

Examining Levels, Influence, and Strategies to Improve Teaching Competence and Instructional Leadership At Battambang Teacher Education College, Cambodia

Sopheaktra Chea ^{a*}, Merryl Kravitz ^b, Chan Hum ^c, Sam Rany ^d

^{1.} Graduate School, National University of Battambang, Cambodia.

^{2.} Professor of Secondary Education at New Mexico Highlands University,

^{3.} Graduate School, National University of Battambang, Cambodia.

^{4.} Graduate School, National University of Battambang, Cambodia.

Corresponding Author: Dr. Merryl Kravitz,

Professor of Secondary Education at New Mexico Highlands University,

ABSTRACT: *The quality of education depends heavily on the quality of teachers. Instructional leadership is a critical component of teacher education institutions because it drives successful teaching, enhances curriculum delivery, and promotes continuous institutional change (Hallinger, 2003). The Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP) 2024–2030 is the national education reform agenda of Cambodia led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). Improving teacher pre-service preparation is an important step to improve the entire education system. Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC) is one of the leading institutions in the region for initial teacher training. It has instructional leadership tools such as supervisory observation, structured feedback loops, and curriculum guidance that are designed to connect academic theory with real-life classroom delivery. There is a lot of empirical literature that shows how instructional leadership can help teachers who are already working but not so much empirical literature has looked at how it can directly affect pre-service teachers in Cambodian teacher education colleges. To fill in this important research gap, this empirical study uses an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate the direct effects of instructional leadership practices on the pedagogical skills of future teachers. This study uses quantitative data from 303 future teachers and qualitative data from 62 key stakeholders (21 teacher educators, 31 student-teachers, and 10 members of the institutional management committee) for a total of 365. The aim is to analyze present leadership practices, evaluate the skills of student teachers and their interrelationship, and develop certain recommendations for teacher education institutions.*

KEYWORDS: *Instructional Leadership, Professional Development, Mentoring, Teaching Competence, Pre-service Teachers, Teacher Educator, Pedagogical Competence.*

I. Introduction

Instructional Leadership as an Essential Component in Improving Teaching Quality and Student Learning Achievement. Instructional leadership is considered one of the most important elements for improving teaching quality and students' learning outcomes (Hallinger, 2011). As far as teacher education institutions are concerned, it is important to note that instructional leaders, including department chairpersons, teacher mentors, and administrators, play an essential role in supporting teachers' training in instructional skills. Given the current reforms in the Cambodian education system, it is important to examine how instructional leadership is practiced at teacher education colleges. Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC), a prestigious teacher training institution in Cambodia, requires a greater number of research studies that discuss how instructional leadership is practiced there. This paper aims to address this research niche and shed light on how current instructional leadership practices in BTEC align with international practices and their effectiveness. Competence in teaching as a variable has multiple dimensions and factors, including teaching knowledge, classroom management, teaching delivery, assessment skills, and reflection in practice, all of which are important according to Darling-Hammond (2006) and Stronge (2018). In teacher education programs, the development of such competencies is vital. The role of teacher training colleges, such as the Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC) in Cambodia, is to provide pre-service teachers with the competencies required for reaching the nationwide educational standards. Enhancing teaching skills and leadership related to instruction are indeed interconnected activities for elevating the quality of teacher education programs. Although the link between leadership and teacher education has been recognized for a long time, recent studies highlight particular integrated approaches to close this divide. Combined Approaches for Skill and Leadership. Recent studies show that to be teacher educators and leaders, we need to change the way we manage things. We should work together. Help each other instead of just following orders. There are ways to help teacher educators get better at their jobs. These new ways focus on working and helping each other more strongly. It is a way of doing things that helps teacher educators become better leaders and teacher educators at the same time. School leaders are working to support educators so they can do their job of teaching science and math to students.

A conclusion section must be included and should indicate clearly the advantages, limitations, and possible applications of the paper. Although a conclusion may review the main points of the paper, do not replicate the abstract as the conclusion. A conclusion might elaborate on the importance of the work or suggest applications and extensions. (10)

II. Literature Review

Current discussions on school enhancement identify instructional leadership as a primary driver of teacher effectiveness and student performance. While traditional models focused heavily on administrative compliance, emerging paradigms, particularly distributed leadership, emphasize that sustainable institutional efficacy relies on the collective participation of administrators, department heads, and teacher mentors. Leithwood et al. (2020) highlighted the significance of fostering a unified institutional culture, departing from the conventional superintendent-as-overseer framework. This shift aligns with recent empirical studies on leadership partnerships, which demonstrate how structured administrative support directly enhances leaders' efficiency in promoting continuous teacher development. A persistent challenge in teacher preparation is bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical execution. As Darling-Hammond (2006) and Stronge (2018) noted, teaching effectiveness is a complex, multidimensional construct encompassing classroom management, assessment literacy, and reflective practice. However, formal pre-service coursework alone remains insufficient. Avalos (2011) posited that professional development is most impactful when it is continuous, collaborative, and embedded within daily pedagogical routines. Recent studies across Southeast Asian post-pandemic educational contexts indicate that while pre-service teachers exhibit high confidence in traditional instructional methodologies, notable competency gaps persist in digital pedagogy and inclusive teaching strategies. In Cambodia, global competency frameworks must be contextualized to fit local institutional realities. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS, 2019, 2020) has prioritized teacher training reforms, placing quality

