

MASTER TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of five master teachers in Lambayong District-III, Philippines, a resource-constrained setting with limited supervisory support. Using Moustakas' framework, the research examines their dual roles as educators and instructional supervisors, revealing their strategies to navigate systemic barriers such as inadequate resources, time constraints, and teacher resistance. Participants emphasized mentorship, collaborative environments, and reflective practices as critical to fostering professional growth among peers. Despite challenges, their efforts correlated with improved teacher practices and student outcomes, underscoring their transformative role in bridging institutional goals with classroom realities. The study highlights the need for institutional support, equitable resource allocation, and targeted professional development programs to empower master teachers as agents of educational change. Recommendations include allocating dedicated supervision time, integrating conflict-resolution training, and expanding master teacher roles in underserved districts.

Keywords: Instructional Supervision, Master Teachers Dual Roles, Professional Development, Educational Leadership.

Introduction

Instructional supervision is a cornerstone of educational systems, serving as a systematic process to evaluate and refine pedagogical practices (Glickman et al., 2014). Beyond mere evaluation, it fosters collaborative environments where educators grow professionally, aligning with broader institutional goals (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). In the Philippines, this process is institutionalized through frameworks like the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) and the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), which mandate supervision to sustain instructional quality and bridge teacher development with student outcomes (DepEd Memorandum No. 50, s. 2020).

Master teachers, distinguished by their expertise and leadership, play a pivotal role in this ecosystem. They are entrusted not only with classroom instruction but also with mentoring peers, conducting observations, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Danielson, 2006). Their influence extends beyond individual classrooms, shaping institutional practices and reinforcing standards set by policies like the RPMS. However, their supervisory roles are often overshadowed by administrative hierarchies, leaving their lived experiences and challenges underexplored in literature.

Existing studies on instructional supervision focus predominantly on theoretical frameworks (Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 2011) or administrative perspectives, neglecting the nuanced realities of master teachers in resource-constrained settings. For instance, while Glickman et al. (2014) emphasize collaboration in supervision, they rarely address how master teachers navigate resistance, limited resources, or institutional barriers. Similarly, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) highlight mentorship but do not delve into the practical strategies employed by master teachers to balance supervisory duties with classroom responsibilities. This gap is particularly pronounced in contexts like Lambayong District-III, where master teacher positions are scarce despite a high number of schools, creating unique challenges in supervision.

The Philippines' DepEd Professional Development Priorities for Teachers and School Leaders (2020) underscores the need for educators to adapt to

technological advancements and modern pedagogical trends. However, these priorities often assume equitable access to resources and training, which may not reflect realities in rural or underfunded districts. Master teachers in such settings must innovate to address gaps in infrastructure, teacher resistance, and time constraints—challenges that are rarely documented in broader policy discussions. By exploring their lived experiences, this study aims to provide actionable insights for refining institutional support systems and professional development programs.

This research seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by centering the voices of master teachers. It investigates how they navigate their dual roles as educators and supervisors, the strategies they employ to overcome systemic barriers, and the impact of their efforts on teacher development and student outcomes. By doing so, it contributes to ongoing conversations about effective instructional supervision, emphasizing the need for context-specific policies that empower master teachers as agents of educational change.

Ultimately, the findings of this study will inform strategies to enhance supervisory practices, advocate for equitable resource allocation, and strengthen mentorship programs. For policymakers, educators, and researchers, this work offers a lens into the complexities of instructional supervision in resource-limited settings, underscoring the transformative potential of master teachers when supported by responsive institutional frameworks.

Research Questions

The study shall address the central question, “What are the lived experiences of Master Teachers in Instructional Supervision?” It shall answer the following sub-questions;

- (1) What are the lived experiences of master teachers in instructional supervision?;
- (2) How do master teachers describe the context of their lived experiences in Instructional Supervision?;
- (3) How do master teachers perceive their role in instructional supervision?; and
- (4) What are the necessary skills of master teachers to effectively fulfill their responsibilities in instructional supervision?

