INFLUENCE OF MENTORSHIP BY EXPERIENCED ENTREPRENEURS ON MENTEES/STUDENTS’ GROWTH IN FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, NEKEDE OWERRI IMO STATE

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Abstract
The paper is a case study that discusses the role of mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs on mentees/students growth at the Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State. Mentoring is simply an act of professionally experienced academic/entrepreneurs, guiding, advising and assisting the students and impacting the required skills. The study aims at finding out among others the role of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentor on addressing the constraint which potential entrepreneurs face. In pursuit of the purpose of the study, the description design as well as case study design were adopted. A sample of 130 students was selected from the five Departments in the School of Business and Management technology. For the study, four research questions guided the study. A structured questionnaire was designed to elicit data from the respondents. The mode of responses to the questionnaire items were structured in line with the four point modified work-type. Among others, the findings of the research reveal that mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs mentors play active roles in addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face. It is recommended that since economic growth is a function of individual activities and skills in society, entrepreneurship mentors are needed in all schools to vigorously instill in students proper entrepreneurship training and development through mentoring.

Keywords: Mentorship, Experienced Entrepreneurs, Mentees, Students, Growth.

Introduction
Entrepreneurship education has existed within business schools for decades but now the number and quality of efforts across institutions have increased. The name moved from commerce or industry to small business. In 2006, government directed that entrepreneurship education be incorporated in all programmes offered in our tertiary institutions of learning as a mandatory course. Similarly, the National Council on Education (NCE) at the 53rd meeting held in Calabar same year, also directed the higher education supervisory agencies to commence the production of appropriate training document for the effective and efficient delivery of the course, entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship education is meant to inform the students that they can be self-employed after graduation from school rather than roaming the streets in search of non-existent government paid jobs. It is a career option which seeks to prepare students to be responsible enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs by immersing in real life
learning experiences where they can take risks, manage results and learn from the outcomes (Tulgan 1999). Recently, another dimension to entrepreneurship education has cropped up—mentoring in entrepreneurship, although, detailed work on entrepreneurship mentoring in education contents is scarce, for now.

Efforts are being made by researchers to look inwards on the mentoring aspect in entrepreneurship education. What then is this mentoring in entrepreneurship education? Institutions of higher learning and governments have recently started programmes which include mentorship as a key component in increasing entrepreneurship education. Recently, there has been an increase in the number of some programmes, entrepreneurship education initiatives and government sponsored small business mentorship programmes in many schools (Brunella 2012). Mentoring is an aspect of skills development which focuses on the improvement, strengthening and practicalizing whatever knowledge, skills, values, competences, one comes into an organization/university with, so as to have a good and smooth transition into the work place and professional growth.

Eby (2010) defines mentorship as a developmentally oriented interpersonal relationship that is typically between a more experienced individual (i.e., the mentor) and a less experienced individual (i.e., the protégé). Mentoring means the support of an expert to overcome problems a starting entrepreneur encounters (Sullivan, 2000). It is a more personalized learning process that can be a valuable tool for developing business skills of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, mentoring is a relevant concept to be used in the sense that it is directed towards facilitation of learning skills and competences, career and behavior related functions in the individual personal development.

Mentoring by experienced entrepreneurs will help to handle or overcome the constraints entrepreneurs face at the initial stage. There is no doubt that man without a mentor, is a man in endless search for what he does not know. This explains why Emetarom (2009) posited that one of the valuable ways of enhancing career prospect is by seeking out and gaining the assistance of a mentor’s supports and guidance. On balance, entrepreneur mentors are expected to have a greater impact on addressing the constraints that potential entrepreneurs face, thus, increasing the likelihood of their mentees engaging in entrepreneurship and this new line of thinking is likely to increase the prospects of entrepreneurs generally. No wonder, Emmanuel (2010) outlined the following which mentors have been able to fish out as hindrance to entrepreneurship growth: immaturity, impatience, lack of confidence and lack of experience. In addition to these, others are the get rich quick attitude of young entrepreneurs, willingness to obtain the crown without going through the crucibles of the cross. The mentoring interaction can facilitate a more efficient and secure transfer of complex experiences into learning.
Mentoring from all indications is effective in the development of entrepreneurial expertise.

