Available on: https://jsshrs.ep-journals.org/ E-ISSN: 3051-3561, P-ISSN: 3051-3553

Journal of Social Science and Human Research Studies

Volume : 02 Issue : 07 July-2026

Professional Development and Mentoring Supervision as Predictors of Teachers' Performance in Anglophone Secondary Schools in South West Cameroon

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Published Date: July 10, 2026 **Article DOI: 10.65150/EP-jsshrs/V2E7/2026-11**

ABSTRACT: Teachers remain the cornerstone of educational quality, and their professional competence largely determines students' academic achievement and the overall effectiveness of school systems. In many developing countries, however, persistent concerns regarding instructional quality, classroom practices, and learners' outcomes have renewed interest in instructional supervision as a strategy for strengthening teachers' professional capacity. While instructional supervision encompasses several supervisory practices, professional development and mentoring supervision have increasingly been recognised as two of the most influential approaches for promoting continuous teacher learning and instructional improvement. Despite their acknowledged importance, empirical evidence on how these supervisory practices influence teachers' performance within Anglophone secondary schools in Cameroon remains limited. This study therefore examined the roles of professional development and mentoring supervision in enhancing teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. The study adopted a concurrent embedded mixed-method research design involving quantitative and qualitative approaches. Three hundred teachers were selected through stratified random sampling, while six principals were purposively selected for interviews. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product–Moment Correlation, whereas qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that professional development has a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with teachers' performance ($r = .929$, $p < .05$). Teachers who participated regularly in professional learning activities demonstrated improvements in lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, and professional commitment. Similarly, mentoring supervision exhibited a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship with teachers' performance ($r = .964$, $p < .05$). Qualitative findings further demonstrated that experienced teachers who provided coaching, instructional guidance, emotional support, and continuous pedagogical feedback significantly enhanced the competence and confidence of novice teachers. The study concludes that sustainable teacher improvement cannot be achieved through periodic inspection alone but requires continuous professional learning opportunities and well-structured mentoring systems embedded within school leadership practices. The study recommends that the Ministry of Secondary Education institutionalise structured professional development programmes and formal school-based mentoring frameworks to strengthen instructional quality and improve teachers' performance across Anglophone secondary schools in Cameroon.

KEYWORDS: Instructional supervision, professional development, mentoring supervision, teachers' performance, secondary education, Cameroon

INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of quality education has remained one of the foremost priorities of governments, international development agencies, and educational stakeholders because of its indispensable contribution to national development, economic productivity, and social transformation. Education not only equips individuals with knowledge and skills but also develops the human capital required to address contemporary global challenges, including technological innovation, sustainable development, social cohesion, and economic competitiveness. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirmed education as a fundamental human right and positioned it at the centre of global development through Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education while promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Achieving this ambitious goal depends substantially on the availability of competent, motivated, and professionally supported teachers capable of delivering high-quality instruction in increasingly dynamic educational environments.

Teachers occupy a unique position within educational systems because they constitute the principal agents through whom curriculum reforms, educational policies, and institutional goals are translated into meaningful learning experiences. Consequently, the quality of any education system rarely exceeds the quality of its teachers. This proposition, consistently reinforced in international educational research, underscores the critical relationship between teacher effectiveness and student achievement. According to UNESCO (2024), improving teacher quality remains one of the most effective strategies for accelerating learning recovery following global educational disruptions while simultaneously strengthening

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educational resilience for future challenges. Similarly, OECD (2023) argues that educational systems capable of sustaining high student achievement invariably invest heavily in continuous teacher learning, collaborative instructional leadership, and evidence-informed supervisory practices.

The growing emphasis on teacher quality has transformed the traditional understanding of instructional supervision. Historically, supervision was largely conceived as an inspection-oriented process characterised by compliance monitoring, fault-finding, and bureaucratic control. Supervisors primarily visited classrooms to evaluate teachers against prescribed standards, often leaving little opportunity for reflective practice or professional growth. Such approaches frequently generated anxiety among teachers and limited the developmental potential of supervision. Contemporary scholarship, however, has redefined instructional supervision as a collaborative, developmental, and capacity-building process through which school leaders facilitate continuous professional learning, reflective practice, instructional innovation, and improved classroom effectiveness (Carl D. Glickman et al., 2018).

Modern instructional supervision therefore extends beyond classroom observation to encompass a broad spectrum of professional support mechanisms designed to improve instructional quality. These include professional development programmes, mentoring and coaching, collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, instructional feedback, action research, and professional learning communities. Collectively, these supervisory practices recognise that teachers, like professionals in other disciplines, require continuous opportunities to update their knowledge, refine pedagogical skills, and adapt to changing educational contexts. Rather than perceiving supervision as an external evaluative exercise, contemporary educational leadership increasingly views supervision as an investment in teacher learning that ultimately improves student achievement and institutional effectiveness.

Among the numerous dimensions of instructional supervision, professional development has emerged as one of the most influential mechanisms for improving teacher effectiveness. Professional development encompasses structured and sustained learning experiences that enable teachers to acquire new pedagogical knowledge, strengthen instructional competencies, integrate emerging technologies into classroom practice, and respond effectively to curriculum reforms. Unlike traditional workshop models that often produce limited long-term impact, contemporary professional development emphasises continuous, collaborative, job-embedded learning directly connected to teachers' daily instructional experiences. Such learning environments encourage reflective practice, professional collaboration, instructional experimentation, and evidence-based decision-making, thereby fostering continuous improvement in teaching quality.

Current educational research consistently demonstrates that teachers who engage regularly in meaningful professional development exhibit higher levels of instructional competence than those with limited opportunities for continuous learning. Linda Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2024) argue that effective professional development should be content-focused, sustained over time, collaborative, practice-based, and aligned with teachers' instructional needs. These characteristics distinguish high-quality professional learning from isolated training workshops that rarely translate into sustained classroom improvement. Similarly, UNESCO (2024) emphasises that continuous teacher professional learning has become indispensable for improving educational quality, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where rapid curriculum reforms require teachers to continually update their professional competencies.

Closely connected to professional development is mentoring supervision, which has increasingly become recognised as one of the most effective approaches for supporting teacher learning throughout the professional career cycle. Mentoring represents a structured developmental relationship in which experienced educators provide instructional guidance, emotional support, professional advice, and constructive feedback to less experienced colleagues. Unlike conventional supervisory models that emphasise evaluation, mentoring is fundamentally collaborative, developmental, and non-threatening. It enables novice teachers to learn from experienced practitioners while simultaneously encouraging mentors themselves to engage in reflective professional practice. Consequently, mentoring contributes not only to instructional competence but also to teacher confidence, professional identity, organisational commitment, and career satisfaction.

Recent literature further indicates that effective mentoring extends beyond supporting beginning teachers to fostering collaborative professional cultures throughout schools. Within learning-oriented organisations, mentoring facilitates knowledge sharing, collaborative problem-solving, instructional innovation, and the development of collective teacher efficacy. Such collaborative cultures strengthen teachers' capacity to address diverse learner needs while promoting organisational learning and sustained school improvement. As educational systems increasingly confront challenges associated with technological change, curriculum transformation, inclusive education, and learner diversity, mentoring supervision provides an important mechanism for ensuring that teachers continuously develop professionally rather than working in isolation.

The growing importance of professional development and mentoring supervision reflects broader transformations in educational leadership itself. Contemporary instructional leadership no longer focuses exclusively on administrative efficiency but increasingly prioritises the creation of professional learning environments where teachers continuously improve instructional practice through collaboration, reflection, coaching, and evidence-informed decision-making. School leaders are therefore expected not merely to supervise instruction but to cultivate cultures of continuous professional learning that ultimately enhance student learning outcomes.

Within the African context, improving teacher performance remains one of the most pressing educational priorities as governments strive to expand access to quality education while simultaneously improving learning outcomes. Although remarkable progress has been made in increasing school enrolment over the past two decades, improvements in educational quality have generally lagged behind. Several countries continue to experience challenges associated with inadequate teacher preparation, limited opportunities for continuous professional learning, insufficient instructional resources, overcrowded classrooms, and weak instructional leadership. Consequently, teacher effectiveness has increasingly become a central concern in educational reform across the continent.

Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa suggests that many educational reforms have achieved only modest improvements because insufficient attention has been devoted to strengthening teachers' professional capacities after initial training. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2024), improving teacher quality represents one of the most cost-effective interventions for raising educational standards in developing countries. However, teacher quality should not be interpreted merely as possession of academic qualifications. Rather, it encompasses continuous professional

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learning, pedagogical competence, instructional adaptability, classroom management, assessment literacy, reflective practice, and collaborative engagement within professional learning communities.

