

Principals' Supervisory Role: A Tool for Effective Teaching and Learning In School

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Abstract:

School leaders' use instructional supervision to improve teaching and learning by providing practicing teachers with an on –going support and guidance after their initial teacher training programs. In the past and even in recent years, supervision of teaching is regarded as a punitive control exercise by superiors in the school chain whereas supervision of teaching is an academic exercise aimed at fostering the teaching skills of teachers after initial training. Glickman in his book titled ‘ ‘supervision of instruction: a developmental approach ‘ ‘ published in 1985 clearly indicated that the purpose of supervision is to develop the skills and abilities of teachers in the classroom. This paper intends to bring out pertinent information related to the importance of supervisory practices by principals of schools who are school site administrators. Paper shall expantiate on importance of supervision, challenges encountered, way forward and conclusion.

Keywords: principals' supervisory role, tool for effective teaching and learning, school.

INTRODUCTION

The word supervision comes from two latin words ‘ ‘super’ ’ meaning ‘over’ and ‘ ‘videre’ ’ meaning ‘to watch or see’ (Smith, 1996, 2005). in other words, supervision means overseeing. Petes (1976; 170), as cited by Smith, reveals that part of the overseer's job is to ensure that work is effectively done to the expected standard. This means that supervision impinges on the effectiveness and quality of work done. Supervision should therefore be part of all activities in every organization or society to ensure effectiveness in actions and attainment of organizational objectives. Traditional supervisory practice can be distinguished from contemporary supervisory practices. According to Sulluvan and Glanz (2000), traditional is old fashion and is where, administrators (principals and regional pedagogic inspectors) direct teachers of all aspects of the teaching learning process. On the other hand, contemporary supervision is the second generation

supervisory practices where the supervisor work collaboratively and assist the supervisee to bring out the best results.

Reports of the national education forum of 1995, the 1998 law on education and the sector wide approach on education 2005, all emphasized the need to strengthen teacher quality as part of a comprehensive strategy towards efforts aimed at improving the quality of educational services. Brro (2006), notes that quality education partly depends on how well teachers are trained and supervised since they are one of the key inputs to education delivery. Over the years in Cameroon educational system, emphasis is placed on supervision of instruction. Policy statements, ministerial orders and official guidelines put emphasis on desired supervisory practices. The draft document of the sector wide approach to education (Republic of Cameroon 2005) emphasize the need for qualified supervisors and strict procedures in appointing people to posts of pedagogic responsibility. According to the draft document of the sector wide approach, efficient supervisors can only be produced through creating academic institutions that are well equipped with personnel skilled in the notions and knowledgeable in supervisory practices. Pedagogic evaluation (inspection) according to the sector wide approach has to be taken into consideration in the follow up of the career of teachers.

The education forum of 1995, that held from the 22nd to the 27th of May recommended the supervision of instruction take central stage in the secondary education sector and as such officers trained for pedagogic supervision should have working spaces. The forum also recommended that pedagogic supervision should be well coordinated through out Cameroon. Paying attention to teachers is very important against the backdrop of demographic and economic changes. According to the draft document, of the sector wide approach, to education, 2005 the majority of the population is relatively young, with 45percent below 15 years and 64 percent below 25 years. These demographic changes will translate to increased demand for education and increase demand for quality teachers. However, many of the teachers in the secondary education sector need to be supervised adequately to make sure contents of various subjects are effectively transmitted to improve students' academic achievements.

In the Cameroonian context, laxity, nonchalance and duty unconsciousness of supervisors and teachers is a call for concern. Ineffective teaching which leads to falling standards, increase in drop out and high repetition rate which the government and international communities are fighting against may be attributed to insufficient supervision or ineffective execution of supervisory tasks. It is in this light this paper endeavor to highlight pertinent information related to importance to supervisory practices, challenges and way forward.

PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to bring to light the importance of supervision of instruction; citing key definitions as it relates to supervision. Relevant information aligning with the importance of supervision will go a long way to assist policy makers and implementers to have mastery of the concept of supervision as it is a vital ingredient to achieve school objectives.

