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Instructional Leadership Practices of Master Teachers as Basis for the Development of an Instructional Mentoring Program

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Abstract

This study examined the instructional leadership practices of Master Teachers and used the integrated findings as the basis for developing a context-responsive instructional mentoring program for island school contexts. The study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. The qualitative phase used phenomenological interviews with Master Teachers to identify mentoring practices, instructional leadership dimensions, and contextual constraints. The quantitative phase validated the emergent dimensions through a survey of 135 teachers from a target population of 160, yielding an 84.38% response rate. Qualitative results showed that Master Teachers enacted instructional leadership through mentoring, coaching, modeling, instructional supervision, professional dialogue, Learning Action Cell facilitation, data-informed support, and contextualized instructional assistance. Quantitative results showed a high overall level of instructional leadership practices (M = 3.51, SD = 0.61), very high perceived instructional support (M = 3.50, SD = 0.67), and very high mentoring needs and priorities (M = 3.56, SD = 0.63). Significant differences were found in perceived instructional leadership practices by teaching experience, teaching position, and mentoring frequency, while mentoring needs differed significantly by school level. Integrated findings supported the development of a structured instructional mentoring program consisting of needs assessment, goal setting, coaching and modeling, observation, feedback and reflective dialogue, professional learning facilitation, differentiated mentoring tracks, contextualized instructional support, action planning, monitoring, and program evaluation.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Master Teachers, Mentoring Program, Instructional Coaching, Teacher Professional Development, Mixed Methods, Island Schools

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

Instructional leadership remains central to school improvement because it links leadership work directly with the quality of teaching, professional learning, curriculum implementation, and learner outcomes. Contemporary syntheses show that school leadership affects students largely through its influence on teachers, instructional conditions, collaboration, and school climate (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). Although early instructional leadership theory was developed mainly around the role of principals, its core logic is applicable to teacher leaders who support colleagues through mentoring, coaching, classroom observation, feedback, and professional learning facilitation (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Nguyen, Harris, & Ng, 2020).

In the Philippine basic education system, Master Teachers occupy a strategic instructional leadership role. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers institutionalize teacher quality through domains on content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment, community linkages, and professional growth (Department of Education [DepEd], 2017). These standards position highly proficient teachers as models of effective practice and as contributors to the professional development of colleagues. Similarly, the Learning Action Cell policy frames school-based professional learning as a continuing professional development strategy intended to improve teaching and learning through collaborative inquiry (DepEd, 2016).

The present study is situated in island school contexts in the Schools Division of Siargao. In such settings, Master Teachers often become the most accessible source of instructional assistance because external training, specialist support, and regular professional development opportunities may be constrained by distance, transportation, workload, and limited resources. Therefore, examining how Master Teachers actually enact instructional leadership is necessary for designing mentoring structures that are responsive to local realities rather than merely compliant with policy expectations.

Rationale and Research Gaps

The rationale for this study rests on three connected gaps. First, while instructional leadership and teacher mentoring are extensively discussed in the literature, many studies rely on perception ratings or competency assessments and provide limited evidence on how leadership is enacted in daily school practice. Second, qualitative accounts of teacher leadership often produce rich contextual descriptions, but these are seldom validated through teacher perceptions across a larger group. Third, mentoring recommendations are frequently generic and are not always translated into structured programs that account for island school conditions, varied teacher readiness, school level, and mentoring frequency.

This study addresses these gaps by using a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. The qualitative phase identifies the practices, processes, and challenges experienced by Master Teachers. The quantitative phase validates these dimensions through teacher responses. The integration of both strands becomes the empirical basis for an instructional mentoring program. This approach is appropriate because mixed-methods integration allows a study to connect the depth of participant experience with the breadth of quantitative validation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Skamagki et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on four theoretical perspectives. Instructional Leadership Theory explains how leaders improve teaching by clarifying instructional goals, supervising instruction, supporting curriculum implementation, and promoting a positive learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Distributed Leadership Theory explains why instructional leadership may be shared across formal and informal leaders rather than confined to school administrators (Spillane, 2006). Social Learning Theory supports the mentoring dimension by explaining that teachers learn through observation, modeling, feedback, and social interaction (Bandura, 1977). Adult Learning Theory further supports the program-development component because teachers, as adult learners, benefit from relevant, experience-based, problem-centered, and self-directed professional learning (Knowles, 1980).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework assumes that Master Teachers' instructional leadership practices influence teachers' perceived instructional support and mentoring needs. These practices include mentoring support, coaching and modeling, instructional supervision and observation, feedback and professional dialogue, and professional learning

facilitation. Through qualitative exploration, these practices are described as lived and enacted experiences. Through quantitative validation, the practices are measured according to level, support, needs, and differences across selected profile variables. The integrated findings are then translated into a context-responsive instructional mentoring program.

