

Mentorship and Business Performance in Nigeria: The Nexus

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Abstract: *Mentorship is perceived as having a generative influence, ensuring that important legacies, values and beliefs of the profession can be preserved and passed to successive generations. The corporate business world has developed systems of mentoring which are integral to the induction and supported development of new company employees. A business mentoring program will help both mentors and mentees to develop their potential and upgrade their expertise. Nigeria is today faced with people who boycott and absconds from mentorship to start a personal venture and practice with insufficient knowledge and this affect their performance. Modern business mentoring has been identified as a possible panacea to global economic distress, organizational failure and poor business leadership succession plan. The study explores the role of mentorship on business performance in Nigeria and assesses the major dimensions of the mentoring relationship. It concludes that Mentoring is an appropriate form of support, which provides mentees with the possibility to improve their management skills and learn through action with the support business experience. It was recommended that Business organization should take mentorship especially career support, knowledge transfer and psychosocial support seriously because it has a positive effects in improving both employee and business performance*

Keyword: mentorship, business performance, career support, psychosocial support

Background of the Study

In the last decade companies have begun to realize the need to reignite the mentor and mentee relationship, and are going great lengths to formalize this through supportive [policies](#). It is now understood that if organizations invest in smarter nurturing of their talent, it will foster healthy work relationships and business will consequently thrive. In the corporate world, mentoring programs have been found critical for developing, retaining and also for attracting employees. Mentoring is a developmental process in which a more experienced person shares their knowledge with a less experienced person in a specific context through a series of conversations. A business mentoring program will help both mentors and mentees to develop their potential and upgrade their expertise. Mentoring involves a formal or informal developmental partnership where employees receive information, advice, and guidance from an experienced professional, usually within the organization, who has expertise and a strong desire to help others grow in their jobs. Mentoring encompasses coaching, sharing perspectives, and transferring knowledge and wisdom to the mentee(s). The mentor is not a supervisor but a person with whom the employee can communicate freely and honestly without concern about being evaluated. Effective mentoring can be associated with positive work behaviours, improve performance and contribute to succession planning, because those who have been mentored are more likely to become mentors themselves (Stewart & Krueger 1990). Anderson (2013) suggests that good mentors encourage employees to gain knowledge and experience and recognize different learning stages.

Business mentoring has been identified as the foundation for the continuity of business and entrepreneurial philosophy, orientation and innovativeness. Business mentoring arises where someone with more entrepreneurial business experience than a mentee serves as a trusted confidant over an extended period of time, usually free of charge. Business mentors act as a sounding board for business ideas and plans and helps mentee think outside the square. They bring to bear on the mentee their own unique experience of life and business and are willing to share their skills and knowhow with the mentee. Mentors from time-to-time do develop their skills as a teachers, managers, strategists, or consultants (Pollyn & Emeti 2013). The corporate business world has developed systems of mentoring which are integral to the induction and supported development of new company employees. In recent years such practices have spread to the wider community. Aubrey and Cohen (1995), Parsloe (2008), Haggard and Turban (2012) posits that mentoring is most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentored or mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth. As they put it, mentoring is an "empowerment strategy applied to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be". Mentors serve as guides who help mentees to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to career issues. Mentors rely upon having had similar experiences to gain an empathy with the mentee and an understanding of their issues (Pollyn & Emeti 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Organisations need effective and efficient managers and employees to achieve its objectives and cannot succeed without their personnel efforts and better performance. Mentorship programs are aimed at increasing productivity and performance in organizations. Olsen et al (1999) established that in knowledge economy, where the business environment is characterized by

turbulence and complexity, knowledge is the main source of creating both innovation and sustainable competitive advantage. People, however, continue to be the most important component of many organizations. Organizations are in need of consistent professional and personal skill development for mastering the complex issues and changes of the work environment (Dew, Alan, & Tomlinson, 2008). Mentoring has been considered attractive and low cost strategy in the today's organizational complexity in order to enhance and make the workforce skilled (Murray, 2002). Modern business mentoring has been identified as a possible panacea to global economic distress, organizational failure and poor business leadership succession plan (Egwu, 2012), many achievers stand on the shoulders of great men through mentorship but nowadays many youth and business men ignore the directives and guidance of those mentoring them and this result to poor performance in attitude, career and business outfits. It is sad and unfortunate to see people boycott and abscond from mentorship to start a personal venture and practice with insufficient knowledge and lack of proper training and these negatively affect the performance and resources management. It is against this background that the research examined the effects of mentorship on business' performance in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

Specifically the study seek out to explicitly

- 1) examines the role of mentorship on business performance,
- 2) Assess the major dimensions of the mentoring relationship.

