

Headteachers' Instructional Supervision and Teacher Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Copperbelt Province Zambia: A Critical Narrative Review of the Literature

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Abstract

Headteachers' instructional supervision is widely regarded as a means of strengthening teaching, yet the completion of supervisory activities does not necessarily demonstrate improvement in teacher performance. This critical narrative review examines the conceptual relationship between instructional supervision and teacher performance, evaluates selected Zambian and international literature, and identifies implications for public secondary schools in Copperbelt Province, Zambia. Sources were purposively selected through targeted searches and examined according to their conceptual contribution, contextual relevance, research design, outcome measures and inferential limitations. The synthesis distinguishes supervision from broader instructional leadership and conceptualises teacher performance as multidimensional professional practice rather than documentary compliance, teacher attitudes or learner achievement alone. Zambian studies provide contextual insights into supervisory practices and leadership preparation, but offer limited evidence of changes in independently assessed teacher performance. International research supports the potential of coaching and sustained professional learning, although differences in educational settings constrain direct application to Copperbelt schools. The paper argues that supervision is more likely to support improvement when classroom evidence informs joint interpretation, targeted assistance, classroom enactment and subsequent review. These processes constitute the Proposed Developmental Instructional Supervision Framework, whose operation may depend on supervisory expertise, professional trust, teacher participation, time and instructional resources. The framework is presented as an interpretive contribution requiring empirical validation. The review recommends strengthening developmental supervisory cycles and undertaking longitudinal, mixed-methods and intervention research that separates supervision from performance measures and accounts for teachers' location within schools. It concludes that the quality and completion of supervisory support warrant greater attention than the frequency of supervisory activities alone.

Keywords: instructional supervision; headteachers; teacher performance; developmental supervision; public secondary schools; Copperbelt Province; Zambia.

1. Introduction

Headteachers have a central responsibility for strengthening the quality of teaching, but their contribution depends on the nature and instructional focus of their engagement with teachers. Reviewing lesson plans, observing classroom practice and discussing learner progress can reveal areas requiring professional support. However, the value of these activities depends on how the resulting evidence is interpreted and used to guide improvement. Grissom et al. (2021) identify instruction-focused interactions, professional collaboration and the purposeful use of evidence as important features of effective school leadership, while cautioning that classroom visits are not necessarily beneficial in themselves. Research on teacher professional development similarly highlights the importance of opportunities to practise teaching strategies and receive follow-up support (Popova et al., 2022). More recently, Sims et al. (2025) found qualified support for professional development that combines the development of teachers' understanding, motivation, instructional techniques and sustained practice. This literature suggests that instructional supervision should connect the identification of teaching difficulties with constructive dialogue, targeted assistance and subsequent review. An observation record therefore documents a supervisory activity; evidence of improvement requires examining whether teachers understood the feedback, received appropriate support and translated agreed actions into classroom practice. Research on instructional leadership provides a basis for examining this distinction. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) positioned supervision and evaluation of instruction within a broader conception of instructional management that includes school goals and the conditions supporting learning. Hallinger (2011) subsequently emphasised the importance of leadership focus, context and shared leadership. Together, these perspectives direct attention to the relationship between supervisory encounters and the wider organization of teaching. In Zambia, Kabeta's (2015) study addressed instructional leadership in basic schools in Central Province. More directly relevant geographically, Mugala and Kabeta (2023) examined headteachers' instructional supervision and learner academic performance in public secondary schools in Ndola District. Such research establishes a local basis for discussion, but differences in educational level, geographical coverage and outcome definition matter. Evidence concerning basic schools elsewhere in Zambia or examination performance in one Copperbelt district cannot automatically explain teacher performance throughout the province. The problem addressed in this review is therefore both conceptual and evidential. Instructional supervision is frequently discussed as though its presence, quality and consequences were interchangeable. Teacher performance is also sometimes inferred from learner results without sufficient consideration of what teachers actually do. These shortcuts weaken explanations of how headteachers might improve instruction and can encourage recommendations to increase supervision without specifying what should change within it. This paper examines three questions:

1. How should instructional supervision and teacher performance be distinguished and connected?
2. What does select local and international evidence establish about the relationship?
3. What framework and research priorities follow for Copperbelt public secondary schools?

