

Mentorship: A Panacea for Success

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to show-case the potency of mentorship in the attainment of success by an individual, group of individuals, or society. It tries to argue that success is a universal value which path to attainment begins with the individual. It argues that the individual's will and passion serve as a driving force for the attainment of success. Such a force, though self-inspired, is activated by the instant environment through socialization, schooling, and mentorship. Its beliefs that, though schooling maybe a potent factor in skills acquisition, mentorship tend to be a more potent and viable route to achieving success, as it combines the goal of transferring skills with the development or arousal of a passionate desire zeal and willingness through, instilling a positive self-worth and attitude in the mentee. The paper believes that, as important as mentorship is, it is limited in its bid to achieving success all by itself. Success as a value, though universal, varies in its measures. To succeed in life therefore, requires a combination of multivariate factors one of which is mentorship.

Keywords: Mentorship, Panacea, Leadership, Followership and Success

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the advent of industrialization, work was edifying, gratifying and highly a part and parcel of livelihood. Work wasn't just for the purpose of monetary payment but was in fact integral for the molding of character. Work was familiarly and communally organized, and was essentially synonymous with "power". Success at this time was greatly measured by "power", that is, how strong at work a person was. The craze to be seen as powerful and or successful set the impetus for polygyny, polyandry, and plurality of children. As the society evolves, work which was highly mechanical, simple and manual became "technically", scientifically, and organically organized.

This was occasioned by the industrial revolution of the early 19th c in Europe. This revolution delves A devastating blow on "work". Man became alienated from work as the ties between man and work became superficial. Work became a means to receipt of monetary payments and subsequent wealth accumulation. Work,

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which was essentially simple and done greatly with physical skills became essentially done with people with requisite technical skills.

The implication of this was that, since all men / woman were not equally endowed, those with requisite technical skills were employed and remunerated higher than those with no requisite skills-their physical power notwithstanding. The charge then, was for men, desirous of paid employment which was essentially the in-think, to seek some education and training to acquire the requisite skills. The more dynamic and willing the individual was to acquire emerging skills, the more relevant he was in the organization of work and the wealthier he was. In order to offer man this opportunity, there was the need to evolve a formal schooling system thus the introduction of formal education. Education and the schooling system, though, thought of as a bakery for human labor to salvage the industry became highly limited in meeting the speedily changing technology of the age. Education was more interested in transmitting cherished social values than being incubators of technology and innovation. Education became bakers of administrative and managerial skills as well as individuals who are largely passive appraisals of the status-quo; docile, and more resigned totally to faith. As the gap between skills required in industrial societies and skills actually acquired by graduates of educational institutions widens, graduates' unemployment, with its concomitant effects became manifest; Success came to be measured by the possession of relevant and requisite skills; and the tendency to go wild for the pursuit of wealth became eminent.

To cope with this scenario, there was the need for individuals to seek counsel or any other form of attachment with skill users. Such attachment or counsel was with a view to gaining experience and skills from these skilled fellows for wealth creation and or balance in the changing and demanding circumstance. This practice of attachment or establishing a relationship with a skilled and experienced person for the purpose of gaining knowledge and skills for striking a balance in life is what is referred to as mentorship. To have a balance in life i.e good health, wealth, self-discipline, peaceful home/ family, good adjustment within the environment, sustained cordial relationship with neighbors, and good disposition to religion is what I feel is "success".

MEANING AND EVOLUTION OF MENTORSHIP

Mentorship is a personal development, a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. It is the practice of attaching or establishing a relationship by a less experienced, skilled and knowledgeable person for the purpose of guidance, for success. Crudely put, mentorship is the formal and informal relationship between a wise and trusted counsellor / teacher, and another individual in need of counseling, knowledge and skills. It is a learning and development partnership between someone with vast experience and someone who wants to learn. It is the constant interaction between a mentor and a mentee for the purpose of advice guidance, teaching or counseling.

