

Teaching Practice and Its Professional Implications for Cooperating Teachers: Evidence from the University of Maroua, Cameroon

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Abstract

Teaching practice is widely recognised as a central component of pre-service teacher education; however, mentoring is often conceptualized primarily as supervisory oversight rather than as reciprocal professional learning. Drawing on constructivist, social learning, and situated learning perspectives, this study reconceptualizes practicum engagement as a socio-structurally mediated site of professional reciprocity. Focusing on cooperating teachers within the University of Maroua teacher education program in Cameroon, the study employed a mixed-methods design combining survey data ($N = 100$) with semi-structured interviews ($n = 18$) to examine how mentors experience and interpret their roles. Findings indicate that mentoring extends beyond novice induction to function as reflective professional re-engagement for experienced teachers. Dialogic lesson planning, observation, and feedback processes prompted renewed pedagogical awareness and identity negotiation. However, the developmental potential of mentoring was shown to be conditional upon institutional recognition, supervisory coherence, and workload alignment. Where mentoring was institutionally supported, it fostered reflective growth; where recognition and follow-up were limited, engagement tended toward procedural compliance. The study advances the concept of *conditional professional reciprocity*, arguing that mentoring's transformative capacity depends on the intersection of relational interaction and structural mediation. By foregrounding cooperating teachers in a Central African context, this research contributes to global mentoring scholarship and challenges deficit-oriented assumptions about professional learning in Sub-Saharan Africa.

ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE
• IMPACTING SOCIETY •

Keywords: Mentoring, Teaching Practice, Professional Learning, Reciprocal Learning, Cameroon, Teacher Education.

Résumé

La pratique pédagogique est largement reconnue comme un élément central de la formation initiale des enseignants ; cependant, le mentorat est souvent conceptualisé principalement comme une supervision plutôt que comme un apprentissage professionnel réciproque. S'appuyant sur les perspectives constructivistes, l'apprentissage social et l'apprentissage situé, cette étude reconceptualise l'engagement dans les stages comme un lieu de réciprocité professionnelle médiatisé par des structures sociales. En se concentrant sur les enseignants coopérants du programme de formation des enseignants de l'Université de Maroua au Cameroun, l'étude a utilisé une méthodologie mixte combinant des données d'enquête ($N = 100$) et des entretiens semi-structurés ($n = 18$) afin d'examiner comment les mentors vivent et interprètent leur rôle. Les résultats indiquent que le mentorat va au-delà de l'initiation des novices et fonctionne comme un réengagement professionnel réflexif pour les enseignants expérimentés. La planification dialogique des cours, l'observation et les processus de rétroaction ont suscité une prise de conscience pédagogique renouvelée et une négociation de l'identité. Cependant, le potentiel de développement du mentorat s'est avéré dépendre de la reconnaissance institutionnelle, de la cohérence de la supervision et de l'alignement de la charge de travail. L'étude fait progresser le concept de *réciprocité professionnelle conditionnelle*, en soutenant que la capacité de transformation du mentorat dépend de l'intersection entre l'interaction relationnelle et la médiation structurelle.

Mots-clés : Mentorat, Pratique pédagogique, Apprentissage professionnel, Apprentissage réciproque, Cameroun, Formation des enseignants.



1. Introduction

Practical experience constitutes a fundamental dimension of professional training across disciplines such as medicine, engineering, law, and education. In teacher education, teaching practice represents the stage during which pre-service teachers transition from theoretical instruction to authentic classroom engagement. It provides opportunities for student-teachers to apply pedagogical theories, develop classroom management skills, and construct their professional identity within real school environments.

Within this process, cooperating teachers (also referred to as mentors or associate teachers) play a pivotal role. They guide, supervise, evaluate, and support student-teachers throughout their practicum. Beyond facilitating trainees' learning, mentoring potentially influences cooperating teachers' own professional growth. Through observation, collaboration, and reflective dialogue, mentors may refine their teaching practices and expand their pedagogical repertoire.

