

School Head Instructional Supervision: Exploring its Impact on Pedagogical Innovation

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Abstract

This study explored the influence of school head instructional supervision on pedagogical innovation at Simandagit Elementary School in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi. Anchored on Instructional Leadership Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, the study examined how supervision practices, leadership support, and contextual conditions shaped teachers' willingness and capacity to improve instructional practices. A qualitative phenomenological research design was employed to capture the lived experiences of the school principal and one classroom teacher. Purposive sampling was used, and data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interview responses were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that evidence-based supervision practices, particularly the use of student performance data and classroom observations, helped guide instructional decisions and improve teaching strategies. Emotional and professional support, constructive feedback, and recognition of teacher efforts also encouraged teacher confidence, motivation, and openness to pedagogical innovation. However, the study identified time constraints, competing administrative priorities, limited instructional materials, inadequate technological tools, and limited training opportunities as barriers to the full implementation of innovative teaching practices. The study concluded that instructional supervision could promote pedagogical innovation when practiced as a supportive, developmental, and data-driven leadership process. It recommended strengthening regular classroom monitoring, timely feedback, reflective professional dialogue, institutional support for school heads, and the provision of instructional resources and training opportunities. The study supports SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening educational, institutional, and community sustainability by promoting teacher development, instructional improvement, and equitable learning support in a resource-constrained school setting.

Keywords: Evidence-Based Supervision, Instructional Leadership, Instructional Supervision, Pedagogical Innovation, Professional Support, Resource-Constrained Schools, Teacher Development

1. Introduction

Instructional supervision is a vital function of school leadership that directly supports teaching quality, teacher development, and learner achievement. As instructional leaders, school heads are expected to guide teachers, monitor classroom practices, provide constructive feedback, and create conditions that encourage professional growth and pedagogical innovation. In schools located in geographically challenged and resource-constrained communities, such as Simandagit Elementary School in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, instructional supervision becomes even more significant because teachers often operate with limited instructional materials, restricted access to technology, and competing school demands. This study explores how the instructional supervision practices of the school head influence teachers' pedagogical innovation, particularly in relation to support, feedback, recognition, resource limitations, and leadership conditions that either promote or hinder innovative teaching practices.

Instructional supervision is an essential component of educational leadership because it helps ensure that teaching practices remain responsive, effective, and aligned with learners' needs. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) introduced a model of instructional leadership in which school heads influence teaching and learning through goal setting, supervision of instruction, and the promotion of a positive school climate. Their framework highlights the principal's active role in improving classroom instruction and supporting teacher effectiveness. In the present study, instructional supervision is viewed not merely as classroom monitoring but as a supportive and developmental process. It includes the use of assessment results, classroom observation, feedback, moral support, recognition, and guidance to help teachers improve instruction. This is consistent with the view that purposeful supervision can strengthen teacher practice and encourage instructional innovation. Recent literature further supports this claim, showing that coaching and feedback can improve instructional quality and student achievement (Kraft et al., 2018).

Related literature suggests that instructional supervision becomes more effective when it is collaborative, constructive, and focused on teacher growth. Blasé and Blasé (1999) found that principals who engage in collaborative instructional supervision positively affect teacher development. Their study emphasized that reflective dialogue, constructive feedback, and encouragement from supervisors motivate teachers to explore new strategies and improve instructional delivery. These supervisory practices help build a school culture where teachers feel safe to experiment, reflect, and innovate. Okendu (2012) also emphasized that instructional supervision can improve teaching practices even in low-resource environments. The study showed that regular classroom monitoring, professional support, and feedback mechanisms contribute to better instructional performance despite material limitations. This insight is relevant to the present study because Simandagit Elementary School operates in a context where limited instructional materials, time constraints, and competing administrative priorities affect the implementation of pedagogical innovation. Recent research strengthens these earlier findings. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that effective teacher professional development is sustained, collaborative, practice-based, and supported by coaching. Similarly, Hitt and Tucker (2016) found that school leadership influences student achievement through practices that build teacher capacity, improve instructional conditions, and create a focused learning environment. Leithwood et al. (2020) further affirmed that successful school leadership affects student learning indirectly by shaping teacher motivation, working conditions, and instructional quality.

At the local level, this study is situated in Simandagit Elementary School in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, a public elementary school located in a geographically disadvantaged setting. In such contexts, the school head's instructional supervision is crucial because teachers may encounter limited access to instructional materials, technology, professional development opportunities, and consistent technical assistance. These conditions make school-based supervision an important mechanism for sustaining teacher motivation and encouraging innovation. At the national level, the study is relevant to the continuing effort to improve the quality of basic education in the Philippines. School heads are expected to serve not only as administrators but also as instructional leaders who guide teachers toward improved classroom practice. This aligns with the broader goals of educational leadership, teacher professional development, and quality assurance in basic education. At the global level, the study contributes to the continuing discourse on school leadership, teacher development, and inclusive quality education. The need for effective instructional supervision is especially important in schools serving remote, marginalized, or under-resourced communities, where leadership support can help reduce instructional gaps and promote more equitable learning opportunities.

