



Research Article

The Role of Instructional Supervision in Teachers Delivery of the Curriculum in Four Selected Schools in Chipata District

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of instructional supervision in teachers' delivery of the curriculum in four selected primary schools in Chipata District, Eastern Province, Zambia. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to analyse the influence of instructional supervisory approaches on curriculum delivery, to examine teachers' perceptions towards instructional supervision, and to develop strategies for strengthening the supervisory function in primary schools. Anchored within the theoretical traditions of Human Relations Management — specifically Argyris's Human Resources atmosphere model and McGregor's Theory Y — the study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative data collected through structured Likert-scale questionnaires administered to 19 teachers and 4 head teachers with qualitative data gathered through a semi-structured interview with the District Education Standards Officer (DESO) and focused group discussions with 32 upper-primary pupils. Document analysis of eight teachers' instructional files provided additional triangulating evidence. Findings revealed that instructional supervision exercised a significant and predominantly positive influence on teachers' preparation of pedagogical documents, lesson delivery effectiveness, use of teaching and learning aids, and teacher-pupil contact time. However, the study also identified a pronounced gap between policy mandates and supervisory practice: only 14% of district teachers were supervised by Education Standards Officers in the preceding year, and fewer than half were internally monitored the requisite three times per term. Teacher perceptions were divided, with 42.6% holding negative views characterising supervision as fault-finding, inspection-oriented, and insufficiently collaborative. The study recommends sustained capacity building for head teachers in collaborative supervisory approaches, provision of adequate instructional resources, reduction of administrative overload on school leaders, and institutionalisation of regular, structured feedback mechanisms.

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KEYWORDS: instructional supervision, curriculum delivery, teacher perceptions, mixed methods, Chipata District, Zambia, primary education, collaborative supervision.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education has long been regarded as a foundational instrument of national development, and the quality of instruction delivered within classrooms is widely recognised as the most proximate determinant of learner outcomes. In Zambia, as in many developing nations, the attainment of quality education has been a consistent policy priority, reflected in landmark frameworks such as the 'Focus on Learning' document of 1992 and 'Educating Our Future' of 1996. Yet, national assessment surveys conducted biannually by the Ministry of Education since 1999 have consistently reported that Grade 5 learners' academic performance falls below 40%, with only a minority reaching minimum literacy and numeracy standards. Pass rates at Grade 9 and Grade 12 exhibit similar patterns. Among the causal factors identified, ineffective school management and inadequate instructional supervision have been prominently cited (MoGE, 2015a).

Instructional supervision — defined as a systematic, school-based process of providing guidance, support, and professional development to teachers to improve classroom instruction and learner performance — occupies a critical position at the intersection of educational management and pedagogical practice. The supervisory function falls primarily on head teachers as internal supervisors, with Education Standards Officers providing external oversight at the district level. Both levels of supervision are expected to monitor teacher preparedness, methodology, use of instructional materials, and the overall learning environment (MOE, 1996; MOE, 2015b). Yet evidence from multiple studies suggests that supervision is conducted far less frequently than standards guidelines require, and when undertaken, it often retains the character of inspection and compliance-checking rather than collaborative professional development (Chanda, 2011; MoGE, 2015a).

This paper examines the role of instructional supervision in teachers' delivery of the curriculum in four selected primary schools in Chipata District. It draws on a convergent mixed-methods study that integrated quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis evidence. The study was motivated by the need to generate empirically grounded, context-specific insights into the supervisory dynamics of rural Zambian primary schools — insights that can inform practical strategies for strengthening the connection between supervision and quality curriculum delivery.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The study was guided by one general and three specific objectives:

General Objective: To determine the extent of the relationship between instructional supervision and teachers' delivery of the curriculum in primary schools in Chipata District.

Specific Objectives

1. To analyse the influence of instructional supervisory approaches on teachers' delivery of the curriculum in primary schools in Chipata District.

2. To examine the perceptions of teachers towards instructional supervision in primary schools in Chipata District.
3. To develop strategies that can help strengthen the role of instructional supervision in curriculum delivery by teachers.

