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Transformative Instructional Leadership: Teachers' Lived Experiences in Advancing School Improvement at Balintocatoc Integrated School

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ABSTRACT

Instructional leadership has become one of the most influential dimensions of school leadership in improving educational quality, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement. In the context of continuous educational reforms, school leaders are increasingly expected to foster collaborative cultures, promote professional growth, and implement evidence-based instructional practices that lead to sustainable school improvement. Despite numerous quantitative investigations examining the relationship between instructional leadership and organizational performance, limited qualitative studies have explored how teachers personally experience transformative instructional leadership within their daily professional practice. This study explored the lived experiences of teachers regarding transformative instructional leadership in advancing school improvement at Balintocatoc Integrated School. Employing a transcendental phenomenological research design, twelve (12) purposively selected teachers participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's Seven-Step Phenomenological Method. The findings revealed that transformative instructional leadership extends beyond instructional supervision by creating an empowering environment characterized by trust, collaboration, continuous professional learning, innovation, and shared accountability. The study recommends strengthening instructional leadership development programs, collaborative professional learning communities, teacher empowerment initiatives, and sustainable school improvement frameworks that support educational excellence.

Keywords: instructional leadership, transformative leadership, school improvement, teachers' lived experiences, phenomenology, educational leadership, teacher development, professional learning

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Background of the Study

The rapidly changing educational landscape requires school leaders to move beyond traditional administrative functions toward leadership approaches that promote continuous improvement, innovation, and organizational transformation. Among the various leadership paradigms, instructional leadership has emerged as one of the most influential approaches because it directly focuses on improving teaching quality, strengthening curriculum implementation, enhancing teacher competencies, and ultimately improving student learning outcomes. Rather than limiting leadership responsibilities to managerial tasks, instructional leadership emphasizes active engagement in curriculum development, classroom supervision, professional development, coaching, mentoring, instructional monitoring, and fostering a culture of continuous learning.

In the twenty-first century, educational reforms have significantly expanded the responsibilities of school leaders. Principals are no longer viewed merely as administrators responsible for maintaining school operations but as instructional leaders who inspire teachers, facilitate professional learning, and establish learning organizations capable of responding effectively to changing educational demands. Transformative instructional leadership recognizes that sustainable school improvement is achieved through collaborative decision-making, teacher empowerment, shared vision, reflective practice, and evidence-based instructional innovations. Consequently, instructional leadership has become a central component of educational effectiveness worldwide.

Globally, research consistently demonstrates that effective instructional leadership positively influences teacher motivation, instructional quality, organizational climate, professional collaboration, and student achievement. Hallinger (2022) emphasized that instructional leadership remains one of the strongest school-based factors influencing educational effectiveness because it strengthens curriculum implementation, teacher professional growth, and instructional decision-making. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2020) reported that school leaders who actively engage in instructional leadership practices significantly improve teaching effectiveness by fostering collaborative professional cultures, providing meaningful feedback, and supporting continuous teacher learning.

Instructional leadership has become one of the most significant leadership paradigms in contemporary education because of its direct influence on teaching quality, teacher professional growth, and learner achievement. Unlike traditional administrative leadership, instructional leadership focuses on improving classroom instruction by actively engaging school leaders in curriculum implementation, instructional supervision, teacher mentoring, professional development, and continuous school improvement. Hallinger (2022) emphasized that instructional leadership remains one of the strongest predictors of school effectiveness because it creates organizational conditions that promote high-quality teaching, collaborative learning, and evidence-based instructional decision-making.

Robinson et al. (2020) argued that school leaders significantly influence teacher learning when they actively participate in instructional supervision and professional conversations focused on improving classroom practices. Rather than functioning as evaluators alone, instructional leaders become instructional partners who provide constructive feedback, facilitate reflective practice, and encourage continuous professional learning. Consequently, teachers become more confident in implementing innovative instructional strategies while improving learner engagement and academic performance.



