

MENTORING AND SUCCESSION OF ADMINISTRATORS: CRITICAL ISSUES IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract. Studies have shown that the quality of outcome in Nigerian secondary schools is declining at an alarming rate due to shortage of required resources as well as leadership challenges. The challenges have been observed to be as a result of lack of mentoring which is not a common practice in school management in Nigeria. Consequently, this study investigated the extent to which mentoring as a strategy for administrators' succession plan impacts on the performance of their duties in public and private secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and administered a 25-item self-constructed questionnaire on participants. A total of 530 participants were randomly selected from the population of 4,350 senior teachers. The Participants were drawn from 145 secondary schools (91 public and 54 registered private) in Education District IV of Lagos State. The findings showed that mentoring has significant impact on administrators' succession planning and that succession planning does not significantly differ in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State. The study concluded that

leadership development is a critical factor in secondary school effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, serving administrators as well as prospective administrators should be regularly evaluated to determine their training needs at different career stages. There should also be mentoring related policies to enhance the managerial skills, sense of competence and effectiveness of the prospective administrators.

Keywords: mentoring, succession planning, coaching, skill enhancement, self-efficacy, leadership effectiveness

Introduction and background

The Nigerian society today is faced with the challenge of sustained effective leadership in all her sectors like other developing countries. The education sector, like any other sector of the economy, is yearning for urgent and adequate attention. This is because education plays an imperative role in the development of any society. It does not only reduce the level of illiteracy but also aids economic development. Human resource management in education is becoming a focal point of discourse among educational planners, policymakers and researchers. Manpower requirements have been referred to as clearly evident needs for persons with particular education, training and experience (Arikewuyo, 2009). The management of educational institutions thus need adequately skilled and experienced individuals. This is in recognition of the fact that the day-to-day management of human, financial, material and information technology in educational institutions for the attainment of the goals of educational programmes rest on the school head. Human resource management function in education is the responsibility of the Personnel Management Department in the Ministry of Education. The appointment and preparation of principals are part of its functions. However, the promotion of teachers to the post of a principal is simply based on their number of years in service, faulty appointment procedures and the politicisation of the industry where un-

qualified teachers are promoted to become School Principals have produced a number of ill-equipped and novice principals in the public secondary schools. Ng (2013) in a World Bank study found that most teachers agreed that to become principals, they have to work hard and be disciplined in order to prove their abilities. The teachers noted that it was helpful to be in another position of responsibility, such as head of department, before applying to be head teacher. Teachers also agreed that they need to pursue further studies to be qualified to manage a school. These however suggest that the process by which principals are selected is not based on qualification to administer a school and tutelage under experienced administrators, but rather they are selected based on prior positions held or their performances as teachers. This thus reaffirms the position that teaching experience, rather than professional qualification and competence are currently being used in promoting teachers to managerial positions in Nigeria and many other African countries. Alimi et al. (2011) in their study of teachers' perception of principals' leadership effectiveness recommended that since the principals of public secondary schools are perceived to be less effective than principals of private secondary schools in school leadership, appointment as principal should not be based on seniority alone but also on capability as a change agent to influence others through collaborative problem solving strategies with students, staff, community and stakeholders.

Succession planning and management is becoming one of the most crucial issues in organizations, owing to the challenging nature of leadership positions. Mentoring has a major role to play in making succession planning deliver real value for organizations. It creates or supports conversations about careers and personal ambition that are difficult to encompass elsewhere. It opens horizons, by helping people recognise options they had not previously considered and raising the level of their ambition. Fundamental to the succession management process is an underlying philosophy that argues that top tal-

ent in the organisations must be managed for the greater good.¹⁾ The fact remains that quality leadership is not a function of academic intelligence alone, but also of hands-on experiences through continued exposure to social, economic, political and geographic features of the school, which the classroom experience is never a substitute. In recognition of its importance, countries like Hong Kong (Ng, 2013), United Kingdom,²⁾ Mexico (Slater, 2008) and South Africa (Hall, 2008) are beginning to incorporate mentoring into succession planning and principal preparation programmes aimed at developing leaders of educational institutions now and in the future. Apart from private school proprietors who for their business interest practice a somewhat informal mentoring, the practice of mentoring as principal preparation programmes is still alien to most African countries, specifically Nigeria, where principalship is a challenging task and so much is still needed to be done to improve teaching and learning.