The corresponding research questions were: (i) How do instructional supervisory approaches influence teachers' delivery of the curriculum? (ii) What are the perceptions of teachers towards instructional supervision? (iii) How can instructional supervision be enriched to support teachers' curriculum delivery?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Concept and Evolution of Instructional Supervision

The concept of instructional supervision has undergone a significant transformation since its origins in the formal education systems of the eighteenth century. In early American educational settings, supervisory responsibility was entrusted to clergy and local government representatives, who exercised nearly unchecked authority to evaluate teachers without agreed criteria for effective instruction (Tracy, 1995; Burke & Krey, 2005). The resulting inconsistency in feedback quality and the authoritarian character of the supervisory relationship laid the groundwork for subsequent reform movements that sought to reposition supervision as a supportive rather than evaluative process.

Contemporary definitions of instructional supervision converge on themes of professional growth, collaboration, and instructional improvement. Heller (1989) describes supervision as a process of mutual professional development among teachers; Dantonio (1995) conceptualises it as a steadfast model for improving instructional skills; and Beach and Reinhartz (2000) define it as a complex, collegial process aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and promoting career-long teacher development. In the Zambian context, this evolution has been reflected in the renaming of external inspectors as Education Standards Officers, signalling a shift in institutional identity from fault-finders to professional advisors (MOE, 1996; Beycioglu & Donmez, 2009).

3.2 Approaches to Instructional Supervision

The literature distinguishes between traditional directive approaches, which emphasise authority and control, and contemporary collaborative approaches, which prioritise partnership and professional dialogue (Zepeda, 2007; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Clinical supervision, developed by Goldhammer and Cogan in the late 1960s, represents the most structured approach, involving a systematic cycle of pre-observation conference, classroom observation, and post-observation analysis. When implemented with fidelity, clinical supervision provides individualised professional guidance and gradually builds teachers' capacity for self-supervision (Goldhammer et al., 1980; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993).

However, empirical studies from Malaysia and other contexts have found that clinical supervision is frequently perceived as time-consuming and has been administered inadequately, with some teachers viewing it as a mechanism for exposing weaknesses rather than building strengths (Baharom, 2002; Haliza, 2005).

Collaborative approaches — encompassing peer coaching, cognitive coaching, and mentoring — operate on the premise that collegial relationships between teachers of similar or complementary expertise can generate richer professional development than hierarchical supervisory structures (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Costa & Garmston, 2002). Peer coaching involves teachers working in pairs or small groups to observe and provide feedback on each other's practice, with the advantage of reducing the power differentials that can inhibit honest professional dialogue (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000). Mentoring assigns experienced practitioners as guides for novice colleagues, offering structured support during the critical early years of teaching when professional identity is being established (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Modern democratic approaches, as advanced by Ajayi (1995) and Udoh et al. (1997), emphasise teacher agency in determining supervisory goals and processes, positioning the supervisor as a collaborative partner rather than an authority figure.

3.3 Supervision, Professional Development, and Curriculum Delivery

The relationship between instructional supervision and teacher professional development is extensively documented. Zepeda (2007) and Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) affirm that supervision and professional development are mutually reinforcing: supervisory observations generate data that informs professional development planning, while professional development equips teachers with skills that supervision subsequently reinforces through feedback. Nolan and Hoover (2008) characterise supervision as an organisational function whose ultimate purpose is to foster teacher growth that translates into improved student learning — a position supported by Wilkinson (2010), who argues that quality supervision maximises resource utilisation and prevents the deterioration of essential teaching support structures.

Empirical evidence from across the region corroborates these theoretical claims. A Kenyan study by Jerop (2013, cited in Awiti & Raburu, 2015) found a strong correlation between head teacher supervisory activity and curriculum delivery in Starehe District primary schools. Nigerian research by Archibong (2010) established that unsupervised instruction risked deteriorating educational standards. Conversely, studies from Uganda and Zimbabwe found that poorly implemented supervision — characterised by fault-finding attitudes, absence of post-observation feedback, and authoritarian relationships — generated teacher anxiety and resistance that undermined its intended benefits (Sembirige, 2009; Mupoperi, 2007). In Zambia, Chanda (2011) reported that teachers and head teachers viewed the existing inspection practice negatively due

