

BEST PRACTICES IN INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION: A STUDY OF ADVENTIST SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RANEN CONFERENCE

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Abstract

This paper discusses some of the best practices in instructional supervision with a sharp focus on the knowledge and skills that a 21st century instructional leader is in dire need of. This is done side by side with a qualitative study of instructional supervision in Adventist secondary schools in Ranen Conference, West Kenya Union Conference. This paper investigates further the perceptions of the administrators and teachers towards the clinical supervision, the challenges in the implementation of clinical supervision and the knowledge the administrators have on clinical supervision. An interview schedule was formulated and used to gather information from the five principals of the secondary schools in the conference. Evidence of the findings indicated that at least supervision is being conducted in these institutions even though the frequency, intention and the approach varies greatly from one institution to another. Moreover, the administrators interviewed expressed their strong beliefs in the place of clinical supervision as the new instructional order and as the only means to inspire teacher's professional growth and subsequently quality learning.

Keywords: Supervision, instructional supervision, clinical supervision

Background of the Study

The greatest need of instructional leaders of this century is expeditious conformity with instructional practices that will fast-track healthy and productive school environment. Cloud (2010) encapsulates it that in order to ensure a healthy and sustainable communities, we need to apply an ever-expanding body of knowledge, employ an ever-changing set of skills; and develop the attitudes that are most likely to create favorable conditions for us to thrive in the constantly metamorphosing age.

Instructional supervision is normally understood to mean the formal process of professional support accorded to practitioners to enable them develop knowledge, competence and assume responsibility for their own practice. It is the process of helping, guiding and mentoring a teacher with the sole purpose of improving their delivery of classroom instruction and consequently student learning. It is an intervention that is provided by a senior member of a profession to a junior member(s) of that profession with the intention of enhancing professional functioning of the junior member(s) (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998).

Through supervision of instruction, the supervisors assist in improving classroom instructions because teachers are made more competent

and efficient, parent are satisfied with the performance of their children, children are motivated to work harder in order to achieve the required standard; hence in the long run, the goal of education is achieved." (Ebele & Olofu, 2017, p. 80)

A lot of researchers have taken interest in understanding the relationship between supervision of instruction and professional development in the past decades (Beach & Reinhartz as cited by Kiptum, 2015) and various authors have stated that instructional supervision has an implicit connection with professional development (Zepeda, 2007). Because this important role, it should not be fashioned to control teachers but to work co-operatively with them (Dollansky by Kiptum, 2015) if it has to achieve the desirable end.

It should be noted with great concern that the way teachers gain professional support from instructional supervisors and the way they view and think about instructional supervision is very important in determining the outcomes of the supervision process. Stark McGhee, and Jimerson (2017) advocate for a collaborative, strength-based approach that promotes teacher growth rather than the one that conditions teachers to wait for the administrator's directive and approval. It is the one that inspires the teacher to be



an active and innovative problem-solver and meet the challenges involved in learning.

Bernard and Goodyear (1998) opine that a developmental approach is intuitively appealing because most people believe that they have become better or will be better with experience and training. Developmental supervision exists in three phases. At the very initial stage, the supervisor diagnoses the developmental level of the teacher and then selects an interpersonal approach that would create the best supervisory match. In the second phase, the teacher employs the chosen interpersonal approach that would help the teacher to solve his or her own instructional problems. Finally, the supervisor changes his or her approach in order to relinquish control of the problem to the teacher in the third phase. This occurs only if the teacher is ready to undertake more active decision-making.

According to Kiptum (2015), the most excellent form of developmental supervision is clinical supervision. Clinical supervision is the model of instructional supervision that is intended to help the teacher to modify the existing patterns of teaching in a way that is sensible to them (Sergiovanni as cited by Ekyaw, 2014). It gives the teacher absolute and unlimited opportunity to develop, grow and improve his/her professional and instructional competency.

Holland and Adam (2002) stressed that clinical supervision administered in schools does help in increasing the teaching development of teachers while at the same time enable teachers to make improvements on their teaching practice to be more effective. Furthermore, they also describe clinical supervision as one size fits all-practice.

Ekyaw (2014), while citing Beach and Reinhartz, explains that this type of supervision churns out responsible teachers who are able and willing to evaluate their own instruction, accept criticism and use it for change. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2014) outline 5 steps in the process of clinical supervision:

1. **Preconference**

Here, the teacher and the supervisor set the purpose, focus and the method of the observation to be used. These resolutions supply direction and clarity to the whole process. This stage also helps the supervisor and the teacher to connect and establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

2. **Observation**

This involves description of the events in the classroom. The observer may use a variety of methods which include categorical frequencies, performance in-

dicators, visual diagramming, space utilization, verbatim, detached open-ended narratives participant observation, focused questionnaire, and tailored observation system. Acheson and Gall (1997) further emphasizes that selection of the instrument of observation plays a significant role in sharpening the teacher's thinking about instruction. Ekyaw (2014), while quoting Goldhammer, states that the teachers' attitude towards supervision would be tremendously changed if supervisors spent more energy in classroom visits followed by helpful conferences.

