

**UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT**

**MENTORSHIP: A GAME CHANGER  
FOR THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

**A VALEDICTORY LECTURE**

**BY**

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## **PROGRAMME**

- 1. GUEST ARE SEATED**
- 2. INTRODUCTION**
- 3. THE VICE CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS**
- 4. CITATION**
- 5. THE VALEDICTORY LECTURE**

The lecturer shall remain standing during the citation. He shall step on the rostrum, and deliver his Valedictory Lecture. After the lecture, he shall step towards the Vice Chancellor, and deliver a copy of the Valedictory Lecture and return to his seat.

- 6. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR**
- 7. VOTE OF THANKS**
- 8. DEPARTURE**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am eternally grateful to Almighty God for being both my seen and unseen father (I lost my earthly father at the age of 7). Our God was there for me all through this journey.

For my mother, Mrs Roseline N. Ibe (Late), who was young enough to re-marry after my father's death but chose to stay back for my sake I owe an unredeemable debt. In addition to paying for my education and providing my physical needs she made me understand the position of God in my life at a very tender age. And by God's grace I held unto that teaching till date. Mama, you were a great woman and I know that you are still interceding for me.

I thank my better half, Lady Chika Ukamaka Ibe who never relented in seeking for the best for my family even at very costly personal sacrifices. You are a great motivator who will push and push until everybody has put in his/her best. I thank you, darling.

I thank my children, especially Chisom, my only daughter, who insisted I should give this lecture. You have all been supportive.

I thank my friends, Engr(Sir) B. E Akalonu and Sir A. C. Ozuzu who have been a tremendous source of support and encouragement.

For my academic journey, I want to thank Late Prof Chi U. Ikoku who despatched two DHL letters of appointment to London in 1984 after my PhD defence (one to the Department of Electrical Engineering, Imperial College, London and the second to my residence in London) just to ensure I came to University of Port Harcourt. Even after I picked an offer from a University in my home State, Anambra in 1984, I came like a prodigal son back to him in 1985 and he still went ahead to get me a fresh letter of appointment to resume in Uniport in October, 1985. Prof Ikoku, I salute you, Sir.

I want to thank my professional colleagues in the Faculty of Engineering. They were a source of strength for me. I want to particularly thank Prof Joseph A. Ajienka who gave me the opportunity to serve the University at very high levels. As the 7<sup>th</sup> Vice Chancellor of the University he appointed me the Director, ICTC in 2011. And in 2015 he presented me to Senate for election into the exalted office of Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration), the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest office in the management of this University. Prof Ajienka, I appreciate you. I want to also thank the former Acting Vice Chancellor of this University, Prof Stephen A. Okodudu for giving approval for me to deliver this lecture.

Finally, I want to congratulate Prof Owunari A. Georgewill on his appointment as the 9<sup>th</sup> Vice Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt and for graciously retaining the earlier approval given for this lecture. My Vice Chancellor Sir, I thank you.

## **Outline**

Acknowledgements

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Classical Examples of Mentorship

3.0 Mentoring Techniques/Types

4.0 The Impact of Academic Mentorship

5.0 Conclusion

## 1.0 Introduction

Mentorship is a relationship between two people where the individual with more experience, knowledge, and connections is able to pass along what he has learned to a more junior individual within a certain field. The more senior individual is the mentor, and the more junior is the mentee.

A mentor can help one advance within his field and connect him with opportunities that he might not have otherwise had access to. The mentor does this by sharing his knowledge, helping the mentee identify opportunities in his path, and potentially opening doors for him when the need arises.



Figure 1.1: A mentor helps others to greater effectiveness (Source: <http://www.shutterstock.com>)

Mentoring can also be looked at as a reciprocal and collaborative relationship between a senior and junior employee for the purpose of the mentee's growth, learning and career development.

Effective mentors often act as role models and sounding boards for their mentees and provide guidance to help them reach their goals.

A good mentor can help the mentee become more effective at work, learn new skills, develop greater confidence, and make better decisions for their overall career growth.



Figure 1.2: Mentoring involves a lot more of training, motivation, and others

When I joined the University of Port Harcourt in 1985 my Department and Faculty were just barely a few years old and so lacked the senior Academics who should have provided the much-needed mentorship to newly recruited young Academics like me. At a point during these early stages of my career I was



the only PhD and only senior Lecturer in my Department. The experience I went through guiding the people that came after me influenced my choice of **mentorship** as my parting gift to the University after 36 years of service.