A mentor according to Online Webster's Dictionary is someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person. A mentor however may be younger but has a certain area of expertise. A mentee is a person who receives mentorship. Sometimes he is referred to as a protégé (male), protégée (female), or apprentice. The formal and / or informal engagement or development of relationship, or partnership between a mentor and a mentee, or apprentice for the purpose of guidance, counseling, transferring of skills and knowledge for the accomplishment of life's targets is mentorship. Whereas mentorship is a guidance and or teaching relationship, mentoring is the process of skills or knowledge transmission from a mentor to a mentee. Mentoring, crudely put, is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career or professional development (Faren, 2015). It entails informal communication, usually face-to-face, and a sustained period of time between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom or experience and a person who is perceived to have less relevant knowledge, wisdom or experience. mentoring therefore is a process through which the mentee is mentored. While the relationship or the partnership of a mentor and mentee is mentorship, mentoring is defined as the web of sustained activities/ communication, exchanges or relationship that eventually leads to expected or positive outcome on the mentee.

EVOLUTION OF MENTORSHIP

Mentorship is a practice which is as old as human society. Its root therefore is lost in antiquity. However, the word mentorship is inspired by the character of “Mentor” in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Though the actual mentor in the story is a somewhat ineffective old man, the goddess Athena takes on his appearances in order to “guide” young Telemachus in his time of difficulty. Since guidance is a universal practice, as old as man himself, the practice which approximates its cotemporary usage can historically be exemplified by the guru-disciple tradition practiced in Hinduism and Buddhism, the discipleship system practiced by Rabbinical Judaism and Christianity, eldership as well as apprenticing under the medieval guild system.

In Europe, mentorship, as in above, has existed since at least Ancient Greek times and in the United States, Advocates for work place equity in the 2nd half of the 20th century popularized the term mentor and the concept of career mentorship as a part of a larger social capital lexicon- which also include learning, such as glass ceiling, bamboo ceiling, networking, role model; and gatekeeper, serving to identify and address the problem barring non-dominant groups from professional success. Main stream business literatures subsequently adopted the terms and concepts promoting them as pathways to success for all career climbers. As at 1970, these terms were not in the general American vocabulary, but by the mid 1990’s they have becomes part of everyday speech.

THE PURPOSE OF MENTORSHIP

Simply, the purpose of mentorship is to offer guidance to a mentee for the sole aim of bettering his/her knowledge and developing talent and skills for rightful adjustment in society. Mentorship is aimed at transferring knowledge, wisdom and skills for the betterment of the life of the recipient. Knowledge is the product of learning and experience while wisdom is the highest form of knowledge. Knowledge is a familiarity, awareness or understanding of someone or something such as facts information, description or skills acquired though experiance and learning. It can refer to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. It can be implicit or explicit and can also be more or less formal or systematic. Epistemologically Plato, in cavell (2002) defined knowledge as justified true belief.

Wisdom, according to *dictionary.com* (2015) is the ability to think and act using knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense and insights. It is the habit or disposition to perform the action with the highest degree of adequacy under any given circumstance. Wisdom, in all, in a disposition to find the truth coupled with an optimum judgment as to what actions should be taken. It is a disposition which informs a right sense of judgment. This right sense of judgment serves to instill self-discipline, self-control and self-confidence. To the Ancient near East cultures, wisdom was seen as a way of thinking, perceiving, arguing and instructing people about the meaning of life. Philosophically wisdom is seen as epistemic humanity and epistemic accuracy. *Plato’s Apology zee-23c*; Socrates, (in Plato’s *Apology*), sees wisdom as knowledge, extensive factual knowledge, knowing how to live well, knowing how to, and succeeding at living well and as rationality. Skills on the other hand is the ability to do or perform a task expertly well (Mbotto & Archibong, 2009). It is an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate systematic and sustained effort to smoothly and adequately carry out complex activities or job functions involving idea (cognitive skills), things (technical skills) and or people (interpersonal skills). It is the learned ability to carry out a task with predetermined results often within a given amount of time, energy or both.