However, despite the recognised importance of mentoring in teacher education, limited empirical attention has been devoted to understanding its impact on cooperating teachers themselves, particularly within the Cameroonian context. At the Higher Teachers' Training College (HTTC) of the University of Maroua, anecdotal observations suggest uneven mentoring practices. While some cooperating teachers actively supervise and engage in reflective collaboration, others provide minimal follow-up or disengage after assigning classroom responsibilities to student-teachers.

This study, therefore, seeks to examine the professional implications of teaching practice for cooperating teachers in secondary schools affiliated with the University of Maroua. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

- What activities do cooperating teachers organise during teaching practice?
- What professional effects does mentoring have on cooperating teachers?
- What factors influence effective or ineffective supervision?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to a more balanced understanding of teaching practice as a reciprocal professional development process rather than a unidirectional training exercise.

2. Literature Review

2.1 From Supervisory Oversight to Educative Mentoring

Early mentoring scholarship conceptualised practicum primarily as evaluative supervision. Hawkey (1997) described mentoring along a continuum ranging from inspection-oriented oversight to developmental partnership, highlighting tensions between control and collaboration. Later, Feiman-Nemser (2001) argued that mentoring becomes "educative" when it fosters inquiry into teaching rather than simple replication of established routines. Similarly, Zeichner (2010)

critiqued technicist models of teacher preparation and advocated reflective, partnership-oriented practicum structures.

These shifts align with constructivist and social learning perspectives. Bandura (1977) emphasised reciprocal determinism in professional learning, suggesting that individuals both influence and are influenced by their environments. Schön (1983) further introduced the concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, arguing that professional growth emerges through critical examination of practice. Together, these theorists reposition mentoring as a dialogic rather than transmissive process. However, despite rhetorical commitment to collaboration, mentoring frequently retains hierarchical features in practice. This tension between supervisory authority and developmental partnership remains central in contemporary mentoring debates.

2.2 African Perspectives on Mentoring and Teacher Professional Learning

African scholarship has increasingly emphasized the contextual mediation of mentoring practices. Akyeampong (2007) demonstrated that mentoring effectiveness in Ghana depends heavily on school leadership engagement and relational trust, particularly where formal structures are limited. More recently, Boadu (2018) identified variability in mentor preparation as a key factor influencing practicum quality in West African contexts. In East Africa, Onguko (2019) highlighted institutional fragmentation and inconsistent supervisory follow-up as constraints on mentoring effectiveness. Bunyi (2013) similarly argued that systemic resource limitations shape teacher professional development structures across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Recent comparative analyses reinforce these observations. Tatto (2020) noted that teacher education reforms in low- and middle-income countries often expand practicum requirements without proportionate institutional support mechanisms. Avalos (2018) further argued that professional learning in Global South contexts frequently emerges through informal collegial networks rather than structured mentoring systems. Within Cameroon, Tambo (2012) observed that teacher education reforms have prioritized structural expansion, sometimes at the expense of sustained mentoring quality. Ngoh (2016) likewise suggested that professional responsibilities are frequently expanded without proportional recognition or incentive structures. Collectively, these studies indicate that mentoring in African contexts must be understood as socio-structurally situated rather than purely relational.

2.3 Situated Learning and Conditional Professional Reciprocity

Situated learning theory provides an additional analytical lens. Lave and Wenger (1991) conceptualised learning as participation within communities of practice, introducing the notion of legitimate peripheral participation. Within practicum contexts, student-teachers gradually assume instructional roles through guided participation. Wenger (1998) later emphasised that communities of practice depend on mutual engagement and shared enterprise. Where institutional fragmentation or workload pressures intervene, community participation may weaken. This insight is particularly relevant in Sub-Saharan educational systems where administrative alignment may vary across schools.

Recent African research suggests that mentoring effectiveness often depends on relational commitment compensating for structural limitations (Onguko, 2019; Tatto, 2020). This duality introduces what may be conceptualised as conditional professional reciprocity: mentoring becomes developmental when dialogic interaction is institutionally supported, but procedural when reduced to compliance.