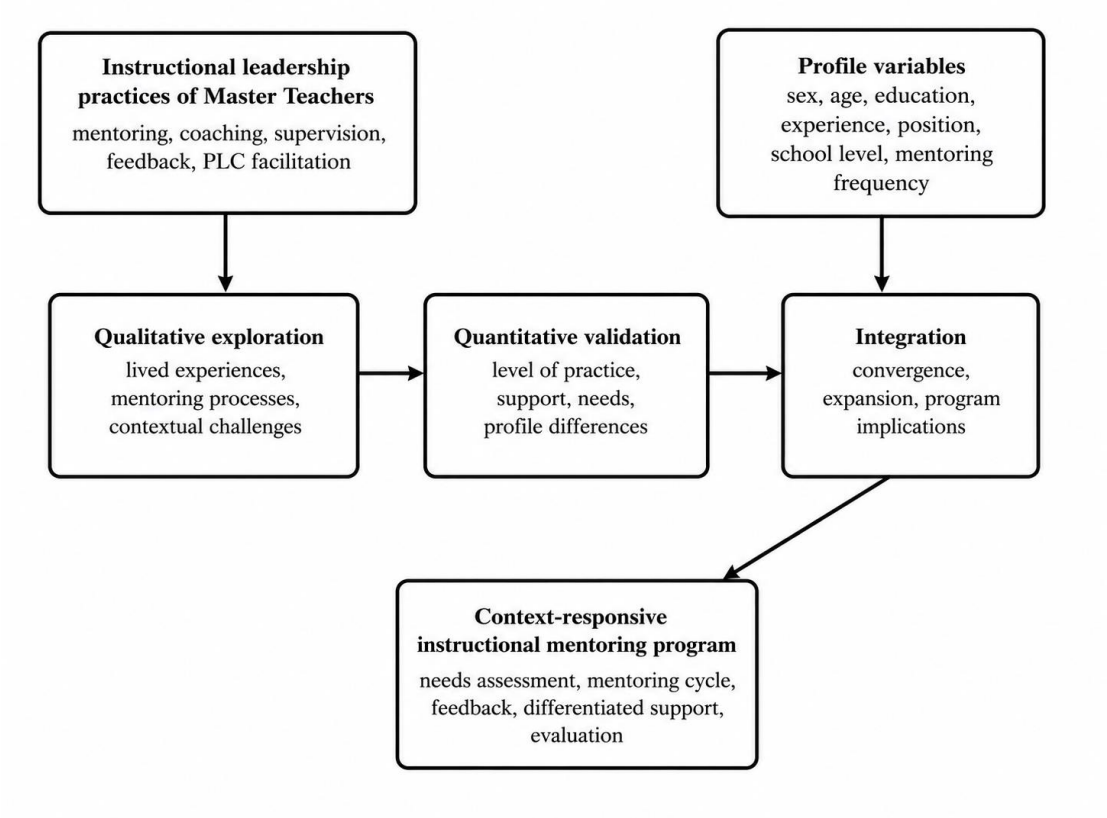

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study showing the sequential movement from instructional leadership practices to qualitative exploration, quantitative validation, integration, and instructional mentoring program development.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study, showing how the instructional leadership practices of Master Teachers lead to the development of a context-responsive instructional mentoring program. The framework begins with the instructional leadership practices of Master Teachers, which include mentoring, coaching, supervision, feedback, and facilitation of professional learning communities. These practices serve as the main phenomenon explored in the qualitative phase of the study.

