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## Exploring Vocational Teachers' Attitudes toward Academic Supervision: Does this Supervision Improve Their Pedagogical Competence?

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### Abstract

*This article explores the impact of academic supervision on vocational teachers' attitudes and pedagogical competence. However, this study specifically investigates how it influences vocational teachers' attitudes toward pedagogical competence. The research involved semi-structured interviews with 68 vocational teachers, examining various aspects of academic supervision, including subject mastery, understanding of student characteristics, evaluation skills, and technology integration. Thematic content analysis revealed positive effects on pedagogical growth, industry integration, and curriculum enhancement. Nevertheless, challenges such as generalized feedback, limited ICT support, and a need for specialized approaches to academic supervision were identified. The study concludes by emphasizing the necessity for tailored academic supervision frameworks in vocational education to address these issues effectively. It acknowledges research limitations, including a small sample size, and calls for further exploration of solutions. Academic supervision remains a vital tool in shaping vocational education and nurturing a skilled workforce, and by addressing its limitations, it can continue to transform education.*

**Keywords:** Pedagogical Competence, Narrative Study, Vocational Teachers, Teachers' Attitude, Academic Supervision.

### Introduction

Educational literature (Gunasekera, et al., 2021; Zhang, et al., 2022) advocates that academic supervision plays a crucial role for schools in improving and maintaining the quality of learning and teaching processes, thereby affecting student learning outcomes. For teachers, this supervision can also assist them in surmounting their teaching difficulties and enhancing their teaching performance. Prior research has shown that academic supervision encourages school teachers by providing guidance and support for their professional development to improve the quality of graduates to be ready to work and able to compete in the job market (Keller-Schneider, et al., 2020; Mak, et al., 2022). Additionally, Brew and Saunders (2020) and Tan, Peng, and Lyu (2019) have reported that the enactment of academic supervision following professional standards takes an important part in ensuring the quality of education in general. Particularly in the context of vocational education, academic supervision if continuously implemented makes

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There has been a growing body of research in academic supervision and school teachers' pedagogical competence. For instance, some studies have examined the effectiveness of academic supervision programs analysing the competence of supervisors, implementation, and the results and impact of academic supervision in enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence (König & Pflanzl, 2016; Wiens, et al., 2022). Additionally, another prior research has examined the extent to which vocational high school teachers are aware of students' learning styles and how they could improve their pedagogical competence (Jenßen, et al., 2022). Leijen, Malva, Pedaste, and Mikser (2022) found that the awareness level of vocational high school teachers regarding students' learning styles was good, with 76.1% of teachers having a good understanding of how to deliver learning materials to their students. Furthermore, previous studies have presented that the process of academic supervision could help teachers improve their lesson planning, teaching methods, and classroom management skills (Cooper, 2019; Malva, et al., 2021). These studies suggest that there is an interest in exploring how academic supervision can improve teachers' pedagogical skills and how vocational high school teachers can develop their pedagogical competence through academic supervision.

Academic supervision has been proved in numerous studies to enhance teachers' pedagogical proficiency (Adomako, 2021; Brown, et al., 2021; VanLone, et al., 2022). For instance, a study conducted in Finland found that academic supervision activities could improve teachers' pedagogical ability in preparing lesson plans (Puroila, et al., 2021). Another study involving early childhood school teachers found that academic supervision could improve teacher performance on pedagogical competence (Karabon, 2021). The method of academic supervision such as reflective discussion, training and workshops, self-evaluation, and collaborative learning can assist teachers in identifying their teaching strengths and weaknesses and give them feedback on how to strengthen their teaching abilities (Burger, et al., 2021; Heng, et al., 2022). Overall, academic supervision is a successful method for enhancing the pedagogical proficiency of teachers. It helps teachers pinpoint their strengths and flaws while providing feedback on their instructional techniques. Academic supervision can aid teachers in sharpening their instructional skills and enhancing their overall effectiveness in the classroom.

