

From Compliance to Development: A Grounded Framework for School-Based Instructional Supervision in Malaysian Public Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

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KEYWORDS:

School-Based Instructional Supervision

Teacher Professional Growth

Developmental Supervision

Malaysian Education

Professional Learning

Community

PDDA Framework

CITATION:

Logaswari, S., Zuraidah, A., & Kenny, S. L. C. (2026). From Compliance to Development: A Grounded Framework for School-Based Instructional Supervision in Malaysian Public Secondary Schools. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 11(4), e003935.

<https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v11i4.3935>

School-based instructional supervision (SBIS) carries a formal legislative mandate in Malaysian public secondary education, yet its intended purpose of fostering teacher professional growth is not consistently realised. Documentation requirements frequently displace developmental intent, and supervision and evaluation continue to be conflated in ways that undermine formative practice. This qualitative multiple-case study examined SBIS implementation across two purposively selected urban public secondary schools in Selangor: one participating in the Transformasi Sekolah 2025 (TS25) programme, and one under standard national provisions. Fourteen participants comprised principals, senior assistant principals, heads of department, subject panel heads, and novice, mid-career, and experienced teachers. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis used Atlas.ti Version 23; intercoder reliability was confirmed via Fleiss' Kappa ($\kappa = 0.775$, $p < .001$), indicating substantial agreement. Seven themes addressed supervision implementation, professional growth, and systemic challenges. Findings reveal structurally divergent supervisory cultures despite shared policy frameworks: the TS25 school demonstrated a multi-tiered developmental approach embedded in Professional Learning Communities, while the non-TS25 school prioritised procedural compliance. Drawing on Glickman's Developmental Supervision Model and Knowles' Adult Learning Theory, the study proposes a PDDA (Plan-Do-Develop-Analyse) framework centred on professional growth. Three contributions are advanced: the first empirical comparison of SBIS between TS25 and non-TS25 Malaysian secondary schools; a reconceptualisation of the compliance-development tension as structural rather than

individual failure; and a practice-derived framework actionable within existing policy constraints. Findings carry implications for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to move supervision beyond compliance toward dynamic, teacher-centred practice.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by providing the first empirical comparison of school-based instructional supervision between TS25 and non-TS25 Malaysian public secondary schools. This study originates the PDDA (Plan-Do-Develop-Analyse) framework, grounded in Developmental Supervision and Adult Learning Theory, offering school leaders an actionable model to shift supervision from compliance toward teacher-centred professional growth

1. Introduction

Instructional supervision occupies a central but contested position in Malaysian educational reform. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013) identifies teacher quality as the single most influential school-level determinant of student outcomes. Yet, Malaysia's continued underperformance in international assessments such as PISA and TIMSS signals that this commitment has not fully translated into classroom-level improvement—school-based instructional supervision (SBIS), mandated through the Ministerial Circular SPI Bil. 3/1987, represents the primary mechanism through which school leaders are expected to monitor and improve teaching quality. Yet a consistent finding across Malaysian research is that SBIS operates more as a compliance ritual than a developmental tool (Malakolunthu & Vasudevan, 2012; Abdullah et al., 2017; Subramaniam et al., 2020).

This gap between supervisory policy and developmental practice is not unique to Malaysia. In Turkey, bureaucratic demands and role overload limit principals' capacity to conduct meaningful instructional supervision (Eryilmaz & Sandoval Hernandez, 2024). In China, hierarchical decision-making constrains flexible, teacher-driven supervisory approaches despite ongoing governance reforms (Hou, 2025). In Taiwan, supervision's impact depends critically on the relational quality between principals and teachers and the intentionality of differentiated supervisory practice (Kim & Lee, 2020). The Malaysian context shares these systemic pressures while adding the unique burden of a centralised curriculum framework, multilingual professional environments, and an accountability system in which a single instrument, Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2 (SKPMg2), serves both evaluative and developmental functions.

The central problem this study addresses is structural. Supervision in Malaysian schools is simultaneously mandated to be formative and used as summative evaluation. Teachers experience observation visits as accountability checks rather than professional conversations, and feedback rarely extends beyond compliance with documentation requirements (Abdullah et al., 2017). This structural conflation limits what supervision can achieve, regardless of the commitment of individual supervisors. The TS25 initiative, introduced in 2015, sought to address this by investing selected schools with external partnerships, leadership development, and collaborative learning tools. Whether TS25 participation produces meaningfully different supervisory cultures, and what lessons those differences carry for the broader system, has not been empirically examined.

This study fills that gap. It examines SBIS implementation across two schools operating under the same policy framework but with contrasting institutional contexts. One school is enrolled in TS25; the other operates under standard national provisions. By comparing supervisory practice, professional growth outcomes, and systemic challenges across these two settings, the study produces empirically grounded insight into what differentiates developmental from compliance-oriented supervision in the Malaysian context. The following research objectives guided the inquiry:

R01: To explore the implementation process of instructional supervision in two selected public secondary schools.

R02: To describe teachers' professional growth resulting from the implementation of instructional supervision.

R03: To identify challenges of instructional supervision in the two selected schools.

R04: To propose a framework for the implementation of instructional supervision grounded in the study's findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Evolution of Instructional Supervision

Instructional supervision has shifted substantially over the past half century, moving from hierarchical inspection toward collaborative, developmental practice. Early supervisory models centred on administrative inspection: evaluating teacher performance against standards, with limited regard for professional dialogue or growth (Glanz, 2018). The clinical supervision model developed by Cogan and Goldhammer in the 1960s marked a significant departure, introducing structured pre-observation conferences, classroom observation, and post-observation dialogue within a collegial relationship oriented toward teacher development (Glanz, 2018). This model established the three-phase cycle, plan, observe, reflect, which continues to underpin most contemporary supervisory frameworks.