The qualitative exploration focuses on the lived experiences of Master Teachers, particularly their mentoring processes and the contextual challenges they encounter. The findings from this phase are then used as the basis for quantitative validation, where teachers' perceptions are examined in terms of the level of instructional leadership practices, perceived instructional support, mentoring needs, and differences according to profile variables.

The profile variables, such as sex, age, education, experience, position, school level, and mentoring frequency, are considered in the framework because they may influence teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership, support, and mentoring priorities. The qualitative and quantitative findings are then integrated to determine areas of convergence, expansion, and program implications.

The integrated findings serve as the basis for developing a context-responsive instructional mentoring program. This program includes needs assessment, a mentoring cycle, feedback mechanisms, differentiated support, and evaluation. Thus, the framework illustrates the logical flow of the study from exploration and validation to integration and program development.

Aim and Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the instructional leadership practices of Master Teachers and use the integrated qualitative and quantitative findings as the basis for developing an evidence-based and context-responsive instructional mentoring program.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do Master Teachers describe their instructional leadership practices in supporting teaching and learning?
2. What instructional leadership dimensions, mentoring processes, and contextual challenges emerge from the experiences of Master Teachers?
3. How do Master Teachers enact instructional support and mentoring within the context of island schools?
4. Based on the emergent qualitative dimensions, what is the level of instructional leadership practices of Master Teachers as perceived by teachers?
5. What is the level of teachers' perceived instructional support from Master Teachers?
6. What are the mentoring needs and priorities of teachers?
7. Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership practices when grouped according to profile variables?
8. Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceived instructional support when grouped according to profile variables?
9. Is there a significant difference in teachers' mentoring needs and priorities when grouped according to profile variables?
10. How do the qualitative and quantitative findings converge, diverge, or complement one another in explaining instructional leadership and mentoring practices?
11. What context-responsive instructional mentoring program may be developed based on the integrated findings of the study?

Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance:

- **H_{01}:** There is no significant difference in teachers' perceived level of instructional leadership practices of Master Teachers when grouped according to profile variables.
- **H_{02}:** There is no significant difference in teachers' perceived instructional support from Master Teachers when grouped according to profile variables.
- **H_{03}:** There is no significant difference in teachers' mentoring needs and priorities when grouped according to profile variables.

2. Literature Review

The literature positions instructional leadership as a practice-oriented form of leadership focused on improving teaching and learning rather than merely managing school operations. Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model remains foundational because it connects leadership to instructional goals, curriculum coordination, supervision, and learning climate. More recent evidence strengthens this claim. Grissom et al. (2021), in a systematic synthesis of two decades of research, showed that effective school leaders improve student and organizational outcomes by shaping teacher practice, school climate, and professional conditions. For the present study, this means that the instructional leadership of Master Teachers should be examined not as a peripheral role but as a school-based mechanism for improving teachers' instructional work.

Teacher leadership literature further extends instructional leadership beyond principals. Nguyen et al. (2020) found that teacher leadership research consistently links teacher leaders with professional development, collaborative practice, school improvement, and instructional influence. In island schools, this perspective is critical because Master Teachers often provide lateral leadership through mentoring, co-planning, modeling, feedback, and professional dialogue. Distributed leadership therefore offers a useful lens for understanding why teacher expertise must be mobilized across the school rather than centralized in administrative positions.

Mentoring and coaching are also well-supported mechanisms for teacher development. Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan's (2018) meta-analysis of causal evidence found positive effects of teacher coaching on instructional practice and student achievement, particularly when coaching is individualized, sustained, feedback-rich, and connected to classroom practice. This finding is closely aligned with the present study because the instructional leadership practices identified among Master Teachers include mentoring, coaching and modeling, classroom observation, feedback, and follow-up support. The implication is that mentoring must be structured as a continuous instructional improvement cycle rather than as occasional advice-giving.

Professional learning communities provide another conceptual link between mentoring and instructional improvement. DepEd's LAC policy defines Learning Action Cells as school-based professional learning communities designed to support teachers' continuing professional development and improve learner achievement (DepEd, 2016). This aligns with international views that teacher collaboration, reflective dialogue, and collective problem-solving strengthen instructional capacity. In the present study, Master Teachers' facilitation of LAC sessions and peer-sharing activities represents a locally institutionalized form of professional learning facilitation.