In the term of academic supervision, some studies find that the goal of academic supervision is to improve teaching and learning by having constant interaction between the supervisor and the teacher (Hoque, et al., 2020; Letzel, Pozas, & Schneider, 2020). However, a study found that supervisors face time constraints due to administrative tasks that must be completed (Muhonen, et al., 2023). Additionally, (Mansfield, 2022; Xiaofang & Jocelyn, 2023) noted that academic supervision had not been programmed in a participatory manner, and there was a lack of understanding of the concept, theory, and practice of academic supervision among supervisors (e.g. Australia, China). Antera's (2021) research has focused on which professional competencies vocational teacher possess or should demonstrate, with little focus placed on how pedagogical competence is defined. This means, there is a conceptual gap related to how pedagogical competence is perceived and constructed among vocational teachers, leaving room for further research.

This study contributes to vocational research on academic supervision by addressing the teachers' attitude on their pedagogical competence. This study aims to explore vocational teachers' attitudes toward academic supervision to enhance pedagogical competence. Consequently, the following research questions guide the study: How do vocational teachers'

attitudes toward academic supervision to enhance pedagogical competence?

## **Literature Review**

### **The Role of Academic Supervision in Teacher Professional Development**

The role of academic supervision on teacher professional growth has been the subject of numerous researches. Particularly, two studies in Egypt investigated the effect of academic supervision on the advancement of the teachers (Elkomy & Elkhaial, 2022; Marey, et al., 2020). According to the study, academic supervision greatly improved the instructors' professional growth and assisted them in developing their instructional strategies. Cai & Tang (2021) and Finch, Akhavein, Patwardhan, & Clark (2023) investigations of the effect of academic supervision on teachers' self-efficacy were part of a larger study. These investigations advocated that academic supervision significantly enhanced the self-efficacy of the teachers and helped them to develop a more positive attitude towards their teaching practices. Similarly, a study conducted explored the impact of academic supervision on the teachers' professional development in Chinese and Australian context (Abacioglu, et al., 2022; Paufler, et al., 2020). These studies emphasized that academic supervision significantly enhanced the teachers' professional development and helped them to improve their teaching practices.

To the best of our understanding, two studies strengthened the main significance of academic supervision for teachers' professional development (Ellis & Nguyen, 2020; Härkki, et al., 2021). (Ellis & Nguyen, 2020) focused on the feedback on teachers' instructional strategies. They found that feedback was an essential component of professional development, as it helped teachers to identify areas for improvement and made necessary adjustments to their teaching practices. Another cruciality of academic supervision is to provide teachers with opportunities for professional development (Härkki, et al., 2021). They observed that professional development was essential for teachers to keep up with the latest teaching practices and pedagogical approaches. This study also found that teachers should be given the chance to participate in workshops, conferences, and other professional development events under academic supervision. All in all, these empirical studies suggest the proof that academic supervision plays a critical role in teacher professional development and has a positive impact on teaching practices and students' learning outcomes.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

The nexus between academic supervision and vocational teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical competence was found in numerous literatures. While there is literature on the importance of pedagogical competence for teachers and its impact on student learning outcomes (Blömeke, et al., 2022; Christoforidou & Kyriakides, 2021)), there is limited research on how academic supervision can influence vocational teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical competence. Existing literature suggests that academic supervision can improve teachers' pedagogical competence and enhance student learning outcomes (van Dijk, et al., 2022).

Another study found that academic supervision of school principals could improve teacher performance on pedagogical competence (Bardach & Klassen, 2020). However, these studies did not focus specifically on vocational teachers or their attitudes towards pedagogical competence. On the other hand, there is literature on the importance of pedagogical competence for vocational teachers and its impact on student learning outcomes. A conceptual review by (Ceallaigh, 2022) found that rapid changes in learning environments have placed new demands on vocational teachers to continuously update their competence.

