

HEADMASTERS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: AN INVESTIGATION INTO SUPERVISORY PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Hamed Alyahmadi

Faculty of Education, Arab Open University, Muscat, Oman

*hamed.y@aou.edu.om

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' professional performance in schools has long been considered a key factor in building high-quality or outstanding schools and in enhancing students' academic achievement. Systematic supervision appears to play a crucial role in strengthening teacher professionalism. School headmasters can serve as vital coordinators in overseeing and guiding the supervisory process. In this context, the essential aim of the current study was to explore and assess the supervisory practices of headmasters in the Sultanate of Oman. A systematic qualitative approach was employed, via document analysis, interviews, and systematic observations as the main methods of data collection. The findings revealed that supervisory practices in Oman primarily focused on supporting teachers' professional growth and development. Two key factors—namely, the professional competence of headmasters and certain organizational and systemic challenges—restrict their ability to effectively carry out supervisory activities that support teaching and learning.

Keywords: Supervision, headmasters qualitative, Oman, teacher professionalism.

INTRODUCTION

Ongoing teacher learning and professional growth serve as the foundation for educational reform and enhanced instructional practices. Improved student learning outcomes cannot be realized without strengthening teachers' curricular knowledge and instructional skills. Teachers, functioning as frontline implementers within the educational system, play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of instructional reforms and innovations. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that teacher learning would be viewed as the most significant factor in the educational improvement process.

Supervision plays a vital role in supporting teacher learning and professional growth. Given this background, supervision is a school-centred process or practice that involves teachers in continuous, constructive, and supportive instructional dialogue aimed at enhancing both teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Tuyor, 2025). Supervisors play a vital role as instructional leaders in fostering the continuous development of teachers. Their supervisory processes, inherently developmental, are seen as crucial for promoting ongoing teacher reflection and growth (Wiyono et al., 2021). This means that effective supervision isn't just about evaluation; it's about a dynamic, supportive interaction that encourages teachers to critically examine their practices, learn from their experiences, and continually improve their skills for enhanced student outcomes.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Developmental supervision is key to teacher growth, with headmasters expected to lead and facilitate the process as instructional leaders. Building on these foundations, the study examines whether headmasters in selected schools perceive providing supervisory support to teachers as a key aspect of their professional responsibilities. If so, how do they understand this role and put it into practice in their daily leadership activities? What specific strategies or tasks do they implement to fulfil this supervisory role effectively? What contextual factors influence headmasters' perceptions and practices in delivering supervisory services aimed at enhancing teacher learning and professional growth? Hence, the leading questions that frame this study are as follows:

1. How do headmasters view the supervisory roles that foster teachers' professional growth, and what specific strategies or tasks do they use in supervision?
2. What situational variables influence headmasters' perspectives on supervision and shape their supervisory practices aimed at supporting teacher development?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For this study, a robust theoretical framework is essential to underpin the investigation into developmental supervision and the headmaster's role in fostering teacher professional growth. This will provide a solid foundation and guide the interpretation of the findings. Considering the study's emphasis on supervision, leadership, teacher development, and contextual factors, an appropriate theoretical framework is informed by three core theories:

Instructional Leadership Theory

This theory provides insight into how headmasters perceive and carry out their responsibilities in the context of developmental supervision. It will help to analyze how headmasters guide, support, and evaluate teaching for professional development. Headmasters, as instructional leaders, are responsible for shaping the teaching and learning environment, including teacher supervision. The growing focus on overseeing teaching and learning as fundamental purposes of the education system has given rise to the concept of "instructional leadership". Instructional leadership is a long-established concept that directly links school leadership to student learning outcomes. Despite its prominence, it has been criticized for focusing more on instruction than on learning itself and for positioning the headmaster as the sole authority. Over time, however, the concept has evolved to include shared leadership roles involving teachers and middle leaders. Its primary focus remains on achieving student learning through improving teacher effectiveness, unlike other leadership models that emphasize leadership processes over outcomes.

Developmental Supervision Model

Supervision is seen as a collaborative, growth-oriented approach tailored to teachers' individual needs, aligning with the study's focus on ongoing, supportive, and non-evaluative professional development. It offers a framework to assess whether headmasters apply strategies like clinical supervision, peer coaching, mentoring, or differentiated support.

This model proposes that teachers progress through specific stages of skill and competence, with supervision adapted to suit each stage through targeted interventions (Poncy, 2020). Moreover, the model emphasizes stage-appropriate support based on teachers' developmental levels, learning pace, and style. (Almalki, 2022; Molla et al., 2020).

