

The Influence of Mentorship Programmes on Teaching Quality in Iringa Municipality

¹Zena, K. Ibrahimu*, ²Chrispina Lekule & ³Stephen Kilasi

¹Master's Student of Education (Planning and Administration) of Ruaha Catholic University, Iringa Tanzania

²Professor, Department of Education, Ruaha Catholic University, Iringa Tanzania

³Lecturer, Department of Education, Ruaha Catholic University, Iringa Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the influence of mentorship programmes on teaching quality in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. The theory which guided this study is Social Constructivist Theory, primarily developed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. The study was guided by a mixed research approach with a convergent research design. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were adopted to select the participants of the study from four (4) selected public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, while quantitative data were analyzed by using statistical package for social science (SPSS) 29.0 version. The findings of the study revealed that mentorship programmes influence the teaching quality. Teachers who participated in mentorship activities reported significant improvements in their professional practice. Mentorship was found to enhance lesson planning skills, and contributed to improved teaching effectiveness, particularly by enabling teachers to adopt learner-centered approaches that actively engage students in the learning process. Based on the results obtained in the study, it concluded that mentorship has transformative potential if it is designed and implemented with clear objectives, sufficient resources and accountability mechanisms. Thus, mentorship should be viewed not only as a tool for professional growth but also as a strategic intervention for systemic improvement in teaching quality. Therefore, it is recommended that mentorship will only achieve its full potential if it is backed by strong institutional support, adequate resources and active engagement from all stakeholders. School leaders, policymakers, government authorities and teachers must work collaboratively to strengthen mentorship programmes as a sustainable mechanism for enhancing teaching quality in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Mentorship programmes, Teaching quality, Influence, Teaching

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Mentorship is widely recognized as a component in promoting teachers' professional growth and improving the quality of teaching (Thi, 2020; Udom, Okoedion & Okolie, 2020). It involves a structured relationship where experienced and knowledgeable teachers guide, support and coach their less experienced colleagues. In public secondary schools, mentorship programmes serve as a critical mechanism for professional development, ensuring that teachers continuously refine their teaching practices to maintain high teaching standards (Udom et al., 2020). Globally, structured mentorship programs have been shown to improve teaching practices, boost teacher morale and contribute to talent retention within the education sector (Csufresno.edu, 2022). Effective mentorship fosters a collaborative environment where experienced educators share insights and best practices with their junior colleagues, enhancing their capacity to deliver quality instruction (Lovett, 2018).

The origin of mentorship programmes in education can be traced back to ancient Greece, where the term "mentor" first emerged in Homer's The Odyssey (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2019). In contemporary education systems, formal mentorship programmes began taking shape in the 20th century,

particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These countries pioneered structured mentorship programmes initiatives as part of broader educational reforms aimed at enhancing teaching quality and reducing the attrition rates of novice teachers. In the United States, mentorship programmes were introduced in the 1980s, with states adopting induction and mentoring frameworks to support beginning teachers during their first years in the profession (Hobson et al. 2019). The goal was to ensure a smoother transition into the teaching environment and improve teaching effectiveness through guidance from veteran teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, teacher mentorship became a key component of teacher induction programmes, formalized through national standards that required newly qualified teachers to be mentored by experienced colleagues (Hobson et al., 2019).

Finland is renowned for its high-performing education system, with mentorship programmes playing a key role in teacher development (Hobson et al., 2019). In Finland, the focus is on collaborative learning, where experienced teachers mentor their peers, emphasizing reflective practice and continuous improvement (Morris, Gorard, Kokotsaki, & Abdi, 2020). This approach highlights the importance of mentorship not just as a tool for new teachers, but as a vital part of ongoing professional growth for all educators, contributing to the overall success of the education system.

The adoption of mentorship programmes in education gradually spread to developing countries, including those in Sub-Saharan Africa, as a response to challenges in teacher quality and professional development. In Ghana, mentorship programmes are gaining traction, particularly in teacher training colleges, where experienced educators mentor student teachers (Adams, Wiium, & Abubakar, 2019). This approach aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical classroom skills, but challenges such as inconsistency and limited resources persist. As mentorship programmes in Ghana continue to develop, there is an ongoing effort to ensure they meet the needs of teachers, ultimately improving the quality of education.

Similarly, Kenya has made significant progress in integrating mentorship programmes into teacher professional development, particularly through initiatives that support newly qualified teachers (Mutwiri & Chui, 2024). Mentorship programmes in Kenya is seen as a way to improve teaching practices, reduce teacher turnover, and address challenges such as varying levels of classroom preparedness. Despite the progress, the quality and consistency of mentorship can vary across the countries, highlighting the need for continued investment in these programs to ensure their success.

