

Motivation-Supportive Instructional Supervision and Teacher Professional Practice: A Qualitative Case Study in an Indonesian Islamic Junior Secondary School

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Abstract

Instructional supervision is often implemented as a compliance-oriented appraisal, although its developmental value depends on whether teachers experience the process as professionally useful and psychologically supportive. This qualitative case study examined how motivation-supportive instructional supervision was enacted at SMP Islam Plus At-Tohari, an Islamic junior secondary school in Central Java, Indonesia; how school personnel perceived its influence on teachers' professional practice; and what conditions enabled or constrained implementation. Participants were the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, and three Islamic religious education teachers selected purposively. Data were generated through interviews, observation, and document analysis and interpreted through an iterative thematic process supported by source and method triangulation. Three themes were identified. First, supervision was organized as a recurring cycle of classroom observation, dialogic feedback, recognition of effective practice, and jointly planned follow-up. Second, participants associated this approach with greater openness to feedback, confidence, lesson preparation, classroom management, and experimentation with instructional methods; these findings represent perceived changes rather than causal effects. Third, implementation depended on leadership commitment, adequate resources, a collegial culture, teachers' understanding of supervision, and intrinsic willingness to improve, while time pressure, evaluation anxiety, resistance, and heterogeneous career-stage needs remained significant constraints. Interpreted through self-determination theory, effective supervision supported autonomy through voice and participation, competence through specific and actionable feedback, and relatedness through respectful professional relationships. The study contributes a context-sensitive model of supervision as a need-supportive professional-learning process rather than a periodic inspection event.

Keywords: *Instructional Supervision Teacher Motivation, Self-Determination Theory, Professional Learning, Islamic School, Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

The quality of classroom instruction is shaped not only by teachers' knowledge and skills but also by the organizational conditions that sustain professional learning, agency, and motivation. School principals influence these conditions through instructional leadership, the provision of feedback, and the design of opportunities for teachers to examine and improve practice. Reviews of educational leadership indicate that principals affect learning primarily through indirect pathways, including teacher capacity, professional collaboration, and the quality of instruction, rather than through simple direct effects on student achievement (Liebowitz &

Porter, 2019; Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Robinson et al., 2008). Instructional supervision is therefore most defensible when it functions as a structured professional-learning process rather than a search for teacher deficiencies.

Empirical research supports the developmental potential of supervision and coaching. Teacher coaching has demonstrated meaningful average effects on instructional practice and smaller but positive effects on student achievement, especially when it is individualized, sustained, and centered on feedback and reflection (Kraft et al., 2018). Qualitative research on exemplary instructional leadership similarly emphasizes professional dialogue, reflection, and growth-oriented interaction between principals and teachers (Blase & Blase, 1999). In Indonesia, collaborative and collegial supervision has been associated with stronger use of performance-based learning, although direct effects on student outcomes are not always evident (Wiyono et al., 2021). Academic supervision has also been linked statistically to teacher performance through work motivation (Prasetyono et al., 2018), while evidence from neighboring Malaysia indicates that supervision is related to both teacher performance and attitudes (Hoque et al., 2020). Taken together, this literature suggests that the effects of supervision are likely mediated by teachers' interpretations of the process and by the motivational climate established by supervisors.

A central problem is that supervision may simultaneously represent support and control. When classroom observation is experienced as surveillance, ranking, or fault-finding, teachers may comply administratively while withholding uncertainty, experimentation, and authentic reflection. Feedback is not inherently productive: its effect depends on clarity, credibility, emotional safety, timing, and the recipient's opportunity to act on it (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008; Wisniewski et al., 2020). Supervision that overemphasizes scores can therefore undermine the professional learning it is intended to promote. Conversely, when teachers participate in goal setting, receive specific evidence about their practice, and are supported in designing follow-up actions, supervision can become a form of embedded professional development.

Teacher motivation is particularly relevant to this distinction. Motivation is not simply the amount of effort a teacher displays; it also concerns the perceived source and quality of that effort. Self-determination theory distinguishes autonomous motivation—acting with volition, value, and professional ownership—from controlled motivation driven primarily by external pressure, reward, or avoidance of sanction (Deci et al., 2017; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Research in educational settings shows that autonomous teacher motivation is related to more adaptive instructional practices and can shape the motivational climate experienced by students (Ahn et al., 2021; Bardach & Klassen, 2021; Eyal & Roth, 2011). In organizational research, autonomy-supportive leadership is consistently associated with need satisfaction, autonomous motivation, well-being, and constructive work behavior (Slemp et al., 2018). These findings provide a stronger empirical basis for understanding motivation-supportive supervision than conventional reliance on hierarchical need models alone.