The contribution of this paper is a context-focused synthesis that identifies plausible mechanisms while preserving the boundaries of the available evidence.

2. Review approach and scope

This paper adopts a critical narrative review rather than a systematic review or meta-analysis. Targeted web searches were conducted using combinations of instructional supervision, instructional leadership, teacher performance, headteachers, Copperbelt, Ndola, Zambia, teacher coaching and professional

development. Searches also used named authors and article titles to verify relevant publications. Publisher websites, university repositories and accessible author-posted article texts provided bibliographic information and substantive evidence. Selection was purposive. The review prioritised sources that offered a foundational conceptual account, direct Zambian relevance, or a research synthesis capable of clarifying a proposed mechanism. 19 publications form the cited analytical core, spanning 1985–2025. They include conceptual scholarship, a supervision textbook, Zambian empirical work, a doctoral thesis, international research syntheses and meta-analyses. Sources were excluded from substantive use when their identity or relevance could not be established adequately. No claim is made to exhaustive database coverage, duplicate independent screening, a registered protocol or formal risk-of-bias scoring. Counts of initially retrieved and excluded records are consequently not presented. The approach permits integration of conceptual and empirical literature, but introduces selection and access bias. It can support a reasoned framework and research agenda; it cannot establish the prevalence of particular practices in Copperbelt Province or estimate a pooled local effect.

3. Conceptual and theoretical foundations

3.1 Instructional supervision as a professional process

Instructional supervision refers to the systematic collection and interpretation of evidence about teaching, followed by professional guidance, support and review intended to strengthen instructional practice. It encompasses classroom observation, scrutiny of instructional records, examination of learner work, professional dialogue and assistance with identified teaching needs (Glickman et al., 2018). These activities should be understood as connected elements of a developmental process: evidence gathering identifies areas requiring attention, while feedback and professional support help teachers respond. Supporting this interpretation, Grissom et al. (2021) identify instruction-focused interactions, coaching and the purposeful use of evidence as important features of effective school leadership. Their synthesis also cautions that classroom walkthroughs are not necessarily beneficial; their value depends on how school leaders use them. Consequently, completing supervisory activities should not, by itself, be interpreted as evidence of professional improvement. Instructional leadership is the broader construct, encompassing the direction of teaching and learning and the organisational conditions that support them. Instructional supervision represents one means through which these responsibilities are enacted. This distinction is consistent with Grissom et al. (2021), whose synthesis situates instructional interactions alongside the development of a productive school climate, teacher collaboration and strategic resource management. Evaluation overlaps with supervision when evidence is used to judge performance against established expectations. Developmental supervision extends this function by identifying the assistance teachers require to improve. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013) similarly emphasises that appraisal can strengthen teaching when feedback connects teachers' developmental goals with relevant training and support. A school may therefore fulfil evaluation requirements without establishing the continuing professional learning needed to address the difficulties identified.

Glickman et al. (2018) provide a developmental orientation in which supervisory approaches respond to teachers' professional needs and capacities. Applied to this review, a beginning teacher requiring explicit guidance and an experienced teacher investigating a persistent instructional difficulty need not receive identical support. Recent international evidence reinforces the importance of recognising differences in professional learning needs. Results from TALIS 2024 indicate that novice teachers more frequently report

needs relating to classroom management, whereas experienced teachers more frequently report needs concerning the use of digital resources and artificial intelligence in teaching (OECD, 2025). These findings suggest that length of service alone is an insufficient basis for determining supervisory support. Differentiation should instead draw on evidence of current practice; teachers expressed needs and the demands of their teaching contexts. For this review, transparent criteria, jointly identified priorities and subsequent review are therefore proposed as principles for making differentiated supervision professionally defensible.

