

Supervising from the Periphery: Educational Leader in Ensuring Instructional Quality for Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas

Nadzmin J. Dugasan¹, Jocelyn A. Pajiji, EdD-EM¹, Annie Rose V. Onaid¹, Rasul M. Abdurasid¹

¹*Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Services, College of Education, Mindanao State University- Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines*

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Email of Corresponding Author: nadzmindugasan@gmail.com

Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the lived experience of an educational commissioner in supervising instructional quality in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Anchored in clinical supervision and adaptive leadership, the study examined how instructional supervision is sustained when conventional monitoring systems, digital reporting tools, standardized performance indicators, and regular school visits are constrained by distance, weak infrastructure, unstable communication, limited resources, and local cultural conditions. Data were gathered through a semi-structured interview with one educational commissioner who served as the key informant, and the responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that effective supervision in GIDAs was sustained through community-based monitoring, remote communication, flexible reporting tools, teacher-centered dialogue, adaptive scheduling, commitment to care, empathy, mentorship, trust-building, contextualized RPMS implementation, local indicators and rubrics, collaborative evaluation, policy adaptation through dialogue, and cultural responsiveness. The study further showed that supervision in remote schools extends beyond compliance and formal evaluation; it requires relational trust, moral responsibility, community participation, and context-sensitive leadership. The main conclusion is that instructional quality can be maintained in marginalized educational settings when supervision is humane, adaptive, collaborative, and culturally responsive. The study recommends strengthening localized supervision frameworks that allow educational leaders to adapt evaluation tools, reporting systems, schedules, and supervisory practices according to actual field conditions. The study supports SDG 4 on Quality Education, SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities, SDG 16 on Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 on Partnerships for the Goals. Its sustainability impact lies in advancing educational, governance, institutional, cultural, and community sustainability in remote and underserved schools.

Keywords: Adaptive Leadership, Community-Based Monitoring, Cultural Responsiveness, Instructional Supervision, Relational Trust, Teacher Support

1. Introduction

Instructional supervision in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) requires educational leadership that is flexible, relational, culturally responsive, and grounded in the realities of limited transportation, unstable communication, scarce resources, and community dependence. This study focuses on the lived experience of an educational commissioner supervising schools in remote island communities in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). It examines how instructional quality is maintained when conventional supervision systems, digital reporting tools, standardized performance indicators, and regular school visits are constrained by geography and infrastructure. Anchored in clinical supervision and adaptive leadership, the study highlights supervision as a humane, dialogic, and context-sensitive practice that depends on trust, mentoring, local participation, and moral responsibility.

Instructional supervision is central to improving teaching quality because it supports teachers through observation, feedback, professional dialogue, and developmental assistance rather than mere compliance checking (Cogan, 1973; Glickman et al., 2013). In GIDAs, however, the practice of supervision becomes more complex because school leaders must respond to physical isolation, weak communication systems, resource shortages, unpredictable transport, and local cultural realities. The Department of Education has recognized that schools in geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas continue to face gaps in facilities, resources, and access, which affect the delivery of quality basic education (Department of Education [DepEd], 2019). Within BARMM, the need for education that is responsive to regional identity, equity, and local realities is reinforced by the Bangsamoro Education Code of 2021, which establishes a complete and integrated system of quality education aligned with the needs and aspirations of the Bangsamoro people (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao [BARMM], 2021). Against this background, the present study positions the

educational commissioner not only as a policy implementer but also as a contextual leader who adapts supervision to ensure that teachers remain supported and learners continue receiving instruction despite difficult conditions.

