



Perceived Impacts of Formal and Informal Mentoring Practices among Teachers of English Language in Secondary Schools in North West, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the perceived impacts of formal and informal mentoring practices among teachers of English language in secondary schools in North West, Nigeria. The study used descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 891 teachers of English language. A sample size of 269 was estimated by the Research Advisor's 2006 table for determining sample size. This sample was achieved through a multistage sampling technique. A Perceived Impact of Mentoring Practices Questionnaire (PIMPQ), a Structured Interview, and a Non-Participant Observation Checklist were the instruments used in the study. The instruments were validated by a senior lecturer of Language Education, Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, a senior lecturer of measurement and evaluation from the Department of Science and Vocational Education, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto and a seasoned English language teacher from Nagarta College, Sokoto. The instruments were pilot-tested at Nagarta College, Sokoto. In assessing the internal consistency of the instruments, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated at $r = 0.87$. Data collected was analysed through descriptive statistics of means and standard deviation on Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 to answer research questions and inferential statistics of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks were used to test all the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that formal mentoring was perceived to be more beneficial in improving English language teaching by providing structured learning opportunities and direct support to teachers over informal mentoring and there was a statistically significant difference between teachers' perception of the impacts of formal mentoring over informal mentoring, with formal mentoring having a higher impact. It therefore recommended that formal mentoring should be encouraged among teachers of the English language in North West, Nigeria.

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Keywords: Formal Mentoring, Informal Mentoring, Teachers of English language, North West, Nigeria

Introduction

Education is a key component of human quality essential for generating high incomes and sustainable socio-economic development. It is an essential ingredient in poverty eradication (Ogawa, 2019). Conceiving education as an essential tool for poverty eradication, mentoring directly contributes to providing guidance and support to individuals so they can fully utilize their educational opportunities and achieve the organization's goal for sustainable socio-economic development. In the context of English language teaching, mentoring plays a pivotal role in helping teachers refine their instructional strategies, enhance their pedagogical skills, and stay updated on the modern teaching resources and methodologies that ultimately improve the quality of education and foster better students' learning outcomes.

Mentoring is a development programme involving a more experienced and knowledgeable person and a less experienced one. A mentor is someone who takes on the role of a trusted adviser, supporter, teacher and wise counsel to another person (Starr, 2021)^[12]. A mentor adopts a selfless role of supporting the learning, development, and ultimate success of another person. Therefore, Bendale (2025)^[5] conceived mentoring as a relationship-based process in which an experienced mentor guides and supports a less experienced mentee, fostering personal and professional growth through the sharing of knowledge, skills, and experiences. It is a professional development programme that facilitates the growth and improvement of less experienced personnel. Bloom (2017)^[6] noted that mentoring facilitates learning towards a long-term goal.

Mentoring has several types. Adebimpe and Adewale (2015)^[1] stated that mentoring can take the form of formal and informal. Formal mentoring is the most common choice for mentoring in the workplace. It involves mentors and mentees meeting up for frequent mentoring sessions over a specified period. A formal mentoring program is well-structured and organized and aligns with an organization's goals and objectives. Formal mentoring relationships are fostered when participants communicate regularly set clear expectations and invest time in the experience (Adebimpe & Adewale, 2015)^[1]. Formal mentoring can be one-on-one or one to many depending on how it is arranged. It is a structured practice with a clear objective of increasing job performance, enhancing confidence, and facilitating networking (Merrick, 2017)^[9]. An informal mentoring is conceived as a supportive relationship developed outside an organized program or activities in the organization (Ahmad, 2009)^[2]. The mentor intentionally, sees something in a colleague, offers up a bit of his experiences, recognises a pathway for improvement and finally provides a major guide to the mentee. It occurs in a relationship between two people where one gains insight knowledge, wisdom, friendship and support from others (Ahmad, 2009)^[2]. This improved mentees' job performance and quality.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of the English language in many secondary schools across North West, Nigeria is very low. The researcher experienced that despite the recognized importance of mentoring, there was a notable absence of structured mentoring programs among teachers of the English language in the region. This led to the complexities of English language teaching with little guidance. Complaints from both teachers highlighted the need for mentorship in updating teaching methodologies, classroom management, and the effective use of instructional materials. The reality of the situation is that without proper mentoring, many teachers continue to face barriers in improving their English language instruction. Therefore, this study is designed to investigate the perceived impacts of formal and informal mentoring practices on teachers of English language in improving English language instruction in secondary schools of North West, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to investigate the perceived impacts of formal and informal mentoring practices among teachers of the English language in secondary schools in North West, Nigeria. The specific

objectives are:

