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Leading Beyond Compliance: Teachers' Lived Experiences of the Instructional Leadership of an Education Program Supervisor and Its Influence on Professional Growth City

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ABSTRACT

The role of Education Program Supervisors (EPSs) has evolved from ensuring policy compliance to fostering instructional excellence, professional collaboration, and continuous teacher development. Despite the growing emphasis on instructional leadership within educational systems, limited qualitative studies have explored how teachers experience the leadership practices of Education Program Supervisors and how these practices influence their professional growth, particularly in the Philippine basic education context. This study explored the lived experiences of teachers regarding the instructional leadership of an Education Program Supervisor and its influence on their professional growth in the Schools Division Office of Santiago City. Employing a transcendental phenomenological research design, the study involved twelve purposively selected public school teachers who had extensive engagement with instructional supervision, technical assistance, curriculum implementation, and professional development initiatives facilitated by an Education Program Supervisor. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Colaizzi's Seven-Step Phenomenological Method. The findings revealed that teachers perceived instructional leadership as a transformative process that extends beyond monitoring compliance, emphasizing mentoring, instructional support, collaborative learning, reflective practice, and continuous professional development. Teachers attributed improvements in instructional competence, curriculum implementation, leadership capacity, confidence, and professional identity to the supportive and developmental leadership demonstrated by the Education Program Supervisor. The study proposes an Instructional Supervisory Leadership Enhancement Framework (ISLEF) to strengthen supervisory practices that promote teacher excellence and sustainable professional growth. The findings contribute to the growing body of educational leadership literature by providing contextual insights into instructional supervision within Philippine basic education and offering practical implications for educational leaders, policymakers, and future researchers. Recent evidence likewise underscores that instructional leadership functions particularly providing professional learning opportunities, curriculum coordination, and instructional supervision are strong predictors of teachers' professional development.

Keywords: instructional leadership, education program supervisor, professional growth, teachers' lived experiences, transcendental phenomenology, instructional supervision, Schools Division Office of Santiago City

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Background of the Study

Educational systems worldwide continue to experience rapid transformation driven by curriculum reforms, technological advancements, globalization, and the increasing demand for quality learning outcomes. These developments have significantly expanded the responsibilities of educational leaders, requiring them not only to ensure policy implementation but also to cultivate professional learning environments that continuously improve teacher competence and instructional quality. Within this evolving educational landscape, instructional leadership has emerged as one of the most influential dimensions of educational leadership because it directly shapes teaching practices, teacher learning, and student achievement. Unlike traditional administrative leadership, instructional leadership emphasizes improving classroom instruction through coaching, mentoring, curriculum support, professional learning, and evidence-based decision-making. Educational leaders are therefore expected to serve as facilitators of teacher growth rather than merely monitors of institutional compliance. Contemporary research consistently demonstrates that instructional leadership contributes significantly to teachers' professional development by strengthening instructional supervision, coordinating curriculum implementation, and expanding opportunities for continuous learning.

Professional growth among teachers has likewise become a central concern of educational reform across many countries. As educational expectations become increasingly complex, teachers are expected to develop competencies beyond classroom instruction, including curriculum innovation, reflective practice, educational research, technology integration, collaborative learning, leadership, and lifelong professional learning. Consequently, teacher professional growth is no longer viewed as participation in isolated seminars but as a sustained process of acquiring knowledge, refining pedagogical skills, strengthening professional identity, and adapting to emerging educational challenges. Effective instructional leadership provides the organizational conditions necessary for this growth by encouraging collaboration, reflective inquiry, mentoring, and continuous capacity building. Research indicates that when educational leaders provide structured coaching, professional learning opportunities, and constructive instructional supervision, teachers become more confident, innovative, and committed to instructional excellence.

Recent international studies emphasize that instructional leadership significantly contributes to teacher effectiveness, organizational learning, and school improvement. Hallinger (2022) argued that instructional leadership remains one of the strongest predictors of educational quality because instructional leaders actively coordinate curriculum implementation, monitor instructional practices, facilitate professional development, and cultivate collaborative school cultures. Similarly, Day et al. (2021) found that instructional leaders who establish supportive learning environments enhance teachers' professional motivation, instructional competence, and organizational commitment. These studies collectively emphasize that instructional leadership extends beyond classroom observation by fostering continuous teacher learning and educational innovation.

