

**ENHANCING QUALITY TEACHING THROUGH MENTORING:
THE PERCEPTION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN
OWERRI EDUCATION ZONE OF IMO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to find out the perception of teachers towards enhancing their professional and human developments through mentoring using Owerri Educational zone. The result of the study would be significant as it would provide basis for incorporating the mentoring system into teachers' development programmes. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. A simple random sampling technique with non-replacement balloting was used to sample hundred (900) teachers in the area of study. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire relating to the topic and analysed with simple percentages. The result of the analysis showed that those primary school teachers were not aware of the benefits of enhancing their profession and personal development through mentoring. Teachers in the area of study had negative perception towards enhancing their personal and professional development through mentoring by years of experience. The levels of education, sex are not determining factors in the teacher's perception of their professional development through mentoring. Based on the result some recommendations were made which include a review of the current development programmes of teachers to incorporate the mentoring system, and team teaching should be encouraged to facilitate networking and sharing of best practices among teachers among others.

Introduction

The launching of the UBE which made provision for first 9 years of free and compulsory basic education has not only led to increase in school enrolment but has put a lot of pressure on the skills of teachers, who hitherto, have come under heavy criticism due to their ineffectiveness. However, since 2011 enrolment has improved greatly due to some positive steps taken by the Imo State government not only in abolishing school fees but in providing school uniforms and textbooks, paying teachers' salaries

regularly and renovating some dilapidated school buildings. In spite of these efforts, the absence of any clear policy on continuing professional development of these teachers Izuagba & Nwigwe (2010) and the inability to realign teacher education curriculum to the needs of the 21st century, Obanya (2004) has adversely affected the quality of output at the lower and middle basic education levels. Research findings by Bakari (2009) also reveal that the main goal of these levels of education is yet to be achieved as learners graduate without being able to read and write, while Nwangwu (2008)

decried the poor management of teaching practice, which is critical to the professional development of pre-service teachers. Omojuwa (2007) and Izuagba & Afurobi (2010) confirm that teachers' poor knowledge of ICT and their inability to integrate it in teaching has affected graduates ability to access the knowledge driven economy.

It is in order to bridge these gaps that the Imo State Government of Nigeria recommended the use of mentors in grooming teachers in the lower and middle basic education levels in order to enhance their professional and personal development for the improvement of teaching and learning. This innovation is being resisted by teachers and some policy implementers who are skeptical of its prospects in facilitating the professional and personal development of teachers for the achievement of the UBE goals.

Quality teachers is the desire of every nation not only because teachers do not only correctly and effectively implement the curriculum, but their positive influence of the professional development of new teachers they work with cannot be quantified. For effective teaching, the teacher must have sound pedagogic content knowledge and a good personality. As a matter of fact, teachers do not

enter the classroom as skilled as they should be when they newly employed, most new teacher do not possess the knowledge and skills they will need to become highly effective, but with experience, novices can become better teacher. Scholars suggest the establishment of inductions programs for beginning teachers in order to guide them through the crucial first years of teaching (<http://en/Wikipedia.org/wiki/mentorship>).s This implies that new teachers should be allowed to teach a class alone without the support of a more experienced teacher as doing this will have adverse consequences on the learners they teach. One of the ways of helping new teachers to grow is through mentoring. Teachers that serve as mentors are usually experienced and skilled who are able to quickly diagnose the needs of struggling, new teachers and can consistently relate to and support them; helping them improve their instructional strategies and skills: help them develop the curricular, and offers other forms of professional help.

According to Wikipedia, the concept mentor originated from a Greek word: *Μέντωρ* / *Méntōr*; gen.: *Μέντορος* and was used in Homer's great literary work "Odyssey". The important role mentor played led to its adoption in English as a term that refers to someone who imparts wisdom to and shares knowledge with a less

experienced individual/ colleague. However, the term mentor gained wide popularity in the business world during the 1970s and, other professionals began to promote its use (Odell, 1990). In education, it is widely used to support novice teachers in order to reduce attrition rates (Feiman-Nemser & Paker, 1993), but its use as an ongoing on-the-job activity to help new teachers to acquire professional skills and improve their instructional strategies has not been greatly explored especially in Nigeria. (Nwamuo, 2012)..

Given the current pressure for educational reforms more especially, the need for teachers to change from the teacher centred approach to the learner centred approach. Mentoring can be an effective way to train teachers to adopt this new practice and learn to net work with others in other to improve on their practices. Change cannot arise spontaneously from externally imposed expectations or mandates, or solely from one-time training sessions or one-shot in-service courses, professional development practices such as mentoring that provide one-to-one guidance and ongoing on-site support can be more successful because learning depends on the collegiality among teachers. (Barth, 2001). A sense of collegiality also makes less experienced teachers feel safe to make mistakes, study themselves, and share learning with

each other to create excellence in their delivery (Dantonio, 2001).