Mentoring is a powerful personal development and empowerment tool. It is an effective way of helping people to progress in their careers and is becoming increasingly popular as its potential is realised. It is a partnership between two people (mentor and mentee) normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences. It is a form of helping relationship based upon mutual trust and respect because of psychological support provided the mentee by the mentor. Mentoring programmes are good tools to help develop an organization's long-term management success, because today's executive may be effective but if there are no employees moving up in the organization to replace them, there will be disruptive, if not very costly, gaps in the future.

The incorporation of the practice of mentoring into the educational system especially in succession planning in secondary schools, would manifest in new principal's motivation for job performance, creativity, and the acceptance of responsibility with confidence, bring employees together to establish a network of professionals within the organization (Koontz et al., 1980;

Mitchell, 1982). This is because succession planning and mentoring go hand-in-hand. Succession planning involves identifying employees within the organization who possess the skills necessary to move into positions of greater responsibility. Murray (2001) says that if the organization is knowledge and skills based, one should consider implementing a succession planning programme.

Principalship and secondary school administration in Nigeria

The headship of secondary schools in Nigeria is usually a product of the teaching force. Teachers, who have spent a minimum of ten years in service are usually appointed as principals and vice principals of secondary schools. Sometimes, two vice principals; one for administration and the other for academic are appointed for bigger schools. Thus, years of experience remain the major yardstick for appointment into the position of principals (Obilade, 1986; Akinola & Adebakin, 2016). Up till now, the secondary school system does not take administrative qualification and criteria into consideration for appointment into leadership positions in schools.

Over the years, heads of secondary schools in Nigeria have been accused of various lapses and offences. They are said to be inefficient and accused of failing to provide direction and adequate leadership for their schools. The falling standard of education in the schools has also been attributed to the inefficiency of the principals (Arikewuyo, 2009). Arikewuyo (2009) further opined that all these inefficiencies, lapses and ineptitude on the part of secondary school principals in Nigeria are often attributed to their lack of professional training, as they do not possess the necessary managerial qualifications and skills needed to administer the schools.

Principalship involves the control of human and materials resources of the school. The administrative and academic head of every secondary school in Nigeria is the Principal, who is regarded as the Chief Executive and respon-

sible for all that happens in the school. Arikewuyo (1999) viewed the functions of the principal as follows:

[P]roviding leadership for curriculum development; providing leadership for instruction improvement; creating an environment conducive for the realization of human potentials; influencing the behaviour of staff members; and supervising instructional activities in the school system (p.70).

The functions of the Principal according to the Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) are to: Manage and deploy school resources efficiently; allocate school accommodation appropriately; ensure satisfactory standards of maintenance and cleanliness of school facilities; organize staff development in school; guide curriculum implementation and change; manage the developmental appraisal system, whole school evaluation and new integrated quality management system; create a professional ethos within the school by involving staff members in decision making, and manage restructuring and redeployment of teachers. These functions were grouped into six by Wong & Ng (2003) as: pupil personnel; staff personnel; community-school relationship; instruction and curriculum development; school finance and business management; School plant and general task.

Wong & Ng (2003) submitted that principals are to demonstrate his/her ability to lead through professional knowledge; organizational and administrative competence; ability to work out a good school policy and put it into effect; skill in the delegation of authority; ability to understand the professional problems of teachers, and give professional guidance; and ability to establish good working relationships with staff and parents. Meanwhile, Hall (2008) and Stroud (2005) identified three basic skills upon which, in his opin-

ion, effective performance and successful administration rest. The basic skills are identified as technical, human and conceptual.

Technical skill refers to the proficiency or ability to use the tools, methods, processes, procedures and techniques of a specialized field (in this case, education) to perform specific tasks. The school administrator needs enough technical skill to be able to accomplish the mechanics of the job he/she is responsible for. *Human skill* refers to interpersonal skills. It is the school administrator's ability to work effectively with, and through other people on a one-to-one basis and in a group setting. It requires an understanding of one's self and group dynamics, and the ability to motivate other people either as individuals or groups. *Conceptual skill* is directly associated with knowledge because in order to conceptualize, an individual must possess or have access to a wealth of cognitive and organized information (Stroud, 2005). Conceptual skill refers to the mental ability to coordinate and integrate the entire interests and activities of the organization and, more importantly, it also refers to the ability to apply information and concepts in practice. Generally, this involves the school administrator's ability to see the organization, i.e.; the school, the school community and the educational programme as a whole and understand how the various parts of the organization depend on one another and how a change in any of them can affect the whole system. These skills are said to be essential to successful administration, their relative importance depends on the level of administrative responsibility.