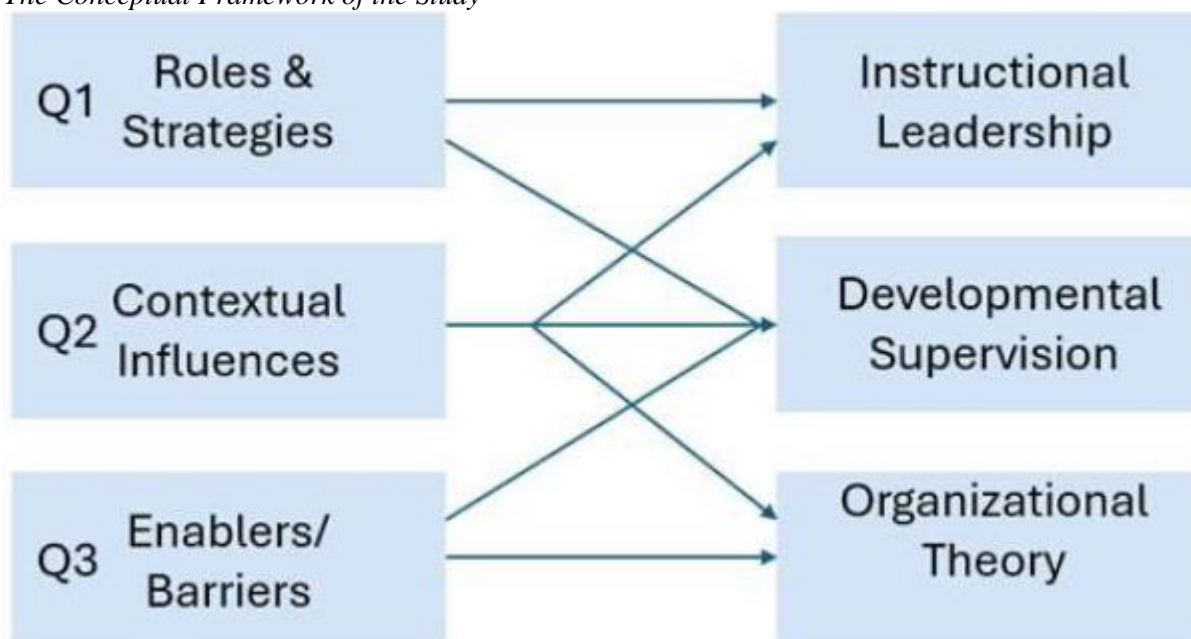
Organizational Theory

Leadership behaviors, including supervision, are shaped by organizational, social, and contextual factors. This approach highlights how culture, policy, workload, and resources affect headmasters' ability to supervise effectively and aims to improve institutional efficiency and practice.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework of the Study



The diagram depicts the connection between three central research questions and three core dimensions of leadership. Here is a breakdown:

This conceptual framework, shown in Figure 1, depicts the connection between three central research questions and three core dimensions of supervision. It is structured around three guiding research questions; each aligned with three interrelated dimensions of educational leadership. The study addresses three key questions: headmasters' supervisory roles and strategies, contextual factors influencing their leadership, and enablers or barriers to effective supervision. These are examined through instructional leadership, developmental supervision, and organizational theory—highlighting how leaders enhance teaching, support teacher growth, and respond to institutional conditions. The framework links these elements to provide an integrated view of how headmasters enact and adapt their supervisory roles within complex school environments.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study used a qualitative methodology to gain profound insights, focusing on participants' perspectives and contextual understanding rather than numerical analysis (Glickman et al., 2022).

A qualitative approach suits this study by revealing the complex, context-specific aspects of supervision and providing deep insights into the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators (Bazen et al., 2021). In education, qualitative research is ideal for exploring how people, policies, and contexts interact to

drive successful reform (Aryal, 2024). Qualitative methods like interviews and observations reveal in-depth insights into teacher evaluation challenges that surveys often miss (Leo et al., 2021).

FINDINGS

The study revealed key insights into supervisory practices in selected Omani schools, showing that all eight headmasters actively engaged in supervisory activities. These included offering instructional support, nurturing collaborative professional communities among teachers, and facilitating ongoing professional learning. They also reported assisting with curriculum design and alignment and launching school-based inquiry or action research projects to boost teaching and learning results. In fact, these key supervisory practices, as highlighted by Zepeda (2019) and Glickman et al. (2022), constitute the core responsibilities of the headmaster.