to fault-finding attitudes, defective techniques, and the absence of constructive feedback.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two complementary theories of human relations management. Argyris's Human Resources atmosphere of management postulates that workers perform optimally when placed in a conducive, supportive environment that respects their professional potential and encourages creativity. McGregor's Theory Y similarly assumes that workers are inherently trustworthy, capable, and self-motivated — requiring not close surveillance but rather an enabling professional environment to perform at their best. Applied to the educational setting, both theories imply that teachers, when treated as capable professionals with agency over their practice, will demonstrate commitment, creativity, and continuous improvement. Effective instructional supervision, on this account, is not a mechanism of control but an enabling structure that provides professional identity, motivational support, and pedagogical guidance (Sergiovanni, 1975; Ifedili, 2013).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The study adopted a convergent mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches within an integrated analytical framework (Creswell, 2003). This design was selected because of its capacity to generate both statistically grounded and contextually nuanced evidence on the multi-dimensional phenomenon of instructional supervision. Quantitative methods enabled systematic measurement of the frequency, mode, and perceived influence of supervisory practices across the sample, while qualitative methods provided the contextual depth necessary to understand the meanings, perceptions, and lived experiences that shaped supervisory dynamics in Chipata District primary schools. The integration of both strands through triangulation strengthened the validity and interpretive richness of the findings.

4.2 Study Location

The study was conducted in Chipata District, Eastern Province, Zambia, situated approximately 570 kilometres from Lusaka. Chipata District is predominantly rural and hosts 89 government primary schools serving a pupil population of approximately 56,967. The district was selected as the study site because educational data indicated persistent underperformance in national assessments and documented challenges in the implementation of instructional supervision, making it a contextually relevant and practically important setting for the investigation.

4.3 Target Population and Sample

The target population comprised all 89 primary schools in the district, their 595 teachers, 56,967 pupils, and the Education Standards staff at the Chipata District Education Office. Four primary schools were selected as the study sample: two from

rural settings and two from urban areas of the district, thereby ensuring diversity in resource availability, teacher demographics, and institutional context. The schools were anonymised as School A, School B, School C, and School D for ethical reasons. A total of 57 participants took part in the study: 19 teachers, 4 head teachers, 1 District Education Standards Officer (DESO), and 32 upper-primary pupils.

4.4 Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure employed a combination of probability and non-probability techniques appropriate to the mixed-methods design. Schools were selected using stratified random sampling, with the population stratified by location (rural versus urban) and two schools randomly selected from each stratum. Head teachers were included through automatic inclusion by virtue of their institutional role. The DESO was selected purposively, given his unique position as the sole district-level supervisory officer and his capacity to provide an authoritative overview of supervisory practice across the district. Teachers were sampled using stratified random sampling, with strata defined by teaching experience — those with over ten years and those with ten years or fewer — and ten teachers randomly selected from each stratum. This stratification was designed to capture differentiated perspectives on supervision from both novice and experienced practitioners. Pupils were sampled using stratified random sampling across Grades 5, 6, and 7 to ensure representation from learners with sufficient school tenure to speak meaningfully to teacher behaviour during supervision.

4.5 Research Instruments

Four data collection instruments were employed. Self-constructed questionnaires with both closed-ended (Likert-scale) and open-ended items were administered to teachers and head teachers, yielding quantitative attitudinal data alongside qualitative elaboration. The Likert scale used a five-point range from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1), with means interpreted as: very high (4.50–5.00), high (3.50–4.49), moderate (2.50–3.49), low (1.50–2.49), and very low (1.00–1.49). A semi-structured interview guide was used with the DESO, employing open-ended questions to generate in-depth qualitative data on district-level supervisory policy and practice. A Focused Group Discussion (FGD) guide was used with pupils, allowing oral expression that did not depend on reading or writing proficiency. Finally, a Document Analysis Guide was used to examine eight teachers' instructional files, verifying the preparation and quality of pedagogical documents, including schemes of work, lesson plans, lesson notes, and evidence of supervisory visits.

4.6 Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

Instrument validity was established through peer review by research colleagues and subsequent assessment by research advisors before deployment. The researcher distributed questionnaires personally to maximise response rates and clarify items where necessary; a response rate of 95% was

achieved for teachers and 100% for head teachers. Ethical protocols were observed throughout: written permission was obtained from the District Education Board Secretary; all participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity; participation was voluntary; and all data were used solely for academic purposes. Parental and school authority consent was obtained for pupil participation in FGDs.