However, there are three major mechanisms that facilitate the acquisition of administrative competence and skills (Aubrey & Cohen, 1995). These are: education (which involves undertaking undergraduate and graduate studies); experience (which involves exposure to a variety of situations, problems and demands. It entails maturity on the job) and a mentor-mentee relationship (involves a young administrator learning a set of administrative skills by observing, working with and relating to a more seasoned higher administrator).

Concept of mentoring

Mentoring is most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth. Kram (2001) sees mentoring as a developmental relationship between more experienced professional (mentor), and a less experienced partner, referred to as protégé. According to Flaxman (2002) mentoring is derived from a Greek word, meaning 'enduring', and therefore defined it as a sustained relationship between the experienced professional or adult and less experienced professional or youth. Through continued involvement, the experienced professional or adult offer supports, guidance and assistance as the less experienced or younger colleagues go through a difficult period, faces new challenges or works to correct earlier problems on the job. In a nutshell, mentoring is an intentional process; a nurturing process that fosters the development of the protégé towards his full potential and is an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the beneficiary.

Mentoring relationships could be viewed from two perspectives, namely formal and informal. Formal mentoring refers to a structured process supported by the organisation and addressed to target populations. Formal mentoring programmes are designed to promote employees' development. There are programme goals, schedules, training for mentor and mentee and evaluation; mentors therefore inspire their mentee to follow their dreams. Formal mentoring relationships are usually organized in the workplace where an organisation matches mentors to mentees for developing careers. It offers employees the opportunity to participate in an organised mentoring programme. In organisations, formal mentoring is part of talent management addressed to populations such as key employees, newly hired graduates, high

potentials and future leaders. There are formal mentoring programmes that are values-oriented, while social mentoring and other types focus specifically on career development. Some mentorship programmes provide both social and vocational support.

Informal mentoring relationships according to Scherer (1999) develop on their own between partners. Informal mentoring takes place in organizations that develop a culture of mentoring but do not have formal mentoring in place. These companies may provide some tools and resources and encourage managers to accept mentoring requests from more junior members of the organization. Informal mentor relationships usually occur spontaneously and are largely psychosocial; they help to enhance the mentee's self-esteem and confidence by providing emotional support and discovery of common interests.

Owing from the above, mentoring to the organisation increases the morale and motivation; leads to greater productivity; affords discovery of talent; develops leadership for future survival and prosperity; communicates of values, goals and plans; demonstrates personal and professional standards; results in achievement of excellent service; implementation of equity initiatives; fostering of shared values and team work; enhancement of leadership and people management skills of managers; re-energises plateaued managers; increases staff satisfaction; builds a learning organisation; manages careers; and develops cross-organisational networks.

To the mentee, it results in development of potential and knowledge about the organisation; flexibility - mentees negotiate with their mentors to work within available time and other commitments; self-directed learning - Mentees choose specific learning objectives; complements ongoing formal study and/or training and development activities; leads to career mobility and more opportunities as a result of the mentor relationship; give and receive feedback; receive encouragement and support to achieve goals; develop new networks; develop new and/or different perspectives; get assistance with ide-

as; demonstrate strengths and explore potential; develop visibility within or outside an organisation; and be challenged to use talents and share expertise.

To the mentor, mentoring obtains a greater understanding of the barriers experienced at lower levels of the organisation; enhance their skills in coaching, counselling, listening and modelling; the sense of being needed and recognised professionally; develop and practise a more personal style of leadership; gain additional recognition and respect; learn new perspectives and approaches; contribute something to others in the organisation; extend professional networks; and demonstrate expertise and share knowledge.

Techniques of mentoring

The focus of mentoring is to develop the whole person and so the techniques are broad and require wisdom in order to be used appropriately (Daloz, 1990). A 1995 study of mentoring techniques most commonly used in organisation conducted by Aubrey & Cohen (1995), found that the five most commonly used techniques among mentors were: (1) *accompanying*: making a commitment in a caring way, which involves taking part in the learning process side-by-side with the learner; (2) *sowing*: mentors are often confronted with the difficulty of preparing the learner before he or she is ready to change; sowing is necessary when you know that what you say may not be understood or even acceptable to learners at first but will make sense and have value to the mentee when the situation requires it; (3) *catalyzing*: when change reaches a critical level of pressure, learning can escalate; here the mentor chooses to plunge the learner right into change, provoking a different way of thinking, a change in identity or a re-ordering of values; (4) *showing*: this is making something understandable, or using your own example to demonstrate a skill or activity; you show what you are talking about, you show by your own behaviour; (5) *harvesting*: here the mentor focuses on “picking the ripe fruit”: it is usually used to create awareness of what was learned by experience and to

draw conclusions; in plain language -reaping the fruit of the process by deducing the lesson and applying them. The key questions here are: “what has been learned?” and “how useful is it?”