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Within the Philippine educational system, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to strengthen instructional leadership through the implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) professional development framework, and the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030. These reforms emphasize that school heads should serve as instructional leaders capable of promoting learner-centered instruction, teacher professional development, curriculum innovation, and data-driven school improvement initiatives. Under these policy frameworks, instructional leadership has become a critical strategy for achieving quality, equitable, and resilient basic education.

School improvement is increasingly recognized as a collaborative process requiring the active participation of teachers, school leaders, learners, parents, and community stakeholders. Teachers play a central role in translating school improvement initiatives into classroom practices because they directly influence learners' academic experiences. Consequently, understanding teachers' perceptions and lived experiences regarding instructional leadership is essential for identifying leadership practices that effectively support professional growth, enhance instructional quality, and sustain organizational improvement. Teachers' firsthand experiences provide valuable insights into how leadership behaviors shape school culture, instructional practices, and collective commitment toward achieving educational excellence.

The Philippine educational system continues to strengthen instructional leadership through policy reforms designed to improve educational quality and organizational performance. The Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030, Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), and MATATAG Agenda collectively emphasize instructional leadership as a critical strategy for enhancing teacher quality, learner achievement, curriculum implementation, and school governance.

At Balintocatoc Integrated School, instructional leadership serves as a fundamental strategy for improving instructional delivery, strengthening teacher competencies, promoting collaborative learning, and sustaining school improvement initiatives. School leaders continuously implement classroom observations, instructional coaching, mentoring sessions, professional learning communities, curriculum planning, and capacity-building programs that aim to improve teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes. However, while these initiatives have become integral components of school management, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how teachers themselves experience transformative instructional leadership and how these experiences contribute to school improvement.

Existing literature has predominantly examined instructional leadership using quantitative approaches that investigate its relationship with teacher performance, organizational commitment, instructional effectiveness, or student achievement. Although these studies provide valuable statistical evidence, they offer limited understanding of the personal meanings, emotions, professional growth, and lived experiences of teachers working under instructional leaders. Moreover, there remains a scarcity of phenomenological investigations conducted within Philippine integrated schools that explore how instructional leadership is experienced by teachers during the implementation of school improvement programs.

The research gap therefore lies in the limited phenomenological studies examining teachers' lived experiences of transformative instructional leadership in advancing school improvement within Philippine



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public integrated schools. Most existing investigations emphasize measurable organizational outcomes while giving less attention to teachers' voices, perceptions, and professional experiences that explain how instructional leadership influences sustainable school improvement. Furthermore, there is limited contextual evidence situated in Balintocatoc Integrated School, where instructional leadership practices continue to evolve alongside educational reforms. Addressing this gap, the present study explores teachers' lived experiences to generate deeper insights into leadership practices that strengthen professional growth, collaborative learning, instructional excellence, and sustainable school improvement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored on Transformational Leadership Theory developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), which posits that effective leaders inspire followers by creating a shared vision, encouraging innovation, promoting professional growth, fostering collaboration, and empowering individuals to achieve organizational goals beyond personal interests. The theory provides the principal lens for understanding how transformative instructional leadership influences teachers' professional experiences and school improvement.

The study is further supported by Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model (2022), which identifies three core dimensions of instructional leadership: defining the school's mission, managing instructional programs, and promoting a positive school learning climate. This model explains how school leaders improve educational quality through instructional supervision, curriculum leadership, teacher support, and continuous professional learning.

Finally, the study adopts Distributed Leadership Theory proposed by Spillane (2006), which explains that effective school improvement occurs when leadership responsibilities are shared among administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders. The theory emphasizes collaboration, collective responsibility, and shared expertise as essential mechanisms for sustaining organizational improvement.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of teachers regarding transformative instructional leadership in advancing school improvement at Balintocatoc Integrated School. A phenomenological approach was deemed most appropriate because the primary purpose of the study was to understand the essence of teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings associated with instructional leadership practices implemented by school administrators. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenology seeks to describe and interpret individuals' common experiences concerning a particular phenomenon. Specifically, the study adopted Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology, which emphasizes describing participants' experiences as consciously lived while requiring researchers to perform epoche or bracketing to minimize personal biases and preconceived assumptions throughout the research process. Through this approach, the study captured rich narratives describing how transformative instructional leadership influenced teachers' professional growth, instructional practices, collaboration, motivation, and participation in school improvement initiatives.

