Teacher Perception on Mentoring for Effective Professional Development in the English Language Teaching of the Oracy Skills Among Secondary School Teachers in Enugu Education Zone

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Abstract

Mentoring is indispensable in effective teaching, particularly in view of the innovations in English Language teaching across nations. This paper investigates the teachers perception on mentoring and how it can help to inculcates confidence, motivation, encouragement, attention and interest needed for effective teaching of the first two language skills known as oracy skills listening skills and speaking skills and professional development of the teachers. The researchers made use of 150 teachers drawn from secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone and structured questionnaire for data collection; mean, standard deviation and t-test were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that the teachers perceive mentoring in English language teaching; that teachers' perception does not depend on teaching experience. Based on these, the researchers made some recommendations.

Key Words: Mentoring, Mentor, Mentee and Mentorship

Introduction

Education is a continuous process and at the helm of affairs of educational process is the teacher. The issue of improved teacher education has been of great concern to educational stakeholders. No wonder FRN 2004 National Policy on Nigeria Education states that: teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and curriculum. Teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. Continuing, it states that in-service training shall be developed as integral part of teacher education and shall take care of all inadequacies. This implies that pre-service and in-service teachers need programme that will make them qualitative, conscientious, committed and effective teachers who are abreast of changes in teaching and development in their subject areas.

In the recent times, Nigeria is involves in millennium development goals which among other things include training and retraining of teachers. The English language teachers are not exempted in this goal.

To Gbeyonron (2007) the English language teachers need sensitization on the job training and teacher training programme. The teacher of English needs to be nurtured guided and built in skills and methodology in order to be competent and confident enough to handle challenges in language teaching. The English language teacher needs to be well equipped in imparting knowledge in the areas of basic language skills: listening, speaking. For him/her to be well equipped he/she needs continuous guidance, providing an encouragement that will help him/hr develop professionally.

Professional Development according to Loucks Horsley et al (2010) is process and practices that improve the job related knowledge, skills and attitude of school employee. To them these skills, knowledge and attitudes should enhance the intellectual,

physical, emotional and well being of all the learners in the school regardless of their linguistic, cultural economic or national background.

This is to say that the teachers will acquire worthwhile skills and knowledge that will help them to impart language skills to the learners. The language teachers have to be effective in order to teach the learners. To be effective is to be versatile in pedagogical skills and subject matter. This is the focal point of professional development.

To Guskey (2000) Fullani (2005) Loucks Horsly et al (2010) there are five core principles of Professional Development. These include:

- To build on foundation of skills, knowledge and expertise

- To engage participants as learners

- To provide practice feedback and follow up

- To measure changes in the teacher knowledge and skills.

- To measure changes in student performance

Based on the above stated principles, it is obvious that if adhered to will lead to successful and effective professional development. It is also deduced from the above that professional development will link new knowledge and activities to what the teachers or practitioners are already familiar with. The professional development will give the practitioner as well as the learners that are the target.

The question then is who can give this needed skill, knowledge and expertise. The skilled helpers are needed. The British Council (2005) continuous professional Development referred to these skilled helpers as mentors and the process of working with teachers as mentoring.

According to them, Professional Development is a life-long process and does not stop once the trainee teachers or mentees become qualified, in-service teachers can

continue to develop through the assistance of skilled helpers or mentors.

It is on this backdrop that this paper sets out to find out teachers' perception on mentoring for effective professional development. The purpose is to find out teachers view on mentoring and how it can help to inculcate confidence, motivation, encouragement, attention and interest needed for effective teaching of the first two basic language skills called oracy skills.

It was Gbeyor (2011) who opines that teacher education should not be restricted to formal teacher training institution alone if teachers of the English Language are to be abreast of dynamic language teaching and learning situations. This implies that retraining and in-service teacher development is highly needed for effective service delivery in English Language Teaching.

Mentoring, Mentor, mentee and Mentorship

From historical point of view, the word mentor was inspired by the character of Mentor in Homer's Odyssey.   From the story the actual mentor was an inactive old man whose appearance was taken by the goddess Anthena in order to guide the young Telemachus in his time of difficulty.