However, insights gained from the subsequent in-depth interviews, probing questions, and extended discussions with the principals revealed that, although they are engaged in some supervisory activities, these efforts appear limited in depth and scope, falling short of creating meaningful learning or driving substantial change in teacher practice. A cross-case analysis of data from all eight headmasters in the study revealed shared contextual factors contributing to their perceived lack of competence, which then impacted their supervisory performance.

Study Question 1: Headmasters' Views on Instructional Supervision

The first research question explores school headmasters' perceptions of supervision, and the specific tasks associated with their supervisory role. Their elaboration is classified under supervision as a role of school leadership, and the five responsibilities of supervision, namely, offering instructional support, nurturing collaborative professional communities among teachers, facilitating ongoing professional learning for teachers, assisting with curriculum design and alignment, and launching school-based inquiry or action research projects to boost teaching and learning results.

The responses from all eight headmasters concerning their immersion in the five supervisory responsibilities are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Immersion of Headmasters in Several Supervisory Responsibilities

Supervision responsibility	Instructional support	Professional communities	professional growth	Curriculum design	Action research
Headmaster A	Partial	Partial	Occurring	Minimal	At the outset
Headmaster B	Partial	Partial	Occurring	Minimal	At the outset
Headmaster C	Partial	Partial	Occurring	Minimal	At the outset
Headmaster D	Partial	Partial	Occurring	Minimal	At the outset
Headmaster E	Partial	Partial	Occurring	Minimal	Not yet initiated
Headmaster F	Partial	Partial	Occurring	Minimal	Not yet initiated
Headmaster G	Partial	Partial	Occurring	Minimal	At the outset

Headmaster H	Partial	Partial	Occurring	Minimal	Not yet initiated
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Supervision. Firstly, all eight headmasters in the study are aware of the important role of supervision in teacher development. However, generally, they were hesitant regarding the notion of supervision and its purposes. For them, supervision was merely a formal obligation mandated by higher authorities, and they considered its objective or educational value. Although all participants perceived supervision mainly to observe and assess teachers' performance, none referred to it as a tool for fostering professional growth or development. It was evident that they could not associate supervision with the range of practices that support teacher professional growth. The headmasters appeared to have a limited understanding of supervision, viewing it primarily as an 'observation' activity conducted once or, at most, twice a year, solely for evaluative purposes. In the words of one headmaster, "Regular supervision is mandated by the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, we conduct classroom observations primarily to assess teachers' performance, and at times, the outcomes of these observations inform their annual performance evaluations" (Alia, HM, 2).

The perspective shared by another headmaster also reflects their comprehension of supervisory practices. She said, "I wasn't aware that supervision is intended to support teachers in enhancing their teaching. I had always assumed it was mainly for monitoring or inspecting their performance" (Rahma, HM, 3). Roughly, none of the headmasters in the study were able to clearly articulate the concept of supervision. Instead, they perceived it narrowly—as a directive from higher authorities that had to be followed without question.

Instructional Support. All eight headmasters identified instructional support as the primary supervisory task among the five examined, viewing it as the key approach to enhancing teachers' instructional practices. The value of clinical supervision lies in its cyclical structure—comprising pre-observation, observation, and post-observation, which offers opportunities for meaningful improvements in teacher practices that directly impact student learning outcomes. Therefore, this model is particularly useful for novice teachers, those in need of additional support, underperforming educators, and teachers who are likely to benefit from increased engagement and guidance from the evaluator.

Relating to the role of clinical supervision in assisting teachers to recognize the knowledge and pedagogy appears to be acceptable to some extent. 61% of the interviewees believe that supervision plays a vital role in upgrading the teacher's understanding of the content well. They realized that the main impact of classroom observation is the support they receive in their classroom practices. They feel that the supervisors provide them with knowledge and skills about their fields of teaching and how to apply them.

Some interviewees consider that reports of feedback observation help teachers to recognize their weak points of knowledge, skills, and pedagogy. During the conduct of the study, Saood, a headmaster, showed the researcher several formative reports prepared by him on teacher performance. Saood confirmed that he: "appreciate the role of this teacher and reward him for his good performance" (Saood, HM, 4). Moreover, Saood asserted that he called this teacher in the presence of his colleagues and praised his performance in front of them. Thus, it appears that some headmasters employ positive feedback, which in turn encourages improvement of the teacher's performance.