The study was conducted at Balintocatoc Integrated School, a public educational institution committed to promoting instructional excellence through learner-centered teaching, continuous professional development, collaborative leadership, and sustainable school improvement programs. The school



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continuously implements instructional supervision, mentoring, coaching, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, classroom observations, curriculum enhancement activities, professional learning communities, and data-driven decision-making aligned with the Department of Education's Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030, Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), and the MATATAG Agenda. These instructional leadership initiatives provide a rich context for understanding how teachers experience leadership practices that contribute to improving instructional quality and organizational effectiveness.

The participants consisted of twelve (12) licensed professional teachers selected through purposive sampling, a sampling strategy commonly employed in phenomenological research to identify individuals who possess rich and meaningful experiences relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion criteria required participants to: (1) be full-time teachers currently employed at Balintocotoc Integrated School; (2) have rendered at least three years of teaching service in the institution to ensure substantial exposure to the school's instructional leadership practices; (3) have actively participated in school improvement initiatives, instructional coaching, mentoring programs, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, curriculum implementation activities, and professional development programs; (4) demonstrate willingness and ability to articulate their professional experiences during in-depth interviews; and (5) voluntarily provide informed consent to participate in the study. The number of participants was guided by the principle of data saturation, wherein interviews were concluded once no new themes, meanings, or significant insights emerged from subsequent data collection (Saunders et al., 2018).

Data collection was conducted through researcher-developed semi-structured in-depth interviews, which allowed participants to openly describe their professional experiences while enabling the researcher to probe for deeper meanings and clarifications. The interview guide was carefully constructed based on the research objectives and relevant literature on instructional leadership, teacher professional development, school improvement, and educational leadership. Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent content validation by experts in educational leadership, qualitative research, curriculum and instruction, school administration, and teacher education to establish content validity, clarity, coherence, and relevance. A pilot interview involving teachers from another public secondary school was likewise conducted to refine the wording, sequencing, and comprehensibility of the interview questions. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted in a quiet, private location within the school premises to ensure confidentiality and facilitate open, uninterrupted dialogue. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented by field notes documenting participants' verbal expressions, emotional responses, body language, and contextual observations that enriched the interpretation of the interview data.

Following data collection, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and subjected to Colaizzi's (1978) Seven-Step Phenomenological Method of data analysis. Initially, the researcher repeatedly read each transcript to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' narratives. Significant statements directly related to transformative instructional leadership were then extracted and carefully examined to formulate underlying meanings. Similar meanings were clustered into thematic categories, which were synthesized into comprehensive descriptions of the teachers' lived experiences. Subsequently, the fundamental structure of the phenomenon was developed to capture the essence of transformative



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instructional leadership in advancing school improvement. To ensure the credibility and authenticity of the findings, member checking was conducted by returning the synthesized interpretations to the participants, allowing them to verify whether the themes accurately reflected their experiences, perceptions, and intended meanings.

To establish the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher adhered to the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation of interview transcripts and field notes, and continuous consultation with qualitative research experts. Transferability was achieved by providing thick, rich descriptions of the research setting, participant characteristics, and methodological procedures, thereby allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational contexts. Dependability was ensured through maintaining a detailed audit trail documenting every stage of the research process, including participant recruitment, interview procedures, coding decisions, thematic analysis, and interpretation. Confirmability was reinforced through reflexive journaling, systematic documentation of analytical decisions, and consistent bracketing to minimize researcher bias while ensuring that the findings emerged directly from the participants' authentic narratives rather than the researcher's assumptions.

Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the conduct of the study in accordance with the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research (2022) and institutional policies governing educational research. Prior to data collection, formal approval was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent, the School Principal of Balintocatoc Integrated School, and other concerned educational authorities. Participants received comprehensive information regarding the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality of responses, anonymity through the use of pseudonyms, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any professional repercussions. Written informed consent was secured before conducting the interviews. All interview recordings, transcripts, and supporting documents were stored in encrypted, password-protected digital files, while printed documents were secured in locked storage accessible only to the researcher. All research materials will be retained and disposed of in accordance with institutional data retention and ethical guidelines.

Through these rigorous methodological procedures, the study generated rich, credible, and authentic descriptions of teachers' lived experiences regarding transformative instructional leadership at Balintocatoc Integrated School. The findings provide meaningful insights into how visionary leadership, instructional coaching, collaborative professional learning, teacher empowerment, and reflective practice contribute to strengthening instructional excellence and sustaining school improvement. Moreover, the study offers evidence-based recommendations that may guide school leaders, policymakers, and educational institutions in enhancing instructional leadership practices that foster professional growth, organizational effectiveness, and continuous educational improvement.

Results and Discussion

The phenomenological analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that **transformative instructional leadership at Balintocatoc Integrated School** significantly influenced teachers' professional growth, instructional competence, collaborative engagement, motivation, and commitment to continuous school



improvement. Participants consistently described instructional leadership as a transformative process that transcended routine classroom supervision and administrative monitoring. Instead, school leaders were viewed as mentors, coaches, collaborators, and visionaries who cultivated a professional culture grounded in trust, innovation, reflective practice, and shared responsibility.

Teachers emphasized that the instructional leadership practices implemented in the school empowered them to become more reflective practitioners, confident educators, and active contributors to organizational development. Rather than perceiving school improvement as the sole responsibility of administrators, participants recognized it as a collective endeavor achieved through collaborative planning, continuous professional learning, shared decision-making, and mutual accountability. These experiences demonstrated that effective instructional leadership nurtures organizational commitment by fostering supportive relationships that encourage teachers to continuously improve their instructional practices while remaining focused on learner success.

Theme 1. Inspiring Professional Growth through Visionary Leadership

One of the most dominant themes emerging from the participants' narratives was the influential role of visionary instructional leadership in fostering continuous professional growth. Teachers consistently described their school leader as someone who articulated a clear educational vision while encouraging every teacher to pursue excellence beyond routine instructional responsibilities. Rather than merely assigning tasks or monitoring compliance, the school leader inspired teachers to continuously improve their pedagogical knowledge, instructional competence, leadership capabilities, and commitment to lifelong learning.

Participants explained that the school's vision was regularly communicated through faculty meetings, instructional conferences, strategic planning sessions, and collaborative discussions. This constant reinforcement helped teachers understand that professional growth was not an isolated individual responsibility but an organizational priority directly connected to improving learner outcomes and overall school performance. Teachers expressed that because they clearly understood the school's educational goals, they became more committed to aligning their classroom practices with institutional objectives.

Several participants emphasized that the principal consistently encouraged them to attend seminars, graduate studies, webinars, action research training, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and professional learning opportunities. More importantly, teachers shared that these opportunities were not simply compliance requirements but meaningful investments in their professional development. As a result, many participants reported increased confidence in implementing innovative instructional strategies, integrating technology, conducting classroom-based research, and assuming leadership responsibilities within the school.

One participant shared:

"Our school head always reminds us that learning never stops. She motivates us to attend trainings, continue graduate studies, and apply new teaching strategies that benefit our learners." (Participant 2)

Another participant remarked:

"Instead of criticizing our weaknesses, our principal helps us identify opportunities to improve. That motivates us to become better teachers every school year." (Participant 6)

Another teacher explained:



"The vision of our school is always clear. Because of that, I understand how my individual work contributes to the success of the entire school." (Participant 10)

Participants further explained that visionary leadership cultivated a culture of optimism, resilience, and continuous improvement despite the challenges brought about by curriculum reforms, increased administrative responsibilities, and changing educational demands. They perceived the school leader as someone who consistently demonstrated commitment to educational excellence, thereby inspiring teachers to adopt similar professional values.