Related literature shows that effective instructional supervision is developmental, collaborative, and teacher-centered. Clinical supervision emphasizes professional dialogue, evidence-based feedback, and teacher growth rather than punitive inspection (Cogan, 1973). Similarly, developmental supervision recognizes that supervisors must adjust their approaches according to teacher needs, capacity, and context (Glickman et al., 2013). These ideas are reflected in the commissioner's use of teacher-centered dialogue, mentoring, flexible feedback, and informal communication as substitutes for rigid supervisory procedures. Adaptive leadership further explains the commissioner's practice because remote school supervision involves complex challenges that cannot be solved by standard technical procedures alone. Adaptive leadership requires leaders to diagnose changing realities, mobilize people, experiment with workable solutions, and sustain collective responsibility under uncertainty (Heifetz et al., 2009). In this study, adaptive leadership is seen in the commissioner's flexible scheduling, acceptance of handwritten or photo-based reports, use of SMS and Messenger when formal systems fail, and reliance on local community actors for monitoring. The literature on relational trust also supports the study's findings. Trust in schools is built through consistency, competence, respect, personal regard, and integrity, and it strengthens school improvement by making collaboration possible (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The commissioner's practice of confidentiality, advance notice of visits, non-punitive feedback, and emotional support shows that trust is not incidental but foundational to supervision in isolated contexts. Cultural responsiveness is also relevant because supervision in BARMM requires sensitivity to language, religious observance, local ceremonies, and community norms. Culturally responsive education values learners' and teachers' cultural identities and uses them as resources for teaching, communication, and institutional relationship-building (Gay, 2010).

Locally, the study is situated in remote island communities within BARMM, where supervision is shaped by boat schedules, sea conditions, market days, weak signal, power interruptions, and culturally embedded routines. These conditions require the commissioner to localize national and regional policies rather than apply them mechanically. The Bangsamoro Education Code supports this contextualization by emphasizing education that is relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals, and aspirations of the Bangsamoro people (BARMM, 2021). Nationally, the study relates to Philippine basic education reforms on teacher quality, performance management, and access to underserved schools. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers provide a standards-based framework for teacher quality, professional accountability, and improved learning outcomes (DepEd, 2017). The Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) provides mechanisms for performance target-setting, monitoring, evaluation, and development planning (DepEd, 2015). However, this study shows that such frameworks require contextual interpretation in GIDAs, where teachers may not have stable internet, complete documents, regular transport, or sufficient instructional materials. Globally, the study aligns with inclusion-oriented education agendas that emphasize the need to reach learners excluded or disadvantaged by location, poverty, culture, language, or other barriers (UNESCO, 2020). It also supports the broader Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). The commissioner's practices show how global commitments to equity and quality become meaningful when translated into local supervision systems that respond to the actual conditions of teachers and learners.

The study is anchored in Clinical Supervision Theory and interpreted through Adaptive Leadership. Clinical Supervision Theory frames supervision as a structured yet collegial process of improving instruction through observation, analysis, dialogue, and feedback (Cogan, 1973). In the context of this study, clinical supervision is expanded beyond formal classroom observation to include informal mentoring, reflective conversation, flexible documentation, and teacher-centered support. This is necessary because conventional supervision cycles may be disrupted by distance, weather, transport limitations, and communication gaps. Adaptive Leadership provides the second conceptual lens. It explains how the commissioner navigates uncertain and resource-constrained conditions by modifying tools, schedules, communication practices, and evaluation indicators without abandoning the goal of instructional quality (Heifetz et al., 2009). Through this lens, the commissioner's work is understood as adaptive governance: the commissioner preserves the purpose of supervision while changing the methods to fit local realities. Relational trust and culturally responsive leadership further support the framework by explaining why care, confidentiality, dialogue, local language, and cultural sensitivity are essential to effective supervision in BARMM (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Gay, 2010).

Although education policies provide standards for teacher quality, performance management, and school improvement, less attention is given to how educational leaders in GIDAs actually enact supervision when formal systems are constrained by geography, infrastructure, and local culture. The gap is not simply about access to schools but about how supervision is redesigned when regular classroom observation, online submission, standardized indicators, and centralized reporting are difficult to sustain. This study responds to that gap by documenting the lived experience of an educational commissioner who ensures instructional quality through community-based monitoring, remote communication, flexible tools, adaptive scheduling, mentorship, trust-building, contextualized RPMS implementation, local rubrics, collaborative evaluation, policy adaptation through dialogue, and cultural responsiveness. The rationale is to generate practical and policy-relevant

insights for localized supervision frameworks that do not weaken standards but make them fair, humane, and workable in marginalized contexts.