The reviewed literature also supports the methodological choice of sequential exploratory mixed methods. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) explain that this design is suitable when qualitative findings are needed to develop or refine quantitative measures. Skamagki et al. (2022) further emphasized that integration is central to mixed-methods value because qualitative and quantitative findings must be connected at the interpretation and reporting levels. In the present study, qualitative findings generated dimensions of instructional leadership, quantitative findings validated their level and variation, and integrated findings served as the basis for program development. Thus, the study contributes by moving beyond description toward an empirically grounded mentoring program for island school contexts.

3. Methodology

This study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, following a QUAL -> QUAN -> integration -> development sequence. The design was appropriate because the study first explored the lived instructional leadership experiences of Master Teachers and then used the emergent themes to guide quantitative validation among teachers. The final integration of findings informed the development of the instructional mentoring program.

The qualitative phase used a phenomenological orientation to explore how Master Teachers described and enacted instructional leadership practices. Participants were Master Teachers from selected public schools in the Schools Division of Siargao who held official Master Teacher positions, had at least one year of experience in

instructional leadership roles, and were actively engaged in mentoring or instructional support. Purposive sampling was used, and the study involved 12 Master Teachers, consistent with the saturation-oriented logic of phenomenological inquiry.

Qualitative data were gathered through a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. The guide elicited descriptions of mentoring, coaching, instructional supervision, feedback practices, professional learning facilitation, data use, and contextual challenges. Expert review was used to improve content validity. With informed consent, interviews were documented, transcribed, and analyzed through thematic analysis. The researcher repeatedly read the transcripts, generated codes, clustered codes into categories, developed themes, and validated interpretations through careful review of participant meanings.

The quantitative phase involved teachers working within the instructional influence or mentoring supervision of Master Teachers. The target population was 160 teachers, of whom 135 responded to the survey, equivalent to an 84.38% response rate. A researcher-developed questionnaire was constructed from qualitative themes and organized around instructional leadership practices, perceived instructional support, and mentoring needs and priorities. Expert validation and pilot testing were undertaken before main data collection.

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviations, and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations described the level of instructional leadership practices, perceived support, and mentoring needs. Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis H, and related pairwise procedures were used where the assumptions for parametric tests were not satisfied. The level of significance was set at 0.05. Integration was conducted through joint display logic by comparing qualitative themes with related quantitative results and deriving program implications.

Ethical procedures included permission from relevant authorities, informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and secure handling of data. Participants were informed that they could withdraw without penalty. Findings were reported honestly, with interpretations grounded in the data.

4. Findings, Results and Discussion

Qualitative Findings

Table 1. Qualitative instructional leadership practices employed by Master Teachers

Codes/Practices	Category	Emergent theme	Interpretation
Mentoring and coaching; co-teaching; demonstration teaching; modeling practice	Instructional support practices	Instructional leadership through mentoring, coaching, and modeling	Master Teachers supported teachers through direct mentoring, coaching, demonstration lessons, and modeling of effective classroom practices.
Pre-observation; observation; post-observation; follow-up; action planning	Mentoring process	Structured and systematic mentoring cycle	Mentoring followed a cycle of observation, feedback, action planning, and follow-up.
IPCRF; IDP; data analysis; needs assessment	Data-driven practices	Data-driven and needs-based mentoring	Performance documents and learner-related data were used to identify instructional needs.
Constructive, supportive, and standards-based	Feedback mechanisms	Central role of feedback in teacher development	Feedback guided reflection and improvement.

feedback			
Lesson planning; teaching strategies; contextualized teaching	Instructional competencies	Focus on core and contextualized instruction	Support focused on lesson planning, strategies, and contextualized teaching.
Improved practices; confidence; reflective practice	Teacher development	Positive impact of mentoring on teacher development	Mentoring contributed to confidence, reflection, and instructional improvement.
Time, workload, resources, resistance, readiness, geography	Constraints	Contextual challenges and system constraints	Leadership was affected by workload, limited resources, distance, readiness, and resistance.