4.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics — frequencies, percentages, and means — presented in tables and figures. Qualitative data from the DESO interview, FGDs, and open-ended questionnaire responses were analysed thematically in reference to the research questions, generating codes and themes that were then interpreted in relation to the quantitative findings. Document analysis data were integrated to triangulate and verify information on teachers' pedagogical preparation. This convergent approach ensured that the study's conclusions rested on a robust, multi-source evidence base.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 57 participants contributed to the study. Among teacher respondents, 57.9% were male and 42.1% were female. Head teacher respondents were 75% male and 25% female. Pupil participants comprised 16 boys and 16 girls, distributed equally across Grades 5, 6, and 7. In terms of professional qualifications, 75% of head teachers held a diploma in education — below the bachelor's degree minimum required for school leadership — and only one head teacher had undertaken formal training in instructional supervision. Among teachers, 63% held diplomas, 32% held bachelor's degrees, and 5% held certificates. The District Education Standards Officer had between 4 and 10 years of experience in a supervisory capacity. These qualification findings are significant: Glickman (2010) argues that principals require strong conceptual skills to effectively support teachers in planning and document preparation, while Hedili and Hedili (2013) note that collegial supervisory approaches are most appropriate for professionally qualified teachers. The predominance of diploma-level head teachers thus represents a structural constraint on supervisory quality.

Table 1: Distribution of Pupil Respondents by Grade and Gender

Grade	Boys	Girls	Total
Grade 5	4	4	8
Grade 6	6	6	12
Grade 7	6	6	12
Total	16	16	32

Source: Field Survey, 2025

5.2 Frequency of Instructional Supervision

A critical finding emerging from multiple data sources was the pronounced gap between policy-mandated supervision frequency and actual supervisory practice. According to the DESO, Education Standards Officers are required to supervise

each teacher at least once per year, while school administrators are required to supervise teachers in lesson delivery at least three times per term. However, the DESO confirmed that in the preceding year, the Standards Department had managed to supervise only 155 out of 1,107 district teachers — representing just 14% of the teaching workforce. Internal supervision by school administrators was similarly irregular: fewer than half of the teacher respondents reported having been monitored at least three times by school administrators in the past year, and only 13.3% had been observed more than twice by Education Standards Officers. Pupil FGD data corroborated this picture, with learners reporting that supervision occurred at most once or twice per term, and some indicating no supervision had taken place in an entire term.

5.3 Influence of Instructional Supervision on Curriculum Delivery

Despite the infrequency of supervision, participants overwhelmingly affirmed its positive influence on curriculum delivery. As shown in Table 2, both head teachers and teachers recorded high to very high mean scores across all measured dimensions of supervisory impact.

Table 2: Summary of Mean Scores on Influence of Supervision on Curriculum Delivery

Dimension of Impact	Head Teachers Mean	Teachers Mean
Improvement in the preparation of schemes, lesson plans, and notes	4.75	4.68
Effectiveness of lesson delivery	4.50	4.47
Learner performance outcomes	4.25	3.84
Teacher confidence in lesson delivery	3.50	4.21
Effective use of teaching and learning aids	4.50	4.16
Lessons become more learner-centred	3.25	4.32
Use of feedback to improve teaching practice	4.25	4.00
Increased teacher-pupil contact time	4.09	3.79

Source: Field Data, 2025

All head teachers (100%) and all teachers (100%) agreed that supervision helped improve teachers' preparation of pedagogical documents, with very high means of 4.75 and 4.68, respectively. All head teachers and 89.5% of teachers affirmed that supervision enhanced effective lesson delivery. Document analysis of the eight sampled teacher files confirmed that all had schemes of work and lesson plans present and regularly checked by school management. The DESO articulated the mechanism underlying these improvements: supervision acts as an 'eye opener' that prompts teachers to reflect on their practice, review methodologies, and embrace active learning approaches that equip learners with higher-order thinking skills rather than rote learning.

However, meaningful divergences emerged on specific dimensions. On learner-centredness, while 94.7% of teachers reported that supervision helped them present more learner-centred lessons, document analysis told a different story: only 37.5% of teachers' files showed evidence of appropriate teaching and learning resources, only 25% showed evidence of

learner-centred methods, and only 12.5% contained evidence of deep learning activities incorporating Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The DESO confirmed that most teachers observed during supervisory visits continued to rely on question-and-answer and teacher-exposition methods rather than discovery, demonstration, or group work approaches. This discrepancy between self-reported and documented practice suggests that teachers may overestimate the degree to which supervision has transformed their pedagogical approach, or alternatively that the supervision they received did not focus sufficiently on methodological transformation.

Pupil perspectives offered a further complicating dimension: while learners acknowledged that their teachers performed noticeably better during supervisory visits — using more teaching aids, being more engaging, and encouraging more questions — they reported only marginal sustained improvement in ordinary lessons. This observation aligns with the head teacher's comment that 'some teachers are generally lazy and truant and as such, supervision has little impact on them' — suggesting that the motivational and accountability effects of supervision may be transient rather than deeply embedded in professional practice when supervisory presence is absent.

