

Full Length Research Paper

Academic mentorship leadership practice and productivity of academics in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria

Patience Okoro*, Nelson Ejiro Akpotu and Romina Ifeoma Asiyai

Department of Educational Management and Foundations, Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria.

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The study explores the relationship between academic mentorship and the productivity of academics in universities. Two questions and a hypothesis were raised to guide the study. The research design employed ex-post-facto methodology with a population of 3,492 academic staff. The stratified random sampling technique was used to determine the sample size of 676 academics. The questionnaire served as the main instrument for data collection. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.97 and the data collected were analyzed using SPSS. The analysis results indicated that the level of academic mentorship leadership practice exhibited in public universities in Delta and Edo States was low, and the academics showed a low level of productivity in research. Overall, the results showed a significant relationship between academic mentorship leadership practice and productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. Based on these findings, it is recommended that academic mentoring be emphasized, particularly in the area of research productivity, to enhance the overall research output of academics.

Key words: Mentorship, academics, leadership, productivity, public universities.

INTRODUCTION

The word mentoring is used to describe the actions of attending, relating, listening, trusting, and cooperating by which the mentee who is regarded as someone in need of help and support is assigned to an intellectual and well-informed person who can officially and positively give guidance and assistance. Mentoring according to Mathipa and Matlabe (2016) is a rapport between a more experienced older adult and a different less experienced younger adult. This rapport involves the provision of ongoing guidance, teaching, and reinforcement targeted at

enhancing the capability and character of the younger adult. Mentorship is a dynamic and multifaceted process that involves the transfer of knowledge, skills, and experience from an experienced individual to a less experienced individual, to support their personal and professional development (Allen et al., 2008). It is a relationship based on trust, mutual respect, and open communication, and it typically involves ongoing support and guidance over an extended period. A mentor shares their knowledge, skills, and expertise, as well as provides

*Corresponding author. E-mail: okoro.patience@delsu.edu.ng. ajlpatience@gmail.com.

feedback, encouragement, and advice to help the mentee grow and develop in their chosen field or area of interest. In the university system, the academic leadership practice of mentorship is a novelty way of empowering and improving the qualities of lecturers.

Haggard et al. (2011) view academic mentoring as a one-on-one give-and-take relationship between a knowledgeable and experienced lecturer referred to as the mentor and another less knowledgeable and experienced lecturer who is regarded as the mentee. The relationship is marked by continuous interaction and collaboration to facilitate the development of the mentee (Haggard et al., 2011). A mentor is a term used to refer to someone responsible for inculcating knowledge and sharing his or her experience with colleagues or students who are less skilled and experienced. A mentor aids, supports, and provides leadership to another known as the mentee. Academic mentorship according to Ekechukwu and Horsfall (2015) is the act of coaching less experienced lecturer so that he or she can as well grow or be productive. Lee et al. (2015) sees it as a nurturing practice where someone with more experience and skills acts as a role model, coaches, sponsors, befriends, counsels, and inspires a less experienced and skilled person intending to advance the career and personal development of the latter. The academic leadership practice of mentorship in institutions of higher learning is aimed at supporting the career development of lecturers in the profession and promoting excellence in teaching and learning, research, and academic leadership. The academic leadership practice of mentoring is aimed at ensuring the development of the strength of the younger lecturer by pairing him or her with a more knowledgeable volunteer who will act as an encouraging role model. The academic leadership practice of mentorship is targeted towards building confidence and competency and developing flexibility and personality of younger lecturers. It helps to bring the younger lecturers to greater heights in the profession. As pointed out by Mathipa and Matlabe (2016), academic mentors are there to make provision for young lecturers with career-improving functions including sponsorship, tutoring, facilitating, disclosure and visibility, and presenting challenging jobs. This will enable the young adult to set up roles in the institution, study the roles, and get set for advancement. Lee et al. (2015) in their study found that academic practice that promotes collaboration and mutual support aiming at having shared benefit and advancement is indispensable to the success of lecturers. In general, academic mentoring is confidential and optional and is a relationship built on mutual respect and trust (Rosemary et al., 2015).