3.2. Teacher performance as a multidimensional construct

Teacher performance is defined here as the quality and consistency of professional actions through which teachers plan, conduct, assess and improve teaching. It encompasses instructional preparation, subject explanation, learner participation, classroom organisation, assessment and feedback, responsiveness to different learning needs, and professional collaboration. This multidimensional understanding is consistent with Danielson's (2022) framework, which distinguishes planning and preparation, learning environments, learning experiences and principled teaching. Similarly, the World Bank's (2024) *Teach Secondary* framework assesses observable practices relating to classroom culture, instruction and socioemotional development, including checking for understanding, providing feedback and adapting teaching to learners' needs. The proposed domains should be assessed separately before any composite score is constructed, so that an overall rating does not conceal strengths or weaknesses in particular aspects of practice. Combining domain scores should also require a clear conceptual rationale and evidence that the resulting measure is valid for its intended purpose. Three distinctions are necessary when operationalising teacher performance. The first one is document completion which provides evidence of preparation but does not establish the quality of classroom instruction. A completed lesson plan may demonstrate compliance with administrative expectations without showing whether explanations are clear, learners participate meaningfully or assessment informs subsequent teaching. The distinction between planning and enacted practice is reflected in Danielson's (2022) separate domains and in the World Bank's (2024) emphasis on evidence of observable teaching behaviours. Accordingly, instructional records should be examined for their educational quality and their relationship to classroom practice, rather than merely for their availability or completeness. Job satisfaction, professional commitment and self-efficacy should be distinguished from performance itself. These constructs concern teachers' attitudes, attachment to their work and beliefs about their capabilities; performance concerns the professional actions they undertake. Recent TALIS findings examine self-efficacy, job satisfaction and teaching practices as related but distinct dimensions of teachers' professional lives (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2025). Although confidence and satisfaction may help explain variation in practice, they cannot substitute for direct evidence of instructional quality. A teacher's belief that they teach effectively, for example, does not by itself demonstrate that learners receive clear explanations or useful feedback.

Third, learner achievement is an educational outcome to which teaching contributes, rather than an unqualified measure of an individual teacher's performance. OECD (2021) demonstrates the importance of considering student and classroom characteristics when examining associations between teaching, school conditions and achievement. Consequently, examination results should be interpreted alongside prior attainment, attendance, home circumstances and the resources available for learning. Without accounting for these influences, differences in results may be attributed to teachers even when they partly

reflect differences in the learners and contexts they serve. Achievement data can therefore contribute to performance assessment, but should be combined with evidence of professional practice.

An adequate assessment should draw on complementary sources of evidence. OECD guidance recommends combining measures such as classroom observations, portfolio reviews, student outcomes and stakeholder perspectives to strengthen the assessment of teaching (OECD, 2013). For this review, this would involve repeated observations across lessons, samples of instructional plans and learner work, and evidence of assessment and feedback practices. Teacher accounts can clarify instructional decisions and contextual constraints, but should not constitute the sole measure of performance. Likewise, headteacher ratings should be interpreted with attention to the explicit criteria used, the evidence supporting each judgment and the supervisory relationship. Assessors should use shared descriptors and compare judgments to improve consistency. The central concern is whether professional practice improves over time, rather than simply whether teachers or headteachers express approval of supervision.

3.3 A complementary theoretical explanation

Instructional leadership and developmental supervision provide complementary explanations. Instructional leadership identifies the organisational responsibility to prioritise teaching. Developmental supervision explains how assistance can be adapted within professional encounters. Neither perspective, by itself, establishes that a particular supervisory activity will cause improved performance in a specified school. This paper therefore proposes an intermediate explanation: supervision contributes when it helps teachers identify a manageable instructional problem, understand possible responses, try an appropriate practice and assess the result. Authority can secure participation, but participation alone does not demonstrate learning. The framework developed below treats professional interpretation and enactment as processes requiring investigation, rather than assuming a direct path from headteacher activity to improved teaching.