This study aligns most directly with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it examines how instructional quality and teacher support can be sustained in remote schools where learners are at risk of being underserved due to geography and resource scarcity (United Nations, 2015). It also supports SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities by focusing on geographically marginalized communities and showing how supervision can reduce educational disadvantage through flexible, contextual, and inclusive practices. SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure is relevant because the findings highlight the instructional consequences of weak communication, transportation, power, and digital infrastructure, while also showing how local innovation can sustain supervision when formal systems fail. SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions is reflected in the commissioner’s participatory, transparent, and non-punitive supervision practices, which strengthen institutional trust and responsive governance. SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals is also evident because community members, barangay officials, parents, and local watch groups become partners in monitoring and supporting schools. A secondary connection to SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being is present because the commissioner’s supervision includes concern for teachers’ emotional, physical, and psychological well-being.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by showing how teacher support, instructional supervision, and professional accountability can continue even in locations where conventional systems are disrupted. It contributes to governance sustainability by demonstrating that policies such as RPMS and teacher standards become more effective when interpreted through local dialogue, fairness, and contextual evidence. It contributes to technological and innovation sustainability by showing that supervision in low-connectivity contexts can use appropriate, low-cost, and teacher-friendly tools such as SMS, photos, handwritten reports, voice notes, and informal check-ins. The study also supports socio-economic and community sustainability because it recognizes the school as a shared community institution and positions local stakeholders as partners in maintaining instructional quality. Its cultural sustainability lies in its respect for local language, religious observance, community traditions, and culturally shaped school routines. Its public health and well-being relevance emerges from the commissioner’s attention to teacher fatigue, grief, isolation, illness, and emotional stress. Overall, the study affirms that sustainable education in marginalized contexts requires more than infrastructure and policy; it requires compassionate leadership, adaptive governance, community partnership, cultural responsiveness, and supervision systems that protect both instructional quality and human dignity.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a phenomenological research design to examine the lived experience of an educational commissioner in supervising schools located in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. This design was appropriate because the study sought to understand the meaning, challenges, and strategies associated with instructional supervision from the perspective of a leader directly engaged in the supervision of remote schools.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in a remote island community within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The area was characterized by geographic isolation, limited access to schools, communication difficulties, resource shortages, unpredictable transportation, and other conditions commonly experienced in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

2.3 Participants of the Study

The participant of the study was an educational commissioner assigned to supervise schools in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. The commissioner served as the key informant because of direct experience in instructional supervision, teacher support, policy adaptation, and the maintenance of instructional quality in remote school contexts.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study involved one key educational leader who provided detailed accounts of supervision practices in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. The manuscript identifies the respondent as an educational commissioner but does not specify the formal sampling procedure used in selecting the participant.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview. This instrument allowed the researcher to gather rich descriptions of the commissioner’s experiences, challenges, and strategies in supervising instruction in remote and disadvantaged school settings. The interview focused on supervision practices, communication methods, teacher support, contextualized performance management, community participation, and adaptive leadership in GIDAs.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered through a semi-structured interview with the educational commissioner. The interview elicited narratives on the respondent's experiences in supervising GIDA schools, navigating instructional challenges, supporting teachers, adapting supervision tools, contextualizing RPMS, developing local indicators and rubrics, and using dialogue and cultural responsiveness in policy implementation.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis identified major themes related to the commissioner's experiences, challenges, and strategies in ensuring instructional quality in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. The emerging themes included community-based monitoring, remote communication, flexibility in tools, teacher-centered dialogue, adaptive scheduling, commitment to care, empathy, mentorship, trust-building, contextualized RPMS, local indicators and rubrics, collaborative evaluation, policy adaptation through dialogue, and cultural responsiveness.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Educational Commissioner's Experiences in Supervising GIDAs