International research consistently demonstrates that supervisory leadership significantly influences instructional quality. Robinson et al. (2020) emphasized that educational leaders who provide sustained instructional support, coaching, and professional learning opportunities positively influence teacher competence and learner achievement. Likewise, instructional supervisors who prioritize developmental supervision rather than compliance-oriented monitoring encourage greater teacher autonomy,



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professional reflection, and instructional innovation.

Knight (2018) described instructional coaching as a partnership that empowers teachers to analyze instructional challenges, develop innovative teaching strategies, and improve classroom effectiveness through collaborative reflection. Teachers become active participants in professional learning rather than passive recipients of supervisory feedback.

Similarly, mentoring strengthens professional identity by providing emotional support, career guidance, instructional advice, and professional encouragement. Mentoring relationships promote confidence, resilience, instructional innovation, and organizational commitment among novice and experienced teachers alike.

The instructional leadership role has become particularly significant within basic education systems where curriculum implementation requires continuous technical guidance and instructional support. Educational supervisors have gradually shifted from performing inspection-oriented functions toward serving as instructional coaches who facilitate curriculum development, provide technical assistance, mentor teachers, analyze instructional data, and coordinate professional development initiatives. This transformation reflects international educational reforms that recognize leadership as a collaborative process centered on improving teaching and learning rather than enforcing administrative compliance alone. Studies have shown that instructional supervisory practices characterized by clinical supervision, mentoring, classroom observation, reflective feedback, and collaborative problem-solving significantly contribute to teachers' instructional competence and long-term professional development.

Within the Philippine educational system, instructional leadership has become increasingly emphasized through the implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) Transformation Framework, the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030, and the MATATAG Agenda. These policy frameworks collectively emphasize instructional quality, teacher professional development, curriculum responsiveness, and learner-centered educational leadership. They encourage educational leaders including Education Program Supervisors to provide sustained technical assistance, instructional coaching, mentoring, monitoring, and professional learning opportunities that improve teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes. The expanding responsibilities of Education Program Supervisors now include curriculum implementation, instructional supervision, capability-building, research promotion, quality assurance, and technical assistance, positioning them as key agents of educational improvement rather than solely compliance officers. Qualitative evidence from Philippine settings also highlights mentorship, reflective practice, collaboration, and support systems as central to meaningful professional development initiatives.

Within the Schools Division Office of Santiago City, Education Program Supervisors play an essential role in translating national educational policies into effective instructional practices across schools. They regularly conduct instructional monitoring, classroom observations, curriculum reviews, technical assistance, Learning Action Cell (LAC) facilitation, capability-building programs, and mentoring activities designed to improve teacher competence and instructional quality. Through these responsibilities, Education Program Supervisors influence teachers' instructional decisions, professional confidence, collaborative learning, and commitment to continuous improvement. However, while these supervisory



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responsibilities are formally institutionalized, teachers may experience instructional leadership in diverse ways depending on the quality of professional interactions, supervisory approaches, communication practices, and opportunities for collaborative learning. Understanding these lived experiences is essential for designing supervisory practices that are responsive to teachers' professional needs and contextual realities.

Although a substantial body of literature has examined instructional leadership, existing studies have predominantly employed quantitative and correlational research designs that measure relationships among leadership variables, teacher performance, and organizational outcomes. Recent Philippine studies have similarly focused on supervisory practices, instructional leadership behaviors, and teacher performance using survey methodologies. These investigations provide valuable statistical evidence but offer limited understanding of how teachers personally interpret, experience, and derive meaning from the instructional leadership practices of Education Program Supervisors. Moreover, qualitative studies specifically examining the lived experiences of teachers regarding Education Program Supervisors remain scarce, particularly within the context of the Schools Division Office of Santiago City.

This gap in the literature underscores the need for a phenomenological investigation that captures teachers' voices and lived experiences concerning instructional leadership beyond administrative compliance. Rather than focusing solely on observable supervisory practices or organizational outcomes, this study seeks to understand how teachers experience instructional leadership as a developmental process that shapes their professional competence, instructional practices, confidence, leadership capacity, and lifelong learning. By exploring these experiences, the study contributes a deeper contextual understanding of instructional supervision within Philippine basic education and provides evidence-based insights for strengthening supervisory leadership practices, teacher professional development programs, and educational leadership policies within the Schools Division Office of Santiago City and similar educational settings.