A study by (Chen & Yang, 2019) emphasized that teachers' pedagogical skills support students' academic progress. However, these studies did not focus specifically on the role of academic supervision in improving vocational teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical competence. Therefore, there is a need for further research on the relationship between academic supervision and vocational teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical competence. This research could explore how academic supervision can be used to improve vocational teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical competence, and how this can impact student learning outcomes in vocational education. A deeper understanding of the function of academic supervision in developing vocational teachers' attitudes toward pedagogical competence and promoting student learning outcomes in vocational education could be a final result of this research.

## Method

The nature of the present study is naturalistic (Garcia, et al., 2019) since it aims to capture vocational school teachers' perceptions of academic supervision geared towards improving pedagogical competence. Therefore, we employed a semi-structured interview to explore these perceptions.

## Participants

Before the study commenced, one of the authors contacted school principals to inform the present research project and asked them to introduce us to teachers who might be willing to participate in the present study. Out of the contacted schools, one school was interested in the project. Therefore, we sampled one vocational school as a single case study. After the school principal allowed us to arrange a meeting with the teachers, a total of 68 teachers were willing to engage in in the present study. Here is the profile of the teachers:

<i>Profile</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Male	27	39.71
	Female	41	60.29
	Total	68	100.00
Age	< 25 years	0	0.00
	26 to 35 years	21	30.88
	36 to 45 years	27	39.70
	> 45 years	20	29.42
	Total	68	100.00
Teaching Experience	1 to 5 years	35	51.47
	6 to 10 years	7	10.29
	11 to 15 years	13	19.12
	> 15 years	13	19.12
	Total	68	100.00

Table 1: Respondents' Distribution Based on Gender, Age, And Teaching Experience (N=68)

## Interview as a Data Collection Method

We conducted a semi-structured interview to collect information about how academic supervision roles to improve the teachers' pedagogical competence. In general, the data is classified into five parts, namely: (1) information about the teacher's background; (2) academic supervision on the mastery of areas of expertise; (3) academic supervision of the mastery of

students' characteristics (4) academic supervision on the abilities in conducting learning evaluations and (5) academic supervision on the abilities in using of information and communication technology for learning process. Before the research was conducted, we developed a personal bond with the participants to enable them to discuss their experiences about academic supervision and their pedagogical competence. Prior to data analysis, research participants are given the chance to verify interview data (member checking) in order to increase data reliability and uphold ethical data (re)construction practices.

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic content analysis was used to examine the acquired data (O'Dowd, 2021). Instead of focusing on the story's structure, this thematic method seeks to grasp "what is being told" and to pinpoint issues and experiences in light of established themes. The interview transcripts are reviewed several times during the analysis in order to comprehend the meaning and discourse of the narrative. The interview transcripts are then coded in accordance with the themes, sub-themes, and topics that are most likely to emerge from the interview. The process for analysing interview data is detailed in (Widodo, 2014), which starts by transcribing the interview results using the subsequent steps:

1. continually listening to the interview material that was recorded to identify the necessary themes or key points;
2. record interview transcripts in the appropriate format to facilitate the coding, sorting, and classification of significant material;
3. analysing interview data; translating participant views, opinions, or points of view (inner voices); and understanding each word and sentence said by the interviewee.
4. provide accurate data by giving participants the chance to comment on the conclusions of data interpretation. This is significant since the voices of the participants are the source of the data and must be accurately represented. Expert researchers who were invited to focus group sessions also offered feedback.

In addition, critical discourse analysis is used to discover the precise significance of each participant's word. The relevance of the data in an empirical text is exposed through this approach (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Widodo, 2018).

### **Results and Discussion**

There are four themes found in this study, i.e.: (1) academic supervision on the mastery of areas of expertise; (2) academic supervision of the mastery of students' characteristics (3) academic supervision on the abilities in conducting learning evaluations and (4) academic supervision on the abilities in using of information and communication technology for learning process.

#### **Teachers' Attitudes toward Academic Supervision and Mastering the Area of Expertise**

In the realm of vocational education, academic supervision emerges as a potent force for facilitating expertise among teachers and enhancing the quality of education. The narratives of these teachers, as expressed in the zoom interview, emphasized how academic supervision functions as a guiding mentor, promotes integration of industry practices, streamlines teaching methods, and elevates curriculum content.