KEY DEFINITIONS

- A. Supervision: the process of bringing about improvement in instruction by stimulating teachers's professional growth and helping teachers and learners to achieve the organizational objectives.
- B. Supervisor: refers to the officer appointed by the ministries of education to oversee the conduction and other assessments of the school.
- C. Supervision of instruction: any activity in the class room where officials makes sure teaching and learning is effective (Glickman, 1998). Also known as instructional supervision.

D. Traditional supervision: supervision practices where the supervisor direct teachers on what to do (Sullivan and Glanz, 2000).

E. Contemporary supervision: supervision practices where, the supervisor work collaboratively and assist the teachers to bring out the best result (Sullivan and Glanz 2000).

F. Clinical supervision: it is a formally structured professional arrangement between a supervisor and one or more supervisees. A planned regular meeting that provides for critical reflection on the work issues raised by the supervisees.

CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Supervision has related concepts which better explain what supervision is all about or what is needed for its effectiveness. The Glickman supervisory tasks, and some rules, responsibilities or requirements for supervision will be looked at.

Glickman's supervisory tasks: According to Glickman (1985), supervision is viewed from the perspective of teachers' development. That is, supervision is a development process. This implies that when teachers are developed, their instruction will be improved, likewise students' academic performance. in order to ensure the effective development of the teacher, the supervisor has five tasks to perform: a) direct assistance to teachers, b) curriculum development, c) in-service education, d) group development e) action research.

- A. Direct assistance to teachers: it is the provision of personal, on-going contacts with individual teacher to observe and assist in classroom instruction. in other words, supervisors such as principal or pedagogic inspectors should indulge in clinical supervision (Goldhammer, 1969) so as to prevent the teacher from warping the instructional or pedagogic aspects he or she displays.
- B. Curriculum development: it is the revision and modification of the content, plans, and materials of classroom instruction. That is, the supervisor should not be rigid but promote the use of diverse teaching methods and instructional materials. such as textbooks, ICT materials like computer, overhead projectors, radio and television among others rather than being attached to chalkboard (Tambo, 2003,267).
- C. In-service education: This includes the legally sanctioned and supported learning opportunities provided to faculty or department by the school or school system. Such opportunities include seminars, workshops and conferences, among others. This will help to boost the teachers' morale since more knowledge will be acquired during such meetings.
- D. Group development: the gathering together of teachers to make decisions on mutual instructional concerns. This means that the supervisor should be able to engineer the collaboration of teachers to share certain new aspects of instruction and their various subjects and to also encourage team spirit in order to improve on their professionalism.
- E. Action research: a systematic study by faculty or department about what is happening in the classroom and school with the aim of improving learning.

For a supervisor to perform the afore-mentioned tasks, he or she needs certain prerequisites or skills which according to Glickman (1985), include: knowledge base, interpersonal skills base and technical skill base. Mbua, (2003), states that an administrator (supervisor), must have conceptual skills (knowledge), interpersonal skills and technical skills for him/her to effectively execute his/her functions. A supervisor with the above skills will be able to glue organizational goals with teachers needs in order to achieve the classroom objective and improve student learning. However, the supervisor in addition to the supervisory tasks seen earlier as stipulated by Glickman should be able to bear in mind other concepts when performing the various supervisory tasks seen above.

Other concepts of supervision include: Overseeing, power and, trust.

A. Overseeing: Smith (1995, 2005), points out that the etymological meaning of supervision is overseeing .that is, in latin “super” means “over” and “videre” means “to watch or see”. A supervisor is therefore someone who oversees how effectively a job is done (Petes, 1997) and reinforces the effectiveness of the job. A principal should therefore be capable to see how teaching is done in an objective manner and be able to get feedback from the oversight of the teaching. The feedback will warrant him/her to reinforce the teaching by performing the supervisory tasks: direct assistance, curriculum development, in-service education, group development and action research (Glickman, 1985).