4. Critical syntheses of the evidence

4.1 What the Zambian literature contributes

Zambian research provides an essential contextual foundation for understanding how instructional supervision operates within local school structures and leadership arrangements. Kabeta (2015) examined instructional leadership and the teaching and learning process in selected basic schools in Central Province, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Its contribution lies in locating instructional leadership within Zambian institutional conditions. However, its educational level and provincial setting differ from those of the present review. The study therefore provides contextual insights rather than a direct estimate of the relationship between instructional supervision and teacher performance in Copperbelt public secondary schools. Leadership preparation receives more explicit attention in Kabeta's (2019) article, which reports perspectives from 32 headteachers and 160 teachers in selected Central Province schools. The finding that most participating headteachers had not received training that prepared them for leadership raises an important question about the relationship between appointment to office and readiness to support instruction. This evidence justifies examining supervisory knowledge and competence alongside the frequency of supervisory activities. Nevertheless, it does not establish the current prevalence of preparation gaps across Zambia or demonstrate that training alone produces improvements in classroom practice. Furthermore, publications involving the same sample should not automatically be treated as independent evidence.

Among the studies considered here, Mugala and Kabeta (2023) provide the most geographically direct evidence. Their descriptive survey combined quantitative and qualitative methods in Ndola public secondary schools and documented the monitoring of lesson plans, schemes of work, instructional records, classroom teaching and syllabus coverage. The authors also reported a positive association between instructional supervision and learner achievement. However, the reported correlation used four annual aggregate observations covering 2016–2019. This limits its interpretation as evidence about individual teachers or schools. Moreover, the outcome was learner achievement rather than a separately measured construct of teacher performance. The study therefore identifies locally relevant practices and an association warranting further investigation, but does not establish a province-wide causal effect.

Muyunda (2022) extends the Zambian evidence base to secondary schools in Lusaka Province. Using a quantitative survey involving 39 principals, 190 teachers and 345 students, the study reported positive relationships between learner academic performance and four instructional leadership dimensions: defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme, promoting a positive learning climate and advancing teachers' interests. Its contribution to the present review lies in showing that supervision operates within a broader set of leadership responsibilities concerned with teaching and learning. However, the study examined instructional leadership rather than the independent contribution of specific supervisory practices, and its outcome was learner achievement rather than directly assessed teacher performance. Its survey design also does not establish causality. Accordingly, Muyunda's findings provide relevant secondary-school evidence from Zambia while leaving unresolved how particular supervisory practices relate to teachers' classroom performance in Copperbelt Province.

These contributions illustrate why contextual relevance and causal strength should be assessed separately. Local descriptive studies help identify supervisory routines, institutional constraints and participants' experiences. International intervention research can help assess whether particular forms of professional support change teaching practices. For example, LaBrot et al. (2024), in a meta-analysis of 17 studies, found evidence that school-based consultation and coaching can support the generalisation of teachers learned practices beyond the conditions directly targeted by an intervention. Such findings strengthen the rationale for examining sustained professional support, while leaving its feasibility and effectiveness in Copperbelt secondary schools open to empirical investigation. A credible synthesis should therefore connect these bodies of evidence without assuming that findings transfer unchanged across settings.

4.2 Classroom observation and documentary monitoring

Classroom observation provides an opportunity to examine how instructional intentions are translated into teaching and learner engagement. Its usefulness depends on the specificity of the evidence gathered and its subsequent interpretation. The World Bank's (2024) *Teach Secondary* framework reflects this emphasis by examining observable practices such as lesson facilitation, checking for understanding, feedback, critical thinking and the creation of a supportive classroom environment. Observation consequently becomes more informative when it records how teaching unfolds, rather than simply confirming that a lesson took place.

Documentary monitoring offers a complementary perspective. Lesson plans and schemes of work can reveal intended sequencing, curriculum alignment and assessment opportunities, while learner work can provide evidence of task demands, feedback and recurring misunderstandings. In Ndola, Mugala and Kabeta (2023) identified the inspection of instructional records and learners' exercise books among reported supervisory activities. However, the occurrence of these checks does not establish the depth of

analysis undertaken or the usefulness of the resulting guidance. A distinction is therefore necessary between verifying that records exist and examining their instructional significance.

Consider a hypothetical observation in which only a small group of learners answers the teacher's questions. A procedural record might note that the lesson was delivered and the planned content covered. A developmental discussion would examine whose understanding was checked, how other learners participated and whether alternative questioning strategies could provide more representative evidence of learning. This example illustrates how observation can inform a specific improvement priority. It is consistent with the attention that *Teach Secondary* gives to participation, checking understanding and adapting instruction to learners' needs (World Bank, 2024).