Conceptual framework

Mentoring

Mentoring is an old concept that has been practiced in many places, the world over. Cardwell and Carter (1993); Doherty (1999), point out that the tradition of mentoring began with Mentor, a character in Greek Mythology. Mentoring relationship involves exchange of wisdom, learning and development of skills and knowledge about the organization for the protégé's career growth (Akinbobola, 2013). Bilesanmi (2013) posited that mentoring is a set of tailor-made advice and incentive that a more experienced staff, in an innovative way can offer less experienced members in a plethora way and on a range of competencies. Mentoring is a close, developmental relationship between two people in which a partner willingly avails him /herself of the full range of superior experience, knowledge, skills, or status of the other partner in all spheres of human endeavour (Okurame, 2013). Mentoring consist of sharing experience, listening with empathy, developing insight through reflection and professional friendship (Sachdeva, & Malhotra, 2015). Mentoring is a transactional process of transmitting information, advice, support and expertise from an experienced to a less-experienced individual. It is concerns with career enhancement, professional development, building and maintaining a professional network, increasing competence and self-esteem. Over time, the definition of mentorship has evolved, with some theorists suggesting that mentorship must be voluntary relationship of equality, openness, and trust between the mentor and mentee (Coppola et al, 2010). Mentorship further involves motivating and empowering the other person to identify their own issues and goals, and helping them to find ways of resolving or reaching them. According to Colby & Young (2006), mentorship involves a process that brings together the inexperienced and experienced individuals in an attempt to enable the former to gain knowledge, self-confidence, skills as the other benefits from the later as they transit through the process. It is a system of semi-structured guidance where one person or a group of people share their knowledge, skills and experience to assist others to progress in their own lives and careers (Allen, 2007).

Business performance

Didier (2002) believes that the performance consists in "achieving the goals that were given to you in convergence of enterprise orientations". In his opinion, performance is not a mere finding of an outcome, but rather it is the result of a comparison between the outcome and the objective. Business performance may be measured from many perspectives including from the perspectives of Accounting, Marketing and Operations (Neely, 2002). Neely asserts that many metrics can be used to measure business performance including profitability, number of new customers acquired, and revenue turnover. In general, business performance is defined as "the operational ability to satisfy the desires of the company's major shareholders" (Wood, 2006), and it must be assessed to measure an organisation's accomplishment. Regular indicators used in measuring business performance are profit, return on investment (ROI), turnover or number of customers (Wood, 2006).

Role of mentorship on business performance

Employees who are mentored tend to stay longer with the organization, as they feel nurtured and valued, and this builds a desire for them to give back, thereby contributing to the overall success and growth of the company. Schooley, Moore and Vitti (2010), mentoring improve efficiency and encourage professional growth. This is because mentors sharpen their coaching, leadership and communication skills as they advice and motivate their mentees, which they can in turn apply to their day-to-day work. It often reenergizes the mentors by empowering them to come up with new business ideas. Besides, mentoring does increase knowledge and insights about other workers. Mentoring makes it possible for mentors to work with employees of different ages, backgrounds, values, styles of working and professional expertise. The established contact breaks down barriers and gives mentees other