Educational leadership scholars equally argue that sustainable school improvement cannot occur without sustained investment in teachers' professional growth. Kenneth Leithwood (2021) maintains that school leadership exerts its strongest influence on student achievement indirectly through improving teachers' instructional practices. Effective instructional leaders therefore create professional environments where teachers continually develop their competencies through coaching, mentoring, collaborative inquiry, professional dialogue, and reflective supervision. Such leadership approaches have increasingly replaced traditional inspection models that primarily emphasised compliance monitoring and administrative accountability.

Professional development has consequently evolved from isolated in-service workshops into comprehensive systems of continuous professional learning. Contemporary models recognise that teachers learn most effectively when professional development is embedded within everyday instructional practice, sustained over time, and directly connected to classroom challenges. Collaborative lesson study, peer observation, coaching, mentoring, action research, professional learning communities, and reflective dialogue now constitute essential components of effective teacher development programmes. These approaches encourage teachers to become active participants in their own professional learning rather than passive recipients of externally prescribed knowledge.

Similarly, mentoring supervision has attracted considerable international attention because of its demonstrated contribution to teacher retention, instructional effectiveness, and organisational learning. Schools that institutionalise mentoring systems generally report higher levels of teacher confidence, professional commitment, instructional innovation, and collaborative culture. Experienced teachers provide practical classroom guidance, model effective instructional strategies, assist novice teachers in classroom management, and facilitate professional socialisation into school culture. Such developmental relationships are particularly valuable during the early years of teaching when professional support substantially influences long-term career effectiveness.

The Cameroonian educational system reflects many of these global and continental concerns regarding teacher quality and instructional effectiveness. Since independence, Cameroon has pursued successive educational reforms intended to improve educational access, quality, and relevance. These reforms have increasingly recognised teachers as the most important school-based resource for achieving national educational objectives. The provisions of Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 place considerable responsibility upon teachers for ensuring educational quality while simultaneously recognising the obligation of government to provide appropriate professional support..

Within secondary education, instructional supervision constitutes one of the principal mechanisms through which the Ministry of Secondary Education seeks to improve teaching quality and strengthen teachers' professional competence. National Pedagogic Inspectors, Regional Pedagogic Inspectors, Divisional pedagogic authorities, school principals, vice principals, and heads of departments collectively share responsibility for supervising classroom instruction, monitoring curriculum implementation, organising professional development activities, mentoring teachers, and promoting instructional improvement. Ideally, these supervisory structures should facilitate continuous teacher learning while simultaneously ensuring accountability for educational quality.

Despite these well-established policy intentions, significant implementation challenges continue to affect instructional supervision throughout many Cameroonian secondary schools. Several studies have identified shortages of trained instructional supervisors, inadequate logistical support, insufficient funding for supervisory activities, irregular classroom visitation, and limited opportunities for structured teacher professional development. Furthermore, supervisory practices frequently remain inspection-oriented, concentrating more on compliance than on teacher learning and professional growth. Such limitations inevitably reduce the developmental value of instructional supervision and constrain its capacity to improve teachers' classroom performance.

These challenges have become even more pronounced within the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, particularly the South West Region, where the prolonged socio-political crisis has substantially disrupted educational service delivery. Since 2016, many schools have experienced intermittent closures, displacement of teachers and learners, insecurity, declining enrolment, and restricted supervisory access. Educational administrators have frequently encountered considerable difficulty organising regular classroom supervision, professional development programmes, and mentoring activities because of security concerns and limited institutional resources. Under such circumstances, sustaining teacher quality becomes considerably more challenging despite increasing expectations regarding instructional effectiveness.

The South West Region therefore presents a particularly important context for examining the contribution of professional development and mentoring supervision to teachers' performance. Teachers working within this environment must continually adapt instructional practices to changing educational realities while simultaneously maintaining professional standards under exceptionally demanding conditions. Consequently, understanding how professional learning opportunities and mentoring relationships contribute to teacher effectiveness within this context has both theoretical and practical significance for educational leadership and policy development.

Although instructional supervision has attracted considerable scholarly attention internationally, relatively few empirical investigations within Cameroon have isolated the specific contributions of professional development and mentoring supervision to teachers' performance. Existing studies have generally examined instructional supervision as a broad administrative construct, often combining several supervisory dimensions without determining the relative influence of individual supervisory practices. Moreover, many available studies have concentrated on classroom observation and inspection while devoting comparatively limited attention to sustained professional learning and mentoring relationships as mechanisms for improving instructional effectiveness. This leaves an important empirical gap regarding the specific supervisory strategies most likely to enhance teacher performance within challenging educational environments such as the South West Region of Cameroon.

Addressing this gap is particularly timely because contemporary educational leadership increasingly emphasises teacher capacity building rather than bureaucratic compliance. School improvement depends less upon occasional inspection than upon sustained professional learning, collaborative instructional leadership, and supportive mentoring relationships that empower teachers to improve their own classroom practices.

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Understanding the effectiveness of these developmental supervisory approaches therefore contributes not only to educational research but also to evidence-informed policymaking capable of strengthening instructional quality throughout Cameroon's secondary education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' Performance

Teachers' performance has increasingly become a central construct in educational research because it directly influences learners' academic achievement, school effectiveness, and the overall quality of education. Across educational systems, teachers serve as the principal agents responsible for translating curriculum objectives into meaningful classroom experiences. Consequently, the effectiveness with which teachers perform their professional responsibilities determines not only students' learning outcomes but also the capacity of schools to achieve national educational goals. Recent international discourse has therefore shifted from simply evaluating teachers' qualifications towards examining the quality of instructional practices that teachers demonstrate in everyday classroom situations (Darling-Hammond et al., 2024).

The concept of teachers' performance has evolved considerably over the past several decades. Earlier perspectives viewed teacher performance primarily in terms of syllabus coverage, classroom discipline, punctuality, and adherence to administrative regulations. Under this traditional perspective, performance was largely assessed through inspection reports and supervisors' evaluations, with limited attention given to instructional quality or learner outcomes. However, educational reforms inspired by constructivist learning theories, instructional leadership, and evidence-based teaching have transformed this understanding. Contemporary scholarship now conceptualises teachers' performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing instructional competence, pedagogical effectiveness, classroom management, learner assessment, professional collaboration, continuous learning, and commitment to improving student achievement (OECD, 2023).

According to Hattie (2023), effective teacher performance is reflected not merely in the completion of instructional tasks but in the teacher's capacity to generate measurable improvements in students' learning, engagement, critical thinking, and academic growth. This perspective shifts attention from what teachers do to the impact their professional practices have on learners. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2024) argue that teacher performance should be understood as the effective integration of pedagogical knowledge, subject-matter expertise, assessment literacy, and professional judgement in ways that maximise learning opportunities for all students.

Within contemporary educational systems, teachers' performance is generally examined through several interrelated dimensions. The first dimension concerns **instructional planning**, which involves preparing lesson plans, identifying learning objectives, selecting appropriate instructional strategies, organising teaching resources, and aligning classroom activities with curriculum expectations. Effective lesson preparation provides teachers with a structured framework for classroom instruction while simultaneously enhancing learner engagement and instructional coherence.

The second dimension relates to **instructional delivery**. Effective teachers employ diverse pedagogical strategies that actively involve learners in constructing knowledge rather than merely receiving information. Such instructional practices include collaborative learning, inquiry-based teaching, differentiated instruction, technology-enhanced learning, and learner-centred pedagogies. Teachers demonstrating high instructional performance adapt teaching strategies to accommodate learners' diverse abilities, backgrounds, and learning needs while maintaining high academic expectations for all students.

A third dimension is **classroom management**, which encompasses creating orderly, inclusive, and supportive learning environments that maximise instructional time and minimise disruptions. Effective classroom management extends beyond maintaining discipline to establishing positive teacher–student relationships, encouraging learner participation, fostering mutual respect, and promoting positive classroom climates conducive to meaningful learning. Research consistently demonstrates that well-managed classrooms significantly contribute to improved learner achievement and teacher effectiveness.

Assessment practices constitute another important indicator of teachers' performance. Contemporary educational assessment extends beyond periodic examinations to include continuous formative assessment, diagnostic evaluation, performance-based assessment, learner feedback, and data-informed instructional decision-making. Teachers who effectively monitor learners' progress are better positioned to identify learning difficulties, adapt instruction, and provide timely interventions that enhance academic achievement. Consequently, assessment literacy has become an essential component of teacher effectiveness within modern educational systems.