1. To assess the perceived impacts of formal mentoring practice in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West, Nigeria.
2. To examine the perceived impacts of informal mentoring practice in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.
3. To measure the differential perceived impacts between formal and informal mentoring practices in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived impacts of formal mentoring practice in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?
2. What are the perceived impacts of informal mentoring practice in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?
3. What are the differential impacts between formal and informal mentoring practices in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

Null Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

H01: There is no significant difference between the perceived impacts of formal and informal mentoring practices in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North West, Nigeria.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Several studies examined the impacts of mentoring practices on teachers' improvement of their teaching practices. For instance, Danladi (2024)^[7] investigated the impact of mentoring programmes on job performance and retention of metalwork teachers in technical colleges in North-West Nigeria. The study employed a quasi-experimental research design with non-equivalent groups, using a population of 152 less experienced metalwork teachers in technical colleges. A purposive sample of 35 teachers, with 16 in the experimental group and 19 in the control group, was selected for the study. The instruments used for data collection included the Career Mentoring and Behaviour Measures (CMBM) and the Teacher Mentoring Programme Guide (TMPG), both of which were validated. The reliability coefficient of the CMBM was 0.93 using Cronbach's Alpha. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, ANCOVA, and MANOVA. The study found that the mentoring programme significantly improved job performance and retention, with no significant gender differences observed, and that the mentoring approach had a more positive impact than the conventional professional development methods.

Similarly, Ogbuanya (2022)^[11] examined the perceived impact of mentoring on job satisfaction and performance among metalwork teachers in North-West Nigeria. This study also used a quasi-experimental design, with a sample of 35 teachers drawn from four technical colleges, divided into an experimental group of 16 and a control group of 19. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire, with a reliability coefficient of 0.93. The study revealed that mentoring had a significant positive impact on job

satisfaction and performance, while gender did not significantly influence the outcomes. The findings suggested that mentoring could be an effective strategy for improving job performance and satisfaction among metalwork teachers. In addition, Amoke (2018)^[3] investigated the effect of formal mentoring on classroom management practices of secondary school teachers in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria, was explored. The study used a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design, with a sample of 250 teachers selected using Taro Yamane's formula from a population of 670 teachers in the region. The research instruments included a Teacher Mentoring Guide (TMG) and a Teacher Evaluation Instrument on Classroom Management (TEICM), both validated by experts and showing high-reliability coefficients (ranging from 0.74 to 0.90). Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The results indicated that formal mentoring had a positive effect on teachers' classroom management practices, improving their ability to manage classrooms effectively.

Furthermore, Ibrahim (2022)^[8] assessed the impacts of mentoring on English language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria. This study employed a descriptive survey design, with a sample of 106 randomly selected English language teachers. The data collection instrument was the "Knowledge of Mentoring in Language Teaching (KNOMILT) Questionnaire," which was validated by experts and had a reliability coefficient of 0.87. The findings showed that there was inadequate knowledge of mentoring among the teachers, and several challenges in mentoring practices were identified.

The reviewed studies, Danladi (2024)^[7], Ibrahim (2022)^[8], Ogbuanya (2022)^[11], and Amoke (2018)^[3] were conducted outside the region of the current area of the study, used different research methodologies, and research instruments and statistical tools to analyze the data. Amoke (2018)^[3] assessed formal mentoring for improved classroom management practices in the Southern region of Nigeria,

Ibrahim (2022)^[8] examined the knowledge of mentoring and the challenges faced by English language teachers in Sokoto Metropolis. None of these studies concentrated on formal and informal mentoring practices in North West, Nigeria. Therefore, there is no statistical data or empirical evidence on the practices in the region.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The purpose of this research design, according to Asika (2012)^[4], is to provide a better and deeper understanding by providing a fuller picture that can enhance the description and understanding of the phenomena.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was 891 teachers of English language teaching in public secondary schools in North West, Nigeria. They consisted of males and females with varying years of teaching experience. Table 1 shows the population of the study.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample size of 269 was used as estimated by the Research Advisor 2006, a table for determining sample size. This sample was achieved through a multistage sampling technique: (i) A convenient sampling technique was used in sampling (Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara) out of seven (Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Kano, Jigawa, Kaduna, and Katsina) states that made up the North West region of Nigeria; (ii) A proportionate sampling technique was used in sampling respondents from teachers of each board responsible for secondary school education in the states; and (iii) A simple random sampling technique of accidental sampling was used in sampling respondents from the sampled schools. Table 2 shows the sampling distribution for the study.