Across academic settings, mentoring is one of the contributing factors to career fulfillment and enhanced departmental or institutional morale (Hart, 2009; Okoro et al., 2023). Lecturers who are mentored expressed increased professional uniqueness and had smoother cross-over from the training level to the scholastic

environment (Hart, 2009). For instance, according to Turnbull (2010), a beginner lecturer may fully assume an academic role and be more productive when he or she is officially mentored by an academician who is more skilled and experienced. Additionally, according to Sambunjak et al. (2006), mentored lecturers expressed augmented self-assurance, confidence, and professional growth or development. Several researchers affirmed that institutions that sponsor or promote mentoring programs experienced enhanced retention rates (Piercy et al., 2005; Smith and Zsohar, 2007; Hart, 2009; Okoro et al., 2023) and enhanced productivity in the place of work (Hart, 2009; Sambunjak et al., 2006; Asiyai, 2017; Patience, 2023; Okoro and Akpotu, 2023). Often, some lecturers assume scholastic roles without a comprehensible idea of the entire range of their duties, or how these responsibilities can be achieved at a level of being regarded as productive lecturers or academicians. Some other lecturers work with the misunderstanding that the primary duty of academicians is teaching. Mentoring relationships can enable lecturers to comprehend the complex roles of being a lecturer, which enhances attaining success in teaching, research, and service. Research reveals that there is no satisfactory progress in the career of lecturers without mentors when compared to the ones with mentors (Turnbull, 2010; Sambunjak et al., 2006). Chitsamatanga et al. (2018) examined the perceptions of female lecturers on academic mentorship in universities to promoting of career development. Their study showed that the presence of mentoring in the universities is theoretical and the practical aspect seems to be limited by old approaches. Also, there is an overall deficiency of interest, knowledge, and unawareness from lecturers on mentorship and interaction. The perceptions of female lecturers on mentoring and interacting in the universities are still been influenced by gender. According to them, there is a lack of female role models in universities which has led to disintegration, isolation, and arrogance in the system. They therefore concluded that there should be formal and continued female lecturers' mentorship and also universities must stare beyond sex on the issues of mentorship. The study of Banja et al. (2018) revealed that mentorship is seen by senior and junior academics as an important factor in the career development of beginner lecturers. Their findings also revealed the nonexistence of a mentorship policy for beginner lecturers; senior lecturers' unconcerned attitudes and some junior lecturers' unwillingness to be mentored affect the mentorship of beginner lecturers negatively.

Mentorship has been found to have a positive impact on staff productivity in various studies. A study by Scandura and Williams (2004) examined the impact of mentoring on career outcomes, including productivity. The study found that mentoring had a positive impact on career outcomes, including productivity. A meta-analysis by Eby et al. (2013) examined the impact of mentoring programs on various outcomes, including productivity. The analysis included 46

studies and found that mentoring programs had a significant positive effect on productivity. Onyemaechi and Ikpeazu (2019) investigated academic mentorship on the productivity of lecturers. Using a population of 396 junior lecturers at State University in Abia, Nigeria, the study administered a questionnaire to 199 sampled lecturers. Onyemaechi and Ikpeazu goal was to find out the correlation between the transfer of knowledge of academic leadership practice of mentoring and junior lecturers' career growth. The outcome of their study showed an affirmative and significant correlation between the transfer of knowledge through academic mentoring and junior lecturer's career growth.

Onyemaechi and Ikpeazu (2019) concluded based on their findings that academic leadership practice of mentoring impacts the productivity or performance of lecturers. Ekpoh and Ukot (2019) examined the correlation between mentorship practices and the teaching productivity of lecturers in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study uses a population of one thousand, one hundred and forty-nine lecturers, out of which two hundred were sampled. Their study revealed that mentoring in research and the academic relationship between the mentor and mentee significantly connect to the effectiveness concerning lesson delivery, instruction technique and assessment of students. Owan et al. (2022) carried out a study on mentorship academic leadership practices and young lecturers' research productivity.

Seven hundred and twenty-three young lecturers from nineteen universities in South-South Nigeria were used as the study population and the questionnaire was used to elicit information from the entire population. Their results showed that mentorship academic leadership practices contribute significantly to young lecturers' research productivity. The mentoring academic leadership practices of University leaders are to be strengthened to enhance the research capacities of young lecturers. The study of Arkaifie and Owusu-Acheampong (2019) assesses the academic leadership practice of mentorship on freshly employed academic staff in higher institutions in Cape Coast, Ghana. The sample of ninety-seven junior lecturers and ten academic leaders was randomly selected for the study and the method used to elicit information from them was through the use of a questionnaire and interview. The result of the study showed a positive effect of the academic leadership practice of mentorship on the work and individual lives of those being mentored. The study also showed that young lecturers were able through their academic leadership mentorship support, to publish more articles, improve lecturing skills, develop cordial rapport with co-lecturers and develop a positive lifestyle.

