The Role of Supervision in Improving the Quality of Education in Schools

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Abstract: Supervision plays a critical role in ensuring that organisations achieve their goals and objectives. We cannot talk of quality and standards without examining the tools and strategies that contribute to the improvement and maintenance of these standards. One such key component of the matrix is supervision. As a result, a number of supervision models have been advanced. These include clinical supervision, self-assessment supervision, connoisseurship supervision, collegial supervision, peer supervision and inquiry-based supervision among other models of supervision. The paper examines the supervision models used in Chegutu Education District of Mashonaland, Zimbabwe. Data was collected at ten primary schools in the district. Data was collected from twenty primary school teachers and ten primary school heads who were randomly selected. The study used the mixed methodology and the case study design. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews and structured questionnaires. School heads and teachers described the nature of supervision common at their schools. From the responses the researcher was able to categorise the different models prevalent in the ten selected schools. The study observed that the school heads did not regularly supervise teachers in the practice of teaching and teachers had a negative attitude towards supervision. This was due to the models of supervision commonly used in the schools, which tended to focus on the weaknesses of the teacher rather than the development of the teacher and the benefits that accrue to the pupils. It was observed that there was too much focus on paper work in the form of records. The study also observed that there was no common model in use in the school. The models used were a cocktail of different models of supervision, dominated by elements of inspection. The study recommends that school heads and teachers should be exposed to different models of supervision. This can be done through workshops and staff development.
Keywords: Supervision; Supervision models; inspection; quality and standards.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Supervision is critical to the attainment of goals in any organisation. The school is one such organisation. There are many factors that have to be addressed if schools have to improve the quality and standards of education at all levels. Areas that have to be addressed include indicators of quality and standards. Such indicators include the quality of structures and facilities at the school, supervision and management practices at the school, the quality of the human resource component at the school, the relevance of the curriculum, the processes of teaching and learning at the school, community involvement and participation, and health and sanitation facilities at the school. All these areas have to be coordinated through supervision. As noted by Carey [1] supervision practices have evolved in stages over the years. Carey [1] furthers takes note of the close link between the development of management theories and the evolvement of different stages of supervision in modern organisations such as schools.

The expansion of the education system in Zimbabwe put a further strain on educational managers such as school heads and district education officers, as it resulted in an increase in the number of pupils, schools and teachers. In some of the cases the teachers who had to be in charge of big classes were under-qualified and some cases had not received any formal training in teacher education. An increase in teacher-pupil ratios also signified an increase on responsibilities for both the school head and the teacher.

The set up in Zimbabwean schools is that there is school based supervision at both primary and secondary school. At primary school the supervisors are the deputy head, Teacher-in-charge (TIC) if the infant department and the school head. Similarly, at secondary school, the following are responsible for school based supervision; the head of department is responsible for supervising teachers in his/her department, the deputy head and school head. Within the education district

there are District Education Officers responsible for the management and supervision of schools in their respective districts. In addition to the District Education Officers there are Education inspectors responsible for different circuits and specific subjects at secondary school. These constitute externally based supervision in Zimbabwean schools. In addition to the external supervision provided by district offices, another form of external supervision comes from the Provincial Education Offices.

Before independence in 1980, supervision of teachers in Zimbabwe was dominated by inspection. It focused on finding faults with the teacher as it focused more on goal attainment than any other variables that contribute to effectiveness and efficiency. Traditionally, these inspectors brought fear to school heads and teachers because of the nature of supervision. In that regard supervision in Zimbabwe before independence in 1980 was characterised by inspection. Such inspection was done by schools managers and schools inspector. As from 1980, there was a movement from the thrust of inspection to supervision. As such the titles changed from schools inspectors and schools managers to Education Officers and District Education Officers. The change of titles was expected to change the operations of the bearers in terms of duties and responsibilities. However, there appears to be a change of heart, as there are attempts to revert to the old titles of ínspector'. Currently, there are District Education Officers and District Education Inspectors in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe. Consequentially, there is the position of inspectors in the Civil Service. These are expected to perform similar duties as Education Inspectors, but encompassing all government ministries.

These changes in titles appear to suggest that there has been a shift in locus in terms of the roles of the different players in education. Supervision on the other hand, is meant to cater for a variety of variables which are expected to enhance quality in education. First, it is expected to focus on efficient and effective ways of improving instruction. Secondly, it has to contribute to goal attainment. Thirdly, supervision is expected to contribute to the professional development of those involved. In the case of a school, the teachers, the school heads, deputy heads, heads of departments and the school inspectors have to benefit through supervision. Supervision, therefore takes many dimensions. Such dimensions include administration, curriculum and instruction [2]. Another change that seems to emerge is related to the duties and responsibilities of an education inspector and an education supervisor.