As shown in Table 1, Master Teachers described instructional leadership as a developmental and relational practice rather than a purely supervisory function. Their leadership was enacted through mentoring, coaching, demonstration teaching, observation, data use, feedback, and professional learning support. This supports instructional leadership theory because the practices were directly connected to classroom improvement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). It also supports social learning theory because teachers learned through modeling, guided practice, and feedback (Bandura, 1977).

Table 2. Challenges encountered by Master Teachers in instructional leadership and mentoring

Challenge area	**Description**	**Effect on mentoring**	**Program implication**
Time constraints	Limited time because of teaching and school responsibilities.	Mentoring became difficult to conduct regularly.	Use realistic schedules and short-cycle mentoring.
Heavy workload	Overlapping instructional, administrative, and mentoring tasks.	Follow-up and monitoring were affected.	Share responsibilities and streamline documentation.
Limited resources	Lack of materials and support tools.	Modeling and lesson support were constrained.	Use low-resource and localized strategies.
Teacher resistance	Some teachers hesitated to accept feedback or new practices.	Mentoring required stronger relational trust.	Use reflective, non-threatening feedback procedures.
Varied readiness	Teachers differed in confidence, skills, and openness.	One mentoring approach could not fit all teachers.	Differentiate mentoring tracks.
Geographic constraints	Distance and island conditions limited access and continuity.	Collaboration and regular interaction were constrained.	Use flexible school-based mentoring arrangements.
Need for contextualized support	Local realities required adaptation of strategies.	Mentoring had to adjust to available resources.	Promote contextualized instructional support.

Table 2 indicates that mentoring effectiveness was constrained by time, workload, resources, teacher readiness, and island geography. These findings suggest that mentoring programs cannot be designed as additional unfunded or unscheduled work. Instead, the program must be embedded in school routines, aligned with LAC sessions, and

adapted to resource-constrained contexts. This is consistent with adult learning principles because professional support must be relevant to teachers' immediate work conditions (Knowles, 1980).

Quantitative Results

Table 3. Level of instructional leadership practices of Master Teachers as perceived by teachers

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Feedback and professional dialogue	3.63	0.63	High	1
Instructional supervision and observation	3.59	0.64	High	2
Professional learning facilitation	3.55	0.65	High	3
Mentoring support	3.40	0.66	High	4
Coaching and modeling	3.36	0.76	High	5
Overall mean	3.51	0.61	High	

Table 3 shows that teachers perceived the instructional leadership practices of Master Teachers as high overall (M = 3.51, SD = 0.61). Feedback and professional dialogue ranked highest, while coaching and modeling ranked lowest. This pattern implies that feedback practices are established and visible, but demonstration teaching, co-teaching, and practical modeling require further strengthening. The result is aligned with coaching research showing that sustained, individualized, and practice-based coaching has measurable benefits for instruction (Kraft et al., 2018).

Table 4. Level of teachers' perceived instructional support from Master Teachers

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Instructional support indicator 4	3.55	0.71	Very High	1
Instructional support indicator 3	3.53	0.75	Very High	2
Instructional support indicator 1	3.50	0.74	Very High	3
Instructional support indicator 2	3.50	0.75	Very High	4
Instructional support indicator 5	3.49	0.75	Very High	5
Overall perceived instructional support	3.50	0.67	Very High	

As reflected in Table 4, perceived instructional support was very high overall (M = 3.50, SD = 0.67). This confirms that teachers generally regarded Master Teachers as accessible and useful sources of instructional guidance. However, the high rating should not be interpreted as evidence that mentoring is already fully systematic. When interpreted together with the qualitative findings, the result suggests that support exists but needs clearer structure, documentation, differentiation, and evaluation.

Table 5. Mentoring needs and priorities of teachers

Mentoring need/priority indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Indicator 1	3.59	0.67	Very High	1
Indicator 4	3.58	0.67	Very High	2
Indicator 2	3.57	0.68	Very High	3
Indicator 3	3.57	0.68	Very High	4
Indicator 7	3.56	0.73	Very High	5
Indicator 8	3.56	0.69	Very High	6
Indicator 5	3.54	0.71	Very High	7
Indicator 6	3.54	0.69	Very High	8
Overall mentoring needs and priorities	3.56	0.63	Very High	

Table 5 shows that all mentoring needs and priorities were rated very high, with an overall mean of 3.56 (SD = 0.63). This finding indicates that teachers require continuing and structured instructional assistance across multiple areas. The result supports the need for a comprehensive mentoring program rather than a single-focus intervention. It also reinforces the relevance of DepEd's school-based professional learning policy, which positions LACs as a mechanism for continuing professional development (DepEd, 2016).