assurance and leadership standards at the core of national policy (TPAP 2024–2030). Nevertheless, empirical and descriptive observations suggest that implementation at Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC) faces persistent constraints, including limited physical resources, high student-teacher ratios, and infrastructure deficits that impede reliable clinical mentoring. Although national frameworks (such as UNESCO/IBE standards) establish benchmark competencies, translating policy into classroom practice requires moving beyond top-down administrative mandates toward collaborative instructional leadership models supported by real-time instructional insights. A key tension remains between traditional pedagogical practices and the evolving demands of 21st-century education. Recent scholarship demonstrates that Cambodian teacher education is progressively integrating digital literacy and inclusive practices. Ultimately, the literature highlights that mentorship is most effective when executed as a deliberate professional practice combining supportive feedback with evidence-based evaluation rather than treated as a peripheral administrative task.

III. Research Methodology

The Development of Instructional and Distributed Leadership. One of the current discourses on school improvement is instructional leadership, which has been identified as a significant factor in teacher effectiveness and student achievement. While early models emphasized compliance with administration, recent models, particularly distributed leadership, indicate that sustainable institutional effectiveness is achieved through joint involvement of administrators, department heads, and teacher mentors. Leithwood et al. (2020) pointed out that a common institutional culture is needed and the traditional model of the superintendent as controller should be abandoned. This shift is consistent with more recent empirical research on leadership partnerships, which suggests that structured administrative support is directly related to improving the effectiveness of leaders in supporting continuous teacher development. **Teacher Competency and Professional Development.** Translating theory into practice has always been a challenge in teacher education. Darling-Hammond (2006) and Stronge (2018) pointed out that teaching effectiveness is a multidimensional concept that includes classroom management, assessment literacy, and reflective practice. Still, the adequacy of formal pre-service coursework is not yet clear. Meaningful, collaborative professional development that is integrated into the day-to-day practice of teaching is most effective (Avalos, 2011). **Contextualizing Reforms in Cambodian Teacher Education.** Global competency frameworks need to be localized to the institutional realities in Cambodia. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS, 2019, 2020) has made teacher training reform a priority, with quality assurance and leadership standards at the very top of the list of national policy (TPAP 2024–2030). Empirical and descriptive observations indicate that barriers to implementation remain at the Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC), including limited physical resources, high student-teacher ratios, and infrastructure shortfalls that do not support reliable mentoring. While national frameworks (for example, UNESCO/IBE standards) provide benchmark competencies, enacting policy into classroom practice must move from top-down administrative directives to collaborative instructional leadership models that are informed by real-time instructional insights. One of the key tensions is the struggle between traditional teaching methods and the changing needs of 21st century education. Recent literature points out the growing use of online literacy and inclusive practices in Cambodian teacher education. To summarize, the literature suggests that mentorship is most effective when it is a sought-after professional activity, with supportive feedback and evidence-based assessment.

The research studied 303 pre-service teachers to obtain honest answers. It then studied classroom observations and the perceptions of others, such as faculty members and administrators. In this way, the study was able to ensure the validity of teachers' self-perception by comparing it with the observations of others and classroom observations in terms of instructional leadership and perception of their mentors. The study studied the impact of instructional leadership on teaching skills enhancement at Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC). We used a research method that combined numbers and words to get the full picture. This method allowed us to gather facts and feelings at the time. Bring these together to get a clearer picture of the problem. The intention was to see how the instructional leadership and teaching competence interact at BTEC. We wanted to know how they could help improve teaching. Instructional leadership and teaching competence are key to making BTEC a better place

for students. By studying them, we hoped to find ways to make teaching and learning better. The study used a method to select the people who would be part of it. This method is called sampling. The aim was to get people who really know what is going on in the BTEC environment. The plan was to get a group of 303 in-service teachers. This large group would help us get results when we looked at how good teachers are. For the part of the study that used talking to student-teachers, 303 large groups and more 31 smaller groups were selected. The group consisted of 21 teacher educators and 10 members of the management committee. These people were chosen because they are directly involved in making sure teachers are doing the work that helps them improve and make the big decisions. The idea was that what they said would add detail to what we found. The research was conducted in accordance with all the rules of research, and the participants' responses were kept confidential and anonymous.