Statement of the problem
There have been growing concerns about the quality of education in Zimbabwe. Some of the discourse has been generated from the perception that there is a decline in the pass rates in schools in Zimbabwe. Some of the factors related to a decline in the quality of education have been attributed to the nature of supervision in schools today. The problem is therefore expressed in question form: How has supervision been conducted in the selected schools in relation to improving the quality of education?

The purpose of the study
The purpose of the study was to assess the role of supervision in improving the quality of education in schools.

Research questions
To find answers to the main research the paper raised the following research questions:
- How is supervision conducted in schools?
- What supervision models are commonly used in schools?
- To what extent has supervision contributed to improvements in the quality of education in schools?

Significance of the study
The study is important to different stakeholders in education. The study makes an attempt to explain the role of supervision in contributing to quality education. The study examines the supervision strategies used in the selected schools in Zimbabwe. It also assesses that different models of supervision and the extent to which they have contributed to the improvement of the quality of education in schools. All these aspects the study focuses on are important to different stakeholders in education such as teachers, school heads, education officers, educational planners and policy makers.

Delimitations
The study focused on ten primary schools in Chegutu Education District. All the schools were in Chegutu urban in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. The study was concerned with how supervision was being conducted in primary schools in relation to the improvement quality of education in schools. It therefore focused on how school heads and deputy heads conducted supervision, the supervision instruments used, the extent to which supervision contributed to improved performance within the context of quality, supervision models and strategies commonly used, and how different stakeholders have played their roles supervision and quality management.

Limitations
The study was confined to a small area and ten schools in Chegutu Education District and as such the findings and conclusions are limited to the schools involved in the study. As the views expressed did not necessarily represent views in all schools in Zimbabwe.

The study used the case study design which has its own limitations in terms of the generalizability of the findings.

CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The concept supervision has at been confused with inspection. These two concepts do not necessarily mean the same. However, they play a complementary role in education. The paper examines two definitions of supervision. Sergiovanni and Starratt [3] argue that traditionally, supervision is considered the province of those responsible for instructional improvement, as it focuses on the improvement of instruction in order to achieve school goals as a result of the human organisation. Glatthorn [4] defines supervision as a process of facilitating the professional growth of a teacher, primarily by giving the teacher feedback about classroom interactions and helping the teacher make use of that feedback in order to make teaching more effective. The focus of supervision as defined in the two above cases is on mostly three areas. These are the need to improve instruction, provision of feedback, and the purpose of promoting school goals. Both definitions indicate the purposes that supervision serves in education.

Similarly, in an attempt to provide another dimension of the conceptualisation of supervision, Wiles and Bondi [2] explain it in terms of six dimensions. These dimensions are based on the functions of supervision. These functions include the following views about supervision: first as an act of administration; an act of curriculum work; as an instructional function; and act of human relations; as management; and as a generic leadership role [2]. The supervisor has to perform administrative supervision tasks, curriculum supervision tasks and instructional supervision tasks. These are varied and wide in scope. In supervision there are at least two actors that are active throughout the process of supervision. These are the supervisor and the supervisee. Within the context of how supervisors have to play their roles in education, they are expected to possess specific skills and competencies that enable them to perform their roles that enable supervision to serve its intended purpose. These competencies are also expected to enhance teaching and learning within the school. Wiles and Bondi [2] identify at least eight competencies that the school head within a school set up should possess. According to them supervisors are developers of peoples; curriculum developers; instructional specialists; human relations managers; staff developers; administrators; managers of change; and evaluators. The roles identified above clearly contain in them the difference between supervision and inspection. Supervision has a focus on developing certain competencies within the supervisee. Such competencies are acquired and developed through personal development, interaction with others and relevant experience acquired.

Supervision can therefore conceptualized in terms of its functions and the purpose it serves as noted above. While it can be noted that supervision in education is expected to serve a wide variety of administrative functions, what stands out though is its contribution to the promotion of human development, improving classroom teaching and learning, providing effective staff development and promotion of the evaluation process as part of teacher assessment tool. Supervision can also be viewed as a quality control measure. Since supervision is a process, it can be explained in terms of the stages involved. Supervision as a process goes through different stages, depending on the model of supervision the supervisor and supervisee are engaged in. However, the supervision process in general involves at least three stages, which are the pre-observation, observation and the post observation stages.

The supervision process has been characterised by the development of different theories of management. The development of management approaches such as the scientific management approach and the human relations approach. Within the context of the scientific management theory, supervising is one of the five management functions. The other management functions within the context of the scientific management include planning, organising, directing and evaluating. Supervision within the context of the scientific management theory is guided by the use of objectives to guide the assessment. This is derived from Tyler's goal oriented approach to evaluation. Sax [5] noted that such assessment includes the need to establish objectives, classifying the objectives, defining objectives in behavioural terms, finding solutions in which achievement of objectives can be shown, developing measurement techniques, collecting performance data, and comparing performance data with behavioural stated objectives. The argument by Sax raises a number of important points in terms of how supervision can be conducted in education. What stands out in the argument is the need to come up with relevant tools and instruments to be used in the assessment process. Some of the supervision instruments are anecdotal records, checklists and narrative reports.