Pepple (2019) investigated the development of human capital as a means of lecturers' productivity in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The population of the study comprises two thousand, four hundred and ten lecturers in three universities in Rivers State. Two hundred and fourteen lecturers were randomly selected and the

questionnaire was used as the major instrument for data gathering. The findings from the study showed that the academic leadership practice of mentorship enabled those academically mentored to be acquainted with their academic responsibilities; also academically mentored lecturers are assisted by their academic mentors to be conversant with certain values needed for some aspects of their work; also, mentorship help to lessen the amount of errors that would have been made by non-mentored lecturers. Another study carried out by Sola (2018) examined the effect of mentorship on the professional development of lecturers in Nigerian universities. A total of one hundred and sixty lecturers were sampled. The study showed that the mentorship practices that exist in Nigerian universities are mainly informal. However, it has a significant effect on the professional development of lecturers. However, the study showed that mentoring has not been beneficial to most lecturers owing to the issues embedded in it. Ameh et al. (2021) discovered through their study that the contribution of mentorship to the research output of lecturers is insignificantly negative; it only enhances lecturers' research productivity if it is followed by a good institutional culture and collaboration practices. The study of Umoh and Etudor-Eyo (2020) investigated the impact of the gender mentorship relationship on the job productivity of lecturers in institutions of higher learning in Akwa Ibom State. A total of two thousand, six hundred and fifty lecturers were used as the study's population out of which five hundred and thirty lecturers were sampled. The findings revealed that the job productivity of lecturers significantly differs based on gender mentorship relationships in universities. It is therefore imperative for both male and female academic leaders to adopt the mentorship academic practice to enhance the productivity of younger lecturers. Tan and Main's (2021) study pointed out that male and female lecturers' agreement on having formal or informal mentors is related, however, mentorship does not seem to be related to increased or augmented productivity. Emenyonu et al. (2020) studies on the impact of mentoring on the job productivity of lecturers showed that mentorship had a significant impact on lecturers' job productivity.

Also, Abugre and Kpinpua's (2017) study on academic mentorship in Ghana revealed that academic mentorship practice in Ghana's universities was very low. Though, it was shown through the study, that there is a strong non-negative mentorship connection between the senior lecturers and the younger lecturers.

The study of Reid et al. (2012) showed that the shortage of mentorship was related to the inability to publish scholarly articles and that mentorship helps in the improvement of lecturers' productivity. Gee and Popper (2017) pointed out that in the mentor-and-mentee relationship, mentors should be sincerely concerned about the long-term attainment of the potential of those being mentored. Mentors should be ready by all means to ensure the success of mentees at any time. True mentorship

is just about being selfless; conversely, mentees should be ready to be pushed, challenged and assessed at every stage. He or she must recognize and regard the mentor's efforts to enable him or her to excel. This will serve as a strong motivator to work hard and provide mentors with feedback. Yusuf (2011) carried out a study to discover the number of annually published papers by library science lecturers. The study was targeted to find out if these librarians had mentors and their views as to how their research productivity has been impacted by these mentors. Sixty-six library science lecturers were sampled from four universities in South-West Nigeria. The participants affirmed that mentoring positively had an impact on their research productivity. Their only challenge was the lack of ability to conceptualize research topics and their routine tasks. Idubor and Adekunle (2022) carried out a study to examine the challenges of mentoring as it relates to mentors and mentees in Nigerian universities. The population of the study comprises all lecturers in three arbitrarily chosen universities in Edo State. The study revealed that the prominent challenges in mentorship include unfair treatment, on-the-spot satisfaction, work-life imbalance, gender-based prejudice and disrespect. Idubor and Adekunle (2022) therefore recommended that a harmonious atmosphere where academic leaders will strive for the development of junior lecturers should be promoted by universities for the progress of the system. Mentors can provide mentees with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to perform their job roles effectively, which in turn can increase their productivity. Furthermore, mentorship can help employees feel more engaged, motivated, and committed to their work, which can lead to increased productivity and performance. In this context, it is important to note that mentorship is not a one-size-fits-all solution. The effectiveness of mentorship programs depends on a variety of factors, including the match between the mentor and mentee, the goals of the program, and the level of support provided by the organization.

Mentorship is an essential tool for enhancing staff productivity and career development. By providing employees with the necessary support and guidance, mentorship programs can help organizations develop a more engaged, motivated, and productive workforce (Allen et al., 2006).

Despite the recognized importance of mentorship in the academic development of junior academics, there is a lack of research addressing the specific impact of academic mentorship leadership practices on the productivity of junior lecturers in public universities. While mentorship is widely acknowledged as a crucial component for professional growth and success in the academic world, there is a gap in understanding how specific leadership practices within the mentorship framework contribute to the overall productivity of junior lecturers. This gap is particularly evident in the context of public universities, where unique institutional dynamics and resource

constraints may influence the effectiveness of mentorship programs. The lack of clarity regarding the relationship between academic mentorship leadership practices and the productivity of junior academics poses a significant challenge for both educators and administrators in public universities. The study therefore aimed to find the relationship between academic mentorship leadership practices and the productivity of junior academics in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.