If we are to go by the above, a mentor can be seen as a guardian. A mentor is an individual who is skilled and more experienced to help another individual. According to Longmans Dictionary of Contemporary English mentor is an experienced person who advises and helps a less experienced person. Mentors are those who help trainee or qualified teachers to develop professionally. No one is an encyclopedia and no one can see his/her ears without a mirror. For one to have a better view of things he needs to stand on the shoulders of others who may be taller than him. Mentoring as a system where people with a lot of experience

knowledge e.t.c. are used to advise other people at work or professional life is necessary to help out.

To Bozeman B. and Feeney, MK (2007) mentoring is a process for informal transmission of knowledge, social capital and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work career or professional development. On this premise is the trust of this study to find out teachers' perception on the relevance of mentoring in their language teaching and learning development.

Bozeman B, and Feeny, M.K. (2007) still on mentoring opine that mentoring involves informal communication on face to face bases in a sustained period of time between a person who is understood to have greater knowledge, wisdom or experience and a person understood to have less knowledge.

In the same vein, Cohen and Garner (1976) see mentoring as a situation where the student-teacher should see himself as one who is limited and inexperienced and eager to profit and learn his craft from the advice and help of a qualified staff.

From the above assertions, mentoring can be viewed to be a process where people of higher experiential knowledge and skills in job career will impact such to people of lower experience and by the process of intellectual osmosis the mentee will gradually pick the knowledge and develop better.

It is in view of this that FRN (2004) in NPE advocate that NCE graduates undergo internship for 2 years while B.Ed graduates should do the same in a year. It is expected that during this period of internship fresh graduates will be mentored to understand the teaching process better.

Mentorship is a personal developmental relationship in which more experienced and

knowledgeable individuals help to guide less experience or less knowledgeable ones. It is on this background that Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria TRCN stipulates in teachers code of conduct that a senior teacher should show exemplary manners in terms of self respect and conduct and strive to bring up junior teachers professionally.

Guttman (2007) reiterates that the best mentors are people who look out for talented people and show them how to succeed being supportive models. The recipient of mentorship may be referred as a protégé if a male or protégée if female of an apprentice it was of recent that he/she is called mentee.

Supervisors/Mentors

For a better understanding of the word mentor we need to understand the supervisor's role and his approaches. A supervisor helps the trainee teachers to develop professionally by playing the role of a manager, instructor, counselor, observe feedback given and evaluation. In doing these a lot of skills are used and impacted to prospective teachers. As a manager, the skills of planning, organizing, liaising and motivating can be employed. As a counselor, skills like relating, helping, responding is inculcated in the mentee. Other skills a supervisor can use include consolidating, establishing frames, stimulating, sharing and analysis.

Supervisors can do all these through technique or approaches like directive, supervision, alternative supervision, collaborative supervision, Non directive, creative and self help explorative supervision. These types of supervisors approach are called from Gobliands supervision model. The work of a supervisor going by the above is complex but it is related to a mentoring work.

But based on Anderson and Shannon Model, a mentor's relationship with the mentee is that of a role model who informs, confirms, disconfirms, prescribes or questions.

He can also function as a sponsor when he protects, promotes and supports. He is an encourager when he affirms, inspires, challenges and a counselor when he listens, advises probes and clarifies and can also be a friend when he relates and accepts the trainee.

If we are to go by this model a mentor will help to motivate, guides, gives confidence as he encourages the English language teacher in his teaching and learning. In another mentoring model by Furlong and Maynard in Field B and Field T (1994) teachers and mentors A Practical Guide, the mentor is seen as a model, a coach, critical friend and a co-enquirer. The above model depicts a general conception of mentoring. It describes a situation of helping another learn and enhance their professional role as a teacher. A skilled mentor should not assume the position of a master in master-apprentice relationship. He is going to force the mentor to do things the exact way he would have done it rather he is to adopt several roles appropriate to teachers developmental needs. To be an effective mentor two basic skills should be adopted.