Contemporary scholarship positions supervision as a career-long continuum of formative support rather than an episodic evaluative event (Glickman et al., 2018; Gordon, 2019). Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) distinguish sharply between summative supervision, which serves accountability, and formative supervision, which serves growth. In effective schools, both functions operate, but with clear boundaries: teachers engage openly in formative conversations precisely because they are not simultaneously being evaluated on those conversations. Where this distinction collapses, supervision produces compliance performance rather than genuine professional learning (Burns & Badiali, 2016).

2.2. Instructional Supervision in Malaysia

In Malaysia, SBIS was formalised through SPI Bil. 3/1987, which assigned principals responsibility for systematic classroom supervision as a mechanism for maintaining and improving teaching quality. The Education Act 1996 reinforced this mandate, and SKPMg2 subsequently introduced a structured evaluative instrument through which supervisory observations are formally recorded. The inherent tension in this policy

architecture is that the same instrument serves developmental and accountability purposes simultaneously, creating conditions in which teachers and supervisors struggle to distinguish between formative and summative interactions (Malakolunthu & Vasudevan, 2012).

Research consistently documents the consequences of this ambiguity. Abdullah et al. (2017) found that Malaysian school leaders conflate supervision with evaluation at the operational level. Subramaniam et al, (202) documented that documentation compliance displaces substantive professional dialogue in most schools. Ariffin et al. (2015) traced this to the policy itself: SPI Bil. 3/1987 provides a mandate without an implementation model, leaving schools to interpret supervision independently and inconsistently. The resulting diversity of practice, within a nominally uniform system, means that teachers in different schools experience fundamentally different professional realities under the same policy framework.

The TS25 initiative, launched in 2015, introduced a deliberate attempt to shift this dynamic in participating schools. By linking school leaders with external partnerships, including the Global School Leaders (GSL) programme, and embedding coaching, mentoring, and collaborative learning into school culture, TS25 created conditions under which supervision could be enacted more developmentally. Kasa et al. (2022) found that TS25 teachers responded more positively to supervision when it was embedded in reflective dialogue and collegial trust, though the mechanisms underlying this difference have not been systematically examined.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. Developmental Supervision (Glickman et al., 2018)

Glickman's Developmental Supervision Model is the primary theoretical lens for this study. The model holds that supervisory effectiveness depends on matching supervisory approach to teacher developmental level, professional commitment, and instructional expertise. Glickman et al. (2018) identify four supervisory approaches along a continuum: directive control, directive informational, collaborative, and non-directive. For novice teachers with limited instructional repertoire, directive approaches provide essential structure and modelling. For experienced, self-directed teachers, non-directive approaches respect professional autonomy and promote inquiry-based growth. The critical insight of the model is that applying the same supervisory approach uniformly across all teachers, regardless of their developmental stage, is not only inefficient but counterproductive. It either over-directs experienced teachers, undermining their agency, or under-supports novices, leaving them without necessary scaffolding.

This differentiation principle is particularly relevant in Malaysian schools, where principals supervise workforces that span novice to veteran teachers with thirty-plus years of experience. SKPMg2 applies the same observation framework to all teachers, making no provision for differentiation. Glickman's model provides the theoretical basis for arguing that this uniformity is a structural limitation, not a minor implementation gap.

2.3.2. Adult Learning Theory

Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy establishes that adult learners, including teachers, are self-directed, draw meaningfully on prior experience, are motivated by relevance to their immediate professional challenges, and engage most deeply when they perceive autonomy in the learning process. These principles have direct implications for supervisory practice. When supervision is designed around the supervisor's observational agenda rather than the teacher's professional questions, it violates the autonomy principle and reduces teacher engagement. When feedback is generic and unconnected to classroom realities, it violates the relevance principle and produces disengagement. When post-observation discussions are one-directional, with the supervisor delivering judgements, the teacher receiving them, the collaborative and dialogic qualities that adult learning requires are absent.

Brookfield (2017) extends this framework by emphasising critical reflection as the engine of adult professional development. Teachers grow not by receiving better information but by developing the habit of interrogating their own assumptions about teaching and learning. Supervision that creates space for this interrogation, that asks teachers to explain their pedagogical choices, consider alternatives, and connect theory to practice, supports deeper and more durable professional learning than supervision that evaluates adherence to observable criteria.

2.3.3. Theoretical Integration

Glickman's Developmental Supervision Model and Knowles' Adult Learning Theory operate at different analytical levels but converge on a shared insight: effective supervision is differentiated, dialogic, and teacher-centred. Glickman's model supplies the structural logic, supervisory approaches must be calibrated to teacher developmental stage, while Knowles' andragogical framework supplies the relational logic: adult professionals engage most deeply when feedback connects to their immediate professional realities, respects their prior experience, and honours their autonomy. Together, these frameworks provide both the critical lens through which to diagnose the limitations of current Malaysian supervisory practice and the constructive basis for proposing an alternative model. The PDDA framework developed in this study translates both theoretical frameworks into operational phases that are directly responsive to the empirical data generated across the two case schools.