However, a minority of headmasters (25%) have some adverse perceptions regarding the influence of the classroom visit on raising teachers' knowledge and teaching skills. Inappropriately, all headmasters -due to their administrative duties- hardly handle the classroom visit with pre-observation, observation, and post-observation. This undermines the quality of classroom visits. Rahma, a headmaster, justified her situation saying, "There are a mass of administrative tasks burden on our shoulders; so how can the

headmasters deal with this situation?” (Rahma, HM, 3). Likewise, Ahmed, who supervises 67 teachers, believes that the time is insufficient, since she is obligated to tackle all the administrative issues. Other headmasters confirmed that a single classroom visit takes three to four periods of time, including pre-observation, observation, and feedback. Nearly the same replies were obtained from Fatema, who said: Every so often, it is [time] not sufficient, due to the extensive workload I’ve taken on—including administrative, financial, social, and public relations duties, along with shift management and other leadership responsibilities—has significantly stretched my capacity” (Fatem, HM, 5).

Obviously, the limited feedback and checkbox responses do not offer enough depth to interpret or assess instructional methods effectively. Post-observation conferences were seldom held, and when they did occur, they typically took the form of brief, superficial meetings. In these sessions, headmasters would simply advise teachers to enhance their teaching and address areas of weakness—without offering deeper engagement or constructive dialogue. One of the headmasters asserted that, "If a teacher is struggling with poor teaching and classroom control, I would privately advise them to improve their teaching strategies and learn classroom management, hoping they'll make progress"(Ahmed, HM, 1).

Highlighting teachers’ weaknesses without practical improvement strategies is ineffective. Teachers need specific, actionable feedback to refine their methods; without it, adopting better practices and improving student outcomes is challenging. Supervision focused solely on finding faults won't improve teaching. To be effective, it needs to involve genuine conversations, working together to solve problems, and continuous support, transforming criticism into opportunities for professional development. The goal of supervision is professional development, not accountability or formal appraisal. Clinical supervision, according to Zepeda (2019) and Glickman et al. (2022), not only encompasses formative evaluation but also extends further by guiding teachers in developing and executing action plans to achieve their instructional objectives.

Professional Communities. Most interviewees were satisfied with teacher-staff collaboration, viewing it as beneficial for professional development and teaching supervision. For example, Muna, a headmaster of a second cycle school, shared her contentment, stating: “Al-hamdu-lillah [praise be to God], all of our work is carried out collaboratively, and we take great pride in that” (Muna, HM, 6). Similar sentiments were echoed by all participating school principals, indicating a shared appreciation for a collaborative school culture.

Several studies conducted in Oman have highlighted a shortage of adequate training sessions for teachers, headmasters, and supervisors on effectively operating professional learning communities (PLCs). Additionally, the overwhelming administrative responsibilities placed on both school leaders and teachers hinder their ability to engage meaningfully with the developmental potential of PLCs. A further barrier is the limited involvement of teachers in decision-making processes related to teaching and learning, which restricts the perceived value of PLCs in supporting teacher growth (Alyahmadi, 2023; Al-Yahmadi & Al-Shammakhi, 2021; Hammad et al., 2024). Nonetheless, when implemented effectively, PLCs hold significant promise for enhancing teacher professional development

Subject panel meetings usually occur once a week, which is acceptable. But such panel meetings typically focus on discussing the syllabus, preparing exam questions, dealing with the heavy burden of classes, participating in school activities, and planning for the course lessons.

Collaboration has a constructive impact on teachers’ confidence in their professional abilities (Hammad et al., 2024). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) center on educators engaging in collaborative group work aimed at enhancing student achievement. This process naturally entails jointly identifying and addressing instructional challenges. Teachers must know how they can work together in groups. That will improve their cooperative expertise and solve multifaceted instructional challenges. It goes

beyond basic collaboration, fostering authentic, interdependent professional learning that enhances educational outcomes for every student.

Professional Growth. All eight headmasters provide professional development programs, but their impact on meaningful teacher learning is unclear. Traditional short-term training is evolving into ongoing, planned development that better supports continuous teacher growth and student success. (Villegas-Reimers, 2021). In today's focus on educational excellence and standards-based reforms, high-quality professional development is crucial. Teaching's complexity demands ongoing skill refinement throughout educators' careers. Villegas-Reimers (2021) highlights that becoming an excellent teacher is a long-term process involving skill development, expert guidance, specialized knowledge, and the growth of ethical and professional attitudes.

This new teacher development model features key aspects that shape educators' views of the education system. It emphasizes active teacher engagement in hands-on tasks, offering opportunities for observation, assessment, and reflection on new instructional practices. The approach is teacher-centered, inquiry-based, and encourages reflective experimentation. Collaboration is central, promoting the exchange of knowledge among peers. Additionally, it is closely aligned with the real-world context of teachers' work and student learning (Darling-Hammond et al. 2021).