5.4 Teacher Perceptions towards Instructional Supervision

Perceptions of instructional supervision were decidedly mixed. Analysis of Table 5 responses revealed that 42.6% of participants held negative views of the current mode of supervision, characterising it as a routine exercise with limited developmental influence (66.7% of head teachers and 42.1% of teachers), as oriented towards error-finding rather than professional growth (66.7% of head teachers and 26.8% of teachers), and as resembling inspection rather than collaboration (66.7% of head teachers and 42.1% of teachers). Conversely, 40.9% of participants held positive views, recognising supervision as sharing mutual responsibilities between supervisor and supervisee and as a platform for improving curriculum delivery. The remaining 16.5% were neutral or uncertain.

When asked whether they would opt for more supervision if given a choice, all four head teachers responded affirmatively, while the majority of teachers (57.9%) said they would prefer less. This preference was particularly pronounced among long-serving teachers with more than ten years of experience, who viewed themselves as sufficiently equipped to manage their own professional development. This finding resonates with Rahmany et al. (2014), who found that experienced Iranian teachers' attitudes towards supervision were significantly shaped by their years of teaching, and with Tesfaw and Hofman (2012), who demonstrated that beginning teachers were more likely to value and seek out supervisory support. The researcher's position, consistent with Glickman et al. (1998), is that all teachers — regardless of experience — benefit from collaborative supervision, as experienced teachers are particularly susceptible to resistance to pedagogical change and may most need the challenge of collegial engagement.

The most preferred supervisory approach among teacher respondents was collaborative supervision (42.1%), followed by peer monitoring (31.6%), mentoring (10.5%), self-reflection (10.5%), and directive supervision (5.3%). This preference distribution strongly supports the theoretical orientation of the study: teachers in Chipata District are most receptive to supervisory approaches grounded in collegial partnership and mutual respect, consistent with the human relations framework of McGregor's Theory Y and Argyris's enabling management model.

5.5 Supervisory Approaches in Practice

Data on the supervisory techniques actually employed in schools revealed important discrepancies between head teachers' self-reports and teachers' experiences. All four head teachers (100%) reported meeting with teachers to discuss lessons after observation, yet only 52.6% of teachers confirmed this practice. Similarly, 75% of head teachers reported conducting pre-observation conferences with teachers, but only 31.6% of teachers said they participated in such meetings. Three-quarters of head teachers reported providing prompt written feedback, but only 42.1% of teachers said they received it. Only 50% of head teachers reported inviting teachers to respond to lesson critiques, and only 26.3% of teachers said they were given this opportunity. These discrepancies highlight a consistent pattern: head teachers perceived the supervisory process as complete and more collegial than teachers experienced it. This gap may reflect the head teachers' aspirational self-image as collaborative supervisors or a genuine disconnect in the supervisory relationship.

Critically, document analysis of teachers' files showed that only 37.5% had evidence of being supervised in lesson delivery by internal supervisors, and none of the sampled files contained evidence of external supervision visits. This finding directly corroborates the frequency data reported by the DESO and reinforces the conclusion that supervisory practice falls substantially short of policy requirements.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illuminate a complex and contradictory supervisory landscape in Chipata District primary schools. On one hand, participants across all respondent categories affirmed that when supervision occurred, it produced measurable positive effects on teacher preparedness, lesson delivery quality, use of instructional materials, and teacher-pupil contact time. These effects are theoretically coherent: from the perspective of McGregor's Theory Y and Argyris's human resources model, structured professional engagement in a supportive environment activates teachers' intrinsic motivation and professional identity, producing improvements that extend beyond the period of observation. The DESO's characterisation of supervision as an 'eye opener' that stimulates reflective practice captures this mechanism precisely.

On the other hand, the frequency data reveal that the conditions necessary for supervision to produce sustained improvements are rarely met. When only 14% of district teachers are

supervised externally in a given year, and when internal supervision falls far short of the three-times-per-term standard, the supervisory function operates at a fraction of its potential. The pupil evidence — those teachers performed better during supervision but reverted to routine practice once the supervisor had departed — is consistent with a view of supervision as an event rather than an embedded professional culture. This is precisely the concern that human relations theorists were responding to when they argued that authoritarian, inspection-based supervision failed to produce intrinsic motivation or lasting behavioural change.