Mentorship therefore seeks to transfer wisdom knowledge and skills from a mentor to a mentee. It seeks to provide a guide to the mentee on what to know, how to know it, what to do, how to do it and when, what, how, and when to take actions and above all how to make rightful and adequate adjustment in the ever-changing society. Mentorship seeks to sharpen the mentee’s cognitive, technical and interpersonal skills. It seeks to develop, in the mentee, self-consciousness, and instills self-confidence, courage and a positive attitude. It seeks also to build in the mentee a sense of self-worth, and a positive attitude. It is the goal of mentorship to develop the whole person and guide the mentee to success.

TYOLOGY OF MENTORSHIP/MENTORING

Mentorship can typologically be classified into formal and informal. Formal mentorship is a planned and structured relationship between a mentor and mentee while informal mentorship is the relatively unplanned and unstructured relationship with highly informal communication between the mentor and the mentee. Besides the formal and informal relationships, mentoring relationship can be peer, situational and supervisory.

In attempting to describe how mentorship can develop and or explain the types of mentorships, *Buell (2007)*, identified 4types of mentorship:

1. ***The cloning mentorship***: the type in which the mentor replicates or attempt to make a duplicate copy of himself out of the mentee.
2. ***The nurturing mentorship***: takes more of a parent figure, creating a safe open environment in which the mentee can both leave and try things for himself.
3. ***Friendship mentorship***: more of peer affairs, no hierarchical relationship involved, and Apprenticeship-less of personal or social aspects. Professional relationship is the sole focus.

MENTORING TECHNIQUES

Whatever the type, mentorship involves mentoring. There are therefore some basic techniques involved in mentoring. These techniques which are commonly used by mentors include;

Accompanying techniques: making communication in a caring way which involves taking part in the learning process side-by-side with the learner.

Sowing techniques: the act of preparing the learner, for learning the result of which may not be immediate. Here the mentor assures that the mentee may not immediately understand or even accept what is being presented but could be of value to the mentee when the situation arises in the future. It is more of idioms or parables.

Catalyzing techniques: a technique used to plunge the learner into change by provoking a different way of thinking, a change in identity or a re-ordering of value.

Showing techniques: this is a technique which is used to make learning more enjoying, more of everyday experience and simpler by using personalized example to demonstrate a skill or an activity. Showing techniques is more of living by example. The mentee learns by overtly observing what you say and do.

Harvesting techniques: This technique is usually used to create awareness or recall what is assumed to have been learnt by experience. Here the mentor tries to know how much the mentee has assimilated. The major reflective questions here include: What have you learned, how useful it is etc. Through questioning, the mentor evaluates both himself and the mentee.

Although we have attempted to highlight some of the most acceptable techniques used in mentoring, much of guidance in real life takes a combination of all the techniques. Much of life guidance is also informally transmitted and learned with the mentor greatly unaware that his actions are significantly being modeled by others.

MEANING OF SUCCESS

Success, like beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It is derived from the Latin word “successes” which is equivalent to succeed—a stem of succeder which means to succeed. According to www.thefreedictionary.com (2016) success is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. It is the good out-come of an undertaking. Success is the favorable or prosperous termination of attempts or endeavors. According to www.dictionary.com Unabridged (2016), success is the attainment of wealth, position, honor or the like. It is in fact synonymous with achievement, fame, triumph etc. The Online Merriam Webster Dictionary defines success as a favorable or desired outcome of an attempt, the attainment of wealth, favor or eminence. Muellar (2015) sees success as the opposite of failure and defines it as the status of having achieved and accomplished an aim or objective. According to Terris (2014), success is a sustained attitude, interest and passion to really live life. It is like a life

journey which starts from the inside and takes planning, effort, persistence, training and time. It is the sustained balancing of one's life in every sphere that makes life possible. Success therefore is sustained balancing of one's personal attitudes, behavior, with family, friends, work, business, community, environment, material things and spirituality. The building of harmony in all these spheres is what is success. To be successful, according to Tarris (2014) an individual must properly strike a balance of attention, interest and time, on all. All may not have equal importance, but none must be ignored.

