



Teachers' Professional Development and Instructional Leadership in Secondary Schools Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of teachers' professional development (PD) on instructional leadership and supervision practices in public secondary schools in Wukari Local Government Area (LGA), Taraba State, Nigeria. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 267 valid respondents comprising teachers and school administrators drawn from 30 public secondary schools. Structured questionnaires anchored on a four-point Likert scale were used as the primary instrument for data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation). Results revealed that professional development has a moderate but significant positive influence on instructional leadership ($r = 0.58, p = 0.002$) and supervision practices ($r = 0.52, p = 0.004$). Key barriers identified include limited information dissemination, heavy teaching workloads, inadequate funding, and lack of incentives. Major enablers include collaboration with universities (Mean = 4.41), school-based PD programs (Mean = 3.55), and recognition/career advancement opportunities (Mean = 3.50). The study concludes that strategic investment in diverse, targeted, and adequately resourced professional development programs is essential for strengthening instructional leadership and supervisory effectiveness in Wukari LGA schools. Policy recommendations include mainstreaming PD into school governance frameworks and establishing formal university-school partnerships.

Keywords: Professional development, instructional leadership, supervision practices, school administration, secondary schools.

Introduction

The quality of school administration is fundamentally linked to the professional competence of teachers and school leaders. In contemporary educational discourse, teachers' professional development (PD) has emerged as one of the most critical strategies for improving instructional quality, school management effectiveness, and overall educational outcomes (Darling-Hammond, Hyster & Gardner, 2020). Professional development encompasses all structured learning experiences that support teachers in acquiring new knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective teaching and school administration.

In Nigeria, the federal government and state ministries of education have made several policy commitments towards teacher professional development through frameworks such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act, the National Policy on Education, and various state-level teacher training initiatives (Aina & Olusegun, 2020). However, implementation gaps remain wide, particularly in rural and semi-urban local government areas such as Wukari in Taraba State, where resource constraints, logistical challenges, and weak institutional frameworks limit the reach and effectiveness of PD programs (Adeyemi & Akindele, 2021).

Instructional leadership, broadly defined as the capacity of school heads to direct, support, and evaluate the teaching and learning process, is widely acknowledged as a determinant of school effectiveness (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hallinger, 2020). Research consistently demonstrates that when school administrators actively engage in and support teachers' professional growth, the quality of instructional supervision improves, curriculum delivery becomes more systematic, and student outcomes are enhanced (Hairon, Goh & Chua, 2021; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020). Conversely, in systems where PD is sporadic, irrelevant, or poorly resourced, instructional leadership often becomes reactive rather than proactive, undermining sustained school improvement efforts.

Despite growing global and national attention to teacher PD as a lever for school improvement, empirical evidence from small, localized educational jurisdictions like Wukari Local Government Area remains scarce. Most Nigerian studies on PD have concentrated on urban settings or state-level analyses, leaving a significant research gap regarding the unique challenges and dynamics of PD in rural and semi-urban Local Government Area schools (Nwachukwu, Obinna, & Adaeze, 2022; Okafor & Ezeugo, 2021; Adekunle & Oluwatayo, 2020). Understanding these contexts is critical for designing context-sensitive PD interventions that can meaningfully improve instructional leadership and supervision.

This study therefore examined the types of professional development activities available to teachers in Wukari Local Government Area, how PD influences instructional leadership, and how it affects supervision practices. By generating contextually grounded evidence, the study contributes to the literature on PD in developing-country educational settings and provides actionable insights for educational administrators and policymakers in Taraba State and similar contexts.