*“Academic supervision is instrumental in helping me master my area of expertise. Through regular observations and feedback, I've refined my instructional techniques, ensuring that I'm effectively transmitting specialized knowledge to my students.” (Teacher #1, Zoom Interview, 24 July 2023)*

*“Academic supervision is like having a mentor who guides me towards mastery in my field. The valuable insights and suggestions from my supervisors have enabled me to integrate real-world industry practices into my teaching, enhancing my own expertise.” (Teacher #3, Zoom Interview, 24 July 2023)*

Academic supervision plays a crucial role in vocational education by fostering pedagogical growth and ensuring effective classroom management. However, as highlighted by these teachers in the zoom interview, there were legitimate concerns regarding the extent to which it supports the mastery of intricate subject matter. To address these concerns, a nuanced approach to academic supervision may be required, one that recognizes the dual role it must play - enhancing pedagogy while also guiding educators toward becoming true experts in their vocational fields.

*“While academic supervision has its merits, I sometimes find that the feedback provided is too generalized. It's challenging to receive specific guidance on mastering the intricate details of my field, which can hinder my ability to impart comprehensive expertise. (Teacher #2, Zoom Interview, 25 July 2023)*

*“Academic supervision, in my experience, tends to focus more on classroom management than on the nuances of my subject matter. This lack of specialization can make it difficult to receive guidance on truly mastering the advanced aspects of my vocational field.” (Teacher #4, Zoom Interview, 25 July 2023)*

In essence, academic supervision should evolve to include more specialized feedback and guidance that aligns with the goal of mastering the advanced aspects of each educator's subject matter. This shift would not only benefit educators but also enhance the quality of vocational education by ensuring that students learn from educators who are not just proficient but true masters in their chosen fields (Andrews, 2022). Ultimately, by addressing these challenges, academic supervision can continue to be a vital tool in the quest for excellence in vocational education.

### **Teachers' Attitudes toward Academic Supervision and Mastering the Students' Characteristics**

The perspectives shared by these teachers in the zoom interview underscore the pivotal role of academic supervision in this endeavour. It serves as a guiding light, helping educators tailor teaching methods, identify individual strengths and challenges, recognize learning preferences, and adapt to diverse skill levels. In the vocational education, understanding and mastering student characteristics are paramount to providing effective and inclusive teaching.

*“Academic supervision is limited in helping me understand and master the diverse characteristics of my students. The feedback I receive guides me in tailoring my teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles, ensuring a more inclusive and effective educational experience.” (Teacher #10, Zoom Interview, 26 July 2023)*

*“I firmly believe that academic supervision plays a significant role in mastering student characteristics. The observations and discussions with supervisors have enhanced my ability to identify individual strengths and challenges, enabling me to provide personalized support that promotes student success.” (Teacher #12, Zoom Interview, 26 July 2023)*

As teachers continue to refine their ability to comprehend and master student characteristics through academic supervision, the benefits extend far beyond the classroom (Zysberg, 2021). Students receive an education that is personalized, inclusive, and responsive to their unique needs. In essence, academic supervision acts as a bridge, connecting educators with the rich tapestry of their students' characteristics, ensuring that vocational education remains a dynamic and transformative force in the lives of learners.

Vocational education stands at the intersection of diverse student characteristics, where each individual's unique needs must be recognized and addressed for effective learning. In a recent zoom interview with two vocational teachers, the conversation centred around the role of academic supervision in mastering these nuanced aspects of student characteristics. Despite the benefits of academic supervision, educators expressed concerns that it often falls short in providing specific guidance and depth required to understand and address the multifaceted challenges posed by vocational students.