Many people are yet to realize the gains in mentorship. The likelihood of people engaging in entrepreneurship is on the increase. No wonder, Amaku (2013) stressed that it is a ladder to greater height and achievement. A man without a mentor could be likened to a man climbing to the top without a ladder. It is said that the fastest route of becoming a star is to understudy a star. A mentor is a star who had successfully arrived a destination and achieved the same result even better (Emechebe 2009).

Leaders or academics attribute their success to others whom they view as role models on whom they could depend, and as a source of inspiration, support and guidance. The effect of mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs to mentees are numerous, one of which is curbing of unemployment, hence, Watts (1996) noted that mentoring helps to bridge the goal between the training programme and real world application, and is cost effective in skills development. There is no gain saying that mentoring in entrepreneurship reduces social vices in education. When students are seriously engaged in challenging assignments, presentation of projects done, excursion, etc., the tendency of thinking about irrelevances are ruled out.

Empirically, Aina (2002) found that serious mentoring in entrepreneurship education has created an incentive for nurturing the development of creative and enterprising skills which allow mentees to initiate, apply knowledge, strategize, and act, rather than just one dimensional developing academic skills of observing, describing etc. Compared with non-entrepreneurship mentors, those with entrepreneurial experience have seen much direct experience (the steps and missteps) in the firm formation process. These are the elements that are missing or there to a lesser extent in mentors who lack direct experience of starting a business.

Lazear (2005) found out that mentors can demonstrate to mentees that skills which are necessary to becoming successful entrepreneurs can be learned. In part, this inspiration comes from the idea that the mentor is now going to share the ‘secrets’ of the start-up process with the mentee. Imparting information on the start-up process from someone who has been there and done it increases the mentee’s confidence in his or her abilities, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. (Landier 2005 and Levie 2013) findings showed that the potential roles of mentors in the transition to entrepreneurship is very helpful and that some obstacles resulting from information or perception which potential entrepreneurs face when making decisions about starting a new venture were stigma or fear of failure, concerns about entrepreneurial ability or self-efficacy, general lack of information about entrepreneurial careers and lack of social connections to resource providers in entrepreneurship.
Based on the benefits inherent in mentorship through experienced entrepreneurs, it is pertinent to examine the roles of mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs on mentees growth in tertiary institutions.

Statement of the Problem
Entrepreneurial knowledge and learning is through mentoring by experienced entrepreneurs because students now believe that it is an experienced-based process of learning that helps them in entrepreneurship education. Mentoring is a complete transformation of the teacher role or experienced entrepreneur to help the students or new entrepreneurs to understand the nitty gritty of the course since it is skill-based and needs personal support. Prospective entrepreneurs and students are yet to realize that mentors show discipline-specific knowledge and facilitate interactions with other professionals in the field and at the same time seek to protect students from failures, including project failures, help students develop confidence in their work, provide strategies for negotiating personal and interpersonal challenges. Many people do not believe that experienced entrepreneurs increase the likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurship, reduce social vices, etc. These are the problematic areas which this paper intends to address.

Purpose of the Study
The major purpose of this study is to determine the influences of mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs on mentees/students growth in Imo State. Specifically, the study sought to:

a. Find out the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors play on addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face.

b. Find out the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on the increase of the likelihood of students engaging in entrepreneurship,

c. Examine positive effects of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on a mentee, and

d. Determine the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors in reducing social vices among students and youths.

Research Questions
Four research questions guided this study: They are as follows;

1. What are the mean ratings of the students on the influence mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors play on addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face?
2. What are the mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on the increase of the likelihood of students engaging in entrepreneurship?

3. What are the mean ratings of the students on the positive effects of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on a mentee?

4. What are the mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors in reducing social vices among students and youths?