information about other areas of business venture. Fresh perspective on performance is acquired by both the mentor and mentee. This is achieved when mentees' question compel the mentor to re-examine his advice, take a critical look at how he has performed as a leader, and possibly consider areas in his operation to adjust for improvement. Mentees gain more self confidence from mentoring and get advancement in their aspiration. The outcome of a successful mentoring process is the emergence of successors and a sense of fulfilment leading to the sustainability of the firm's competitive position. The modern trend to the successful running of a business is innovation and this is the heart of entrepreneurship. (Mathewman et al 2012) established that mentorship has a large number of outcomes for the mentor, the protégé and the organization. Protégé outcomes include career advancement, success and satisfaction whilst mentors can benefit from increased promotion rates, rejuvenation and the acquisition of useful information. Furthermore, organizational outcomes include increased employee motivation, better job performance and increased competitive advantage. (Clutterbuck et al 2012) found out that mentorship has the net effect of enhancing the competence of mentee; provide psychological support, motivation and job satisfaction which enhances performance not only for the employee but the organization as a whole which may translate into a competitive advantage position to the organization. According to Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010) for firm performance, the most influential factors are skills, technical understanding, and both psychological and behavioral features.

The self image of mentee can be enhanced by psychological support with the help of ensuring the desired behaviors which help in the development of mentee's moral outlook, capability of leadership, professional identity, and the efficacy of taking risk, personal competence and confidence level (St Jean & Tremblay, 2012). Mentoring has so many roles related to mentee and organizational performance directly and indirectly by transferring information and knowledge assembles through many years of experience. Mentoring has positive effects on organizations such as, mentoring reduced labor and training costs, help in managing talent, reduced staff turnover and improved retention rates (Rockoff, 2008), help in disseminating business values and developing the culture, improved business stability, improved morale, motivation and relationships, improved succession planning, improved job creation and business performance, provided cost efficient enhancement, enhanced productivity, encouraging older managers, enhanced flow of information and communication, improving business learning. Askari et al., 2015 in Muzaffar, Abdul, Mohd 2016 assert that mentoring programme as related to mentees in business organizations increased productivity, opportunity of career and making advancement, enhancement of skill and knowledge, more confident, enhancement in the satisfaction of job, wellbeing, and motivation, decision making skills, abilities of leadership, developing leaders, making understanding related to product, customer, policies and politics, enhancement of creativity and innovation, and encouraging taking positive risk.

Dimensions of the mentoring relationship

The two major dimensions of the mentoring relationship according to Kram (1983) in Muzaffar, Abdul & Mohd (2016) are :

Career support function: Career functions are directly related to assisting the mentee with career advancement. These functions include providing a mentee with opportunities for increased exposure and visibility within an organization, sponsorship, coaching, exposure to important contacts and resources, facilitating protection of the mentee and challenging assignments to enhance the protégé's career these functions are helpful in increasing the performance (St Jean, & Audet, 2012).

Psychosocial support functions: focus more on the personal aspects of the mentee that influence the mentee self image and competence. Mentors providing psychosocial functions usually have an emotional bond with the mentee and provide role modeling, counseling, friendship, acceptance and confirmation (Clutterbuck, 2004). In addition, Craig et al. (2013) suggested that these two functions of mentoring can influence employees to experience other beneficial organizational outcomes. Psychosocial was viewed as what a mentor does to help the mentee develop a sense of competence and effectiveness. This act makes people feel understood and accepted by each other because everyone's view is listened to, even if it is in a minority. Participants are thus perceived to have a 'we are together' attitude. The approach is consistent with works Adamson, Moore and Wang (2017) and kraiger et al (2018). Confidence, effectiveness and competence are often enhanced by participation in mentoring relationships that function to meet the career and psychosocial needs of the mentee.

Conclusion

Mentoring is an appropriate form of support, which provides mentees with the possibility to improve their management skills and learn through action with the support business experience. A business mentoring program will help both mentors and mentees to develop their potential and upgrade their expertise. Effective mentoring can be associated with positive work behaviours, improve performance and contribute to succession planning, because those who have been mentored are more likely to become mentors themselves

Recommendations

The following recommendations are pertinent in improving mentorship and business performance in Nigeria.

1. Business organization whether small, medium and large, should take mentorship especially career support, knowledge transfer and psychosocial support seriously because it has a positive effects in improving both employee and business performance.

2. Government should organize mentorship programme for youth and business men, the mentoring will expose, the viability of the business they want to venture, enable them develop a business plan which will aid in starting a business. It will also help the business people/ entrepreneurs to know how best to improve their business, manage the challenges and take advantage of the opportunity around them.

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