Different techniques may be used by mentors according to the situation and the mind-set of the mentee.

Mentoring for succession planning

Research indicates that clear objectives are critical to establishing effective succession planning (Kesler, 2002). These objectives tend to be core to many or most companies that have well-established practices: (i) identify those with the potential to assume greater responsibility in the organization; (ii) provide critical development experiences to those that can move into key roles; (iii) engage the leadership in supporting the development of high-potential leaders; (iv) build a data base that can be used to make better staffing decisions for key jobs.

In other organisation these additional objectives may be embedded in the succession process: (v) improve employee commitment and retention; (vi) meet the career development expectations of existing employees; (vii) counter the increasing difficulty and costs of recruiting employees externally.

Mentoring is an important career management and succession planning activity. Emetarom (2009) identified four stages of careers development of educational managers as apprentice, colleague, mentor and sponsor. He also highlighted coaching/counselling and mentoring as the two of the most widely-applied career development activities by managers. On the role of mentors, he opined that mentors develop, guide and assist other individuals, often those at the apprentice and colleague stages. Being a mentor enables the more experienced educational managers to involve the younger persons in broadening activities. A mentor emphasises the interpersonal relationship and skill development of subordinates or colleagues who need and want assistance in devel-

oping their skills. Delegation of tasks by the mentor to the younger person is a common part of the role of the mentor.

Mentors are generally viewed as providing two types of functions to their protégés, namely career and psychological functions (Kram, 1985; Krietner, 2002). First, mentors may offer career functions. Career functions involve a range of behaviours that help protégés “learn the ropes” and prepare them for hierarchical advancement within their organizations. These behaviours include coaching protégés, sponsoring their advancement, increasing their positive exposure and visibility, and offering them protection and challenging assignments. Secondly, mentors may provide psychosocial functions. Psychosocial functions build on trust, intimacy, and interpersonal bonds in the relationship and include behaviours that enhance the protégé’s professional and personal growth, identity, self-worth, and self-efficacy. They include mentoring behaviours such as offering acceptance and confirmation and providing counselling, friendship, and role-modelling. Wong & Ng (2003) submitted that mentoring relationships have a potential to facilitate psychosocial development – mentored individuals enjoy higher self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-assurance. Mentors too can benefit from enhanced self-confidence of their capabilities for reflective thinking and communication, as well as personal satisfaction of contributing to the discipline and the next generation.

Mentorship aids the development of managerial talent for the organization. Not only do these relationships help young professionals learn technical knowledge, but they also aid them in learning the organizational ropes, developing a sense of competence and effectiveness, and learning how to behave at successive management levels (Hunt & Michael, 1983). Studies within the mentoring literature have indicated that its effects in succession planning tend to be enduring (Chao, 1997; Orpen, 1995; Scandura, 1992). To make the most of mentoring as a succession planning tool, Kesler (2002) says, activities

must be flexible and focused on the human aspect of the relationship, and work in tandem with a supportive organizational culture.

Problem

The management of educational institutions in Nigeria like in any advanced nation, needs adequately skilled and experienced individuals. The experience required surpasses the number of years a teacher spends in the teaching service but a conscious continuous exposure to the world of educational leadership. Performance skills, gained through training and long practice are some of the basic assets needed for high performance among school heads. More than basic training, long practice through continued exposure to real work situations, under the tutelage of experienced administrator makes newly appointed principals better equipped for performance. Regrettably, the situation in Nigeria is that of overreliance on long years of teaching service and seniority in the appointment and promotion to the post of a school principal.

Several researches (Daloz, 1990; Chao, 1997; Flaxman; 2002; Slater, 2008; Nnamdi, 2012) have been conducted on mentoring of newly appointed teachers. However, not so much has been done on mentoring of school principals for effective consolidation on the achievements of their predecessors. It has been generally observed that mentoring is not a common practice in secondary school management in Nigeria. It is therefore not uncommon to see beginning principals on their appointment, get into the job with a lot of anxiety and uncertainty. Where something of similar nature is practised, it usually meets with conflict between the mentor and the protégé, arising from generational gap. This, often times results in a nose dive in the performance of schools that have maintained good standing academically and otherwise, in the event of change of leadership. This current situation of succession planning and management in secondary school principalship therefore informed this study.