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of teachers regarding the instructional leadership of an Education Program Supervisor and its influence on their professional growth in the Schools Division Office of Santiago City. Specifically, the study aimed to uncover the meanings teachers assign to instructional supervision, technical assistance, mentoring, coaching, collaborative learning, and professional support provided by an Education Program Supervisor. Furthermore, the study sought to develop an evidence-based Instructional Supervisory Leadership Enhancement Framework (ISLEF) that may guide educational leaders, the Department of Education, and policymakers in strengthening instructional leadership practices that foster teacher excellence, continuous professional development, and sustainable school improvement.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach using transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of teachers regarding the instructional leadership of an Education Program Supervisor and its influence on their professional growth in the Schools Division Office of Santiago City.



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Transcendental phenomenology was selected because it seeks to understand the essence and meanings individuals attach to their lived experiences while allowing the researcher to set aside personal assumptions through epoche or bracketing (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design enabled the researcher to capture teachers' authentic perceptions of instructional leadership practices, including technical assistance, instructional coaching, mentoring, curriculum supervision, collaborative professional learning, and reflective supervision. The study was conducted within the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Santiago City, Department of Education Region II, where Education Program Supervisors play a significant role in curriculum implementation, instructional supervision, quality assurance, capability-building, and teacher professional development. The participants consisted of twelve (12) purposively selected public school teachers from elementary and secondary schools under the Schools Division Office who had at least three years of teaching experience and had directly experienced instructional supervision, technical assistance, mentoring, classroom observations, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and other professional development initiatives facilitated by an Education Program Supervisor. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants possessed rich and meaningful experiences relevant to the phenomenon under investigation, with data collection continuing until thematic saturation was achieved (Saunders et al., 2018). Data were gathered using a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions focusing on teachers' experiences with instructional leadership, technical assistance, coaching, mentoring, collaborative supervision, professional learning, and perceived professional growth. Prior to implementation, the interview guide underwent expert validation by specialists in educational leadership, qualitative research, and instructional supervision, while pilot testing was conducted among teachers outside the study participants to establish clarity and appropriateness of the questions. Before data collection, formal approval was secured from the Schools Division Office of Santiago City and school administrators, and informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the objectives, voluntary nature, confidentiality measures, and ethical considerations of the study. Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes were conducted in venues convenient to the participants. With their permission, interviews were audio-recorded, while field notes documented non-verbal cues, contextual observations, and reflective insights that enriched the verbal narratives. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and participants were given opportunities to verify the accuracy of their transcripts through member checking. The data were analyzed using Colaizzi's Seven-Step Phenomenological Method (Colaizzi, 1978), which involved repeatedly reading the transcripts, extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering meanings into categories, developing emergent themes, producing exhaustive descriptions of the phenomenon, and validating the findings with participants. This rigorous analytical procedure enabled the identification of the essential structures underlying teachers' lived experiences regarding the instructional leadership of an Education Program Supervisor. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher observed the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was established through prolonged engagement, in-depth interviews, member checking, and triangulation of interview transcripts with field notes. Transferability was achieved through thick descriptions of the research setting, participants, and instructional leadership experiences, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational contexts. Dependability was



strengthened by maintaining a comprehensive audit trail documenting every phase of the research process, while confirmability was ensured through reflexive journaling, participant validation, audit records, and continuous bracketing of researcher assumptions. Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the investigation. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected by assigning pseudonyms and participant codes instead of real names, while all audio recordings, interview transcripts, field notes, and electronic research files were securely stored in password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher. The study likewise complied with the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research (2022), ensuring respect for participants' dignity, autonomy, beneficence, confidentiality, and justice throughout the conduct of the research.

Results and Discussion

The phenomenological analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that teachers perceive the instructional leadership of an Education Program Supervisor (EPS) as a transformative force that extends far beyond ensuring compliance with Department of Education policies. Rather than viewing supervisory visits as routine monitoring activities, participants described the Education Program Supervisor as an instructional mentor, curriculum expert, coach, facilitator, and professional partner who continuously supports teachers in improving classroom instruction and advancing their professional competencies. The participants emphasized that effective instructional leadership is demonstrated through meaningful professional relationships, constructive technical assistance, collaborative problem-solving, and sustained capacity-building initiatives that address the realities of classroom teaching. They consistently explained that the influence of an Education Program Supervisor is most evident when supervisory practices empower teachers to become reflective practitioners, innovative educators, and lifelong learners rather than merely compliant implementers of educational policies.