## **2.0 Classical Examples of Mentorship**

The first example I would like to talk about is the relationship between Jesus Christ and his disciples. Jesus mentored his disciples who eventually went into the world to establish Christianity and preach the good news.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). The disciples of Jesus Christ were ordinary people comprising fishermen, tax collectors, etc. yet they did extra-ordinary things after the ascension of Jesus. The religious leaders who were in the Council were surprised at the boldness of Peter and John despite their not having any “special training” other than that they were with Jesus – but that was their training. What they lacked in any special education, they made up for in the mentoring process they went through under Jesus.



Figure 2.1: Jesus mentored His Disciples (Source: <http://www.bibleinfo.com>)

The second example is the **Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS)**.

The Igbo apprenticeship system, also known as the Igbo trade apprenticeship system and commonly referred to as “igba-odibo” or “igba-boi” or “imu-ahia” is a classical system where a very senior person “the master” or the mentor picks a young boy “the nwa boi” the mentee and teaches him the business he is doing over a specified period. Thereafter the mentee is “settled” i.e., set up to start his own business.

This mentorship system has proved very successful over the years and Harvard Business Review has accepted to publish the work of Prof Ndubuisi Ekekwe on the IAS.



Figure 3.1: Mechanic Workshops are an extension of IAS (Source: <https://autojosh.com/6-ways-avoid-being-ripped-off-nigerian-mechanics>)

Other notable examples of mentorship include the following:

- Socrates mentored Plato
- Maya Angelou mentored Oprah Winfrey
- Christian Dior mentored Yves Saint-Laurent
- Warren Buffet mentored Bill Gates
- Steve Jobs mentored Mark Zuckerberg
- Sir Freddie Laker mentored Richard Branson.

### **3.0 Mentoring Techniques**

Broadly, a mentoring style could either be “equipping” or “empowering”. An equipping mentor is one whose approach is predominantly that of a teacher, telling the mentee what to do and giving him detailed directives on how to do it. Such a

mentor tends to be domineering, giving the mentee little room to exercise his initiative. In this type of relationship, the mentee is dependent on the mentor, hardly takes risks and experiences relatively slow growth.

On the other hand, an empowering mentor is non-directive in his approach. He is more likely to give the mentee a broad outline of what needs to be done, allowing the mentee the freedom of using his initiative to find appropriate solutions. The mentee in this kind of relationship tends to be more independent and self-reliant. He accepts advice from the mentor but has the freedom to make his own judgement.

The four main styles of mentoring are:

- Informal Mentoring
- Guiding
- Collaborative and
- Confirming

### **3.1 Informal Mentoring**

This is an equipping style, involving the mentor playing an active role of teaching, explaining and describing things. The mentee is usually dependent on the mentor and shows little initiative. The mentee is also more likely to be open to advice from the mentor.

### **3.2 Guiding**

This falls under equipping style, but not to the degree of “Informal Mentoring”. Here the mentor suggests, rather than prescribes, options to the mentee. At times, the mentor

persuades and confronts the mentee. At other times he coaches/models. The mentor questions, probes and pushes to motivate the mentee.

### **3.3 Collaborative**

This is an empowering style of mentoring. The mentor and the mentee engage in a two-way dialogue, take joint decisions and joint responsibility for solving problems. In this arrangement the mentee is more independent and shows a lot more initiative.

### **3.4 Confirming**

This also involves the empowering style. The mentor serves as a sounding board for the mentee's ideas. The mentor listens and helps the mentee clarify his ideas and encourages him. The mentee develops confidence to present his ideas while incorporating insights gained from the mentor.

### **3.5 Types of Mentoring Arrangements**

Having discussed styles of mentoring let us now discuss six types of mentoring arrangements.



Figure 3.2: The Various Types of Mentoring Arrangements

**One-on-one Mentoring:** This type is the most traditional of all the types of mentoring. Only the mentor and the mentee are involved in this type of mentoring. And it is usually a more experienced individual with a less experienced or much younger mentee.

**Group Mentoring:** This involves one or several mentors working with a group of mentees. This is the model we adopt in appointing course advisers in the University.

**Peer mentoring:** Participants in this model are from the same or similar disciplines and have similar experiences. So, they pair up to offer support for each other involving a group approach or one-on-one mentoring relationship.