Observation and documentary evidence should therefore be interpreted together. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013) recommends using multiple measures, including observations, portfolios and stakeholder perspectives, to strengthen judgments about teaching. For this review, that principle implies checking whether planned activities are enacted, whether assessment tasks reveal understanding and whether feedback addresses identified difficulties. Neat records cannot independently demonstrate effective teaching, just as incomplete documentation cannot, by itself, establish poor classroom practice. These are proposed principles for designing and evaluating supervision, rather than claims that all Copperbelt schools currently follow or neglect them.

4.3 Feedback and professional dialogue

Feedback provides a potential connection between supervisory evidence and professional improvement when it identifies a specific instructional issue, explains its significance and supports a feasible response. A judgment that merely classifies a lesson as satisfactory or unsatisfactory offers limited direction for subsequent action. More useful professional dialogue examines the evidence supporting the judgment and allows the teacher to explain instructional intentions, contextual constraints and alternative interpretations. Grissom et al. (2021) support this emphasis through their identification of instruction-focused interactions, coaching and professional collaboration as important features of effective school leadership. Their synthesis also indicates that the value of classroom visits depends on how leaders use them. The foundational synthesis by Robinson et al. (2008) found that leadership practices centred on teaching and learning were associated with stronger student outcomes, with promoting and participating in teacher learning emerging as a particularly influential dimension. This supports leaders' active engagement in professional learning, but does not establish that every feedback conversation improves instruction. More recent evidence from LaBrot et al. (2024) supports the potential of structured consultation and coaching to promote changes in teachers' practices and their application beyond directly trained conditions. Because these interventions can combine several forms of assistance, their findings should not be attributed to feedback alone.

Recent TALIS evidence further supports attention to the relevance and usability of professional support. OECD (2025) reports that teachers' professional learning needs vary and that time constraints remain a major barrier to participation. Teachers also report benefits from feedback, including changes in classroom management, although these self-reports should not be equated with independently observed improvement. The implication for supervision is that recommendations need to address an identifiable teaching need and be feasible within the teacher's working conditions.

For Copperbelt secondary schools, the practical question is consequently whether feedback is understood, considered useful and translated into action. A teacher may formally accept a recommendation while

lacking the materials, subject-specific guidance or time required to implement it. A proposed follow-up process would establish an agreed improvement priority, identify the necessary support and revisit evidence of practice after implementation. This would help distinguish disagreement, misunderstanding and practical constraint, allowing subsequent assistance to respond to the actual difficulty. The effectiveness of such a process should be judged through changes in teaching practice, rather than the delivery of feedback or participants' satisfaction alone.

4.4 Coaching and sustained professional learning

Kraft et al. (2018) synthesised 60 studies using causal designs and reported average coaching effects of 0.49 standard deviations on instruction and 0.18 on achievement. Much of the evidence concerned United States literacy coaching in prekindergarten and elementary education. Effects also weakened in larger-scale programmes. The findings strengthen the case that sustained individualised support can improve teaching, but they should not be interpreted as predicted effect sizes for headteacher supervision in Zambian secondary schools. Popova et al. (2022) examined teacher professional development internationally and documented a gap between characteristics of evaluated programmes and many programmes delivered at scale. Opportunities to practise skills and receive follow-up support are relevant to that gap. This directs attention to implementation: scheduling professional development does not ensure that teachers can apply what they learn. Sims et al. (2025) tested a theory of professional development using 104 randomised controlled trials and found qualified support for combining mechanisms concerned with understanding, motivation, technique and sustained practice. Their review was restricted to OECD countries, which limits direct contextual transfer. Its contribution here is a mechanism-oriented approach to professional learning, rather than evidence that a particular programme will succeed in Copperbelt. A reasonable implication is to connect identified teaching needs with specific learning activities. A teacher struggling with diagnostic questioning may benefit from modelling, rehearsal and review of learner responses. A general workshop on professionalism may not address that need. School-based learning should therefore be evaluated by the instructional problem it helps resolve, alongside attendance and completion.