Teachers also expressed that instructional leadership significantly influences not only their instructional competence but also their confidence, motivation, professional identity, leadership abilities, and commitment to educational excellence. Participants appreciated supervisors who invested time in mentoring teachers, facilitating collaborative learning opportunities, recognizing professional accomplishments, and providing practical solutions to instructional challenges. Instead of perceiving supervision as a fault-finding mechanism, teachers described it as a developmental process that enabled them to examine their instructional practices critically, strengthen pedagogical competencies, and continuously improve learner outcomes. Collectively, these lived experiences demonstrate that instructional leadership becomes most effective when it promotes trust, collaboration, reflective practice, professional empowerment, and continuous learning.

Theme 1. Inspiring Professional Growth through Visionary Instructional Leadership

The first and most dominant theme illustrates that teachers perceive the Education Program Supervisor as a visionary instructional leader whose guidance inspires continuous professional growth. Participants consistently described the supervisor as someone who communicates a clear educational vision centered on quality instruction, learner success, and professional excellence. Rather than merely ensuring



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compliance with curriculum standards and administrative requirements, the Education Program Supervisor inspired teachers to become reflective educators committed to lifelong learning and continuous instructional improvement.

Teachers explained that supervisory visits were not limited to checking lesson plans or monitoring documentation. Instead, these interactions became opportunities for professional conversations that challenged teachers to rethink instructional practices, adopt innovative pedagogies, pursue graduate education, conduct educational research, and participate actively in professional learning activities. Participants emphasized that visionary instructional leadership encouraged them to move beyond routine teaching by viewing themselves as educational leaders capable of influencing learner achievement and school improvement.

One participant shared:

“Whenever our Education Program Supervisor visits our school, the discussion is never just about reports or compliance. She always reminds us that every improvement we make in teaching directly changes the lives of our learners. That perspective motivates us to continuously improve ourselves.” (Participant 4)

Another participant narrated:

“She inspires us to pursue graduate studies, conduct action research, and attend professional development programs because she believes that teachers should continuously grow professionally.” (Participant 9)

Participant 11 similarly reflected:

“Our supervisor always tells us that learning never ends for teachers. Her encouragement motivates me to study new teaching strategies and become a better educator.”

Teachers further emphasized that visionary instructional leadership cultivated optimism during periods of educational reform, curriculum transitions, and increasing instructional demands. Rather than focusing on organizational limitations, the supervisor consistently encouraged teachers to view challenges as opportunities for innovation and professional growth. Such leadership practices strengthened teachers' commitment to instructional excellence while nurturing resilience, adaptability, and organizational engagement.

These findings strongly support Bass and Avolio's (1994) Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that transformational leaders inspire followers through vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and motivational influence. Similarly, Hallinger (2022) emphasized that instructional leaders improve educational quality by articulating clear instructional goals while fostering teacher commitment to continuous professional learning. Leithwood et al. (2020) further argued that visionary educational leadership strengthens teachers' intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment, and professional growth by cultivating a shared educational purpose. Within the Schools Division Office of Santiago City, the findings demonstrate that instructional leadership becomes transformative when Education Program Supervisors motivate teachers to pursue professional excellence beyond the minimum expectations of policy compliance.

Theme 2. Strengthening Instructional Competence through Technical Assistance and Coaching

The second theme highlights the significant contribution of technical assistance and instructional coaching to teachers' professional competence. Participants consistently described coaching sessions and



technical assistance provided by the Education Program Supervisor as among the most valuable professional learning experiences they had encountered. Rather than simply identifying deficiencies during supervisory visits, the supervisor provided practical instructional recommendations, modeled effective teaching strategies, facilitated reflective discussions, and collaboratively developed solutions responsive to classroom realities.

Teachers emphasized that coaching sessions enhanced their lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, differentiated instruction, curriculum integration, educational technology utilization, and classroom-based action research. The participants appreciated that coaching conversations focused on improvement rather than evaluation, making teachers feel supported rather than criticized.

Participant 2 explained:

“Every technical assistance visit becomes a learning session. Instead of pointing out mistakes, our supervisor demonstrates better strategies and explains why those approaches work for learners.”

Participant 6 stated:

“After every classroom observation, she discusses practical recommendations that we can immediately apply in our classrooms. Those conversations have significantly improved my teaching.”

Participant 8 added:

“She listens first before giving advice. That makes us comfortable sharing our classroom challenges because we know the purpose is improvement, not criticism.”

Several participants also emphasized that individualized coaching acknowledged differences in teachers' experiences, teaching styles, subject specializations, and professional needs. Beginning teachers particularly valued mentoring and instructional guidance, while experienced teachers appreciated opportunities to refine instructional innovations and conduct classroom action research.