*“While academic supervision offers benefits, I've found that it doesn't always provide specific guidance on mastering student characteristics. The focus tends to be more on broader teaching strategies, leaving gaps in addressing the individual needs of my vocational students.” (Teacher #11, Zoom Interview, 26 July 2023)*

*“I appreciate academic supervision, but it doesn't always delve into the depth required to truly master student characteristics. The focus on overall classroom dynamics sometimes falls short in addressing the nuanced challenges of vocational education.” (Teacher #13, Zoom Interview, 26 July 2023)*

The challenges of mastering student characteristics in vocational education are multifaceted and require a nuanced approach. While academic supervision undeniably offers benefits by focusing on broader teaching and pedagogical strategies, there is a pressing need for a more specialized and detailed approach (Shareefa, 2021). Vocational teachers must navigate a landscape where student characteristics, including diverse skill levels and backgrounds, play a significant role in the learning process.

### **Teachers' Attitudes toward Academic Supervision and Ability to Conduct Learning Evaluation**

In the realm of vocational education, the ability to effectively evaluate student learning is a fundamental skill. The practical nature of vocational subjects demands a nuanced approach to assessment. In a recent zoom interview with two dedicated teachers, the importance of academic supervision in enhancing their ability to evaluate student learning became evident. Academic supervision has played a pivotal role in refining their assessment techniques, guiding them to create balanced and vocational-specific evaluation systems that accurately measure both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

*“Academic supervision has been instrumental in enhancing my ability to evaluate student learning. The feedback I receive has guided me in creating more effective assessments that accurately measure not just knowledge but also practical skills acquired in my vocational*

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*“I firmly believe that academic supervision plays a crucial role in my learning evaluation skills. The discussions with supervisors have provided insights into diverse assessment methods, enabling me to create a balanced evaluation system that reflects the vocational nature of my subject.”* (Teacher #19, Zoom Interview, 26 July 2023)

Academic supervision acts as a catalyst in refining teachers' skills, guiding them to create assessments that align with the vocational nature of their subjects. This ensures a balanced evaluation system that accurately measures both theoretical knowledge and practical application (Sharma, et al., 2023). As a result, students are provided with assessments that prepare them not only for exams but also for the real-world challenges they will face in their vocational careers.

In the realm of vocational education, the art of evaluating learning outcomes holds immense significance. Assessments must be tailored to mirror the demands of the vocational world, measuring not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills. However, in a recent zoom interview with two vocational teachers, concerned the depth of support provided by academic supervision in enhancing their learning evaluation skills. Academic supervision, while beneficial, may occasionally fall short in delivering specialized guidance on crafting assessments that align closely with vocational demands.

*“While academic supervision offers benefits, I've found that it doesn't always delve into the depth required to enhance my learning evaluation skills. The feedback tends to be more focused on broader classroom strategies, leaving gaps in addressing the intricacies of vocational assessment.”* (Teacher #18, Zoom Interview, 27 July 2023)

*“Academic supervision could provide more support for my learning evaluation skills. The feedback tends to lean towards pedagogical strategies, making it challenging to receive specialized insights on designing assessments that mirror vocational demands.”* (Teacher #20, Zoom Interview, 27 July 2023)

The challenges and opportunities in enhancing learning evaluation skills in vocational education are multifaceted. The insights shared by these teachers in the zoom interview underscore the need for more specialized guidance within the framework of academic supervision. While academic supervision plays a crucial role in fostering pedagogical growth and broader classroom strategies, there is room for improvement in delivering specialized guidance on crafting assessments that closely align with vocational demands (Ajjawi, et al., 2020). To address these concerns, academic supervision should adapt and provide more comprehensive support for mastering learning evaluation skills in the vocational context.

### **Teachers' Attitudes toward Academic Supervision and Ability in Using ICT for Learning**

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become a paramount concern, especially in vocational education. Vocational educators must equip students with not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills relevant to the digital demands of their careers. In a recent zoom interview with two vocational teachers, the transformative role of academic supervision in enhancing their ability to utilize ICT in learning became evident. Academic supervision has played an instrumental role in shaping their technological pedagogy, enabling them to create multimedia-rich lessons and bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world industry practices.