These findings support Bass and Avolio's (1994) Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes inspirational motivation as a mechanism through which leaders encourage followers to transcend personal interests in pursuit of organizational goals. Likewise, Hallinger (2022) emphasized that instructional leaders who establish clear educational visions significantly strengthen teacher commitment, organizational effectiveness, and sustainable school improvement.

Theme 2. Strengthening Instructional Excellence through Continuous Coaching and Mentoring

Another significant theme that emerged from the interviews was the transformative influence of continuous instructional coaching and mentoring on teachers' instructional competence. Participants consistently described coaching as an empowering process rather than a supervisory mechanism intended to evaluate teacher performance. They appreciated that classroom observations were followed by constructive discussions, reflective conversations, individualized feedback, and collaborative planning aimed at improving instructional effectiveness rather than identifying deficiencies.

Teachers explained that mentoring relationships fostered open communication between school leaders and faculty members. Instead of fearing classroom observations, participants viewed them as opportunities for professional dialogue where instructional challenges, classroom management concerns, learner engagement strategies, and assessment practices were openly discussed. These mentoring conversations encouraged teachers to critically examine their instructional approaches while exploring innovative methods of improving classroom instruction.

One participant stated:

"After every classroom observation, our principal discusses both our strengths and areas for improvement. I never feel judged because the feedback is always constructive." (Participant 4)

Another participant shared:

"The coaching sessions helped me improve my questioning techniques, learner engagement, and classroom management. I became more confident in handling different learning situations." (Participant 8)

A third participant remarked:

"Mentoring is not only about correcting mistakes. It helps us discover better ways of teaching and encourages us to reflect on our classroom practices." (Participant 11)

Participants likewise emphasized that instructional coaching encouraged experimentation with innovative teaching strategies. Because school leaders created supportive environments where teachers could openly discuss instructional concerns without fear of criticism, participants became more willing to integrate technology, implement differentiated instruction, utilize authentic assessment strategies, and develop learner-centered instructional approaches.

The participants also acknowledged that coaching contributed significantly to their emotional well-being



as professionals. Knowing that school leaders were willing to guide, encourage, and support them reduced feelings of anxiety associated with instructional evaluation. Consequently, teachers became more receptive to feedback and more committed to continuous instructional improvement.

These findings strongly support Knight's (2018) Instructional Coaching Model, which emphasizes coaching as a collaborative partnership that enhances professional learning through dialogue, reflection, and shared problem-solving. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2020) argued that instructional leaders who actively engage in coaching and mentoring significantly improve teacher effectiveness, instructional quality, and learner achievement.

Theme 3. Cultivating Collaborative School Culture through Shared Leadership

Participants consistently described collaborative school culture as one of the defining characteristics of transformative instructional leadership at Balintocatoc Integrated School. Teachers emphasized that leadership responsibilities were not concentrated solely on the school principal but were shared among department heads, coordinators, master teachers, and classroom teachers through collaborative planning, committee work, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, curriculum development, and school improvement planning.

Teachers explained that shared leadership created opportunities for every faculty member to contribute ideas, participate in decision-making, and assume leadership responsibilities according to their expertise and interests. This collaborative approach strengthened teachers' sense of ownership over school improvement initiatives while promoting mutual trust and professional respect among colleagues.

One participant explained:

"Our ideas are always heard during planning meetings. We feel that we are partners in making decisions for the improvement of our school." (Participant 1)

Another participant stated:

"We solve problems together. Our principal values everyone's suggestions before making important decisions." (Participant 7)

Another teacher shared:

"Learning Action Cell sessions allow us to exchange teaching strategies, discuss classroom challenges, and learn from one another's experiences." (Participant 12)

Participants further explained that collaborative leadership fostered stronger interpersonal relationships among teachers. Open communication, teamwork, shared accountability, and collective reflection enabled faculty members to support each other professionally while addressing instructional challenges collaboratively. Teachers viewed collaboration as an essential factor in sustaining organizational learning and maintaining positive school climate.