Teachers further noted that technical assistance became increasingly meaningful because it was contextualized to their learners' needs rather than merely following standardized supervisory checklists. They explained that supervisors carefully examined classroom realities before recommending instructional improvements, resulting in more relevant and sustainable professional development.

These findings support Hallinger's (2022) Instructional Leadership Theory, which emphasizes instructional supervision, coaching, and curriculum support as central leadership responsibilities that directly improve teaching quality. Likewise, Knight (2018) argued that instructional coaching enhances teacher competence by facilitating reflective dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and classroom-focused professional learning. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) further demonstrated that job-embedded coaching significantly strengthens teachers' instructional effectiveness because professional learning becomes directly connected to authentic classroom experiences.

Theme 3. Empowering Teachers through Collaborative Supervision and Shared Professional Learning

Teachers consistently described collaborative supervision as one of the defining characteristics of effective instructional leadership. Rather than imposing top-down directives, the Education Program Supervisor actively engaged teachers in professional dialogue, collaborative curriculum planning, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, lesson study, instructional innovation, and action research activities. Participants perceived collaboration as evidence that their professional expertise was respected and valued.



Many teachers explained that collaborative supervisory practices strengthened professional ownership because teachers actively participated in identifying instructional challenges, developing intervention strategies, evaluating classroom practices, and implementing educational innovations. Through collaborative supervision, teachers became contributors to educational improvement rather than passive recipients of supervisory decisions.

Participant 5 shared:

"Our supervisor values our opinions. During meetings, she asks us to suggest solutions before giving recommendations. That makes us feel that our professional experiences matter."

Participant 10 stated:

"Learning Action Cell sessions became meaningful because our supervisor encourages us to share best practices instead of simply listening to lectures."

Participant 1 explained:

"We solve instructional problems together. Collaboration has become part of our professional culture because our supervisor believes everyone has valuable ideas."

Teachers further emphasized that collaborative supervision strengthened collegial relationships across schools by encouraging professional networking, peer mentoring, lesson sharing, collaborative research, and collective instructional reflection. These collaborative experiences enhanced communication skills, leadership competencies, problem-solving abilities, and professional confidence while reducing feelings of professional isolation.

The findings align closely with Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership Theory, which argues that leadership becomes more effective when responsibilities are shared among professionals rather than centralized within administrators. Similarly, DuFour and Fullan (2018) emphasized that collaborative professional learning communities significantly improve instructional quality because teachers collectively analyze instructional practices, exchange professional expertise, and develop innovative teaching strategies. The findings suggest that Education Program Supervisors contribute to sustainable school improvement by cultivating collaborative professional cultures where teachers become active participants in educational leadership.

Theme 4. Building Professional Confidence through Constructive Feedback and Recognition

The fourth theme revealed that **constructive feedback and professional recognition** served as powerful catalysts in strengthening teachers' confidence, instructional competence, and commitment to professional excellence. Participants consistently described the Education Program Supervisor as a leader who provided feedback that was developmental rather than judgmental. Instead of focusing solely on deficiencies identified during classroom observations, instructional monitoring, or technical assistance visits, the supervisor highlighted teachers' strengths while collaboratively identifying realistic strategies for improvement. Teachers perceived this balanced approach as respectful and empowering because it acknowledged their professional capabilities while encouraging continuous growth.

Participants emphasized that constructive feedback was delivered through reflective conversations that encouraged self-assessment, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving. Rather than prescribing immediate solutions, the Education Program Supervisor facilitated discussions that enabled teachers to



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analyze their own instructional practices, recognize areas needing enhancement, and formulate appropriate instructional interventions. This reflective supervisory approach increased teachers' confidence because they became active participants in improving their professional practice instead of passive recipients of supervisory recommendations.

One participant explained:

"Our Education Program Supervisor never makes us feel that classroom observations are examinations. Instead, every post-conference becomes an opportunity to reflect on what went well and what we can improve. She listens carefully before giving suggestions, making us feel respected as professionals." (Participant 3)

Another participant shared:

"Whenever I receive feedback from our supervisor, I don't feel discouraged because she always begins by recognizing my strengths. That motivates me to improve the areas that need further development." (Participant 7)

Participant 12 likewise reflected:

"Recognition from our supervisor means a lot because it shows that our efforts are appreciated. Even simple words of encouragement increase our confidence and inspire us to continue innovating in our classrooms."