**Method**

The design of the study is a descriptive design as well as case study design. This is because the study attempted to find out the effects of mentoring in entrepreneurship education and career choice. The population of the study included all HND II Students who are offering entrepreneurship education in the School of Business and Management Technology, Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, made up of five (5) departments with total population of two hundred and fifty (250) students according to records obtained at the Polytechnic Registry. The sample of the study consisted of one hundred and thirty (130) students. Twenty-six (26) learners each from the five departments were randomly selected by simple random sampling. The mode of sampling was the “lucky dip”.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed structured questionnaire known as role of mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs on mentees/students growth in Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri questionnaire (RMEEMSNGQ). The instrument was made up of twenty-four (24) items arranged in four clusters. Cluster one contains eleven (11) items that elicited the role of mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs to mentees. Cluster two contains four (4) items which elicited on the role of mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs on the increase of the likelihood of students engaging in entrepreneurship. Cluster three contains four (4) items which elicited on the positive effects of mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs on mentees. Cluster four contains five (5) items which elicited on how mentoring by experienced entrepreneurs can reduce social vices among students and youths. The mode of response to the questionnaire items were structured in line with the four-point modified Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (4points), Agree (3points), Disagree (2points), Strongly Disagree (1point). The instrument was validated by two (2) Senior Lecturers in the Department of Maths/Statistics, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, and Owerri. Also the instrument was re-validated by three Senior Lecturers in the Faculty of Education, Imo State University, and Owerri who specialized in Measurement, Evaluation and Research. The instrument was also assessed for reliability, using the Cronbach Alpha for internal stability and test-re-test for consistency over time. The co-
efficient of Cronbach Alpha was 0.86 while the correlation coefficient using Pearson moment coefficient was 0.81. The researcher is therefore convinced that the instrument is reliable.

The research instrument was directly administered to the sampled students who were assembled in the polytechnic auditorium. The students responded to the instrument and returned them immediately. This was to avoid any loss. The return therefore was complete and 100%.

The responses to the questionnaire were converted to numerical scores. Research questions were answered by calculating the mean (x) scores. The bench mark for making decisions using the mean (x) scores was the theoretical mean of 2.50.

Results
Data were presented on tables and analyzed as shown on the tables that follow.

Research Question 1:
What are the mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors play on addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face?

Table 1: Mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors play on addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement:</th>
<th>Students’ n</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Experienced entrepreneur mentors introduced sourcing for loan schemes/facilities from micro finance banks to the mentees.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experienced entrepreneur mentors introduced ways of getting grant from governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Experienced entrepreneur mentors encouraged the mentees to practice and engage in cooperate business so as to reduce the financial difficulties.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Experienced entrepreneur mentors showed the mentees the influence of insurance in entreprenuerships so that they should not have fear of failure in choosing</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
entrepreneur as career.

5 Experienced entrepreneur mentors organized workshops and conferences for mentees to build up their capacity on entrepreneurship to reduce their fear of failure.

6 Experienced entrepreneur mentors helped the mentees to develop realistic assessment of the possible career choices in event of venture failure.

7 Experienced entrepreneur mentors provided guidelines to information on conventional careers like investment banking.

8 Experienced entrepreneur mentors linked the mentees to various career services available in the internet, locally and internationally.

9 Experienced entrepreneur mentors provided the mentees behavioral information of entrepreneur skills.

10 Experienced entrepreneur mentors demonstrated to mentees that different necessary skills to be successful entrepreneur can be learnt.

11 Experienced entrepreneur mentors provided mentees with information on the greater level of security and aspiration.

| Mean of Means | 2.75 |

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors play on addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face. The table indicated that all the items (1-11) were agreed on by the students since their mean scores were above the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean of means of 2.75 is an indication of high agreement of the respondents on issues raised on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors play on addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face. The conclusion is that mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors play critical roles in addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face.

Research Question 2:
What are the mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on the increase of the likelihood of students engaging in entrepreneurship?
Table 2: Mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on the increase of the likelihood of students engaging in entrepreneurship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
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<th>n</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Taking attendance each time lesson held compelled mentees to attend lesson.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Giving regular assignments improved mentees attitude to class.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Interactions with students by mentors developed mentees attitude, values and behaviors in respect to entrepreneurship education.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Method of mentoring by experienced entrepreneur aroused mentees’ interest in choosing entrepreneurship as career.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mean of Means</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on the increase of the likelihood of students engaging in entrepreneurship. The table indicated as well that items 12, 13, 14 and 15 were agreed on, having recorded means above the criterion mean of 2.50. This was confirmed by a high score in the mean of means of 2.89. The conclusion is that it was agreed by the students that mentorship by experienced entrepreneur play a good role on the increase of the likelihood of students engaging in entrepreneurship.