3.1.1 Community-Based Monitoring

The data showed that the commissioner relied on barangay officials, community watch groups, parents, and local leaders to monitor teacher attendance, classroom conditions, and school concerns when direct supervisory visits were not possible. The commissioner gathered information through informal conversations during school feeding programs, community encounters, and local updates from those who regularly interacted with the school. This finding indicates that supervision in GIDAs extends beyond formal administrative structures. Because distance, transport limitations, and poor infrastructure restrict direct monitoring, the commissioner transformed community members into partners in maintaining school standards. This reflects Epstein's (2011) view that school, family, and community partnerships strengthen student support and school improvement. It also aligns with Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership perspective, which explains that leadership practice can be shared across formal and informal actors within a school community.

3.1.2 Remote Communication

The result suggests that communication and documentation in GIDAs depend less on formal digital systems and more on persistence, adaptability, and mutual trust. In contexts where infrastructure is weak, supervision must adjust to available means while preserving its instructional purpose. UNESCO (2023) emphasized that technology can support education only when access, equity, governance, and teacher preparation conditions are addressed. Thus, the commissioner's use of SMS, Messenger, photos, handwritten reports, and voice notes reflects an appropriate response to low-connectivity conditions rather than a weakening of supervisory standards. Mette (2024) similarly showed that supervision and evaluation in rural contexts must account for spatial and contextual realities that affect how school leaders support teachers.

3.1.3 Flexibility in Tools

The data showed that the commissioner did not require teachers to use online tools when internet access, electricity, or digital devices were unavailable. The commissioner accepted handwritten reports, photos of student outputs, voice notes, printed worksheets, and other practical forms of documentation. The commissioner's statement, "Don't worry about forms—tell me what's really happening," reflected the commissioner's preference for authentic reporting over rigid compliance. This finding highlights the importance of contextualized accountability in remote schools. By allowing teachers to use available tools, the commissioner preserved the purpose of supervision without imposing unrealistic documentation demands. Sullivan and Glanz (2013) emphasized that supervision should improve teaching and learning through reflective, practical, and supportive processes rather than mechanical compliance. Similarly, Glickman et al. (2018) argued that effective supervision requires differentiated approaches that respond to teachers' actual circumstances and professional needs.

3.1.4 Teacher-Centered Dialogue

The findings showed that the commissioner approached supervision as a conversation centered on the teacher's situation rather than immediate inspection of outputs. The commissioner began visits by asking teachers how they were doing and encouraged them to speak openly without fear of mistakes. The commissioner's view that "supervision should be a conversation, not an audit" emphasized empathy, openness, and professional partnership. This result indicates that teacher-centered dialogue helped reduce fear and strengthen supervisory relationships. Clinical supervision emphasizes professional conversation, observation, feedback, and reflection as means of improving instruction (Cogan, 1973). The commissioner's approach also reflects the importance of relational trust, which Bryk and Schneider (2002) identified as a core resource for school improvement. When teachers feel respected and protected, they are more likely to disclose challenges, accept feedback, and engage in professional growth.

3.1.5 Adaptive Scheduling

The data revealed that the commissioner's school visits depended on boat schedules, market days, weather conditions, sea waves, and transport availability. The commissioner rescheduled visits when travel was unsafe or impossible and timed supervision around local mobility patterns. This finding shows that supervision in GIDAs requires flexible time management and strong local awareness. Rescheduling was not a sign of weak planning but a practical response to the realities of island communities. Leithwood et al. (2008) emphasized that successful school leaders apply core leadership practices in ways that are responsive to context rather than dictated by uniform procedures. In the same way, adaptive leadership requires leaders to diagnose situational constraints and adjust implementation without abandoning organizational goals (Heifetz et al., 2009).