3. **Analysis and planning**

After the classroom observation, the results obtained are analyzed and the post-conference is planned for. The analysis may involve counting up the frequencies, looking for recurring patterns, isolating a major occurrence, or discovering which performance indicators present and those that are not. After which, the supervisor goes ahead and chooses the interpersonal approach to use with the teacher in the post-conference based on the individual teacher's level of development, expertise, and commitment in choosing the supervisory approach. The supervisor may decide to use directive informational, collaborative, or nondirective approaches to supervision.

4. **Post-conference**

The post-conference is held to share the observation data and analysis, interpret the meaning of the data, and produce a plan for instructional improvement (Glickman et al., 2014). The supervisor meets the teacher armed with the completed observation form, completed analysis, and the chosen interpersonal approach. The teacher is allowed into what was observed as he or she reflects on the same. The supervisor then employs previous chosen interpersonal approach in handling the issues that rise before the conference finally comes to an end with a plan for further improvement.

5. **Critique**

Critique involves a brief discussion on the suitability of the format and procedures from the preconference through post-conference. The teacher's responses and feedback gives the supervisor an opportunity to decide on what practices to continue, revise or change before the next session.

Collegial Supervision

Collegial supervision has a close connection with clinical supervision. They share a number of

principles. Ekyaw (2014) views it as cooperative professional development which means a process of fostering teacher growth through systematic collaboration with peer and which includes a variety of approaches such as professional dialogue, curriculum development, peer observation and feedback and action research projects. Glickman et al. (2014), on the other hand, describes a collegial school as one characterized by purposeful adult interactions about improving school wide teaching and learning. Some of the elements include:

- **Peer coaching**

Glickman et al. (2014) observe that teachers offer peer assistance to their colleagues has become formalized and well-received as a way of direct assistance to every staff member. Ladder teachers, mentor-teachers, master teachers, grade-level chairpersons, team leaders, and department heads have supplied extended responsibility in assisting colleague teachers to improve their instruction. Peer coaching is thus understood to mean the use of teachers to help other teachers through clinical supervision. This will earn great result because teachers would rather seek assistance from a colleague than the principal.

Glickman et al. (2014) identify other popular forms of direct teacher assistance in schools:

- **Demonstration teaching**

This is the occasion where the expert peer is the guest teacher demonstrating a new teaching model or method for the teacher requesting assistance. The teacher desiring to learn new skills can alternatively visit the expert peer's classroom for a demonstration classroom.

- **Co-teaching**

This is another way of establishing trust and rapport as well as fostering collegiality, dialogue and mutual reflection that inspires the teacher's growth. Here, the expert peer and the teacher seeking assistance plan, teach and evaluate a lesson.

- **Assistance with resources and materials**

It is one thing to supply the needed instructional resources and materials but it is another to explain and demonstrate how these materials and resources can be put into a useful purpose. It may just be as useless not providing the materials if the teacher does not have any idea on how they would be utilized.

- **Mentoring**

Mentoring is referring to the assistance provided by an experienced teacher to a beginning teacher. This assistance may include but not limited to expert coaching, demonstration teaching, and co-teaching. In the process, the mentor and the beginning teacher bonds to-

gether and join up in a trusting, helping relationship which results to a successful entrance to a profession.

Self-directed Supervision

In this model, the teacher sets professional development goals and then presents them to the supervisor says Ekyaw (2014). Upon completion of the set time period, the teacher and the supervisor conference to review data that represents the teacher's work towards the goal and reflect upon what was learnt before setting new goals.

It is generally accepted in the spheres of organizations that growth in knowledge and operational expertise is anchored on interaction with other workers in the collective quest for improvement (Kiptum, 2015). Wagner et al. (2006) express their sound conviction that,

“We firmly believe that creating a system focused on the ongoing improvement of instruction must be the central aim of any education improvement effort. . .

Student achievement will not improve unless and until we create schools and districts where all educators are learning how to significantly improve their skills as teachers and as instructional leaders.” (chapter 2)

Sergiovanni, as cited by Kiptum (2015), emphasizes that if the teacher development is to move to the center stage in the school's improvement process, then the schools need to create supervisory systems and growth strategies that inspire reflection, acknowledge teacher individuality, and emphasize collaborative relationships.

Many supervisors have failed flat in their work, despite the overwhelming research findings that have given supervision a facelift based on the modern theories. Supervision has been a challenging task to most administrators yet the most important aspect of administration. Many supervisors maintain the erroneous view of supervision. They have perceived it as a ritual they participate in according to well established scripts without much consequence (Sergiovanni, cited by Kiptum, 2015).