Table 6. Differences in instructional leadership practices, instructional support, and mentoring needs by profile variables

Outcome variable	Profile variable with significant result	Test value	p-value	Decision/interpretation
Instructional leadership practices	Teaching experience	H = 6.23	0.0443	Reject H01; significant difference
Instructional leadership practices	Teaching position	H = 8.15	0.0430	Reject H01; significant difference
Instructional leadership practices	Mentoring frequency	H = 18.53	0.0024	Reject H01; significant difference
Instructional support	All profile variables	-	p > 0.05	Fail to reject H02; no significant difference
Mentoring needs and priorities	School level	H = 7.742	0.0208	Reject H03; significant difference

Table 6 summarizes the inferential results. Teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership practices differed significantly by teaching experience, teaching position, and mentoring frequency. This suggests that teachers encounter Master Teachers' leadership differently depending on professional maturity, role level, and exposure to mentoring. No significant differences were found in perceived instructional support across profile variables, indicating that support was generally consistent. Mentoring needs differed significantly by school level, showing the need for differentiated mentoring tracks for elementary, junior high school, and senior high school teachers.

Integrated Results and Findings

Table 7. Joint display of integrated qualitative and quantitative findings

Qualitative theme	Related quantitative result	Type of integration	Program implication
Mentoring, coaching, and modeling were common support practices.	Coaching and modeling ranked lowest despite a high interpretation.	Expansion	Strengthen demonstration teaching, co-teaching, and peer coaching.
Observation, post-observation feedback, action planning, and follow-up formed a mentoring cycle.	Instructional supervision and observation ranked second.	Convergence	Formalize the pre-conference, observation, post-conference, and follow-up cycle.
Master Teachers used IPCRF, IDP, observation, and learner data.	Mentoring needs and priorities were very high.	Convergence	Begin mentoring with needs assessment and teacher profiling.
Feedback was constructive, supportive, and standards-based.	Feedback and professional dialogue ranked first.	Convergence	Adopt a feedback and reflective dialogue protocol.
Contextual challenges affected mentoring continuity.	Leadership perceptions varied by experience, position, and mentoring frequency; mentoring needs varied by school level.	Expansion	Use flexible schedules and differentiated school-level mentoring tracks.

Table 7 shows that qualitative and quantitative findings largely converged, particularly in the value of feedback, observation, needs-based mentoring, and professional learning. Quantitative findings also expanded the qualitative results by identifying specific groups requiring differentiated attention. This integrated interpretation provides the empirical justification for the proposed mentoring program.

Table 8. Proposed instructional mentoring program matrix

Component	Objective	Key activities	Success indicators
Mentoring needs assessment	Identify strengths, gaps, and priorities.	Review IPCRF, IDP, COT results, teacher self-assessment, and mentoring checklist.	Completed needs assessment and teacher mentoring profiles.
Goal setting and mentoring plan	Set clear mentoring goals.	Mentor-mentee conference, goal setting, schedule preparation.	Approved mentoring plan with clear goals and timelines.
Coaching and modeling	Strengthen instructional practices.	Demonstration teaching, co-teaching, lesson modeling, guided lesson preparation.	Documented coaching sessions and improved teacher confidence.
Instructional supervision and observation	Provide developmental classroom-based support.	Pre-observation, classroom observation, post-observation conference, follow-up.	Completed observation cycles and feedback records.
Feedback and reflective dialogue	Promote reflection and improvement.	Constructive feedback, reflective conversation, action points.	Teacher reflection notes and action plans.

Professional learning facilitation	Sustain collaborative learning.	LAC sessions, peer sharing, collaborative lesson planning.	Documented LAC sessions and shared strategies.
Differentiated mentoring tracks	Address varied needs by school level and teacher profile.	Group teachers by needs, level, experience, and mentoring exposure.	Mentoring activities matched to teacher needs.
Contextualized instructional support	Adapt instruction to island school conditions.	Localized materials, low-resource teaching strategies, contextualized lesson planning.	Contextualized lessons and resource-based strategies used.
Action planning and evaluation	Monitor progress and improve the program.	Follow-up conference, progress monitoring, program evaluation.	Progress reports and revised mentoring plan.