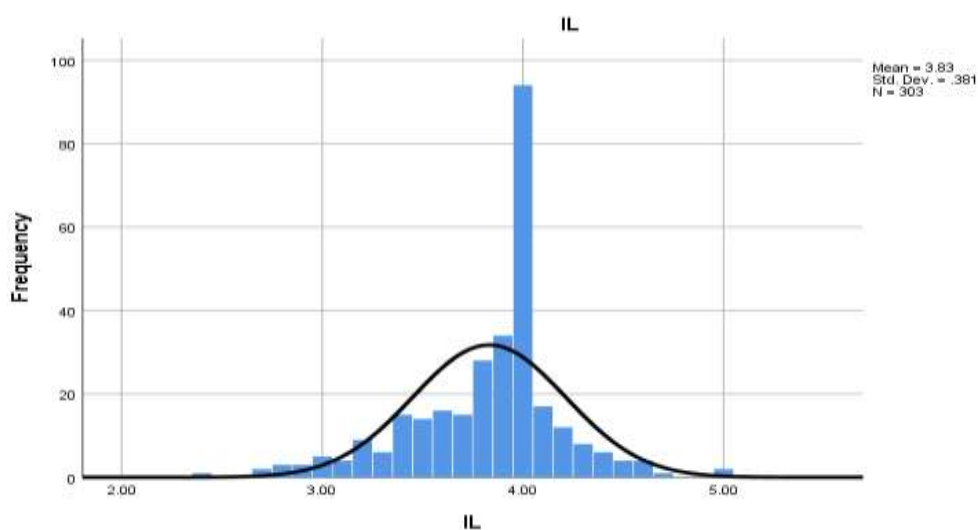
IV. Findings

RESULTS

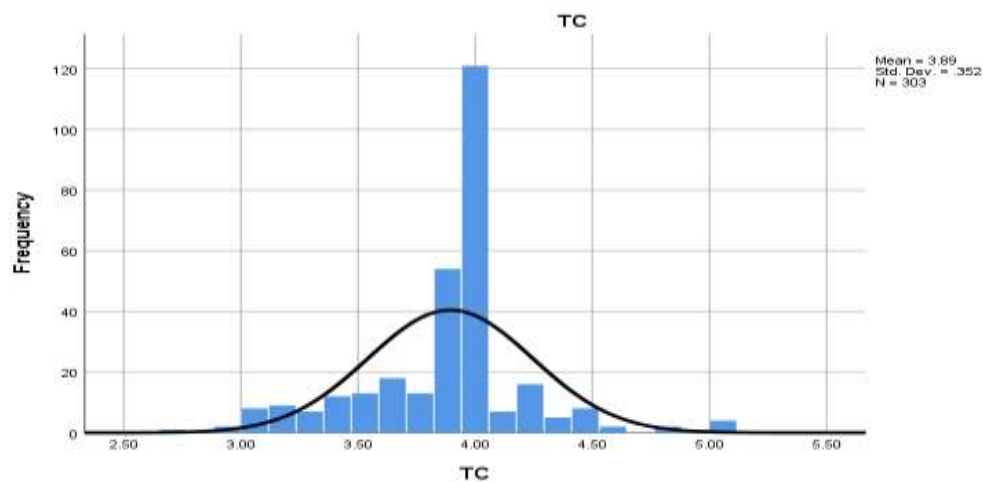
Analysis of Main Variables in a Descriptive Approach. Descriptive statistical analyzes were used to identify the baseline for pedagogical competencies of pre-service teachers and their perceptions of instructional leadership at Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC). The mean score of perceived instructional leadership practices (IL) was 3.83 with a standard deviation of 0.38. This shows that supportive supervision, goal setting, and pedagogical guidance were present to a strong extent. The average score on the Pre-service Teaching Competence (TC) test was 3.87 with a standard deviation of 0.32. This indicated that teachers felt they were good at teaching core subjects. The correlation data showed a high positive correlation between teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership in the classroom and their perceived effectiveness as prospective teachers ($r=.538$, $p<.001$, $n=303$). Thus, pre-service teachers who are given more support from instructional leaders and feedback from their supervisors tend to be more effective. Regression Analysis (Predicting the Impact of Instructional Leadership). A simple linear regression was conducted to assess the extent to which instructional leadership practices can predict the performance of pre-service teachers in the classroom. Initial regression tests confirmed that the assumptions of homoscedasticity, normality of residuals, and non-multicollinearity were satisfied.

Key drivers: Teacher educators and managers said planned clinical feedback loops and observing model teaching sessions directly improve pre-service teachers' ability to plan lessons and run their classrooms. Gaps in digital integration and formative assessment: Pre-service teachers demonstrated they were good at planning lessons, but qualitative responses showed they still struggled to incorporate modern digital resources and establish ongoing formative assessments.