Generally, success is a universal value, it is a lifelong desire and a sustained balance of one's social, economic, political and religious life to the extent to which such a balancing effect a social status that draws, fame, eminence, favor wealth respect and influence.

HOW TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

To achieve success, there must be a personal determination, the inside push and the desire for success. According to Tarris (2014), to succeed in life every individual must achieved a success journey from within. He must know or try to come to terms with the meaning of success. Real success is not measured by the possession of wealth, property, influence but on the amount of people who are able to live a better and more advanced life because of what you do or created. Success lies not in trophies but the beneficial consequences of the trophies in the immediate environment.

Another key to success is goal setting, the individual must set some targets in life and strive towards accomplishing the targets.

- The individuals must not be planless, aimless or strategy less. He must design a plan/strategy with which to accomplish his goal.
- The individuals must divide the goal into easier to reach sub goals and the individuals must strive to accomplish each of the sub goals.

From the forgoing, it can conveniently be said that to succeed in life or to achieve success, the individual must initiate in his thinking faculty, the burning desire for success, he must plan, make effort, preserver in his effort, acquire some training and expense time and energy. He must be focused, and put on a positive attitude. Success is a life long journey.

THE PLACE OF MENTORSHIP IN ACHIEVING SUCCESS

Talents are endowment while skills are acquired. All men, are not equally skillful in all life's endeavors. The meeting point that bridges this life of inequality in mentorship. As seen in the section on how to achieve success, mentorship is key to all the steps. You need the wisdom of the wise to initiate a positive, intelligent and wise sojourn into one's self. You need the exposition of a legend, the experience of the elderly and the narration of the successful to arouse interest and challenge one's capacity for positive action. The mentor performs this role. He opens the mentees' thinking faculty, he unlocks the hidden treasures in the mentee, and bounces him into a world of self-knowledge, self-realization and positivism. The mentor, in mentorship, guides the mentee into a self-thinking, planning and executing individual. He guides him into achieving skills, for not just survival but, for value addition in the ever-changing world of needs and insatiable wants. Mentorship incubates technology and innovation, a pair of which, sets the pace for socio-economic transformation. Mentorship by its very focus on total transformation of the individual, bequeath requisite wisdom, knowledge and skills which are engines of success. Mentorship breeds inert job/work gratification. By developing a relationship, the mentees enjoy what he does, he derives satisfaction from his job and the job/work gives him an identity. The techniques of mentoring make skills transmission/ transfer a lot easier and simpler. Mentees are not only able to have a fair knowledge of a phenomenon but are able to practically manipulate the phenomenon.

Mentorship takes man from the realm of total dependence on nature, where man is merely a puppet of destiny to the realm where man can, not only understand nature but radically and practically interact with nature. Mentorship, like education, offers a liberating experience to the mentee, it sets man loose from the gripe of poverty to the realm of affluence, prestige, wealth and riches. Mentorship foster the development of

interpersonal skills, needed for peaceful coexistence and meaningful adjustment and adaptation. It develops and transmit cognitive skills which incubate ideas. Ideas, as you know, rule the world. Ideas, drives innovation, invention, technology and social change. Mentorship incubates technical skills which serves to, not only engender technology but energizes the ever-changing technology. There is virtually no sphere of life that one can excel or succeed all by himself without guidance. Mentorship therefore is a catalyst for human social capital development and corresponding success.

THE PRACTICE OF MENTORSHIP IN NIGERIA

As a country, mentorship has historically been a part and parcel of skills acquisition though highly unstructured, unplanned and greatly informal. The bronze civilization and its corresponding bronze technology and arts among the Bini people was passed on from one generation to the next, so with the Nok and Igbokwu cultures through mentorship. Apprenticeship was also a common practice in several cultures. As societies evolves and much of learned knowledge becomes acquired through formal schooling, with its emphasis on certification, the emphasis on practical skills acquired through apprenticing became less fashionable. Many who had acquired this life skill through apprenticing lose their prestige and were accordingly accorded fewer social statues or values. Mentorship in its strict sense gave way to formal schooling.