Self-determination theory proposes three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to experiencing volition and meaningful participation rather than independence from all structure. Competence refers to feeling effective and capable of improvement. Relatedness refers to feeling respected, connected, and securely included in a professional community (Guay, 2022; Van den Broeck et al., 2016; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). In schools, principal autonomy support is associated with teacher well-being, while need-supportive leadership can foster teachers' autonomous motivation and need-supportive teaching (Ebersold et al., 2019; Haw & King, 2023). Supervisory practices such as listening to teacher perspectives, acknowledging constraints, offering meaningful choices, providing informational feedback, and maintaining clear but non-controlling expectations are therefore theoretically important.

The case examined in this study is SMP Islam Plus At-Tohari in Tuntang, Semarang Regency, Central Java. The school had identified practical concerns that are common in many institutions: punctuality, the perceived burden of instructional administration, uneven lesson preparation, limited variation in instructional methods, and difficulties in classroom management. The management team responded by integrating motivational principles into routine supervision. Rather than treating these problems only as compliance failures, supervisors sought to identify teachers' needs, recognize effective performance, provide constructive feedback, and plan differentiated support. This setting is analytically valuable because it illustrates the transition from conventional appraisal toward a more relational and developmental model in a small Islamic school.

Despite the growing body of research on instructional leadership, teacher motivation, and professional development, limited attention has been given to how motivation-supportive supervision is enacted within the everyday routines of schools, particularly in the context of Indonesian Islamic secondary education. Existing quantitative studies have contributed to identifying relationships among supervision, teacher motivation, and professional performance. However, such studies often provide only limited explanations of the interpersonal processes through which teachers experience supervision as supportive, developmental, controlling, or threatening. Consequently, the mechanisms that shape teachers' openness, engagement, and willingness to improve remain insufficiently understood.

A further limitation concerns the conceptualization and measurement of teacher performance. Many studies present teacher performance as a general outcome without clearly distinguishing whether it refers to directly observed changes in instructional practice, compliance with administrative documentation, self-reported confidence, or improvements in student learning. These different forms of evidence cannot be treated as equivalent because each reflects a distinct dimension of professional development. A qualitative approach is therefore needed to examine how supervisory practices are implemented, interpreted, and negotiated by participants, as well as the organizational and individual conditions that support or hinder the process. Such

an approach also makes it possible to describe participants' perceived experiences without making causal claims that are not supported by the research design.

Based on these gaps, this study investigated how motivation-supportive instructional supervision was enacted at SMP Islam Plus At-Tohari, how participants perceived its influence on teachers' motivation and professional practice, and what organizational and individual conditions enabled or constrained its implementation. These questions directed attention not only to the formal procedures of supervision but also to the quality of communication, feedback, participation, and follow-up experienced by teachers.

Theoretically, the study contributes by conceptualizing instructional supervision as a need-supportive professional-learning process. Within this framework, the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness provide an explanation for why similar supervisory procedures may generate different responses, ranging from professional engagement and openness to anxiety and defensiveness. Practically, the study offers a context-sensitive model for school leaders who are required to balance institutional accountability with teacher development. It highlights the importance of dialogue, evidence-based feedback, psychological safety, and differentiated follow-up in creating supervision that supports sustained professional learning.

Theoretical Framework

Instructional supervision as embedded professional learning

Instructional supervision encompasses the observation, analysis, feedback, and follow-up processes through which school leaders and teachers examine classroom practice. Its developmental form overlaps with coaching and job-embedded professional development. Effective professional learning is typically content focused, connected to teachers' work, sustained over time, coherent with school goals, and supported by active learning and feedback (Desimone, 2009; Kennedy, 2016; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Teacher learning is also shaped by the interaction of individual histories, school structures, and professional communities, which means that no single supervisory technique will work identically across teachers or settings (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

A productive supervisory cycle therefore includes evidence collection, interpretation, professional dialogue, goal setting, opportunities to rehearse or apply changes, and subsequent review. Feedback should answer three questions: where practice is heading, how current practice compares with the goal, and what action should follow (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Meta-analytic evidence indicates that feedback is most useful when it is task- and process-focused rather than directed at the person as a fixed identity (Wisniewski et al., 2020). Coaching research further suggests that one-off observation is insufficient; change is more likely when feedback is integrated with repeated practice, modeling, and reflection (Allen et al., 2011; Kraft et al., 2018).