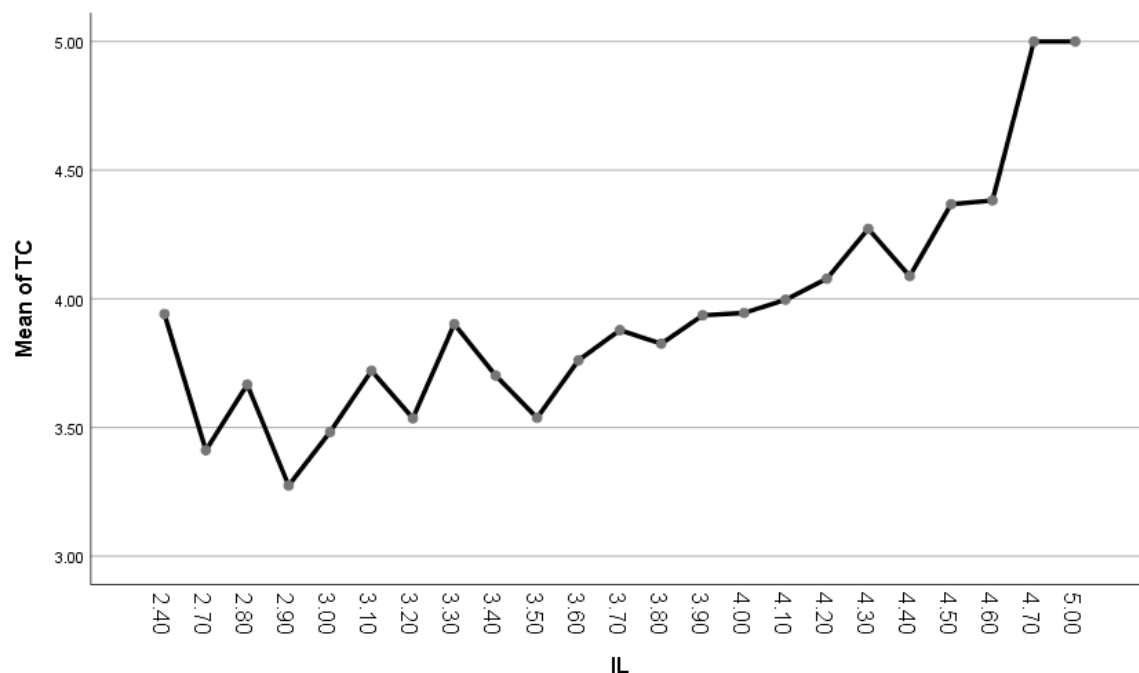
Histogram of Instructional Leadership (IL) with Normal Curve Overlay



Histogram of Teacher Competency (TC) with Normal Curve Overlay



Line Graph of Mean Teacher Competency (TC) Across Instructional Leadership (IL) Levels



The line graph represents a general positive trend between IL (x-axis) and the mean of TC (y-axis). The lower IL values (from 2.40 to about 3.50) have a non-linear variation in the Mean of TC (roughly 3.28 to 3.95). When IL is above 3.50, the Mean of TC shows a steady upward trend, increasing from around 3.54 at IL 3.50 to a small peak of around 4.27 at IL 4.30. There is a slight drop at IL 4.40 (about 4.09), then a rapid acceleration in the trend, peaking at 5.00 for IL 4.70 and 5.00. Overall, higher IL values are strongly associated with higher mean TC values.

The Instructional Leadership (IL) scale had a strong internal consistency score of .835 and a standardized score of .846. The average item mean was $M = 3.83$. The Teaching Competence (TC) scale had a mean score of 3.89.

It has good internal reliability ($\alpha = .932$ and standardized $\alpha = .933$). All three scales were thought to be very reliable for later inferential statistical analyzes (bivariate correlation and linear regression) because their alpha coefficients were much higher than the standard academic level of .70.

The current practices of instructional leadership at Battambang Teacher Education College:

The empirical evidence shows that the instructional leadership techniques of Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC) are operationalized by five strategic core aspects. These practices change the manner in which collaboration occurs, the ways students' needs are placed at the forefront, and the ways technology is used to improve teacher education. Collaborative and Distributed Leadership Model: BTEC is a shared and collaborative approach to running the leadership and teaching of the school. Instead of simply doing what is told from the top, institutional executives, department heads, and teacher educators work together to set the academic standards and pedagogical priorities of the institution. Develop a shared vision of the institution, always focused on improving teaching. Link institutional goals to national and regional teacher education programs. Encourage student-centred teaching leadership styles can help the transition from traditional lecture-based teaching to active and student-centred learning. Technology and Teaching Topics Aimed at the Needs of Different Students. Systematic Monitoring, Supervision and Evaluation of Instruction: BTEC has set up formal methods of monitoring to maintain the level of education and make the teachers accountable. This is leadership in action. Structured Classroom Observations: Regular classroom visits by a supervisor and peer educator using standard rating rubrics Actionable Feedback Cycles: Debriefing sessions after observations to provide positive feedback and identify specific areas for instructional improvement Performance Monitoring: Multiple sources to measure teachers' performance and adherence to the syllabus Use of Educational Technology: Digital transformation is a key component of leadership skills for both administrative and teaching tasks: use of virtual classrooms, online evaluation tools and online learning management systems (LMS) Administrative Efficiency: Digital systems for lesson planning, course delivery and student tracking will support administrative efficiency School-Community Partnerships and Contextual Engagement: BTEC leaders emphasize the importance of establishing close ties with nearby primary and secondary practice schools They also recognize the need for teacher development that is tailored to the needs of the students This community-involved leadership model provides a close link between teacher training programs and the realities of the classroom in Cambodian schools. Prepares pre-service teachers to meet the unique socio-cultural and educational needs of local school communities. Summary Matrix: Core Instructional Leadership Practices at BTEC Leadership Dimension Intended Core Business Practices Institutional Outcome Collaborative Governance Collective vision building, shared goal setting and dispersed decision making Academic unity and institutional consistency Pedagogical Supervision Student-oriented Methodology, PBL and Promotion of Active Learning Active knowledge building, enhanced student engagement Monitoring and evaluation Observations of formal classes, assessment using rubrics, and instant feedback Accountability for instruction and ongoing professional development Digital Integration Online LMS, digital assessment tools and virtual lesson preparation Updating teaching delivery and administrative efficiency Community Partnerships Community engagement and practicum alignment with local practice schools Context-responsive.