Mentoring has far greater potential to reform the educational system, especially when the “mentoring is to support and encourage new and inexperienced teachers to maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be. Mentoring is a powerful personal development and empowerment tool given the fact that a mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and help develop solutions to career issues. Mentors rely upon having had similar experience to gain an empathy with the mentee and an understanding of their issues. Mentoring is a powerful developmental technique that socializes learner to the larger context of an organization. Mentoring provides the mentee with all opportunity to think about career options and progress. A mentor should help the mentee to believe in her/himself and boost her/his confidence.

However, the extent a mentee accepts to be mentored depends of his/her perception of the mentoring programme. Many Scholars (Peacock 2005, Audi 2006, Cassam 2007 and Strawson 2008) believe that perception and knowledge are intertwined. In fact, the concept “perception” cannot be explained without reference to knowledge

which is a function of one's educational level, experience, exposure, philosophy and for a teacher theory of teaching and learning. (Taiwo 2009). These variables are responsible for how and why people's understanding or views of issues differ. Constructivists rightly pointed out that experience and beliefs influence the way people perceive, understand or approach issues. Izuagba & Ezenwa (2010) noted that if experience is seen as the product of variables like sex, educational attainment, one's personality, exposure and the person's interaction with the environment. It implies that the perception of teachers can affect the mentoring programme.

It is on this premise that this study sets out to determine whether sex, years of experience, level of education of teachers are responsible for any negative or positive perception of their professional and personal development through mentoring.

Specifically, the research sets out to do the following:

1. To find out the perception of teachers towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring.
2. Find out if years of service has an influence on perception of teachers towards enhancing

their professional and personal development through mentoring.

3. Determine if teachers' level of education has an influence on the perception of teachers their professional and personal development through mentoring
4. Find out if sex has an influence on the perception of teachers towards enhancing professional and personal development through mentoring.

Based on the above, the researchers will be guided by the following research questions:

Research Questions:

1. What is the perception of teachers towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring?
2. To what extent do years of service influence teachers' perception of enhancing their professional and personal development of through mentoring?
3. To what extent does level of education acquired by teachers influence their perception of enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring?
4. To what extent does sex influence the perception of teacher towards enhancing their professional and personal

development through mentoring?

This study is a simple survey designed to elicit information from primary school teachers on their perception towards enhancing teachers' professional and personal development through mentoring. It is limited to Imo State of Nigeria where the mentoring programme was initiated at the UBE level by the new administration in 2010/2011 academic session. Imo State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria and the enrolment in its education system is one of the highest in the country but in the last five decades the quality of teaching and learning has been very poor as reflected in high drop rate, poor academic performance, low transition and completion rates of pupils in the lower and middle basic education levels, Falayijo, Makoju,; Okebukola,; Onugha, & Olubodun (1997), Obanya (2002,; 2004)

The population of this study comprised all of the 11,874 teachers in the Imo State lower and middle basic education (1,387 males and 10,487 females). From this a sample of teachers will be selected using the stratified random sampling technique.

Method

This study is a survey designed to elicit information from primary school teachers on their perception towards enhancing teachers' professional development through mentoring. The population of the study consisted of 11,874 primary school teachers in Owerri Educational Zone. The simple random sampling with non-replacement balloting technique was employed. Stratification was also used for sex, years of experience and level of education. A sample size of 900 respondents was used representing 7.5% of the population. According to Owie (1996) when the population is large a sample of 5 – 10% can be used.

Instrument constructed by the researcher was a structured questionnaire which sought to measure the variables under investigation. The instrument used was a 22 item three – point scale questionnaire, which sought information on primary school teachers' perception towards enhancing their profession development through mentoring. The total score for all items was taken as the index of perception. The instrument was validated by experts in mentoring and teachers professional development. The Spearman Brown's Coefficient of correlation of 0.86 was realized when subjected to a pilot study

using primary school teachers in Okigwe zone.

The instrument was administered on a face to face basis over a four week period. A total of 920 questionnaires were distributed but 8 was lost in transit. Another 12 were incorrectly completed therefore were discarded, leaving 900 copies. Data generated was

subjected to descriptive statistics of frequency and percentages.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the perception of teacher towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring?

Table 1: The nature of primary school teachers' perception towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring.

Level of Perception	No of Teachers	Percentages
Negative	556	62
Mildly positive	150	17
Positive	194	21
Total	900	100

Table 1 shows the nature of primary school teachers' perception towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring. To show the true nature of their perception, scores were divided into three levels namely negative, mildly positive and positive. The result in the above table shows that 62%, 17% and 21% of primary

school teachers' perception tends towards negative, mildly positive and positive perceptions respectively.