Curriculum Design. All eight headmasters reported limited teacher involvement in curriculum development, mainly coordinating with supervisors and senior teachers to create supplementary activities for lessons. Salima, for instance, indicated that her teachers prepare some subject-based activities. In Salima's words, "math teachers develop many kinds of activities in math for the eighth class. I demonstrated them to the technical supervisor that and he encouraged them and promised to send a copy of them to the Ministry (Salima, HM, 7). Moreover, some interviewees indicated that their teachers participate in preparing some activities, such as preparing exams; for instance, Muna (HM, 6) confirmed that some of her teachers engaged for many years in preparing exams at the area-wise level and the sultanate-wise level.

Oman's education system is highly centralized, with all schools following a uniform curriculum, which limits opportunities for introducing new lessons. Nevertheless, the basic education philosophy promotes the teacher's initiative in creating supplementary activities and exercises related to the curriculum. According to Daga (2021), the curriculum can be categorized into three main positions: the transmission, transaction, and transformation positions. These three perspectives differ in context, goals, experiences, the role of the teacher, and methods of supervision. Curriculum development itself is an ongoing process that encompasses four key stages: orientation, development, implementation, and evaluation.

The transmission position in curriculum development prioritizes teacher-led instruction, where fixed content is delivered primarily through traditional methods such as lectures and textbooks. In this model, students play a passive role, expected to absorb predetermined knowledge, skills, and cultural values. Assessment focuses on evaluating how well students have mastered the content, with teachers maintaining full control over the learning process (Daga, 2021). On the other hand, the transaction position highlights the importance of learners engaging with their environment through inquiry and problem-solving. Students are viewed as active, thoughtful participants who build knowledge through dialogue and hands-on experiences. Teachers act as facilitators of this development, while assessment emphasizes the growth of intellectual and social competencies within democratic, interdisciplinary learning settings. By contrast, the transformation position centers on personal growth, spiritual enrichment, and social transformation. Learning is viewed as a holistic process that integrates physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual aspects, encouraging self-exploration, reflection, and active societal involvement. Teachers serve as facilitators of personal transformation, with informal, participatory assessments guiding learners in their individual and social development.

In the eight schools studied, the transmission approach dominated, with limited use of the transaction approach and no evidence of the transformation approach. This suggests teachers are unfamiliar with advanced curriculum models or lack support to promote higher cognitive development, mainly following prescribed content rather than shaping the curriculum.

Action Research. Action research is essential for active teaching and for training both headmasters and teachers to respond to daily challenges. Collaborative action research, especially interdisciplinary, fosters the exchange of best research practices (Salih & Omar, 2022).

The eight headmasters stated that action research is a required by the Ministry of Education (MoE). The MoE recommends that, besides classroom observation, the headmasters should employ some supervision sources of information for supervision and data collection, including peer observations, reflective journaling, self-assessment, one-on-one consultations, and action research (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The headmasters acknowledged that this is a relatively new concept for them and mentioned that they have only recently begun engaging in action research. Most of the headmasters claimed that classroom observation is the only method applied in their schools. They wish to utilize action research, but they don't know how. In Rahma's words:

Our supervision system depends almost entirely on classroom observation, which significantly undermines its credibility. I wonder why we don't incorporate other effective tools like portfolios, action research, and student achievement data, as they offer valuable insights and strengthen the supervision process. But also, we must know carefully how to conduct them. (Rahma, HM, 3).

Wyatt (2024) suggests numerous examples of action research, which can be conducted in school, such as the following:

- Improving teamwork and students' self-assessment skills
- Enhancing language skills through narrative lessons, process writing, and vocabulary tools
- Supporting expressive and receptive language development using interactive methods like games and shared texts

Study Question 2: Situational Variables

The second study question deals with the situational variables influencing headmasters' perceptions of supervision and shaping their supervisory practices aimed at supporting teacher development. Particularly, this question investigates the external variables (professional competences, institutional, and societal) that ease or compel headmasters' participation in the supervisory journey.

Cross-case analysis examines similarities and differences across individual cases to identify patterns, themes, or theoretical insights that go beyond a single case. To enhance the generalization of findings, cross-case analysis involves systematically examining similarities and differences across individual cases. The data extracted from the interviews revealed that numerous variables have affected the headmasters' performance in steering various supervisory responsibilities such as offering instructional support, nurturing collaborative professional communities among teachers, facilitating ongoing professional learning for teachers, assisting with curriculum design and alignment, and launching school-based inquiry or action research projects to boost teaching and learning results. Several underlying variables could explain the ineffective fulfillment of supervisory responsibilities, as shown below:

The Limitations of Supervision in Enhancing Teachers' Knowledge and Pedagogical Practices.