B. power: The concept of power cannot be left out of any administrative process (supervision inclusive).It requires so much authority for someone to enter a teacher’s class and supervise him/her. Mbua, (2002) defines power as “the control which a person possess and can exercise on others”. Weber (1947) defines it as “ the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in position to carry out his own will despite resistance”. According to Mbua, (2003, 217) the pioneer works of John French and Bertrand Raven (1968) led them to identify five kinds of power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power and expert power. The supervisor’s possession of the enthusiasm to perform his functions comes from some or all these various sources of power.

C. Trust: trust is the backbone of supervisory practices. The supervisor cannot allow a teacher to teach if he/she has no trust in the latter to achieve classroom objectives. Confidentiality and trust bestowed on the teacher will promote his openness for the supervisor to see his merits and demerits and thus act on the teacher’s short-comings and positively reinforced the teacher’s merits to improve instruction. The lack of trust in any of the two partners will hinder effective or smooth supervision (Luft, 1970).

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION -CAMEROON

The prevailing situation of supervision in Cameroon can be attributed to the socio-economic, political and cultural spheres.

Socio-economically speaking, Cameroon is a developing country and is made up of people of divers social and economic status.. There is relatively low income pumped into the Cameroon educational system compared to the European and American education.there is also a great discrepancy in the distribution of resources in Cameroon schools. Secondary schools in Cameroon are found in both urban and rural areas. Some of the schools in urban areas, especially public schools are relatively well equipped with trained teachers, libraries, computer, science laboratories and other resources which are absent in rural schools. The pathetic accessibility problem in the country especially the lack of roads and electricity in many rural areas of the ten regions hinders effective performance of supervisory tasks.

However, the rapid growth in mass education requires the installation of a pedagogic inspector in each sub-division to supervise the teachers in the schools. This suppose to be the main function of principals as instructional leaders (Starrat, 2002). Principals are, however, more attached to their administrative, financial and social functions (Mbua, 2003) leaving out most parts of the educative function to the teachers. It can be said that most principals in Cameroon scarcely clinically supervise instruction, but since they ensure that instructional materials are brought to the school and they also ensure the holding of departmental meetings and providing the required means for their teachers to attend seminars on pedagogy, they are instructional supervisors.

The fact that there is/are only one or two pedagogic inspectors per subject is a call for concern because one is tempted to say that the country needs just the name to have got pedagogic

inspectors instead of their efficiency and effectiveness, bearing in mind that principals hardly clinically supervise instruction, as required. This is because there is no way three inspectors can effectively oversee and moderate the works of all history teachers in the north and extreme north regions for example. In this vein, the number of pedagogic inspectors per region and their decentralization that is, divisions and sub-divisions, should be looked at, if we really want to raise standards of education in this country. That is, more money should be invested to train more pedagogic inspectors and decentralize them to ensure the proper use of state resources sent to various schools ; that is, to maximize the achievement of secondary school objectives.

In the political light, Cameroon is an internationally recognized country for being a member of many international organizations like the United Nations, African union, the common wealth of nations, la francophonie, CEMAC among others. All these organizations and other bilateral and multilateral relations promote sound education by fighting illiteracy. Cameroon is trying her best to lay down policies which will meet the demands of these organizations and to improve on her socio-economic, cultural and political development.

In the school setting, the school culture exists with less trust and less confidentiality between the teachers and supervisors. There is a large number of trained teachers in public or government secondary schools whom the state employs from teachers training institutions like ‘Ecole Normale Supérieure ‘ENS’’Yaounde, Bambili, Ebolowa, kumba and Maroua. The private sector on the other hand has a majority of untrained teachers. The internal supervision in private schools is more serious than in government schools. Although clinical supervision is not common with respect to Golhammar’s (1969) stages, the principal of private colleges do not condone with laxity on the part of teachers. The teachers put in their best because the contract they have with school authority is usually yearly and so they will put in their best in order to have commendable results so as to be reemployed during the proceeding academic years.

