

Mentoring Programmes as Determinants of Professional Growth among Newly Recruited Teachers in Secondary Schools in Edo State

Dr Roseline Efosa Ekhaise

Department of Business Education, Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

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*Corresponding Author: efosaekhaise@uniben.edu

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study examines how formal and informal mentoring influence the professional growth of newly recruited secondary school teachers in Edo State, focusing on classroom management skills, professional confidence, and retention. Transitioning from theoretical training to practical classroom delivery poses significant challenges for novice educators. While formal mentoring provides structured, institutionally backed systems (such as the Edo Basic Education Sector Transformation—EdoBEST—programme), informal mentoring offers spontaneous, peer-led emotional and professional support. This paper synthesises current literature to argue that formal mentoring builds technical and pedagogical competencies, whereas informal mentoring fosters emotional resilience and professional identity. The study concludes that integrating both approaches is vital for improving classroom management, self-efficacy, and teacher retention. Key recommendations include institutionalising written mentorship policies, providing dedicated capacity building for mentors, and integrating structured induction frameworks into school development plans.

Keywords: Formal Mentoring, Informal Mentoring, Professional Growth, Teacher Retention, EdoBEST, Edo State.

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1. Introduction

The 21st-century educational landscape is rapidly transforming, driven by technological advances, evolving pedagogical paradigms, and increasingly diverse classrooms. To navigate these complexities, modern educators must possess adaptive skills, innovative mindsets, and pedagogical flexibility. However, newly recruited secondary-school teachers frequently experience "reality shock" as they transition from theoretical preparation to independent

classroom instruction.

These early-career challenges typically take the form of:

- Inadequate classroom control and student management.
- Low self-efficacy and professional anxiety.
- Uncertainty regarding administrative and institutional expectations.

Without robust support systems, these struggles

lead to early burnout, reduced instructional quality, and high attrition rates. Mentoring has emerged as a crucial intervention to bridge this gap. By pairing experienced educators with novice teachers, mentoring facilitates knowledge transfer, instils professional confidence, and provides essential psychosocial support. In Edo State, where educational reform initiatives such as the Edo Basic Education Sector Transformation (EdoBEST) have set high standards for technology-driven, student-centred instruction, structured professional guidance for incoming teachers is more critical than ever.

Concept and Typologies of Mentoring

Mentoring in education is a collaborative, developmental relationship in which an experienced teacher (the mentor) guides, coaches, and supports a less experienced colleague (the mentee) to foster professional competence and systemic adaptation (Lecton & Ali, 2024). This process transforms underprepared or overwhelmed novice teachers into productive, highly motivated professionals (Kamarudin et al., 2020).

Mentorship operates primarily through two structural frameworks:

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring comprises structured, institutionally backed programmes characterised by planned activities, scheduled meetings, systematic classroom observations, and formalised feedback loops (Veronica & Hilda, 2025).

The Edo State Context: Under the EdoBEST initiative, the state government has systematised teacher induction and training for more than 11,000 educators. This formal structure introduces new recruits to modern pedagogical technologies, standardised lesson plans, and continuous professional monitoring.

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring develops organically

through peer-to-peer relationships, casual interactions, and everyday collaboration. It is highly flexible, immediate, and deeply responsive to new teachers' daily anxieties. Examples include:

- **Ad-hoc Pedagogical Tips:** Brief discussions in the staffroom regarding transition techniques or student engagement.
- **Emotional Scaffolding:** Peer validation that normalizes early-career failures, mitigating isolation and reducing anxiety.

The Concept of Professional Growth

Professional growth is a continuous, career-long process through which educators refine their instructional skills, pedagogical content knowledge, and ethical standards (Chidiebere & Umeh, 2021). Utami and Vioresa (2021) conceptualise teacher professional development (TPD) as the accumulation of formal and informal learning experiences in dynamic school environments.

The primary objectives of professional growth initiatives are highlighted in the **National Policy on Education**, which mandates that teacher education must:

- Produce highly motivated, conscientious, and efficient classroom teachers.
- Encourage creativity, critical inquiry, and adaptability in teachers.
- Help teachers integrate smoothly into their social and professional communities.
- Enhance long-term commitment to the teaching profession.