Table 1: Samples for the Study

S/N	State	Sample
1.	Sokoto	145
2.	Kebbi	67
3.	Zamfara	57
	Total	269

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Instruments for Data Collection

Three instruments were used for data collection. These are:

1. A Perceived Impact of Mentoring Practices Questionnaire (PIMPQ)
2. Structured Interview
3. Non-Participant Observation

1. A Perceived Impact of Mentoring Practices Questionnaire (PIMPQ)

The study used a researcher-developed questionnaire titled: Mentoring Practices among Teachers of English Language Questionnaire (MPTELQ) to collect data. Mentoring Practices among Teachers of English Language Questionnaire (MPTELQ) has two sections A & B. Section A consists of background information of the participants which has five questions such as (sex, state of origin, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, area of specialization) while Section B has 36 items that were

constructed based on research questions of the study. The questionnaire was structured on four (4) Rating Scale such as Strongly Agreed (SA)=4, Agreed (A)=3, Disagreed (D)=2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD)=1 respectively to measure the responses of the participants.

2. Structured Interview

This structured interview consisted of three sections: formal mentoring, informal mentoring, and the differences between formal and informal mentoring. Each section aimed to explore specific aspects of mentoring practices, allowing for a detailed understanding of how both types of mentoring influenced teachers' professional development and teaching effectiveness.

- **Formal Mentoring:** This section focused on the participants' perceived impacts of formal mentoring exploring how participants were paired with mentors, the frequency and nature of their interactions, the specific

support they received, and how formal mentoring impacted their teaching practices.

- **Informal Mentoring:** In this section, participants reflected on their experiences with mentoring that occurred outside of a formal structure, such as peer mentoring or mentorship through spontaneous interactions.
- **Differences between Formal and Informal Mentoring:** The final section compared the two mentoring approaches. Participants were asked to reflect on the key differences between their formal and informal mentoring experiences.

3. Non-Participant Observation Checklist

This instrument was designed to record mentoring practices observed during formal and informal mentoring sessions. It was structured to capture specific, observable practices across five key areas: relationship building, goal setting, support and guidance, feedback and reflection, and session closure. Each area contained clearly defined indicators. During each observation, the researcher remained unobtrusive and used the checklist to tick relevant practices as they occurred, ensuring consistency and objectivity. Brief comments were also included alongside each item to provide contextual insights where necessary. This instrument allowed comprehensive recording of mentoring practices, supporting the accurate analysis of mentoring dynamics across different settings.

Validity of the Instruments

The PIMPQ was content and face validated by a senior lecturer of Language Education and a Senior Lecturer of Measurement and Evaluation both from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto and one experienced teacher of English Language from Nagarta College, Sokoto. The copies of PIMPQ, Structured Interview, and Observation Checklist were given to them to scrutinize and make necessary corrections on the content, construct, and face. After essential corrections and observations, the researcher corrected all the mistakes and the research instrument was adjudged to have content, construct and face validity.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was pilot tested at Nagarta College, Sokoto with Sokoto South Education Zone with 7 teachers of English language for two weeks. The instruments were pilot-tested at Nagarta College, Sokoto. In assessing the internal consistency of the instruments, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated at $r = 0.87$. This was considered reliable for use in the study.