The idea of mentorship in Tanzania has evolved over time, influenced by the country's changing educational landscape (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2008). Although formal mentorship programmes were introduced in recent decades, elements of mentorship have existed in various forms since the post-independence era, particularly within the education sector (Sumra & Katabaro, 2014). In the immediate years following independence in the 1960s to 1980s, Tanzania experienced a significant expansion in the education sector, driven by the government's commitment to education for self-reliance under the leadership of Julius Nyerere (Galabawa, 2001). During this period, mentorship in education was largely informal. Experienced teachers, often called "Walimu wakuu", played a role in guiding and supporting younger or newly posted teachers (Sumra & Katabaro, 2014). The mentorship was based on collegial relationships rather than formal structures (Mutwiri & Chui, 2024). Due to a shortage of trained teachers, many unqualified or underqualified teachers were deployed and mentorship became a survival mechanism to help them navigate classroom teaching, lesson planning, and classroom management (Galabawa, 2001). Though not institutionalized, this support system laid the foundation for future structured mentorship programmes approaches.

Furthermore, Shields and Murray (2017) indicate international initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and USAID's Tusome Pamoja Project which also, have been supporting mentorship efforts in Tanzania. These programmes provide funding and technical assistance to develop mentorship programmes, aiming to enhance teachers' instructional practices (Goldburg, 2023). These initiatives highlight the importance of mentorship in enhancing teacher quality in Tanzania. These initiatives aim to provide new teachers with the practical skills and confidence needed to succeed in the classroom. While the implementation of mentorship programmes in Tanzania is still evolving, efforts continue to strengthen and formalize these practices to better support teachers and improve educational outcomes (Richardson, 2024).

However, in Tanzania, mentorship programmes for teachers are still developing, reflecting broader national trends (Shields & Murray, 2017). Efforts to improve mentorship have been supported by various initiatives and policies aimed at enhancing the quality of education. There are ongoing efforts to formalize and strengthen these programmes to ensure more structured and consistent support (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MoEST], 2020). These efforts are part of a broader push to improve teacher professional development and address challenges such as teacher shortages and varying levels of training. Local educational authorities and schools are increasingly recognizing the importance of mentorship programmes (MoEST, 2020). These programs focus on improving teaching practices, classroom management and overall teacher effectiveness. Despite these positive steps, challenges remain, including limited resources, time and varying levels of implementation across different schools. Nonetheless, there is a growing commitment to enhancing mentorship programs to support teachers and improve educational outcomes in Iringa Municipality.

Understanding the influence of mentorship on teaching quality is important for several reasons. Mentorship fosters professional development for teachers, enhancing their instructional skills and classroom management techniques (Kyaruzi, 2017). This, in turn, directly impacts student engagement and learning outcomes. When educators receive guidance and support, they are better equipped to implement effective teaching strategies, adapt to diverse learning needs and create a positive learning environment. As the Iringa Municipality seeks to elevate educational standards, understanding and harnessing the potential of mentorship programmes will be essential for fostering a culture of quality teaching. However, while informal mentorship programmes are common, there was limited empirical data on how these programmes influence teaching effectiveness. Therefore, this study assessed the influence of mentorship programmes on teaching quality in Iringa Municipality.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

This study was guided by Social Constructivist Theory which primarily developed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. The theory emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their own knowledge. Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, first introduced his ideas in the 1920s, focusing on how children build their understanding of the world through stages of cognitive development. Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, expanded on this in the 1930s with a focus on social interaction and cultural context, particularly through his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which underscores the role of more knowledgeable others, such as teachers or peers, in the learning process.

The key assumption of Constructivist Theory is that learners do not passively absorb information; instead, they actively build upon their prior knowledge, making sense of new information through experience and reflection. Learning is seen as a social process where knowledge is constructed through interactions with others, particularly teachers or mentors (Jakob, Buchel, Brunetti and Steffen, 2022). Piaget emphasized stages of cognitive development, while Vygotsky highlighted the importance of social context, language, and collaborative learning.

The strength of this theory lies in its emphasis on learner autonomy and the importance of creating engaging, interactive learning environments. When encouraging active learning, it fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and deeper understanding. It also recognizes the importance of teachers as facilitators rather than mere transmitters of knowledge. In terms of educational practice, Constructivism encourages personalized learning experiences that cater to the individual needs and developmental stages of students.

However, one shortcoming of Constructivist Theory is its potential difficulty in standardized educational systems (Jakob et al., 2022). The individualized and inquiry-based approach may not always align with rigid curricula or testing standards. Additionally, the theory's focus on the learner's self-directed discovery might not fully account for the challenges students face in situations where foundational knowledge or support is lacking. Teachers need to carefully balance guidance and freedom in this approach, as some students may struggle without adequate scaffolding.