Although scholars such as Feiman-Nemser (2001), Zeichner (2010), and Wenger (1998) conceptualise mentoring as reciprocal and situated professional learning, African research highlights structural contingencies shaping its enactment. Three gaps remain in the literature: (1) limited empirical analysis of mentoring reciprocity in Central African contexts; (2) insufficient integration of constructivist theory with structural mediation in African teacher education systems; and (3) a tendency to portray mentoring either as reform success or systemic weakness, rather than as contextually negotiated practice. This study addresses these gaps by examining the mentoring practicum programme within the University of Maroua and conceptualising teaching practice as socio-structurally mediated professional learning.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Theoretical Orientation

This study employed a mixed-methods design grounded in a pragmatic-constructivist orientation. Because mentoring was conceptualised as a socially situated and structurally mediated process, neither quantitative nor qualitative approaches alone were sufficient to capture its full complexity. The research followed a convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018): quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analysed independently, and then merged during interpretation. The quantitative strand identified patterns in mentoring practices and institutional engagement, while the qualitative strand provided interpretive depth by exploring how cooperating teachers construct meaning around their mentoring roles. Integrating both strands enabled triangulation and strengthened analytical credibility.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The study involved 100 cooperating teachers ($N = 100$) supervising student-teachers during the most recent practicum cycle associated with the University of Maroua's teacher education programme. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, a strategy commonly employed in educational research to identify individuals who possess direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2002). Selection criteria included: (1) current affiliation with a secondary school partnered with the University of Maroua practicum programme, and (2) at least one completed year of experience as a cooperating teacher.

A sub-sample of 18 participants ($n = 18$) was purposively selected for semi-structured interviews to ensure diversity in terms of supervisory experience, school type (urban/rural), and subject specialism. Interviews continued until thematic saturation was reached, meaning no new meaningful themes emerged from additional interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Two primary data collection instruments were used:

Structured questionnaire: A 28-item questionnaire was developed to collect data on supervisory experience, frequency of mentoring activities, perceived professional benefits, and institutional support. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) or via categorical response options. The instrument was reviewed by two experts in teacher education for content validity and pilot-tested with 10 cooperating teachers not included in the main sample before finalisation.

Semi-structured interview guide: An interview guide comprising 12 open-ended questions was developed to explore participants' interpretations of their mentoring roles, professional learning experiences, and institutional constraints. Interviews lasted between 35 and 55 minutes, were conducted in French or English according to participant preference, audio-recorded with consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) with SPSS v.26. Results are reported through tables and interpreted in relation to the study's research questions.

Qualitative data from interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Coding was conducted by the primary researcher and verified by an independent coder; inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa = .81$), indicating strong agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Data integration occurred at the interpretation stage: quantitative patterns were used to contextualise qualitative findings, and participant accounts served to explain statistical distributions.

3.5 Research Context

The research was conducted within the teaching practice programme of the University of Maroua, Cameroon, where experienced secondary school teachers serve as cooperating teachers supervising student-teachers during practicum placements. Although supervisory guidelines exist, implementation varies across schools, making this context suitable for examining mentoring as enacted practice.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation. Anonymity was maintained by assigning codes to all participants (e.g., CT1–CT18 for interview participants). The study did not involve any vulnerable populations. Data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional authority at the University of Maroua prior to data collection.

4. Findings

This section presents the results of both the questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews, organised around the study's three research questions.

4.1 Supervisory Experience of Cooperating Teachers

The first item examined the number of years that cooperating teachers had been hosting student-teachers.

Table 1. Supervisory experience of cooperating teachers

Years of supervisory experience	Number of respondents	Percentage
1 – 5 years	66	66%
5 – 8 years	21	21%
8 – 10 years	13	13%
Total	100	100%

The data show that two-thirds of participants (66%) had between one and five years of supervisory experience, indicating that many cooperating teachers were relatively new to mentoring roles. Only a small proportion (13%) reported more than eight years of supervisory experience. This distribution suggests that mentoring responsibilities are frequently assigned to teachers who may still be developing their own supervisory practices.

Several interview participants noted that while they were willing to mentor student-teachers, they had received limited formal preparation for mentoring responsibilities. One cooperating teacher (CT3) explained:

"When student teachers come to our school, we try to guide them as best as we can, but there is no formal training for us as mentors. Most of what we do comes from our own experience as teachers."