The levels of teaching competence among pre-service BTEC teachers:

Analysis of empirical data indicates that the teaching competence of pre-service (BTEC) teachers is not homogeneous, but rather a developmental continuum divided into four levels of proficiency: Beginner, Developing, Proficient and Advanced. Traversing these levels involves a fundamental pedagogical shift from traditional teacher-centered knowledge transmission to a dynamic, student-centered learning facilitation. presents a synthesis of the levels of competence, their characteristics, and supporting mechanisms revealed in this study.: Levels of Development of Teaching Competence of Pre-Service BTEC Teachers Levels of Competence Main Pedagogical Features Instructional and Assessment Strategies Mentorship and Professional Support1. Amateur: Basic pedagogical knowledge; classroom management problems; lack of confidence and worry about teaching Textbook/rote instruction. Direct instruction: passive. Concentrate on curriculum coverage; organized teaching

practice. Direct observation & feedback from mentor. Educational guidance. Establishing Confidence and mastery in the classroom. Better student engagement. Skilled Teaching with high flexibility & confidence; successful classroom management; student-focused perspective; inquiry and project-based learning; differentiated teaching & group work; instructional changes based on data; co-planning & co-teaching. Opportunities for peer-to-peer mentorship; development of active curriculum. Forward Instruction and innovation leadership; capacity for critical reflective practice; mentoring by peers. Flexible, innovative pedagogy; ongoing integration of action research. Variety of evaluation methods. Support for action research & publication; academic-level conference presentations• Professional learning communities that go deep. Competence Levels Detailed Analysis

1. Beginner Level (Beginner Stage) The pre-service BTEC teachers at the novice level show basic and mostly theoretical knowledge about education. They tend to teach primarily through direct transmission lectures, passive reading of texts, and so on. Classroom management skills are still inadequate, and teachers often suffer from poor self-efficacy as they cannot easily match theory with the practical classroom situation. Lesson planning at this point is mostly about identifying the curricular content that is required and not about personalizing instruction to the requirements of the learners. Support Mechanisms: At this level, pre-service teachers rely on external scaffolding such as structured practicum placements, modeling by expert mentors, and regular constructive criticism based on direct classroom observations. 2.

Developing Stage (Emerging Competence): With experience, the pre-service teachers go to the Developing level and show better classroom management, increased self-confidence, and student involvement. Teachers also actively use a variety of teaching resources to attract students' attention, including class debates, educational videos, computers or tablets, and interactive games for learning. Additionally, lesson planning is more organized when pre-assessment procedures are included to track learning progression. Support Mechanisms: Developmental progress is achieved by offering lengthy supervised teaching, peer critiques, and focused encouragement to experiment with diverse educational techniques.

3. The good pre-service teacher is confident in himself as a teacher, thinks in different ways, and is committed to placing the needs of each student first. These teachers are quick thinkers and can adapt their instruction if their original plans don't work. Pedagogical strategies go beyond just passing on information. Reflective practice is starting to be viewed as a way to establish goals for professional and personal development. Some of these include inquiry-based learning, group projects where students work together, and individualized lessons for each type of learner. Support Systems: Quality teachers-to-be use advanced testing methods and utilize both formative and final data to improve their lessons. As part of ongoing professional development, teachers co-teach, plan lessons with colleagues, mentor other teachers, and participate in activities that contribute to the program.

4. Advanced Level (New Ways of Leading and Reflection): The advanced level provides the best environment for teachers-to-be because it requires a lot of creativity, leadership in the classroom, and an impact on institutions. Teachers at this level often employ new teaching methods and have extensive knowledge of critical thinking. They are constantly evaluating and assessing their performance using a variety of evaluation methods such as self-assessment rubrics and reflective.

Instructional leadership practices influence the teaching competence of pre-service BTEC teachers, or the effect that instructional leadership techniques have on pre-service BTEC instructors' ability to teach

The teaching skills of future BTEC teachers are affected by the ways in which instructional leaders lead. Also called the effect of instructional leadership on future BTEC teachers' teaching skills, what instructional leadership practices do to pre-service BTEC teachers' ability to teach is called the effect of instructional leadership practices on pre-service BTEC tutors' ability to teach. The findings of the study suggest that senior educators, teacher trainers, and practicum supervisors who utilize instructional leadership approaches have a positive and significant impact on the teaching skills of pre-service teachers at Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC). Strategic leadership interventions are crucial for bridging the gap between knowledge of effective