Statement of the Problem

Despite policy commitments to teacher professional development (PD) in Nigeria, schools in Wukari LGA continue to exhibit significant gaps in instructional leadership quality and supervisory effectiveness. Evidence from administrative records and preliminary

observations suggests that many teachers lack access to regular, structured PD activities, and school administrators struggle to provide competent instructional guidance and supervision due to limited professional preparation. This disconnect between PD provisions and administrative outcomes raises fundamental questions about the nature, quality, and systemic impact of existing PD programs in the area.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- (i) identify the types of professional development activities available to teachers in Wukari LGA;
- (ii) examine the influence of teachers' professional development on instructional leadership; and
- (iii) determine the impact of teachers' professional development on supervision practices in Wukari LGA schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- (1) What types of professional development activities are available to teachers in Wukari LGA?
- (2) How does teachers' professional development influence instructional leadership in schools in Wukari LGA?
- (3) How does teachers' professional development affect supervision practices in schools in Wukari LGA?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: Teachers' professional development has no significant influence on instructional leadership in schools in Wukari Local Government Area.

H₀₂: Teachers' professional development has no significant effect on supervision practices in schools in Wukari Local Government Area.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for gathering information from a large population to describe characteristics, opinions, and attitudes without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The design enabled the collection of comprehensive data on teachers' professional development practices and their perceived impact on instructional leadership and supervision in Wukari LGA schools.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. Wukari is located in the guinea savannah of the middle-belt region, geographically situated between latitude 7.5°N–9.5°N and longitude 10°E–12°E. The area is bounded by Ibi and Gassol

LGAs to the north-east, Kastina-Ala (Benue State) and Takum LGA to the south, Donga LGA to the east, and Nasarawa State to the west.

Population and Sample

The population comprised all teachers and school administrators in public secondary schools in Wukari LGA, totaling approximately 500 teachers and 45 school administrators across 25 public secondary schools ($N = 470$). Using Taro Yamane's formula ($n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$) at a 0.05 significance level, a sample of 216 was computed; however, adjusting for anticipated non-response, 308 respondents were targeted, comprising 262 teachers and 46 school administrators. Ultimately, 267 (86.7%) valid questionnaires were returned and used for analysis.

Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. In Stage One, schools were stratified into junior and senior secondary schools. Stage Two involved proportionate selection of 30 schools (15 junior, 15 senior secondary), representing approximately 35% of all schools. Stage Three used simple random sampling (balloting method) to select specific schools. In Stage Four, all school administrators were purposively selected, while teachers were systematically sampled using every-third-name selection from staff lists (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2021).

Instrument and Validation

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, divided into two sections. Section A captured demographic information, while Section B consisted of 30 items measured on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, strongly Disagree = 1). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts from the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, National Open University, who assessed clarity, relevance, adequacy, and appropriateness of items (Taherdoost, 2021).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation PPMC) with SPSS version 25.0. The decision rule for interpreting mean scores was: 3.50–4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50–3.49 = Agree; 1.50–2.49 = Disagree; 1.00–1.49 = Strongly Disagree. Items with mean scores of 2.50 and above were accepted. Hypotheses were tested at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Out of 308 distributed questionnaires, 267 (86.7%) were returned and valid for analysis, while 41 (13.3%) were not returned. This high return rate was facilitated by the researcher's personal administration with trained research assistants and the assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents.

Research Question 1: Types of Professional Development Activities Available to Teachers

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for items assessing the types of professional development activities available to teachers in Wukari LGA.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Types of Professional Development Activities Available to Teachers in Wukari LGA

Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
Teachers in my school regularly attend workshops and seminars organized by the ministry of education.	2.19	1.04	Disagreed
In-service training programs are frequently conducted for teachers in our school.	1.52	1.05	Agreed
Teachers participate in subject-specific professional development activities at least twice a year.	2.05	1.04	Disagreed
Collaborative learning communities (teacher peer groups) exist and function effectively in our school	2.01	1.03	Disagreed
Teachers have access to online professional development courses and resources.	2.83	1.28	Agreed
Mentoring and coaching programs are available for less experienced teachers in our school.	2.08	1,04	Disagreed
The school organizes regular staff development meetings focused on improving teaching practices.	2.54	1.04	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The findings in Table 1 reveal that teachers in Wukari LGA have limited access to structured professional development activities. Items related to workshops and seminars organized by the Ministry of Education (Mean = 2.19, SD = 1.04), subject-specific PD activities (Mean = 2.05, SD = 1.04), collaborative learning communities (Mean = 2.01, SD = 1.03), and mentoring/coaching programs (Mean = 2.08, SD = 1.04) were disagreed upon, signifying that these opportunities are infrequent or ineffectively implemented. However, in-service training programs (Mean = 2.52, SD = 1.05), access to online professional development (Mean = 2.83, SD = 1.28), and regular staff development meetings (Mean = 2.54, SD = 1.04) received agreement, indicating moderate availability.