Teachers also emphasized that professional recognition extended beyond formal awards and certificates. They valued supervisors who publicly acknowledged innovative teaching practices, successful instructional interventions, action research accomplishments, curriculum innovations, and collaborative contributions during division meetings, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, conferences, and capability-building programs. Such recognition reinforced teachers' professional identity by affirming that their work contributed meaningfully to educational improvement.

Several participants further explained that mentoring relationships established by the Education Program Supervisor strengthened their emotional resilience during periods of instructional difficulty, curriculum transitions, and increasing professional responsibilities. The supervisor provided not only technical guidance but also emotional encouragement, career advice, and continuous professional support. Beginning teachers particularly appreciated mentoring because it reduced anxiety associated with classroom management, curriculum implementation, and instructional decision-making, while experienced teachers valued professional consultations that challenged them to become instructional leaders and mentors themselves.

Teachers likewise described how positive supervisory relationships created psychologically safe learning environments where they could openly discuss instructional difficulties without fear of criticism or negative evaluation. This atmosphere encouraged experimentation with innovative teaching approaches, collaborative reflection, and continuous professional inquiry. Participants consistently reported that they became more willing to implement educational innovations because they trusted that their supervisor viewed mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than indicators of professional failure.

These findings strongly support Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which posits that verbal persuasion, constructive feedback, successful experiences, and social encouragement strengthen individuals' beliefs in their professional capabilities. Education Program Supervisors who consistently provide constructive feedback and meaningful recognition contribute significantly to enhancing teachers' confidence, instructional competence, resilience, and willingness to pursue continuous professional development. Similarly, Ryan and Deci's (2020) Self-Determination Theory explains that supportive



leadership fulfills teachers' psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, thereby increasing intrinsic motivation, professional engagement, and organizational commitment. Moreover, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that effective professional development depends not only on technical knowledge but also on supportive mentoring relationships that encourage teachers to reflect upon practice, embrace innovation, and sustain lifelong professional learning. The findings therefore demonstrate that recognition and constructive feedback are essential dimensions of instructional leadership because they cultivate confident educators who continuously strive for instructional excellence and educational innovation.

Theme 5. Sustaining Lifelong Professional Development through Reflective Leadership and Innovation

The fifth and final theme illustrates that teachers perceived the instructional leadership of the Education Program Supervisor as instrumental in cultivating a culture of lifelong professional learning, reflective practice, and instructional innovation. Participants consistently emphasized that the supervisor viewed professional development as a continuous process rather than a series of isolated seminars or mandatory training activities. Through sustained mentoring, instructional coaching, collaborative reflection, research engagement, and educational innovation, teachers developed the mindset that professional learning is an ongoing responsibility essential for improving learner outcomes and responding to the evolving demands of basic education.

Participants explained that the Education Program Supervisor consistently encouraged them to evaluate their instructional practices through reflective dialogue, classroom action research, lesson study, peer observations, and collaborative professional discussions. Rather than accepting established teaching methods without question, teachers were challenged to analyze learner performance data, identify instructional gaps, experiment with innovative pedagogical approaches, and continuously refine classroom practices. These reflective experiences transformed supervision into an authentic learning process that promoted critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and professional autonomy.

Participant 5 shared:

"Our supervisor constantly reminds us that every lesson is an opportunity to learn as teachers. She encourages us to reflect after every instructional activity so that we can continuously improve our teaching."

Participant 9 remarked:

"She motivates us to conduct action research whenever we encounter recurring classroom problems. Instead of simply accepting challenges, we are encouraged to investigate them scientifically and develop evidence-based solutions."

Participant 2 explained:

"Innovation has become part of our teaching because our supervisor encourages us to explore new strategies, integrate technology, and share successful practices with our colleagues."

Many participants likewise emphasized that the Education Program Supervisor actively encouraged them to pursue graduate studies, attend regional and national conferences, publish educational research, participate in professional organizations, and engage in continuous capability-building programs. These opportunities broadened their professional perspectives, strengthened research competencies, and increased their confidence in contributing to educational improvement beyond their individual



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classrooms.

Teachers further explained that reflective leadership promoted adaptability during curriculum reforms, technological advancements, and changing learner needs. Instead of viewing educational reforms as burdensome, participants perceived them as opportunities for continuous professional renewal because the supervisor consistently provided guidance, technical assistance, and collaborative support throughout implementation. This supportive environment enabled teachers to become more resilient, innovative, and responsive to contemporary educational challenges.