Models of supervision in education

A number of models have been used to explain supervision in education. These models include clinical supervision, artistic supervision, scientific supervision, inquiry-based supervision, connoisseurship supervision and collegial supervision. Clinical supervision has developed from the work of Cogan and Goldhammer. Both Cogan and Goldhammer explain clinical supervision in terms of stages that the supervisor and supervisee go through. Sergiovanni and Starratt [3] note

that clinical supervision is an in-class support system designed to achieve assistance directly to the teacher in order to bring about changes in classroom operation and teacher behaviour. There are a number of elements that stand out in the definition. The definition demonstrates that clinical supervision plays a critical role in the professional growth of both the teacher and the school head. This takes place as a result of the interaction between the school head and teacher as they plan, observe, analyse, and conduct conferences. Sergiovanni and Starratt [3] stress the distinction in clinical supervision stages between Cogan and Goldhammer. According to them Cogan identifies eight stages of clinical supervision and Goldhammer summarises them to five stages. Cogan's stages include establishing a relationship, planning together, planning the strategy of observation, observing instruction, analyzing the teaching-learning process, planning of the conference strategy, the conference and the return to planning. Goldhammer summarised the stages to five which are pre-observation, observation, analysis and strategy, post-observation conference, and post-conference analysis.

What stands out in the case of clinical supervision is that there is sharing of ideas between the supervisor and supervisee. There is ownership of ideas and clinical supervision is expected to contribute to the professional development of both the teacher and school head. Apart from providing for the growth and development for both the teacher and school head, clinical supervision can promote cooperation between school head and teacher as they can identify needs in the form resources. Within that context clinical supervision can be used as a planning strategy, motivation strategy and an instrument to bring about change within the institution. On the whole, the use of clinical supervision as a supervision model is premised on a number of assumptions. Some of the assumptions are that the use of clinical supervision improves a number of areas within the education system. It is envisaged that it improves the quality of education, improves efficiency and effectiveness and motivates the teacher. At the same time it is assumed that it develops teaching skills and analytical skills within both the teacher and the school head. As noted by Bernard and Goodyear [6] clinical supervision enhances quality of education, modifies teaching methods and as such improves teaching skills.

However, clinical supervision has had its critics. It has been argued that because of the position that the supervisor occupies within the institution he/she has a competitive advantage over the teacher as a subordinate. Within that sense, clinical supervision may limit the professional role of the teacher. It compromises the autonomy of the teacher as he/she has to take into consideration the input from the school head. While it may be effective in promoting good

relations between the school head and the teacher, it has been criticised for its failure to address curriculum issues that have a direct impact on the students. On the other hand, the different stages in clinical supervision fail to address the needs of the students. The applicability of clinical supervision is limited in terms of time. It can be time consuming on the part of both the school head and the teacher, considering that they have other responsibilities apart from planning together, observing lessons and conferencing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The study used the mixed methodology and the case study design. The mixed methodology had the advantage of using both structured and unstructured questionnaires, and face-to-face interviews. On the other hand the use of the case study design enabled the researcher to study specific cases such as individuals, groups or organisations such schools. Case studies help in terms of how they give in-depth analysis of events.

Sample
The sample comprised ten primary schools in Chegutu District. These were three government schools, two council schools, four church-related schools and one company owned school. The composition of the sample in a way represented the type of schools found in Zimbabwe. Regardless of ownership, all registered schools have to be supervised by officials from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The sample was conveniently selected on the basis of accessibility to the researcher. It was selected on the basis of the schools that are commonly found in Zimbabwe. The school heads in these automatically became respondents in the study. In addition to the school heads, twenty teachers were randomly selected comprising two teachers from each of the ten primary schools.

Data collection methods
The study used questionnaires which were both structured and open ended. It also used face-to-face interviews that allowed the researcher to seek clarification on issues on how supervision was conducted in the selected schools.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The study wanted to find out those who were involved at different stages of supervision at primary school. The general responses from the school heads and teachers indicated that supervisors at school level differed from level to level. At school level, Teachers-in-charge (TICs), deputy school heads, school heads and district inspectors were involved in supervision of teachers. The TICs were mainly in charge of the infant school. The infant school comprised Early Childhood Development (ECD) classes (ECD-A and ECD-B), grades one and two. The junior school departments were supervised by deputy school heads and school

heads. These comprised grades three to seven. On a related note school heads indicated that they were supervised by district inspectors who were at times accompanied by school heads from other schools. From the responses of the teachers and school heads it would appear that the supervision structure and supervision roles in primary schools were clearly defined. If the different supervisors were to perform their duties as indicated, there would be improvements in teacher performance and the quality of education, since supervision is a quality management instrument [2]. However, the allocation of departments to supervise, as indicated above can be viewed as a management strategy within the context of delegation, otherwise the school head is accountable for whatever happens at school level as he/she is seen as the chief executive officer. Hence, the focus of the study was on school heads and teachers' views and perceptions.