These findings indicate that mentoring within the practicum programme often relies on teachers' individual initiative and professional experience rather than systematic mentor preparation. This aligns with Boadu's (2018) observation regarding variability in mentor preparation across West African teacher education systems.

4.2 Mentoring Activities during Teaching Practice

The survey and interview data reveal that cooperating teachers engage in a variety of mentoring activities during the teaching practice period. These include collaborative lesson planning, classroom observation, pedagogical workshops, and post-lesson discussions.

4.2.1 Collaborative Lesson Planning

Many cooperating teachers reported engaging student-teachers in co-planning lessons before classroom instruction. These sessions typically involved discussions about lesson objectives, instructional strategies, classroom management, and assessment methods. Interview participants described collaborative planning as an opportunity for professional dialogue rather than simple instruction. One participant (CT7) explained:

"Before the lesson, we sit together and discuss how the lesson will be structured. I ask them why they choose certain activities and how they think the students will respond."

Such interactions demonstrate that mentoring may function as a dialogic process in which pedagogical reasoning is jointly explored rather than merely transmitted. This is consistent with Feiman-Nemser's (2001) conception of educative mentoring.

4.2.2 Classroom Observation

Classroom observation emerged as one of the most frequently reported mentoring activities. Cooperating teachers observed lessons delivered by student-teachers and provided feedback on instructional techniques, classroom management, and student engagement. In addition to evaluating student-teachers' performance, several cooperating teachers indicated that the observation process also encouraged them to reflect on their own instructional practices. One teacher (CT11) remarked:

"When I observe my trainees teaching, I also think about how I teach the same lesson. Sometimes I realise that there are other ways to explain things."

This suggests that observation may contribute not only to novice teacher development but also to reflective practice among mentors.

4.2.3 Pedagogical Workshops and Group Discussions

Some cooperating teachers reported organising informal pedagogical workshops or group discussions with student-teachers. These sessions often took place after classroom observations and were designed to address teaching challenges encountered during lesson presentations. One participant (CT5) noted:

"Sometimes I am teaching while the trainees are observing. After the lesson, we discuss it together. They can also tell me what they think could be improved."

Such practices illustrate the emergence of reciprocal learning relationships, where mentoring interactions extend beyond unilateral supervision.

4.2.4 Post-Lesson Discussions

Post-lesson discussions represent another key mentoring activity. During these sessions, cooperating teachers and student-teachers reflected on classroom events, instructional strategies, and student responses to lessons. These discussions frequently addressed issues such as clarity of lesson objectives, use of teaching aids, classroom interaction patterns, and student engagement. The majority of cooperating teachers reported that these conversations helped them articulate pedagogical principles that often remain implicit in everyday teaching practice.

4.3 Professional Learning Outcomes for Cooperating Teachers

In addition to supporting student-teacher development, mentoring activities were perceived to generate several professional benefits for cooperating teachers themselves.

4.3.1 Exposure to New Pedagogical Ideas

A commonly reported benefit of mentoring was exposure to new teaching approaches introduced by student-teachers. Because trainees had recently completed formal teacher education courses, they often brought updated pedagogical knowledge into classroom discussions. One cooperating teacher (CT14) explained:

"The trainees come with new ideas from the training college. When they prepare their lessons, they sometimes use methods that we were not trained with. We learn from them too."

This exchange illustrates how mentoring relationships can foster mutual knowledge exchange between novice and experienced teachers.

4.3.2 Strengthening Instructional Practices

Mentoring was also reported to encourage cooperating teachers to refine their own teaching practices. The presence of trainees often prompted teachers to prepare lessons more carefully and model effective classroom management techniques. As one participant (CT9) explained:

"When you have trainees observing you, you want to give a good example. It makes you think more carefully about how you teach."

Such findings suggest that mentoring can function as a catalyst for reflective teaching, encouraging experienced educators to critically examine their own practices, in line with Schön's (1983) reflection-on-action framework.

4.3.3 Professional Recognition and Self-Esteem

Many respondents reported that being selected as a cooperating teacher enhanced their sense of professional recognition within the school environment. Mentoring responsibilities were often interpreted as an indication that the school administration considered them capable and experienced educators. One participant (CT2) noted:

"When student teachers are assigned to you, it means the administration trusts your teaching. It makes you feel respected by your colleagues."