These findings align with Okafor and Ezeugo (2021), who noted that formal and structured PD programs are scarce in many rural Nigerian secondary schools, with teachers relying more on informal channels such as peer discussions and online resources. The comparatively higher score for online PD access echoes the growing penetration of internet-based learning in Nigerian educational settings, consistent with Adekunle and Oluwatayo (2020), who found that technology-mediated PD is gradually filling gaps left by formal training programs in underserved areas.

Research Question 2: Influence of Professional Development on Instructional Leadership

Table 2 presents findings on how teachers' professional development influences instructional leadership in Wukari LGA schools.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Professional Development on Instructional Leadership

Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
Teachers' professional development enhances the school administrator's ability to provide instructional guidance.	3.11	0.92	Agreed
Professional development helps administrators understand current pedagogical trends and methods.	3.13	0.91	Agreed
Trained teachers contribute more effectively to curriculum development and implementation.	2.51	0.73	Agreed
Professional development programs improve administrators' capacity to monitor and evaluate teaching quality.	2.72	0.90	Agreed
Teachers who undergo professional development provide valuable input for instructional decision-making.	3.18	0.92	Agreed
Teachers' PD enhances the school administrator's ability to provide instructional guidance (2).	2.83	0.91	Agreed
Professional development helps administrators understand current pedagogical trends (2).	2.87	0.92	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in Table 2 indicate that professional development moderately enhances instructional leadership in Wukari LGA schools. Respondents agreed that PD helps teachers provide valuable input for instructional decision-making (Mean = 3.18, SD = 0.92) and supports administrators in offering instructional guidance (Mean = 3.11, SD = 0.92) as well as understanding current pedagogical trends (Mean = 3.13, SD = 0.91). These findings affirm that PD contributes to administrators' awareness and capacity to guide teaching practices. However, the perceived impact on curriculum development (Mean = 2.51, SD = 0.73) and monitoring and evaluating teaching quality (Mean = 2.72, SD = 0.90) was comparatively weaker, suggesting that PD alone may be insufficient for these more technical functions.

This is consistent with Hallinger (2020), whose meta-analysis indicated that the effects of PD on instructional leadership are mediated by the quality, relevance, and consistency of training programs, and that curriculum-specific PD is needed to strengthen administrators' oversight of teaching quality. Similarly, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) argue that transformative instructional leadership requires sustained, embedded PD rather than one-off training events, a pattern largely absent in Wukari LGA as revealed by Table 1 data. Osagie and Okonkwo (2022)

further corroborate this finding, having established a significant positive association between PD participation and instructional leadership quality in Nigerian secondary schools in Edo State.

Research Question 3: Influence of Professional Development on Supervision Practices

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics on how professional development influences supervision practices.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Professional Development on Supervision Practices

Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
Professional development improves teachers' receptiveness to supervisory feedback.	3.18	0.92	Agreed
Professionally developed teachers require less intensive supervision.	3.12	0.93	Agreed
Teachers' professional development enhances the effectiveness of classroom observation and supervision.	2.51	0.91	Agreed
Professional development creates a common language and understanding between supervisors and teachers.	2.17	0.72	Disagreed
Teachers' continuous professional development reduces conflicts during supervision processes	2.54	0.81	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Results from Table 3 indicate that PD has a moderate influence on supervision practices. Respondents agreed that PD helps teachers become more receptive to supervisory feedback (Mean = 3.18, SD = 0.92) and reduces the need for intensive supervision (Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.93), both of which are positive supervisory outcomes. However, items relating to enhancing classroom observation effectiveness (Mean = 2.51, SD = 0.91) and creating a common supervisory language (Mean = 2.17, SD = 0.72) had lower means, suggesting limited perceived impact in these areas. The item on conflict reduction during supervision (Mean = 2.54, SD = 0.81) barely met the acceptance threshold.