Various institutional practices drive professional growth, including Training for Higher Qualifications (THQ), seminars, peer coaching, and structured mentoring (Awodiji & Ijaiya, 2019). For early-career teachers, this growth trajectory determines whether they thrive or leave the school system prematurely.

Influence of Mentorship on Professional Growth

The literature establishes a direct, positive correlation between robust mentorship and the professional efficacy of newly recruited teachers (Eze & Iroanya, 2022).

Mentorship Support

└─► Pedagogical Modeling ─► Improved Classroom Management

└─► Emotional Validation ─► Higher Self-Efficacy & Confidence

└─► Social Integration ─► Increased Retention & Job Satisfaction

Classroom Management Skills

Managing diverse student behaviours is a primary source of anxiety for novice teachers. Through mentorship, new teachers observe experienced colleagues' model proactive discipline, classroom organisation, and student engagement strategies (Nwankwo & Okoro, 2024).

Professional Confidence and Self-Efficacy

Beginning teachers often experience severe self-doubt. Informal mentors play a vital role in normalising these early struggles. By celebrating "small wins" and providing a non-evaluative space for reflection, mentors help novice teachers build the resilience needed to overcome instructional setbacks.

Teacher Retention and Attrition Reduction

Teacher attrition remains a major systemic challenge in Nigeria (Umeh & Nnaji, 2023). Studies show that early-career educators who participate in structured mentoring programmes report significantly higher job satisfaction and are far more likely to remain in the profession long term (Agbo & Mba, 2023). Mentorship fosters a sense of community and organisational belonging, mitigating the isolation that often drives young talent away.

Systemic Challenges in Mentoring Programmes

Despite its documented benefits, the implementation of mentoring programmes in secondary schools faces several operational bottlenecks:

Challenge Category	Formal Mentoring Limitations	Informal Mentoring Limitations
Operational	Rigid administrative structures, heavy reporting workloads.	Lack of consistency, accountability, and quality control.
Resource-Based	Insufficient funding, lack of incentives for mentors.	Highly dependent on personal goodwill and chemistry.
Temporal	Lack of designated school hours for mentor-mentee meetings.	Encroaches on personal time, leading to mentor burnout.

Furthermore, a lack of specialised training for senior teachers in mentoring adults often results in evaluative, top-down supervision rather than collaborative, developmental coaching.

Conclusion

Both formal and informal mentoring are indispensable pillars of teacher professional development. While formal frameworks such as EdoBEST provide the technical, pedagogical, and technological foundation for modern classrooms, informal mentoring networks offer the psychosocial resilience and peer support needed to navigate the emotional demands of early-career teaching. To maximise instructional quality and retain top talent in secondary schools in Edo State, policymakers and school administrators must deliberately integrate both formal structures and informal spaces into a holistic teacher-support ecosystem.

Recommendations

To optimise the impact of mentoring on the professional growth of newly recruited teachers, the following measures are recommended:

- **Formulate Institutional Mentorship Policies:** Secondary schools should establish written guidelines defining clear roles, operational timelines, and mutual expectations for both mentors and mentees.
- **Embed Mentoring in School Development Plans:** The Edo State Ministry of Education should mandate and monitor mentorship practices, linking them directly to institutional quality-assurance reviews.
- **Build Capacity for Mentors:** Educational managers and senior teachers should receive specialised training in adult learning theories, coaching methodologies, and the delivery of constructive feedback.
- **Optimise Time Allocation:** Schools should schedule dedicated, non-instructional hours (e.g., 20–30 minutes per week) for mentor-mentee interactions to alleviate time-constraint burdens.
- **Establish Structured Induction Programmes:** Government-led teacher

recruitment must be paired with localised, school-level induction processes that transition seamlessly into ongoing peer support.

- **Simplify Governance and Tracking:** To address administrative rigidity, mentoring programmes should appoint dedicated coordinators and use simple, low-barrier tracking systems (such as brief monthly check-ins) rather than burdensome reporting paperwork.

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