On the other hand government teachers are paid by the state and decide to take absent from school without any reasons. Some teachers even have problems with the principals but the principals can only write a report and forward to the higher authority that be. The practice of nepotism, tribalism, corruption, laxity, indiscipline and effective quality control is call for concern in public schools..Regional pedagogic inspectors according to the 2005 document outlining their functions, are classified into general and specific functions. Their general functions or duties include:

- a permanent duty to supervise, animate and control pedagogic activities.
- a permanent duty to inspect teaching personnel and syllabuses at the divisional delegations of secondary education and school authorities.
- the organization of refresher courses, seminars and pedagogic conferences and workshops.
- the conception, production and distribution of pedagogic documents meant for supervision of teachers and various partners of the education community.
- the promotion and distribution of pedagogic research work carried out in the various regional delegations of secondary education.

QUALITIES OF GOOD INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISOR

Berhane, (2014) in his thesis completed in 2014 from Jimma university, said a supervisor in his own capacity is regarded as an instructional leader. He is expected to perform functions and to fulfill the expectations, aspirations, needs and demands of the society in which he/she operates. For a supervisor to be successful; he/she needs to possess certain qualities that will put him over those under his supervision; he/she must be true to his own ideals at the same time flexible, loyal, and respectful of the beliefs, rights and dignity of those around him; in the same vein, he/she must

be strong willed, consistent and fair in his dealings with other people ; he/she must be prepared for opposition but should handle opposition without malice; in the final analysis, a good supervisor must be honest, firm, approachable, ready to help people solve their problems and maintain a relaxing atmosphere that would encourage, stimulate, and inspire people around him to work harmoniously. finally, the supervisor must be up-to date in his knowledge of psychology of learning and principles of education since such knowledge greatly influences the effectiveness of instruction (Hammock & Robert 2005).

IMPORTANCE /PURPOSE OF SUPERVISORY PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

Peter Fon Titanji and Nchia Mary-Judith Yuoh in their work titled ‘ ‘supervision of instruction in Cameroon: are pedagogic inspectors doing their work ? ‘ ‘ published in 2010, quoting wanzare and da costa (2000) identified nine inter-related purposes of supervision of instruction. These include:

- A. improving instruction (Glickman et al 1998; Sergiovanni & Starrat 2000);
- B. enhancing the professional development of teachers as individuals and groups(wiles & bondi 1996);
- C. creating awareness among teachers about the potential consequences of their teaching behaviors(Glickman et al 1998);
- D. creating a supportive environment within which teachers, as individuals and groups can experiment with new instructional approaches;
- E. enhancing curriculum development (Glickman et al 1998);
- F. strengthening norms of collegiality among teachers and supervisors (Glickman 1998; Wiles& Bondi 1996);
- G. increasing the motivation and commitment of teachers (Glickman et al 1998).

Blasé and blasé 1999; pansiri 2008; rous 2004; Sullivan & glanz, 2000 found out the following importance of supervisory practices :

1. Collaboration: supervision practices by school site supervisors (principals), promote collaboration among their teachers to improve instruction. In the US, Blasé and Blasé (1999), found that supervisors’ modelled teamwork, provided time for teams to meet regularly and advocated free sharing of ideas. According to these researchers, collaboration resulted in increased teacher motivation, self-esteem, efficiency and reflective behavior such as risk taking, instructional variety and innovative/creativity. Collaboration is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyse and implement their classroom practices which, in turn, leads to higher levels of students achievement Dufour (2004). The handbook for heads in cameroonian public secondary schools included the expectation that supervisors would encourage experienced teachers to help other teachers professionally. this seems to convey the notion that collegiality is a one-way relationship in which only experienced teachers help new, weaker and inexperienced peers.
2. Assistance and support: contemporary models of supervision promote the view that supervisors should provide various forms of assistance and support to teachers to improve instruction. Teachers in public secondary schools in the south-eastern, mid-western and north-western states of the US overwhelmingly reported that successful supervisors offered suggestions to improve instructional methods and solve problems. Supervision in Cameroon secondary schools would improve if supervisors begin to hold pre-observation conferences with teachers. Involvement in the planning process makes teachers aware of what aspect of the instructional process is to be observed, and the time and method of observation. Teachers can then prepare

adequately, which would potentially raise their level of confidence, boost their morale, and result in improvement in teachers' instructional practices.