Table 8 presents the major components of the proposed instructional mentoring program, including their corresponding objectives, key activities, and success indicators. It shows that the program begins with a mentoring needs assessment, where teachers' strengths, gaps, and priorities are identified through the review of IPCRF, IDP, COT results, teacher self-assessment, and mentoring checklists. This initial component ensures that mentoring support is based on documented instructional needs rather than general assumptions.

The second component focuses on goal setting and mentoring planning. Through mentor-mentee conferences, specific mentoring goals, schedules, and timelines are established. This provides direction and structure to the mentoring process. The next components, coaching and modeling as well as instructional supervision and observation, emphasize direct classroom-based support. These include demonstration teaching, co-teaching, lesson modeling, pre-observation conferences, classroom observations, post-observation conferences, and follow-up sessions. These activities are intended to strengthen teachers' instructional practices and provide developmental feedback grounded in actual classroom performance.

The table also highlights feedback and reflective dialogue as a key component of the program. This component promotes teacher reflection through constructive feedback, professional conversation, and action planning. In addition, professional learning facilitation is included to sustain collaborative learning through LAC sessions, peer sharing, and collaborative lesson planning. The differentiated mentoring tracks and contextualized instructional support components ensure that mentoring activities respond to differences in teacher profile, school level, experience, mentoring exposure, and island school conditions. These components make the program more responsive to varied instructional needs and local school realities.

Finally, the action planning and evaluation component provides a mechanism for monitoring teacher progress and improving the mentoring program. Through follow-up conferences, progress monitoring, and program evaluation, mentoring outcomes can be documented and used to revise future mentoring plans. Overall, the table demonstrates that the proposed instructional mentoring program is systematic, evidence-based, differentiated, and context-responsive. It begins with needs assessment, proceeds through structured mentoring support, and concludes with evaluation and program refinement.

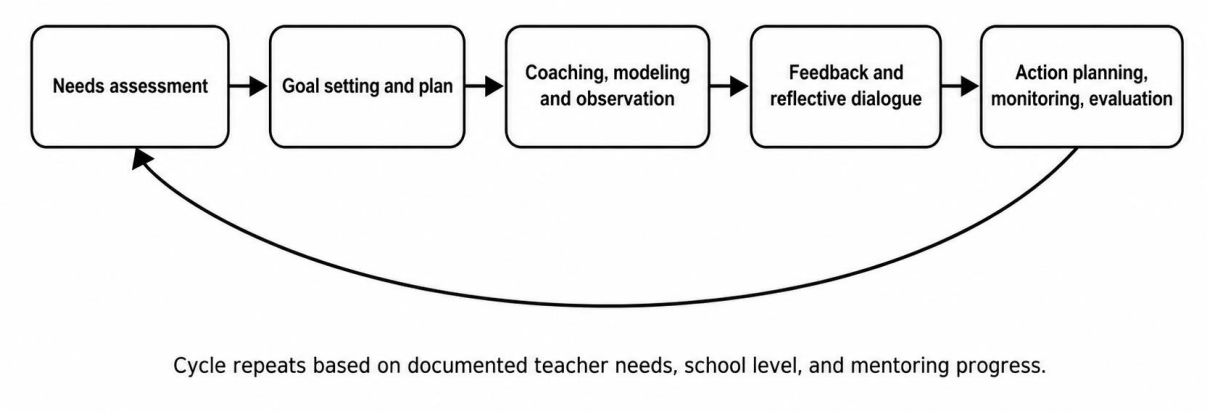

Figure 2. Proposed mentoring cycle showing the process from needs assessment to evaluation and continuous improvement.

Figure 2 illustrates the mentoring cycle embedded in the proposed instructional mentoring program. The cycle begins with needs assessment, where teachers' strengths, instructional gaps, and professional development priorities are identified using available evidence such as performance records, classroom observation results, self-assessments, and mentoring checklists. This stage ensures that mentoring support is grounded in actual teacher needs.