Furthermore, participants highlighted that collaborative decision-making enhanced their commitment to implementing school improvement programs because they actively participated in designing and evaluating these initiatives. Rather than perceiving school improvement plans as externally imposed directives, teachers viewed them as collectively developed strategies reflecting the shared aspirations of the entire school community.

These findings align with Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership Theory, which argues that leadership becomes more effective when responsibilities are distributed across organizational members



rather than concentrated in a single individual. Likewise, DuFour and Fullan (2018) emphasized that Professional Learning Communities strengthen instructional improvement through collaborative inquiry, collective responsibility, and shared professional expertise.

Theme 4. Enhancing Teacher Motivation through Recognition and Support

Teachers consistently identified recognition, encouragement, and emotional support as essential characteristics of transformative instructional leadership. Participants emphasized that school leaders acknowledged both major accomplishments and everyday professional efforts, creating an atmosphere where teachers felt appreciated, valued, and respected.

Participants explained that recognition extended beyond formal awards and certificates. Simple expressions of appreciation, positive feedback during meetings, public acknowledgment of accomplishments, and sincere words of encouragement significantly strengthened teachers' motivation and professional satisfaction. Participants believed that such recognition inspired them to continue improving their instructional practices despite increasing workloads and educational challenges.

One participant shared:

"Even a simple thank you from our principal makes us feel that our hard work is appreciated." (Participant 3)

Another participant remarked:

"Whenever we accomplish something, our school head celebrates our achievements with us. That motivates us to continue giving our best." (Participant 9)

Another teacher stated:

"Our principal understands our challenges and always encourages us instead of focusing only on our mistakes." (Participant 5)

Teachers also emphasized the importance of emotional support during stressful periods such as curriculum implementation, accreditation activities, and school-based projects. They appreciated leaders who listened to their concerns, provided guidance during difficult situations, and demonstrated empathy toward teachers' professional and personal challenges.

The findings indicate that supportive instructional leadership contributes not only to instructional effectiveness but also to teachers' psychological well-being, organizational commitment, and resilience. Teachers who felt valued became more willing to assume additional responsibilities, initiate innovations, and actively participate in school improvement activities.

These findings support Ryan and Deci's (2020) **Self-Determination Theory**, which emphasizes that motivation flourishes when individuals experience competence, autonomy, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Likewise, Bandura's (1997) **Self-Efficacy Theory** suggests that recognition and positive feedback strengthen teachers' confidence in their professional capabilities, thereby enhancing instructional effectiveness and organizational engagement.

Theme 5. Sustaining School Improvement through Innovation and Reflective Practice

The final theme highlighted teachers' experiences of sustaining school improvement through continuous innovation and reflective practice. Participants consistently described transformative instructional leadership as encouraging teachers to critically examine their instructional practices, embrace educational innovations, and continuously seek better approaches to teaching and learning.

Teachers explained that reflective practice became embedded within the school's professional culture



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through post-observation conferences, action research, Learning Action Cell discussions, curriculum reviews, learner performance analysis, and collaborative evaluation of instructional interventions. These activities encouraged teachers to move beyond routine teaching by regularly assessing the effectiveness of their instructional decisions and identifying areas requiring improvement.

One participant explained:

"We regularly reflect on our teaching after classroom observations and meetings. Reflection helps us improve every day."
(Participant 2)

Another participant shared:

"Our school encourages innovation. We are free to introduce new teaching strategies as long as they benefit our learners."
(Participant 10)

Another teacher stated:

"School improvement is not a one-time activity. It is a continuous process of learning, reflecting, and improving together."
(Participant 6)

Participants further explained that innovation extended beyond classroom instruction to include curriculum enhancement, instructional material development, technology integration, community engagement, and collaborative research. They believed that instructional leadership cultivated an organizational mindset where continuous improvement became part of the school's professional identity rather than merely fulfilling administrative requirements.