2.4. Professional Learning Communities and Supervision

The growing emphasis on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a vehicle for teacher development creates both an opportunity and a structural challenge for instructional supervision. When supervision is integrated into PLC processes, with observational data informing collective inquiry, and supervisory conversations connected to shared professional goals, it gains the collaborative legitimacy that individual observation cannot produce alone (Gordon & Espinoza, 2020; Louis & Leithwood, 2021). Supervisors in this model function as facilitators of professional inquiry rather than evaluators of individual performance.

In Malaysia, PLCs have been formally endorsed as a professional development mechanism, but their integration with supervision has been inconsistent. Schools vary widely in how PLCs are structured, facilitated, and connected to supervisory practice.

Where the connection is absent, PLCs and supervision operate in parallel, each achieving less than either could achieve in combination.

2.5. Research Gap

Three gaps structure this study. Theoretically, no published study has examined how Glickman's Developmental Supervision Model applies to SBIS implementation in the Malaysian context, despite three decades of SBIS policy. The relationship between supervisory differentiation and teacher professional growth, which Glickman's model predicts should be strong, has not been empirically tested in Malaysian secondary schools. Contextually, no comparative study has examined how TS25 and non-TS25 schools differ in supervisory practice, feedback culture, and professional growth outcomes under the same policy framework. Methodologically, no study has applied intercoder reliability assessment to Malaysian SBIS research, and the bilingual professional context has not been addressed in instrument design. This study addresses all three gaps.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Paradigm and Design

This study adopts an interpretivist paradigm, grounded in the ontological position that supervisory practice is not an objective, measurable phenomenon but a socially constructed reality shaped by participants' interpretations, institutional contexts, and relational dynamics (Creswell, 2014). The epistemological implication is that understanding how supervision works requires accessing participants' experiences, meanings, and perceptions, not measuring observable behaviours against standardised criteria.

A qualitative multiple-case study design was employed, following Yin's (2003) framework for studying contemporary phenomena in real-world contexts. The comparative case structure was theoretically motivated: the two schools share the same national policy framework but represent contrasting institutional conditions, enabling systematic exploration of how context shapes supervisory practice (Stake, 1995). The researcher acknowledges her positionality as a Malaysian educator with professional familiarity with the SBIS policy landscape. To mitigate interpretive bias, reflexive journaling was maintained throughout data collection and analysis, and member checking was conducted with four participants across both schools to verify the accuracy of emerging interpretations.

3.2. Research Sites and Participants

Two urban public secondary schools in the same district of Selangor were selected through purposive sampling to control for geographic and resource variation while enabling comparison of institutional context. Both schools implement SBIS under SPI Bil. 3/1987 and operate within the same district education office jurisdiction. School A participates in the TS25 initiative and has an active partnership with the Global School Leaders programme. School B operates under standard national provisions without external partnership support. Table 1 presents the school selection criteria applied in this study.

Table 1: School Selection Criteria

Selection Criterion	School A	School B
Ministry TS25 Programme participation	Yes	No
Principal with NPQEL formal leadership training	Yes	Yes
Urban school location	Yes	Yes
Implements SBIS under SPI Bil. 3/1987	Yes	Yes
Novice, mid-career, and experienced teachers present	Yes	Yes

Fourteen participants were selected across the two schools using purposive sampling criteria that required direct professional engagement with SBIS either as a supervisor or supervisee. From each school, four supervisors (principal, senior assistant principal, head of department, and subject panel head) and three supervisees (experienced, mid-career, and novice teacher) were recruited, ensuring that both policy-level and classroom-level perspectives were represented. Full demographic profiles are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Participant Profile - School A

Code	Gender	Age	Position	Experience (yrs)	Role
SchA_R1	Female	54	Principal	32	Supervisor
SchA_R2	Male	46	Senior Assistant Principal	19	Supervisor
SchA_R3	Female	49	Head of Department	25	Supervisor
SchA_R4	Female	52	Subject Panel Head	30	Supervisor
SchA_R5	Female	50	Experienced Teacher	28	Supervisee
SchA_R6	Female	45	Mid-Career Teacher	20	Supervisee
SchA_R7	Male	33	Novice Teacher	6	Supervisee

Table 3: Participant Profile - School B

Code	Gender	Age	Position	Experience (yrs)	Role
SchB_R8	Female	54	Principal	30	Supervisor
SchB_R9	Male	58	Senior Assistant Principal	36	Supervisor
SchB_R10	Male	39	Head of Department	16	Supervisor
SchB_R11	Female	41	Subject Panel Head	18	Supervisor
SchB_R12	Female	52	Experienced Teacher	27	Supervisee
SchB_R13	Female	43	Mid-Career Teacher	13	Supervisee
SchB_R14	Female	28	Novice Teacher	2	Supervisee

3.3. Data Collection

Three data sources were triangulated to strengthen credibility and enable cross-validation: semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document analysis (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). Semi-structured interviews lasting 45 to 75 minutes were conducted individually with all 14 participants, exploring each participant's direct experience of supervisory processes, feedback practices, professional growth, and perceived challenges. Interviews were conducted in English or Bahasa Malaysia according to participant preference, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim.

Direct observation was conducted across three visits to each school, spaced one week apart. Each visit lasted 60 to 90 minutes and focused on supervisory activities in progress: Learning Walk sessions, Classroom Walk-Through exercises, PLC meetings, and formal post-observation feedback conferences where accessible. Field notes recorded observable interactions, engagement patterns, and contextual features of each setting. Document analysis examined school strategic plans, supervision schedules, SKPMg2 records, meeting minutes, WhatsApp communication logs (shared voluntarily by participants), TS25 modules, and the Yearly Management Planning Booklet.