teaching and its implementation in practice. Instructional leadership plays a role in three key areas of development: the development of professional knowledge, the improvement of teaching practice, and the development of thinking ability. Summarizes the main instructional leadership techniques, how they are used, and how they affect the skills of teachers-to-be. Impact of Instructional Leadership Practices on Pre-Service Teacher Competency Leadership Strategy / Practice How it Works Direct Effect on Pre-Service BTEC Teachers Supported Literature Direct Observation and Feedback Classroom observation, structured, followed by post observation debrief, using standardized rubrics Increases efficiency of classroom management, increases delivery of lessons and increases self-correction Hallinger (2011) Instructional Demonstration & Modeling Leaders model active learning and use of digital technologies well Enhances teaching effectiveness, inspires creativity It offers clear educational standards. Bush (2015) Structured Coaching & Mentoring. This provides personalized professional support, bridging theory and classroom practice. It facilitates accelerated professional identity development, confidence in teaching, and reduced fear in practice. Darling-Hammond et al., 2017: Professional Learning Community (PLCs). Collaborative lesson planning, lesson observation, and collective reflective conversation. It promotes collective ownership, peer-sharing of information, and continuous professional development. Bush, 2015 Reflective Practice Culture. This includes problem-posing conversations, rubrics for self-assessment, and portfolio analysis. It stimulates critical thinking, self-analysis, and dynamic pedagogical decision-making. Freire (1970): Supportive & Innovation-Driven Environment. Psychological safety is created for instructional risk-taking. It enhances teacher morale, creativity, online literacy, and pedagogical flexibility. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) In-depth Study of Leadership Dimensions with Influence

1. Broadening of Professional Knowledge Base. The instructional leaders ensure that their instructional practices are aligned with the Competency-Based Education (CBE) standards, thus greatly strengthening the theoretical and technical foundation of pre-service BTEC teachers (Bush, 2015). Curriculum orientation, modeling, and targeted workshops are used by instructional leaders to orient potential teachers to understand not only what to teach but why and how specific learner-centered techniques are appropriate for vocational and technical education. Impact: Pre-service teachers develop a thorough knowledge of curricular scope, competence standards, and contemporary industry-aligned instructional methodologies; they learn to think beyond material delivery to outcome-based learning design.

2. Improving Teaching Practice and Delivery. Effective instructional leadership can result in immediate improvements in classroom teaching through the systematic observation, professional modeling, and constructive criticism of teachers (Hallinger, 2011). Supervisors also model more sophisticated strategies such as the integration of educational technology, the use of active learning games, and the facilitation of small group projects, thus providing concrete benchmarks for pre-service teachers' own classrooms. Impact: There is a marked improvement in classroom management, pace of delivery, and methods of student engagement for teachers.

3. Developing your analytical and reflective skills. Freire's (1970) problem-posing education challenges instructional leaders to collaborate with educators as critical co-learners and to promote self-evaluation and reflective inquiry. Leaders engage in self-evaluation of candidate teachers' performance through structured post-observation conferences, self-assessment rubrics, and submission of teaching portfolios. Pre-service teachers develop increased flexibility in their teaching and confidence in their ability to use a wide range of instructional strategies to meet the needs of students. Effect: Changes pre-service teachers from passive consumers of information to active, reflective practitioners. They learn the analytical skills to determine where their instruction may be deficient, take constructive criticism, and make their own changes to their teaching methods to overcome problems in the classroom.

4. Developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) Instructional leaders develop Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to create an institutional atmosphere that is supportive. Leadership breaks down instructional isolation by having teachers see one another's classrooms, co-plan lessons, and debrief. Impact: PLCs promote collective responsibility for student learning results. Pre-service teachers develop a strong professional identity, positive morale, and a desire for lifelong professional learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), which is crucial in the setting of technical and vocational education where there is the need for constant adaptation to changing industry norms. Triangulation of leadership effect methodology. The empirical triangulation of the leadership

strategies was carried out through a mixed-methods design consisting of Likert-scale quantitative survey questionnaires, open-ended interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and pre- and post-practicum performance comparisons. Both practicum supervisors' and pre-service teachers' qualitative narratives and statistical ratings consistently indicate that organized leadership feedback loops are the most significant predictor of advances in pre-service teacher efficacy and competency growth. Synthesis of the Findings Summary of Findings: Strategic instructional leadership as mentorship, actionable feedback, modeling, collaborative PLCs, and a supportive environment is transformative in transforming pre-service BTEC instructors. It contributes directly to their pedagogical expertise, sharpens their instructional delivery, and nurtures a lifelong commitment to thoughtful, student-centered teaching practice. Thus, good instructional leadership gives candidate teachers enough confidence and competence to fulfill the rigorous demands of technical and vocational education.