In formal schooling, what approximate mentorship, particularly in Nigeria, came to the fore. Teachers became mentors of the students who themselves grew to mentor the ones after them. Lecturers also became mentors of their student particularly their project students. While experienced teachers and lecturers became mentors of the less experienced or novice teachers/lecturers. With the wake of the renewed emphasis on practical and employable skills. Many organizations have had to introduce graduate attachment programmes, graduate trainee programmes, while educational institutions have enshrined students industrial work experience schemes as well as teaching practices. Federal and states governments are establishing technology and skills acquisition/incubating centers. All these are efforts and practices geared towards effective mentoring for successful skills transfer. Many practical skills transferring disciplines have been introduced in school's curriculum and entrepreneurial skills centers established in most schools. Notwithstanding these efforts, real mentorship in Nigeria is still relatively ill practiced. There is still the high dependence on paper qualifications and grades than practical skills. There is a relatively low awareness on the benefits of mentorship, many relatively young lecturers have refused to be mentored, same with some students. Mentorship requires effective communication, love, hard work, sincerity, patience, perseverance and determination. It requires humility, sacrifice and a friendly disposition. These, in real practice, have no doubt served to make the practice of mentorship in Nigeria largely a mirage.

In the context of single parenting, mentorship can be a valuable support strategy for single parents in Nigeria, as it provides them with guidance, encouragement, and practical advice from experienced individuals who have navigated similar challenges. Mentors can offer emotional support, share knowledge and skills related to parenting and household management, and help single parents develop strategies for overcoming obstacles and achieving their goals (Akah, Ikpeme & Ede, 2022). Mentorship programs could pair single parents with mentors who have successfully raised children as single parents or who have expertise in relevant areas such as financial management, childcare, or education. These mentors can serve as role models, providing encouragement and reassurance to single parents who may be feeling overwhelmed or isolated. They can also offer practical assistance, such as helping single parents access community resources, navigate legal or bureaucratic processes, or develop strategies for balancing work and family responsibilities (Akah, et al, 2022). Overall, mentorship can play a vital role in providing single parents in Calabar with the support, guidance, and encouragement they need to thrive despite the challenges they may face. By fostering positive relationships and providing personalized support, mentorship programs can help single parents build resilience, develop skills, and create a supportive network of individuals who are invested in their success.

In medical facilities for instance, Mentorship plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of services rendered by social workers in healthcare settings like the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital (Ede, Enamhe, Akah, Ogar, Eyang & Oviahon, 2024). Through mentorship, experienced social workers can pass on their knowledge, skills, and values to novice social workers, thereby enhancing their ability to provide high-quality care to

patients. Studies have shown that mentorship programs in healthcare settings lead to improved job satisfaction, increased competence, and enhanced patient outcomes (Kashiwagi et al., 2013; Zilembo & Monterosso, 2008). In the context of the UCTH, mentorship could facilitate the development of essential skills such as effective communication, case management, and interdisciplinary collaboration among social workers. These skills are vital for delivering comprehensive services to patients, addressing their psychosocial needs, and promoting their overall well-being (Ede, et al 2024). Furthermore, mentorship fosters a supportive work environment where social workers feel valued, motivated, and empowered to deliver quality services. This positive work culture can translate into improved patient experiences and outcomes, ultimately contributing to the hospital's reputation and overall quality of care. Mentorship plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of services rendered to patients by social workers at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital. Implementing structured mentorship programs can help cultivate a skilled and compassionate workforce, ultimately benefiting both social workers and the patients they serve. According to Akah & Uzoh (2019), mentorship can play a significant role in addressing the compulsive desire for material wealth and unwholesome acquisitive spirit in Nigeria, thereby informing social work intervention and policy development efforts. Mentors can serve as role models who guide individuals towards more balanced and meaningful pursuits, helping them prioritize values such as community, empathy, and social responsibility over materialism.