Professional commitment equally represents a critical dimension of teachers' performance. Effective teachers demonstrate commitment through punctuality, regular attendance, ethical conduct, collaboration with colleagues, participation in school improvement activities, continuous professional learning, and willingness to adopt innovative instructional practices. Such commitment contributes not only to individual teacher effectiveness but also to organisational learning and sustained school improvement. Several factors influence teachers' performance. At the individual level, teachers' academic qualifications, pedagogical competence, teaching experience, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, professional identity, and commitment significantly affect classroom effectiveness. Organisational factors—including instructional leadership, school climate, collegial collaboration, availability of teaching resources, workload, supervisory support, and opportunities for professional development—also shape teachers' professional performance. Broader contextual factors such as educational policy, curriculum reforms, community expectations, technological advancement, and socio-political conditions equally influence teachers' capacity to perform effectively.

Within Cameroon, teachers' performance has assumed increasing importance because of ongoing educational reforms intended to improve instructional quality and learner achievement. National education policy recognises teachers as central actors in achieving educational excellence while emphasising continuous professional improvement through instructional supervision and teacher development initiatives. However, educational challenges—including shortages of instructional resources, large class sizes, limited professional development opportunities, and, in the Anglophone regions, the prolonged socio-political crisis—continue to constrain teachers' professional effectiveness. These realities underscore the need for supportive supervisory mechanisms capable of strengthening teachers' instructional competence under challenging educational circumstances. Drawing upon these perspectives, teachers' performance in the present study is conceptualised as the extent to which teachers

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effectively perform their instructional, pedagogical, professional, and organisational responsibilities through quality lesson preparation, effective instructional delivery, efficient classroom management, meaningful learner assessment, and sustained professional commitment, thereby contributing to improved teaching quality and learner achievement**.** This conceptualisation aligns with the developmental perspective of instructional supervision adopted in this study, where continuous professional learning and supportive mentoring are viewed as fundamental mechanisms for enhancing teachers' professional effectiveness.

Professional Development

Professional development has become one of the most widely researched concepts in contemporary education because of its significant contribution to improving instructional quality, teachers' professional competence, and students' learning outcomes. As educational systems continue to respond to curriculum reforms, technological advancements, globalization, and changing learner needs, the continuous professional learning of teachers has increasingly been recognised as indispensable for sustaining educational quality. Rather than viewing teacher education as an activity confined to pre-service training, contemporary educational thought considers professional development a lifelong process through which teachers continually acquire, refine, and update the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies necessary for effective classroom practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2024).

Historically, professional development was largely synonymous with occasional in-service training programmes organised by ministries of education or educational authorities. These programmes typically consisted of short workshops, seminars, or conferences designed to acquaint teachers with curriculum changes or administrative directives. Although such initiatives contributed to disseminating new educational information, they were frequently criticised for being episodic, theoretical, externally driven, and disconnected from teachers' everyday instructional realities. Consequently, many teachers experienced limited opportunities to translate newly acquired knowledge into sustained improvements in classroom practice (Guskey, 2002).

Over the past two decades, however, the concept of professional development has undergone significant transformation. Contemporary scholarship now conceptualises professional development as **continuous professional learning**, characterised by sustained engagement, collaborative inquiry, reflective practice, and classroom-based improvement. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2024), effective professional development should not merely transmit information but should actively engage teachers in analysing instructional challenges, experimenting with innovative pedagogical approaches, reflecting upon their practices, and collaboratively constructing professional knowledge. This shift reflects growing recognition that teachers learn most effectively through active participation in authentic professional learning experiences situated within their instructional contexts.

Similarly, Desimone and Garet (2015) argue that high-quality professional development possesses five essential characteristics: content focus, active learning, coherence with teachers' professional needs, sustained duration, and collective participation. These characteristics distinguish effective professional learning from traditional one-off workshops by emphasising long-term instructional improvement rather than short-term knowledge acquisition. More recently, the OECD (2023) reaffirmed that professional development contributes significantly to teachers' adaptive expertise, enabling them to respond effectively to rapidly changing educational environments while maintaining high standards of instructional quality.

Professional development encompasses numerous learning activities through which teachers improve their instructional competence throughout their careers. These activities include formal academic programmes, in-service education, workshops, seminars, conferences, action research, professional learning communities, peer observation, collaborative lesson planning, instructional coaching, mentoring, online learning, and reflective practice. Contemporary educational systems increasingly encourage schools to become learning organisations where professional development occurs continuously through collaboration rather than relying exclusively on externally organised training programmes (Fullan, 2024).

Within instructional supervision, professional development serves as one of the principal mechanisms through which supervisors enhance teachers' instructional effectiveness. School principals, heads of departments, pedagogic inspectors, and instructional leaders facilitate professional development by identifying teachers' learning needs, organising capacity-building programmes, encouraging collaborative learning, providing constructive instructional feedback, and supporting reflective professional practice. Consequently, professional development represents not merely an individual responsibility but also an organisational strategy for improving teaching quality and promoting school effectiveness.

Recent international evidence consistently demonstrates positive relationships between professional development and teachers' performance. A comprehensive review by Darling-Hammond et al. (2024) concluded that sustained, job-embedded professional learning significantly improves teachers' pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, instructional decision-making, learner engagement, and assessment practices. Similarly, the UNESCO (2024) reports that countries investing systematically in continuous teacher learning consistently achieve stronger educational outcomes than those relying primarily on pre-service teacher education. These findings reinforce the argument that improving educational quality requires sustained investment in teachers' professional growth throughout their careers.

Research conducted across Europe and North America equally supports the importance of continuous professional learning. Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2018) found that high-quality professional development programmes produce measurable improvements in instructional practice and student achievement when they are intensive, collaborative, and sustained over time. Likewise, Timperley (2019) demonstrated that professional learning initiatives closely aligned with classroom challenges significantly enhance teachers' instructional competence and confidence. These findings collectively suggest that professional development exerts its greatest influence when teachers actively participate in analysing their instructional practices rather than passively receiving information.

Within Sub-Saharan Africa, professional development has increasingly been recognised as a critical strategy for addressing persistent challenges affecting teacher quality. However, opportunities for continuous professional learning remain uneven across many African educational systems because of financial limitations, shortages of qualified facilitators, inadequate institutional support, and competing administrative priorities. Nevertheless, studies conducted in countries such as Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Rwanda consistently indicate that teachers who

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participate regularly in structured professional development demonstrate higher levels of instructional effectiveness than colleagues with limited access to continuous learning opportunities (Akyeampong et al., 2020).

The Cameroonian educational context reflects many of these continental realities. Educational reforms introduced by the Ministry of Secondary Education increasingly emphasise continuous teacher development as an essential strategy for improving educational quality. National and Regional Pedagogic Inspectors, together with school administrators, are expected to organise pedagogical seminars, subject panels, instructional workshops, lesson demonstrations, and other professional learning activities intended to strengthen teachers' instructional competence. These initiatives seek to improve curriculum implementation, promote innovative teaching methods, and enhance learners' academic achievement.

Despite these policy intentions, however, professional development opportunities remain inconsistent across many secondary schools. Financial constraints, shortages of instructional personnel, inadequate logistical support, heavy teaching workloads, and the continuing socio-political crisis affecting the Anglophone regions have reduced opportunities for sustained teacher learning. Consequently, many teachers continue to rely primarily on their initial professional preparation despite rapidly changing curriculum demands and instructional expectations. These challenges underscore the continuing importance of strengthening school-based professional development systems capable of providing continuous instructional support under diverse educational circumstances.

Within the present study, professional development is conceptualised **as** a continuous, structured, and collaborative process through which teachers enhance their professional knowledge, pedagogical skills, instructional competence, and reflective practice through sustained learning opportunities designed to improve classroom effectiveness and overall teachers' performance**.** This conceptualisation extends beyond traditional in-service training by recognising professional development as an ongoing process of career-long learning supported through effective instructional supervision.

The central assumption underpinning this study is that teachers who engage regularly in meaningful professional development are more likely to demonstrate improved lesson preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, professional commitment, and overall instructional effectiveness than teachers who experience limited opportunities for continuous professional learning. Consequently, professional development is expected to exert a significant positive influence on teachers' performance within secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Mentoring Supervision

Mentoring supervision has increasingly emerged as one of the most effective instructional supervision strategies for enhancing teachers' professional competence, instructional effectiveness, and career development. Contemporary educational systems recognize that teachers do not develop professionally in isolation but through continuous interaction with experienced colleagues who provide instructional guidance, professional advice, emotional support, and opportunities for reflective practice. Consequently, mentoring supervision has become an indispensable component of teacher development programmes aimed at improving instructional quality and promoting school effectiveness.