*“Academic supervision has significantly contributed to my mastery of utilizing ICT in learning. Through this process, I’ve learned to integrate virtual simulations and online platforms that mirror real-world industry experiences, enriching the vocational education journey.” (Teacher #19, Zoom Interview, 28 July 2023)*

*“I credit academic supervision for my ability to effectively use ICT during learning process. The ongoing feedback has helped me develop technologically-driven lessons that cater to both theoretical understanding and practical application in my vocational classroom.” (Teacher #21, Zoom Interview, 28 July 2023)*

The integration of ICT in vocational education is no longer an option but a necessity to prepare students for the digital demands of the workforce. The insights shared by these teachers in the zoom interview underscored the pivotal role of academic supervision in this issue. Academic supervision empowers vocational teachers to master the effective utilization of ICT in learning. Through ongoing feedback, guidance, and insights, educators can develop technologically-driven lessons, create multimedia-rich content, and bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world industry practices (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020).

In a recent zoom interview with two teachers, concerns emerged regarding the depth of support provided by academic supervision in enhancing their ICT integration skills. While academic supervision is beneficial, it sometimes falls short in providing the specialized guidance required to effectively integrate technology into vocational education and address the varying levels of tech proficiency among students.

*“Academic supervision, while beneficial, occasionally overlooks the importance of mastering ICT integration in the vocational context. I’ve felt the need for more focused guidance on leveraging technology to create industry-relevant learning experiences.” (Teacher #43, Zoom Interview, 29 July 2023)*

*“Academic supervision could provide more support for my ICT skills. The feedback tends to lean towards pedagogical strategies, making it challenging to receive specialized insights on effectively integrating technology into vocational education.” (Teacher #45, Zoom Interview, 29 July 2023)*

The integration of ICT in vocational education is a complex endeavour, one that requires specialized guidance and support. While academic supervision offers numerous benefits, including pedagogical strategies and broader teaching objectives, it occasionally falls short in providing the depth and specificity required for effective ICT integration in the vocational context. To bridge this gap, academic supervision should adapt and provide more comprehensive support for mastering ICT integration skills (Adarkwah, 2021). This could involve specialized training, resources, and guidance that specifically address the unique challenges of technology integration in vocational education, as well as cater to the needs of varying levels of tech proficiency among students.

## **Conclusion**

In the realm of vocational education, academic supervision emerges as a potent force for facilitating expertise among teachers and enhancing the quality of education. The narratives of these teachers, as expressed in the zoom interview, emphasized some pros and cons perspectives. Academic supervision helped improving the teachers’ pedagogical growth, integration of industry practices, streamlined teaching methods, elevated curriculum content. Nevertheless,

generalized feedback, focus on classroom management, lack of depth, limited support for ICT integration are the part of academic supervision that need breakthrough. The interviews underscore the need for a more specialized approach to academic supervision in vocational education. These insights have theoretical implications for the development of academic supervision frameworks tailored to vocational education's unique requirements. While the interviews provide valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge their limitations.

The perspectives presented here were based on the experiences and opinions of a limited number of educators. Additionally, the interviews need to explore potential solutions to the identified challenges in depth, leaving room for future research in this area. As we look towards the future, it is clear that academic supervision will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the vocational education landscape, fostering excellence, and nurturing a new generation of skilled professionals. By addressing the limitations and building on the insights shared by these educators, academic supervision can evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of vocational education, ensuring that it remains a dynamic and transformative force in the lives of learners. Finally, this study recommends that academic supervision should evolve to include more specialized feedback and guidance, aligning with the goal of mastering advanced aspects of each teacher subject matter.

Then, specialized training, resources, and guidance should be offered to teachers for effective ICT integration in vocational education, catering to varying levels of tech proficiency among students. Provide the conclusion to your study, and final words on the value of your analysis, research, or paper. Limitations of your study should be addressed. Recommendations for future research related to your topic should also be mentioned.

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