This perception of professional recognition contributed to increased motivation among cooperating teachers who actively engaged in mentoring.

4.4 Institutional Factors Influencing Mentoring Engagement

Although mentoring generated several professional benefits, the findings also reveal significant variability in supervisory engagement across cooperating teachers.

Table 2. Frequency of supervisory follow-up by university supervisors

Supervision patterns	Number of respondents	Percentage
Regular follow-up	50	50%
Occasional follow-up	11	11%
Supervision limited to evaluation phase	14	14%
Only correcting lesson notes	12	12%
Only providing scheme of work	13	13%
Total	100	100%

Rather than indicating uniform effectiveness, these data suggest uneven supervisory engagement. While half of the respondents reported regular follow-up from university supervisors, the remaining participants described supervision as irregular or limited. This distribution points to structurally differentiated mentoring experiences. The practicum thus appears as a site where supervisory intensity varies, shaping the depth of reflective engagement possible within mentoring relationships.

4.5 Reasons for Reduced Engagement with Student-Teachers

Participants were asked to identify factors that explain why some cooperating teachers reduce their engagement with student-teachers during the practicum. Their responses are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Reported reasons for reduced engagement with student-teachers

Reasons	Number of respondents	Percentage
Supervising trainees increases workload	23	23%
Trainees expected to learn independently	9	9%
Lack of institutional recognition	36	36%
Absence of certification for mentors	16	16%
Limited involvement of inspectors	2	2%
Opportunity to reduce teaching workload	4	4%
No response / other	10	10%
Total	100	100%

The most frequently cited concern was lack of formal recognition for mentoring activities (36%), particularly the absence of certification or official acknowledgement of mentoring responsibilities. Increased workload without corresponding support was also a significant factor (23%). Some cooperating teachers expressed frustration that their mentoring efforts were not formally documented within their professional records. One participant (CT16) deplored:

"Today, I have been training student-teachers for four years, but there is no official document that can certify that I have already trained pre-service teachers in my career. As a cooperating teacher, our roles are not considered by the government."

These findings indicate that mentoring practices operate within a structural environment that may either support or constrain teachers' engagement. Where mentoring was institutionally recognised and supported, cooperating teachers were more likely to engage in collaborative mentoring activities. Conversely, where recognition and coordination were limited, mentoring sometimes became procedural rather than developmental.

5. Discussion

5.1 Mentoring as Reciprocal Knowledge Construction

The findings of this study challenge the traditional hierarchical conception of mentoring as unilateral knowledge transmission. While cooperating teachers occupy formal positions of authority, the data reveal that mentoring interactions often generate reflective reconsideration of pedagogical practice. This supports constructivist professional development theory, which posits that professional knowledge emerges through dialogic engagement rather than passive application of established routines.

Participants' accounts of collaborative lesson planning, post-observation discussions, and pedagogical questioning suggest that mentoring functions as a reflective mirror. The presence of student-teachers appears to destabilize taken-for-granted practices, prompting mentors to articulate, justify, and sometimes revise their instructional decisions. In this sense, mentoring constitutes a structured interruption of routine, activating Schön's (1983) reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action processes. This finding aligns with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory's principle of reciprocal determinism: rather than a unidirectional modelling process, the mentoring relationship operates as a dynamic exchange in which both actors influence one another's professional development.

5.2 The Practicum as Situated Professional Learning

From a situated learning perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the practicum operates as a community of practice in which knowledge is contextually negotiated. However, the data indicate that the quality of this negotiation varies significantly across institutional contexts. Where mentoring was collaborative and dialogic, professional learning appeared embedded within shared practice, reflecting the ideal functioning of a community of practice through legitimate peripheral participation. Conversely, where supervision was minimal or perfunctory, mentoring became

procedural rather than developmental. This divergence suggests that situated professional learning is not automatically produced by co-location; it requires relational investment and institutional support.