The relevance of Constructivist Theory to the study of teachers' mentorship for quality teaching in public secondary schools in Iringa lies in its emphasis on the dynamic relationship between teachers and students. Mentorship, under this theory, is not merely about transferring knowledge, but about guiding students through

meaningful learning experiences that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving. Teachers, as mentors, play a crucial role in scaffolding students' learning, fostering an environment where students can construct knowledge actively. This aligns with the study's focus on how teacher mentorship influences academic performance, as it provides a framework for understanding how guidance, support and interaction can positively impact students' learning outcomes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Research Approach and Design

In finding out the extent to which mentorship programmes influence teachers' quality teaching in Iringa Municipality, a mixed research approach was used. Qualitative approach was applied first, where the researcher collected and analysed data to gain in-depth insights and meaningful understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data provided detailed views of the respondents, such as the perspectives and experiences of heads of schools and teachers, during the investigation of mentorship programmes for quality teaching. Subsequently, the quantitative approach was used to collect numerical data, which were interpreted qualitatively to provide a comprehensive perspective. The quantitative method assessed the influence of mentorship on quality teaching by analysing measurable indicators. This combination ensured that both the processes of mentorship and their tangible effects are thoroughly examined.

The study utilized convergent research design. Using a convergent research design for studying the impact of teachers' mentorship on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research problem by integrating both qualitative and quantitative data. The convergent design was particularly suited for this study because it provided a more holistic view of the issue at hand. Since the qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time, it saved time and resources. This was especially important in the context of this educational research, where time constraints limited the duration of the study.

3.2 Participants

In the study, the target population was 172 including teachers and heads of schools from the selected public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality. The sample size of the study was 63 respondents comprised of four (4) heads of schools and fifty-nine (59) teachers. Due to the obtained sample size, the researcher hoped that it was enough to provide the required information concerning the study. Heads of schools were included in the study as leaders and administrators, who are responsible for the overall direction and management of the school, including the development and support of mentorship programmes initiatives. Their perspectives provided valuable insights into how mentorship is structured and its goals. Purposive sampling techniques was utilized in selecting heads of schools.

Also, teachers were included in the study due to the fact that they are the one who are responsible in ensuring that educational goals are practically attained, especially provision of quality education through quality teaching. When mentorship programmes are encouraged, they directly affect teachers. The selection of teachers included the use of simple random sampling technique. This technique was applied since teachers are many and all of them cannot involved in the study. To avoid biasness (Fowler, 2014), the researcher prepared the pieces of papers with numbers from one and continued according to the number of teachers at a particular school. The researcher folded the pieces of papers and ask each teacher to select only one of the folded papers. Finally, the researcher selected the papers with numbers written from one up to six in order to get the participants from the particular school.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Questionnaires were used as the primary tool for collecting quantitative data from teachers. According to Creswell (2014), questionnaires are effective for gathering data from a large number of participants, making it possible to obtain a broad and representative sample of teachers' perspectives. The use of both closed-ended and

open-ended questions allowed for the collection of both structured data that can be analyzed statistically and qualitative insights (Bryman, 2016).

Also, interviews were conducted with heads of schools to gather qualitative data on their roles in promoting and supporting mentorship programmes as well as their perceptions of its influence on teaching quality. Interviews were particularly valuable for exploring complex phenomena, as they allowed for in-depth conversations and the flexibility to probe further into participants' responses. The interview lasted for thirty (30) to forty-five (45) minutes. The researcher used both voice recording and note-taking during the interviews to ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data.

3.4 Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

The data that obtained through interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis. The analysis process begun with the researcher becoming familiar with the data by transcribing interviews and repeatedly reading the transcripts to gain a deep understanding. The quantitative data which were obtained from questionnaire were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 29.0. The data were presented in tables indicated through frequencies and percentages.

Also, adherence to ethical considerations was paramount throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, an introductory letter was obtained from the office of the Director of Postgraduate Studies at Ruaha Catholic University. This letter served as formal recognition, allowing the researcher to approach regional and municipal authorities with credibility. It facilitated access to the selected schools, ensuring that the study was conducted within a framework of institutional support. During the data collection process, ethical issues were carefully addressed to protect the rights and well-being of the participants. Informed consent was sought from all respondents, ensuring that they fully understood the purpose of the study, their role in it, and their right to withdraw at any time. This transparency was crucial in fostering trust and promoting a respectful research environment. Furthermore, confidentiality was rigorously maintained; participants were assured that their identities and responses would be kept anonymous, which is essential for encouraging open and honest communication.