Methodology

This study adopts a transcendental phenomenological design, rooted in Moustakas’ (1994) framework, to explore the lived experiences of five master teachers in Lambayong District-III, Sultan Kudarat, Philippines, a location deliberately chosen for its limited resources and unique challenges. Criterion sampling will be used to select participants who meet specific requirements,

ensuring a diverse yet focused perspective. A semi-structured interview questionnaire, comprising demographic information and open-ended questions about experiences in instructional supervision, will serve as the primary research instrument. Data collection will involve face-to-face interviews, phone calls, and video conferencing, all recorded for subsequent analysis.

Data analysis will follow Moustakas’ phenomenological approach, involving horizontalization, thematic clustering, textural description, and structural description to synthesize the collective experiences of the master teachers. Rigor will be ensured through Lincoln and Guba’s criteria for trustworthiness: credibility (data triangulation, verbatim quotes), transferability (detailed context), dependability (documented procedures), and confirmability (peer review, conference feedback). Ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity, and providing participants with transcripts for verification. This methodology aims to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the challenges and strategies employed by master teachers in instructional supervision within a resource-constrained setting.

Results and Discussion

The essence of master teachers’ lived experiences in instructional supervision within Lambayong District-III is revealed through seven interconnected themes:

- (a) Role and Responsibilities, highlighting their function as mentors and standard-bearers;
- (b) Strengths and Weaknesses, reflecting their unique capabilities and limitations in supervision;
- (c) Effective Strategies, showcasing approaches that foster collaboration and reflection;
- (d) Perception of Success, emphasizing the fulfillment derived from the teacher and student improvement;
- (e) Challenges Encountered, outlining obstacles such as resource constraints and resistance;
- (f) Necessary Skills, underscoring the importance of communication, empathy, and adaptability; and
- (g) Training Needs, stressing the necessity of continuous professional development in areas like conflict resolution and technology integration.

Theme 1: Role and Responsibilities of Master Teachers

Master teachers play a vital role in mentoring colleagues and ensuring that instructional practices meet educational standards. Participant A shared, “I became a master teacher six years ago. It was my choice because I wanted to contribute more to the development of my school.” This sentiment aligns with Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2014), who emphasize the collaborative aspect of

instructional supervision, where master teachers foster professional growth among their peers. Similarly, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) noted that master teachers act as exemplars in providing leadership and guidance in educational contexts.

Additionally, the participants discussed their responsibilities in maintaining performance standards among teachers while supporting their growth. Participant B described, "Being a master teacher is challenging and rewarding. My main responsibility is ensuring teachers meet performance standards while inspiring them to grow professionally." This reflects the findings of Stronge (2018), who highlighted the dynamic nature of instructional supervision as an evolving profession focused on ongoing teacher development.

Theme 2: Strengths and Weaknesses in Instructional Supervision

Master teachers possess unique strengths in communication and mentorship, which enable them to build trust and rapport with teachers. Participant A mentioned, "My strength lies in building trust with teachers, which makes feedback sessions productive." This observation supports the findings of Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), which emphasized trust as a critical factor in effective instructional supervision. Similarly, Allida, Ollela, Ogwari, and Minka (2018) noted the importance of creating a positive and collaborative environment to address teacher challenges.

However, weaknesses such as time constraints and resistance to change were also identified. Participant B remarked, "Dealing with resistance to change is my weakness." This aligns with Enaigbe (2019), who discussed time limitations and workload as significant obstacles faced by instructional supervisors. Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) similarly highlighted that balancing supervision and other responsibilities can be overwhelming, requiring strategic approaches to address these issues effectively.

Theme 3: Effective Strategies for Supporting Teachers

The participants shared various strategies they have found effective in supporting teachers. Participant C explained, "I focus on creating a collaborative culture. Teachers feel more motivated when they know their ideas are valued." This is consistent with Joyce and Showers (2002), who emphasized the importance of collaboration and feedback in fostering teacher improvement.

Additionally, Stronge and Grant (2009) pointed out that collaborative environments enhance instructional supervision, resulting in better teaching practices and student outcomes.

Participant A remarked, "I encourage teachers to try new teaching methods and hold post-observation discussions to reflect on their practices." This approach aligns with the findings of Maisyaro et al. (2018), who advocated for participatory and reflective supervision methods to empower teachers. By encouraging experimentation and reflection, master teachers can guide their colleagues in embracing change and enhancing their instructional skills.