5.3 Institutional Recognition as a Structural Mediator

A significant pattern emerging from the data concerns the influence of institutional recognition on mentor engagement. While intrinsic professional commitment motivated many participants, inconsistent supervisory follow-up and limited formal acknowledgement appeared to moderate levels of investment. This introduces an important structural dimension to constructivist interpretations of professional learning: institutional validation appears to legitimize mentoring as professional labour rather than voluntary goodwill. Where mentoring is symbolically and materially undervalued, reflective engagement may diminish despite individual goodwill. Thus, mentoring should be conceptualized as socio-structurally situated professional work rather than purely relational interaction.

5.4 The Dual Nature of Mentoring: Developmental and Constraining

An important contribution of this study lies in identifying mentoring as a dual-structured phenomenon. While many participants described professional growth through mentoring, others reported role ambiguity, increased workload without recognition, or limited institutional support. This duality complicates idealised narratives of mentoring as inherently beneficial. The coexistence of growth and constraint reflects the concept of conditional professional reciprocity: the mentoring relationship becomes developmental when dialogic exchange is sustained and institutionally supported, and becomes performative when reduced to procedural compliance. This conceptualisation contributes to global mentoring scholarship by foregrounding contextual variability within Sub-Saharan educational systems, where institutional infrastructures may be uneven.

5.5 Reframing Teaching Practice in the Cameroonian Context

By situating mentoring within constructivist and situated learning frameworks, this study reframes teaching practice in Cameroon as more than a regulatory component of teacher certification. It emerges as a contested professional space in which pedagogical identities are negotiated. Importantly, the findings demonstrate that professional learning in the Cameroonian context is neither deficient nor derivative of Western models; rather, it reflects locally mediated interactions shaped by resource constraints and institutional hierarchies. This challenges deficit-oriented assumptions sometimes applied to African teacher education systems and instead positions Cameroonian mentoring practices within broader global debates on professional learning.

6. Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the sample was drawn exclusively from cooperating teachers affiliated with the University of Maroua, which limits the generalisability of findings to other teacher education institutions in Cameroon or across Sub-

Saharan Africa. Second, the cross-sectional design does not allow for examination of how mentoring practices evolve over time. Third, data collected through questionnaires and interviews are susceptible to social desirability bias, as participants may have reported practices that reflect expected norms rather than actual behaviour. Fourth, while inter-rater reliability for the qualitative coding was strong ($\kappa = .81$), thematic analysis necessarily involves interpretive judgment. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs, comparative institutional samples, and where possible, classroom observation data to triangulate self-report findings.

7. Conclusion

This study reconceptualised teaching practice in the Cameroonian context as a socio-structurally mediated site of reciprocal professional learning. Moving beyond supervisory interpretations of mentoring, the findings demonstrate that practicum engagement constitutes a dynamic space in which cooperating teachers negotiate pedagogical identities, reconstruct instructional reasoning, and participate in dialogic professional exchange. In alignment with constructivist and situated learning perspectives, mentoring emerges not as unilateral transmission but as conditional professional reciprocity.

However, the developmental potential of mentoring was shown to be neither automatic nor uniformly distributed. Institutional recognition, supervisory coherence, and structural support mechanisms significantly shaped levels of engagement. Where mentoring was dialogic and institutionally affirmed, it functioned as reflective professional renewal. Where it was procedurally enacted without recognition, it risked becoming performative compliance.

These findings extend global mentoring theory by demonstrating how relational and structural conditions intersect within Sub-Saharan educational systems. By foregrounding the experiences of cooperating teachers (an often underexamined group in practicum research) this study contributes to a more balanced understanding of mentoring as mutually constitutive professional work. It challenges deficit narratives frequently applied to African teacher education by revealing the complexity and agency embedded within local mentoring practices.

Theoretically, the study advances the notion of conditional professional reciprocity, emphasizing that mentoring's transformative capacity depends on sustained dialogic interaction supported by institutional alignment. Conceptually, it invites a shift from viewing teaching practice as a certification requirement toward understanding it as negotiated professional space.

Future research should explore comparative institutional configurations across African teacher education systems to further examine how structural mediation shapes mentoring enactment, and should consider longitudinal designs to trace the development of mentor identity and practice over time.

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