



MENTORING STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES ADOPTED BY ENTREPRENEURS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study examined entrepreneurship businesses and mentoring strategies adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State. Two research questions were posed to guide the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The entire populations of 471 were target of the research and issued with questionnaire as no sample was drawn. Data for this study were collected by means of questionnaire. A total of 356 entrepreneurs who returned their instrument were studied. Test-retest method was used for the reliability test, which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.78. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypothesis. Findings revealed that entrepreneurs adopted some of the strategies and techniques raised by the researcher as the hypothesis proved that there was no significant difference in the strategies and techniques by the entrepreneurs in Rivers State. Based on the findings, recommendations made amongst which includes that entrepreneurs should adopt effective mentoring strategies and techniques that will help them to excel and succeed in their businesses. Also, enlightenment for mentoring should be effectively carried out by entrepreneurs to enable intending entrepreneurs to know its effectiveness.

KEY WORDS: *Mentoring, Strategies, Techniques, Adopted, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurs, Rivers State.*

Introduction

Mentoring has being long used in efforts to raise entrepreneurs and intending entrepreneurs' retention and to promote entrepreneurship businesses. However, in small, medium and large scale business enterprises, high percentage of people are involved, but very few people or individuals from visible minorities occupy prominent or managerial positions. There is no doubt that anticipating entrepreneur learning is the core business of entrepreneurship practices which contribute to their learning process. Intending entrepreneurs need to understand the involvement of mentoring through guided discovery of tutoring and learning with strong focus on what constitute effective entrepreneurship practices. Combining the mentor entrepreneurs' knowledge of tutoring with the knowledge of effective mentoring can provide preservice tutors (mentees) with valuable directions for advancing their entrepreneurship business development. Yet mentoring could be haphazard as mentors need to develop technical knowledge and practices to assist them in their roles (Hudson, 2013).



There has been a great deal of attention paid to the subject of entrepreneurship as a means of sustaining the economy of a nation. This has stemmed primarily from the findings of economic analysts that small firms contribute considerably to economic growth and development. Moreover, many men and women have chosen entrepreneurial careers because doing so seems to offer them greater economic and psychological rewards than does the large company route (Zahra & George, 2002). Entrepreneurship helps to develop a pool of potential entrepreneurs who are well equipped with skills and technical know-how to manage small and medium scale industries (Amesi, 2011).

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

Concept of Mentoring and Entrepreneurship

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



and Adams (2006) viewed mentoring as one person helping another to achieve something. More specifically, something that is important to them. Mentoring is also concerned with creating an informal environment in which one person can feel encouraged to discuss one's needs and circumstances openly and in confidence with another person who is in a position to be of positive help. (Parsloe & Wray, 2000).

Entrepreneurship is a way of thinking, reasoning and acting that is opportunity based and holistic in approach (Wikipedia, 2008). Entrepreneurship according to Akpomi (2008), stimulates and promotes the economy, while entrepreneurs are innovators and job creators. Amesi (2010) saw entrepreneurship as a mission for self-employment and poverty alleviation, which is the hope of many Nigerians in entrepreneurship businesses. To Amesi, entrepreneurship is the ability to create and build something from practically nothing as it has to do with doing, achieving, and building an enterprise or organization, rather than just watching, analysing, or describing one. David (2008) perceived entrepreneurship as the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed. This ability according to David should be acquired and should differ in some respects from the abilities required to enable a person obtain an employment. It involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for self-reliance. Agbaeze (2007) recognized entrepreneurship as that which is associated with different kinds of activities that have to do with the establishment and operations of business enterprises and such activities may include identification to exploit for profit, promotion and establishment of business enterprise. Others includes distribution of goods and services, organization and management of the human and material resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprise, risk bearing and innovation (Agbaeze, 2007).

Good Mentoring Strategies

At small, medium and large scale entrepreneurship businesses, there are standards to attain and knowledge to acquire. According to Bozeman and Feeney (2007), a good mentor must commit the time, have the patience and willingness to provide one with insights and get one started on the right track. These insights can be designed to help entrepreneurs or intending entrepreneurs to gather information and acquire knowledge in relation to their businesses and also assist new or intending entrepreneurs by giving those insights on the right track. Hobson; Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson (2009), viewed mentoring as an approach to one's development that introduces an independent and objective source of help outside of the individual's relationship. According to Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2005), good mentoring contributes to:

- a) Retention of Business Progress (RBP}
- b) Entrepreneurs' Satisfaction and Research Productivity (ESRP)
- c) Clear Entrepreneurship Expectations (CEE)



- d) Success Achievement (SA)
- e) Professional Development (PD)

Mentoring Strategies

The following are mentoring strategies attributed to entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship businesses:

Aligning Business-Support Efforts: Business support as a communal tree is supposed to be watered once a week as it is way to help a new entrepreneur close the “knowing-doing” gap by learning to apply knowledge of best practices to daily entrepreneurship business routines (Cindy, 2004).

