

The Meaning of Instructional Supervision for Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Public Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Instructional supervision is expected to function as professional support rather than merely as administrative control, particularly for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers whose classroom responsibilities combine pedagogical demands with the contextual integration of Islamic values. This study explores how IRE teachers in public elementary schools understand and experience instructional supervision, how supervision is implemented, and which conditions shape its perceived usefulness. A qualitative descriptive case-study design was employed in three public elementary schools in Banyubiru District, Semarang Regency, Indonesia: SDN Banyubiru 01, SDN Banyubiru 03, and SDN Banyubiru 04. Seven informants were selected purposively, comprising three principals, one IRE supervisor, and three IRE teachers. Data were generated through observation, interviews, and document study. Credibility was strengthened through source and method triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Analysis followed data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that supervision was implemented as a sequence of planning, classroom observation, individual feedback, group supervision, and follow-up. Teachers interpreted effective supervision as a space for reflection, practical problem solving, professional learning, and improvement of instructional planning and classroom practice. Its value was strongest when supervision was scheduled, dialogic, participatory, solution-oriented, and responsive to the local teaching context. Conversely, supervision was perceived as less meaningful when it became document-centered or formalistic. Time constraints and limited integration of technology also emerged as challenges. The study indicates that developmental, collaborative, and context-sensitive supervision is particularly relevant for strengthening IRE teachers' professional practice in elementary schools.

Keywords: *Instructional Supervision, Islamic Religious Education, Teacher Professional Development, Reflective Practice, Elementary School*

INTRODUCTION

Instructional supervision is increasingly conceptualized as a developmental process through which teachers receive structured observation, feedback, professional dialogue, and follow-up support. This orientation moves supervision beyond compliance checking toward continuous improvement of teaching practice. Recent studies show that supervision is more likely to support teacher competence when it is collaborative, reflective, and linked to concrete classroom needs rather than dominated by administrative inspection (Haryanto, 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Suryani et al., 2024). Clinical and academic supervision studies likewise emphasize the value of pre-observation planning, classroom observation, constructive feedback, and sustained

professional assistance for strengthening teachers' professional identity and instructional competence (Chaula, 2024; Chaula et al., 2024).

The developmental orientation is especially important in elementary education because teachers must translate curriculum expectations into age-appropriate learning experiences while responding to diverse student needs. Empirical studies in Indonesian primary-school settings have linked well-structured academic supervision with pedagogical competence, learning quality, and teacher professionalism (Arwan et al., 2023; Hestiningtyas et al., 2023; Mekarsari et al., 2025). Other work indicates that supervision can become more useful when it incorporates coaching, mentoring, peer learning, and systematic follow-up rather than ending with a one-off classroom visit (Juhadira et al., 2024; Khofifah et al., 2025; Phumsaidorn & Julsuwan, 2024).

For Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers, supervision has an additional contextual dimension. IRE instruction is not limited to the transmission of subject matter; teachers are also expected to relate religious knowledge and values to students' everyday lives. Consequently, professional support needs to address pedagogical competence, classroom interaction, instructional media, curriculum alignment, and the meaningful integration of Islamic values. Studies focused on Islamic education suggest that supervision is more productive when it is sensitive to the characteristics of religious instruction and when supervisors function as professional partners who facilitate improvement rather than merely as evaluators (Bachaqi et al., 2022; Erwanto, 2023; Kurniaty & Indrayuda, 2024; Najwa, 2023).

A persistent problem, however, is the gap between the developmental ideal of supervision and its implementation. Research has documented supervision practices that remain heavily oriented toward documentation, compliance, or episodic inspection. In such circumstances, teachers may experience supervision as a formal requirement with limited relevance to instructional improvement (Fathih, 2022; Hariri, 2022; Lestari et al., 2023). Practical constraints, including limited time, heavy workloads, insufficient supervisory capacity, and weak follow-up mechanisms, can further reduce the continuity of professional support (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Thomas & Onyango, 2022). These issues make teachers' own interpretations of supervision an important object of inquiry because the same supervisory procedure may be experienced as supportive, evaluative, or burdensome depending on how it is enacted.

