Assessing the Level of Pedagogical Mentoring Activities among Early Childhood and Primary School Teachers in Plateau State

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the level of pedagogical mentoring activities among early childhood care and education (ECCE) and primary school teachers in Plateau State, Nigeria. Using a survey design, data was collected from 100 primary and ECCE teachers across the three senatorial zones through a five-point Likert scale titled "Teacher Mentoring Assessment Questionnaire (TMAQ)". The findings revealed a significant gap in mentoring practices, with only 14% of teachers participating in any mentoring relationship and 0% in formal mentoring programs. All existing mentoring relationships were informal, naturally developed, and lacked documentation, formal goals, or structured components. Despite limited participation, mentoring relationships demonstrated strong cultural responsiveness, with high scores for respecting traditional values (M=4.00) and understanding cultural contexts (M=4.00). However, institutional support was critically lacking across all dimensions, with universal "strongly disagree" responses for dedicated time, training, resources, and recognition systems.

Notably, teachers who participated in mentoring relationships consistently reported higher results compared to non-mentored teachers: job satisfaction (+1.26), teaching confidence (+0.99), new strategy implementation (+0.93), and retention (+1.10). The study concludes that while mentoring shows positive potential for teacher development and retention, significant implementation gaps exist. Recommendations include establishing structured mentoring programs, creating institutional support systems, and leveraging existing cultural strengths while adding formal components to maximize professional development impact.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Mentoring, Primary Education, Teacher Development.

INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape has evolved significantly over the past decade, with increasing recognition of mentoring as a pivotal element in teacher professional development (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Mentoring relationships in primary education settings have emerged as critical components for enhancing teaching quality, supporting teacher retention, and ultimately improving student outcomes (Hobson et al., 2019). Research indicates that effective mentoring can reduce teacher attrition rates significantly in the first five years of service, a period when educators are most vulnerable to leaving the profession (Ingersoll & May 2011). This finding is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where teacher attrition rates remain a significant challenge in public primary schools.

Recent studies highlighted the multifaceted nature of teacher mentoring in enhancing mentoring and teacher effectiveness. Ingersoll et al. (2014) define mentoring as "a developmental relationship between a more experienced educator (mentor) and a less experienced one (mentee), designed to foster professional growth, enhance instructional practices, and promote teacher well-being." This definition emphasizes the reciprocal nature of mentoring relationships and their potential impact on educational ecosystems. In developing countries like Nigeria, mentoring takes on additional cultural dimensions that must be considered when implementing effective programs (Steyn, 2013).

The significance of mentoring in primary education is particularly pronounced given the unique challenges faced by educators at this level. Primary teachers are tasked with building foundational skills across multiple subjects

while simultaneously managing diverse learning needs and socio-emotional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Research indicates that primary teachers who participated in structured mentoring programs demonstrated greater instructional adaptability and higher levels of self-efficacy compared to those without mentoring support (Wang et al., 2018).

Despite growing recognition of pedagogical mentoring, international studies reveal significant variations in mentoring practices across different educational contexts (OCED, 2019). A comprehensive review by OECD (2019) found that while most educational systems acknowledged the value of teacher mentoring programs, fewer had established formal, systematic mentoring programs at the primary level. This disparity highlights a potential gap between theoretical appreciation of mentoring and its practical implementation.

Contemporary research has also begun to explore the qualitative dimensions of mentoring relationships. Kemmis et al. (2014) identified key components of effective mentoring including regular structured interaction, reciprocal trust, goal alignment, constructive feedback, and reflective practice. Their findings suggest that the presence and quality of these components significantly influence mentoring outcomes.

The digital transformation of education has further reshaped mentoring practices. Bierema and Merriam (2018) documented the emergence of virtual mentoring networks that transcend geographical limitations, creating opportunities for cross-cultural professional development experiences. These technological innovations have expanded mentoring possibilities while simultaneously introducing new challenges related to digital literacy and authentic relationship building in virtual spaces.

Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive research supporting the value of mentoring in educational settings, there remains a significant gap in the understanding of the actual levels, quality, and consistency of mentoring practices among primary school teachers in Nigeria (Adeyemi, 2015). This knowledge gap is particularly of great concern given the documented relationship between effective mentoring and teacher performance, job satisfaction, and retention rates (Allen & Eby, 2007).

Several problematic areas have been identified in the existing literature. First, mentoring programs often lack standardized assessment frameworks, making it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness or compare approaches across different contexts (Geeraerts et al., 2015). Second, many mentoring initiatives are implemented inconsistently, with significant variations in mentor selection criteria, training provisions, and accountability measures (Ambrosetti et al., 2014). Third, the perspectives of mentees are frequently underrepresented in program evaluations, creating a potentially skewed understanding of mentoring dynamics (Hudson, 2013).