This study therefore sought to: (a) investigate the impact of mentoring on principal's succession planning; and (b) examined the difference in the succession planning programme in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research hypotheses

(1) Mentoring does not have significant impact on principal succession planning and performance of duties.

(2) Succession planning does not significantly differ in public and private secondary schools.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design and used participants drawn from 145 secondary schools (91 public and 54 registered private) in Education District IV of Lagos State. A total of 530 participants were randomly selected from the population of 4,350 senior teachers who were considered as prospective school administrators (serving administrators, assistants, heads of department and sectional heads). A 25-item self-designed questionnaire was administered on the participants and data gathered therefrom were analysed with appropriate statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and discussions

H₀₁: Mentoring does not have significant impact on principal's succession planning and performance

Table 1 showed that mentoring has significant impact on principal succession planning. This finding is consistent with the findings of Nnamdi (2012) where mentoring was cited as a critical aspect of training by 16 percent of the respondents in the study. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2009) found that there is evidence of the effective employment of coaching and mentoring in

principal preparation and the early career stages of principal development. This appears to fall in line with the finding of Wong & Ng (2003) that new principals perceived learning on the job, learning from supervisors and sharing with experienced principals as more effective than taking training programmes. Therefore, it is pivotal and critical for principals to provide their senior teachers with the necessary on-the-job training opportunity with a view not only to assisting them in coping with the reform environment but also to boosting their confidence when becoming principals. In this regard, schools can keep on progressing and sustainably developing because of having a well-designed principal succession plan (Leithwood et al., 2006). The key advantages of leadership mentoring therefore relate to the flexibility of the process and its focus on achieving a meshing of both individual and organizational goals.

Table 1. Mentoring and principal succession planning

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Calc. X²</i> | <i>Crit. X²</i> |
|---|----------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mentoring | 530 | 18 | 95.52 | 28.87 |
| Principal Succession Planning and performance | | | | |
| Significant, $p < 0.05$ | | | | |

H₀₂: Succession planning does not significantly differ in public and private secondary schools.

Table 2. Succession planning in public and private secondary schools

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t Stat</i> | <i>t Crit.</i> | <i>df</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|-----------|
| Public Schools | | 25.63 | 6.43 | | | |
| | 530 | | | 1.16 | 1.96 | 528 |
| Private Schools | | 25.21 | 5.23 | | | |
| Not Significant, $p > 0.05$ | | | | | | |

Table 2 showed that succession planning does not significantly differ in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. This result is consistent with the findings of Ng (2013) and Scandura (1992) who found that most teachers agreed that to become principals, the teachers noted that it was helpful to be in another position of responsibility, such as head of department, before applying to be head teacher. Several teachers in the study also commented that they were not interested in becoming principals. Akinola & Adebakin (2016) thus reaffirmed the position that teaching experience, rather than professional qualification and competence are currently being used in promoting teachers to managerial positions in Nigeria. Moreover, this process of appointing principals in public schools does not promote mentoring of prospective principals. The major reason that could be adduced is overreliance on teaching experience and the influence of political office holders in the appointment of principals. It could be concluded therefore, that where there is a significant difference the performance of principals of public and private secondary school, it could be accounted for by factors other than the tutelage received from experienced principals, since succession planning does not significantly differ in public and private secondary schools.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study investigated mentoring and succession of secondary school administrators in Education District IV, Lagos State. The findings of this study revealed that mentoring plays a critical role in leadership succession planning and management at secondary school level. It underscores the importance of mentoring in the appointment and promotion of prospective principals to prepare them for the challenge of principalship, and that the procedure and criteria for appointment of school administrators and replacement planning in public secondary schools is not different from what obtains in private secondary schools. This finding is suggestive that not only public sec-

ondary schools rely heavily on teaching experience in the appointment and promotion to administrators, but also private schools, as it is the practice in most parts of Africa. It is recommended that administrator's preparation programme should be re-engineered to incorporate mentoring for aspiring principals. This would equip them with necessary school leadership skills and knowledge through both learning by doing and training programmes, so that they could have the capacities to face the challenges arising from the workplace and act strategically for school effectiveness and school improvement. Mentorship however, should be a working relationship rather than an assessment exercise, appointment of leaders should no longer be based on teaching experience alone, but also the ability to administer a school, and training programme for aspiring leaders should put more emphasis on the core leadership areas of staff and resources management, external relations, self-management and social management.

NOTES

- 1.<http://www.lifecycleinsights.com/engineering-management/engineering-leadership-development>
- 2.<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-headship-npqh>

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