The meaning attached to supervision is also shaped by the quality of professional interaction. Dialogic supervision can create conditions in which teachers discuss classroom problems openly, receive actionable feedback, and reflect on their pedagogical decisions. Conversely, supervision that provides criticism without practical guidance can produce defensiveness or a sense of administrative burden. Recent research on reflective supervision and peer observation reinforces the importance of professional dialogue, trust, shared learning, and reflection in transforming observation into professional development (Mouraz et al., 2023; Westein et al., 2023). In Islamic educational contexts, collaborative supervision has similarly been associated with teacher competence and professional learning (Suryani et al., 2024).

Digital transformation adds another dimension to the supervision agenda. Teachers increasingly encounter expectations to use digital resources and interactive media, while supervisors are also encouraged to employ technology for communication, documentation, feedback, and professional learning. Studies of coaching-oriented supervision and teacher development indicate that technology can support continuity and flexibility, although its value depends on teachers' needs, institutional capacity, and the quality of professional interaction surrounding the technology (Juhadira et al., 2024; Nasikin et al., 2024). For IRE teachers, technology is therefore best understood not as a substitute for pedagogical supervision but as a potential means of extending access to resources and follow-up support.

Existing research has established the importance of academic and clinical supervision, but less attention has been given to how elementary IRE teachers themselves interpret the meaning of supervision within a specific local school context. This study addresses that gap through a case study in Banyubiru District, Semarang Regency. It examines three interrelated questions: (1) How is instructional supervision for IRE teachers implemented in the participating public elementary schools? (2) How do IRE teachers interpret the meaning and value of the supervision they receive? and (3) What conditions support or constrain the perceived effectiveness of supervision? By focusing on teachers' situated experience while also considering the perspectives of principals and an IRE supervisor, the study aims to provide a context-sensitive account of supervision as professional practice rather than as an administrative procedure alone.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case-study design. The design was selected to explore the implementation and meaning of instructional supervision within its real school context. The study did not seek to quantify the effect of supervision or establish causal relationships; instead, it focused on describing supervisory practices, participants' perceptions, and the contextual conditions associated with those practices.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in Banyubiru District, Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, across three public elementary schools: SDN Banyubiru 01, SDN Banyubiru 03, and SDN Banyubiru 04. Participants were selected purposively because of their direct involvement in instructional supervision. The study involved seven informants: three school principals, one Islamic Religious Education supervisor, and three Islamic Religious Education teachers.

Data Collection

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and document study. Observation was used to understand the school and supervisory context and to examine relevant aspects of instructional practice. Interviews were used to explore how principals, the IRE supervisor, and IRE teachers understood the implementation, benefits, and constraints of supervision. Document study was used to examine supporting instructional and supervisory materials

available in the research setting. The original study materials do not report standardized interview durations, the number of observation sessions, or a formal interview protocol; therefore, these details are not added here.

Trustworthiness

Data credibility was addressed through source triangulation and method triangulation by comparing information obtained from different participant groups and different data-collection techniques. The study also used member checking and peer debriefing as reported in the original research design. These procedures were intended to reduce reliance on a single perspective and to strengthen the interpretive credibility of the findings.

Data Analysis

Analysis proceeded through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, information relevant to the research questions was selected and organized around the implementation and meaning of instructional supervision. Second, the reduced data were arranged in systematic narrative form to identify recurring patterns across the three school sites and participant groups. Third, conclusions were developed by relating those patterns to the study objectives. No statistical analysis was conducted because the study was qualitative and the dataset consisted of observational, interview, and documentary information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Supervision as a Structured Developmental Cycle

Across the three public elementary schools, instructional supervision was described as beginning with planned preparation. Supervisors or principals arranged supervision schedules in relation to the academic calendar and communicated the schedule to teachers in advance. The preparation stage also involved supervisory instruments covering lesson planning, classroom implementation, instructional media, and the integration of Islamic values into learning. In the context of the present study, advance scheduling was important because it gave teachers time to prepare instructional materials and reduced the sense that supervision was an unexpected inspection.

Classroom observation constituted the main supervisory activity. The supervisor or principal observed how the IRE teacher opened the lesson, explained the subject matter, motivated students, used learning media or technology, interacted with students, managed instructional time, and evaluated learning at the end of the session. The value of the classroom visit was not located in observation alone. It became meaningful when observation was connected to a post-observation conversation in which strengths were acknowledged and areas for improvement were discussed. This sequence is consistent with recent clinical-supervision literature emphasizing the interaction between pre-observation preparation, direct observation, feedback, and professional follow-up (Chaula, 2024; Chaula et al., 2024; Kurniaty & Indrayuda, 2024).