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected through a combination of random distribution of questionnaires, non-participant observation, and interviews. The researcher and the trained research assistants visited the schools and introduced themselves to the school administrators and teachers of the English language. The research team explained the objectives, design and method of the data collection process to the teachers. Then, the team began random distribution, collection, and retrieval of the questionnaires. After retrieval of the questionnaires, a mentoring session was organized among the teachers of the English language in that school, the researcher team attended as non-participant observers, using a checklist to record the mentoring practices observed during the sessions. Lastly, interviews were conducted with seven teachers using a structured interview guide.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and inferential statistics of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test on Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 to test null hypotheses. The observation and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the perceived impacts of formal mentoring practice in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

This research question was answered with descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation on SPSS version 23.0 and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Assessing the Perceived Impacts of Formal Mentoring practice in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	N	Sum	Mean	SD	Rank
	Formal mentoring helps teachers of English language of English language understand themselves better and plan their teaching effectively.	269	852	3.17	0.91	6
	Formal mentoring improves teachers of English language of English language skills and performance in the classroom.	269	865	3.22	0.84	3
	Formal mentoring makes teachers of English language of English language more productive and efficient.	269	860	3.20	0.89	4
	Formal mentoring boosts teachers of English language of English language morale and encourages teamwork.	269	862	3.20	0.86	4
	Formal mentoring prepares teachers of English language of English language to handle teaching challenges.	269	882	3.28	0.86	1
	Formal mentoring supports teachers of English language of English language in growing professionally.	269	849	3.16	0.85	7
	Formal mentoring helps teachers of English language of English language create engaging lesson plans.	269	851	3.16	0.87	7
	Formal mentoring helps teachers of English language of English language create engaging lesson plans.	269	869	3.23	0.87	2

Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2024)

Table 2 presented the perceived impacts of formal mentoring practices on the teaching of the English language in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria. The analysis revealed positive perception, with all mean scores ranging from 3.16 to 3.28. The results indicated that formal mentoring is perceived as a valuable tool for professional development

and instructional improvement among English language teachers in the region.

Research Question 2

What are the perceived impacts of informal mentoring practice in improving English language teaching in secondary

schools in North-West Nigeria?

This research question was answered with descriptive

statistics of mean and standard deviation on SPSS version 23.0 and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Assessing the Perceived Impacts of Informal Mentoring Practice in Improving English Language Teaching in Secondary Schools in North-West Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	N	Sum	Mean	S.D.	Rank
	Informal mentoring helps teachers of English language of English language learn new skills from experienced mentors.	269	760	2.83	1.05	4
	Informal mentoring builds friendships and professional support.	269	804	2.99	0.99	1
	Informal mentoring promotes discipline and professionalism.	269	781	2.90	1.07	2
	Informal mentoring makes learning easier through open communication.	269	724	2.69	1.17	5
	Informal mentoring guides teachers of the English language in their careers and personal growth.	269	769	2.86	1.09	3
	Informal mentoring creates a comfortable learning environment.	269	717	2.67	1.13	6

Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2024)

Table 3 presented the perceived impacts of informal mentoring practices on the teaching of the English language in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria. The analysis revealed a moderately positive perception, with all mean scores ranging from 2.67 to 2.99. The results indicated that informal mentoring was perceived as helpful in fostering collegial relationships and professional ethics of teachers in the region.

Research Question 3

What are the differential impacts between formal and informal mentoring practices in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

This research question was answered with descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation on SPSS version 23.0 and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Assessing Perceived Differences between Formal and Informal Mentoring Practice on Improving English Teaching in Secondary Schools in North-west, Nigeria

Mentoring Practice	N	Mean	Std. D.	MD
Formal Mentoring	269	3.20	0.28	
				0.21
Informal Mentoring	269	2.82	0.47	

Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2024)

Table 4 indicates the perceived differential impacts between formal and informal mentoring practices in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria. The analysis showed that formal mentoring has a higher mean impact (Mean = 2.96, Std. D. = 0.98) compared to informal mentoring (Mean = 2.75, Std. D. = 1.06), with a mean difference (MD) of 0.21. To determine whether this mean difference is effective, it was subjected to the null hypothesis for further analysis.

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the perceived impacts of formal and informal mentoring practices in improving English language teaching in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.

This null hypothesis was tested electronically on SPSS version 23.0 using non-parametric statistics of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Comparing English Teacher's Responses on the Effectiveness of Informal and Formal Mentoring Practice in Improving Teaching of English Language in Secondary Schools in North West, Nigeria.