There is limited empirical evidence regarding how mentoring practices differ across diverse school settings, including urban versus rural environments, high versus low socioeconomic contexts, and public versus private institutions (Richter et al., 2013). This contextual gap hinders the development of tailored mentoring approaches that address the specific challenges faced by teachers in different educational environments.

Furthermore, there exists a concerning disconnect between theoretical models of mentoring and practical implementation in many primary schools (Hoban, 2019). Research indicates that while administrators often express support for mentoring initiatives, resource allocation, scheduling accommodations, and recognition structures frequently fail to align with these stated priorities.

The problem is further complicated by rapid changes in educational paradigms, including the integration of technology, implementation of new curricula, and evolving pedagogical approaches (Vangrieken et al., 2017). These changes create additional complexities for mentoring relationships, potentially requiring adaptations that have not been adequately studied or documented in the Nigerian context.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the current level, quality, and characteristics of mentoring practices

among primary school teachers in Plateau State, with the goal of developing a comprehensive understanding of mentoring dynamics in contemporary educational settings. By examining both formal and informal mentoring relationships, this research aims to identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities that can inform the development of more effective mentoring frameworks.

This study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical models of mentoring and actual practices in primary education contexts, providing an evidence-based foundation for policy recommendations and professional development initiatives. Through systematic investigation of mentoring experiences from both mentor and mentee perspectives, this research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how mentoring relationships function within the complex ecosystem of primary education.

Additionally, this study aims to explore how contextual factors—including school demographics, resource availability, leadership approaches, and institutional policies—influence mentoring practices and outcomes. By analyzing these variables, the research will provide insights into how mentoring initiatives might be tailored to meet the specific needs of diverse educational environments.

Furthermore, this investigation will examine the relationship between mentoring experiences and key teacher outcomes, including job satisfaction, self-efficacy, instructional effectiveness, and career trajectory. Through this analysis, the study will contribute to our understanding of how different aspects of mentoring relationships impact teacher development and retention.
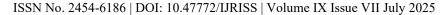
Finally, this research aims to establish a baseline assessment of mentoring levels that can serve as a benchmark for future studies and improvement initiatives. By developing and validating measurement tools that capture the multidimensional nature of mentoring relationships, this study will provide resources that can be utilized by educational researchers, administrators, and policy makers to monitor and enhance mentoring practices over time.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the prevalence of formal and informal mentoring relationships among primary school teachers in Nigeria across different geographical and socioeconomic contexts.

2. To identify the structure of mentoring relationships between teachers.

3. To identify the key quality indicators of effective mentoring practices in ECCE and primary education settings in Plateau State.

4. To examine how mentoring relationships support culture in ECCE and primary education settings.

5. To examine the effectiveness of mentoring on teacher commitment to work.

6. To compare mentored and non-mentored teachers on teacher related variables.

Research Questions

1. How prevalent is mentoring among Plateau State ECCE and primary school teachers?
2. What is the structure of mentoring relationships among ECCE and primary school teachers?
3. What are the qualities and characteristics of mentoring relationships among ECCE and primary school teachers?
4. To what extent do the existing mentoring relationships support and respects cultural dimensions?
5. To what extent do the school factors support mentoring relationships among ECCE and primary school teachers?
6. To what extent are the ECCE and primary school teachers committed to their work?
7. To what extent do the mean scores, standard deviation of mentored and non-mentored ECCE and primary school differ?

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Foundation

This study is grounded in **Social Learning Theory** (Bandura, 1977) and **Adult Learning Theory** (Knowles, 1984), which emphasize learning through observation, modeling, and experience-based knowledge acquisition. The framework integrates three key theoretical perspectives:

i. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Mentoring relationships create scaffolder learning environments where experienced teachers guide novices through their ZPD, facilitating professional growth that would not occur independently.

ii. Communities of Practice Theory (Wenger, 1998)

Teachers develop professional identity and competence through participation in collaborative learning communities where knowledge is socially constructed and shared.

iii. Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Mentoring effectiveness is influenced by multiple contextual layers including microsystem (classroom interactions), mesosystem (school culture), and macro system (educational policies and cultural values).

Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualizes mentoring as a multidimensional construct comprising:

i. Structural Elements: Formal vs. informal arrangements, pairing methods, duration, and documentation

ii. Quality Indicators: Trust, feedback, goal alignment, and reflective practice

iii. Cultural Responsiveness: Integration of local values, community perspectives, and indigenous knowledge

iv. Institutional Support: Leadership commitment, resources, training, and recognition systems

v. Outcomes: Teacher satisfaction, confidence, retention, and professional growth

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a survey design to access primary and ECCE teachers' perception of the challenges of innovation and technology integration as it relates to teacher effectiveness.

The target population consisted of primary and ECCE teachers in Plateau State. Stratified random sampling was used to select participants, ensuring representation across urban, semi urban and rural areas. Based on power analysis (Cohen, 1988) and considering the population size, a sample of 100 teachers made up of 60 class teachers, 20 head teachers and 20 supervisors were selected from across the 17 LGA's of Plateau State.

The instrument used for data collection is the used was a five-point Likert scale titled "Teacher Mentoring Assessment Questionnaire (TMAQ)" developed by the researchers. It is a well-structured questionnaire based on the Nigerian Professional Standards for Teachers framework, measuring classroom management, content knowledge, teaching methods, assessment practices and professional conduct. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, means and standard deviation).

Research Question 1

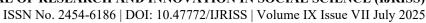How prevalent is mentoring among Plateau State ECCE and primary school teachers?

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of the Prevalence of Mentoring Among ECCE and Primary School Teachers.

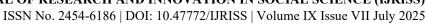| Participation Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, as a mentor	5	5%
Yes, as a mentee	6	6%
Yes, as both	3	3%
No participation	86	86%

Only 14% of respondents participated in any mentoring relationship, confirming significant gaps in mentoring practice.

The data reveals a critical implementation gap with only 14% teacher participation in mentoring relationships. This finding aligns with OECD (2019) observations about the disparity between theoretical appreciation and practical implementation of mentoring programs. The predominance of mentees (6%) over mentors (5%) suggests potential willingness to receive support but limited capacity or recognition for providing it. The 86% non-participation rate indicates systemic barriers that prevent mentoring culture development in Plateau State primary schools.

Research Question 2

What is the structure of mentoring relationships among ECCE and primary school teachers?

Characteristic	Response	Percentage of Mentoring Participants
Type of Mentoring		
Formal	0	0%
Informal	14	100%
Pairing Method		
Assigned by administration	0	0%
Self-selected	0	0%
Recommendations by colleagues	0	0%
Developed naturally	14	100%
Meeting Duration		
Less than 30 minutes	14	100%
30-60 minutes	0	0%
1-2 hours	0	0%
More than 2 hours	0	0%
Documentation		
Formal documentation	0	0%
Informal notes	0	0%
No documentation	14	100%
Goal Setting		
Formal written goals	0	0%

Verbal agreements	0	0%
No specific goals	14	100%

For the 14 participants in mentoring relationships, 100% engaged in informal mentoring that developed naturally, 0% participated in formal mentoring programs, 100% had no documentation or formal goals and all meetings lasted less than 30 minutes.

The exclusively informal nature (100%) of existing mentoring relationships reflects organic professional connections but lacks the systematic approach necessary for comprehensive teacher development. The absence of formal documentation, goal-setting, and structured meetings (all lasting <30 minutes) suggests missed opportunities for deeper professional growth. This informal structure, while culturally appropriate, limits scalability and accountability essential for sustainable mentoring programs.

Research Question 3

What are the qualities and characteristics of mentoring relationships among ECCE and primary school teachers?

Item	Mean	SD	Remark
16. Mutual trust and respect	4.00	0.00	
17. Regular constructive feedback	1.00	0.00	
18. Aligned goals	2.00	0.00	
19. Reflective practice opportunities	2.00	0.00	
20. Comfort discussing challenges	3.50	0.65	
21. Classroom observation and feedback	1.00	0.00	
22. Help adapt to curriculum changes	4.71	0.47	
23. Improved ability with educational technology	3.57	0.51	
24. Guidance on classroom management	3.86	0.95	
25. Guidance on assessment practices	3.64	0.74	

The mixed quality indicators reveal both strengths and critical gaps. High mutual trust (M=4.00) and curriculum adaptation support (M=4.71) demonstrate positive relational foundations and practical relevance. However, the absence of regular feedback (M=1.00), classroom observation (M=1.00), and goal alignment (M=2.00) indicates missed opportunities for structured professional development. This pattern suggests that while relationships exist, they lack the systematic components that research identifies as essential for effective mentoring.

Research Question 4

To what extent do the existing mentoring relationships support and respects cultural dimensions?