Individual feedback was complemented by document review. Lesson plans, teaching materials, and learning journals were among the types of documents used to connect observed classroom practice with instructional planning. This combination allowed supervision to address both what had been planned and what actually occurred in the classroom. Comparable studies have shown that supervision is more useful when classroom evidence and instructional documents are treated as complementary sources for professional discussion rather than as isolated compliance items (Haryanto, 2024; Jafar et al., 2023; Yulianto, 2023).

The schools also used group supervision in which IRE teachers from different schools could learn together. These activities took the form of training or workshops, including themes such as the use of technology in IRE learning and project-based learning. The group format broadened supervision beyond an individual supervisor-teacher relationship by creating opportunities for peer exchange and the sharing of good practices. This finding resonates with studies that position collaborative supervisory groups and professional communities as mechanisms for strengthening teacher learning and competence (Bachaqi et al., 2022; Suryani et al., 2024).

Follow-up represented the final stage of the supervisory cycle. Supervision results were documented in written reports containing analysis and recommendations, after which teachers could receive further discussion, additional training, individual assistance, or subsequent supervision. This feature is important because supervision that ends at observation and scoring risks becoming episodic. Coaching and mentoring research instead emphasizes continuity, goal-oriented follow-up, and repeated professional support (Juhadira et al., 2024; Phumsaidorn & Julsuwan, 2024). The Banyubiru case therefore suggests that supervision was understood institutionally as a cycle of preparation, observation, feedback, collaborative learning, and follow-up rather than as a single monitoring event.

Supervision as Reflection, Professional Learning, and Practical Support

For the participating IRE teachers, the most important meaning of supervision was its function as a professional learning process. Supervision provided an opportunity to review strengths and weaknesses in lesson planning, content delivery, classroom management, and assessment. Teachers valued supervisory interactions when feedback was concrete enough to guide improvement. In this sense, supervision was not interpreted merely as an evaluation of performance but as a structured opportunity to examine teaching decisions and identify practical alternatives.

The reflective dimension was particularly salient. Feedback enabled teachers to reconsider whether their instructional strategies were effective for the students they taught and whether Islamic values were being connected meaningfully with everyday contexts. This meaning is consistent with scholarship showing that supervision can support reflective practice when observation is followed by dialogue that helps teachers interpret evidence from their own teaching (Mouraz et al., 2023; Westein et al., 2023). Reflection, however, was not presented in

the study as an abstract exercise. Its perceived usefulness depended on whether it led to specific changes in planning or classroom practice.

Teachers also associated supervision with professional confidence and motivation. When supervisors acknowledged effective practices and offered workable solutions for weaknesses, teachers reported a more positive experience of the process. This pattern aligns with research indicating that supportive academic supervision can strengthen teacher professionalism, pedagogical competence, and willingness to engage in improvement (Arwan et al., 2023; Hariri, 2022; Mekarsari et al., 2025; Oluwakemi & Hassan, 2023). The implication is that the interpersonal quality of supervision matters alongside the technical quality of the supervisory instrument.

In the present case, supervision also served as a channel for introducing new instructional approaches, including digital media and project-based learning. This was relevant because teachers faced expectations to adapt teaching to contemporary curricular and technological developments. Recent studies of teacher supervision similarly report that coaching, mentoring, and professionally focused follow-up can help teachers translate new ideas into practice when the guidance is connected to actual instructional problems (Khofifah et al., 2025; Nasikin et al., 2024). Thus, the meaning of supervision for IRE teachers extended from evaluation toward learning, experimentation, and professional renewal.

Dialogic and Participatory Supervision as a Condition for Meaningfulness

The findings indicate that the perceived quality of supervision depended substantially on how the interaction between supervisor and teacher was conducted. Teachers responded positively when supervision was participatory and dialogic, when weaknesses were discussed without humiliating the teacher, and when feedback included practical alternatives. Under these conditions, supervision was more likely to be interpreted as support. This finding supports recent evidence that collaborative academic supervision can strengthen teacher engagement because professional dialogue positions teachers as active participants in improvement rather than passive recipients of judgment (Haryanto, 2024; Suryani et al., 2024).