The principal's role is consequently both instructional and relational. Leadership may establish expectations and monitor standards, but it must also create the trust and professional agency required for teachers to disclose difficulties and test alternatives. Principal instructional leadership is associated with teacher self-efficacy and professional learning (Liu & Hallinger,

2018), and teacher motivation partially explains how organizational and leadership practices are translated into improved teaching (Thoonen et al., 2011). Supervision is therefore conceptualized here not as an isolated administrative event, but as a recurring learning architecture embedded in school leadership.

Motivation-supportive supervision through self-determination theory

Self-determination theory provides a mechanism for explaining the motivational quality of supervision. Autonomous motivation is strengthened when the social environment supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness; controlled motivation and amotivation become more likely when these needs are frustrated (Deci et al., 2017; Gagné et al., 2015; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). This distinction matters because externally compliant performance can appear satisfactory in the short term while producing limited ownership, persistence, or innovation.

Autonomy-supportive supervision does not mean removing standards or allowing teachers to ignore institutional responsibilities. It means explaining the rationale for expectations, inviting teachers' perspectives, providing meaningful input into improvement goals, and avoiding language that humiliates or coerces. Competence support involves clear criteria, specific evidence, achievable challenge, scaffolding, and feedback that identifies actionable next steps. Relatedness support involves respect, availability, recognition, and a professional relationship in which teachers can discuss weaknesses without fear of devaluation. Experimental and meta-analytic research in work settings indicates that supervisors can be trained to enact such need-supportive behaviors and that these behaviors are associated with stronger autonomous motivation and more adaptive outcomes (Kaabomeir et al., 2023; Slemp et al., 2018).

Teacher motivation is also sensitive to workload, stress, efficacy, school climate, and career stage. Job demands such as time pressure and disruptive behavior can erode motivation and well-being, whereas resources such as collegial support and leadership support are protective (Collie et al., 2012; Fernet et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction vary across experience and stress conditions (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Consequently, a uniform reward or feedback strategy is unlikely to be equally meaningful for novice and experienced teachers. Motivation-supportive supervision should diagnose the teacher's current professional needs and calibrate challenge, recognition, autonomy, and support accordingly.

Analytical proposition

The analysis was guided by the proposition that supervisory procedures influence professional practice through teachers' experience of the supervisory climate. Observation and evaluation are more likely to support learning when they are enacted through autonomy-supportive dialogue, competence-building feedback, and respectful relationships. These mechanisms are expected to foster openness, professional agency, and sustained follow-up, whereas time pressure, controlling communication, anxiety, and insufficient resources may weaken the process.

Table 1. Psychological Needs, Supervisory Practices, and Expected Professional Responses

Psychological need	Motivation-supportive supervisory practice	Expected professional response
Autonomy	Invite teacher perspectives; explain rationales; co-construct goals; allow context-sensitive instructional choices.	Ownership of improvement goals, openness, and willingness to experiment.
Competence	Use clear criteria; identify strengths and gaps; provide specific, actionable feedback; arrange follow-up support.	Confidence, skill development, and purposeful revision of practice.
Relatedness	Communicate respectfully; recognize effort and achievement; provide psychological safety and availability.	Trust, reduced defensiveness, and stronger engagement with supervision.

METHOD

Research design and setting

The study used a descriptive qualitative case-study design to examine a bounded supervisory practice in its institutional context. A case-study approach was appropriate because the inquiry focused on how supervision was organized, interpreted, and constrained within one school rather than on estimating population-level effects. The site was SMP Islam Plus At-Tohari, a private Islamic junior secondary school in Tuntang, Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The case centered on the school's attempt to integrate motivational support into academic supervision.

Participants

Five participants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in planning, implementing, or receiving supervision: the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, and three Islamic religious education teachers. The small sample is consistent with the bounded nature of the case, but it limits the range of perspectives represented. The study did not seek statistical representativeness.

Table 2. Characteristics and Roles of Study Participants

Participant group	Number	Role in the case
Principal	1	School leader and principal supervisor; responsible for policy, motivational approach, and follow-up.
Vice principal for curriculum	1	Member of the supervision team; supports scheduling, documentation, and instructional evaluation.
Islamic religious education teachers	3	Teachers who experienced classroom observation, feedback, and follow-up support.