Participants also noted that lifelong professional learning extended beyond formal training sessions. Informal professional conversations, peer mentoring, collaborative lesson planning, instructional conferences, Learning Action Cell (LAC) discussions, and reflective supervisory meetings became equally valuable learning experiences. These collaborative interactions strengthened professional networks across schools, encouraged the exchange of best practices, and promoted collective responsibility for improving instructional quality within the Schools Division Office of Santiago City.

The findings strongly affirm Knowles' (1984) Adult Learning Theory, which emphasizes that adults learn most effectively through meaningful experiences, self-directed inquiry, reflection, and authentic professional engagement. Teachers in this study demonstrated characteristics of self-directed learners who continuously sought opportunities to improve instructional practice when supported by responsive instructional leadership. Likewise, Schön's (1983) Reflective Practice Theory explains that professionals develop expertise through systematic reflection on their actions, enabling them to respond effectively to complex and evolving professional situations. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that sustained, collaborative, job-embedded professional development significantly enhances instructional effectiveness because teachers continuously refine their pedagogical knowledge within authentic teaching contexts. Hallinger (2022) similarly argued that instructional leaders who cultivate reflective organizational cultures create schools capable of sustaining innovation, professional collaboration, and continuous educational improvement. Consistent with these perspectives, the present findings demonstrate that Education Program Supervisors play a vital role in transforming schools into learning organizations where reflective leadership, instructional innovation, educational research, and lifelong professional development become integral components of teachers' professional practice. Collectively, these experiences highlight that instructional leadership is most effective when it nurtures educators who are reflective, research-oriented, innovative, and committed to continuous professional growth, thereby contributing to sustainable school improvement and improved learner achievement.

Conclusion

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of teachers regarding the instructional leadership of an Education Program Supervisor and its influence on their professional growth in the Schools Division Office of Santiago City. The findings revealed that instructional leadership extends far beyond ensuring compliance with educational policies, curriculum standards, and administrative requirements. Teachers consistently perceived the Education Program Supervisor as a transformational instructional leader, mentor, coach, facilitator, and professional partner who significantly contributed to



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their instructional competence, professional confidence, leadership capacity, collaborative practices, and lifelong learning. Rather than viewing supervision as a mechanism for monitoring performance, participants described instructional leadership as a developmental process that cultivated reflective practice, instructional innovation, organizational commitment, and continuous professional improvement. The first emergent theme, Inspiring Professional Growth through Visionary Instructional Leadership, demonstrated that teachers were inspired by Education Program Supervisors who articulated a clear educational vision centered on instructional excellence, learner success, and continuous professional development. Participants emphasized that visionary supervisors encouraged them to pursue graduate studies, engage in educational research, attend professional development activities, and embrace innovative instructional practices. This visionary leadership strengthened teachers' intrinsic motivation, resilience, and commitment to educational excellence while fostering a professional culture where continuous learning became a shared organizational value. These experiences illustrate that instructional leadership becomes transformative when educational supervisors inspire teachers to pursue excellence beyond compliance with institutional expectations.

The second theme, Strengthening Instructional Competence through Technical Assistance and Coaching, highlighted the critical role of instructional coaching and technical assistance in enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence. Participants consistently described coaching sessions as meaningful opportunities for reflective dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and instructional improvement. Education Program Supervisors provided individualized feedback, demonstrated effective instructional strategies, guided curriculum implementation, and offered practical recommendations responsive to classroom realities. Teachers reported improvements in lesson planning, classroom management, differentiated instruction, learner assessment, technology integration, and classroom-based action research. These findings affirm that instructional supervision becomes more effective when coaching emphasizes professional growth rather than evaluation or compliance monitoring.

The third theme, Empowering Teachers through Collaborative Supervision and Shared Professional Learning, revealed that collaborative leadership significantly enhanced teachers' professional ownership, leadership competencies, and organizational commitment. Participants appreciated supervisory practices that encouraged active participation in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, curriculum planning, lesson study, professional learning communities, instructional innovation, and collaborative research. Through shared decision-making and collective professional inquiry, teachers developed stronger communication skills, leadership abilities, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving competencies. The findings suggest that collaborative supervision transforms teachers from passive recipients of supervisory directives into active contributors to educational improvement and organizational learning.

