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African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

# EXPLORING THE MENTORING SKILLS OF HEAD TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYE-EKITI, EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to examine the mentoring skills of head teachers in secondary schools in Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, specifically focusing on interpersonal, pedagogical, goal-oriented, and reflective mentoring skills. A descriptive survey design was employed to gather comprehensive insights into these mentoring practices. The population for the study comprised all head teachers in secondary schools within the region. A simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 116 head teachers, ensuring representativeness. Data were collected using the Head Teachers' Mentoring Skills Questionnaire (HTMSQ), which assessed the four specified dimensions of mentoring skills. For data analysis, frequency counts and percentages were utilized to describe sociodemographic characteristics, while the Relative Importance Index (RII) was calculated to evaluate the perceived importance of various mentoring practices. Major findings indicated that head teachers excel in establishing trust and effective communication, demonstrating strong pedagogical skills, and actively engaging in goal-oriented and reflective mentoring practices. The study concludes that effective mentoring by head teachers significantly enhances teacher performance and student outcomes. Recommendations include integrating mentoring practices into school policies, providing targeted training for head teachers to improve their mentoring skills, and fostering a collaborative school culture to support continuous professional development.*

**Keywords:** Head teachers; Mentoring, Skills, Secondary School

## Introduction

Head teachers play an all-important role in schools, acting as instructional leaders, administrators, and mentors all rolled into one. They have a wide range of responsibilities, from setting the strategic direction and managing day-to-day operations to creating a positive learning environment. They are in charge of implementing the curriculum, supporting teacher development, and handling student discipline, all while building strong relationships with parents, staff, and the wider community (Bediako, 2019). Effective head teachers foster a positve school culture, encourage academic success, and nurture teacher growth, which cumulatively shapes the educational experiences and outcomes of students (Bediako, 2019). Through leading by example, offering guidance, and making thoughtful decisions, head teachers significantly enhance the overall quality of education in their schools, making their role essential for the success of students, teachers, and the entire school community.

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Head teachers' mentoring skills are crucial for nurturing the growth and development of both students and teachers. For students, effective mentoring means offering guidance on academic and personal issues, helping them set goals, and providing constructive feedback to enrich their learning experiences (Omoseebi et al., 2024). This can be done through regular one-on-one meetings, where head teachers assist students in pinpointing their strengths and weaknesses and crafting strategies to boost their academic performance (Muti, 2019). Additionally, encouraging involvement in extracurricular activities can help students build confidence and leadership skills, leading to a more well-rounded educational journey experiences (Omoseebi et al., 2024). When it comes to mentoring teachers, head teachers can concentrate on improving instructional practices, supporting professional growth, and nurturing a collaborative school culture (Gading, 2024). By observing classes and giving feedback on teaching methods, they can help teachers sharpen their skills, while peer coaching and mentoring sessions can promote knowledge sharing and teamwork (Balasubramanian, 2023). Furthermore, head teachers can motivate teachers to reflect on their practices, set professional goals, and devise strategies to reach them, which can enhance teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction (Okoye, 2023). Hence, by mentoring both students and teachers, head teachers can foster a supportive and inclusive school environment that encourages academic success, teacher retention, and overall school improvement (Lijun & Te, 2024). Essential mentoring skills like active listening, empathy, and effective communication are key for head teachers to build trust and rapport with their mentees (Abetang et al., 2020). Therefore, dedicating time and effort to mentoring can profoundly impact the lives of students and teachers, shaping their academic and professional paths and contributing to the overall success of the school (Squires, 2019).

To be successful in their roles, head teachers need a diverse set of mentoring skills. This includes active listening, empathy, effective communication, and keen observation (Ragas et al., 2024). Active listening helps head teachers grasp the needs and concerns of their mentees, while empathy enables them to offer tailored support and guidance (Mehmood et al., 2023; Ragas et al., 2024). Effective communication is also vital for clearly expressing expectations, giving constructive feedback, and encouraging reflection and growth (Franco et al., 2021). Observation skills are equally important, as head teachers must be able to assess teaching practices, student behaviour, and the overall school culture to pinpoint areas that need improvement (Bennett, 2017). Moreover, they require skills relating to goal-setting, problem-solving, and conflict resolution to assist both teachers and students in reaching their objectives (Visone, 2018). It iss also crucial for head teachers to cultivate a collaborative and inclusive school environment, support teacher professional development, and build trust and rapport with their mentees (DeWaard & Chavhan, 2020). Additionally, they need to be adaptable and flexible, ready to meet the varied needs of their

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mentees, while also managing their time effectively and keeping a focus on the broader school goals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2024). By honing these mentoring skills, head teachers can offer meaningful support and guidance to both teachers and students, ultimately improving teaching and learning outcomes and driving school improvement (Gading, 2024).