**Distance or E-mentoring:** With technology mentorship relationship no longer has to be face-to-face. Using online software or email participants can connect virtually and engage in effective mentoring activities.

**Reverse Mentoring:** This is a situation where the traditional model of mentorship is flipped. Instead of a senior professional mentoring a more junior employee, the junior employee mentors a more senior professional by teaching him new skills or a new application/technology.

**Speed Mentoring:** This type of mentoring usually occurs as a corporate event or conference. The mentee has a series of one-on-one conversations with a set of different mentors and usually moves from one mentor to another after a brief meeting. The mentee is usually armed with questions for the senior professional (he must have read works of this senior professional and knows ahead of time that he is billed to attend the proposed conference).

#### **4.0 The Impact of Academic Mentorship**

Mentorship has become an indispensable management tool for sustainable growth of many corporate organizations today. So, the University should not be an exception. In fact, the University, because of its peculiarities, needs mentorship more than other corporate entities. The introduction of a deliberate policy by the University of Port Harcourt will go a long way in addressing most of the career-related problems and the creation of a more conducive atmosphere for serious academic work.

#### **4.1 Mentorship Programmes in a University**

Mentorship programmes in a University should include the following:

- Bi-weekly or monthly professionalization seminars, open to new or all Lecturers within a Department or Faculty.
- Identification of specific mentors for new Faculty members and support for mentorship activities like provision of mentoring lunches.
- Funding for mutual mentoring programmes, allowing groups of Faculty members to form around particular career needs.
- Workshops centred on writing for grants and curriculum development.
- Meetings once or twice a year with a team of mentors or Departmental Personnel Committee (DPC) members providing career advice.

Programmes should be tailored to allow Faculty members to thrive in different aspects of their careers. Programmes should ensure that all Faculty members understand expectations of career advancement, help develop research productivity and teaching excellence.

Some of the practices we can adopt include:

- (i) The assignment of two mentors to all incoming Lecturers based on their preferences.
- (ii) Invitation of a senior scholar in their field to campus to give a talk every other year and help build networks.



- (iii) Annual meetings with personnel committee for young Academics (Assistant Lecturers and Lecturers grade two) and mid-career Lecturers (Lecturers grade one and senior Lecturers) with candid advice aimed at career progression.
- (iv) Workshops for proposal writing (for grants), curriculum development, running of research groups, accountability writing (report writing).
- (v) Financial support for mutual mentoring groups or affinity group meetings.
- (vi) Writing and editing support to Lecturers.
- (vii) Monthly or bi-weekly professionalism seminars aimed at research, teaching, or professional development issues.

The sample topics to be covered in the recommended bi-weekly and monthly meetings include the following:

- Identifying funding opportunities
- Running a research group
- Research grant administration
- Building research collaborations
- Building your research plan
- Teaching and mentoring undergraduates
- Recruiting and mentoring graduate students
- Developing mentoring networks
- Time management

## **4.2 Who does the Mentoring?**

Although no system can be said to be the best, one central finding from literature is that team mentoring, or mutual mentoring models are more successful than one-on-one hierarchical models.

Professors and Heads of Departments or Associate Deans of Faculties should play critical roles in mentoring. They should hold regular meetings with Lecturers in the Faculty, providing honest assessments of staff.

Mutual mentoring models allow Lecturers at similar career stages to work together on career development.

Team mentoring models ensure that the Lecturers within the Faculty receive feedback from an array of colleagues, who may have different approaches, but can provide useful feedback that helps inform successful career progression.

Another good one is the external mentor model where arrangements are made to invite senior persons in the field of the Lecturers to campus to help them develop networks, and may even provide specific feedbacks on articles, grants proposals, and career development.

## **4.3 Qualities of and Expectations from a Mentor**

A good mentor has the following qualities:

- Relevant expertise or knowledge and experience
- Enthusiasm for sharing that expertise
- A respectful attitude

- Eagerness to invest in others
- The ability to give honest and direct feedback
- Reflective listening and empathy (caring attitude)
- Willingness to be a sponsor
- Character: A mentor should have admirable qualities such as honesty and integrity. This will ensure that positive qualities are sustained through generations of leadership. A mentor who is honest gains the trust of the mentee. This produces faster development.
- Similar goals: It is more efficient to learn from someone who has the same goals and can steer a mentee through the inevitable “rough spots” that occur on the path to success.
- Open mind: An open mind on the part of the mentor allows the mentee to progress at a more natural pace.
- Optimism/belief in the mentee: Positivity produces good results. A mentor who believes in a mentee is more effective.
- Networking: To help establish professional network with graduate students, peers, and colleagues within the University to enhance mentee’s career potential.