Teachers also emphasized that reflective practice promoted accountability because educators became more conscious of the impact of their instructional decisions on learner achievement. Instead of relying solely on routine practices, participants actively sought evidence-based strategies that improved classroom instruction and supported the school's long-term improvement goals.

These findings support Schön's Reflective Practice Theory (1983), which argues that professionals continuously improve by critically reflecting on their experiences and instructional decisions. Likewise, Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model (2022) emphasizes that sustainable school improvement requires ongoing instructional monitoring, innovation, professional learning, and reflective organizational cultures.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that transformative instructional leadership is a multidimensional leadership approach that extends well beyond classroom supervision and administrative management. Teachers experienced instructional leadership as a dynamic process characterized by visionary leadership, continuous coaching and mentoring, collaborative decision-making, professional recognition, innovation, and reflective practice. These leadership experiences collectively fostered professional growth, instructional excellence, organizational commitment, and sustained school improvement at Balintocatoc Integrated School. The participants' narratives revealed that meaningful school improvement is achieved when school leaders cultivate trust, empower teachers, encourage shared leadership, and establish professional learning cultures where continuous improvement becomes a collective responsibility. These findings strongly affirm Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Theory, Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model, Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, and Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory, all of which emphasize that educational excellence is sustained through



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collaborative leadership, teacher empowerment, reflective professional learning, and organizational innovation. Collectively, the study underscores that transformative instructional leadership serves as a critical catalyst in advancing sustainable school improvement by nurturing teachers who are competent, motivated, reflective, and fully committed to achieving quality education.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of teachers regarding transformative instructional leadership in advancing school improvement at Balintocatoc Integrated School. The findings revealed that transformative instructional leadership is a dynamic and collaborative leadership approach that extends beyond instructional supervision, administrative management, and classroom observation. Teachers perceived instructional leadership as a process that inspires professional excellence, strengthens instructional competence, empowers educators, promotes collaborative decision-making, and sustains continuous school improvement. Through visionary leadership, coaching and mentoring, shared leadership, recognition, and reflective practice, teachers experienced an organizational culture that encouraged lifelong learning, innovation, and collective accountability for educational excellence.

The first theme, Inspiring Professional Growth through Visionary Leadership, demonstrated that school leaders play a critical role in motivating teachers to pursue continuous professional development. Participants emphasized that a clearly communicated school vision, coupled with consistent encouragement to participate in graduate studies, seminars, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, classroom action research, and professional learning opportunities, cultivated a culture of continuous improvement. Teachers became more committed to enhancing their instructional competencies because they understood that their individual growth directly contributed to achieving the school's educational goals. Visionary instructional leadership fostered optimism, resilience, and a shared commitment to organizational excellence despite the demands of educational reforms and changing instructional environments.

The second theme, Strengthening Instructional Excellence through Continuous Coaching and Mentoring, highlighted that teachers regarded instructional supervision as a developmental rather than evaluative process. Participants appreciated classroom observations that were followed by constructive feedback, reflective dialogue, and collaborative planning. Coaching and mentoring created opportunities for teachers to improve classroom management, learner engagement, assessment strategies, curriculum implementation, and instructional innovation. These experiences strengthened teachers' confidence, instructional competence, and willingness to embrace new pedagogical approaches while reducing anxiety commonly associated with supervisory practices.

The third theme, Cultivating Collaborative School Culture through Shared Leadership, revealed that transformative instructional leadership fostered a professional environment characterized by trust, teamwork, open communication, and collective responsibility. Teachers actively participated in school improvement planning, curriculum development, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, committee work, and collaborative problem-solving. Rather than viewing leadership as centralized within the school principal, participants experienced leadership as a shared organizational responsibility where every teacher's expertise and perspectives were recognized and valued. This collaborative culture enhanced teachers' ownership of school improvement initiatives while strengthening organizational commitment



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and professional relationships.