A head teacher's mentoring skills can be shaped by a variety of factors, starting with their sociodemographics. Factors such as: age, gender, educational background, and experience all play a role in how a head teacher approaches mentoring and how effective they are at it (Kutsyuruba et al., 2020). For example, a head teacher's age and experience can greatly affect their empathy and understanding of the challenges their mentees face (Ntshangase & Nkosi, 2022). Moreover, their educational qualifications can influence how well they guide students on academic issues (Anwar et al., 2022). Personal traits, such as communication style, emotional intelligence, and leadership methods, also impact a head teacher's mentoring abilities (Prummer et al., 2024). The culture and environment of the school are also important. Aspects like collegiality, trust, and support among staff can significantly enhance the mentoring process (Sezgin et al., 2020). Additionally, the availability of resources and support for mentoring, like training and professional development, can affect how well a head teacher mentors (Manzar-Abbass et al., 2017). The characteristics of the mentee, including their motivation, attitude, and learning style, also play a role in shaping the mentoring relationship and the head teacher's effectiveness in providing support (Abetang et al., 2020). Lastly, external factors such as government policies, educational reforms, and accountability measures can influence a head teacher's mentoring strategies and priorities (Ifarajimi et al., 2025).

Therefore, given the vital roles head teachers play in shaping the educational experiences of both students and teachers in Nigeria, especially in Ekiti State, there is a pressing need for more research to delve into their mentoring skills, pinpointing areas of strengths and weaknesses, and developing strategies for improvement.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the mentoring skills of head teachers in secondary schools in Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the:

1. Interpersonal mentoring skills of head teachers.
2. Pedagogical mentoring skills of head teachers.
3. Goal-oriented mentoring skills of head teachers.
4. Reflective mentoring skills of head teachers.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What interpersonal mentoring skills do head teachers possess?
2. How do head teachers demonstrate pedagogical mentoring skills?
3. To what extent do head teachers use goal-oriented mentoring skills?

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4. How do head teachers engage in reflective mentoring practices?

## Methods

### Ethical Consideration

Approval for this study was obtained from the research board of the Department Guidance and Counseling, Federal University Oye-Ekiti. Informed consent was secured from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. To maintain anonymity, no personally identifying information was collected, and all responses were kept confidential.

### Study Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey design was deemed suitable for this study as it allows for a comprehensive exploration of the mentoring practices of head teachers in secondary schools in Oye-Ekiti.

### Population for the Study

The population for this study comprised all head teachers in secondary schools in Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 116 head teachers from the population. This technique ensures that every head teacher had an equal chance of being selected, enhancing the representativeness of the sample. The inclusion criteria for this study required participants to be currently serving as head teachers in secondary schools in Oye-Ekiti and to have at least two years of experience in their role.

### Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was the Head Teachers' Mentoring Skills Questionnaire (HTMSQ), a researcher-developed instrument designed to assess the mentoring skills of head teachers across four dimensions: interpersonal, pedagogical, goal-oriented, and reflective mentoring skills. The HTMSQ consists of four sections. Section A collects sociodemographic information, including gender, years of experience, and school type (public or private). Section B consists of items measuring interpersonal mentoring skills, Section C assesses pedagogical mentoring skills, Section D evaluates goal-oriented mentoring skills, and Section E focuses on reflective mentoring skills. Each item is measured using a five-point Likert scale. The HTMSQ has a reliability coefficient of 0.91, indicating high internal consistency.

### Method of Data Collection

Data were collected using the HTMSQ administered to head teachers at a single time point. Participants completed the questionnaire, which provided insight into their mentoring skills across the specified dimensions.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data analyses were conducted using frequency counts and percentages to describe the sociodemographic

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characteristics of participants. Additionally, the Relative Importance Index (RII) was calculated for each dimension of mentoring skills to determine the perceived importance of various mentoring practices. This statistical approach allows for a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in head teachers' mentoring skills.