3.4. Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model, involving iterative cycles of data reduction, display, conclusion drawing, and verification. Interview transcripts, observation field notes, and documentary evidence were coded concurrently using Atlas.ti Version 23. An initial deductive coding framework derived from the research objectives was applied, then extended inductively as emergent patterns surfaced across sources. Coded segments were grouped into categories, and categories were consolidated into major themes through constant comparative analysis. To establish dependability, two independent coders reviewed a stratified subsample of 35 coded segments. Inter-coder agreement was assessed using Fleiss' Kappa (κ), appropriate for evaluating agreement among more than two raters. The analysis produced $\kappa = 0.775$ ($Z = 50.3$, $p < .001$), classified as substantial agreement (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Table 4 presents the reliability statistics.

Table 4: Inter-coder Reliability Statistics

Measure	Value	Interpretation	Reference
Fleiss' Kappa (κ)	0.775	Substantial agreement (0.61–0.80)	O'Connor & Joffe, 2020
Z-value	50.3	Statistically significant ($p < .001$)	Cheung & Tai, 2023
Simple percentage agreement	68.6%	Baseline agreement measure	O'Connor & Joffe, 2020
Segments rated	35	Coded by three independent raters	

Trustworthiness was established through Lincoln and Guba's (1988) four criteria. Credibility was achieved through triangulation of three data sources, member checking

with four participants, and prolonged engagement over twelve weeks of fieldwork. Transferability was supported through thick description of each school's context, enabling readers to assess applicability to comparable settings. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail of all coding decisions, inter-rater reliability assessment, and a systematic case study protocol. Confirmability was maintained through reflexive journaling and explicit documentation of the researcher's interpretive decisions at each analytical stage. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the State Education Office (JPN), and the District Education Office (PPD). All participants provided written informed consent.

4. Findings

Seven themes emerged from thematic analysis across the three research objectives. Table 5 presents the full coding structure, mapping key codes and categories to themes and research objectives.

Table 5: Coding Structure - Themes, Categories, and Research Objectives

Research Objective	Category	Major Theme
R01: Implementation Process	Structured Supervision Process	Theme 1: Structured Supervisory and Evaluation System
R01: Implementation Process	Learning Walks and Classroom Observation	Theme 2: Adequate Classroom Supervision and Evaluation
R02: Professional Growth	Collective Feedback and Support Process	Theme 3: Continuous Professional Development and Teacher Growth
R02: Professional Growth	Supervision for Accountability and Quality Assurance	Theme 4: Supervision Control and Evaluation
R02: Professional Growth	Professional Development Through Empowerment	Theme 5: Empowerment and Collaborative Professional Development
R03: Challenges	Teacher and Relationship-Related Challenges	Theme 6: Non-Supportive Feedback and Dissatisfaction
R03: Challenges	Administrative and Process-Related Challenges	Theme 7: Non-Communicative and Non-Supportive Follow-Up

4.1. R01: Implementation Process of Instructional Supervision

4.1.1. Theme 1: Structured Supervisory and Evaluation System

Both schools organised supervision around annual schedules aligned with SPI Bil. 3/1987 and SKPMg2. In School A, supervisory schedules were communicated to all teaching staff at the start of the academic year and consistently adhered to. This early transparency served a function beyond administrative organisation: it signalled to teachers that supervision was an institutional commitment rather than an ad hoc accountability measure, and appeared to reduce defensive professional anxiety.

"We focus on teaching and learning. So, we plan in the early part of the year before school starts. There is a schedule for administrators to observe teachers, which everyone is aware of. So, that is part of the early planning. That's because we want to monitor teaching and learning. So, we need to observe each teacher twice a year." (SchA_R2)

School B maintained an annual planning structure but exhibited greater flexibility in its application. Observation dates shifted in response to competing institutional demands, co-curricular activities, administrative priorities, and actual implementation was often delayed or compressed into the second semester. This produced uneven coverage across the teaching staff.

"It is indeed in our schedule where we will be observed twice a year. We will be informed at the beginning of the year. After that, it also depends on the supervisor; for example, if at the beginning of the year it's not done, it might be done in the middle of the year or all at once; that depends on the supervisor." (SchB_R13)

The divergence between schools was not in the existence of a supervisory plan but in the degree to which that plan was treated as a genuine institutional commitment versus a procedural requirement. This distinction has significant implications for teacher perceptions of supervision's seriousness and developmental intent.

4.1.2. Theme 2: Adequate Classroom Supervision and Evaluation

School A extended formal observation through informal, continuous supervisory practices that distinguished it markedly from School B. Learning Walks conducted two to three times per week and daily Classroom Walk-Throughs, using structured observation forms from the GSL programme, created a culture of continuous instructional visibility. These informal mechanisms captured classroom dynamics that biannual formal observations could not: how lessons unfolded without advance preparation, how students engaged when no one had signalled that an evaluation was coming, and how instruction varied across time rather than at selected moments.