Strategies can be implemented to improve instructional leadership and teaching competence at BTEC, or tactics can be used at BTEC to enhance teaching proficiency and instructional leadership

Strategies can be implemented to improve instructional leadership and teaching competence at BTEC, or tactics can be used at BTEC to enhance teaching proficiency and instructional leadership. Tactics or strategies are used to improve teaching skills and instructional leadership at BTEC. Polls, focus groups, and document analyzes done at the end of the practicum show that there is a need for a plan for a systemic, multi-level intervention to assist teachers and instructional leaders in performing their jobs better at Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC). It is important to address both small (teacher skills) and large (institutional policy and structural design) issues to close the gaps in leadership skills, practicum guidance, and institutions' ability to work together. Plans call for Competency-Based Education (CBE) and new ways to help teachers get better. The table lists all of these planned strategy actions, along with how they will be carried out and the goals that the institutions want to reach. The game plan is in the table. Is supposed to make the lives of BTEC teachers and school leaders easier. What schools and teachers can expect and the research to back it up are the parts that matter for operations. Required ongoing staff training. Join classes on active learning, new approaches to leading, how to excel on tests, and how to incorporate AI and tech in the classroom. This will help teachers teach more easily. These workshops also help teachers provide better leadership and make sure that the things they teach are still needed for students today. The work of Darling-Hammond et al. When mentors and mentees are matched formally, there are established structures for clinical supervision, routine feedback, and developing the skill of mentors. All of these help mentees and mentors to develop their professional identities more rapidly, feel more confident in their teaching capabilities, and connect theory and practice. Knight (2011) and Hobson and Malderez. Learning groups at work. Allows everyone to take turns being responsible, learn from each other, and always grow as a group. Fourth, Eaker and DuFour (1998): learning together with action learning and technology, thinking critically, and trying new ways to teach. Burns and Hallinger 2011, OECD 2019.

V. Discussion

Evaluation of Leadership and Perceived Competencies in the Classroom. The practical findings of the study show the importance of instructional leadership for the success of teacher education colleges and the improvement of teaching quality. The ratings of the prospective teachers on the instructional leadership approaches at BTEC were high, with a mean of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 0.38. The findings support the Hallinger Instructional Leadership Model (2003, 2011), which indicates the direct effect of goal setting for the school, the supervision of the teaching program, and the establishment of a safe learning environment on the professional development of teacher candidates. More precisely, the study participants pointed out that formal supervisory observation, clinical feedback systems, and practical mentoring help were important to improve their teaching skills. Pre-service teachers felt very confident in their capacity to teach core subjects, especially in lesson planning and lesson development. However, qualitative and descriptive views exhibited considerable variations in practice. In the absence of standard clinical supervision frameworks, there is still supervisory feedback provided in varied ways across different areas. The lack of official rubrics implies that the quantity and quality of supervision may vary, leading to inconsistencies in the level of support given to pre-service teachers. Major Institutional Failures: The

merging of technology and mentoring capacity. The findings suggest that there are major institutional barriers to the realization of instructional leadership at BTEC, despite the generally positive perceptions. A major problem is that there is still a large gap between theoretical training on how to teach and the actual use of educational technology (EdTech) in practice. The current pre-service training modules don't do enough to teach candidates how to use digital resources effectively in modern classrooms. This problem is made worse by Cambodia's poor infrastructure and lack of technology-enabled mentorship platforms, which make it harder for teachers and mentees to communicate in real time, be monitored continuously, and get feedback from afar. Also, teacher educators and mentors often have a lot of administrative work to do and don't get much formal training in advanced coaching. This means that coaching is not always seen as a way to learn and grow, but as something that has to be done to be able to follow the rules. Planning for a Strategic Action to Change Institutions. To address these systemic issues and make national policies such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport's (MoEYS) Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP 2024–2030) effective in the real world of the classroom, BTEC needs to adopt an integrated instructional leadership framework: Establish formal mentor training programs to provide teacher educators with standardized observation rubrics, constructive criticism techniques, and clinical coaching strategies. This will help to systematize the mentoring certification and clinical supervision. Contextualized Educational Technology Integration: Reorganize the training to include digital teaching methods that work in Cambodian schools, along with localized Educational Technology (EdTech) tools and online reference libraries. Institutionalize Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Set up structured PLCs to foster the observation of each other, joint lesson study, and reflective practice for mentors and pre-service teachers all the time. Focusing on instructional leadership as a key driver for institutional change, BTEC can improve the way teachers are trained at the start and make a big difference to the long-term quality of education in Cambodia.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

A good baseline rating ($M = 3.83$) from this study shows that instructional leadership is a key factor in determining how well pre-service teachers at Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC) can teach. When compared to other new school systems in Southeast Asia, like those in Thailand and Vietnam, BTEC shows similar good trends. But, like its peers in the region, BTEC has to deal with structural problems, such as strict administrative rules, limited resources, and the ongoing problem of switching from supervision focused on compliance to integrated, data-driven instructional support. Cambodia has moved from a control-based supervision structure to a competency-based standards model. This is reflected in the gaps found in digital technology integration and assessment literacy. Top-down guidance often makes it hard to do reflective practice. By switching from a passive "banking model" of supervision to a critical "problem-posing model," BTEC can encourage mentors and future teachers to work together on questions that will help them understand the complicated facts of the classroom and make real changes to the way they teach. Suggestions for the Future. To make sure that national policy is followed in the classroom, it is suggested that you use a three-part strategic action plan. Reforming the structure and system of supervision. Framework for Mentor Certification: Move away from ad hoc ways of supervising and toward a standardized, approved mentor training program. Workload Optimization: Make sure there are equal numbers of mentors and mentees so that teacher educators can give consistent, high-quality, and individualized clinical comments. Digital Innovation and the Use of EdTech. Digital Badging Initiative: Set up a structured digital badge system to help teacher educators and pre-service candidates learn how to use technology and make sure they're good at it. Alignment with Vocational Needs: Improve the digital infrastructure to make sure that initial teacher education meets the needs of modern vocational and educational needs. Creating institutional cultures that work together. Putting PLCs in place: Set up busy Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across departments to make it easier for teachers to observe each other, plan lessons together, and ask themselves questions. Contextualized Pedagogical Adaptation: Use PLCs as places for candidate teachers to work together on study projects and try out, improve, and adapt modern teaching methods to work in Cambodian schools.

