by researchers and a greater understanding by research users of the relevance of health research through the building of direct relationships between researchers and funders;
4. An increase in the direct contact between the researcher and other funders leading to greater understanding and a cementing of the relationship for future research collaborations;
5. Funds are more likely to be given to a research project with a “track record” already, so it is an incentive to collaborate with one that has already had some success.

Tella, Akinboro and Hammed (2012) also highlighted some benefits of collaborative research to the organization to include:

1. Staff development opportunities, through offering more varied and changing responsibilities;
2. Incentive for accurate activity-based costing, to ensure that the council is accurately reimbursed for its services;
3. Benefits of working within a team environment; and
4. That staff time can be another limited resource, and an increase in involvement with other funders would increase pressure on this resource.

Mentorshikit (2007) had refined the term as a process whereby an experienced, highly regarded, empathic person guides another individual in the examination and development of personal and professional ideas and learning situations. Genoni (2008) in Ozioko, Nwabueze and Igwesi (2004) professed that typically, mentoring relationships are supportive of individual’ learning outcome since they create a safe learning environment that guaranteeing confidentiality and target the learner’s needs, addressing career, psychological. Ozioko, Nwabueze and Igwesi (2004) avowed that it is themes and dimensions that are common in research literature, hence they defined mentoring as a relationship between a more experienced individual who facilitates another as he transits into maturity in a profession.

### **Benefits of Mentoring**

Bilesanmi (2011), quoting Douglas (1997), outlined the welfares and shortcomings /hindrances of mentoring to include:

1. Career advancement of the mentee, personal fulfilment to the mentor and development of managers to the organization, which guarantees continuity and growth of the organization;
2. Personal support to the mentee, assistance on projects to the mentor and increased commitment to the organization. This strengthens symbiotic relationship and peaceful co-existence of staff;

3. Learning and development to the mentee; financial reward to the mentor and cost effectiveness to the organization;
4. Increased confidence to the mentee as well as to the mentor and improved organization (standardization) to the organization;
5. Assistance and feedback to the mentee, revitalized interest to the mentor, and good communication flow to the organization; this would curb grape-vine related coercions.

### **Shortcomings /Hindrances**

1. Lack of organizational support to the organization; neglect to core job to the mentee; lack of time to the mentor;
2. Difficulties in coordinating programs to the organization with organizational initiatives; to the mentee, negative experiences; and to the mentor, lack of perceived benefits;
3. To the organization, creation of a climate of dependence; to the mentee unrealistic experiences; to the mentor, lack of skills needed for the mentoring role;
4. Cost and resources associated with the overseeing and administering programs to the organization; over dependence on the mentoring relationship to the mentee; and to the mentor, pressure to take on mentoring role;
5. To the mentee, role conflict between boss and mentor; and to the mentor, resentment of mentee.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a descriptive research method to describe the current situation of mentoring for collaboration of LIS educators. The population of the study comprised of all (27) Library educators in the University of Calabar Library School under the Faculty of Education and academic Librarians' who have been offered part-time lecturer job at the Department with a minimum of Master's Degree qualification from Assistant Librarians to Professors. This group had been chosen because they constantly conduct research especially based on the "publish or perish" syndrome in Universities today. There was no sampling, but total enumeration was used because the population is minimal. Interview method was used to elicit responds from the educators. The essence was to ensure that all educators were given access to speak concerning mentoring and collaboration.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion of Results**

Data was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages (Tables 1 and 2).

The result in Table 2 indicated that mentoring for collaboration exists among library educators, and tallied with Omotoso and Igiomoh (2012) who pointed out that the need for collaboration became eminent to meetup the current challenges in library and information science sector among developing countries.

#### ***Objective 2: Reasons Why LIS Educators Participate in Mentoring for Collaboration***

Respondents gave the following reasons for their participation in mentoring that yield collaboration:

1. There is a sense of belonging among collaborating members;
2. It's motivational as one has another person to rely on, when in need of help;
3. Reduces time and cost since partners share their resources to achieve a purpose;
4. It shows LIS educators contribution to both technological and economic developments;
5. Holds the interest of participants at heart hence engages their seriousness;
6. Increases educator's abilities for access, gathering and blending diverse perspectives of the professional trend;

Table 1. Demographics

Professional Ranks	Years of Experience				Male	Female
	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40		
Professor	-	-	2	-	-	2
Associate Prof.	-	-	1	-	-	1
Senior librarian	-	1	4	1	6	2
Librarian 1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Librarian 11	6	6	-	1	2	9
Asst. Librarian	2	-	-	-	-	2
Grad Asst.	2	-	-	-	1	1
Total	27				27	