Research questions

- 1) What is the level of academic mentorship leadership practice in state and federal universities in Delta and Edo States?
- 2) What is the level of productivity of junior academics in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

- 1) There is no significant relationship between academic mentorship leadership practice and the productivity of junior academics in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed an *ex-post-facto* design, with a population comprising 3,492 academic staff from five government-owned universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. The sample size consisted of 676 academic staff from two federal and two state universities in Delta and Edo States, respectively. Out of these, 301 were academic leaders (senior lecturers and above), while 375 were junior lecturers. The sample size represented 20% of the entire academic staff population in Delta and Edo States, including both federal and state universities. The stratified random sampling technique was utilized to determine the sample size, involving the grouping of academic staff into strata such as senior lecturers (professors, associate professors, and senior lecturers), and junior lecturers. The percentage used to determine the total sample size was obtained by cutting ten sheets of paper and writing percentages ranging from 10 to 100% on each, that is, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, and so on up to 100%. These sheets were then folded and placed into a container with a cover. The container was thoroughly shaken, and one of the folded papers was randomly selected. The research instrument utilized was the questionnaire titled "Academic Mentorship Leadership Practices and Productivity Questionnaire (AMLPPQ)". The questionnaire was structured into two sections, A and B. Section A focused on "Academic Mentorship Leadership Practices" and was responded to by junior academics. In this section, respondents were required to indicate the various forms of academic mentorship leadership practices adopted by their senior colleagues, who were regarded as the academic leaders in the study. Section B focused on "Level of Productivity." In this section, the questionnaire comprised eighteen questions covering productivity in teaching, research, and community service. Senior academics indicated their perceptions regarding the productivity of junior academics in teaching and community service, while junior academics were required to indicate their research productivity. The items in sections A and B were

Table 1. The level of academic mentorship leadership practice in state and federal universities in Delta and Edo States.

Academic mentorship leadership practice						
Federal-owned Universities		State-owned Universities		Public Universities in Delta and Edo States		Remark
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
2.6603	0.45761	2.7194	0.73620	2.6899	0.61902	Agree

Source: Fieldwork (2022).

Table 2. The level of the productivity of lecturers in public universities in Delta and Edo States?

level of the productivity of academics	Federal government owned universities		State government-owned universities		Federal and state universities	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Teaching	3.1647	1.03086	2.9148	39335	3.0108	0.71772
Research	1.9396	0.91213	2.3652	1.68505	2.1671	1.39403
Community Service	2.7197	0.46786	2.6153	0.37334	2.6554	0.41431

Source: Fieldwork (2022).

Table 3. Significant relationship between academic mentorship leadership practice and the productivity of academics in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	P-value	Remark
Academic mentorship leadership practice Productivity	494	0.237	0.0675	6.75	0.028	Significant

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Fieldwork (2022).

measured based on a four-point rating scale of 1 to 4. The research instrument demonstrated face and content validity with a reliability coefficient of 0.97. Out of 676 questionnaires distributed to participants, 494 were successfully retrieved. The data gathered were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the research question, with the acceptable benchmark for the mean score set at 2.50. The hypothesis was tested using regression analysis at a significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Table 1 revealed that academic mentorship leadership practice was exhibited more in state-owned universities as compared to federally-owned universities in Delta and Edo state.

The result in Table 2 showed that the productivity of academics in federal universities in Delta and Edo States was 3.1647 for teaching, 2.7197 for community service, and 1.9396 for research. This meant that the productivity of academics in federal-owned universities in Delta and Edo States was highest in teaching, higher in community service, and low in research.

On the other hand, the productivity of academics in state universities in Delta and Edo States was 2.3652 for

research, 2.9148 for teaching, and 2.6153 for community service. The result revealed that academics in state-owned universities in Delta and Edo were very productive in teaching followed by community service and then in research (Table 2). The productivity of junior academics was low in research in both state and federal universities in Delta and Edo states respectively.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis concerns the significant relationship between academic mentorship leadership practice and the productivity of academics in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria, as depicted in Table 3.

DISCUSSION

The result in Table 1 showed that AMLP was exhibited in state-owned universities with a total mean of 2.7194 and 2.6603 in federally-owned universities. In both federal and state universities, the result obtained showed a mean of 2.6891, implying that the level of academic mentorship

exhibited by senior academics was low. This low result was one of the reasons some junior academics are unable to fully understand the demands of the job, effectively conduct research, and fully take part in institutional activities. This finding was in concordance with the study of Chitsamatanga et al. (2018) that there was an overall deficiency of interest and knowledge from lecturers on academic mentorship.