4.5 Relationships and organisational conditions

Hallinger et al. (2025) synthesised 68 quantitative studies and reported a moderate relationship between instructional leadership and teacher attitudes overall ($r = .450$). Teacher trust showed the strongest reported association among the attitudes examined. This evidence supports attention to the relational dimension of instructional leadership, while remaining distinct from proof that trust mediates a causal effect on teaching. Grissom et al. (2021) likewise situate effective principal practice within instruction, school climate, collaboration and management of personnel and resources. Their United States research synthesis suggests that instructional work is embedded in organisational conditions. It does not establish the relative importance of those conditions in Copperbelt public secondary schools.

The implication developed in this review is that supervision should be examined as an interaction between professional relationships and practical capacity. Teachers may be more willing to disclose instructional difficulty when the process is predictable and respectful. Yet willingness cannot compensate fully for an unmanageable teaching load or unavailable materials. Equally, providing resources without focused professional support may leave instructional problems unresolved. Research should measure these conditions rather than treating context as a general explanation added after results are obtained.

5. Strength and limits of the evidence

The evidence base supports a differentiated conclusion. Selected Zambian studies establish contextual relevance and identify leadership practices and preparation concerns. International syntheses strengthen the rationale for instructional focus, coaching and sustained professional learning. Neither body of evidence, as assembled here, establishes the size or direction of a causal supervision effect on teacher performance across Copperbelt Province. Several methodological issues require particular attention. Common-source bias may arise when the same respondent rates both supervision and performance. A generally favourable view of the school can raise both scores. Reverse direction is also plausible: headteachers may intensify supervision because teaching is weak, or effective teachers may seek more professional engagement. A single cross-sectional association cannot distinguish these explanations. Aggregation creates another problem. Teachers are situated within departments and schools, and a headteacher's practice may affect several teachers simultaneously. Treating all responses as independent can misrepresent statistical precision. Conversely, school averages may conceal unequal access to support among teachers. Subject specialisation further complicates interpretation because a supervisory conversation may depend on knowledge that is distributed across the school. Finally, measurement overlap can make a relationship partly circular. If receiving feedback appears in both the supervision scale and the performance scale, their association may reflect shared item content. A stronger design separates the supervisory activity, the teacher's response and independently assessed practice. These concerns do not invalidate all descriptive research; they define the claims it can credibly support.

6. Proposed Developmental Instructional Supervision Framework

The Proposed Developmental Instructional Supervision Framework organises the review's argument into five connected processes. It is a conceptual contribution for local adaptation and empirical testing, not a validated causal model. Its distinctive emphasis is the completion of a developmental cycle: supervisory evidence must connect to assistance and a subsequent examination of practice.

Process	Central question	Illustrative evidence
Evidence gathering	What instructional issue requires attention?	Lesson observations, learner work and relevant teaching records
Joint interpretation	How do the teacher and supervisor explain the issue?	A specific account of the difficulty and an agreed improvement priority
Targeted support	What assistance makes change feasible?	Subject guidance, modelling, rehearsal or access to required materials
Classroom enactment	How is the agreed practice used?	Subsequent lesson evidence and samples of learner responses
Follow-up and adjustment	What changed and what remains unresolved?	Comparison with the initial concern and a revised support decision

Table 1: Developmental Instructional Supervision Process: Questions and Illustrative Evidence

The processes operate within conditions that may enable or constrain them: supervisory expertise, subject knowledge, teacher participation, professional trust, protected time and instructional resources. Learner outcomes sit beyond teacher performance in the proposed pathway. Improvement in teaching may contribute to learner progress, but this additional relationship requires its own evidence and consideration of competing influences. Three propositions follow. as the quality and completion of the developmental cycle should explain variation in teacher performance beyond the frequency of supervision alone, teachers' understanding and enactment of feedback should help explain how supervisory support relates to changes in classroom practice and the relationship should vary with opportunities to implement recommendations, including available time, resources and subject expertise. These propositions are testable expectations, not findings of the present review. The framework also permits failure to be located more precisely. Evidence may be too vague, interpretations may remain contested, support may not match the problem, or teachers may lack an opportunity to practise. Follow-up can reveal that an apparently sensible recommendation did not work. The cycle therefore requires revising supervisory judgments as well as evaluating teachers.