Mentoring	Ranks	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	Z test	p-Value	Decision
Formal-Informal	Negative Ranks	199 ^a	145.30	28915.00	-10.013 ^b	0.001	H ₀₁
	Positive Ranks	60 ^b	79.25	4755.00			Rejected
	Ties	10 ^c					
	Total	269					

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 5 presented the results of a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the means of formal and informal mentoring practices. The result showed that out of 269 respondents, 199 provided higher ratings for formal mentoring compared to informal mentoring (negative ranks), with a mean rank of 145.30 and a sum of ranks of 28,915. Only 60 respondents rated informal mentoring more highly (positive ranks), with a lower mean rank of 79.25 and a sum of ranks of 4,755. There were 10 ties, indicating equal ratings for both mentoring types. The Z value of -10.013 and a p-value of 0.001 indicated a statistically significant difference

in favour of formal mentoring. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀) was rejected. This implied that formal mentoring was perceived to be significantly more impactful than informal mentoring in improving English language teaching among secondary school teachers in the region.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are summarized below:

1. Formal mentoring was perceived to be beneficial in improving English language teaching by providing structured learning opportunities and direct support to teachers.

2. Informal mentoring was seen as more flexible, allowing teachers to seek guidance from peers and experienced colleagues at their convenience.
3. A statistically significant difference was found between formal and informal mentoring, with formal mentoring having a higher impact.

Discussion of Findings

Formal mentoring was perceived to be beneficial in improving English language teaching by providing structured learning opportunities and direct support to teachers. The findings showed that formal mentoring had a higher mean score compared to informal mentoring. Interview showed that R1, R4, and R7 believed that formal mentoring improved their confidence and professional development. However, R2 and R6 stated some limitations such as its rigid structure and dependence on mentors' availability. The observation from formal mentoring practices revealed that most of the mentees were cooperative and exchange ideas. They also participated in practical process in mentoring. This finding supported Danladi (2024)^[7] and Ogbuanya (2022)^[11], who both emphasize the positive effects of structured mentoring on job performance and teacher satisfaction. Danladi's study found that mentoring significantly improved job performance and retention of metalwork teachers, and it was more effective than conventional professional development methods. Ogbuanya's study also revealed a significant positive impact of mentoring on job satisfaction and performance, highlighting mentoring's effectiveness in enhancing teacher outcomes. This aligns with the perception in the current study that formal mentoring offers structured support, leading to better teacher development. However, the limitations identified in the reviewed studies, such as challenges in the availability of mentors and gender neutrality in mentoring effects, also echo the findings in this study that formal mentoring may have constraints despite its clear benefits.

Informal mentoring was seen as more flexible, allowing teachers to seek guidance from peers and experienced colleagues at their convenience. R2, R3, R4, and R5 responded that informal mentoring promotes collaboration and sharing of teaching strategies but lacks structure and consistency. The observation of the formal mentoring confirmed this by identifying flexible nature in the practice. Every mentee can join at his will. This finding is supported Danladi (2024)^[7] and Ogbuanya (2022)^[11] that informal mentoring is flexible, lacked the consistency and structure necessary for deep impact.

The study found that a statistically significant difference between formal and informal mentoring, with formal mentoring having a higher impact. R1, R3, R5, R6 and R7 reported that they benefitted more from structured learning and direct mentoring. They consider informal mentoring as a supplementary practice to formal mentoring. The researcher recorded that mentee were more attentive, cooperative, and curious when a session was structured than when it was not. This finding corroborated Amoke (2018)^[3] that formal mentoring improved classroom management practices, suggesting that a structured, systematic approach to mentoring has a significant impact on teaching practices. Ibrahim (2022)^[8], although discussing English language teachers, highlighted the importance of structured mentoring

and the challenges associated with informal mentoring, supporting the current study's conclusion that formal mentoring produces better results. These studies indicated that while informal mentoring has value, it lacks the organizational rigor and direct support that formal mentoring offers, which enhances its overall effectiveness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant impact of formal mentoring on English language teaching, demonstrating that structured mentoring programs offer greater support, professional development, and increased teacher confidence compared to informal mentoring. While informal mentoring provides flexibility and promotes collaboration, its lack of consistency and structure limits its effectiveness. The findings emphasize that formal mentoring, with its direct guidance and systematic approach, plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher performance and development, underscoring the need for schools to prioritize and implement well-organized mentoring programs to maximize their impact.

Recommendations

1. Schools should set up clear, formal mentoring programs to give teachers regular support and help them grow professionally.
2. Schools should train mentors to ensure they have the skills needed to support and guide teachers effectively.
3. Schools should also encourage informal mentoring, like peer support and group discussions, to help teachers share ideas and learn from each other.

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