The concept of mentoring originates from the ancient Greek epic The Odyssey, where Mentor served as the trusted adviser and guide to Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. Over time, the concept evolved beyond its historical origins to describe structured relationships through which experienced individuals support the professional growth of less experienced colleagues. Within education, mentoring has evolved from informal collegial assistance into a systematic supervisory strategy designed to facilitate continuous teacher learning, improve instructional practice, and strengthen professional identity (Hudson, 2016).

Educational scholars define mentoring supervision as a developmental process in which an experienced teacher or instructional leader provides continuous professional guidance to a less experienced teacher through observation, coaching, modelling, dialogue, constructive feedback, and collaborative reflection. Sullivan and Glanz (2013) describe mentoring as a collegial partnership that promotes professional growth by encouraging reflective practice rather than evaluating performance for administrative purposes. Unlike traditional inspection, mentoring supervision is characterised by mutual trust, collaboration, confidentiality, and professional learning.

Recent scholarship has expanded the conceptual understanding of mentoring supervision by distinguishing it from related concepts such as coaching, induction, peer supervision, and instructional coaching. Although these concepts share common characteristics, they differ in their objectives and implementation. Coaching generally focuses on improving specific instructional skills through targeted guidance, whereas mentoring adopts a broader developmental perspective encompassing instructional competence, professional identity, career advancement, emotional support, and organisational socialisation (Knight, 2018). Instructional coaching often involves short-term interventions directed towards improving classroom practice, while mentoring typically establishes longer-term professional relationships that support teachers throughout various stages of their careers.

Mentoring supervision serves multiple functions within educational institutions. First, it facilitates the professional induction of newly recruited teachers by helping them understand school policies, curriculum expectations, classroom management strategies, and institutional culture. Beginning teachers frequently encounter numerous instructional and organisational challenges during their transition into the profession. Effective mentoring enables them to navigate these challenges while developing confidence, professional competence, and instructional effectiveness.

Second, mentoring supervision promotes continuous instructional improvement among experienced teachers. Contemporary educational environments are characterised by rapidly changing curricula, technological innovations, learner diversity, inclusive education, and evolving pedagogical approaches. Through collaborative mentoring relationships, teachers continually exchange professional knowledge, reflect upon instructional practices, analyse learner outcomes, and develop innovative teaching strategies capable of responding to changing educational demands. Consequently, mentoring supervision contributes to organisational learning by transforming schools into professional learning communities where knowledge sharing becomes an integral aspect of everyday instructional practice.

Third, mentoring supervision contributes significantly to teachers' professional wellbeing. Research increasingly demonstrates that supportive mentoring relationships reduce professional isolation, increase job satisfaction, strengthen organisational commitment, and reduce teacher attrition, particularly among novice teachers. Teachers who receive consistent mentoring support generally demonstrate greater confidence, resilience,

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instructional creativity, and willingness to adopt innovative teaching approaches than teachers working without professional guidance (Ingersoll & Strong, 2018).

Within instructional supervision, mentoring reflects the broader shift from bureaucratic supervision towards developmental instructional leadership. Rather than emphasising fault-finding or administrative compliance, developmental supervision seeks to build teachers' professional capacity through supportive relationships that encourage continuous learning and reflective practice. According to Zepeda (2022), effective instructional supervision should prioritise professional growth by creating environments where teachers feel supported to experiment with new instructional approaches, discuss classroom challenges openly, and learn collaboratively from colleagues. Mentoring supervision therefore embodies the humanistic philosophy underpinning contemporary instructional leadership.

International empirical evidence consistently demonstrates the positive influence of mentoring supervision on teachers' performance. A comprehensive review conducted by Ingersoll and Strong (2018) found that teachers participating in structured mentoring programmes exhibited higher levels of instructional competence, classroom management effectiveness, learner engagement, and professional commitment than teachers who received limited mentoring support. Similarly, Hobson (2020) reported that mentoring significantly enhances beginning teachers' confidence, instructional decision-making, and classroom effectiveness while simultaneously reducing professional stress and early career attrition.

Across Europe, North America, and Australia, mentoring has become an integral component of teacher induction and continuing professional development programmes. Countries such as Finland, Singapore, Canada, and New Zealand institutionalise structured mentoring systems that combine classroom observation, professional dialogue, collaborative lesson planning, and reflective coaching. These educational systems consistently report improved teacher effectiveness, stronger collaborative cultures, and higher levels of instructional innovation attributable to sustained mentoring practices (OECD, 2023).

Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa similarly supports the contribution of mentoring supervision to improving educational quality, although implementation remains uneven across countries. Educational reforms in Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria increasingly emphasise school-based mentoring as a strategy for strengthening teacher competence and promoting collaborative professional learning. However, many African schools continue to face challenges associated with shortages of experienced mentors, limited supervisory training, inadequate institutional support, and heavy teaching workloads, which constrain the effectiveness of mentoring programmes (Akyeampong et al., 2020).

In Cameroon, mentoring supervision has traditionally occurred through informal professional relationships rather than structured institutional programmes. Newly recruited teachers frequently rely on experienced colleagues for guidance regarding lesson preparation, classroom management, learner assessment, curriculum implementation, and professional conduct. School principals, vice-principals, heads of departments, and senior teachers equally play important mentoring roles by providing instructional advice, observing classroom practice, organising demonstration lessons, and facilitating pedagogical discussions. These practices are intended to strengthen instructional competence while promoting professional collaboration within schools.

Nevertheless, the implementation of structured mentoring supervision remains inconsistent across many secondary schools in Cameroon. In several schools, mentoring relationships develop informally without clear institutional frameworks, designated mentors, or systematic follow-up. The prolonged socio-political crisis affecting the South West Region has further constrained opportunities for sustained mentoring because teacher displacement, school closures, insecurity, and increased administrative demands have reduced opportunities for regular professional interaction among teachers. These contextual realities underscore the need to strengthen mentoring supervision as an institutional strategy for improving teachers' professional performance.

Within the present study, mentoring supervision is conceptualised as a collaborative and continuous supervisory process through which experienced educators intentionally support less experienced teachers by providing instructional guidance, professional coaching, constructive feedback, emotional encouragement, and opportunities for reflective professional learning in order to enhance teachers' instructional competence and overall professional performance. This conceptualisation aligns with the developmental philosophy of instructional supervision adopted throughout this study.

The study therefore assumes that teachers who experience effective mentoring supervision are more likely to demonstrate improved lesson preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, professional confidence, and organisational commitment than teachers who receive limited mentoring support. Accordingly, mentoring supervision is expected to have a statistically significant positive influence on teachers' performance in public secondary schools within the South West Region of Cameroon.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical frameworks provide the intellectual foundation upon which empirical studies are developed. They explain the mechanisms through which relationships among variables are expected to occur and provide a lens for interpreting research findings. In educational research, theory serves not merely as an abstract explanation of educational phenomena but as a guide for understanding how instructional practices influence teachers' professional behaviour and classroom effectiveness. The present study is anchored on three complementary theories: **Distributed Leadership Theory**, **Growth Mindset Theory**, and **Collective Teacher Efficacy Theory**. Collectively, these theories explain how professional development and mentoring supervision contribute to improving teachers' performance through collaborative leadership, continuous professional learning, and shared instructional responsibility.

Distributed Leadership Theory

Distributed Leadership Theory has become one of the most influential contemporary perspectives in educational leadership because it challenges the traditional assumption that leadership resides exclusively in the school principal. Instead, the theory argues that leadership responsibilities should be shared among multiple actors within the school, thereby harnessing collective expertise to improve teaching, learning, and school effectiveness. Although the intellectual foundations of distributed leadership are often associated with the work of James P. Spillane (2006), more

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recent scholarship has further refined the theory by demonstrating how leadership distribution strengthens instructional improvement through collaborative professional practice (Nguyen, 2020).

Distributed Leadership Theory assumes that educational improvement is most sustainable when leadership functions are dispersed among principals, vice-principals, heads of departments, experienced teachers, mentors, and other instructional leaders rather than concentrated in a single administrator. Leadership therefore becomes an organisational practice emerging through interactions among individuals who collectively contribute to instructional improvement. This perspective recognises that teachers themselves possess valuable professional expertise capable of supporting colleagues through mentoring, collaborative planning, peer observation, and professional dialogue.

One of the major strengths of Distributed Leadership Theory lies in its emphasis on collaboration and shared responsibility. Schools characterised by distributed leadership generally encourage teachers to participate actively in instructional decision-making, curriculum implementation, professional development activities, and school improvement initiatives. Such collaborative environments promote trust, mutual learning, and professional accountability while reducing dependence upon hierarchical administrative control. Consequently, teachers become active contributors to school improvement rather than passive recipients of administrative directives.