- The skill of establishing trust
- The skill of relating to other.

An effective highly skilled mentor should not require only professional knowledge but also the ability to use that knowledge in variety of ways suitable to the mentee while assisting them to develop their own unique professional selves. The mentor has to bear in mind that there are many lands of effective teaching not just the one model on his own practice he has to strive to develop a whole person.

Values of Mentoring

Mentors serve as experienced friend who is there to help in any number of situation. They can give support for education, day to day living as well as career place. To support a mentee the mentor need approaches like.

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- Accompanying technique

- Sowing

- Catalyzing

- Showing

- Harvesting

In accompany technique, the mentor will make commitment in a caring way by taking part in learning process of the trainee. In sowing approach just like a school is sown, it may not be ready to germinate instantly, a mentee may not be ready to immediately change. Mentors are confronted with difficulty of preparing the learner before he is ready to change. In sowing, the mentor has to know what he say may not be understood or be accepted immediately but will one day make sense to the mentee when the need arises.

A mentor will employ catalyzing technique when change reaches a critical level of pressure, learning can reach its climax. Here the mentor plunges the mentee right into the change provoking, different though change in identity or value.

Another vital technique is showing. In this case things are made understandable through the use of mentors demonstrative skills or activity you show what you are talking by your own doing. For instance a mentor may model speech work before mentee. Activities like observation, feedback and support meeting can be employed.

Harvesting technique is when the mentor creates awareness of what was learned and draw conclusion. Here questions like what have you learned? How useful is it? May be asked not all the techniques should be applied at the same time. It should be applied based on situations and mindset of the mentee.

Mentor is of great value in professional development. It enhances career development, improves managerial skills, develop new experts put high potential individual at the careers fast track, promotes diversity and improves technical knowledge.

An English language teacher who is well mentored will gain all these and more. This will put him/her through in his technical know- how of performing his pedagogical duties. The question now is how many language teachers know that they need mentoring or professional development? How can mentoring help them in imparting knowledge effectively in the language skills needed for effective communication? This study will help us to have an insight on teachers' perception on mentoring and teaching and learning of the English language skills.

If we consider the goals of secondary school education in FRN (2004) thus to prepare the student for useful role in the society; to prepare them for higher education, it becomes imperative that there is an urgent need to re-tool English teachers for effective teaching of English in order to produce learners that can function effectively in the society. It is based on this premise that this paper undertake, in order to identify the gap in experienced and less experienced teachers and their perception of mentoring and first two language skills, listening and speaking teaching and suggest area of professional development. Specifically, this paper sets out to:

1. determine teachers perception of listening skills
2. determine teachers perception of speaking skills

To achieve these objectives, two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study and they are:

1. What is the teacher's perception of listening skills?
2. What is the teachers' perception of speaking skills?

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between experienced and less experienced teachers perception on mentoring for effective professional development.

Method

This study used a 10 item structured likert type questionnaire, it is sub-divided into 2 to answer the two research questions. It was administered on 150 English language teachers. The questionnaire sought to know the teachers' perception on mentoring/the first two language skills called oracy skills and whether then- perception were depended on experienced or less experienced. The data that occurred were analyzed using mean and t-test. The questionnaire has four point scale of very high extent (VHE), high extent (HE), low extent (LE), and very low extent (VLB) and weighted 4,3,2,1 respectively. A mean of 2.5 was used for decision making.

Research Question One: What is the Teachers' Perception of Listening Skills

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLB	X	SD	Decision
1	Mentoring gives confidence in listening skills.					3.00	096	Accepted
2	Mentoring motivates in listening skills					3.28	0.85	.Accepted
3	Mentoring increases encouragement in teaching listening skills.					3.27	0.79	Accepted
4	Mentoring increases attention in listening skills.					2.87	0.88	Accepted
5	Mentoring increases interest in listening skills.					3.24	0.92	Accepted
	Grand mean - 3.13							Accepted

From table 1 above, the analysis shows that all the 5 items have mean rating of 3.00, 3.28, 3.27, 2.87 and 3.24 respectively. It also indicated a grand mean of 3.13. It shows that both the experienced and less experienced teachers of English language perceive the

contributions of mentoring in the aspect of teaching listening skills.