Data collection

Data were collected through interviews, observation, and document study. Interviews explored the rationale for adopting a motivational approach, the procedures used during supervision, teachers' responses, perceived changes in practice, and enabling or constraining

conditions. Observation focused on instructional practice and the implementation of supervision, including classroom management, teaching methods, teacher–student interaction, and the post-observation feedback process. Documents included lesson plans, student-learning records, supervision instruments, evaluation notes, and follow-up plans. The use of multiple sources enabled comparison between participants’ accounts, observed routines, and documentary evidence.

Data analysis and trustworthiness

The material was analyzed iteratively. First, interview, observation, and documentary records were read to identify recurring statements and events related to supervisory practices, teacher responses, and implementation conditions. Second, relevant segments were coded and grouped into provisional categories. Third, categories were compared across data sources and refined into themes that addressed the research questions. Finally, the themes were interpreted through the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This procedure is consistent with thematic analysis as a method for identifying patterned meaning while maintaining sensitivity to context (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Credibility was supported through source triangulation (principal, curriculum leader, and teachers) and method triangulation (interviews, observation, and documents). The analysis deliberately distinguished participants’ perceptions of improvement from demonstrated causal effects. This distinction is important because qualitative quality depends on transparency, coherence between claims and evidence, and acknowledgment of the limits of the dataset (Nowell et al., 2017; Tracy, 2010). Reporting was organized with reference to the logic of the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research, particularly clarity about participants, data generation, analysis, and findings (Tong et al., 2007).

FINDINGS

Three interrelated themes were developed: (1) supervision as a recurring need-supportive cycle, (2) perceived changes in professional agency and instructional practice, and (3) organizational and individual conditions that enabled or constrained implementation. Table 3 summarizes the themes and their principal evidence.

Table 3. Thematic Findings and Supporting Evidence Sources

Theme	Core finding	Indicative evidence sources
A recurring need-supportive cycle	Formal and informal supervision combined observation, recognition, constructive feedback, dialogue, and jointly planned follow-up.	Management and teacher interviews; observation of supervision; supervision instruments and plans.
Perceived changes in agency and practice	Teachers reported greater openness, confidence, preparation, methodological experimentation, and responsiveness to feedback.	Teacher interviews; classroom observation; lesson-planning and evaluation documents.

Theme	Core finding	Indicative evidence sources
Enablers and constraints	Leadership commitment, resources, collegial culture, understanding, and intrinsic motivation supported implementation; time, anxiety, resistance, and heterogeneous needs constrained it.	Cross-participant interviews; scheduling and supervision documents; observational records.

Theme 1: Supervision was enacted as a recurring need-supportive cycle

The school organized supervision through a combination of formal and informal processes. Formal supervision occurred at least once in each semester, while informal monitoring and consultation were used between scheduled cycles. The formal process involved preparation, classroom observation, review of instructional documents, feedback discussion, and a follow-up plan. This recurring structure positioned supervision as a continuing process rather than a single annual score.

Observation focused on lesson preparation, classroom management, instructional methods, teacher–student interaction, and assessment. The supervision instrument used a numerical scale, but participants’ accounts indicated that the score was not intended to be the endpoint. Supervisors discussed the evidence with teachers and used it to identify strengths, areas for development, and appropriate next steps. Documents such as lesson plans and student-learning records were treated as evidence for professional discussion rather than merely as administrative requirements.

Recognition was a prominent motivational strategy. Supervisors acknowledged effective practices before addressing areas for improvement. Appreciation could be expressed verbally and, in some instances, through certificates or institutional recognition. The purpose was to reinforce teachers’ sense that their effort and professional contribution were visible. However, recognition was most meaningful when it was connected to specific practice rather than offered as generic praise.

Feedback was described as constructive and dialogic. Teachers were given space to explain contextual constraints, discuss why a particular method had been chosen, and consider alternative strategies. This reduced the distance between evaluator and evaluated and shifted the interaction toward collaborative problem solving. Rather than imposing an identical solution, supervisors attempted to adapt recommendations to the teacher’s needs and the instructional context.

Follow-up planning converted feedback into action. Possible actions included revising lesson preparation, varying methods, improving classroom management, participating in relevant training, or receiving additional guidance. The supervision team also differentiated the timing and intensity of support. Teachers needing more assistance could receive closer follow-up, while others were given greater scope to implement agreed changes independently. The model therefore combined structure with flexibility.