Theme 4: Perception of Success in Instructional Supervision

Participants expressed moments of fulfillment when their supervisory efforts led to positive outcomes among teachers and students. Participant A shared, "I felt successful when a teacher improved her teaching methods after our feedback sessions. Seeing her students perform better was rewarding." This aligns with the findings of Stronge and Grant (2009), who established a positive correlation between effective supervision and improved student performance. Such successes illustrate the critical role of master teachers in bridging teacher development and classroom achievements.

Additionally, Participant B highlighted a specific instance: "One of my proudest moments was mentoring a new teacher who then exceeded expectations in her evaluation." These narratives resonate with Ingersoll and Strong (2011), who found that mentorship programs not only enhance instructional practices but also significantly improve teacher retention and satisfaction. These moments validate the participants' roles as essential contributors to the professional growth of their colleagues.

Theme 5: Challenges Encountered in Instructional Supervision

Participants outlined various challenges, including resource constraints and resistance from teachers. Participant C admitted, "Limited resources sometimes hinder effective supervision. I often improvise to provide necessary tools or materials." This observation aligns with Ghamrawi et al. (2019), who emphasized the need for adequate resources and facilities to ensure successful instructional supervision. Similarly, Suleiman, Ijaya, Ishola, and Joshua (2020) suggested that finance and capacity building are essential for overcoming supervision-related obstacles.

Resistance from teachers also posed a significant challenge. Participant B explained, "Some teachers hesitate to accept feedback, fearing judgment. I address this by fostering trust and emphasizing collaboration." This reflects the findings of Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), who highlighted the importance of addressing teacher reluctance with

empathy and constructive feedback to foster growth and acceptance of change.

Theme 6: Necessary Skills for Effective Instructional Supervision

Participants highlighted essential skills, such as communication, adaptability, and empathy, as key to effective supervision. Participant A remarked, “Effective communication is key in helping teachers understand their areas for improvement.” This aligns with Maisyaroh et al. (2018), who emphasized that communication fosters collaboration and shared goals. Furthermore, Joyce and Showers (2002) stressed that adaptability enables supervisors to address diverse teacher needs and scenarios effectively.

Participant C also mentioned empathy as an important skill, stating, “Empathy allows me to connect with teachers and address their concerns.” This resonates with the findings of Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2014), who noted that building relationships with teachers is critical to fostering trust and acceptance of feedback. By exhibiting empathy, supervisors can create a supportive environment conducive to professional growth.

Theme 7: Training Needs for Master Teachers

Continuous professional development was identified as essential for enhancing supervisory effectiveness. Participant B shared, “Workshops on conflict resolution could help me handle resistance among teachers.” This aligns with the findings of Sari et al. (2016), who underscored the importance of ongoing capacity building to address challenges in supervision. Additionally, Maisyaroh et al. (2018) suggested that training programs should focus on innovative methods tailored to modern educational demands.

Similarly, Participant C stated, “I’d like to attend seminars on integrating technology into instructional supervision.” This reflects the findings of Glanz (2018), who emphasized the need for supervisors to stay updated on evolving trends and practices in education. By participating in targeted training programs, master teachers can ensure their approaches remain relevant and effective in addressing the needs of 21st-century education.

Conclusion

Grounded in Moustakas’ transcendental phenomenology and employing criterion sampling, this study rigorously examined the lived experiences of five master teachers in the resource-constrained Lambayong District-III of the Philippines. Data, gathered through semi-structured interviews and subjected to horizontalization, thematic clustering, and textural-structural analysis, revealed that while these master teachers function as pivotal mentors

and instructional leaders, their effectiveness is significantly hampered by systemic challenges, including limited resources, time constraints, and teacher resistance. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions, such as strategic time allocation by school administrators, enhanced empathetic communication strategies among master teachers, and prioritized funding for adaptable resources by schools. Furthermore, the integration of conflict resolution and technology-enhanced supervision workshops by DepEd, alongside the strategic allocation of additional master teacher roles in underserved districts by policymakers, is crucial for maximizing these educators’ transformative potential and fostering improved teacher development and student outcomes within similar educational contexts. The study’s trustworthiness was rigorously upheld through adherence to Lincoln and Guba’s criteria, thereby ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest by the author in this manuscript.

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