Advance communication also shaped teachers' experience. A clear supervision schedule allowed teachers to prepare learning devices and reduced the anxiety associated with sudden inspection. The point is not that preparation should become performance staging; rather, predictable procedures signal that supervision is a professional process with transparent expectations. Studies of supervision planning have similarly emphasized clarity of purpose, systematic scheduling, and shared understanding as conditions that make supervision more developmental (Fathih, 2022; Zandroto et al., 2024).

At the same time, the study identified a contrasting interpretation: supervision could be experienced as formalistic when it focused primarily on administrative documentation without sufficient engagement with classroom realities. In such situations, supervision was perceived more as evaluation than development. Comparable studies have reported that administrative

dominance can weaken teacher ownership and limit the contribution of supervision to instructional change (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2023). The Banyubiru findings therefore reinforce the distinction between supervision that checks compliance and supervision that uses documentation as evidence for professional dialogue.

The teacher's level of experience also influenced expectations. The source study notes that less-experienced teachers tended to view supervision as an opportunity to acquire new teaching knowledge, while more experienced teachers could perceive limited added value when feedback repeated familiar observations without offering new or relevant solutions. This pattern suggests that supervisory support should be differentiated. A uniform checklist may be administratively efficient, but developmental supervision requires attention to individual professional needs, career stage, and the instructional challenges faced by each teacher.

Contextual Responsiveness, Islamic Values, and Local Teaching Needs

A distinctive feature of IRE supervision in the study was the expectation that improvement in teaching should remain connected to the educational purposes of Islamic Religious Education. Supervision addressed not only instructional technique but also the contextual integration of Islamic values in students' daily lives. Teachers therefore needed feedback that was pedagogically useful and substantively appropriate to the character of IRE. Research on Islamic education supervision has likewise argued for models that combine professional competence with the ethical and value-oriented dimensions of religious education (Erwanto, 2023; Kurniaty & Indrayuda, 2024; Najwa, 2023; Rouzi et al., 2025; Sintasari & Lailiyah, 2024).

Contextual responsiveness also involved sensitivity to student diversity and local school conditions. The study's introductory data indicate that IRE teachers face differences in students' social and religious backgrounds and need guidance that can be applied to actual classroom circumstances. Culturally responsive teaching research emphasizes that instruction becomes more inclusive when teachers are supported to understand learners' backgrounds and adapt pedagogy accordingly (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024). In IRE, this means that supervision should help teachers preserve the integrity of religious learning while also promoting respectful, context-sensitive classroom interaction.

The local orientation of supervision is important because professional recommendations are useful only when teachers can enact them. The study therefore supports supervision that combines common professional standards with needs arising from a particular school, class, and teacher. Recent studies in Islamic and general educational settings similarly advocate collaborative and competence-oriented supervision that is anchored in local problems rather than generic inspection routines (Murniati et al., 2025; Suryani et al., 2024; Tugiah & Asmendri, 2022). Such an approach can make supervision more relevant to the everyday decisions teachers make about content, method, media, and student engagement.

Constraints: Time, Formalism, and Limited Technology Integration

Despite the generally positive meaning attributed to developmental supervision, the study identified practical constraints. Time limitations affected the ability of supervisors and teachers to conduct supervision continuously and to sustain follow-up. This constraint is consistent with research showing that workload, scheduling conflicts, and limited supervisory capacity can reduce the frequency and depth of instructional supervision (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Thomas & Onyango, 2022; Zandroto et al., 2024). In practice, a well-designed supervisory instrument cannot compensate for insufficient time for dialogue and follow-up.

A second constraint concerned the risk of formalism. When supervision is reduced to checking lesson plans or completing required documents, the professional meaning of the process becomes weaker. The findings do not imply that documentation is unnecessary. Rather, documents are most useful when they become evidence for analyzing teaching and planning improvement. This interpretation is supported by studies that distinguish developmental academic supervision from administrative monitoring and call for supervision to be tied more directly to teacher learning and instructional competence (Hariri, 2022; Haryanto, 2024; Jafar et al., 2023).