Ethical considerations continued during the data analysis phase, where the researcher was committed to relying solely on the findings derived from the collected data rather than imposing personal biases or interpretations. Through focusing on the evidence gathered from questionnaires and interviews, the analysis aimed to faithfully represent the perspectives and experiences of the participants. This commitment to ethical integrity ensured that the study's conclusions were grounded in the reality of the participants' experiences, contributing to the credibility and reliability of the research outcomes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study found out the extent to which mentorship programmes influence teachers' quality of teaching in Iringa Municipality. The study found that mentorship programmes in public secondary schools influence teachers' quality teaching by improving lesson planning skills. Also, mentorship improves teaching effectiveness, enhance teachers' ability to utilize learner-centered teaching methods, improves teachers' classroom management skills and enhancing teaching quality. Furthermore, mentorship programmes increase confidence and handling diverse classroom challenges, improve the ability to assess and evaluate students' learning, help teachers to integrate technology better in their teaching and contribute to teachers' professional development. The responses of teachers on the extent to which mentorship programmes influence teachers' quality teaching in Iringa Municipality were analyzed and tabulated (See Table 1).

Table 1: Teachers' Responses on the Extent to which Mentorship Programmes Influence Teachers' Quality Teaching (N=59)

Statement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The mentorship programme has improved my teaching effectiveness	17(28.7%)	6(10.1%)	36(60.9%)

My lesson planning skills have improved due to mentorship	20(33.8%)	7(11.8%)	32(54.1%)
Regular mentorship sessions help me improve my classroom management skills	15(25.3%)	7(11.8%)	36(60.9%)
I receive constructive feedback from my mentor that enhances my teaching quality	11(18.6%)	11(18.6%)	37(62.6%)
My ability to assess and evaluate students' learning has improved through mentorship	14(23.6%)	11(18.6%)	34(57.5%)
I integrate technology better in my teaching because of mentorship guidance	17(28.7%)	7(11.8%)	35(59.2%)
Mentorship programmes contribute to my professional growth and career development	15(25.3%)	11(18.6%)	33(55.8%)

Source: Field data (2025)

4.1 Mentorship programmes improve teachers' teaching effectiveness

Mentorship programmes improve teachers' teaching effectiveness by providing guidance, support and feedback from experienced teachers (Sumra & Katabaro, 2014). This helps teachers develop better instructional skills, improve lesson delivery, and manage classrooms more effectively. Through mentorship, teachers gain confidence and practical strategies that enhance how they teach, leading to improved learning experiences for their students. A large proportion, 60.9%, agreed that mentorship programmes improve teachers' teaching effectiveness, showing that such initiatives play a key role in enhancing the ability to deliver lessons in a more organized and engaging manner.

Interviews with heads of schools also, reinforced the perception that mentorship is a practical tool for improving teachers' effectiveness. Heads of schools observed that mentorship provided teachers with concrete guidance on lesson preparation, classroom management and instructional diversity, which in turn enabled more organized and engaging lesson delivery. Sustained interaction with mentors enhanced teachers' confidence, sharpened time management skills and encouraged the adoption of approaches that respond to diverse learners' needs. Effective mentoring offers both pedagogical direction and psychosocial support, thereby shaping teachers' classroom practice and professional identity (Ally & Libent-Mabagala, 2022).

This was also evidenced when one among heads of schools said: *"Teachers who go through mentorship become more organized in planning and delivering lessons. You can see the difference in how they manage their classes and how pupils respond to their teaching"* (Interview with Head of School from SA held on 2nd June, 2025). This statement reflects the tangible outcomes of mentorship, as teachers demonstrate improved classroom organization and pupils engage more actively in learning. Mentorship contributes not only to teacher preparedness but also to improved pupil outcomes, underscoring its dual role in supporting teachers and learners alike.

Another head of school remarked: *"Mentorship has helped teachers to apply learner-centred approaches more effectively, which has improved pupils' participation and understanding during lessons."* (Interview with Head of School from SB held on 5th June, 2025). This statement demonstrates how mentorship fosters pedagogical innovation by shifting teachers toward learner-centred practices. Such findings correspond with Handrianto, Kurniati and Lestari, (2022) who highlight that mentorship is instrumental in promoting interactive teaching approaches that enhance student learning. Mentorship is therefore not only strengthens teaching quality but also ensures that pupils are actively involved in their learning processes, thereby increasing comprehension and performance.