The fourth theme, Building Professional Confidence through Constructive Feedback and Recognition, emphasized the importance of supportive supervisory relationships in strengthening teachers' professional confidence and self-efficacy. Participants consistently explained that constructive feedback, mentoring, recognition of accomplishments, and emotional encouragement motivated them to improve their instructional practices and pursue continuous professional growth. Teachers viewed supervisory feedback as developmental rather than punitive because Education Program Supervisors focused on strengths while collaboratively addressing areas requiring improvement. Recognition of instructional innovations,



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research accomplishments, and professional contributions further reinforced teachers' confidence, resilience, and commitment to quality education. These findings indicate that positive supervisory relationships significantly contribute to teachers' professional identity and long-term organizational engagement.

The fifth theme, Sustaining Lifelong Professional Development through Reflective Leadership and Innovation, demonstrated that Education Program Supervisors cultivate sustainable professional growth by promoting reflective practice, continuous learning, educational innovation, and research engagement. Participants described supervision as an ongoing learning partnership that encouraged them to evaluate instructional practices critically, integrate educational technologies, conduct action research, participate in graduate education, and continuously adapt to evolving educational demands. Reflective leadership enabled teachers to become more innovative, adaptive, research-oriented, and responsive to learners' diverse needs. Consequently, professional development evolved from isolated training activities into a lifelong commitment to instructional excellence and educational transformation.

The findings conclude that the instructional leadership of an Education Program Supervisor significantly influences teachers' professional growth by fostering environments characterized by collaboration, trust, mentoring, empowerment, reflective practice, and continuous learning. The lived experiences of teachers affirm that effective instructional leadership is fundamentally developmental rather than compliance-oriented. Education Program Supervisors who prioritize coaching, mentoring, collaborative supervision, technical assistance, and professional support contribute substantially to teachers' instructional competence, leadership capacity, professional confidence, innovation, and organizational commitment. These findings strongly support Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Theory, Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Theory, Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, and Knowles' Adult Learning Theory, demonstrating that instructional leadership becomes most effective when it empowers teachers to become reflective, competent, innovative, and lifelong professional learners.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study provide important implications for educational leadership, instructional supervision, teacher development, and educational policy. First, Education Program Supervisors should continue shifting supervisory practices from compliance-oriented monitoring toward developmental instructional leadership that prioritizes coaching, mentoring, technical assistance, reflective supervision, and collaborative professional learning. Such leadership practices strengthen teachers' instructional competence while fostering sustainable professional growth. Second, schools and the Department of Education should institutionalize collaborative professional learning structures, including Learning Action Cells (LACs), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), lesson study, action research, instructional coaching, and peer mentoring, to sustain continuous teacher development across schools. Third, supervisory leadership programs should emphasize emotional intelligence, communication, collaborative leadership, instructional coaching, curriculum innovation, and research mentoring to prepare Education Program Supervisors for increasingly complex educational leadership responsibilities. Fourth,



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educational policies should reinforce the expanded instructional leadership role of Education Program Supervisors as facilitators of professional learning rather than inspectors of policy compliance. Finally, higher education institutions responsible for preparing educational leaders should integrate instructional leadership, coaching, mentoring, reflective supervision, organizational learning, and professional development into graduate leadership programs to strengthen future supervisory practices within Philippine basic education.

Recommendations

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

1. Education Program Supervisors should strengthen instructional leadership by providing continuous coaching, mentoring, reflective supervision, collaborative professional learning, technical assistance, and individualized instructional support tailored to teachers' professional needs.
2. Teachers should actively engage in graduate education, action research, Learning Action Cells (LACs), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), mentoring programs, instructional innovation, and reflective teaching practices to sustain continuous professional growth.
3. School Heads should collaborate closely with Education Program Supervisors in establishing supportive instructional environments that encourage teacher collaboration, innovation, curriculum enhancement, and evidence-based instructional improvement.
4. The Department of Education should develop comprehensive capability-building programs for Education Program Supervisors focusing on transformational instructional leadership, coaching, mentoring, educational research, technology integration, curriculum leadership, emotional intelligence, and collaborative supervision aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030, NEAP Transformation Framework, and the MATATAG Agenda.
5. Educational policymakers should allocate sufficient resources for continuous supervisory leadership development, instructional coaching initiatives, teacher mentoring programs, and collaborative professional learning to strengthen instructional quality across schools.
6. Future researchers should conduct comparative, mixed-methods, or longitudinal studies involving Education Program Supervisors from various school divisions to examine instructional leadership practices across different educational contexts. Future investigations may also explore the relationships among instructional leadership, teacher well-being, organizational resilience, instructional innovation, educational technology integration, and learner achievement.



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