Research Question 2: To what extent do years of service influence the perception of primary school teachers towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring.

Tables 2: Percentage response of the influence of years of service on primary school teachers' perception towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring.

Years of Service	Level of Perception			Total
	Negative	Mildly Positive	Positive	
5 – 12	308 (34.)	56 (6.)	98 (11)	462 (51)
13 and above	248 (28)	94 (10.)	96 (11)	438 (49)
Total	556 (62)	150 (17)	194 (21)	900 (100)

Table 2 shows that primary school teachers with 5 – 12 years of service showed 34%, 6.% and 11% of negative, mildly positive and positive perceptions respectively towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring, while those with 13 and above years of service showed 28%, 10% and 11% of negative, mildly

positive and positive perceptions respectively.

Research Question 3: To what extent does level of education acquired influence primary school teachers' perception towards enhancing their professional at personal development through mentioning.

Table 3: Percentage response of the influence of level of education acquired on perception of primary school teachers towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring.

Level of Education	Level of Perception			Total
	Negative	Mildly Positive	Positive	
NCE	265 (29)	66 (7)	89 (10)	420 (47)
B.ED	291 (32)	84 (9)	105 (12)	480 (53)
Total	556 (62)	150 (17)	194 (21)	900 (100)

Table 3 shows that primary school teachers with NCE showed 29%, 7.% and 10% of negative, mildly positive and positive perceptions towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring,

while those with B.ED showed 32.%, 9.% and 12% of negative, mildly positive and positive perceptions respectively.

Research Question 4: To what extent does sex influence the

perception of primary school teachers towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring?

Table 4: Percentage response of the influence of sex on perception of primary school teachers towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring.

Sex	Level of Perception			Total
	Negative	Mildly Positive	Positive	
Male	261 (29)	79 (9)	90 (10)	450 (50)
Female	275 (33)	71 (8)	104 (11)	450 (50)
Total	556 (62)	150 (17)	194 (21)	900 (100)

Table 4 shows that 29%, 9% and 10% of male primary school teachers showed negative, mildly positive and positive perceptions respectively towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring, while 33%, 8% and 11% of female primary school teachers showed negative, mildly positive and positive perceptions.

Discussion

This study used primary school teachers in Owerri Educational Zone. Table 1 shows that primary school teachers show a negative perception towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring. A good percentage of 62% showed a negative perception. This shows that primary school teachers are not aware of the benefits of enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring.

Table 2 shows that a total of 556 or 17% of all respondents presented a

negative perception towards enhancing the personal and professional development through mentoring, while a total of 194 or 21% showed a positive perception. An appreciable percent of 17% showed a middle positive perception. The indication from the finding is that teachers have a negative perception towards enhancing their personal and professional development through mentoring by years of service. This finding point to the fact that years of service is a determining factor of teachers' perception.

Table 3 shows that there is a little disparity in the perception of teachers by level of education. 29% of the teachers with N C E certificate showed a negative perception while 32% of those with the Bed certificate also showed a negative perception. The differences in their perceptions were not seen as significant. This finding indicates that the level of education is not a determining factor in their perception. It could

be concluded that there is a possibility that the concept of mentoring is not quite clear to them hence the skepticism

In answer to research question 4, table 4 shows that both male and female teachers" showed a negative response with high perception of 69%. The indication is that sex is not a determining factor of teachers" perception towards enhancing their personal and professional development through mentoring since both male and female were in agreement in their perception.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing analysis and discussions the researchers drew a number of conclusions. Primary school teachers in the area of study are not aware of the benefits of enhances their professional and personal development through mentoring.

It was also concluded that teachers in this areas of study have a negative perception towards enhancing their personal and professional development through mentoring. Thus, it could be deduced that there is a possibility that the concept of mentoring is not quite clear to them hence the skepticism and that years of service, level of education of teachers and sex have no influence on the perception of teacher

towards enhancing their professional and personal development through mentoring.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study?

1. There should be a review in current developmental programmes of the teacher to incorporate the mentoring system.
2. Government and agencies that are concerned with teachers' development should ensure the use of mentors in grooming teachers in the lower and middle basic education level in order to enhance their professional and personal development for the improvement of teaching and learning.
3. Teachers should not teach in isolation, rather methods such as team teaching which encourages mentoring where teachers learn to net work with others in other to improve on their practices.
4. To improve teaches' perception towards mentoring, professional development practices such that provide one-to-one guidance and ongoing on-site support should be carried out regularly because learning depends on the collegiality among teachers.

5. Principals and headmasters should establish friendly and co-operation prone environment in their schools to encourage teachers to have self-confidence in themselves as well as feel free to consult each other at difficult moments without fear and feeling of complex.

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