"They will enter, look at the objectives, the criteria on the board, check if there's a title, and the date. For the Learning Walk, they don't inform in advance. It's on the spot; they don't inform. It happens about 2 to 3 times a week. There's a form. The Learning Walk form indeed shows what they want to assess." (SchA_R6)

"Classroom walk-through also happens daily. So, anybody can simply walk, and we don't see who is teaching and all that. We don't look at their timetable. There is no particular thing like how many times." (SchA_R3)

School B's classroom supervision was largely confined to biannual formal observations using SKPMg2 instruments. The absence of informal supervisory activity meant that the school's picture of classroom instruction was constructed from two data points per teacher per year, a frequency insufficient for tracking developmental progress or identifying emerging instructional challenges.

4.2. R02: Teachers' Professional Growth

4.2.1. Theme 3: Continuous Professional Development and Teacher Growth

Professional growth through supervision was experienced more substantively and consistently in School A than in School B. In School A, post-observation feedback was dialogic, initiating with acknowledgement of strengths before transitioning to areas for development, and was integrated with PLC processes and coaching cycles managed by subject panel heads. This integration meant that supervisory observations were not isolated events but entry points into sustained professional conversations.

"After the lesson, the supervisor and I usually meet immediately to reflect on the session. We exchange perspectives, drawing on both the supervisor's observations and my own reflections on the lesson."
(SchA_R2)

For novice teachers in School A, this developmental orientation was described as transformative. SchA_R7, with six years of experience, contrasted current supervisory practice with earlier, more evaluative approaches in ways that illustrate the impact of shifting from assessment to dialogue.

"Those days, the observation was mostly about pointing out the teacher's weaknesses, which often left a bad impression. But over the past two to three years, it has become more of a sharing session. It is more like a visit to guide or assist teachers. Even after the session, they do not point out mistakes immediately. They start with all the good remarks first and then give suggestions on how to improve positively." (SchA_R7)

School B's feedback sessions averaged five to fifteen minutes, a duration that participants across both supervisory and teacher roles acknowledged was insufficient for substantive professional dialogue.

"We usually adjust to the teachers' schedules, especially when they have classes immediately after. So, we arrange a short discussion, often five to ten minutes, to go through strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement." (SchB_R9)

4.2.2. Theme 4: Supervision Control and Evaluation

Both schools evidenced a degree of performance-based accountability as a function of supervision. In School A, the principal's regular presence in corridors and classrooms was acknowledged to maintain professional standards, including punctuality and preparedness. However, this accountability function was embedded within a broader developmental culture, so it did not produce the performance anxiety that is typically associated with evaluative supervision.

In School B, the evaluative dimension was more dominant. Teachers described adjusting their visible behaviour during observed lessons, including increasing formality, implementing activities they would not ordinarily use, in ways that suggest supervision was being treated as a compliance performance rather than an authentic professional encounter.

"Usually, when there is supervision, the teacher prepares the lesson plan as usual, following each step or activity sequence and having all the materials. In reality, I do not deny that not everything written in the lesson plan is implemented. For example, it may be written that the teacher uses a video, but there is none when there is no supervision." (SchB_R8)

4.2.3. Theme 5: Empowerment and Collaborative Professional Development

School A's supervisory system generated what participants described as organic peer learning, with professional knowledge circulating informally through collegial relationships without being directed from above. Teachers sought out colleagues for pedagogical advice, adapted their practices based on what they had observed in PLC sessions, and developed a sense of shared professional ownership over instructional quality.

"We will talk to the teacher. That's why we have the coaching. In our school, we have a Professional Learning Community, and we have coaching. We have middle leaders who are the GKMPs and KPs. We have a GKMP in charge of this coaching session. In a year, she will give two coaching sessions." (SchA_R3)

This empowerment was not absent in School B but was less institutionalised. Individual teachers reported learning from peer observation, but these interactions lacked the structured facilitation that would make them routine.

4.3. R03: Challenges of Instructional Supervision

4.3.1. Theme 6: Non-Supportive Feedback and Dissatisfaction

Feedback quality emerged as the most frequently cited challenge across both schools, with School B participants expressing more acute dissatisfaction. A recurring concern was the absence of meaningful post-observation dialogue, feedback limited to marks and brief written comments, delivered without discussion of the underlying pedagogical decisions.

"Yes, what I usually see is they just sign and give marks without any actual comments or feedback. It's like they just agree and that's it." (SchB_R12)

"In my experience, the supervisor would provide comments in the record book. The comments are usually just ordinary. As for the marks, they don't show us. They keep it hidden. Then we don't know what's going on, just chatting, suggestions, and then the marks will be given later. Our discussion with them doesn't finish. We just listen to what they have to say. It's very limited." (SchB_R12)

Beyond the quality of content, participants raised the relational dimension of feedback delivery. Hierarchical communication styles, with feedback delivered as directive correction rather than collegial dialogue, undermined teachers' sense of professional respect and reduced their openness to receiving criticism.

"But there are one or two administrators who treat us like school children. So, it's like teachers can't accept that. If the administrators respect teachers and treat them as teachers, it feels different." (SchA_R6)

Participants also cited the gap between supervisory expectations and supervisors' own practice as a source of professional friction. When supervisors required teaching behaviours of teachers that they did not model in their own instructional practice, the developmental credibility of the supervision was undermined.

"Leadership through example is important. In my view, if a supervisor wants to evaluate us, they should first demonstrate those practices themselves. As teachers, we also observe how supervisors teach. At times, the expectations set during observations are not reflected in their own practice." (SchA_R6)

4.3.2. Theme 7: Non-Communicative and Non-Supportive Follow-Up

Administrative overload was the primary structural constraint identified in both schools. Supervisors holding classroom teaching responsibilities alongside supervisory and administrative duties reported insufficient time for meaningful follow-up after supervisory visits. In School B, this produced a pattern in which observation occurred but developmental conversations did not.