Table 2. Objective 1: Existence and forms of mentoring used for collaboration

No. of Respondents	Yes- It Exists/Percentage (%)	No- Does Not Exist / (%)
27	27(100%)	-
Forms	Frequency	Percentage
Individual mentoring	3	11.11%
Group mentoring	7	25.93%
Peer mentoring	4	14.81%
Role modeling	10	37.04%
Coaching	3	11.11%
Total	27	100%

7. Collaboration provides a realistic context to motivate educational researchers towards how to create and present the results of their researches;
8. Mentoring for collaboration yields consensus decision-making born out of a team spirit and cooperation after much brainstorming and critical thinking;
9. It fosters mutual trust and peaceful co-existence in the work place making easy, the jobs to be done;
10. Kills the spirit of timidity, depression and loneliness among members while making room for guaranteed growth for junior professional;
11. Seeing educators collaborate will also help our undergraduates to imbibe the spirit, prepare early for the challenges the profession brings, and keep them balanced for the future;
12. Collaboration enhances LIS researchers' awareness of how research is valued, assessed and reinforced;
13. It helps to count indigenous researches when compared for global analysis.

The highlights of objective 2 indicated that there are many reasons why LIS educators collaborate and the benefits are a grand foundation for success. This finding tally with the works of Sodipe and Madukoma (2013) who presented mentoring as supplements of professional training of librarians as it promotes skill acquisition for improved performance and success in one's career.

The result in Table 3 indicated that, out of the 25 respondents, 19 had collaborated for the writing of articles 8 times out of every 11 articles, which represented 70.37% of the collaborated publication. 6 respondents had collaborated 6 times out of every 11 counted, representing 22.22% of their publication and 4 respondents had collaborated for writing 2 articles out of every 11 published ones representing 7.41%. The results yielded three (3) partitions hence; the first group, which had the highest percentage, came from the ranks of professors, Associates, senior librarians as well as librarians 1 & 11. The second group involved Assistant librarians, while the last group were Graduate Assistants with 7.41%. This is a clear indication that the younger educators are quickly taught to survive the “publish or perish” syndrome that is in vogue through mentoring for collaboration while gaining the goal of continuity of the profession. The result here confirmed Stamm and Buddebery, Fisher (2011) which showed that mentoring for collaboration has a positive impact on research. This went ahead to confirm the saying that “two can work together when they agree” and mentorship functions in the agreement of the mentor and the mentee.

**Table 3. Objective 3: Results from mentoring for collaboration**

Respondents	Articles	Textbooks	Conferences	Editorship/ Textbooks
Professor	8/11 .2	6	10	6
Ass. Prof	8/11 .1	3	3	2
Sen Librarian	8/11 .7	4	16	-
Librarian 1	8/11 .1	2	-	-
Librarian 11	8/11 .8	3	-	2
Asst Librarian	6/11 .6	1	5	-
Grad. Assistants	4/11 .2	-	3	-

**Objective 4: Challenges Faced During Mentoring for Collaboration**

The challenges highlighted include:

1. Some mentees feel that the mentor wants to control them and they show “cool feet” in the process and this is discouraging to the mentors;
2. Many mentees keep complaining of their inabilities but would want the mentor to accept them as they wish to be, while stacking their time to be publishing and putting the mentees names in every publication; they only want to pay after the mentor had gone through all the rigors of research;
3. Some mentees are not ready to learn fast but because time is not supposed to be delayed since civil service has stipulated years, the mentors try to influence the speed and are accused for being harsh;
4. Some mentors feel they are helping the younger ones hence, would want to put the financial burdens on the mentee with the slogan “after all, they are the ones trying to find their feet”.

The findings of Objective 4, simply tallied with Bilesanmi (2011) who highlighted a lack of organizational support to the organization; neglect to core job to the mentee; lack of time to the mentor. Difficulties in coordinating programs to the organization with organizational initiatives; to the mentee, negative experiences; and to the mentor, lack of perceived benefits. To the mentee, role conflict between boss and mentor; and to the mentor, resentment of mentee among others.

## **CONCLUSION**

From literatures review, mentoring and collaboration involves sharing and partnering which creates opportunity for personal and group's growth and development. This is because it helps the weak to lean on the power of the strong. This causes a lifting up in knowledge, skills, abilities and capabilities. It allows the less knowledgeable to learn from the more knowledgeable to such extent that there is growth in knowledge, and the less knowledgeable begins to stand alone, practicing what had been learnt overtime and he subsequently becomes strong enough to give a helping hand to those behind. However, let the mentors be straightforward in their dealings with the mentees. Trust is the only way that people can work together and accomplish goals regardless of the profession they belong to. It is the easiest way for professional continuity and should never be taken for granted if any profession has to move with times and be useful for the future generation.

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