Within the context of professional development, Distributed Leadership Theory suggests that continuous teacher learning should not depend exclusively on externally organised workshops or supervisory visits. Rather, professional learning should emerge through collaborative interactions among teachers who share instructional experiences, analyse classroom challenges, exchange innovative teaching strategies, and jointly solve instructional problems. Professional learning communities, subject panels, lesson study groups, peer observations, and collaborative action research all exemplify distributed leadership in practice because they utilise teachers' collective expertise to improve instructional quality.

The theory is equally relevant to mentoring supervision. Effective mentoring reflects distributed leadership because experienced teachers assume instructional leadership roles by guiding novice colleagues through classroom observation, coaching, lesson planning, curriculum interpretation, learner assessment, and reflective dialogue. Under this perspective, mentoring is not merely a supportive relationship but also a leadership function through which experienced educators contribute directly to school improvement by developing the instructional competence of other teachers. Consequently, mentoring supervision becomes a practical manifestation of distributed instructional leadership.

Despite its considerable strengths, Distributed Leadership Theory has received several criticisms. Critics argue that leadership distribution may create ambiguity regarding responsibility and accountability if organisational roles are not clearly defined. Harris (2021) observes that distributed leadership may become symbolic rather than substantive when school cultures remain highly hierarchical or when teachers lack sufficient professional autonomy to exercise leadership effectively. Similarly, excessive distribution without adequate coordination may produce fragmented decision-making and inconsistent instructional practices. These criticisms suggest that distributed leadership requires supportive organisational cultures, clear communication, and effective coordination to achieve intended educational outcomes.

Nevertheless, the theory remains highly relevant to the present study because it explains how professional development and mentoring supervision operate through collaborative leadership processes rather than hierarchical supervision alone. The study assumes that teachers working within schools characterised by collaborative instructional leadership are more likely to benefit from continuous professional learning and supportive mentoring relationships, thereby improving their professional performance.

Growth Mindset Theory

Growth Mindset Theory, developed by Carol Dweck (2016), provides another important theoretical foundation for this study. The theory distinguishes between two contrasting beliefs regarding human ability: the fixed mindset and the growth mindset. Individuals possessing a fixed mindset believe that intelligence and professional competence are largely innate and relatively unchangeable. Conversely, individuals with a growth mindset believe that abilities can be continuously developed through learning, effort, persistence, constructive feedback, and experience.

The central assumption of Growth Mindset Theory is that professional competence is not static but evolves through continuous learning and reflective practice. Within educational settings, this perspective encourages teachers to view instructional challenges as opportunities for professional growth rather than evidence of personal inadequacy. Teachers who embrace a growth mindset demonstrate greater willingness to experiment with innovative instructional strategies, reflect upon classroom experiences, seek professional feedback, and participate actively in continuous professional development.

Professional development aligns naturally with Growth Mindset Theory because continuous learning presupposes that teachers possess the capacity to improve throughout their careers. Workshops, seminars, coaching, collaborative lesson planning, postgraduate studies, online learning, and professional learning communities all provide opportunities for teachers to strengthen instructional competence through deliberate learning. Rather than perceiving professional development as remedial training, teachers operating within a growth mindset regard continuous learning as a normal and desirable aspect of professional practice.

Growth Mindset Theory also provides strong justification for mentoring supervision. Effective mentoring encourages beginning teachers to view mistakes, classroom challenges, and instructional difficulties as valuable learning experiences rather than professional failures. Mentors provide constructive feedback, model effective instructional practices, encourage reflective dialogue, and reinforce teachers' confidence in their ability to improve continuously. Such supportive relationships cultivate resilience, professional confidence, and instructional innovation—qualities consistent with growth mindset principles.

Recent educational research further demonstrates that growth-oriented professional cultures contribute significantly to instructional improvement. According to Dweck (2016), schools that encourage continuous learning, constructive feedback, collaboration, and reflective practice create environments where teachers become more adaptive, innovative, and professionally engaged. Similarly, educational leaders who promote growth mindsets among teachers contribute to sustained instructional improvement because teachers become more receptive to professional development and mentoring opportunities.

Notwithstanding its widespread acceptance, Growth Mindset Theory has also attracted criticism. Some scholars argue that educational institutions occasionally oversimplify the concept by assuming that encouraging positive attitudes alone automatically improves performance. Others contend

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that structural factors—including inadequate resources, excessive workloads, limited professional support, and unfavourable policy environments—may constrain professional growth despite teachers possessing positive mindsets (Sisk et al., 2018). Consequently, fostering growth mindsets should be complemented by organisational conditions that provide genuine opportunities for professional learning.

Despite these criticisms, Growth Mindset Theory remains highly applicable to this study because it explains why teachers participating in professional development and mentoring supervision are expected to improve their instructional competence continuously. The theory reinforces the proposition that teacher performance is not predetermined but develops progressively through sustained professional learning supported by effective instructional supervision.

Collective Teacher Efficacy Theory

Collective Teacher Efficacy Theory, advanced by Roger Goddard, Wayne Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000), extends Albert Bandura's concept of self-efficacy from individuals to groups. The theory posits that teachers' shared belief in their collective capacity to positively influence student learning significantly shapes instructional behaviour, professional collaboration, and educational outcomes. Schools with strong collective teacher efficacy exhibit greater collaboration, instructional innovation, professional commitment, and persistence in addressing learner challenges than schools characterised by weak collective efficacy.

The theory assumes that teachers become more effective when they believe that collaborative professional action can improve student achievement regardless of learners' socio-economic backgrounds or other contextual constraints. Such beliefs encourage teachers to share instructional knowledge, support colleagues, engage in collaborative problem-solving, and maintain high expectations for student success. Consequently, collective teacher efficacy strengthens both individual and organisational capacity for instructional improvement.

Professional development contributes directly to collective teacher efficacy by creating opportunities for teachers to learn together, discuss instructional challenges, analyse learner performance, and develop shared pedagogical practices. Through collaborative learning experiences, teachers develop confidence not only in their individual abilities but also in their collective capacity to improve educational outcomes. Similarly, mentoring supervision reinforces collective efficacy by facilitating knowledge sharing, instructional collaboration, and professional support between experienced and novice teachers.

One of the major strengths of Collective Teacher Efficacy Theory is its emphasis on collaboration as the foundation of school improvement. Rather than viewing teacher effectiveness as solely an individual attribute, the theory recognises schools as professional communities where instructional excellence emerges through shared learning and collective responsibility. This perspective aligns strongly with contemporary instructional supervision, which increasingly promotes collaborative professional cultures instead of isolated classroom practice.

Nevertheless, critics argue that collective efficacy may be difficult to sustain in schools experiencing severe organisational instability, limited resources, or weak leadership. Furthermore, collective confidence without corresponding instructional competence may produce overestimation of organisational effectiveness. These limitations highlight the importance of combining collaborative beliefs with continuous professional development and effective mentoring.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers' performance remains one of the strongest determinants of students' academic achievement and overall educational quality. In contemporary educational systems, effective instructional supervision is expected to provide continuous professional support through structured professional development programmes, mentoring relationships, instructional feedback, collaborative learning, and reflective practice. Such supervisory processes are intended to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence, strengthen classroom instruction, improve learner assessment, and promote continuous professional growth. Consequently, educational policies in Cameroon assign significant supervisory responsibilities to pedagogic inspectors, school principals, vice principals, and heads of departments to ensure that teachers receive the instructional support necessary for improving educational quality.

However, evidence from the South West Region suggests that this expectation is not consistently realised. Professional development opportunities remain irregular in many schools, while structured mentoring systems are either weak or largely informal. External supervisory visits have become increasingly infrequent because of shortages of personnel, financial constraints, logistical challenges, and the continuing socio-political crisis affecting the region. Internal instructional supervision conducted by school administrators is similarly constrained by heavy administrative workloads, inadequate supervisory training, and limited institutional support. As a result, many teachers receive insufficient professional guidance capable of continuously improving their instructional practice.

Although previous studies have acknowledged the importance of instructional supervision for improving educational quality, relatively little empirical evidence exists regarding the independent contributions of professional development and mentoring supervision to teachers' performance within Anglophone secondary schools in Cameroon. Most existing studies have treated instructional supervision as a single multidimensional construct without examining whether specific developmental supervisory practices exert stronger influence on teacher effectiveness than traditional supervisory approaches. Consequently, educational leaders possess limited evidence regarding which supervisory strategies should receive greater institutional investment under conditions of constrained educational resources.

It is against this background that the present study investigates the extent to which professional development and mentoring supervision influence teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. By generating empirical evidence on these two developmental dimensions of instructional supervision, the study seeks to contribute to improved educational leadership, more effective supervisory practice, and stronger teacher professional learning within Cameroon's secondary education system.