The data further suggested that motivational support was differentiated by career stage. Less-experienced teachers were viewed as needing reassurance, clear guidance, and opportunities to build competence and professional stability. More-experienced teachers were more likely to respond to recognition of expertise, opportunities to contribute, and strategic roles in supporting colleagues. Although the available dataset did not permit a systematic comparison by years of experience, participants consistently emphasized that uniform treatment would not address teachers' different professional needs.

Theme 2: Participants perceived stronger professional agency and instructional practice

Participants associated the motivation-supportive approach with changes in how teachers responded to supervision. Initial apprehension remained, particularly because classroom observation was still linked to evaluation. Over time, however, teachers reportedly became more willing to discuss difficulties and accept feedback when they experienced the process as respectful and useful. This openness was a central outcome because it created the conditions for supervisors and teachers to identify instructional problems more accurately.

Teachers also reported greater confidence in recognizing their strengths and addressing weaknesses. Specific recognition helped them see effective elements of their teaching, while constructive feedback clarified what could be improved. The combination was important: praise without diagnostic guidance would not support development, whereas criticism without recognition could be experienced as devaluing. Participants perceived balanced feedback as more motivating than an approach focused only on deficiencies.

Perceived improvements were reported in lesson preparation, the use of varied teaching methods, classroom management, and responsiveness to students. Teachers became more attentive to the alignment between lesson plans and classroom implementation and more willing to consider active or alternative methods rather than relying on a narrow instructional routine. Observation and documents provided some corroboration that supervision was linked to concrete instructional targets, although the study did not quantify change over time.

The collaborative discussion also appeared to strengthen professional agency. Teachers were not positioned simply as recipients of directives; they participated in diagnosing problems and deciding how to respond. This participation supported a sense of ownership over the improvement plan. Teachers' willingness to seek solutions and integrate feedback was therefore interpreted as an important change in professional behavior.

The findings must nevertheless be stated cautiously. The study did not include pre- and post-intervention measures, an external observation rubric administered repeatedly, student achievement data linked to individual teachers, or a comparison school. It therefore cannot establish that the supervisory approach caused improvement in teacher performance. The evidence supports a narrower conclusion: participants perceived the approach as increasing motivation, confidence, openness to feedback, and attention to instructional improvement.

Theme 3: Implementation depended on enabling conditions and remained vulnerable to constraints

The first enabling condition was visible commitment from school leadership. The principal and curriculum team planned the supervision schedule, communicated its developmental purpose, participated in feedback, and attempted to ensure follow-up. This consistency signaled that supervision was not an occasional administrative ritual. Leadership commitment also mattered because teachers were more likely to take the process seriously when supervisors invested time and demonstrated knowledge of instruction.

Second, resources and facilities supported implementation. Access to instructional media helped teachers apply recommended methods, while a suitable place for confidential discussion enabled post-observation dialogue. These resources were modest but consequential. Motivation could not compensate indefinitely for the absence of practical conditions needed to change teaching.

Third, a positive work culture enabled teachers to share experiences and solutions. Collegial support reduced the isolation of classroom practice and normalized professional learning. Teachers' understanding of the purpose of supervision was equally important. When the process was explained as a means of development rather than fault-finding, teachers were more willing to engage. Their own intrinsic commitment to learning provided an additional foundation for improvement.

The most persistent constraint was time. Supervisors and teachers had crowded schedules, which could shorten observation, delay feedback, or reduce the continuity of follow-up. The problem was not only the frequency of supervision but also the quality of attention available for dialogue and support. A formally complete cycle could still be educationally weak if post-observation discussion was rushed.

Evaluation anxiety and resistance also constrained the process. Some teachers initially interpreted deeper observation as a threat or anticipated that weaknesses would be used against them. Such concerns did not disappear merely because the school described the approach as motivational. Trust had to be built through repeated experience of fair criteria, respectful communication, and credible follow-up.

Finally, differences among teachers made implementation complex. Teachers varied in experience, confidence, readiness for change, and the kind of recognition or support they valued. A strategy that motivated one teacher could feel controlling, superficial, or irrelevant to another. Supervisors therefore needed diagnostic sensitivity and a repertoire of responses rather than a fixed script.