## Results

**Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants**

| S/N | Characteristic | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Gender | Male | 70 | 60.34 |
| | | Female | 46 | 39.66 |
| 2 | Age Group | 18-24 years | 12 | 10.34 |
| | | 25-34 years | 24 | 20.69 |
| | | 35-44 years | 58 | 50.00 |
| | | 45-54 years | 16 | 13.79 |
| | | 55 years and above | 6 | 5.17 |
| 3 | Years of Experience | 1-5 years | 35 | 30.17 |
| | | 6-10 years | 45 | 38.79 |
| | | 11-15 years | 25 | 21.55 |
| | | 16 years and above | 11 | 9.48 |
| 4 | Educational Qualification | Bachelor's Degree | 58 | 50.00 |
| | | Master's Degree | 35 | 30.17 |
| | | Doctorate | 23 | 19.83 |

Table 1 is the distribution score of the sociodemographic characteristics of 116 participants in the study. The gender distribution indicates that 60.34% are male (70 participants) and 39.66% are female (46 participants). In terms of age, the majority (50.00%) fall within the 35-44 years category, while 20.69% are aged 25-34 years, 13.79% are 45-54 years, 10.34% are aged 18-24 years, and 5.17% are 55 years and above. Regarding years of experience, 38.79% of participants have 6-10 years of experience, while 30.17% have 1-5 years, 21.55% have 11-15 years, and 9.48% have 16 years or more. Finally, educational qualifications show that 50.00% hold a Bachelor's Degree, 30.17% have a Master's Degree, and 19.83% possess a Doctorate. This comprehensive profile provides valuable insights into the diverse backgrounds of the participants involved in the study.

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**Table 2: The Relative Importance Index of Interpersonal Mentoring Skills of Head Teachers**

| S/N | Item | RII | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Establishes trust with staff | 0.85 | 1 |
| 2 | Communicates effectively | 0.80 | 2 |
| 3 | Provides emotional support | 0.75 | 3 |
| 4 | Listens actively to concerns | 0.70 | 4 |
| 5 | Encourages open dialogue | 0.68 | 5 |
| 6 | Resolves conflicts amicably | 0.65 | 6 |
| 7 | Shows empathy towards staff | 0.63 | 7 |
| 8 | Recognizes staff achievements | 0.60 | 8 |

Data in table 2 are the results of interpersonal mentoring skills possessed by head teachers in secondary schools in Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The highest-rated skill is "Establishes trust with staff" with an RII of 0.85, followed by "Communicates effectively" at 0.80. "Provides emotional support" ranks third with an RII of 0.75. Other notable skills include "Listens actively to concerns" at 0.70 and "Encourages open dialogue" at 0.68. The remaining skills, such as "Resolves conflicts amicably" (0.65), "Shows empathy towards staff" (0.63), and "Recognizes staff achievements" (0.60), further illustrate the interpersonal capabilities of head teachers. This finding provides an answer to research question 1 regarding the interpersonal mentoring skills that head teachers possess.

**Table 3: The Relative Importance Index of Pedagogical Mentoring Skills of Head Teachers**

| S/N | Item | RII | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Models effective teaching strategies | 0.82 | 1 |
| 2 | Provides instructional guidance | 0.78 | 2 |
| 3 | Facilitates professional development | 0.76 | 3 |
| 4 | Encourages innovative teaching methods | 0.74 | 4 |
| 5 | Assists in curriculum development | 0.70 | 5 |
| 6 | Evaluates teaching practices | 0.68 | 6 |
| 7 | Shares best practices with staff | 0.65 | 7 |
| 8 | Supports lesson planning | 0.63 | 8 |
| 9 | Addresses diverse learning needs | 0.60 | 9 |

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Table 3 is the result of evaluating the pedagogical mentoring skills of head teachers. The highest score is for "Models effective teaching strategies" at 0.82, followed by "Provides instructional guidance" at 0.78. "Facilitates professional development" ranks third with an RII of 0.76. The next highest scores include "Encourages innovative teaching methods" at 0.74 and "Assists in curriculum development" at 0.70. Lower scores include "Evaluates teaching practices" (0.68), "Shares best practices with staff" (0.65), "Supports lesson planning" (0.63), and "Addresses diverse learning needs" (0.60). This finding provides an answer to research question 2 regarding how head teachers demonstrate pedagogical mentoring skills.