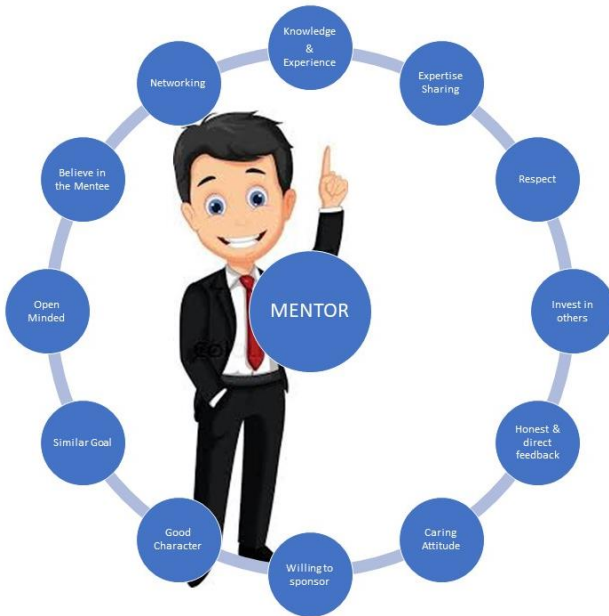


Figure 4.1: Qualities of a Mentor

#### 4.4 Qualities of and Expectations from a Mentee

A good mentee should have the following attributes:

- **Motivation to succeed:** A good mentee should have the zeal to succeed. This ensures that the exercise is not in vain.
- **Commitment:** To fully participate in the mentoring relationship and the research programme activities.
- **Time management skills:** A good mentee must be sufficiently talented on time management.
- **Positive attitude:** Positive people usually produce better and more sustainable results.

- **Respect:** A good mentee respects the mentor and the value he provides.
- **Willingness to learn:** A person who is willing to learn will invariably accomplish more than the person who is not.
- **Honesty:** To communicate honestly with the mentor(s). A dishonest mentee will be difficult to assess.
- **Clarity in communication:** A good mentee should be able to communicate effectively for the outcomes of the exercise to be easily measurable.
- **Confidence:** A good mentee should believe in himself.

#### **4.5 Mentorship of Students**

The core of student mentorship involves caring about, connecting and catalyzing students. Mentorship by a Faculty member focuses on building a relationship that goes beyond academic programme. It is about helping students start a long process of becoming the architects of their lives.

Mentoring is not the same as friendship. It should be focused on aspects of a student's academic success, personal growth and professional launching. Unlike friendship, the value of mentorship is contingent on the mentor's ability to achieve a desired end, which in this case, is student's development and success. Mentors are conscious of the fact that they should help students learn what they need to attain their personal and professional goals.

Mentorship is not crisis management. Faculty members should be able to identify when students are in crisis (including health and financial challenges) and help them find the right persons (counsellors) who can help them manage the crisis.

#### **4.6 Mentorship of Administrative and Technical Staff**

Mentorship is one subject that cuts across all professions and all categories of staff. The basic tenets of mentorship are the same for different professionals. For Academics the emphasis may be training on paper writing, application for research grants, curriculum planning and teaching techniques. But for administrators and technical staff the emphasis may shift to other subjects designed to make them better administrators and better technologists/technicians. Relevant training programmes are also put in place to enhance proficiency and professionalism.

One big advantage of working in a University is that everybody has the opportunity of improving himself academically (ie read and acquire a degree). So hardworking staff members can make good progress in their careers through the acquisition of a degree while undergoing prescribed mentorship.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

“It’s always good to have a helping hand at the start. I wouldn’t have got anywhere in the airline industry without the mentorship of Sir Freddie Laker”- Richard Branson. Richard Branson is a billionaire who owns the Virgin group of companies.