"For the administrators, they have to teach, and at the same time, we are the supervisor and evaluators. So, indeed, this supervision does somewhat burden the supervisor." (SchB_R9)

"In our school, administrators face various constraints. Sometimes, due to meetings or urgent or emergency matters, we have to leave earlier. Sometimes, for a teaching and learning session of 35 minutes, we only have 10 minutes available to observe." (SchB_R9)

The dual role burden was compounded by delegation patterns in which follow-up responsibility was passed to middle leaders without clear briefing or accountability structures, resulting in inconsistent and unreliable post-supervisory support.

"The follow-up action is carried out. But perhaps it's not the supervisor who does it. We will delegate it either to the subject head of the panel or to the HOD to provide further guidance." (SchB_R9)

5. Discussion

5.1. Structure and Development as Complementary, Not Competing

The discussion is organised around the three empirical research objectives. RO1 findings (implementation) are addressed in Section 5.1; RO2 findings (professional growth) in Section 5.2; and RO3 findings (challenges) in Section 5.3. The PDPA framework responding to RO4 is presented in Section 6. The most significant finding of this study is not that the two schools differ in supervisory practice, that much is evident from the data, but that both schools operate within the same formal policy framework while

producing fundamentally different professional cultures. This finding carries a critical theoretical implication: policy compliance does not determine supervisory quality. What determines quality is how leaders interpret, extend, and embed supervisory practice beyond what policy requires. School A and School B both satisfy the minimum requirements of SPI Bil. 3/1987 and SKPMg2. The difference lies in what they choose to do beyond those requirements and in how they culturally position supervision in relation to teachers' professional lives.

This pattern resonates with findings from comparable centralised systems. In Taiwan, Ting and Chuang (2025) found that teacher satisfaction with supervision was substantially higher in schools where principals differentiated their supervisory approach, even within a standardised national framework. In Turkey, Eryilmaz and Sandoval Hernandez (2024) documented that bureaucratic compliance pressures constrained the quality of supervision in ways that individual leadership could partially but not fully overcome. The Malaysian case extends these findings by showing that even a relatively low-resource intervention. TS25 programme participation with external partnership support can create conditions sufficient to shift supervisory culture toward the developmental end of the continuum.

Glickman et al.'s (2018) argument that supervision must be differentiated to be developmental finds clear empirical support in the contrast between the two schools. School A's use of directive approaches for novice teachers (coaching cycles managed by GKMPs), collaborative approaches for mid-career teachers (PLC dialogue and peer observation), and non-directive space for experienced teachers (autonomy in PLCs) reflects precisely the kind of situational responsiveness that Glickman's model advocates. School B's uniform biannual observation cycle, by contrast, applies the same framework to teachers at all career stages, a structural limitation that limits developmental impact regardless of supervisors' intentions.

5.2. Professional Growth Requires More than Observation

Themes 3 and 5 together demonstrate that observation events, however well structured, are insufficient as standalone mechanisms for professional growth. What transforms observation into professional learning is what happens around it: the quality of pre-observation dialogue that frames the observation's developmental purpose, the depth of post-observation conversation that connects observable evidence to pedagogical reasoning, and the integration of individual supervisory encounters into collective professional inquiry through PLCs.

This finding strongly supports Knowles' (1980) adult learning principles. Teachers in School A described supervisory interactions that honoured their professional experience, connected to their actual classroom challenges, and gave them agency in identifying developmental priorities. These are the conditions under which adult professionals engage most deeply with learning. Teachers in School B described interactions that delivered standardised feedback on observable criteria, the antithesis of the relevance, autonomy, and experience-connectedness that andragogical theory identifies as essential.

Brookfield's (2017) emphasis on critical reflection as the driver of professional growth is particularly relevant to the distinction between the two schools' PLC cultures. In School A, PLCs functioned as spaces for shared inquiry, with observational data from

formal and informal supervision informing collective examination of teaching challenges. This is the dialogic, reflective function that Brookfield identifies as the mechanism through which adult professionals develop critically rather than technically. School B's PLC activity was less structured and less connected to supervisory data, limiting its capacity to produce this deeper form of professional learning.

5.3. Structural Challenges Require Structural Solutions

Themes 6 and 7 identify challenges that cannot be resolved through individual supervisors' commitment or skill alone. Administrative overload is a systemic problem: when supervisors carry teaching responsibilities, management duties, co-curricular oversight, and supervisory accountability simultaneously, something will be compromised. The evidence from both schools suggests that follow-up, the element most critical for translating observation into development, is systematically under-resourced.

School A managed this structural constraint more effectively than School B through distributed supervision: spreading supervisory responsibility across the leadership team (principal, senior assistant principal, heads of department, and subject panel heads) rather than concentrating it in senior administrators. This distribution not only increased supervisory coverage but also created multiple developmental relationships within the school, diversifying the sources of professional support available to each teacher. School B's more centralised supervisory model left teachers dependent on senior administrators whose competing demands most severely constrained supervisory quality.