This study is anchored on Instructional Leadership Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. Instructional Leadership Theory (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) emphasizes the principal's role in managing and improving instruction. It identifies key leadership functions such as defining school goals, supervising teaching, and promoting an academic learning climate. In this framework, the school head's direct involvement in classroom supervision is essential in guiding teachers toward improved and innovative instructional practices. The study is also supported by Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985), which explains how leaders inspire, motivate, and empower followers to exceed expectations and embrace change. A transformational school head encourages teachers to grow professionally, recognize their own capacity for improvement, and try new instructional approaches. Through encouragement, recognition, and supportive feedback, the school head can create a positive professional environment where pedagogical innovation becomes possible. Zepeda (2012) also provides a practical basis for understanding instructional supervision as a developmental process that uses observation, reflection, feedback, and professional dialogue to improve teaching. Together, these perspectives explain how effective supervision can influence teacher confidence, instructional experimentation, and sustained pedagogical improvement.

Although instructional supervision has been widely discussed in educational leadership literature, there remains a need for more context-specific studies that examine how school head supervision influences pedagogical innovation in small, remote, and resource-constrained public schools. Much of the existing literature focuses on broader school systems or more accessible educational contexts. Less attention has been given to the lived experiences of school heads and teachers in geographically disadvantaged schools where instructional innovation must occur despite limited materials, time, technology, and professional development opportunities. This study addresses that gap by exploring the experiences of the school principal and a classroom teacher at Simandagit Elementary School. Specifically, it examines how instructional supervision is practiced, how teachers perceive its influence on their pedagogical approaches, and what contextual or leadership factors support or hinder innovation. The study is significant because it highlights how supportive and data-informed supervision can still promote instructional improvement even when school resources are limited.

This study aligns most strongly with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it focuses on improving instructional quality, teacher support, and learning conditions in a public elementary school. By examining how school head supervision influences pedagogical innovation, the study supports efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, particularly for learners in geographically disadvantaged communities. The study also relates to SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities because it draws attention to the educational realities of a school in a resource-constrained setting. Strengthening instructional supervision in such contexts can help reduce disparities in access to quality teaching and

learning. In addition, the study supports SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals because sustaining pedagogical innovation requires collaboration among school heads, teachers, education officials, parents, and community stakeholders.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by emphasizing that quality teaching can be strengthened through consistent supervision, constructive feedback, teacher support, and leadership commitment. It shows that instructional supervision is not only an administrative requirement but also a mechanism for sustaining teacher development and improving classroom practice. The study also contributes to institutional sustainability because it highlights the need for school systems that support instructional leaders through time allocation, resource provision, professional development, and reduced administrative overload. When school heads are given adequate support, they are better able to provide meaningful supervision that improves teaching and learning. Furthermore, the study contributes to community sustainability because schools in remote areas serve as important institutions for long-term human development. Improving instructional supervision in such schools can help strengthen learner outcomes, teacher motivation, and community trust in public education. In this way, the study offers insights not only for school leadership but also for broader concerns in educational equity, governance, and sustainable development.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of the school head and teacher regarding instructional supervision and its influence on pedagogical innovation. The design was appropriate because the study sought to understand how participants described their experiences, perceptions, and practices in relation to instructional supervision, teacher support, and innovation in teaching.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Simandagit Elementary School in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi. The school was selected because it represents a public elementary school situated in a geographically disadvantaged area where instructional supervision, teacher support, and pedagogical innovation are shaped by contextual realities such as limited resources, administrative demands, and school-community conditions.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participants of the study were the school principal and one classroom teacher of Simandagit Elementary School. The school principal provided insights on instructional supervision practices, leadership approaches, instructional challenges, and school-related factors affecting supervision. The classroom teacher provided perspectives on how the school head's supervision influenced teaching practices, confidence in using new approaches, and perceived support for instructional improvement.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants of the study. The school principal and one classroom teacher were chosen because they could provide direct and relevant experiences related to instructional supervision and pedagogical innovation. Their participation allowed the study to capture both the supervisory perspective of the school head and the instructional perspective of the teacher.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used semi-structured interview guide questions as the primary research instrument. The questions were designed to gather in-depth responses on the school head's instructional supervision approaches, ways of addressing instructional challenges, contribution of supervision to teaching innovation, and school or community factors that support or hinder supervision. For the teacher, the questions focused on perceptions of the school head's supervision, needed instructional support, confidence in trying new teaching approaches after receiving feedback, and school-related factors that affect pedagogical innovation.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the school principal and one classroom teacher. The interviews focused on instructional supervision practices, teaching innovations, support mechanisms, and challenges encountered in the school context. The interviews were conducted with the consent of the participants and were transcribed for analysis. The process allowed the researcher to obtain detailed descriptions of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the influence of instructional supervision on pedagogical innovation.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher familiarized herself with the interview data, coded relevant responses, and identified recurring patterns and themes. The analysis generated major themes such as evidence-based