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

Finding the Right Entrepreneurs to be Mentors. Most entrepreneurs including small and medium scale organizations do not have the structures in place to assess who their most skilled entrepreneurs are, or who among their progressive entrepreneurs have a strong, positive impact on new and intending entrepreneurs’ outcomes. Even in business organizations like small and medium scale, that are able to identify their high-performing entrepreneurs, there can be resistance to recruiting the intending or new entrepreneurs from their businesses (Allen; Eby, & Lentz, 2006). Other strategies for mentors to mentees are: be a good example, offer problem solving strategies, encourage excellence, listen and support, confront unprofessional behaviour, and offer challenging opportunities. According to Bates, Ramirez and Drits (2009), other strategies includes such as: Entrepreneurs context, Differentiated learning, Mentor modelling of practice, Mentor articulating of practices, Allowing mentee to experience practices, Reflection on practices, Interactions with progressive entrepreneurs, Link to other technological practices, Preservice entrepreneurs for variability, Inclusion, Task expectations, Transitions, Language and notion of drawing upon a community of mentors where mentors can allow preservice entrepreneurs to work with and observe a variety of different lecture and workshops, including seminars.



Mentoring Techniques

The focus of mentoring is to develop the entire individual and so the techniques are broad and require wisdom in order to be used appropriately. The five most commonly used techniques among mentors are:

Accompanying: Making a commitment in a caring way, which involves taking part in the learning process side-by-side with the mentee.

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

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

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

Harvesting: Here the mentor focuses on "picking the ripe fruit": it is usually used to create awareness of what was taught or advice by experience and to draw conclusions. Other techniques for mentoring include setting goals, providing feedback, celebrations and rewards and collaborations.

Types of Mentoring Models

One of the advantages of mentoring is that it can be adapted to any organization's culture and resources. There are several mentoring models to choose from when developing a mentoring program, including:

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

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

Group mentoring: This requires a mentor to work with 4-6 mentees at one time. The group meets once or twice a month to discuss various topics. Combining senior and peer mentoring, the mentor and the peer's help one another learn and develop appropriate



skills and knowledge. Group mentoring is limited by the difficulty of regularly scheduling meetings for the entire group. It also lacks the personal relationship that most entrepreneurs prefer in mentoring. For this reason, it is often combined with the one-on-one model.

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

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

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that effective mentoring is lacking among male and female entrepreneurs and where it exists, effective strategies and techniques are not adhered to by entrepreneurs. Consequently, the researcher needs to ascertain the mentoring strategies and techniques adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State.

Purpose

The aim of this study was to:

1. Ascertain the mentoring strategies adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the mentoring techniques adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State.

Research Questions

Two basic questions guided the study:

1. What mentoring strategies are adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State?
2. What mentoring techniques are adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

Only one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female entrepreneurs in Rivers State regarding to mentoring strategies and techniques adopted by them.

Method

The study area was Rivers State of Nigeria. The design of the study was descriptive survey and the population was four hundred and seventy-one registered



entrepreneurs, within the scope of the researcher. The entire population was studied by the researcher and no sample/sampling was considered necessary. Data for the study were collected by means of questionnaire developed by the researcher from insight gained from reviewed works. The questionnaire has two parts - “A” and “B”. Part A sought information on the selected personal background of the respondents, and it contained four items. Part B sought information on the view of the entrepreneurs regarding the topic of the study with nine question items. The questionnaire adopted a modified four point Likert scale as follows: Highly Adopted (HA = 4 points); Adopted (A = 3 points); Fairly Adopted (FA = 2 points) and Not Adopted (NA = 1 point) for the research questions. The researcher and three research assistants briefed by the researcher personally distributed the 471 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. In all, 356 copies out of the 471 copies of the questionnaire sent out were retrieved, which amounts to 76 percent return rate. Test-retest method was used to test the reliability of the items and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypothesis.

Results

The results obtained from the respondents are shown below:

Research Question 1: What mentoring strategies are adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mentoring Strategies Adopted by Entrepreneurs in Rivers State (N = 356)

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

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Table 1 shows that all the items regarding mentoring strategies were adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State. This is based on the responses of the respondents as the grand mean and standard deviation of 3.21 and 1.05 confirmed it. From the analysis, offer challenging opportunities achieved a high mean of 3.33; offer problem solving strategies achieved a mean of 3.23, followed by confronting unprofessional behaviour with a mean of 3.19, finding the right entrepreneur to be mentor achieved a mean of 3.17, and encouraging excellence gave a mean of 3.15.