**Table 4: The Relative Importance Index of Goal-Oriented Mentoring Skills of Head Teachers**

| S/N | Item | RII | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sets clear academic goals | 0.88 | 1 |
| 2 | Monitors progress towards goals | 0.84 | 2 |
| 3 | Encourages goal setting among staff | 0.80 | 3 |
| 4 | Aligns school goals with staff objectives | 0.75 | 4 |
| 5 | Provides resources to achieve goals | 0.73 | 5 |
| 6 | Celebrates goal achievements | 0.70 | 6 |
| 7 | Offers guidance on overcoming obstacles | 0.68 | 7 |
| 8 | Develops action plans for staff | 0.65 | 8 |
| 9 | Evaluates goal attainment | 0.60 | 9 |

Table 4 is the result of examining the goal-oriented mentoring skills of head teachers. The highest score is for "Sets clear academic goals" at 0.88, indicating a strong focus on establishing measurable objectives. "Monitors progress towards goals" follows at 0.84, while "Encourages goal setting among staff" ranks third at 0.80. Other significant skills include "Aligns school goals with staff objectives" at 0.75 and "Provides resources to achieve goals" at 0.73. Lower scores include "Celebrates goal achievements" (0.70), "Offers guidance on overcoming obstacles" (0.68), and "Evaluates goal attainment" (0.60). This finding provides an answer to research question 3 regarding the extent to which head teachers use goal-oriented mentoring skills.

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**Table 5: The Relative Importance Index of Reflective Mentoring Skills of Head Teachers**

| S/N | Item | RII | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Encourages self-reflection | 0.87 | 1 |
| 2 | Promotes reflective practice among teachers | 0.83 | 2 |
| 3 | Facilitates discussions on teaching experiences | 0.79 | 3 |
| 4 | Supports peer observations | 0.75 | 4 |
| 5 | Provides feedback on reflective practices | 0.72 | 5 |
| 6 | Encourages continuous improvement | 0.70 | 6 |
| 7 | Models reflective teaching | 0.68 | 7 |
| 8 | Shares personal reflections | 0.65 | 8 |
| 9 | Integrates reflection into professional development | 0.60 | 9 |
| 10 | Utilizes reflection for professional growth | 0.58 | 10 |

Table 5 presents the result of reflective mentoring skills of head teachers. The highest score is for "Encourages self-reflection" at 0.87, followed by "Promotes reflective practice among teachers" at 0.83. "Facilitates discussions on teaching experiences" ranks third with an RII of 0.79. Other notable skills include "Supports peer observations" at 0.75 and "Provides feedback on reflective practices" at 0.72. Lower scores include "Encourages continuous improvement" (0.70), "Models reflective teaching" (0.68), and "Integrates reflection into professional development" (0.60). This finding provides an answer to research question 4 regarding how head teachers engage in reflective mentoring practices.

## Discussion of Findings

This study examined the mentoring skills of head teachers in secondary schools in Oye-Ekiti and found that they place a strong emphasis on building trust and effective communication, which are essential for successful school leadership (Panagopoulos et al., 2024). Head teachers foster trust through clear communication, feedback mechanisms, and collaborative decision-making, highlighting the close link between a leader's communication skills and the trust they earn from teachers (Sutherland & Yoshida, 2015). Additionally, the research demonstrated that mentoring practices that encourage positive attitudes and exceed expectations significantly contribute to a supportive school environment (Guillergan, 2024). The study also found that head teachers exhibit strong pedagogical mentoring skills by modeling effective teaching strategies and providing instructional guidance, which enhances educational practices (Hudson, 2013). Furthermore, goal-oriented mentoring skills were identified as vital, with head teachers supporting student teachers through formal mentoring programs that yield positive outcomes

(Hobson & Sharp, 2005). Reflective mentoring practices were also emphasized, as head teachers actively encourage self-reflection among staff, contributing to ongoing professional development (Sempowicz & Hudson, 2012; Pocklington & Weindling, 1996). While these mentoring practices are consistently valued, challenges exist, such as mentors' authoritative behavior and insufficient content knowledge (Munir & Amin, 2021).

## Conclusion

This study examined the mentoring skills of head teachers in secondary schools in Oye-Ekiti, focusing on their interpersonal, pedagogical, goal-oriented, and reflective mentoring practices. The findings indicate that head teachers possess strong mentoring skills across these dimensions, which significantly contribute to the professional development of their staff and the overall effectiveness of the educational environment. The role of head teachers in fostering positive mentoring relationships enhances teacher performance and student outcomes, highlighting the importance of effective leadership in schools. The study underscores the need for educational stakeholders to recognize the value of mentoring practices in promoting a supportive and productive school culture.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that educational authorities encourage head teachers to actively engage in and develop their mentoring skills to improve teaching and learning outcomes. It is essential for school administrations to provide professional development programs focused on enhancing interpersonal, pedagogical, goal-oriented, and reflective mentoring skills. Additionally, the integration of mentoring practices into school policies and curricula should be prioritized to foster a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration among staff. By emphasizing the importance of effective mentoring, schools can create a more supportive environment that benefits both teachers and students.

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