The divided perception data are theoretically significant. The 42.6% of participants who viewed supervision negatively were disproportionately represented among long-serving teachers and those who had experienced supervision primarily as fault-finding. This aligns with the historical trajectory of supervision in Zambia, where the 'inspector' model left a residue of anxiety and defensive behaviour that the renaming of inspectors as Education Standards Officers has not fully eradicated. Where teachers perceived supervisors as collaborative partners — as evidenced by the 40.9% who held positive views — the potential for professional growth was substantially higher. This finding underscores the critical importance of the human relations dimension of supervision: the quality of the supervisor-supervisee relationship is not peripheral to the supervisory function but is its central enabling condition.

The document analysis findings reinforce the conclusion that supervisory impact on pedagogical quality remains limited. The dominance of question-and-answer and teacher-exposition methods in lesson plans, the rare inclusion of higher-order thinking activities, and the limited evidence of appropriate teaching and learning resource utilisation all suggest that the supervisory feedback teachers received — where it occurred — was not sufficiently focused on the depth and quality of learning experiences. Supervision that checks for the presence of schemes of work and lesson plans without examining whether those plans reflect active, learner-centred pedagogy fails to address the most consequential dimension of curriculum delivery.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study affirms that instructional supervision plays a significant and positive role in teachers' delivery of the curriculum in Chipata District primary schools. When implemented effectively, it improves teacher preparedness for lesson delivery, enhances the quality of classroom instruction, promotes the use of appropriate teaching and learning resources, and increases teacher motivation and accountability. These findings are consistent with the theoretical predictions of the Human Relations Management frameworks adopted in this study and with the empirical evidence from comparable African educational contexts.

However, the study also establishes that the realisation of supervision's potential is severely constrained by the infrequency with which it is conducted, the residual inspection-orientation that characterises supervisory practice in many

schools, the inadequate training of head teachers in supervisory skills, the overloading of school administrators with non-supervisory duties, and the insufficient availability of instructional resources that are necessary to support the teaching and learning improvements that supervision is designed to promote.

The gap between policy intention and supervisory practice in Chipata District is substantial and consequential. Until supervision is implemented with the frequency, collaborative character, and professional depth that its transformative potential requires, its contribution to curriculum delivery will remain episodic rather than systemic. Addressing this gap demands coordinated action at the teacher, school, district, and policy levels.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 For Head Teachers and School Administrators

Head teachers should prioritise instructional supervision as a core professional responsibility rather than an administrative appendage. A structured supervision schedule should be developed at the beginning of each term, clearly allocating time for pre-observation conferences, classroom observations, and post-observation feedback for all teachers. The supervision schedule should be distributed to teachers in advance, enabling them to prepare deliberately and reducing the anxiety associated with unannounced visits. Head teachers should adopt collaborative and clinical supervisory approaches as their primary modality, ensuring that every supervisory cycle includes substantive dialogue about methodology, learner engagement, and the use of appropriate teaching and learning resources. Deputy head teachers and senior teachers should be actively involved in the supervisory function to distribute the load and ensure wider coverage.

8.2 For the District Education Office and Policymakers

The Ministry of Education and the Chipata District Education Office should invest in systematic, sustained capacity building for head teachers and senior teachers in the theory and practice of instructional supervision. Training should encompass collaborative supervisory approaches — clinical supervision, peer coaching, and mentoring — with particular emphasis on the pre-observation and feedback phases that research has shown to be most formative for teacher professional development. The District Education Office should also work to reduce the administrative and teaching loads of head teachers to create the structural space necessary for meaningful supervision. Provision of adequate instructional materials — including manila papers, flip charts, markers, textbooks, and mathematical manipulatives — should be prioritised, as resource scarcity emerged as a significant barrier both to effective lesson delivery and to the productive use of supervisory feedback. The district should intensify recruitment and deployment of Education Standards Officers to close the supervisory gap identified in this study.

8.3 For Researchers

Future research should examine the long-term effects of specific supervisory approaches — particularly collaborative and clinical models — on teacher professional development and learner performance in Zambian primary schools. Longitudinal designs that track individual teachers' instructional development over multiple years of structured supervision would provide uniquely valuable evidence. Comparative studies across provinces and school types would strengthen the generalisability of findings. Research specifically focused on the professional development needs of head teachers as supervisors is urgently needed, given the qualification gap identified in this study. Finally, investigation of cost-effective models for scaling collaborative supervision in large, under-resourced districts would directly inform practice.

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