3.2 Navigating Challenges to Ensure Instructional Quality in GIDAs

3.2.1 Commitment to Care

The findings showed that the commissioner viewed teacher well-being as part of instructional supervision. The commissioner expressed responsibility not only for teaching performance but also for teachers' emotional health. When teachers were sick, grieving, or facing family concerns, the commissioner adjusted evaluation expectations and provided support when needed. This result suggests that care functioned as a foundation of leadership in GIDAs. Instructional quality cannot be sustained when teachers' physical, emotional, and psychological needs are ignored. Collie et al. (2012) found that school climate is associated with teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy, indicating that supportive environments matter for teacher performance. Viac and Fraser (2020) also emphasized that teacher well-being is shaped by working conditions at both the school and system levels, including professional demands, social relationships, and organizational support. The commissioner's caring approach therefore strengthened supervision by addressing the human conditions that affect teachers' ability to teach effectively.

3.2.2 Empathy as Principle

The data revealed that empathy guided the commissioner's supervision. The commissioner tried to understand teachers' lived experiences, including long travel, personal sacrifice, isolation, and emotional stress. The commissioner listened patiently during dialogues and recognized that, at times, listening itself was the support teachers needed. This finding indicates that empathy allowed the commissioner to interpret teacher performance in relation to context. Rather than reducing supervision to metrics or compliance, the commissioner acknowledged the hardships behind teaching in remote areas. Tschannen-Moran (2014) emphasized that trust in schools depends on benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. Dreer (2023) further found that teacher well-being is associated with important educational outcomes, including teacher retention, teacher-student relationships, and student outcomes. The commissioner's empathetic listening supported these trust and well-being conditions and helped teachers feel valued, understood, and professionally safe.

3.2.3 Mentorship as Supervision

The findings showed that the commissioner treated supervision as mentorship rather than correction or punishment. The commissioner asked teachers what support they needed, offered encouragement during feedback, provided resources when available, and connected teachers with others who could help them improve. This result shows that mentorship made supervision developmental and collaborative. Developmental supervision recognizes that teachers require differentiated support depending on their competence, commitment, and professional needs (Glickman et al., 2018). Likewise, Sullivan and Glanz (2013) described supervision as a process that should help teachers reflect on and improve their practice. He et al. (2024) found that principals' instructional leadership significantly predicts teachers' professional development, particularly through supervision, evaluation, and professional learning opportunities. The commissioner's mentoring style therefore transformed supervision from an evaluative act into a professional learning process.

3.2.4 Building Trust

The data showed that trust was central to the commissioner's supervision. The commissioner maintained confidentiality, avoided surprise visits, gave teachers assurance that honesty would not be used against them, and built relationships through consistency and kindness. Teachers became more open in sharing concerns, asking for help, and participating in supervision dialogues. This finding suggests that trust transformed supervision from a monitoring activity into a collaborative process. Bryk and Schneider (2002) argued that relational trust supports school improvement because it strengthens cooperation among educators, families, and school leaders. Tschannen-Moran (2014) similarly emphasized that trust is essential to effective school leadership. In the GIDA context, trust reduced fear, increased transparency, and allowed the commissioner to understand actual teaching conditions more accurately.

3.2.5 Non-Instructional Roles

The findings revealed that the commissioner often performed roles beyond formal instructional supervision. The commissioner brought food to teachers, fetched water, helped with transport, assisted during emergencies, and supported teachers who stayed in schools for extended periods due to isolation. This result shows that leadership in GIDAs often requires humanitarian and logistical support alongside instructional guidance. The commissioner's actions were consistent

with the broader understanding that school leadership influences the organizational conditions that support teaching and learning (Leithwood et al., 2008). Since schools in remote and disadvantaged communities often lack basic services and resources, educational leadership must also involve practical problem-solving, community linkage, and care-based support (DepEd, 2019).