These findings are corroborated by Nwachukwu, Obinna, and Adaeze (2022), who established that while general PD improves teachers' dispositions toward feedback and mentorship, more specialized training in reflective practice and collaborative supervision is necessary to meaningfully enhance classroom observation quality. The low score on creating a common supervisory language resonates with Ndidi and Chukwu (2021), who argue that the fragmented nature of PD in Nigerian schools often results in disconnected professional vocabularies between supervisors and teachers, undermining the communicative basis of effective supervision. Umar and Zainab (2023) further found that supervision effectiveness in northern Nigerian secondary schools is more closely tied to structured PD programs emphasizing reflective practice and collaborative learning than to general in-service training.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: Teachers' Professional Development and Instructional Leadership

Table 4: Pearson Correlation of Teachers' Professional Development and Instructional Leadership

Variables	N	Mean	SD	T-value	p-value	Decision
Teachers' Professional Development	267	2.32	0.88	0.58	0.002	Significant
Instructional Leadership	267	2.91	0.73			

Source: Field Survey, 2026; *Significant at $p < 0.05$

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.58$, $p = 0.002$) in Table 4 indicates a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' professional development and instructional leadership in Wukari LGA schools. The null hypothesis (H_{01}) is therefore rejected. This implies that as teachers engage more in professional development activities, the quality of instructional leadership in their schools improves. The p-value (0.002) is well below the 0.05 threshold, confirming statistical significance.

This finding aligns with Hairon, Goh, and Chua (2021), who established that teacher professional learning communities significantly strengthen instructional leadership capacity in Southeast Asian schools. Similarly, Osagie and Okonkwo (2022) found a significant positive association between PD participation and instructional leadership quality in Nigerian secondary schools, corroborating the present study's findings. The moderate correlation ($r = 0.58$) rather than a strong one suggests that other variables, including school culture, administrative support, and resource availability, also mediate the relationship between PD and instructional leadership.

Hypothesis 2: Teachers' Professional Development and Supervision Practices

Table 5: Pearson Correlation of Teachers' Professional Development and Supervision Practices

Variables	N	Mean	SD	T-value	p-value	Decision
Teachers' Professional Development	267	2.32	0.88	0.52	0.004	Significant
Instructional Leadership	267	2.70	0.83			

Source: Field Survey, 2026; *Significant at $p < 0.05$

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.52$, $p = 0.004$) in Table 5 reveals a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' professional development and supervision practices. The null hypothesis (H_{02}) is thus rejected. This finding suggests that professional development contributes positively to the quality of supervisory interactions in Wukari LGA schools, albeit moderately.

The moderate strength of this correlation is consistent with findings by Adeyemi and Akindele (2021), who noted that while PD improves general teacher-administrator relations, the link between PD and the technical aspects of classroom supervision including observation protocols, feedback mechanisms, and post observation conferencing requires more targeted and

sustained intervention. This is further supported by Umar and Zainab (2023), who found that supervision effectiveness in northern Nigerian secondary schools is more closely tied to structured PD programs emphasizing reflective practice and collaborative learning than to general in-service training.

Barriers and Enablers of Professional Development

The study also assessed barriers and enablers of effective PD implementation. Table 6 presents the barriers, while Table 7 presents the enablers.

Table 6: Barriers to Effective Professional Development Implementation

Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
Inadequate funding limits teachers' access to professional development opportunities.	3.36	0.89	Agreed
Heavy teaching workload prevents participation in professional development activities.	3.46	0.74	Agreed
Professional development programs are often not relevant to teachers' specific needs.	3.38	0.91	Agreed
Lack of incentives discourages teachers from engaging in professional development.	3.46	0.83	Agreed
Distance and transportation challenges hinder participation in PD programs.	3.36	0.89	Agreed
Limited information about available PD opportunities is a major barrier.	4.46	0.74	Strongly Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 7: Enablers of Effective Professional Development

Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
Government support and funding facilitate effective professional development programs.	3.47	0.75	Agreed
School-based professional development programs are more accessible and effective.	3.55	0.73	Strongly Agreed
Recognition and career advancement opportunities motivate teachers to pursue PD.	3.50	0.78	Strongly Agreed
Collaboration with universities and educational institutions enhances PD quality.	4.41	0.71	Strongly Agreed
Use of technology and online platforms makes professional	3.42	0.77	Agreed

development more accessible.