Research suggests that mentorship programs can effectively promote prosocial behaviors and values among participants, leading to positive social outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002; Herrera et al., 2000). By fostering supportive relationships and providing guidance, mentors can help individuals develop a sense of purpose beyond material accumulation, encouraging them to engage in activities that contribute to the well-being of society. In the context of Nigeria, where issues of materialism and unwholesome acquisitive spirit may be prevalent, mentorship programs tailored to address these concerns could be particularly beneficial. According to Akah & Uzoh (2019), social workers can leverage mentorship to empower individuals to resist societal pressures and adopt more fulfilling lifestyles that prioritize personal growth, social connections, and community engagement.

The implication of this is a relatively low socio-economic transformation and or development in Nigeria. There is a great dependence on oil revenue which contributes relatively less to the Gross Domestic Product. There is also low technical know-how to propel the much-needed transformation for socio-economic development. Although individually taken, Nigerians are among the most successful in the continent and some of the richest in the world, Nigeria is far from being seen as a successful country. These “somehow” successful Nigerians in the strictest sense of the word, can be said to be, in fact, unsuccessful after all.

THE WAY FORWARD

The way forward for mentorship and success is in 3-fold. The individual, family and institutional.

Individual Level

- The individual must embrace core values of hard work, sincerity, prudence, success, trustworthiness, integrity and humility.
- The individual must be ready and willing to learn or acquire knowledge.
- The individual must be amendable to change
- The individual must re-order his priorities
- The individual must be willing and ready to take concrete and practical actions.

The Family Levels

- The family must re-define her role as, not just sole mechanism for replenishing human population/procreation, but of, initiating the individual into life. The family must perform her socialization function by inculcating in their member from the beginning such core values required for effective and successful social life.

- The family must strive to go beyond socialization to giving real support to her members in terms of training and mentorship.
- The family must reinvigorate good value and family identity.
- The family must reinvent herself as an economic unit and shorn selfishness.

The Institutional Level

All the social institutions must be alive to their responsibilities

- The educational institution must be flexible enough to, not just, embrace change but be incubators of skills or centers of innovation, discovery, imitation, and change the school's curriculum must reflect the yearnings of the time thus serve to produce human capacities that could conveniently meet these yearnings.
- The educational institutions must also champion value re-orientation, as well as resocialization of the citizenry.
- The economic institution must set the enabling environment for the growth of SMES as engines of economic growth and development.
- The political institution must-exercise and muster political will to eliminate corruption, injustice, and inequity. It must foster a high sense of justice equity and security.
- The religious institution must strive at all times to maintain pattern, instill discipline and a high sense of peace and integration.

The above in my mind can encourage true mentorship, stimulate positive competitiveness and success.

CONCLUSION

Success in a universal value, every individual, family, community or society aspires and strives responsibly to achieve success. The success of individual members of a family, community and society translates to the success of the family, community and society. Efforts have been made from time immemorial to achieve success by man, social institutions strengthened by deliberate policies, have attempted and are still attempting to achieve success. One of such efforts and policies is mentorship. Mentorship if properly and deliberately undertaken, is a sure and potent way to revolutionized the economic, educational, and political institutions and engender not just individual successes but collective success.

Mentorship, though important, can only conveniently be a viable panacea for success if combined with other multivariate and salient determinants of success. Such other determinants expressed earlier can also be found in motivational and wise expressions as;

- People rarely succeed, unless they have fun in what they are doing.
- When you set goals, they work in two ways- we work on them, and they work on us.
- Action is the foundational key to all success (Pablo Picasso)
- The only limit to your realization of tomorrow will be your doubts of today.
- Action springs not from just thought but from a readiness for responsibility.
- Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other (Abraham Lincoln)
- You are not obligated to win but obligated to keep trying to do the best you can every day.
- Defeat is not the worst of failure, not to have tried is the true failure (George Edward Woodberry).
- Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.
- Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment (Jim Rohn).

- Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from unshakable will.
- Don't search for the meaning of life, make your life have meaning (Ray Tarris).

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