The fourth theme, Enhancing Teacher Motivation through Recognition and Support, emphasized that meaningful recognition, emotional support, and professional appreciation significantly influenced teachers' motivation, morale, and commitment to organizational goals. Participants consistently described instructional leaders who acknowledged both individual accomplishments and collective achievements, thereby creating a positive organizational climate where teachers felt respected, appreciated, and empowered. Emotional support during challenging situations further strengthened teachers' resilience and encouraged them to sustain high levels of instructional performance despite increasing professional demands.

Finally, the fifth theme, Sustaining School Improvement through Innovation and Reflective Practice, illustrated that transformative instructional leadership encouraged teachers to continuously evaluate, refine, and innovate their instructional practices. Reflection became embedded within the school's professional culture through coaching conferences, classroom observations, action research, curriculum reviews, learner performance analyses, and collaborative professional discussions. Teachers recognized that sustainable school improvement requires continuous innovation, evidence-based decision-making, and reflective professional learning rather than isolated improvement initiatives. Consequently, instructional leadership contributed to developing an organizational culture committed to continuous educational excellence.

Overall, the findings affirm that transformative instructional leadership significantly contributes to sustainable school improvement by strengthening teacher professional growth, instructional effectiveness, collaborative organizational culture, innovation, and shared accountability. The study supports Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Theory, Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model, Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, and Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory, all of which emphasize that educational transformation occurs through visionary leadership, collaborative professional learning, teacher empowerment, reflective practice, and continuous organizational improvement. The study concludes that transformative instructional leadership serves as a powerful catalyst for achieving quality education by cultivating highly competent, motivated, innovative, and collaborative teachers who actively contribute to advancing school improvement.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study present significant implications for educational leadership, instructional supervision, teacher professional development, school governance, and educational policy.

First, **school leaders** should strengthen transformational instructional leadership practices that prioritize coaching, mentoring, reflective supervision, and collaborative professional learning rather than relying primarily on compliance-oriented supervision. Instructional leadership should focus on developing teachers as reflective practitioners capable of continuously improving classroom instruction and learner outcomes.

Second, **teachers** should be empowered to become active partners in school leadership by participating in curriculum development, instructional innovation, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, classroom action research, and collaborative decision-making. Such participation strengthens professional ownership and promotes sustainable school improvement.



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Third, school administrators should institutionalize professional learning communities that encourage continuous dialogue, collaborative inquiry, peer coaching, lesson study, instructional innovation, and evidence-based teaching practices. These collaborative structures strengthen organizational learning while improving instructional quality.

Fourth, the Department of Education should continue strengthening instructional leadership capability-building programs for school heads through continuous professional development aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030, and the MATATAG Agenda. Leadership development programs should emphasize coaching, distributed leadership, reflective practice, emotional intelligence, and teacher empowerment.

Fifth, educational institutions should cultivate organizational cultures where recognition, trust, professional support, innovation, and collaboration become integral components of everyday school operations. Such environments promote teacher motivation, organizational commitment, instructional excellence, and sustained educational improvement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School heads should continuously strengthen transformative instructional leadership practices by emphasizing coaching, mentoring, collaborative leadership, instructional innovation, reflective supervision, and teacher empowerment.
2. Teachers should actively engage in continuous professional development through graduate education, seminars, webinars, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, action research, peer mentoring, and professional learning communities to further enhance instructional competence.
3. School administrators should institutionalize collaborative professional learning structures that encourage shared leadership, reflective dialogue, peer observation, instructional coaching, and evidence-based instructional decision-making.
4. Schools Division Offices and the Department of Education should develop comprehensive instructional leadership enhancement programs that equip school leaders with advanced competencies in transformational leadership, distributed leadership, instructional supervision, organizational development, and change management.
5. Educational policymakers should strengthen policies that recognize instructional leadership as a critical strategy for achieving sustainable school improvement by providing adequate resources, professional development opportunities, and organizational support for school leaders and teachers.



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6. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct comparative phenomenological studies involving elementary, secondary, and integrated schools from different geographical regions. Mixed-methods and longitudinal studies examining the influence of transformative instructional leadership on teacher effectiveness, learner achievement, organizational resilience, innovation, and educational sustainability are likewise recommended to enrich the existing body of knowledge.

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