Sullivan and Glanz (2000) found that clinical supervision has not been administered adequately. A study by Sergiovanni (1995) discovered that school principals give less attention to clinical supervision and dedicate most of their time on the administration aspects. Another study by Taher and Swanson



(1995) discovered that principals neglect to supervise their teachers and if otherwise, the supervisions are bureaucratic, autocratic and hierarchical. They found that about 12.03% primary school teachers and 5.88% secondary school teachers do not agree the implementation of clinical supervision. Teachers perceived that the implementation of clinical supervision in schools is solely to find teachers' weaknesses.

Statement of the Problem

As the time passed, the changes in globalization certainly affected the education field that requires careful planning, systematic and holistic approaches in order to face the future education challenges (Mohd, Zuraidah, Nik, Mohd, & Norhesham, 2014). So, it is warrant for educators and all stakeholders to collaborate in effort to enhance the style and quality of our educational model. Moreover, the quality of the teacher's instruction and the level of student learning are heavily dependent on the constant and continuous school-based supervision. To realize this, the instructional leaders must engage the teachers in a manner that is bound to improve practice and inspire them to be creative and knowledgeable. However, the question that always lingers is the invaluableness of principals' supervisory practices and the regularity of the supervision. The Adventist school principals have a broad spectrum of responsibilities (Rana & Kumar, 2015) that if correct supervision measures and policies are not put in place then their important role as instructional leaders may suffer and thus the quality of education, beyond unimaginable levels. It is upon this backdrop that this research was set to investigate the supervisory practices in Adventist schools as well as some of the challenges met with an aim of drawing incredible lessons from such practices and inspire progress.

Research Questions

This study sought answers to the following research questions:

- What are the instructional supervision practices used by the supervisors in Adventist schools in Ranen Conference?
- What are the perceptions of the instructional supervisors towards the use of clinical supervision in supervising instruction?
- What are the challenges associated with super

vision of instruction in Adventist Schools in Ranen Conference?

Significance of the Study

This study adding is intended to give direction and offer guidance to instructional supervisors in Adventist secondary schools in addition to the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA)

Methodology

The study employed descriptive research design. Interview was principally used as the research instrument to gather the data. A total of five principals were interviewed on their practice of instructional supervision. Interview questions were formulated to collect data. Moreover, the research has also reviewed existing related literature.

Findings

Instructional Supervision Practices

- Class observations done monthly, termly and in some schools only when there is need.
 - Some schools monitor instruction through lesson monitoring tool and syllabus coverage monitoring tool.
 - In three of the five schools, instructional supervisors conduct impromptu visits.
 - The teacher is always invited for a session where the strengths, weaknesses and emergent issues are discussed prayerfully after the observation. In a station, the outcome is presented in a staff brief or staff meeting
 - Majority of the supervisors allow for a democratic sharing in an attempt to solve instructional challenges.
 - Most of the schools have assumed co-teaching, demonstrative teaching and provision of instructional materials as a means of solving instructional needs.
- Supervision of instruction has not been formalized in some of the schools and so it is only done when need arises and not as frequent as it should be (it is given less attention).
 - No preconference sessions conducted for

planning

- In some institutions supervision of instruction has not been delegated. The principal does single handedly thus hampering its efficiency.

Strengths

- The prayer session just before conducting supervision was noted to boost the confidence of the supervisee.
- Collaborative effort in approaching and handling instructional challenges was amazing.
- The spirit of bearing one another's burden, brotherliness and forbearance towards less experienced colleagues.

Perceptions on Clinical Supervision

- Clinical supervision involves a lot of processes that are time consuming.
- Some supervisors feel that it is a noble activity that should not only be given attention but done promptly.
- A number were skeptical about self-directed supervision.
- They unanimously agreed on collaborative effort towards solving instructional problems.
- Pre-conferencing conditions the teachers to do their best thus shielding the supervisors from identifying their needs

Challenges

- Teachers do not straightway accept correction and admitting their mistakes.
- Inadequate time to conduct thorough supervision of instruction
- Inadequate resources for the implementation of the new curriculum.
- Teachers' mistrust of the intention of the supervisor and so coiling up and withdraw.
- Teachers preparing intensively for supervision thereby giving false impression that that it is the same way they do prepare for all their instruction sessions.
- Some teachers fancy themselves independent and so feel hard-pressed and too controlled during supervision.

Conclusion

Instructional supervision requires the principal to conduct a closer, periodic and continual internal supervisory practice in order to ensure that the school meets its goals. Intermittent, lethargic and indifferent supervision only serves as a hindrance to improvement of instruction that supervision is geared. Establishing mutual trust with the teachers and positive learning environment is paramount if success is to be realized in the whole process.

Recommendations

- The principals should be prompt in supervision of instruction (conduct regular classroom observation) and not only do it when there is need.
- In institutions where instructional supervision has not been formalized it should be done so with speed not.
- The quality assurance team through the director of education should organize training programs for principals as well as teachers on the need for effective and contemporary instructional supervision practices. They should also be regular in their supervision.

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