Taken together, these findings align with a growing body of literature that views mentorship as a cornerstone of teacher professional development and a critical determinant of teaching quality. However, as Lindgren (2019)

cautions, the effectiveness of mentorship depends on the consistency of implementation, school-level support and the capacity of mentors. For this study, the implication is that while mentorship has strong potential to transform teaching in Iringa Municipality's public secondary schools, its impact may be uneven unless policies, resources and leadership commitment are harmonized across schools.

4.2 Teachers' lesson planning skills are improved due to mentorship programmes

Teachers' lesson planning skills are improved due to mentorship programmes because experienced mentors guide teachers on how to organize lessons effectively, set clear objectives and select appropriate teaching methods and materials (Riebenbauer, Dreisiebner & Stock, 2017). Through observation and feedback, teachers learn to align lesson plans with students' needs and curriculum requirements, making their planning more structured and practical for classroom use. Table 1 indicates that, 54.1% agreed that mentorship improves teachers' lesson planning skills, suggesting that these programmes equip teachers with strategies to prepare structured and curriculum-aligned lesson plans.

The findings obtained through interviews conducted with Heads of schools revealed that mentorship positively influenced teachers' lesson planning skills, leading to better preparation and structured delivery of lessons. Heads of schools reported that through mentorship, teachers gained practical guidance on aligning lesson plans with syllabus objectives, setting clear learning outcomes and selecting appropriate teaching methods and materials. This finding corresponds with Smith, (2024) who underscore that high-quality professional support enables teachers to design lessons that are both systematic and responsive to curriculum demands. Mentors were particularly noted for their role in assisting teachers to break down complex topics into manageable sections, ensuring clarity and alignment with curriculum requirements.

One head of school explained: *"Mentorship helps teachers to prepare lesson plans that are clear and aligned with what is required in the syllabus, making it easier for them to teach effectively"* (Interview with Head of School from SA held on 2nd June, 2025). This statement illustrates how mentorship bridges the gap between curricular expectations and classroom practice by guiding teachers in crafting structured lesson plans that support effective teaching. Another head of school said: *"We have seen that after mentorship sessions, teachers prepare more detailed and organized lesson plans with clear objectives and activities that match pupils' levels"* (Interview with Head of School from SB held on 5th June, 2025). This comment highlights the shift from generic lesson preparation to more intentional and learner-focused planning, a transformation that enhances pupils' comprehension and participation.

These findings demonstrate that mentorship in Iringa Municipality's public secondary schools contributes directly to strengthening teaching effectiveness by improving lesson planning, promoting reflective practice and encouraging collaboration. The implication for this study is that mentorship is not simply an add-on professional development initiative, but rather a foundational practice that shapes teachers' instructional quality, thereby fostering improved student outcomes. However, as Smith (2024) cautions, sustaining such positive impacts requires consistency in programme implementation and adequate support to ensure all schools benefit equally.

The findings further revealed that mentorship programmes guide teachers on how to incorporate diverse instructional methods and teaching aids into their lesson plans, thereby enriching lesson delivery and addressing pupils' varying learning needs. Mentors were reported to frequently review teachers' lesson plans and provide constructive feedback, enabling teachers to identify areas for improvement and refine their planning practices over time. Heads of schools emphasized that teachers who had undergone mentorship demonstrated greater confidence and consistency in lesson planning compared to those without mentorship support. This improvement directly contributed to organized lesson flow, effective time management and clearer instructional delivery during classroom teaching. Such findings align with Riebenbauer, Dreisiebner, and Stock (2017), who contend that mentorship provides practical guidance that helps teachers structure lessons effectively, define clear objectives and select appropriate teaching methods and materials. The implication here is that mentorship acts as a scaffolding mechanism, progressively strengthening teachers' planning competence and ensuring more purposeful lesson delivery.

4.3 Regular mentorship sessions help teachers to improve their classroom management skills

Regular mentorship sessions help teachers improve their classroom management skills by allowing them to learn practical strategies from experienced mentors on maintaining discipline and creating a positive learning environment (Goldburg, 2023). Through observation, feedback, and discussions, teachers gain techniques for managing student behavior, organizing classroom activities, and handling challenges effectively, which strengthens their confidence in managing classrooms. Regular mentorship sessions were recognized by 60.9% of respondents as instrumental in improving classroom management skills, highlighting the importance of guided support in creating an orderly and conducive learning environment.