3.3 Educational Commissioner's Strategies in Ensuring Effective Teaching and Learning in GIDAs

3.3.1 Contextualizing RPMS

The data showed that the commissioner modified the implementation of the Results-Based Performance Management System to fit local realities. The commissioner removed indicators that were not applicable, replaced “use of ICT” with “use of any available resource,” and avoided penalizing teachers for missing outputs when conditions prevented compliance. The commissioner emphasized impact over documentation. This finding indicates that standardized performance systems require contextual interpretation in GIDAs. The RPMS was designed to support performance planning, monitoring, review, and development within DepEd (DepEd, 2015), while the multi-year RPMS-PPST guidelines further aligned teacher performance management with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers across school years (DepEd, 2023). However, the commissioner's practice shows that accountability tools must be applied with fairness when teachers work in conditions of limited internet, electricity, transport, and materials. This interpretation is consistent with adaptive leadership, which requires leaders to preserve the purpose of institutional policy while adjusting implementation to complex realities (Heifetz et al., 2009).

3.3.2 Local Indicators and Rubrics

The findings showed that the commissioner developed local indicators and rubrics based on real classroom scenarios in GIDAs. Teachers' success was evaluated through attendance, community feedback, storytelling, photos, student outputs, and evidence of community impact. These rubrics were adjusted according to teacher and student needs. This result suggests that locally developed rubrics made evaluation more meaningful and attainable. Effective instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching and learning rather than merely completing administrative requirements (Hallinger, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008). By using evidence that reflected actual classroom and community realities, the commissioner made evaluation more responsive to GIDA conditions. This also connects with culturally responsive education, which recognizes that educational practices must be interpreted through learners' and communities' cultural and social contexts (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

3.3.3 Collaborative Evaluation

The data revealed that evaluation was conducted as a shared process. Teachers were asked to assess themselves before receiving feedback, and improvement plans were co-created with the commissioner. Evaluation meetings were flexible and sometimes held in informal settings, allowing more honest discussion. This finding shows that collaborative evaluation shifted supervision from a hierarchical judgment process to a professional growth process. Clinical supervision supports teacher development through pre-observation dialogue, observation, analysis, feedback, and reflective planning (Cogan, 1973). Sullivan and Glanz (2013) also emphasized reflective supervision as a collaborative process that helps teachers examine and improve their instructional practice. The commissioner's use of self-assessment and co-created improvement plans strengthened teacher ownership and reduced fear of evaluation.

3.3.4 Policy Adaptation Through Dialogue

The findings showed that the commissioner adapted policies through conversation rather than command. Before implementing new MBHTE memos or guidelines, the commissioner consulted teachers and localized the directives through pre-implementation meetings. The commissioner used open questions and non-threatening language to help teachers understand and participate in policy interpretation. This result indicates that dialogue made policy implementation more practical and sustainable. Policies are more likely to be implemented meaningfully when leaders consider local context, organizational routines, and the people who enact them in practice (Spillane, 2006). Leithwood et al. (2008) also emphasized that effective leaders respond to the settings in which they work rather than applying leadership practices mechanically. Through dialogue, the commissioner reduced resistance, strengthened teacher ownership, and made policy implementation more realistic in GIDA schools.

3.3.5 Cultural Responsiveness

The data showed that the commissioner adjusted supervision based on local religious, linguistic, and cultural practices. The commissioner delayed observations during Ramadan or local ceremonies, greeted teachers in the local dialect, used language that made teachers feel safe, and adjusted expectations when traditions affected school routines. This finding shows that cultural responsiveness strengthened the legitimacy and effectiveness of supervision. Gay (2018) explained that culturally responsive teaching uses students' and communities' cultural experiences as meaningful resources for education. Ladson-Billings (1995) likewise argued that culturally relevant pedagogy connects learning with cultural identity and social context. Mansfield and Lambrinou (2024) further emphasized that culturally responsive leadership requires equity-oriented and community-grounded practices that involve school leaders, teachers, families, students, and community members. In

the commissioner's practice, cultural responsiveness was not limited to classroom instruction; it also shaped supervision, scheduling, communication, and teacher support.