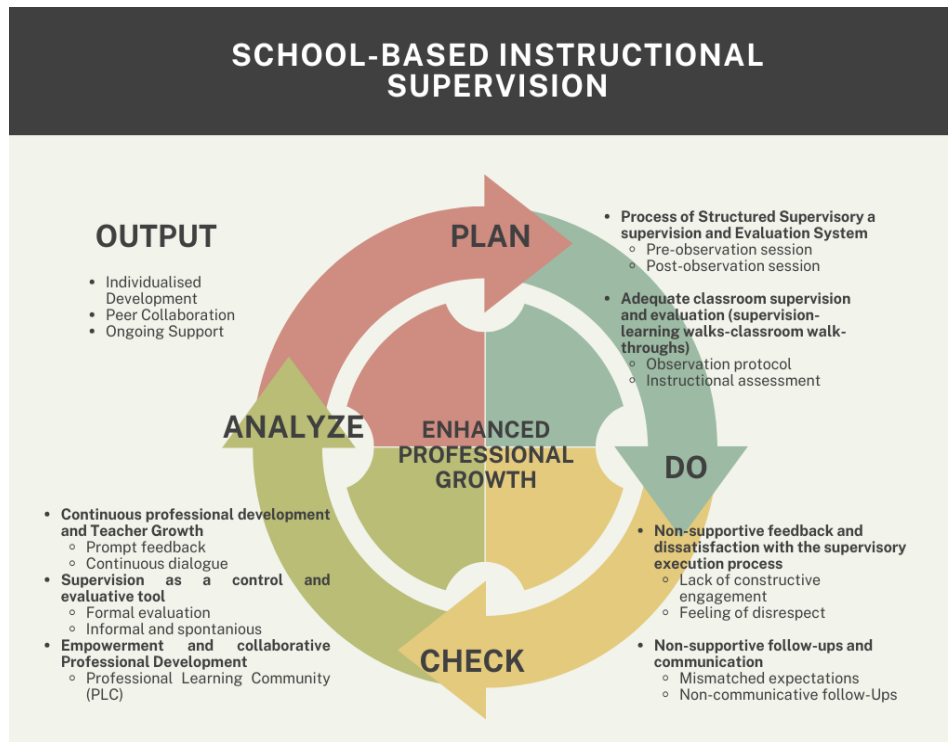
The conflation of supervision and evaluation, documented across both schools, represents a deeper structural problem that leadership distribution alone cannot solve. When the same interaction serves both formative and summative purposes, teachers rationally manage their professional risk by performing for evaluation rather than engaging with development. Resolving this requires not just a change in supervisory practice but a change in the institutional function that observation serves, a policy-level intervention that current frameworks do not support.

6. A PDDA Framework for School-Based Instructional Supervision

6.1. Framework Overview

The findings of this study, seven themes across three research objectives, grounded in fourteen participants' professional experiences and triangulated across interviews, observation, and document sources, support the development of a cyclical framework for SBIS implementation. The framework, presented as Figure 1, is built around the Plan-Do-Develop-Analyse (PDDA) cycle with Enhanced Professional Growth at its centre. Each phase is theoretically grounded and empirically derived: its design reflects specific patterns identified in the data rather than abstract principles applied retrospectively. The framework is explicitly mapped to the seven themes to demonstrate its evidential foundation.

Figure 1: PDDA Framework for the Implementation Process of SBIS



6.2. Phase 1: Plan: Purposeful and Differentiated Preparation (Themes 1 & 2)

The Plan phase establishes the developmental architecture of each supervisory cycle. Its key elements, annual scheduling communicated transparently to all staff, pre-observation conferences that establish shared observation goals, differentiation of supervisory approach according to teacher career stage and professional needs, and identification of informal observation activities (Learning Walks, Classroom Walk-Throughs), are each derived from practices that distinguished School A's supervisory culture. The differentiation principle reflects Glickman et al.'s (2018) core argument: directive guidance for novices, collaborative inquiry for mid-career teachers, and non-directive autonomy for experienced educators. Knowles' (1980) andragogical framework underpins the pre-observation conference structure, which positions the observation's developmental purpose as the teacher's question rather than the supervisor's agenda.

6.3. Phase 2: Do: Observation with Developmental Intent (Themes 2 & 4)

The Do phase covers the enactment of supervisory observation across formal and informal modalities. Formal biannual observations using SKPMg2 provide the accountability record required by policy. Informal Learning Walks and Classroom Walk-Throughs, conducted with structured GSL observation forms, provide the continuous instructional intelligence that biannual observation cannot generate. The critical distinction between these modalities in the framework is their purpose: formal observations document performance; informal observations generate evidence for professional dialogue. When both are present and their purposes are clearly separated, the evaluative function does not contaminate the developmental function. This phase directly addresses the conflation challenge identified in Theme 4.