Research Objectives

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to examine the influence of professional development and mentoring supervision on teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon.

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Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the influence of professional development on teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon.
2. Determine the influence of mentoring supervision on teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The concurrent embedded design was considered appropriate because quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same phase of the study, with the quantitative component serving as the dominant strand while the qualitative component provided complementary evidence for interpreting statistical findings. The design enabled triangulation of evidence by combining teachers' questionnaire responses with principals' interview perspectives, thereby enhancing the credibility and comprehensiveness of the findings. This methodological approach was particularly suitable because the study sought not only to determine the statistical relationships between the variables but also to understand participants' perceptions regarding the supervisory practices influencing teachers' performance.

Study Area

The choice of Fako Division was informed by several considerations. First, the Division accommodates a substantial number of secondary schools operating under the Anglophone subsystem of education. Second, the Division has experienced considerable educational disruptions arising from the ongoing socio-political crisis affecting the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. These disruptions have influenced instructional supervision, teacher deployment, professional development opportunities, and school administration, making the Division an appropriate setting for investigating the relationship between instructional supervision and teachers' performance.

Population of the Study

The target population comprised all principals and teachers serving in public secondary schools in Fako Division during the period of data collection. Teachers constituted the principal respondents because they directly experienced professional development programmes and mentoring supervision within their schools. School principals participated as key informants owing to their responsibilities as instructional leaders responsible for supervising teachers, organising professional learning activities, and facilitating mentoring within their respective institutions.

The accessible population consisted of teachers and principals drawn from selected public secondary schools within four subdivisions of Fako Division. These schools were considered accessible because they remained operational during the period of data collection despite the educational challenges associated with the prevailing socio-political situation.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The study involved 300 teachers **and** six principals, giving a total sample of 306 participants. The teacher sample was determined using established sampling procedures appropriate for survey research, while the principals were purposively selected because of their direct responsibility for instructional supervision and school leadership.

A **multi-stage sampling strategy** was employed. At the first stage, stratified sampling was used to ensure adequate representation of teachers across selected public secondary schools. Stratification enhanced sample representativeness by reducing sampling bias and ensuring that teachers from different schools participated in the study. Subsequently, simple random sampling was employed within each stratum to select teacher participants. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select six principals possessing substantial experience in instructional supervision and school administration. Their leadership roles enabled them to provide rich contextual information regarding professional development practices, mentoring supervision, and teachers' performance within their respective schools.

The combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques was considered appropriate because it balanced statistical representativeness with the need to obtain in-depth qualitative insights from information-rich participants.

Research Instruments

Two complementary instruments were employed for data collection: a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire constituted the principal instrument for collecting quantitative data from teachers. It comprised closed-ended items measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from **Strongly agree (4)** to **Strongly disagree (1)**. The instrument was organised into sections corresponding to the study variables, namely professional development, mentoring supervision, and teachers' performance. This structure enabled systematic measurement of respondents' perceptions regarding the extent to which supervisory practices influenced instructional effectiveness.

The questionnaire was selected because it facilitated the collection of standardised data from a relatively large number of respondents while ensuring anonymity and reducing interviewer bias. Furthermore, the Likert-scale format permitted quantitative analysis using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures.

Interview Guide

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews administered to the six selected principals. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore principals' experiences regarding professional development, mentoring supervision, instructional leadership, and teachers' performance within their schools.

The semi-structured format provided flexibility for probing participants' responses while ensuring consistency across interviews. It also enabled the researcher to obtain detailed explanations that complemented and clarified the quantitative findings.

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Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Prior to data collection, the research instruments underwent rigorous validation to ensure that they adequately measured the constructs under investigation. Content validity was established through expert review involving specialists in Educational Administration and Measurement and Evaluation from the University of Buea. Their comments guided revisions relating to item clarity, relevance, language, and alignment with the study objectives.

The quantitative instrument achieved an acceptable Content Validity Index (CVI)**,** indicating satisfactory coverage of the study constructs. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through a pilot study conducted outside the main study area using respondents possessing characteristics similar to those of the target population. Internal consistency was estimated using **Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient**, which demonstrated satisfactory reliability for all study variables. The obtained coefficients exceeded the minimum threshold of **0.70** recommended for educational research (Lee J. Cronbach, 1951; Joseph F. Hair et al., 2022), thereby confirming that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection commenced after obtaining the necessary administrative authorisation from relevant educational authorities and the participating schools. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to teachers with the assistance of school administrators where necessary. Participants received clear explanations regarding the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion where possible, while arrangements were made for subsequent collection in schools requiring additional time. Interviews with principals were conducted at mutually convenient times within their respective schools. Each interview followed the prepared guide while allowing sufficient flexibility for participants to elaborate on issues relevant to instructional supervision and teachers' performance. Interview responses were carefully recorded and subsequently organised for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately before being integrated during interpretation.

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were computed to summarise respondents' characteristics and perceptions. To test the study hypotheses, the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to determine the strength and direction of relationships between professional development, mentoring supervision, and teachers' performance. Statistical significance was evaluated at the **0.05 level**.

Qualitative interview data were analysed using **thematic analysis** following the procedures proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2022). Interview transcripts were read repeatedly, coded systematically, grouped into categories, and organised into themes corresponding to the study objectives. The qualitative findings were subsequently integrated with quantitative results during discussion to facilitate triangulation and enhance interpretive depth.

Findings

This section presents the findings according to the two research objectives guiding the study. Quantitative findings are presented first, followed by qualitative evidence obtained from interviews with school principals. The integration of both strands provides a comprehensive understanding of how professional development and mentoring supervision influence teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon.

Professional Development and Teachers' Performance

The first objective sought to determine the influence of professional development on teachers' performance.

Teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements describing professional development practices within their schools. The findings generally indicate that respondents perceived professional development as an important mechanism for improving instructional competence and classroom effectiveness.

The majority of teachers agreed that professional development programmes exposed them to contemporary instructional strategies, strengthened lesson preparation, improved classroom delivery, enhanced learner assessment practices, and increased their confidence in curriculum implementation. Respondents equally indicated that refresher courses, pedagogical seminars, workshops, and collaborative professional learning opportunities enabled them to remain current with educational reforms and evolving teaching methodologies. These findings suggest that continuous professional learning contributes substantially to teachers' professional competence and instructional effectiveness.

Qualitative evidence obtained from principals strongly corroborated the questionnaire findings. Interview participants consistently reported that professional development activities improved teachers' instructional practices by updating pedagogical knowledge, encouraging innovative teaching approaches, and strengthening professional commitment. Principals further observed that teachers who regularly participated in pedagogical seminars and capacity-building programmes demonstrated greater confidence in lesson delivery, more effective classroom management, and improved learner engagement.

However, principals also acknowledged several institutional challenges affecting professional development. These included inadequate funding for training programmes, irregular organisation of pedagogical seminars, shortages of instructional materials, and limited opportunities for continuous professional learning resulting from administrative constraints and the prevailing socio-political crisis. Despite these limitations, respondents unanimously agreed that professional development remained one of the most effective strategies for improving teachers' instructional competence and overall professional performance.

To determine whether professional development was significantly associated with teachers' performance, the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed.

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The analysis revealed a **strong positive and statistically significant relationship** between professional development and teachers' performance (**r = .929, p < .001**). Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant relationship between professional development and teachers' performance was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. The magnitude of this correlation indicates that teachers who reported greater participation in professional development activities also tended to report higher levels of instructional performance. It should be emphasised, however, that the correlation coefficient demonstrates a strong statistical association rather than establishing causality. Nevertheless, the finding provides compelling evidence that professional development constitutes an important component of instructional supervision associated with enhanced teacher effectiveness. Overall, the findings suggest that continuous professional learning enables teachers to improve instructional planning, classroom management, learner assessment, curriculum implementation, and professional confidence, thereby contributing to improved teaching performance within secondary schools.

Mentoring Supervision and Teachers' Performance

The second objective examined the relationship between mentoring supervision and teachers' performance.

Questionnaire responses indicate that teachers generally perceived mentoring supervision as an important source of professional guidance and instructional support. Respondents agreed that mentoring relationships facilitated lesson preparation, strengthened classroom management, increased confidence in instructional delivery, and encouraged the adoption of innovative teaching strategies. Teachers equally acknowledged that advice received from experienced colleagues enabled them to overcome classroom challenges and improve professional competence.

The qualitative findings further illuminate these perceptions. Principals consistently reported that newly recruited teachers benefited considerably from structured orientation and induction activities conducted within their schools. Experienced teachers frequently supported novice colleagues through classroom observation, collaborative lesson planning, demonstration teaching, professional advice, and continuous instructional guidance. According to the principals, these mentoring activities significantly enhanced beginning teachers' confidence while simultaneously improving instructional quality across departments.