supervision practices, emotional and professional support, recognition and motivation, time constraints, competing priorities, and limited resources. These themes were used to explain how instructional supervision influenced pedagogical innovation in the school context.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the conduct of the study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality was maintained, and the information gathered from the interviews was used solely for research purposes. The researcher ensured that the participants were treated with respect and that their responses were handled responsibly during transcription, analysis, and reporting.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Instructional Supervision Practices and Their Influence on Pedagogical Innovation

3.1.1 Evidence-Based Supervision Practices

The findings showed that the school head used student performance data and classroom observations to guide instructional decisions and provide feedback to the teacher. Both participants emphasized that assessment results and observation findings helped identify areas for improvement and supported the development of more responsive teaching strategies. This result suggests that data-informed supervision strengthens instructional decision-making and helps teachers improve their pedagogical approaches. The finding is consistent with Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership model, which emphasizes the role of the school head in supervising instruction, monitoring classroom practices, and promoting an academic learning climate. This is also supported by Hitt and Tucker (2016), who emphasized that effective school leaders influence student achievement through practices that develop people, improve instructional programs, and shape positive organizational conditions. Similarly, He et al. (2024) found that school principals' instructional leadership significantly predicted teachers' professional development, confirming the importance of supervision, curriculum coordination, and professional learning opportunities in improving teacher growth and instructional practice.

3.1.2 Emotional and Professional Support

The teacher reported that the school head's consistent presence, moral support, and constructive feedback created a positive environment for instructional improvement. This support helped the teacher feel encouraged, empowered, and more open to trying new teaching approaches. This finding indicates that pedagogical innovation is more likely to occur when teachers feel supported rather than merely monitored. The result aligns with Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes motivation, inspiration, and support as important leadership practices that encourage followers to embrace change and exceed expectations (Bass, 1985). Recent studies further support this interpretation. Liu et al. (2021) found that instructional and distributed leadership were associated with teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction through supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. Đuranović et al. (2024) also found that principal support contributed to teacher self-efficacy and collective teacher efficacy. These findings reinforce the idea that emotional and professional support from school heads can increase teacher confidence, strengthen professional commitment, and encourage openness to pedagogical change.

3.1.3 Recognition and Motivation

The findings revealed that recognition of teacher efforts served as an important motivational factor. The teacher shared that being acknowledged, even through informal praise, helped boost morale and encouraged continuous improvement in classroom practice. This result shows that recognition can strengthen teacher motivation and sustain innovative behavior. When school heads acknowledge teachers' efforts, they reinforce positive instructional practices and encourage teachers to continue improving. This supports the idea that transformational leadership contributes to professional growth by inspiring teachers and affirming their capacity to contribute meaningfully to school improvement (Bass, 1985). Leithwood et al. (2020) similarly emphasized that successful school leadership improves learning indirectly by shaping teacher motivation, working conditions, and professional capacity. Thus, recognition is not merely a personal gesture but a leadership strategy that can help sustain teacher engagement and willingness to innovate.

3.2 Challenges Affecting Instructional Supervision and Innovation

3.2.1 Time Constraints

The findings showed that limited time affected the school head's ability to conduct regular classroom visits and provide consistent follow-up coaching. The principal acknowledged that administrative duties reduced opportunities for sustained instructional supervision. This finding suggests that even when school heads value instructional supervision, time limitations can weaken its implementation. The result highlights the need to balance administrative responsibilities with instructional leadership functions. Without sufficient time for observation, feedback, and follow-up, the impact of supervision on pedagogical innovation may be reduced. Kraft et al. (2018) emphasized that coaching can improve instruction and achievement, but its effectiveness depends on focused, sustained, and structured support. In this study, time

constraints limited the school head's ability to provide the continuity needed for supervision to fully influence teacher innovation.

3.2.2 Competing Administrative Priorities

The school head identified multiple responsibilities, including paperwork, reporting, and community involvement, as barriers to sustained instructional supervision. These competing priorities sometimes delayed feedback and limited opportunities for timely instructional support. This result indicates that instructional supervision is affected not only by leadership intention but also by workload and institutional demands. When school heads are burdened with administrative tasks, their capacity to provide focused instructional guidance becomes limited. This condition may reduce the consistency of supervision and hinder the development of innovative teaching practices. Hitt and Tucker (2016) emphasized that effective leadership requires attention to both instructional improvement and organizational conditions. Therefore, strengthening instructional supervision requires not only committed school heads but also institutional systems that allow leaders to prioritize teaching and learning.