3.4 Overall Interpretation of the Findings

The findings reveal that supervision in GIDAs is not limited to classroom observation, compliance monitoring, or performance documentation. It is a complex leadership practice shaped by geography, infrastructure, culture, community participation, teacher well-being, and local governance. The commissioner ensured instructional quality by adapting tools, schedules, policies, evaluation systems, and communication practices to the realities of remote schools. Overall, the study demonstrates that effective instructional supervision can continue even under extreme constraints when it is grounded in empathy, trust, flexibility, mentorship, and contextual understanding. This supports the view that instructional leadership has a strong influence on teaching and learning when leaders focus on the core work of schools (Hallinger, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008). It also affirms UNESCO's (2020) emphasis on inclusion in education, particularly for learners and communities excluded or disadvantaged by location, poverty, language, culture, or other barriers. In this study, supervision from the periphery becomes a model of adaptive, relational, and culturally responsive leadership for marginalized educational contexts.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that instructional supervision in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas is a complex, context-dependent leadership practice that extends beyond classroom observation, compliance monitoring, and formal performance documentation. The lived experience of the educational commissioner showed that instructional quality in GIDAs can be sustained through community-based monitoring, remote communication, flexible documentation tools, teacher-centered dialogue, adaptive scheduling, commitment to care, empathy, mentorship, trust-building, contextualized RPMS implementation, local indicators and rubrics, collaborative evaluation, policy adaptation through dialogue, and cultural responsiveness. These findings affirm that effective supervision in remote and marginalized schools requires adaptive governance, relational trust, and culturally responsive leadership, particularly when conventional supervisory systems are constrained by weak infrastructure, limited transportation, unstable communication, and scarce resources (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Gay, 2018; Heifetz et al., 2009; Mette, 2024; O'Shea & Zuckerman, 2022). Overall, the study demonstrates that supervision from the periphery can become a humane, innovative, and development-oriented model of educational leadership when it protects both instructional quality and teacher dignity.

It is recommended that education authorities and school governance bodies strengthen localized supervision frameworks for GIDAs by allowing educational leaders to adapt performance indicators, reporting tools, evaluation schedules, and supervisory procedures according to actual field conditions while maintaining the core purpose of instructional improvement. Policies such as RPMS should be implemented with contextual flexibility so that teachers are assessed through realistic, evidence-based, and locally meaningful indicators rather than through uniform documentation requirements that may be impractical in remote schools (DepEd, 2015; DepEd, 2023; Heifetz et al., 2009). Supervisors assigned to GIDAs should also be supported in using mentoring, dialogic feedback, community participation, culturally responsive communication, and trust-building practices as legitimate components of instructional supervision. Since the findings show that teachers in isolated schools require both professional and emotional support, supervisory systems should recognize care, empathy, and collaborative evaluation as essential to sustaining teacher effectiveness, institutional trust, and inclusive quality education (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Dreer, 2023; UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO, 2023; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

The study is limited by its phenomenological focus on the lived experience of one educational commissioner supervising schools in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. While the findings provide rich and contextually grounded insights into supervision in remote island communities within BARMM, they do not represent the full range of experiences of other supervisors, teachers, school heads, learners, or community stakeholders in other GIDA contexts. The study also relied on semi-structured interview data, which means that the findings are based on the participant's narrated experiences rather than on multiple data sources such as classroom observations, document analysis, teacher interviews, or learner performance records. Therefore, future studies may expand the scope by involving more participants, comparing different GIDA settings, and incorporating additional sources of evidence to further examine how adaptive, relational, and culturally responsive supervision affects teacher development and instructional quality.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical standards for research involving human participants. The educational commissioner participated voluntarily after being informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and use of data, and informed consent was obtained before the interview. Confidentiality was observed by protecting the participant's identity and ensuring that shared experiences were used only for academic and research purposes. Ethical approval was secured from the appropriate institutional authority prior to data gathering. The authors declare no conflict of interest and affirm that all contributions to the study were properly acknowledged. Copyright ownership and responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript remain with the authors.

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