A third challenge was the limited integration of technology into supervision. The study indicates that technology had not yet been fully integrated as part of the supervisory process, even though technology was also a topic in teacher development activities. This suggests an opportunity for supervisory practice to use digital tools for sharing resources, documenting goals, maintaining communication, or supporting follow-up between face-to-face sessions. Nevertheless, the present data do not establish the effectiveness of any particular digital-supervision platform, so such tools should be treated as a possible extension of professional interaction rather than as an evidence-based outcome of this case study.

the constraints highlight a central principle: the value of supervision lies less in the existence of a formal program than in the quality and continuity of professional support that the program makes possible. Studies of academic supervision and teacher professionalism similarly show that supervision is most effective when it is systematic, evidence-informed, collaborative, and followed by opportunities for professional learning (Febrina et al., 2024; Khofifah et al., 2025; Mekarsari et al., 2025).

Conceptual Interpretation of the Findings

Taken together, the findings can be interpreted through a developmental model of supervision with five interconnected functions: preparation, evidence generation, reflective dialogue, collaborative learning, and follow-up. Preparation establishes transparent expectations; classroom observation and document review generate evidence; individual discussion turns evidence into reflection; group supervision expands learning through colleagues; and follow-up connects recommendations to subsequent professional action. The meaning teachers attach to supervision depends on whether these functions remain connected.

This interpretation helps explain why supervision can produce different experiences even within the same institutional system. A classroom observation without dialogic feedback can feel evaluative. Feedback without practical follow-up can feel temporary. Documentation without classroom evidence can feel bureaucratic. Conversely, when the cycle is integrated, supervision can become a professional learning mechanism. This is consistent with international and Indonesian studies emphasizing the combined importance of observation, feedback, collaboration, and sustained support in teacher development (Chaula et al., 2024; Mouraz et al., 2023; Phumsaidorn & Julsuwan, 2024).

For IRE teachers, the model requires an additional layer of contextual and value sensitivity. Supervisors must attend to general pedagogical quality while also recognizing the distinctive educational task of connecting Islamic teachings with students' lived contexts. The contribution of this study therefore lies not in claiming a new causal model, but in showing how seven participants across three public elementary schools understood supervision as meaningful when professional development, local responsiveness, and value-oriented teaching were brought together.

Implications for Practice

The findings suggest several practical priorities for supervision of IRE teachers in public elementary schools. First, supervisory programs should preserve a complete developmental cycle rather than emphasizing classroom visits alone. Scheduling, observation, feedback, and follow-up need to function as connected stages. Second, feedback should be dialogic and specific. Teachers need to understand not only what requires improvement but also what practical alternatives are available within their classroom context. Third, group supervision can complement individual observation by providing opportunities to share good practices and discuss recurring instructional problems.

Fourth, supervision should be differentiated according to teacher needs and experience. Less-experienced teachers may need explicit guidance on planning and instructional strategies, whereas experienced teachers may benefit more from focused reflection, innovation, and problem solving. Fifth, IRE supervision should attend to the integration of Islamic values in ways that are contextually meaningful for students rather than treating value integration as a separate administrative requirement. Finally, technology can be explored as a support for communication and follow-up, but its use should remain subordinate to the pedagogical and relational purposes of supervision.

Limitations

This study is bounded by the characteristics of a qualitative case study conducted in three public elementary schools in one district and involving seven informants. The findings therefore describe the meanings and practices reported in this setting and should not be generalized statistically to all IRE teachers or schools. The available source manuscript does not report the number or duration of interviews and observations, nor does it provide verbatim interview

excerpts; consequently, the revised article does not introduce those details. The study also does not measure changes in teacher competence or student learning before and after supervision. Claims in this article are therefore limited to the reported implementation of supervision, participants' perceptions, and the contextual factors documented in the original study.

CONCLUSION

Instructional supervision for IRE teachers in the three public elementary schools in Banyubiru was implemented through planning, classroom observation, document review, individual feedback, group supervision, and follow-up. For teachers, supervision was most meaningful when it operated as professional support: a process for reflection, practical problem solving, professional learning, and improvement of instructional planning and classroom practice. Its perceived value was strengthened by transparent scheduling, dialogic interaction, participatory feedback, solution-oriented guidance, and sensitivity to local teaching conditions and the integration of Islamic values. Conversely, supervision became less meaningful when it was experienced mainly as administrative checking or formal evaluation. Limited time and incomplete use of technology were additional challenges. These findings indicate that effective IRE supervision should be developmental, collaborative, continuous, and context-responsive. Within the limits of this case study, the central implication is that supervision gains professional meaning not merely from being conducted regularly, but from the quality of the dialogue, evidence, and follow-up through which teachers are supported to improve their practice.

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