Research Question 2: What mentoring techniques are adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mentoring Techniques Adopted by Entrepreneurs in Rivers State (N = 356)

S/n	Items	Mean	S.D	Remark
1.	Providing feed back	3.22	0.83	Adopted
2.	Accompanying – making a commitment in a caring way by collaborations	3.31	0.86	Adopted
3.	Showing – making something understandable by setting goals	2.91	0.94	Adopted
4.	Celebrations and rewards	2.76	0.98	Adopted
Grand Mean/S.D =		3.05	0.99	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Data in table 2, show that the respondents considered all the items as mentoring techniques adopted by them. Accompanying –making a commitment in a caring way by collaborations achieved the highest mean of 3.31, providing feedback got a mean of 3.22, showing – making something understandable by setting goals got a mean of 2.91 and celebrations and rewards got the lowest mean of 2.76. The responses from the respondents show that the items in the table are mentoring techniques adopted by them. This was based on the grand mean and standard deviation of 3.05 and 0.99 respectively.

Table 3: z-test of Difference of Male and Female Entrepreneurs in Entrepreneurship Businesses Regarding Mentoring Strategies and Techniques Adopted

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

***Significant at 0.05 level of significance**

Table 3 shows that the calculated z-ratio is 4.12 while the critical or table z-value is 1.96. Since the calculated Z-ratio is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at 354 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Based on the test of hypothesis, the researcher concludes that there is a significant difference in the responses of the respondents on mentoring strategies and



techniques adopted by male and female entrepreneurs in Rivers State. In other words, for entrepreneurs to effectively mentor, they must adopt effective mentoring strategies and techniques.

Discussion

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

Findings from research question two proved that the respondents considered accompanying –making a commitment in a caring way by collaborations; providing feedback, showing – making something understandable by setting goals, and celebrations and rewards as mentoring techniques adopted by them. This finding is in agreement with the view of Hudson (2013) who opined that the techniques mentors employ have the potential to motivate the mentees in entrepreneurship and increase productivity as it is to seek out mentors who are not afraid to be honest with the mentees in the interest of improving the business. In agreement with the view of Hudson, the researcher opined that positive feedback as an effective mentoring technique reinforces strong behaviours in entrepreneurship and provides entrepreneurs with motivation to keep working hard as constructive criticism addresses areas of concern and offers suggestions for improving performance.

The test of hypothesis proved that there was a significant difference in the responses of the respondents on mentoring strategies and techniques adopted by entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship in Rivers State. In other words, it is very necessary and essential for entrepreneurs to adopt these strategies and techniques as setting goals, providing feedback, celebrations and rewards, collaboration, being a good example, offering problem solving strategies, encouraging excellence, listening and supporting, confronting unprofessional behaviour, and offering challenging opportunities. Setting goals provides the mentee with something definite to work with and also have the potential to increase productivity in the business as the mentors may help the mentees to



create realistic goals. Positive feedback as a technique for mentoring, reinforces strong behaviours in entrepreneurship and provide entrepreneurs with motivation to keep working hard as celebrations and rewards motivate entrepreneurs as they reach goals in their businesses and make improvements to their performance based on constructive criticism if adopted. Celebrations and rewards as mentoring techniques help in building respect for the mentor and help the mentee to know that the mentor is not only there to criticize but also to share in their success if effectively adopted. Collaboration as a mentoring technique in entrepreneurship provides the individual opportunity to collaborate with others as they begin their entrepreneurship activities. The mentors in adopting collaboration as a mentoring technique helps the mentees learn how to direct businesses and to complete tasks effectively.

One attribute of a mentor in adopting effective technique is leading by example. After agreeing to take on a mentee, it is the responsibility of a mentor to demonstrate the excellence, professionalism, and business ethics that make one an accomplished. Problem solving strategies as effective mentoring strategy is the effort of a mentor to help a mentee address problems strategically and effectively. At this stage, the mentor adopting these techniques, offer strategies he or she has used to solve similar problems and issues. Mentors are usually in perfect position to set the bar high and encourage their mentees to rise to the occasion as mentors who push the novices they work with to excel increase the competitiveness of their mentees.

Conclusion

This paper focused on mentoring strategies and techniques adopted by entrepreneurs in Rivers State. It discussed concept of mentoring and entrepreneurship, role of good mentorship and mentoring strategies and mentoring techniques. It concluded that adequate and effective mentoring strategies and techniques be used by mentors in entrepreneurship so as to enable them mentor effectively and also carry their mentees along in their business endeavours.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and conclusion, the following recommendations were put forward by the researcher:

1. Entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship should adopt effective mentoring strategies and techniques that will help them to excel and succeed in their business.
2. Every entrepreneur in Rivers State should have one or two mentors who have excelled in their businesses to guide them effectively in areas of strategies and techniques to adopt in their businesses to propagate and establish the business.



3. Enlightenment for mentoring in entrepreneurship businesses should be effectively carried out by entrepreneurs as to enable the intending entrepreneurs to know its effectiveness.

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