Research Question Two: What is Teachers' Perception of Speaking Skills

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Decision
6	Mentoring gives confidence in speaking skills					3.00	0.69	Accepted
7	Mentoring motivates in speaking skills					300	0.84	Accepted
8	Mentoring increases encouragement in teaching speaking skills.					2.95	0.75	Accepted
9	Mentoring improves expression in speaking skills.					3.00	3.00	Accepted
10	Mentoring increases courage in speaking skills.					3.03	3.03	Accepted
	Grand mean - 3.00							Accepted

Data in table 2 shows that all the 5 items have mean rating of 3.00, 3.00, 2.95, 300 and 3.03 respectively. It also indicated a grand mean of 3.00. It shows that both the experienced and less experienced teachers of English language perceive the contributions of mentoring to the teaching of speaking skills.

Table Three: The Perception of Less Experienced and Experienced Teachers and Mentoring

S/N	Items	Less	60	Exp	90
		X	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD
1	Mentoring gives confidence in listening skills.	3.12	0.55	2.74	0.66
2	Mentoring motivates in listening skills.	3.24	0.64	2.93	0.82
3	Mentoring increases encouragement in teaching listing skills.	2.87	0.73	3.04	0.91
4	Mentoring increases attention in listening skills.	3.02	0.64	2.75	0.75
5	Mentoring increases interest in listening skills.	3.14	0.57	3.00	0.63
6	Mentoring gives confidence in speaking skills.	3.00	0.98	2.80	0,57
7	Mentoring motivates in speaking skills.	3.03	0.86	3.02	0.64
8	Mentoring increases encouragement in teaching speaking skills.	3.08	0.75	2.70	0.85

9	Mentoring improves expression during speaking skills.	3.25	0.76	2.85	0.94
10	Mentoring increases courage in speaking skills.	2.95	0.56	3.15	0.64
		3.07	0.704	2.898	0.76

Summary of t-test values verifying the significance different between

Variable	n	$\overline{x}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	P	Decision
Less Exp	60	3.07	0.70	148	1.9889	1.960	0.05	Reject
Expansion	90	2.89	0.76					

Data in the above table shows that the t-cal is higher than t-crit and this is rejected which shows that teacher's perception on mentoring depend on teaching experience.

Table 3 shows that the t-cal 1.9889 and t-crit is 1.960 which means that the hypothesis is rejected, that the experienced teachers perceive mentoring in professional development more than the less experience teachers perceive mentoring in professional development.

Discussion

The analysis in the two tables of the research questions 1and 2, show that the teachers of the English language both the experienced and less experienced perceive mentoring as a factor that can enhance professional development. This finding confirmed to the policy of FRN (2004:40) which states that

> *Teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and the curriculum. Teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession.*

> *In-services training shall be developed as an integral part of teacher education and shall take care of all inadequacies.*

The above implies that in-service teacher education programmes produce quality, conscientious and committed teachers, effort should be made that they are kept abreast with innovations in teaching and developments in their subject area.

Conclusion

This study set out to determine the English language teacher's perception of mentoring in professional development. 150 English language teachers were used for the study and the results of the data show that both the experienced and less experienced teachers viewed mentoring as an activity that can help to inculcate confidence, motivation, encouragement, attention and interest needed for effective teaching of the four language skills. Based on these findings the researchers make recommendations.

Recommendations

Having identified that there are gaps between the experienced and less experienced teachers and their perception of mentoring on the first language skills, the researchers recommend that enough time should be created for the mentor and mentee to have more discussion and directions.

There is need for the education unit and curriculum planners to integrate teaching of listening skills into the curriculum of secondary school level of our education. There is also need for the English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN) to direct the state coordinators of ELTAN to organize seminars monthly or quarterly for professional development of English Language teachers.

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