DISCUSSION

From evaluative inspection to need-supportive professional learning

The principal finding is that supervision became more acceptable and professionally useful when the school combined evaluative structure with motivational support. The formal elements (criteria, observation, documentation, and follow-up) were not removed. Instead, they were

enacted through recognition, dialogue, and individualized planning. This balance is theoretically significant because autonomy support is often misunderstood as the absence of structure. Self-determination theory instead predicts that clear expectations can support motivation when teachers understand their rationale, have meaningful voice, and receive informational rather than controlling feedback (Guay, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

The case illustrates all three need-support mechanisms. Autonomy was supported when teachers could explain their choices, discuss constraints, and participate in improvement goals. Competence was supported through explicit criteria, identification of strengths and gaps, and actionable follow-up. Relatedness was supported by respectful dialogue, recognition, and an attempt to create psychological safety. This interpretation aligns with evidence that leader autonomy support is associated with autonomous motivation and adaptive work outcomes (Slomp et al., 2018), and that need-supportive leadership may influence students indirectly through teacher motivation and teaching practice (Haw & King, 2023).

The findings also clarify why recognition alone is insufficient. External rewards can communicate appreciation, but they can also become controlling if teachers perceive them as contingent pressure. In this case, recognition appeared most useful when it was specific, credible, and embedded within developmental dialogue. Its function was informational: it helped teachers identify what they were doing effectively and strengthened competence. This is consistent with the broader distinction between autonomous and controlled forms of work motivation (Deci et al., 2017; Gagné et al., 2015).

Feedback, agency, and the mechanism of perceived improvement

Participants' accounts suggest that motivation was not a separate activity added after supervision; it was a quality of the supervisory interaction. Teachers became more open to feedback when supervisors recognized strengths, used specific evidence, and involved them in deciding next steps. This finding is consistent with feedback research showing that information is more likely to improve performance when it is understandable, actionable, and directed toward task and process rather than personal judgment (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008; Wisniewski et al., 2020).

Professional agency emerged as a plausible mechanism linking supervision to perceived instructional change. Teachers who participated in diagnosing problems were more likely to own the response. This interpretation complements research showing that principal instructional leadership is related to teacher professional learning through teacher self-efficacy and related organizational processes (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Thoonen et al., 2011). It also aligns with coaching evidence: sustained improvement is more likely when teachers engage actively in goal setting, practice, feedback, and reflection rather than receiving decontextualized advice (Allen et al., 2011; Kraft et al., 2018).

The distinction between perceived improvement and causal impact remains essential. Quantitative studies have reported relationships among supervision, motivation, and performance (Prasetyono et al., 2018), but collaborative supervision does not necessarily

generate direct student-outcome effects (Wiyono et al., 2021). The present study adds process-level explanation but cannot resolve causal questions. Its contribution lies in showing how teachers and leaders understood the sequence: supportive supervision reduced defensiveness, clearer feedback increased perceived competence, and participation encouraged follow-through.

Career-stage differentiation and sustainable implementation

The perceived difference between novice and senior teachers suggests that motivation-supportive supervision should be differentiated. Less-experienced teachers may prioritize clarity, reassurance, modeling, and opportunities to develop competence. More-experienced teachers may value professional autonomy, recognition of expertise, and opportunities to mentor or influence school practice. This does not imply a rigid age-based formula. Rather, it reinforces the need to diagnose each teacher's current goals, confidence, and constraints. Research shows that teacher self-efficacy, stress, and job satisfaction vary with experience and working conditions, while job demands and resources shape motivation and well-being (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017, 2018).

Sustainability depends on organizational design. Time pressure can convert a theoretically supportive model into a superficial checklist. Professional development research consistently emphasizes duration, coherence, active learning, and follow-up (Desimone, 2009; Kennedy, 2016; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). The school therefore needs protected time for observation and dialogue, a manageable number of improvement goals, and a mechanism for revisiting progress. Without these conditions, the motivational value of respectful feedback may not translate into sustained practice.

The case also demonstrates the importance of school climate. Teacher stress, efficacy, and satisfaction are related to social-emotional and organizational conditions (Collie et al., 2012), and leadership support can buffer strain during periods of disruption (Collie, 2021). A positive collegial culture allowed teachers to interpret supervision as part of shared improvement rather than individual exposure. Relatedness was therefore not merely interpersonal warmth; it was an organizational resource that supported professional risk taking.