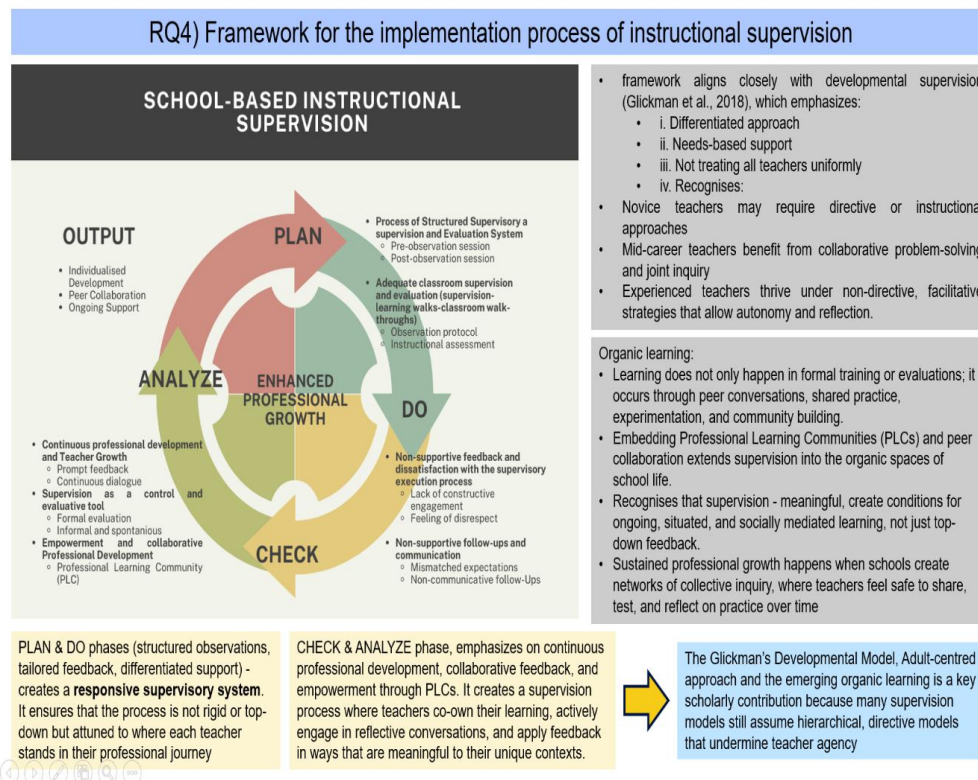
6.4. Phase 3: Develop: Feedback as Professional Dialogue (Themes 3, 5 & 6)

The Develop phase restructures post-observation feedback as a two-directional professional dialogue rather than a unidirectional assessment delivery. Drawing on Theme 3 evidence, the framework specifies that feedback should begin with acknowledged strengths, connect observations to pedagogical reasoning rather than procedural compliance, invite the teacher's own reflection and questions, and identify specific and actionable developmental priorities. PLC integration is specified as a structural element of this phase: feedback from individual observations should enter collective professional inquiry through PLC discussion, so that individual developmental conversations are connected to school-wide professional learning. This directly addresses the disconnection between supervision and PLCs identified in Theme 5. The framework also specifies that supervisors must be held to the same professional standards they articulate in feedback; the credibility gap identified in Theme 6 requires explicit attention to supervisory modelling.

6.5. Phase 4: Analyse: Reflective Evaluation and Cycle Renewal (Themes 7 & R04)

The Analyse phase closes the PDDA cycle by generating evidence for the next planning cycle. Follow-up visits are scheduled as institutional obligations rather than optional additions, with clear allocation of responsibility to ensure continuity of developmental support. Data from both formal and informal observations across the cycle are reviewed collectively by the supervisory team to identify school-wide instructional patterns. Teachers' developmental progress is evaluated against the goals established in the Plan phase, not against standardised criteria alone.

Figure 2: Operational Framework for the Implementation Process of Instructional Supervision



This approach transforms supervision from an episodic evaluative event into a continuous, evidence-driven improvement cycle consistent with Brookfield's (2017) argument that sustained critical reflection, rather than periodic feedback, is the primary driver of adult professional growth. The Analyse phase directly addresses the systemic follow-up failure documented in Theme 7 by institutionalising follow-up as a scheduled and accountable obligation. The operational framework is shown in Figure 2, emphasizing the relationships between the four phases and the related outputs for each.

7. Conclusion

This study contributes three distinct advances to the literature on instructional supervision. First, it provides the first empirical comparison of SBIS practice between TS25 and non-TS25 Malaysian public secondary schools, demonstrating that programme participation is associated with meaningfully different supervisory cultures despite identical policy frameworks. Second, it grounds the compliance-development tension not in individual supervisory failure but in structural conditions, role overload, instrument conflation, differentiation absence, that require systemic rather than individual responses. Third, the PDDA framework offers a theoretically grounded, empirically derived model for SBIS implementation that is specific enough to be actionable and contextually situated enough to be credible for Malaysian school leaders. For teachers, the findings reinforce the importance of positioning oneself as an active participant in supervisory conversations rather than a passive recipient of evaluation. For school leaders, the evidence supports investing in distributed supervision structures, pre-observation conference protocols, and integrated PLC facilitation as the mechanisms most likely to shift supervisory culture. For policymakers, the findings argue for a recalibration of SKPMg2 to separate its evaluative and developmental functions, and for the provision of concrete operational guidance for differentiated SBIS implementation.

This study is limited by its two-school, single-district sample, which supports analytical but not statistical generalisation to other Malaysian school contexts. The cross-sectional design captures practice at a single point in time and does not permit conclusions about how supervisory cultures develop or sustain over time. Future research should examine the PDDA framework's applicability across multiple school types and geographic contexts, employ longitudinal designs to track professional growth outcomes, and investigate the mechanisms through which the TS25 programme elements specifically influence supervisory culture change.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study received ethical approval from the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the Selangor State Education Office (Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri, JPN), and the District Education Office (Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah, PPD). All participants were fully informed of the study's aims, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained from all fourteen participants before data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and confidentiality of all data was maintained throughout the research process.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Acknowledgements

The authors sincerely thank the principals, senior assistant principals, heads of department, subject panel heads, and teachers at both participating schools for their generous time, openness, and willingness to share their professional experiences. Their candid reflections made this study possible. The authors also extend their gratitude to the school communities for welcoming the research team and facilitating access throughout the fieldwork period.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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