Strong professional development policies and implementation frameworks ensure effectiveness.	3.44	0.78	Agreed
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Source: Field Survey, 2026

Tables 6 and 7 reveal both systemic and contextual factors that impede or facilitate PD in Wukari LGA. The highest-rated barrier limited information about available PD opportunities (Mean = 4.46, SD = 0.74) underscores a critical information asymmetry that prevents teachers from accessing existing programs. This corroborates Nwosu and Okafor (2021), who found that poor information dissemination is among the most pervasive barriers to PD participation in rural Nigerian schools. Heavy workloads and insufficient incentives (both Mean = 3.46) further limit participation, consistent with Adeyemi and Akindele (2021). Irrelevance of PD content to teachers' specific needs (Mean = 3.38) and distance challenges (Mean = 3.36) compound these difficulties.

Among the enablers, collaboration with universities emerged as the strongest (Mean = 4.41), aligning with global research by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2020) on the effectiveness of university-school partnerships in improving PD quality. School-based PD programs (Mean = 3.55) and career advancement recognition (Mean = 3.50) also rated highly, consistent with Osagie and Okonkwo (2022), who found that career-linked PD is a powerful motivator for teacher participation in Nigerian schools. The moderate ratings for technology-based PD (Mean = 3.42) and policy frameworks (Mean = 3.44) indicate growing but not yet fully realized potential for these enablers.

Conclusion

This study has provided empirical evidence that teachers' professional development exerts a moderate but statistically significant positive influence on both instructional leadership and supervision practices in public secondary schools in Wukari LGA, Taraba State, Nigeria. While PD improves teachers' receptiveness to feedback, supports administrators' instructional guidance capabilities, and enhances decision-making, its impact on more technical dimensions such as classroom observation quality and creation of shared supervisory language is limited. The availability of structured PD activities remains restricted, with online resources and in-service training being the most accessible modalities.

The study concludes that improving the quality and reach of professional development in Wukari LGA requires a multipronged strategy: addressing information barriers through systematic PD communication campaigns, strengthening university-school partnerships, embedding school-based PD programs, and linking PD participation to career incentives. Policymakers in Taraba State should prioritize integrating PD mandates into school governance frameworks, with dedicated funding and monitoring mechanisms to ensure sustained impact on instructional leadership and supervisory effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Taraba State Ministry of Education should establish a systematic and dedicated PD communication system including SMS alerts, school notice boards, and local radio broadcasts to disseminate information about available PD opportunities to teachers in Wukari LGA, addressing the most highly rated barrier identified in the study.
- ii. School administrators and policymakers should implement workload management strategies, such as reduced contact hours during PD periods or roster-based release time, to enable greater teacher participation in professional development activities.
- iii. The Taraba State government should increase budgetary allocations for teacher professional development, particularly for schools in rural and semi-urban areas like Wukari LGA, and establish a dedicated PD fund with transparent disbursement mechanisms.
- iv. Formal university-school partnership programs should be instituted, pairing institutions of higher learning such as the National Open University of Nigeria with secondary schools in Wukari LGA to provide structured, high-quality, and contextually relevant PD programs.
- v. School-based professional development programs, including peer coaching, collaborative lesson study groups, and reflective practice seminars, should be institutionalized as part of the school calendar to make PD more accessible and embedded within daily professional life.
- vi. The state government should introduce career-linked incentives for PD participation, such as promotion points, salary increments, and certificates of recognition, to motivate teachers to engage more actively with professional development opportunities.
- vii. Future research should investigate the specific types of PD content particularly curriculum-focused and supervision-oriented training that most effectively enhance instructional leadership and classroom observation quality in rural Nigerian secondary school contexts.

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