Research Question 3:
What are the mean ratings of the students on the positive effects of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on a mentee?
Table 3: Mean ratings of the students on the positive effects of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on a mentee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
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<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mentees are punctual and regular to entrepreneurship education lectures.</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mentees develop courage in handling difficult skills in entrepreneurship education.</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Mentees develop confidence in handling issues in various aspects of entrepreneurship skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>High level eagerness to choose entrepreneurship as career by the mentees</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean of Means 2.84

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of the students on the positive effects of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur on a mentee. It was indicated in the table that all the items (16-19) were agreed on by the students because their mean scores were above the criterion mean of 2.50. Also the mean of mean is 2.84 which is an indication of a high agreement among the students. The conclusion is that mentorship by experienced entrepreneur has positive effects on mentees/students in Imo State.

Research Question 4:
What are the mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors in reducing social vices among students and youths?

Table 4: Mean ratings of the students on the influence of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors in reducing social vices among students and youths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement:</th>
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<th>n</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Activities/ Challenging assignment kept mentees busy all the time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Individual presentation of practical assignments in class prevented students from engaging in activities that do not have anything to add to their academics.</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.592</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22. Regular involvement of mentees in excursion from time to time kept students busier thereby not allowing them to engage in social vices.  

23. Assignments on group projects provided mentees with diverse opportunities to exhibit their skill and knowledge publicly so as not having time to be involved in social vices.  

24. When mentees are guided by mentors, they have opportunities and materials that will help them in getting employment/sponsorship thereby not having time to engage in social vices.  

Mean of Means: 2.67  

Table 4 shows the mean ratings of the students on the role of mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors in reducing social vices among students and youths. The table indicated that item 20-24 were all agreed on by the students since the items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean of means stood at 2.67 which can be used to conclude that mentorship by experienced entrepreneur helps in reducing social vices among students and youths as activities/challenging assignment keep mentees busy all the time.  

Discussion  

The result of the study revealed that the mean of means of 2.75 as an indication of high agreement of the respondents on issues raised on the role mentorship by experienced entrepreneur mentors play on addressing the constraints which potential entrepreneurs face. This finding corroborate with that of Landier (2005) and Levie (2013) who found that potential roles of mentors in the transition to entrepreneurship is very helpful and some obstacles resulting from information or perception that potential entrepreneurs face when making decisions about starting a new venture were stigma or fear of failure. This fear could be addressed by mentors if approached.  

It was also revealed that mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs may play a good role on the increase of the likelihood of students engaging in entrepreneurship. This is in line with Aina (2002) who found that serious mentorship in entrepreneurship education has created incentives for nurturing the development of creative and enterprising skills which allow mentees to initiate, apply knowledge, strategies to tackle obstacles when they arise.
Finally, result obtained from table four showed the mean of means of 2.67 which concludes that mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs help in reducing social vices among students and youths as activities/challenging assignments keep mentees busy all the time. This is in line with what Emechebe (2009) found out to the effect that a mentor is a star who had successfully arrived at a destination and achieved the same result even better.

**Conclusion**

Man is created with certain potentialities and these potentialities cannot be harnessed without proper guidance. We are in the era of entrepreneurship development and realizing the inadequacy in the educational system, the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education. (NBTE), etc recommended that “entrepreneurship studies be made compulsory at the tertiary level. It is therefore, concluded that these policy objective cannot be achieved without acknowledging the fact that mentorship in entrepreneurship education is inevitable.

It is against this background that the following recommendations are proffered for effective entrepreneurship education generally.

**Recommendations**

1. Government and other education stake holders should make sure that educational programme at all levels of education are made relevant by providing students with mentors that will monitor the activities of students while the necessary skills are being impacted.

2. A potentially effective mechanism for increasing students interest in entrepreneurship is by engaging well qualified mentors who will be devoted enough to increase students’ propensity for entrepreneurship considering the fact that some mentors can be more effective than others.

3. Economic growth is a function of individual activities and skills in society. This can be achieved and reinforced through mentors hence entrepreneurship mentors are needed in all schools to always mount entrepreneurship training and development programmes to enhance socio-economic growth vigorously.
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