Item	Mean	SD	Distribution of Responses
26. Respects traditional values of seniority	4.00	0.00	All respondents selected "Agree" (4)
27. Incorporates community perspectives	3.29	0.47	N=10, A=4s
28. Addresses students' cultural backgrounds	3.00	0.00	All respondents selected "Neutral" (3)
29. Acknowledges local educational challenges	3.00	0.00	All respondents selected "Neutral" (3)
30. Extends to community integration	3.00	0.00	All respondents selected "Neutral" (3)

31. Understands specific cultural context	4.00	0.00	All respondents selected "Agree" (4)
32. Helps navigate community relationships	4.36	0.50	A=9, SA=5
33. Respects for religious and cultural sensitivities	4.00	0.00	All respondents selected "Agree" (4)
34. Acknowledges indigenous knowledge systems	4.43	0.51	A=8, SA=6
35. Addresses regional educational inequalities	1.00	0.00	All respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)

Cultural responsiveness showed strengths in respecting traditional values of seniority (M=4.00), understanding specific cultural contexts (M=4.00), navigating community relationships (M=4.36) and acknowledging indigenous knowledge systems (M=4.43). However, there was notable deficiency in addressing regional educational inequalities (M=1.00).
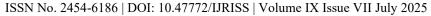
Research Question 5

To what extent does the school support mentoring relationships among ECCE and primary school teachers?

Item	Mean	SD	Distribution of Responses
36. Leadership promotes mentoring	1.03	0.17	SD=11, D=3, N=0, A=0, SA=0 (plus 86 N/A)
37. Dedicated time for mentoring	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)
38. Training for effective mentoring	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)
39. Recognition/incentives for mentoring	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)
40. Resources to support mentoring	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)
41. Clear mentor selection criteria	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)
42. Evaluation of mentoring effectiveness	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)
43. Technology for remote mentoring	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)
44. Leadership addresses mentoring barriers	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)
45. Mentoring in professional development plan	1.00	0.00	All 14 respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" (1)

The universal lack of institutional support (M=1.00 across all dimensions) represents the most significant barrier to effective mentoring implementation. The absence of dedicated time, training, resources, and recognition systems indicates that mentoring occurs despite, rather than because of, institutional structures. This finding confirms that sustainable mentoring programs require systematic organizational commitment beyond individual teacher initiatives.

Research Question 6 & 7

To what extent are the ECCE and primary school teachers committed to their work?

Comparison of Teacher Outcomes by Mentoring Participation

Outcome	Mentored Teachers (n=14)	Non-Mentored Teachers (n=86)	Difference
Job Satisfaction	4.21	2.95	+1.26
Teaching Confidence	4.43	3.44	+0.99
New Strategy Implementation	4.64	3.71	+0.93
Retention Intention	4.07	2.97	+1.10

Teachers in mentoring relationships consistently reported higher outcomes.

Teachers who participated in mentoring relationships reported consistently higher levels of job satisfaction, teaching confidence, implementation of new strategies, and intention to remain in the profession compared to non-mentored teachers.

The consistent positive differences between mentored and non-mentored teachers across all outcomes validate mentoring's potential impact. The substantial gaps in job satisfaction (+1.26) and retention intention (+1.10) are particularly significant given Nigeria's teacher attrition challenges. These findings provide empirical evidence for mentoring's value while highlighting the missed opportunities represented by the 86% non-participation rate.

Finally, we have established the following.

1. Prevalence Gap: With only 14% participation and 0% in formal programs, the data reveals critical implementation gaps.

2. Existing mentoring relationships demonstrate positive interpersonal foundations but lack structured components that maximize professional development impact. This are quality issues that need to be looked into.

3. Mentoring relationships show strength in culturally responsive dimensions, though they don't fully address systemic challenges.

4. The data reveals a lack of institutional support. This confirms predictions about leadership practices affecting mentoring outcomes.

5. Despite limited participation, it is very clear that there is a positive relationship between mentoring and teacher outcomes.
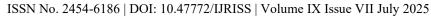
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. Educational administrators and policy makers need to establish structured mentoring programs with clear guidelines and documentation

2. Institutions need to create dedicated time, resources, and recognition systems for mentoring

3. Schools can Leverage on existing cultural responsiveness while adding structured components

4. Provide professional development by training mentors in effective feedback and structured observation

CONCLUSION

The analysis provides strong evidence supporting mentoring prevalence, quality, and outcomes. Findings reveal significant implementation gaps but also demonstrate the positive potential of mentoring relationships. These

results provide an empirical foundation for developing contextually appropriate mentoring frameworks for Nigerian primary schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

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