The findings obtained from Heads of schools through interviews reveal that, regular mentorship sessions in public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality have made a notable contribution to strengthening teachers' classroom management skills, which in turn enhances the quality of teaching. Heads of schools pointed out that mentorship provides teachers with practical and continuous guidance on how to maintain order, manage time effectively, and create a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. One head of school stressed this by stating: *"During mentorship, teachers are shown how to manage their classes better, including how to control noise and keep pupils focused during group activities"* (Interview with Head of School from SB held on 5th June, 2025). Another observed: *"Mentorship sessions often include discussions on classroom management, helping teachers learn how to handle discipline issues and maintain order while teaching"* (Interview with Head of School from SA held on 2nd June, 2025). These statements illustrate that mentorship goes beyond theoretical advice by offering practical, context-based strategies that enable teachers to address real classroom challenges.

The emphasis on building teachers' confidence in handling discipline and ensuring uninterrupted learning echoes Henning, Gut and Beam (2015) assertion that classroom management is not only about controlling behaviour but about creating conditions that optimize learning. In the context of this study, it means that mentorship equips teachers with the ability to transform classrooms into structured yet supportive environments where pupils remain engaged and focused. This is particularly important in Iringa Municipality, where large class sizes and limited resources often magnify the challenges of maintaining order.

The findings revealed that mentorship encourages teachers to reflect on their own classroom management challenges and adopt proactive solutions. Teachers under mentorship were found to apply strategies such as setting clear rules, using praise effectively and employing fair corrective measures when necessary. One head of school emphasized: *"We have seen that teachers who attend regular mentorship become more confident in handling discipline while ensuring that learning continues without unnecessary interruptions"* (Interview with Head of School from SC held on 7th June, 2025). These insights are consistent with Suleiman (2023), who argue that proactive classroom management not only reduces disruptions but also maximizes instructional time. For this study, such alignment underscores that mentorship strengthens teachers' ability to sustain a learning-focused environment, which directly contributes to improved student outcomes.

Additionally, mentorship sessions were found to provide opportunities for teachers to observe how experienced mentors manage classrooms effectively. This kind of modeling and peer observation resonates with Bandura's (1997) social learning theory, which highlights the value of learning through observation and imitation. Teachers in Iringa Municipality benefited from these opportunities by gradually integrating effective strategies into their own classroom routines. The implication is that mentorship builds professional capacity through experiential learning, enabling teachers to internalize classroom management practices that might otherwise take years to develop.

The evidence from this study also confirms that classroom management is central to quality teaching, supporting Maganga (2017) claim that effective instruction cannot occur in the absence of orderly and supportive learning environments. Aligning with this perspective means that the mentorship programmes in Iringa are not simply helping teachers refine pedagogical skills but are laying the foundation upon which all other aspects of teaching rest. Without mentorship, teachers may struggle with behavioural challenges that reduce learning time and compromise instructional quality. With mentorship, however, they gain the competence and confidence to create classrooms where effective teaching can truly take place.

4.4 Mentorship programmes enhance teachers' teaching quality

Mentorship programmes enhance teachers' teaching quality by providing ongoing guidance, feedback and support from experienced mentors (Richardson, 2024). This helps teachers improve their lesson delivery, use effective teaching methods, and address learners' needs more effectively. As a result, teachers become more confident and skilled, leading to better learning experiences and outcomes for their students. The majority, 62.6%, agreed that mentorship enhances teachers' overall teaching quality, underlining its value in refining instructional practices.

Similarly, the interviews conducted with Heads of schools revealed that mentorship contributes to quality teaching by providing teachers with constructive feedback from their mentors. This feedback process involves mentors observing teachers during actual lessons and offering specific, actionable advice on areas such as lesson delivery, use of instructional methods, time management, and pupil engagement. One head of school explained: *"Mentors often attend lessons to observe how teachers teach and give feedback on what went well and what needs improvement, which helps teachers improve their teaching"* (Interview with Head of School from SC held on 7th June, 2025). This observation underscores the importance of feedback as a practical mechanism for continuous professional growth, helping teachers identify strengths while also addressing areas needing development.

Another head of school elaborated: *"Teachers receive clear advice from mentors on how to improve their lesson delivery, classroom control, and use of teaching methods, and this feedback helps them to grow professionally"* (Interview with Head of School from SD held on 12th June, 2025). This reflection shows that feedback within mentorship programmes is not only corrective but developmental, designed to empower teachers to refine their instructional practices systematically.

These findings resonate with Richardson (2024), who stresses that mentorship enhances teaching quality through ongoing guidance, constructive feedback and sustained professional support. In line with this perspective, the study indicates that mentorship in Iringa Municipality creates structured opportunities for teachers to reflect critically on their practices, adopt learner-centred strategies, and improve lesson delivery. Such alignment implies that feedback mechanisms embedded in mentorship are central to bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and effective classroom application.