The findings suggest that the role of supervision in enhancing teachers' understanding of content knowledge and pedagogy is perceived as moderately effective. A majority (61%) of participants view supervision as a crucial factor in improving teachers' subject knowledge and instructional skills, noting that it equips educators with valuable insights and techniques for effective teaching. However, a smaller group of headmasters (26%) expressed skepticism, perceiving supervision as a routine administrative task rather than a meaningful strategy for professional growth. They argue that the process has strayed from its intended purpose and is now seen as inefficient, offering limited value within teacher development and student achievement.

One headmaster (Ziana, HM, 8) expressed surprise at the broad scope of supervision, noting that they had not been informed that it includes activities ranging from direct support to action research. They expressed a desire to better understand how these various components are connected to the overall concept of supervision. Such comments reflect a limited awareness among some principals regarding the full scope and purpose of supervision. Such comments reflect a limited awareness among some principals regarding the full scope and purpose of supervision.

The Limitations of Technical Skills Possessed by Headmasters. The second variable is the limitations of technical skills possessed by headmasters regarding the appropriate procedures for conducting supervision. For instance, the research revealed that the headmasters have vague views about clinical supervision. Most of them don't know that clinical supervision is a collaborative process. Recognizing clinical supervision as a collaborative process means understanding how it relates to teacher development, professional relationships, and the objectives of supervision. Moreover, some headmasters lack knowledge of the most useful model developed by Morris Cogan and further refined by Robert Goldhammer and others. This model comprises five key steps: pre-observation conference, classroom observation, data analysis and interpretation, post-observation feedback and follow-up. Neglecting these steps leads supervision to lose its effectiveness; feedback becomes vague, subjective, or unhelpful. Moreover, the headmaster might make hasty judgments or offer unhelpful, general advice.

Insufficient Understanding of The Varying Stages of Teacher Expertise Development.

Headmasters who are unfamiliar with the various stages of teacher development may find it difficult to offer targeted and meaningful support. As a result, they might give generalized feedback that fails to address individual teacher needs or misjudge a teacher's performance due to not accounting for their experience level.

When the headmasters are asked if they follow up on the teachers' external reading to improve themselves, many of them confirmed that they play this role efficiently. Alia, for example, accepted that: "repeatedly I urge my teachers to read a lot in their specialization and in the teaching methodology" (Alia, HM, 2). The influence of supervision was somewhat evident in teachers' motivation to advance their own professional development. The researcher extracted some insightful observations by analyzing teachers' feedback, aspirations, and attitudes regarding their role in fostering professional growth, as reflected in their self-supervision inquiries. With this perspective, teacher self-supervision is recognized as an integral component of the supervision tools used during classroom observation.

These and other citations clearly indicate that some headmasters are genuinely committed to fostering their teachers' professional development and actively encourage them to engage in self-evaluation through self-supervision. This finding implies that teachers can establish their professional development goals according to their specific needs, interests, and areas for improvement. Supervision outcomes are aligned with performance standards.

It is also important for headmasters to understand the different levels of teaching expertise among their staff. An experienced teacher's approach is fundamentally different from a novice's, particularly in their understanding of student needs and classroom dynamics. While a new teacher might focus on the mechanics of a lesson and maintaining discipline, a seasoned professional has the expertise to adapt their instruction and engage students on a deeper level. This difference stems from a developed ability to connect new information to existing knowledge and a more sophisticated understanding of learning processes.

According to Sydnor et al. (2024), insufficient support for novice teachers can lead to heightened personal and professional stress. Sydnor et al. (2024) also found that workplace isolation contributes to teacher attrition. This occurs when teachers are left to work independently without adequate opportunities for collaboration, co-teaching, or joint lesson planning with colleagues. The combination of persistent and emerging challenges faced by early-career teachers can adversely affect their well-being, ultimately influencing their long-term professional paths.

The headmasters in this study didn't seem to understand the various stages of teacher expertise or the specific support teachers need at each level of their professional growth.

Fatema, a headmaster for almost ten years, provides evidence of what she deems an indication of the Lack of understanding of these differences. She discussed the educational concept of "one size fits all." She believes that using the same supervision method for all teachers, regardless of their subject, experience, or career stage, fails to account for their individual expertise. She describes this point saying:

We don't offer different types of supervision for our teachers. Everyone goes through the same process. The only real difference is how often they're observed: senior teachers get one observation a year, while junior teachers are observed more frequently to ensure they're on track in the classroom (Fatem, HM, 5).