As a follow up to the above question twenty teachers, comprising two teachers from each of the ten selected primary schools were asked to indicate how often they had been supervised in a term. The responses differed from school to school and from individual to individual even within the same school. Of the ten school heads sixty percent noted that they conducted lesson observations on a teacher once per term, thirty percent conducted lesson observations twice per term and ten percent of the school heads noted that they conducted lesson observations thrice per term. The responses demonstrated that while school heads accepted their duties and responsibilities of supervising teachers, the frequency of lesson observations varied from school to school and from individual head to another. The responses by school heads seem to concur with those of the teachers. Out of the twenty teachers, fifty percent of them indicated that they had been supervised only once per term, thirty percent noted that they had been supervised twice per term and twenty percent noted that they had been supervised thrice a term. Most school heads noted that teacher supervision was a critical component in ensuring quality education, especially if it is done regularly. However, they noted that they had other management and administrative functions that compromised the frequency of lesson observations in schools.

School heads were asked to explain the supervision strategies that they commonly used in the schools. In lesson observation, the responses by the school heads appeared to suggest that the basic supervision process was followed in most cases. This involved pre-observation conference, observation and post-observation conference. The pre-observation conference was in the form of the school head informing the teacher on the time of the class visit and the lesson to be observed. Most school heads and teachers agreed that there was not much discussion at the pre-observation stage. School heads used supervision instruments that assessed the professional knowledge and understanding of the teacher, professional skills and abilities of the teacher and professional values and personal commitment among other attributes. Such observations lasted the teaching period of the lesson in order for the school head to observe all the different stages of the lesson from the introduction, lesson development up to the conclusion. School heads and teachers noted that the post-observation conference took much longer than the pre-observation conference. They noted that the post-observation conference was characterised by discussions between the school head and the teacher, with the school head giving the teacher feedback on the lesson observed. It was noted that the teacher did not contribute much during the post-observation conference. The responses by school heads and teachers on supervision strategies used in schools appear to indicate the use of the Scientific Management model of supervision in all the ten schools. It further suggests the lack of use of the Clinical Supervision model, despite its appeal on paper. The feedback provided by the school head is most likely to enhance the performance of the teacher and thereby improve the quality of education. However, there are a number of challenges that are most likely to arise if the Scientific Management Model of supervision is not handled with caution where human relations are involved. These challenges include the likelihood of increasing resistance to change were subordinates are not wholly involved in the decisions that affect them and secondly, the model appears to promote the master-servant relationship in which the teacher has little say in the things that affect instruction. As noted by most (75%) of the teachers, they did not view the type of supervision that they were exposed to as helpful to their professional development. This they attributed to the failure of the supervisors to acknowledge their contributions and that supervision in their schools was done as a regulatory requirement rather than for professional development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made a number of observations and conclusions. It observed that there were three groups of supervisors within the primary school. These were the school head, deputy head and the Teacher-in-Charge. The form of supervision in schools relied on supervision instruments that focused on different attributes and dimensions of the teacher. Whilst in the past schools used different supervision instruments generated at school level, at the time of the study the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education had just introduced a new supervision instrument. The new supervision instrument had the following sections; Personal Details; Institutional Details; Professional Knowledge and Understanding; and Professional Values and Personal Commitments. These are very important attributes if we are to contribute to the

professional growth of the teacher but much depends on the strategies and models used in supervision. It can be concluded that while the attributes contained in the instrument are important, the human relations element has to be considered and this has to be a key component of the development and capacity building of the supervisors.

The frequency of supervision differed from school to school and from individual to individual. As noted by most school heads, their other responsibilities as school administrators and managers impacted negatively on supervision. The use of supervision teams comprising of school heads, deputy heads, TICs and senior teachers can help improve supervision in schools.

The commonly used model of supervision in the selected schools was the Scientific Management Supervision model. Like any model of supervision it has its limitations. The limitations of the model appeared to impact negatively on the teachers. As such teachers had a negative attitude towards supervision; they viewed it as inspection that was aimed at finding fault. The use of a variety of supervision strategies may help change this attitude. In that respect, it can be concluded that while supervision is expected to improve the quality of education, its role is very much determined by the nature and model of supervision for the pupils, teachers, school heads and the school as a whole to benefit.

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