The evidence further shows that teachers who receive regular feedback learn to structure their lessons more effectively, apply learner-centred methods with greater confidence and manage classrooms more efficiently. Constructive feedback therefore becomes a catalyst for continuous professional reflection, confidence-building, and alignment with instructional standards. This has direct implications for pupil learning, as better-prepared and more reflective teachers deliver lessons that are engaging, interactive, and conducive to improved academic outcomes.

4.5 Mentorship improve teachers' ability to assess and evaluate students' learning

Mentorship improves teachers' ability to assess and evaluate students' learning by guiding them on how to design clear assessments, use different evaluation methods and interpret students' results effectively (Shields & Murray, 2017). Mentors provide feedback on assessment practices and help teachers align assessments with learning objectives, enabling them to monitor student progress and adjust teaching to support learners' needs. In terms of assessment skills, 57.5% agreed that mentorship improves teachers' ability to assess and evaluate students' learning, indicating that these programmes contribute to more effective and meaningful evaluation practices.

Mentorship encourages reflective practice in assessment, allowing teachers to critically analyze student outcomes and identify both strengths and areas requiring additional support. When doing so, teachers are able to implement targeted instructional interventions that address learning gaps and reinforce pupil understanding (Muraya & Wairimu, 2020). This demonstrates that mentorship contributes not only to teacher professional development but also to improved learner outcomes, as assessments become tools for informed instructional decision-making rather than merely routine grading exercises.

The findings confirm that mentorship programmes in Iringa Municipality enhance teachers' assessment and evaluation competencies, enabling them to deliver more structured, fair, and effective evaluations. The implication for this study is that strengthened assessment skills, supported through mentorship, are integral to quality teaching, as they ensure that instruction is responsive to pupils' needs, learning is monitored systematically, and educational outcomes are improved.

4.6 Mentorship helps teachers to integrate technology better in their teaching

Mentorship helps teachers integrate technology better in their teaching by providing guidance on using digital tools to support lessons and engage students (Anyanwu & Abe, 2023). Mentors can demonstrate practical ways to use technology for lesson delivery, assessments, and interactive learning, helping teachers gain confidence and skills in applying technology effectively in the classroom. The integration of technology into teaching was supported by 59.2% of respondents, pointing to mentorship's role in encouraging teachers to adopt digital tools and resources in lesson delivery. During the interviews, Heads of schools reported that through continuous guidance and practical advice from mentors, teachers have become more confident and skilled in using technological tools to enhance lesson delivery and pupil engagement. One head teacher explained:

Mentors help teachers learn how to use technology effectively, from preparing digital lessons to incorporating interactive tools that make learning more engaging. Because of mentorship, many teachers have embraced using projectors, computers, and even online resources, which has improved how they deliver lessons (Interview with Head Teacher from SA held on 2nd June, 2025).

This demonstrates that mentorship provides not only technical skills but also the confidence to experiment with digital resources in ways that enrich the learning experience. The increased technological competence allows teachers to cater to diverse learning styles, access up-to-date information, and foster interactive classrooms. Such outcomes are critical in modern education, where technology can transform lesson delivery and support deeper student engagement. This aligns with Anyanwu and Abe (2023), who emphasize that mentorship offers practical guidance on effectively using digital tools to enhance lesson delivery and pupil participation. In the context of this study, this alignment indicates that mentorship in Iringa Municipality functions as a bridge between conventional teaching practices and modern, technology-enhanced instruction.

Mentorship equips teachers with the skills to utilize a variety of technological tools, including projectors, computers and iPads (locally referred to as 'VISHIKWAMBI'), to enrich lesson content and engage learners through interactive activities. Mentors provide hands-on training and encourage teachers to incorporate these tools into their daily teaching routines, which strengthens both competence and confidence in using digital resources. The implication for this study is that mentorship supports the professional development of teachers in ways that align with contemporary educational demands, ensuring that technology is not only available but effectively applied to improve teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

The findings suggest that mentorship programmes play a role in modernizing instructional practices within Iringa Municipality's public secondary schools. Through enhancing teachers' technological skills and confidence, mentorship contributes to more engaging, interactive, and effective lessons, demonstrating a clear link between teacher support, innovative teaching approaches, and improved pupil outcomes.

4.7 Mentorship programmes contribute to teachers' professional growth and career development

Mentorship programmes contribute to teachers' professional growth and career development by providing continuous guidance, support and opportunities to learn new skills (Goldburg, 2023). Through mentoring, teachers gain practical teaching strategies, improve their confidence and develop reflective practices that strengthen their professional competence, preparing them for future responsibilities and advancement in their careers. 55.8% of respondents agreed that mentorship programmes contribute to teachers' professional growth and career development, reflecting the role of ongoing guidance in motivating teachers to advance their skills and pursue career progression.