Insufficient Time and Cognitive Capacity to Effectively Reflect on and Carry Out Supervisory Responsibilities. Time, alongside other essential resources, is crucial for aligning the goals of supervision with its practical application. The headmasters interviewed by the researcher consistently identified time constraints as the primary obstacle in implementing supervision that supports both teacher professional growth and accountability. This challenge appears widespread across schools. They frequently cited heavy administrative workloads as a major barrier, limiting their capacity to consistently monitor teachers. As a result, their ability to ensure instructional quality and assess teacher progress is significantly hindered.

As a result, headmasters rarely carry out classroom visits that include all three essential stages: pre-observation, observation, and post-observation. This lack of thoroughness negatively impacts the overall quality of the visits. Ahmed (HM, 1) explained that a complete classroom visit typically requires three to four class periods to accommodate all stages, including feedback. He noted, "This doesn't even account for the time needed to document the visit on the computer. Sometimes, due to weak internet connectivity, I must delay this task, which affects both my students and my other responsibilities" (Ahmed, HM, 1). Similar concerns were echoed by Alia (HM, 2), Rahma (HM, 3), Saood (HM, 4), and others.

During the conduct of this study, several interviewees confirmed that each headmaster is responsible for overseeing and evaluating between 40 and 80 teachers. Given the limited time available to each supervisor, it becomes extremely challenging to thoroughly assess teacher performance and support their professional growth. Consequently, the supervision process often lacks depth and effectiveness. A

headmaster who visits a teacher only once a year cannot realistically evaluate the teacher's overall performance.

Absence of Well-Defined Job Description and Limited Opportunities For Professional Development For Headmasters In Their Roles As Instructional Leaders And Supervisors. Official documents that define the professional duties of school headmasters often fail to emphasize supervision as a key responsibility. Among headmasters' job responsibilities is executing supervisory visits for faculty members and related positions and providing the relevant supervisor with a detailed overview of the main strengths and the key areas for proposed development (Ministry of Education, 2015). In many instances, it is either briefly mentioned or entirely omitted from their job descriptions, indicating that it is not treated as a priority within their leadership role. This lack of clarity can lead to confusion about their instructional duties and may limit efforts to enhance teaching quality through active supervision. Because higher authorities do not emphasize it and headmasters are not evaluated on their supervisory role, they do not feel a sense of responsibility or accountability for it.

It is obvious that: lack of a clearly defined job description leads to overlapping responsibilities and heightened employee conflicts, which in turn contributes to reduced overall performance. Al Rawas et al. (2023) emphasize that organizations must create clear, detailed job descriptions to help employees understand their duties and evaluate performance effectively.

DISCUSSION

Insights from headmasters reveal two main barriers to effective supervision: professional gaps, such as limited supervision skills and understanding of adult learning, and organizational challenges like time constraints, heavy administrative duties, and unclear supervisory roles. These factors significantly hinder principals' supervisory effectiveness.

Professional Competence

One key barrier is headmasters' professional shortcomings in supervision. Although headmasters see supervision as essential for improving teaching and student outcomes, their views are shaped by many factors. They often consider supervision a way to guide, mentor, and support teachers' professional growth, acting as lead mentors who help teachers overcome classroom challenges.

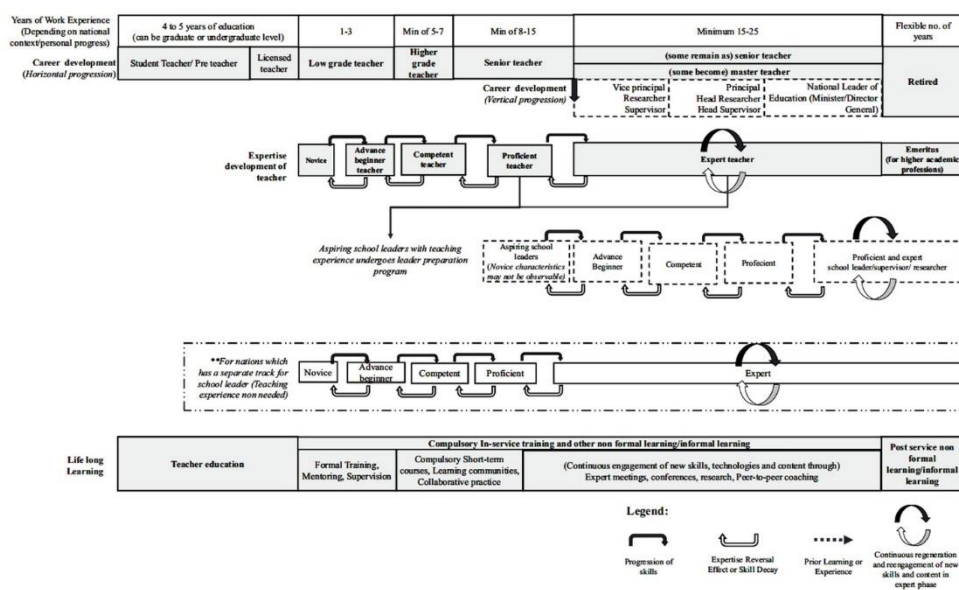
In short, while headmasters value supervision for improving school performance, their effectiveness is often hindered by systemic barriers, organizational limits, and gaps in knowledge and skills. Without a strong understanding of the school environment, teachers' roles, and the impact of teacher growth on students, headmasters may struggle. Many grasp the idea of supervision but lack the technical skills for effective observation, feedback, and coaching.