Chitsamatanga et al. (2018) further advocated for gender-inclusive mentorship practices in universities. The findings regarding Academic Mentorship Leadership Practices (AMLPL) in this study align with the perspective of other researchers, indicating that academics without mentors experience slower career progress compared to those with mentors (Turnbull, 2010; Sambunjak et al., 2006). Additionally, Banja et al. (2018) highlighted the absence of mentoring policies for junior academics and the indifferent attitudes of senior academics towards mentorship. Banja et al. (2018) also noted that junior academics are often reluctant to seek mentorship, which has adversely affected their development.

The result in Table 2 showed that the productivity of junior academics in federal universities in Delta and Edo States was 3.01647 for teaching, 2.7197 for community service, and 1.9396 for research. This meant that the productivity of junior academics in federal-owned universities in Delta and Edo States was highest in teaching, moderate in community service, and low in research. On the other hand, the productivity of junior academics in state universities in Delta and Edo States was 2.3652 for research, 2.9148 for teaching, and 2.6153 for community service. The result revealed that academics in state-owned universities in Delta and Edo were not productive in research but showed higher productivity in teaching and moderate in community service. Overall, the total mean scores for the productivity of junior academics in public (federal and state) universities in Delta and Edo States was 3.0108 for teaching, 2.6554 for community service, and 2.1671 for research. This meant that junior academics in state and federal universities in Delta and Edo States showed high levels of productivity first in teaching, moderate productivity in community service and very low productivity in research. Hypothesis of the study focuses on finding the significant relationship between academic mentorship leadership practice and productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States. The outcome of the results was: r -value = 0.237, r^2 = 0.0675, $r^2\%$ = 6.75 and p -value = 0.028 < 0.05 (Table 3). The above result revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between academic mentorship leadership practice and productivity. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant relationship exists between academic mentorship leadership practice and productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo was rejected and the alternative was retained, therefore, it was concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between academic mentorship leadership practice, job commitment,

and productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo. The result showed that academic mentorship leadership practice contributed 6.75% to the relationship (Table 3). The more senior academics exhibit their mentorship leadership, the higher the productivity of the junior academics under them.

In support of the findings, the study by Gbarage (2020) revealed that academic mentoring brings about commitment as academic trust is being secured. Gbarage (2020) further explained that giving responsibilities to junior academics showed the degree of confidence their academic leaders have in them. The reality of this will boost the morale of the junior academics and ultimately the enhancement of their commitment to the job. Owan et al. (2022) stated academic mentorship positively and significantly contributes to the research productivity of junior academics. Arkaifie and Acheampong (2019) stated that academic mentorship positively impacts the life of mentees. And that junior academics through academic mentorship support became more productive in research, and teaching, showed cordiality with colleagues, and develop an optimistic attitude. Pepple (2019) also stated that academic mentorship enables junior academics to be familiar with their academic duties, understand the job values, and reduce the number of blunders.

However, the finding was not in agreement with Ojeaga (2019) in whose opinion academic mentorship practices do not influence the career commitment of lecturers. Abodunde (2018) revealed that academic mentorship practices in universities in Nigeria are informal and that junior academics affirm that academic mentorship does not positively impact them. In the same vein, Ameh et al. (2021) stated that academic mentorship negatively impacts research output and that lecturers' research output is only improved when academic leadership is backed up with good institutional formal mentorship culture and collaboration practices. Still concerning the findings of this study, Abugre and Kpinpuo (2017) stated that there was low academic mentorship practice exhibited in Ghana's universities. Supporting further, Reid et al. (2012) stated that low academic mentorship was related to poor research output. Corroborating further Also, Gwavuya (2011) stated that poor output and low commitment of teaching staff in Zimbabwe universities were a result of incompetent leadership while Gee and Popper (2017) stated that academic mentors should show genuine concern for the long-term achievement of mentees.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, academic mentorship has a significant impact on the productivity of academics. An academic mentor can provide guidance, support, and valuable feedback that can help a mentee develop new skills, improve performance, and achieve their goals. When a lecturer has access to academic mentors who can help

them navigate their career paths, they are more likely to feel valued and supported in their roles. This, in turn, can lead to increased productivity, as lecturers are more motivated to contribute to the success of their institutions. However, the result of the study showed that the academic mentorship leadership practice exhibited in public universities in Delta and Edo was low. This may be the reason why the staff productivity in research was low. Based on this, it was recommended that focus should be directed on the research productivity of academics.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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