Strategic recommendations: Propose a three-part plan to bridge the gap between policy and what happens in the classroom: structural and systemic reform. BTEC needs to change the way it oversees mentors. Instead of doing things randomly, they should create a proper mentor certification program. This way, mentors give feedback and

have a balanced number of students to work with. This will enable mentors to truly see and support their students. Use of technology: The college needs to improve in the use of technology. They should develop a digital badging program. This will help align the college with modern vocational education needs and ensure teacher educators are able to utilize the tool effectively. Collaborative culture: we need to set up groups for teachers to learn from each other, called professional learning communities (PLCs). These groups will help teachers think deeply about their work and improve. They should use these groups to try out teaching ideas and adapt them to work in Cambodia.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and the National University of Battambang (NUBB) for their invaluable support, guidance, and academic environment, which is strongly in line with the national agenda under the Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP 2024–2030) to advance teacher education in Cambodia.

I thank the leadership, management committee, and faculty members of Battambang Teacher Education College (BTEC) for their institutional support, cooperation, and assistance in facilitating data collection for this study. Special thanks are extended to all research participants who greatly contributed to the completion of this paper, including the 303 pre-service teachers who participated in the quantitative survey and the 62 key stakeholders (21 teacher educators, 31 student-teachers and 10 institutional management committee members) who shared their invaluable knowledge in the qualitative phase.

Finally, wish to thank my colleagues and families for their strong encouragement, patience, and support throughout this research journey.

References

- [1.] Anselmus Dami, Z., Budi Wiyono, B., Imron, A., Burhanuddin, B., Supriyanto, A., & Daliman, M. (2022). Principal self-efficacy for instructional leadership in the perspective of principal strengthening training: Work engagement, job satisfaction and motivation to leave. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), Article 2064407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2064407>
- [2.] Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education over Ten Years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 10-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007>
- [3.] Bain, S., Fedynich, L. and Knight, M. (2011) The Successful Graduate Student: A Review of the Factors for Success. *Journal of Academic and Business Ethics*, 3, 1-9. <https://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/10569.pdf>
- [4.] Bandura, A. (1997) Self-Efficacy: *The Exercise of Control*. W.H. Freeman Co.
- [5.] Bellibaş, M. Ş., Polatcan, M., & Kılınç, A. Ç. (2022). Linking instructional leadership to teacher practices: The mediating effect of shared practice and agency in learning effectiveness. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 50(5), 812-831.
- [6.] Burns, A. (2010). *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203863466>
- [7.] Bush, T. (2015). Understanding instructional leadership. *Educational Management Administration*
- [8.] & Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake
- [9.] of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1315–1325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>
- [10.] Craig, John Thomas, "The Impact of Mentoring on New Teacher Self-Efficacy" (2021). *Theses and Dissertations*. 264. https://scholar.stjohns.edu/theses_dissertations/264
- [11.] Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21st-century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 300–314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487105285962>
- [12.] Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional*

- [13.] *development*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/122.311>
- [14.] DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement. *Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service*.
- [15.] Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(2), 125–142. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111116699>
- [16.] Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217–237. <https://doi.org/10.1086/461445>
- [17.] Hobson, A. J., & Malderez, A. (2013). Judgementoring and other threats to realizing the potential of school-based mentoring in teacher education. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 2(2), 89–108. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-03-2013-0019>
- [18.] Hudson, P. (2010). Mentors Report on Their Own Mentoring Practices. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(7). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2010v35n7.3>
- [19.] Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership Revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40, 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- [20.] Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport MoEYS, 2024
- [21.] OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) (2019). *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>
- [22.] Orland-Barak, L., & Wang, J. (2021). Teacher Mentoring in Service of Preservice Teachers' Learning to Teach: Conceptual Bases, Characteristics, and Challenges for Teacher Education Reform. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 72(1), 86-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487119894230>
- [23.] Orland-Barak, L., & Wang, J. (2021). Teacher Mentoring in Service of Preservice Teachers' Learning to Teach: Conceptual Bases, Characteristics, and Challenges for Teacher Education Reform. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 72(1), 86-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487119894230>
- [24.] Stronge, J. H. (2018). *Qualities of effective teachers* (3rd ed.). ASCD.
- [25.] Tolentino, S. B. (2025). Measuring pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy: The effect of professional, instructional, and personal mentoring. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(5), 6089–6095.
- [26.] Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher Efficacy: Capturing an Elusive Construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 783-805. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(01\)00036-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00036-1)
- [27.] Wang, Y. L. (2018). An Overview of E-Learning in China: History, Challenges and Opportunities. *A Research in Comparative and International Education*, 13, 195-210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499918763421>