The "new supervision paradigm" shifts from top-down evaluation to a collaborative, supportive approach focused on teacher growth and school improvement rather than inspection or control. Professional competence includes headmasters' practical and technical skills needed for effective supervision. Those with strong communication, feedback, mentoring, and reflective abilities significantly enhance teacher growth and teaching quality. Additionally, supervisors must have digital skills and self-competence to use them effectively to achieve goals (El-Din et al., 2024).

Supervision used to be applied uniformly to all teachers, ignoring their experience and needs. Now, it's personalized, adapting to each teacher's experience, subject, learning style, and goals, often using developmental or adaptive models for better support.

Teacher development is often viewed as isolation, yet it is essential to recognize it as a continuous journey that spans an educator's entire career. This journey is rarely linear; it reflects the teacher's deepening understanding of their practice, the integration of diverse skills, and the evolving nature of professional growth (Raduan et al., 2020). They proposed an integrative model that connects three continuous paths: expertise development, career development, and lifelong learning. It underscores the complex and ever-changing nature of teaching skills as illustrated in Figure 2. Therefore, they emphasize the need for strategic teacher-training programs that align with every phase of a teacher's career. Tailoring the training curriculum to a teacher's specific expertise level is increasingly vital for providing individualized, need-based training in both their subject area and specific teaching methods.

Figure 2
Integrated Model (Expertise Development, Career Development, and Lifelong Learning)



Note. Source: Raduan et al. (2020).

Organizational and Systemic Issues

Some Organizational and systemic issues constitute challenges facing headmasters in conducting supervision properly. The study highlights a strong level of coordination among the departments involved in supervision. This collaboration is primarily facilitated through the General Committee for Implementing the School Performance Development Program, established by Ministerial Decree No. 19/2006. The committee's core mandate is to ensure alignment between the implementation, supervision, and evaluation of school performance, including teacher performance.

However, a few interviewees pointed out instances of insufficient coordination among the supervisory departments. A closer examination of the evaluation tools reveals discrepancies in their structure; each tool encompasses different domains, standards, and indicators. This divergence stems from the fact that the Ministry of Education issues the formative evaluation form, while the summative evaluation form originates from the Ministry of Civil Service.

This situation reflects what is often referred to in educational literature as a "one-size-fits-all" approach. In other words, using a single evaluation framework for all teachers—regardless of their subject area, experience, or professional role—demonstrates a lack of tailored coordination among the responsible departments.

Nonetheless, the unification of supervision instruments can also be interpreted as an effort to promote fairness and consistency in teacher assessments. The Ministry's intention appears to be standardizing supervision criteria to ensure equity across the teaching workforce. The researcher concludes that while some degree of standardization is necessary, it is equally important to preserve subject-specific considerations within the supervision process.

While teacher supervision in Oman serves as a tool to assess teachers' performance, it is intended to improve teaching practice by offering constructive feedback to the teachers. Headmasters seek to provide the teachers with the chance to pursue professional growth that is associated with the teaching process. These efforts, to some extent, do not satisfy the teachers' desire to promote themselves professionally. In their point of view, evaluators must prepare comprehensively by recognizing the features of each teacher's duty to be evaluated precisely. This ambition can be achieved by developing multiple resources for data collection to be used.

CONCLUSION

Overall, interviews revealed a wide range of opinions on the current state of supervision in Omani schools. A common thread was the belief that supervision has a minimal positive impact on teachers' performance or their career progression. Many headmasters expressed low satisfaction and motivation with the current supervisory practices. This dissatisfaction stems from various issues, including a lack of incentives, insufficient commitment, and limited involvement in supervision-related decisions. Most headmasters also felt that poor teacher performance in schools is largely a result of ineffective supervisory implementation.

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