Implications

Theoretical implications

The study advances a need-supportive model of instructional supervision. In this model, supervisory procedures do not influence practice solely because teachers are observed or scored. Their developmental value depends on whether the interaction supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Motivation is therefore conceptualized as a mediating process between supervision and professional action. This model helps explain why technically similar supervision can generate different outcomes: an observation followed by controlling criticism may provoke concealment and compliance, whereas the same evidence discussed through respectful, competence-building dialogue may generate reflection and ownership.

A second theoretical implication concerns the integration of structure and autonomy. The findings reject a false choice between accountability and teacher agency. Clear standards,

scheduled observation, and documented follow-up can coexist with autonomy support when teachers receive rationales, voice, and context-sensitive options. The relevant distinction is not structured versus unstructured supervision, but informational and participatory structure versus controlling structure.

Third, the study highlights career-stage sensitivity as a boundary condition. Need-support is universal in theory, but the practices through which teachers experience support may vary. Competence support may require modeling for one teacher and advanced challenge for another; relatedness may involve reassurance for a novice and recognition of professional contribution for a senior teacher. Future research should test this differentiated mechanism systematically.

Practical implications for school leaders

School leaders can translate the findings of this study into a structured six-stage supervision protocol. The process should begin with a clear explanation of the purpose, criteria, and expected outcomes of the observation, with particular emphasis on professional learning and the rationale underlying the required standards. Supervisors should then invite teachers to identify a specific developmental focus so that the observation reflects both institutional priorities and teachers' individual professional goals. During the observation, supervisors should collect specific and objective evidence of instructional practice rather than relying on general impressions or judgments about teachers' personalities.

The feedback stage should begin by recognizing effective practices before addressing a limited number of high-priority areas for improvement. Focusing on a manageable set of issues may help teachers engage with the feedback more constructively and translate it into practical changes. Supervisors and teachers should subsequently develop an actionable follow-up plan that clearly specifies responsibilities, required resources, and a realistic date for reviewing progress. The form and intensity of support should also be differentiated according to teachers' readiness, career stage, professional needs, and teaching context, while maintaining fairness and consistent institutional expectations.

At the organizational level, schools should allocate sufficient time for post-observation dialogue and provide supervisors with training in constructive feedback, coaching, and motivation-supportive communication. Where possible, developmental supervision should be separated from high-stakes personnel decisions to preserve openness and psychological safety. When such separation is not feasible, school leaders should clearly distinguish which components of the process are formative and which are evaluative. Greater transparency regarding the purpose and consequences of supervision can reduce ambiguity, minimize anxiety, and strengthen teachers' engagement with professional development.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations. First, it examined one small private Islamic junior secondary school and included only five participants, three of whom taught Islamic religious education. Transfer to other schools, subjects, and governance contexts should therefore be analytical rather than automatic. Second, the findings rely substantially on participant accounts

and may be affected by social desirability, especially because the principal and teachers belonged to the same organization. Third, the available records did not permit a detailed account of observation frequency, interview duration, participant experience, or changes across a defined longitudinal period. Fourth, the study did not include student perspectives, independently scored classroom observations, teacher-motivation measures, or linked student-learning outcomes. Finally, no comparison case was available.

Future studies should use longitudinal mixed-method designs to examine whether need-supportive supervisory behavior predicts changes in autonomous motivation, psychological need satisfaction, instructional practice, and student engagement. Comparative studies across public, private, and Islamic schools could identify contextual differences. Research should also examine how developmental supervision can be integrated ethically with formal teacher appraisal, and whether career-stage differentiation improves the acceptability and impact of feedback.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study indicates that instructional supervision was experienced as more constructive when it moved beyond periodic evaluation and became a recurring process of observation, recognition, dialogue, and follow-up. Participants associated the approach with stronger openness to feedback, confidence, lesson preparation, classroom management, and instructional experimentation, although the design does not support causal claims. Leadership commitment, resources, collegial culture, teacher understanding, and intrinsic willingness to improve enabled the process; limited time, evaluation anxiety, resistance, and heterogeneous needs constrained it.

Self-determination theory provides a coherent explanation for these findings. Supervision supported autonomy when teachers had voice and meaningful participation, competence when feedback was specific and actionable, and relatedness when professional interaction was respectful and psychologically safe. The central implication is that effective supervision is neither permissive nor merely controlling. It combines clear standards with need-supportive leadership so that accountability becomes a platform for professional learning rather than an endpoint in itself.

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