3. Professional development: Contemporary researchers of supervision of instruction advocate that supervisors should model lessons, as well as provide school-based in-service training workshops to develop the professional skills of teachers. Empirical research findings in the US have shown that demonstrating teaching techniques to teachers improve instruction, and consequently raise student learning. Researchers have shown empirically that some supervisors directly or indirectly provide teachers with professional support to improve their instructional practices.
4. Leadership skills/behavior: contemporary researchers in supervision, such as Blasé and (Blasé 1999), shows that the behavior supervisors' exhibit in the process of carrying out their duties affects teachers emotionally and psychological, and hence their performance .praising teachers significantly and positively affects teacher motivation, self –esteem, and efficacy. Praise fosters teachers' reflective behavior re-enforcing teaching strategies, risk –taking, and innovative/creativity.

CHALLENGES OF SUPERVISORY PRACTICES AND WAY FORWARD

Glickman (1985), debunk the idea that supervision of instruction relates to controlling teachers for a job well done or poorly done. He insinuates that supervision of instruction is to develop the teaching skills of the teachers. From observation, there are several supervisory challenges;

- absence of keeping teachers engaged during the supervisory process
- absence of good professional communication during the supervisory process
- challenge of managing absentee teachers
- absence of keeping employees motivated
- no training or support for supervisors, low level of supervisory skills
- supervision of instruction not a priority activity in schools
- problem of managing a joint supervisory process
- inexperienced and inappropriate attitude of teachers
- the challenge of balancing a supportive role and controlling role

Charles (2011), in his research project titled ‘‘obstacles to effective instructional supervision in public primary schools in mbooni division, west district, kenya elucidated obstacles/challenges to supervisory practices. He outlined them using four perspectives: 1. Instructional 2. Curriculum 3. Physical and 4. Material perspectives. Regarding instructional perspectives he identified the following issues: not advising and assisting teachers; lack of classroom visits; sporadic visits not enough for supervision practice; lack of post-observation conference; failure to revisit class to evaluate progress;not taking into consideration student's individual differences.

Regarding curriculum perspectives, Charles identified the following issues: lack of provision of curriculum support materials; failure to advise staff on relevant curriculum for the school; lack of support and curricular activities; failure to evaluate curriculum outcome; lack of set goals and purpose of curriculum programmes.

In the aspect of physical resources, he identified the following issues ; inadequate physical structures, for example classrooms and toilets; poor infrastructures ie lack of electricity, water and communication; poor maintained structures.

Regarding material resources, the following issues were identified lack of textbooks and teachers' guides; lack of manual and charts ; lack of computers; lack of instructional materials ; and poorly maintained textbooks, and teachers' guides.

WAY FORWARD

As concerns way forward, Charles (2011), brought out three dimensions for effective instructional supervision: administrative dimension; curricular dimension and instructional dimension. Regarding administrative dimension, the following aspects were highlighted: motivate and stimulate teachers; establish academic disciplinary standards; orient new staff; select teaching staff; secure resources set and prioritize goals.

In the direction of curricular dimension, the following aspects for way forward were identified: support co-curricular activities; evaluate curriculum outcome; advise staff on relevant curriculum for the school; support staff development; provide curricular support materials; set goals and purpose of curricular programmes.

Instructional dimension talks about: revisit class to evaluate progress; hold post-observation conference with the teachers; support instructional programmes; consider student's individual differences; check and control teachers professional background. From the above dimensions we could summarise that teachers need to be well trained and school leaders need to monitor all stakeholders involve in the supervision chain.

CONCLUSION

Supervision of instruction is an activity that fosters school success. school leaders especially the principal is suppose to be apt in this activity. Without adequate supervisory practices teachers will not improve their teaching skills and students will not improve on their academic pursuit. As Glickman (1985), puts it ‘ ‘ supervision is for development of the teacher’’ especially contemporary skills in teaching.

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