Participants also highlighted several specific contributions of mentoring supervision. First, mentoring reduced anxiety among newly appointed teachers by providing continuous emotional and professional support. Second, collaborative lesson planning and peer coaching encouraged teachers to experiment with innovative instructional strategies. Third, regular professional interaction between experienced and less experienced teachers strengthened organisational learning and promoted a collaborative school culture.

Despite these positive outcomes, principals identified several factors constraining effective mentoring supervision. Heavy teaching workloads frequently limited opportunities for regular mentoring sessions. Inadequate financial and instructional resources constrained the organisation of structured mentoring programmes, while a few teachers perceived mentoring as unnecessary or demonstrated reluctance to participate in mentoring relationships. These institutional challenges reduced the consistency with which mentoring supervision could be implemented across schools. Nevertheless, participants unanimously maintained that mentoring supervision remained an indispensable mechanism for strengthening teachers' instructional competence and professional growth. The relationship between mentoring supervision and teachers' performance was subsequently examined using the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient.

The statistical analysis revealed a **very strong positive and statistically significant relationship** between mentoring supervision and teachers' performance (**r = .964, p < .001**). Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that mentoring supervision was significantly associated with teachers' performance.

The exceptionally strong correlation suggests that teachers who experienced greater mentoring support also reported higher levels of professional performance. Although the correlation should not be interpreted as evidence of direct causation, it provides substantial empirical support for the proposition that supportive mentoring relationships constitute an important developmental component of instructional supervision capable of enhancing teachers' instructional effectiveness. Overall, the findings indicate that mentoring supervision contributes to improved teacher confidence, instructional competence, classroom innovation, collaborative professional learning, and organisational commitment, thereby strengthening teachers' overall professional performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of professional development and mentoring supervision on teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. The discussion is organised according to the two research objectives and integrates the quantitative and qualitative findings with the theoretical framework and existing empirical literature. Rather than treating the statistical relationships as evidence of causality, the discussion interprets the observed associations within the broader context of instructional supervision, teacher professional learning, and educational leadership.

Professional Development and Teachers' Performance

The first objective examined the relationship between professional development and teachers' performance. The quantitative findings revealed a strong positive and statistically significant association between professional development and teachers' performance ($r = .929$, $p < .001$), while the qualitative findings indicated that teachers who regularly participated in pedagogical seminars, refresher courses, workshops, and collaborative learning activities demonstrated greater instructional confidence, improved classroom delivery, enhanced lesson preparation, and stronger curriculum implementation. Principals equally acknowledged that continuous professional learning had become one of the most effective mechanisms for strengthening instructional competence despite the operational challenges confronting schools in the South West Region.

The findings support the central proposition of Growth Mindset Theory, which posits that professional competence develops progressively through continuous learning, reflective practice, and constructive feedback rather than remaining fixed throughout one's career. Teachers who participated in professional development activities appeared more willing to update instructional practices, experiment with learner-centred pedagogies, and respond effectively to changing curriculum demands. The findings equally reinforce the assumptions of Distributed Leadership Theory, which argues that professional learning is strengthened when school leaders create collaborative environments where teachers continuously share

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instructional experiences and collectively solve pedagogical challenges. From this theoretical perspective, professional development represents not merely a training activity but an instructional leadership strategy through which schools strengthen organisational learning and instructional improvement.

The findings are also consistent with Collective Teacher Efficacy Theory, which maintains that teachers' shared confidence in their collective professional capacity influences instructional effectiveness and student learning. Professional development activities such as pedagogical seminars, collaborative lesson planning, subject panels, and professional learning communities create opportunities for teachers to exchange instructional knowledge, develop common pedagogical approaches, and strengthen collective responsibility for learner achievement. Consequently, professional development contributes not only to individual competence but also to collaborative professional cultures capable of sustaining long-term school improvement.

The present findings are consistent with substantial international evidence regarding the contribution of professional development to teacher effectiveness. For example, Darling-Hammond et al. (2024) concluded that sustained, content-focused, collaborative professional learning significantly improves teachers' pedagogical competence, instructional quality, and student achievement. Similarly, the OECD (2023) reported that educational systems characterised by continuous teacher learning consistently outperform systems relying primarily on pre-service teacher preparation. Likewise, Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2018), through their meta-analysis of instructional coaching programmes, demonstrated that sustained professional learning contributes significantly to improved classroom instruction and learner outcomes. Collectively, these international studies reinforce the present finding that teachers benefit substantially from continuous opportunities for professional growth.

The findings equally converge with evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa. Akyeampong et al. (2020) reported that teachers participating regularly in structured professional development programmes demonstrated stronger classroom management, improved learner engagement, and greater instructional competence despite persistent institutional constraints affecting many African educational systems. Similarly, Wanzare (2021) found that continuous professional development significantly enhanced instructional planning and learner-centred teaching practices among secondary school teachers in Kenya. These similarities suggest that professional development remains an important determinant of teacher effectiveness irrespective of contextual differences, although implementation strategies may vary across educational systems.

Within Cameroon, the findings corroborate previous studies emphasising the importance of continuous teacher learning for improving instructional quality. Tambo (2020) argued that pedagogical seminars, refresher courses, and collaborative professional activities enhance teachers' lesson preparation, curriculum implementation, and instructional confidence. The present study extends this evidence by demonstrating that professional development remains significantly associated with teachers' performance even within the challenging educational environment created by the prolonged socio-political crisis affecting the South West Region. This extension is particularly important because relatively few empirical studies have examined professional development within conflict-affected educational contexts in Cameroon.

The strong convergence between the present findings and previous research may be explained by the fundamental role that continuous learning plays in professional practice. Teaching is a dynamic profession characterised by evolving curricula, technological innovation, learner diversity, inclusive education, and changing pedagogical expectations. Consequently, teachers who participate in continuous professional learning are more likely to update instructional knowledge, improve classroom practice, and respond effectively to emerging educational challenges than colleagues with limited opportunities for professional development. Furthermore, collaborative professional learning creates opportunities for reflective dialogue, peer support, and shared problem-solving, thereby strengthening both individual competence and organisational learning.

Nevertheless, although the statistical relationship observed in this study is exceptionally strong, it should be interpreted cautiously. The correlation coefficient demonstrates a substantial positive association between professional development and teachers' performance but does not establish a direct causal relationship. Other contextual factors—including teachers' experience, motivation, school leadership, availability of instructional resources, organisational climate, and personal commitment—may equally contribute to observed differences in teachers' performance. Consequently, professional development should be understood as one important component within a broader system of instructional leadership rather than the sole determinant of teacher effectiveness.

From a practical perspective, the findings have important implications for instructional leadership within Cameroon's secondary education system. School principals, Regional Pedagogic Inspectors, Divisional Pedagogic Inspectors, and the Ministry of Secondary Education should move beyond viewing professional development as occasional workshops organised in response to curriculum reforms. Instead, schools should institutionalise continuous, school-based professional learning through professional learning communities, collaborative lesson study, peer observation, action research, instructional coaching, and reflective professional dialogue. Such developmental approaches are likely to produce more sustainable improvements in teachers' instructional competence than isolated training programmes.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that professional development constitutes an essential dimension of developmental instructional supervision capable of strengthening teachers' professional competence, instructional effectiveness, and organisational learning. Investment in continuous teacher learning therefore represents an important strategy for improving educational quality and strengthening school performance within Cameroon and comparable educational contexts.

Mentoring Supervision and Teachers' Performance

The second objective examined the relationship between mentoring supervision and teachers' performance. Quantitative findings revealed a very strong positive and statistically significant association between mentoring supervision and teachers' performance ($r = .964$, $p < .001$). The qualitative findings further indicated that mentoring enhanced teachers' confidence, strengthened instructional competence, improved classroom management, encouraged collaborative lesson planning, and promoted professional innovation. Principals consistently emphasised that guidance provided by experienced teachers enabled novice colleagues to adapt more effectively to instructional responsibilities despite institutional challenges such as heavy workloads, limited resources, and the continuing socio-political crisis.

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The findings strongly support Distributed Leadership Theory, which argues that instructional leadership is most effective when professional expertise is shared across the school rather than concentrated solely in formal administrative positions. The mentoring relationships reported by participants illustrate how experienced teachers assume instructional leadership responsibilities by coaching, guiding, and supporting less experienced colleagues. Such collaborative leadership practices contribute to organisational learning by transforming schools into communities where professional knowledge is continuously exchanged rather than individually retained.