Through sustained guidance and support, teachers gain opportunities to enhance their skills, reflect critically on their teaching practices and set clear career goals. In the interviews, Heads of schools showed that mentorship encourages continuous learning and motivates teachers to pursue further training and qualifications. One head of school observed: *“Mentorship creates a supportive environment where teachers feel encouraged to improve professionally and consider career advancement. Through mentorship, teachers receive advice on professional pathways and are inspired to develop their competencies beyond the classroom”* (Interview with Head of school from SB held on 15th May, 2025). This underscores how mentorship goes beyond immediate classroom practices to nurture long-term professional aspirations.

The study shows that mentorship contributes not only to improved teaching quality but also to job satisfaction and teacher retention. When teachers feel supported and valued through structured mentorship, they are more likely to remain committed to their profession and engage actively in professional development. This aligns with Goldberg (2023), who emphasizes that mentorship provides continuous guidance, practical support, and opportunities for teachers to acquire new skills that are essential for career advancement. In the context of Iringa Municipality, this alignment means that mentorship strengthens the teaching workforce by building motivation, professional competence, and a sense of purpose among educators.

Mentorship programmes also enable teachers to enhance instructional practices, develop reflective skills and build confidence in their teaching, all of which collectively contribute to professional competence. Through ongoing mentorship, teachers are encouraged to engage in lifelong learning, pursue further academic or professional training, and set career objectives that align with both personal and institutional goals. The implication for this study is that mentorship not only improves immediate classroom effectiveness but also invests in the long-term capacity and motivation of teachers, ensuring a sustainable and skilled workforce capable of delivering quality education.

The findings confirm that mentorship is a strategic tool for professional growth, career development, and the cultivation of a motivated and competent teaching cadre. Through linking practical guidance with reflective practice and career planning, mentorship programmes in Iringa Municipality help teachers grow holistically, benefiting both their professional trajectories and the learning outcomes of their pupils.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study it affirmed that mentorship programmes are important in shaping teachers' professional growth and improving the quality of teaching in public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality. Drawing on social constructivism theory, which emphasizes learning as a social process where knowledge is constructed through interaction and collaboration, the study showed that mentorship provides a vital platform for teachers to co-construct pedagogical knowledge, reflect on practice and engage in meaningful dialogue with peers and mentors. In this sense, mentorship is not merely a technical exercise of transferring skills from experienced to less experienced teachers, but rather a collaborative process of knowledge creation that strengthens professional identity and pedagogical competence.

When mentorship is poorly supported, teachers are deprived of opportunities for authentic engagement and collaborative reflection, thereby weakening the culture of shared learning that is central to constructivist theory. The findings therefore challenge policymakers, school leaders and education stakeholders to rethink mentorship not as an optional or informal activity, but as a structured and well-supported professional development strategy that is embedded in the broader educational system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based to the findings and conclusion drawn under this study, recommendations are provided into two angles; recommendations for action and recommendation for further studies. For action to be taken it is recommended that school leaders should take deliberate steps to institutionalize mentorship within their schools. For policymakers and government leaders, it is essential to provide a supportive policy framework that recognizes mentorship as a central component of teachers' continuous professional development. Clear guidelines should be established to standardize mentorship practices across schools while allowing flexibility to adapt to local

contexts. Government leaders, particularly within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, should allocate adequate financial and human resources to support mentorship programmes, including training mentors, funding workshops, and facilitating peer-learning platforms. Policy initiatives should also aim to reduce politicization of mentorship practices and ensure that mentorship is implemented fairly, equitably and with clear accountability measures.

Teachers themselves have a critical role to play in making mentorship effective. They should embrace mentorship as a learning opportunity rather than as an additional burden, actively participating in collaborative teaching, reflection and peer support. Newly recruited teachers should seek guidance from their mentors, while experienced teachers should approach mentorship with commitment and openness, recognizing it as an avenue for professional renewal. When doing so, teachers contribute to creating professional learning communities where knowledge is co-constructed and shared.

Furthermore, apart from the provided recommendations for actions, the following are the recommendations for further studies which have generated from the findings. Other researchers are invited to explore the long-term impact of mentorship programmes on students' academic performance to establish the indirect benefits of mentorship on learning outcomes. Further studies may also investigate the effectiveness of different models of mentorship programmes to determine which approaches are most suitable in the context of public secondary schools. Comparative studies between schools with well-established mentorship structures and those without could provide deeper insights into the contributions of mentorship to teachers' professional development and teaching effectiveness. Additionally, research could examine the perspectives of students regarding changes observed in teachers' instructional methods due to mentorship to provide a holistic understanding of mentorship's influence within the school environment.

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