The benefits of mentoring go way beyond the mentee's personal development, positively affecting mentors themselves, as well as the organizations they work for. From supporting inclusion through exposure to new perspectives, to increased chance of promotion for both parties. For the mentee, in addition to the fact that he is encouraged and empowered in personal development, the benefits include the fact that he is helped to:

- Identify and achieve career goals
- Identify and correct gaps in knowledge
- Build up confidence
- Have access to a senior role model
- Gain insight into University culture
- Achieve greater success in accessing external research grants
- Improve his communication skills
- Expand his network of contacts.
- Prepare for career advancement, including a higher rate of promotion

Mentorship is a win-win thing. So, the mentor has the following benefits too from the exercise:

- A recognized involvement in a programme of strategic importance to his Faculty
- Additional experience in staff management and development
- Potential for networking

- Funding agencies increasingly value an active mentoring programme and often encourage senior staff to be mentors
- Opportunity for self-reflection, and personal satisfaction
- Knowledge sharing by the mentor is encouraged, which increases the mentor's sense of self-worth
- A sense of fulfilment through teaching and from seeing junior staff progress

Finally, an active and successful mentoring scheme brings the following benefits to the Faculty and, by extension, the University by:

- Improving academic performance through staff development
- Improving communication between individuals/groups/units
- Reinforcing the Faculty's commitment to learning and development
- Creating a breeding ground for fresh ideas and innovations
- Enhancing the Faculty's reputation through improved career destinations of its staff
- Demonstrating to funding agencies that we already have an active and successful mentoring programme in place



From what we have presented above it is obvious that giving mentorship a centre stage, the University of Port Harcourt will be transformed to an enviable academic community. When the staff are mentored and their career progression follow a normal path the staff will be happy to put in their best including the mentoring of students. Students that are properly mentored will not be creating problems in the University. We will then have a very conducive environment for serious academic work. Progressively we will be building a culture of smooth succession from one administration to another and from one generation of staff to another. Admission and graduation will become seamless.

I will therefore strongly recommend the establishment of a Directorate of Human Resources to drive this noble idea of mentorship across the various facets of the University system.

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**Professor Anthony Ogbonnaya Ibe**  
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Prof Anthony Ogbonnaya Ibe was born at Aba in Abia State on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1951. He had his primary education at St Michael's primary School, Aba between 1959 and 1964. He had his post primary education in two parts because of the Nigerian civil war. The first part was at IHEME Memorial Grammar School, Arondizuogu between 1965 and 1967. The second part was at National Secondary School, Nnewi between 1970 and 1972 when he sat the West African School Certificate examination. He came out with Division one (Distinction). He proceeded to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1974 for his post-secondary education. He graduated in 1979 with a first class in Electrical/Electronic

Engineering. He was the best graduating student for his Department. It is worth mentioning that Prof Ibe was at top of his class at the end of his first year in the University and with a 1<sup>st</sup> class CGPA. This performance earned him three scholarships namely; The University Foundation Scholarship, the East Central State Scholarship and the Federal government scholarship.

After just two years in the industry which included the compulsory National Youth Service Corps scheme the young Ibe proceeded to Imperial College of Science & Technology, London in 1981 on Commonwealth scholarship for his postgraduate studies. Professor Anthony Ibe benefitted from an accelerated programme that allowed hardworking postgraduate students to convert from M.Phil to PhD programme after twelve months. So, in just three years, and with a first degree, Professor Ibe bagged his PhD degree in Power Systems (1984).

Being a strong believer in nation building Prof Ibe returned back to Nigeria the same year he got his PhD to the then Anambra State University of Science & Technology, Enugu as a Lecturer II. And in 1985 he moved over to the University of Port Harcourt as Lecturer I. He became a senior Lecturer & Ag Head of Department in 1990.

Dr. Anthony Ogonnaya Ibe became the first Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Port Harcourt in April 2009.

To build up the staff strength of the young Department Professor Ibe started a masters' degree programme in 1996 with the assistance of Late Professor T. C. Nwodo who came in as Adjunct. Nine of the current academic staff of the Department are products of that masters' programme. And they all have their PhDs now. As Professor Ibe bows out this week after 36 years of service to the University of Port Harcourt he has moved Electrical/Electronic Engineering from a Department with one PhD to a Department with 22 PhDs, two of which are Professors. Also the Department has added not just a masters' programme but a PhD programme to its cocktail of programmes.

Professor Ibe served the University in the following capacities: fourteen years as Head of Department (1990-2002 and 2004-2006), four years as ICTC Director (2011-2015), four years as Council member (2013-2017) and two years as Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration) (2015-2017).

Professor Anthony Ogbonnaya Ibe is happily married to Lady Chika Ukamaka Ibe (a Pharmacist). The marriage is blessed with children and grand children.

**Professor Owunari A. Georgewill**  
**Vice-Chancellor**