3.2.3 Limited Resources

Both participants recognized the lack of teaching materials, technological tools, and training opportunities as major challenges to pedagogical innovation. Although leadership support was present, the limited availability of instructional resources restricted the teacher's ability to fully implement new teaching strategies. This finding affirms that instructional supervision alone may not be sufficient when material and professional development resources are inadequate. The result echoes earlier findings that effective supervision can contribute to improved teaching practices even in low-resource environments, but resource limitations remain a significant barrier to instructional improvement (Okendu, 2012). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that effective professional development should be sustained, collaborative, job-embedded, and supported by coaching and expert assistance. Kim and Lee (2020) also found that principal instructional leadership influenced teachers' participation in professional development activities such as mentoring, peer observation, and coaching. These findings suggest that schools in resource-constrained settings need both leadership support and systematic professional learning opportunities to sustain pedagogical innovation.

3.3 Overall Relationship Between Instructional Supervision and Pedagogical Innovation

Overall, the findings showed that instructional supervision positively influenced pedagogical innovation when it was grounded in evidence-based practices, constructive feedback, moral support, and recognition. The teacher became more confident in trying new instructional approaches when supervision was supportive, developmental, and responsive to classroom needs. These results suggest that school head supervision can serve as a catalyst for pedagogical change, especially when supervision is practiced as a collaborative and supportive process. The findings support Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) view of instructional leadership and Bass's (1985) view of transformational leadership by showing that supervision, motivation, and support can encourage teachers to improve instruction. Blasé and Blasé (1999) similarly emphasized that collaborative supervision, reflective dialogue, and constructive feedback support teacher development. Recent research strengthens this claim, as O'Shea (2021) found that distributed leadership had a positive effect on teachers' use of innovative teaching practices, while Liu et al. (2021) showed that leadership practices can improve teacher self-efficacy and satisfaction through supportive culture and collaboration. However, the findings also show that the effectiveness of supervision depends on the availability of time, institutional support, and adequate resources.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

This study concluded that instructional supervision plays a meaningful role in promoting pedagogical innovation, particularly when it is implemented as a supportive, developmental, and data-driven leadership practice. The findings revealed that the school head's use of student performance data, classroom observation, constructive feedback, moral support, and recognition of teacher efforts encouraged the teacher to reflect on instructional practices and become more open to trying innovative teaching approaches. These supervisory practices helped create a positive professional environment where the teacher felt guided, motivated, and supported in improving classroom instruction. However, the study also found that the full potential of instructional supervision was limited by time constraints, competing administrative responsibilities, and inadequate instructional resources. These challenges indicate that while school head supervision can initiate and sustain pedagogical innovation, its effectiveness depends on the availability of institutional support, adequate materials, sufficient time for instructional monitoring, and opportunities for continuous teacher development. Overall, the study highlights that instructional supervision is not merely an administrative function but a leadership mechanism that can strengthen teaching quality, teacher confidence, and instructional improvement, especially in resource-constrained school settings.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that instructional supervision be strengthened as a regular, structured, and supportive process that prioritizes teacher growth and instructional improvement. School heads should be given sufficient time and institutional support to conduct classroom observations, provide timely feedback, and engage teachers in reflective

professional dialogue. Supervision should continue to use evidence from student performance, classroom practices, and teacher needs so that feedback becomes more relevant and responsive to actual instructional challenges. It is also recommended that teachers be provided with adequate instructional materials, technological tools, and training opportunities to help them implement innovative teaching strategies more effectively. Since recognition and moral support were found to motivate teachers, school heads should continue acknowledging teacher efforts and creating a school culture that values experimentation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Strengthening these support systems may help sustain pedagogical innovation, improve teacher confidence, and enhance the overall quality of instruction in resource-constrained schools such as Simandagit Elementary School.

This study was limited to the lived experiences of one school principal and one classroom teacher from Simandagit Elementary School in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi. Because the study used a qualitative phenomenological approach with a small number of participants, the findings are not intended for broad statistical generalization. Instead, the results provide context-specific insights into how instructional supervision influences pedagogical innovation within a resource-constrained educational setting. The study was also limited to interview-based data, which means that the findings depended on the experiences, perceptions, and reflections shared by the participants. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable understanding of the relationship between school head supervision and teacher innovation, particularly in schools where limited resources, time constraints, and administrative demands shape instructional leadership practices.

Compliance with ethical standards

Compliance with ethical standards was observed throughout the conduct of the study. Permission and ethical approval were secured from the concerned institution, and the participants voluntarily took part after being informed of the purpose, procedures, and use of the research. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality of the participants' identities and responses was maintained. The researcher acknowledges the cooperation and contributions of the school head and teacher of Simandagit Elementary School. The author declares no conflict of interest and assumes full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and copyright ownership of the research work.

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