7. Implications for public secondary schools

- Headteachers should develop supervision plans that connect evidence collection to scheduled support and review. The plan should identify a manageable instructional priority and specify what will count as progress. Increasing the number of observations without protecting time for discussion risks expanding administrative work while leaving the proposed mechanism incomplete.
- Heads of department and experienced subject teachers can contribute disciplinary expertise, particularly where the headteacher cannot provide detailed guidance across the curriculum. Responsibility should be explicit: who observes, who supports the teacher, what information is recorded and how the headteacher reviews implementation. Shared work requires agreed standards so that delegation does not produce inconsistent expectations or obscure accountability.
- Leadership preparation should include practice in interpreting classroom evidence, conducting respectful professional conversations and designing follow-up. Training can use anonymised lesson cases, examples of learner work and rehearsed feedback discussions. Its effectiveness should be assessed through changes in supervisory practice and teachers' experiences, rather than completion certificates alone. These are recommendations arising from the synthesis, not claims about existing provincial training arrangements.
- School monitoring should also distinguish a completed procedure from an improvement outcome. Useful records would show the instructional concern, agreed action, assistance provided and subsequent evidence. A compact record linked to an actual teaching problem may be more informative than extensive forms that document activity alone. Schools should review whether teachers receive equitable access to useful support across departments and experience levels.
- Standards officers and school leaders should examine implementation constraints before attributing limited progress to teacher motivation. Where recommendations require unavailable resources, the response should include resource decisions or an achievable alternative. Accountability remains necessary, but its credibility improves when expectations, support and evidence are aligned.

8. Future Research

- A field-focused study should sample public secondary schools across different district and school circumstances, then measure supervision and teacher performance as separate constructs. Baseline observation followed by repeated measurement would improve understanding of temporal order. Sampling and analysis should account for teachers nested within schools, with a sufficient number of schools to support any proposed school-level estimates.
- Mixed-methods work can explain discrepancies between headteachers' accounts, teacher perceptions and observed practice. Interviews should investigate specific supervisory encounters: what evidence was discussed, what the teacher understood, what support followed and what changed. These accounts would complement, rather than substitute for, independently assessed teaching.
- Intervention research could compare an enhanced observation, feedback and support cycle with existing practice. Where feasible, allocation at school level would reduce contamination between teachers. Evaluation should document implementation, assessor reliability, costs and unintended consequences, including excessive workload or strategic compliance. Statistical significance should be considered alongside the practical size and durability of any improvement.
- Research should also test competing explanations. Professional learning and teacher attitudes are candidate mechanisms, but cross-sectional mediation would not establish their causal order. Repeated measures, transparent analytical assumptions and sensitivity analyses would make such claims more credible. Null or inconsistent findings should inform refinement of the framework rather than being treated as inconvenient departures from an assumed positive relationship.

9. Limitations

The review is selective and depends on sources accessible through targeted web retrieval. It does not provide comprehensive coverage of all African or Zambian scholarship and may omit relevant unpublished or poorly indexed research. Access ranged from complete article text to abstracts and bibliographic descriptions, limiting uniform appraisal. The small locally focused evidence base assembled here restricts provincial inference, while international intervention evidence comes from educational systems that differ from Zambia. The proposed framework accordingly represents an interpretive synthesis requiring local validation. No new participant data were collected and no local effect size was calculated.

10. Conclusion

Headteachers' instructional supervision offers a plausible means of improving teacher performance when evidence about teaching is connected to professional interpretation, appropriate assistance and follow-up. The reviewed literature does not justify treating the presence or frequency of supervision as proof of improvement. Nor does evidence about learner achievement alone establish changes in teachers' professional practice.

For Copperbelt public secondary schools, the priority is to investigate and strengthen the developmental work within supervision. This requires capable supervisors, meaningful teacher participation, feasible improvement actions and credible assessment of subsequent teaching. The proposed framework supplies a structure for that work while leaving its relationships open to empirical testing. A stronger provincial evidence base should establish which forms of supervision improve which aspects of teacher performance, for whom, under what conditions and at what cost.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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