The findings equally reinforce Growth Mindset Theory, which suggests that teachers improve professionally through supportive feedback, reflection, and continuous learning opportunities. Mentoring supervision provides precisely these conditions by encouraging teachers to view instructional challenges as opportunities for growth rather than evidence of professional inadequacy. Constructive guidance from experienced colleagues therefore strengthens teachers' confidence while encouraging experimentation with innovative instructional approaches and reflective classroom practice.

From the perspective of Collective Teacher Efficacy Theory, mentoring supervision strengthens schools' shared capacity to improve teaching and learning. By promoting collaboration, peer support, and collective responsibility for instructional improvement, mentoring contributes to the development of professional cultures characterised by trust, shared expertise, and mutual accountability. Such collaborative cultures enhance organisational resilience, particularly within educational environments experiencing significant contextual challenges such as those prevailing in the South West Region of Cameroon.

The present findings are consistent with international research demonstrating the educational value of mentoring supervision. Ingersoll and Strong (2018) concluded that structured mentoring programmes significantly improve teachers' instructional competence, classroom management, professional confidence, and organisational commitment. Similarly, Hobson (2020) reported that mentoring contributes substantially to beginning teachers' professional identity, instructional decision-making, and classroom effectiveness. Knight (2018) likewise demonstrated that instructional coaching and mentoring enhance teachers' pedagogical practice by facilitating continuous professional dialogue and evidence-based reflection. These studies collectively reinforce the present finding that supportive mentoring relationships constitute an important mechanism for strengthening teachers' professional performance.

Evidence from Africa similarly supports the observed relationship. Botha (2021) reported that mentoring significantly improved beginning teachers' classroom confidence, lesson preparation, and learner assessment practices within South African secondary schools, although programme effectiveness depended upon institutional support and availability of trained mentors. Comparable findings have also been reported in Ghana, Rwanda, and Kenya, where mentoring has increasingly been recognised as an effective strategy for promoting collaborative professional learning despite persistent resource constraints.

Within Cameroon, empirical literature examining mentoring supervision remains comparatively limited. Nevertheless, existing studies acknowledge that experienced teachers frequently provide informal guidance to novice colleagues through lesson demonstrations, curriculum interpretation, classroom observation, and pedagogical advice. The present study extends this body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence that mentoring supervision is strongly associated with teachers' performance within public secondary schools operating under the unique conditions created by the socio-political crisis in the South West Region.

The convergence between the present findings and previous studies may be explained by the inherently collaborative nature of mentoring. Teachers rarely develop expertise solely through individual experience; rather, professional competence evolves through continuous interaction with colleagues, reflective dialogue, modelling of effective instructional practices, and constructive feedback. Mentoring therefore accelerates professional learning by enabling less experienced teachers to benefit from the practical knowledge accumulated by experienced educators while simultaneously strengthening collaborative professional cultures throughout schools.

However, as with professional development, the exceptionally strong correlation observed should not be interpreted as evidence of direct causality. Although mentoring supervision demonstrated a very strong statistical association with teachers' performance, the cross-sectional correlational design does not permit causal inference. Factors such as school climate, leadership style, teachers' motivation, organisational commitment, availability of resources, and prior teaching experience may also influence the observed relationship. Future longitudinal or experimental studies could provide stronger evidence regarding causal mechanisms.

The findings nevertheless carry important implications for educational leadership. School principals should institutionalise structured mentoring programmes by formally assigning experienced teachers to mentor newly recruited colleagues, providing time for collaborative lesson planning, encouraging peer observation, and recognising mentoring as an important component of instructional leadership. Similarly, educational authorities should develop clear policy guidelines supporting school-based mentoring as a continuous professional development strategy rather than limiting mentoring to informal relationships.

Taken together, the findings suggest that mentoring supervision constitutes an indispensable component of developmental instructional supervision capable of strengthening teachers' professional competence, confidence, and collaborative practice. Investment in structured mentoring systems may therefore contribute substantially to improving instructional quality and sustaining educational improvement within Cameroon's secondary education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations arising from this study are directed towards educational policymakers, instructional supervisors, school leaders, teachers, and future researchers.

The Ministry of Secondary Education should institutionalise a comprehensive policy framework for continuous professional development that guarantees regular, structured, and adequately funded learning opportunities for secondary school teachers. Professional development should move beyond occasional workshops and become an integral component of teachers' professional responsibilities through sustained school-based programmes, professional learning communities, and collaborative instructional improvement initiatives. The Ministry should equally develop a

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national mentoring policy establishing clear guidelines for selecting mentors, defining mentoring responsibilities, monitoring mentoring activities, and evaluating programme effectiveness. Such policy would ensure greater consistency in mentoring practices across secondary schools.

Pedagogic Inspectors should increasingly adopt developmental approaches to instructional supervision by complementing classroom inspection with professional coaching, instructional feedback, collaborative lesson analysis, and continuous pedagogical support. Greater emphasis should be placed on improving teachers' instructional competence rather than merely evaluating compliance with administrative procedures. Inspectors should further collaborate with school principals to organise periodic pedagogical seminars, subject conferences, demonstration lessons, and instructional workshops that respond directly to teachers' identified professional learning needs.

School principals should recognise instructional leadership as their foremost professional responsibility. They should establish school-based professional learning communities that encourage collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, reflective dialogue, action research, and professional knowledge sharing among teachers. Formal mentoring systems should equally be established within schools by pairing newly recruited teachers with experienced colleagues capable of providing continuous instructional guidance, classroom support, and professional coaching. Time should deliberately be allocated within school programmes to facilitate regular mentoring interactions.

Teachers should actively embrace continuous professional learning as an essential aspect of professional practice rather than viewing professional development solely as an externally organised activity. They should participate actively in pedagogical seminars, collaborative lesson study, peer observation, educational research, and professional learning communities. Experienced teachers should willingly serve as mentors to younger colleagues, recognising mentoring as an important contribution to school improvement and educational quality rather than an additional administrative responsibility.

Universities and teacher-training institutions should strengthen pre-service teacher education by integrating mentoring skills, collaborative instructional leadership, reflective practice, and continuous professional learning into teacher preparation programmes. Such preparation would enable future teachers to enter the profession with stronger understanding of collaborative professional development.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of professional development and mentoring supervision on teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. The investigation was motivated by growing concerns regarding instructional quality, teacher effectiveness, and the need to strengthen instructional supervision within a context characterised by educational reforms, limited institutional resources, and the prolonged socio-political crisis affecting Cameroon's Anglophone regions. By focusing specifically on professional development and mentoring supervision, the study sought to contribute empirical evidence capable of informing instructional leadership, teacher professional learning, and educational policy.

The findings demonstrate that both professional development and mentoring supervision are strongly and positively associated with teachers' performance. Teachers who reported greater participation in professional development activities equally reported higher levels of instructional competence, lesson preparation, classroom management, learner assessment, curriculum implementation, and professional commitment. Similarly, teachers who experienced stronger mentoring supervision demonstrated greater instructional confidence, improved classroom practice, stronger collaborative engagement, and enhanced professional effectiveness. Qualitative evidence obtained from school principals reinforced these statistical findings by illustrating how continuous professional learning and supportive mentoring relationships strengthen teachers' instructional capacity despite contextual challenges confronting schools within the South West Region.

Theoretically, the study confirms the relevance of Distributed Leadership Theory, Growth Mindset Theory, and Collective Teacher Efficacy Theory in explaining the mechanisms through which developmental instructional supervision contributes to teachers' professional improvement. The findings suggest that teacher effectiveness is strengthened when instructional leadership extends beyond administrative inspection to include collaborative professional learning, continuous mentoring, reflective practice, and shared responsibility for instructional improvement. Consequently, the study reinforces contemporary educational leadership perspectives that conceptualise supervision primarily as a developmental rather than evaluative process.

Although the statistical analyses revealed exceptionally strong positive associations between the study variables, these relationships should be interpreted within the methodological boundaries of correlational research. The findings demonstrate meaningful associations rather than direct causal effects. Teachers' performance is influenced by multiple interacting factors, including school leadership, organisational climate, teacher motivation, instructional resources, teaching experience, and broader educational policy. Nevertheless, the consistency between the quantitative and qualitative findings provides persuasive evidence that professional development and mentoring supervision constitute important components of instructional supervision associated with improved teacher performance.

Overall, the study concludes that improving teachers' performance requires sustained institutional investment in teacher learning rather than reliance on periodic inspection or administrative compliance alone. Educational systems seeking to improve instructional quality should therefore strengthen continuous professional development, institutionalise structured mentoring programmes, and cultivate collaborative professional cultures capable of supporting teachers throughout their professional careers. Such investments are particularly important within educational contexts experiencing institutional disruption, where strong instructional leadership and continuous professional support become essential for sustaining educational quality.

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