The next stage is goal setting and planning, where the Master Teacher and mentee establish clear mentoring goals, timelines, and expected outputs. This provides direction for the mentoring process and ensures that both mentor and mentee have a shared understanding of the intended instructional improvements. After this, the cycle proceeds to coaching, modeling, and observation, where the Master Teacher provides direct instructional support through demonstration teaching, lesson modeling, guided preparation, classroom observation, and related coaching activities.

The fourth stage, feedback and reflective dialogue, emphasizes constructive professional conversation. At this point, the Master Teacher provides feedback based on observed instructional practices, while the mentee reflects on strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement. The final stage is action planning, monitoring, and evaluation, where specific improvement actions are documented, progress is monitored, and the effectiveness of mentoring support is evaluated.

The curved arrow indicates that the mentoring process is cyclical rather than linear. After evaluation, the cycle returns to needs assessment so that mentoring may be adjusted based on documented teacher needs, school level, and mentoring progress. Overall, Figure 2 shows that the instructional mentoring program follows a continuous improvement process that is evidence-based, reflective, and responsive to changing teacher development needs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study concludes that Master Teachers enact instructional leadership through mentoring, coaching, modeling, classroom observation, feedback, professional dialogue, data-informed support, and professional learning facilitation. Teachers perceived these practices as high overall and perceived instructional support as very high, confirming the importance of Master Teachers as school-based instructional leaders. However, the results also

show that mentoring remains affected by time constraints, workload, resource limitations, teacher resistance, varied readiness, geographic isolation, and differences in mentoring exposure. The convergence and expansion of qualitative and quantitative findings indicate that instructional leadership in island schools requires a structured, differentiated, and context-responsive mentoring program. Therefore, the proposed instructional mentoring program is justified as an evidence-based intervention for strengthening teacher support, professional learning, and instructional improvement.

Recommendations

It is recommended that school heads formally recognize mentoring as a core component of Master Teachers' workload and provide time for scheduled mentoring cycles. Master Teachers should implement the proposed mentoring program beginning with needs assessment, goal setting, coaching and modeling, observation, feedback, and follow-up monitoring. Schools should strengthen LAC sessions as venues for collaborative mentoring and should document mentoring plans, feedback, and progress reports. Differentiated mentoring tracks should be used for elementary, junior high school, and senior high school teachers because mentoring needs differed significantly by school level. DepEd division and district personnel may adapt the program for other island and geographically isolated schools, subject to validation and implementation monitoring. Future researchers may conduct implementation studies to test the effectiveness of the proposed program on teacher practice, mentoring quality, and learner-related outcomes.

Declarations

Ethical Approval
This study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards for educational research. The researcher secured permission from the concerned school and division authorities before the conduct of data collection. The study observed the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and responsible data handling throughout the research process.

Informed Consent
All participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, and scope of the study before their participation. Written or documented informed consent was obtained from the participants involved in the qualitative interviews and quantitative survey. They were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Data Privacy and Confidentiality
The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly protected. Codes and pseudonyms were used in the presentation of qualitative data, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed in the manuscript. The collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes and were stored securely in accordance with applicable data privacy requirements.

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in the conduct, analysis, interpretation, and publication of this study.

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Data Availability Statement
The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the authors upon reasonable request, subject to institutional approval, participant confidentiality, and applicable data privacy regulations.

Author Contributions

Kenneth Eriga Savandal conceptualized the study, conducted the data gathering, analyzed and interpreted the data, and prepared the initial manuscript. Don Anton R. Balida, Ph.D., provided research supervision, technical guidance, manuscript review, and scholarly input in the development and refinement of the study for journal publication.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors declare that artificial intelligence-assisted tools were used only for language refinement, grammar checking, formatting assistance, and improvement of manuscript readability. The intellectual content, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, conclusions, and recommendations remain the responsibility of the authors. The authors reviewed, verified, and approved the final manuscript and take full responsibility for its accuracy and integrity.

Publication Ethics Statement

The authors affirm that this manuscript is original, has not been previously published, and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Proper acknowledgment has been given to all sources cited in the manuscript. The authors also confirm that the study complied with ethical standards in research and publication.

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