Supervisors' Challenges to Effective Supervision of Teaching and Learning at Junior High Schools in the Krachi Nchumuru

By

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Abstract

The study was set up to investigate supervisors' challenges to effective supervision of teaching and learning at Junior High Schools in the Krachi Nchumuru. The qualitative research approach was employed alongside the case study as the design to conduct this study. A convenient sampling technique was used to select seven (7) head teachers and fourteen (14) teachers making a sample size of twenty-one (21) participants. Data were collected through face-to-face in-depth individual interviews using tape recording. The thematic analytical method was used to analyze the collected data. The findings on the supervisors' challenges to effective supervision of teaching and learning include are inadequate professional qualifications in supervision, inadequate continuing training in supervisory skills, school heads' heavy workloads, routine administrative roles of school heads as supervisors and lessons assigned to school heads to teach and their effects on quality supervision. Recommendations made were that the Ghana Education Service should establish Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs tailored specifically for school heads' supervisory skills acquisition. The Ghana Education Service should contract experts in supervision to develop a comprehensive curriculum that covers the core competencies required for effective supervision in schools. This curriculum should be designed in collaboration with education experts and should align with the specific needs and challenges faced by school heads as supervisor.

Keywords: *Supervision, Inadequate, Supervisory Skills, Professional Training, Challenges.*

Introduction

Supervision can be seen as the process of improving an institution by working with people who work with students (April & Bouchamma, 2015). Teacher supervision is a management and instructional process involving teachers and school heads to enhance the potential of schools to contribute to effective teaching and learning (April & Bouchamma, 2015). Teacher supervision is the act of developing the professional competencies of teachers through supervisory practices aimed at increasing students' academic achievements (Mette, Range, Anderson Hvidston, & Nieuwenhuizen, 2015).

It is important to explain here that the history of supervision as a formal activity by educational administrators commonly begins in the late 1830s as an inspection of work. In the United States Cogan (1969) proposed the word supervision. According to De Grauwe and Gabriel (2004) since the beginning of the 1990s, there has undoubtedly been renewed worldwide interest in issues of quality and therefore, a call for monitoring and supervision. Some countries that had dismantled their supervision services earlier have re-established them (such as the Philippines), while others that did not have them in the past have created them (such as China and Sweden). More importantly, the number of countries that initiate a process of reorganizing and strengthening supervision services is increasing every year.

The significance of teacher supervision in schools as a key instrument for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning as well as students'' academic performance is met with numerous internal and external challenges. April and Bouchamma (2015) and, Cranston (2009) are of the concern that some school heads are not adequately trained in teacher supervision and therefore, lack the skills and the time to properly carry out their supervisory activities with their teachers. DuFour and Eaker (2004) also lament that some school heads are more focused on administrative duties, and have no time for supervisory

activities and balancing pedagogical guidance and authority in their role as leaders Cevik and Zepeda (2020) explain that supervision enhances reflective practices, supports good relationships, and opportunities to create and improve teacher ability, and focuses effort, and time to create momentum for teachers to become more social-just. And that, educational supervision must have cultural, social, and political principles and without these, supervision professionals learning, and evaluation will remain secrete administrative functions that will not focus on the needs of teachers while they are on the move throughout their careers.

Thus, the realization of a quality culture of teaching and learning in all education systems depends on the effective and realistic supervision of all teachers (Goldhaber, 2006). This is because the realistic supervision of teachers in all schools has the power to genuinely improve teachers' classroom practices and, as a result, leads to a high level of students' academic performance (Baffour-Awuah, 2011; Kholid & Rohmatika, 2019). Instructional supervisors in educational organizations have individual goals for improvement and believe that the purpose of supervision is to achieve those specified goals. It is the cycle of activities between a supervisor and a teacher to improve classroom performance. Supervision is the link between teacher needs and the school goals so individuals can improve and work together towards the vision of the school (Baffour-Awuah 2019).

Despite all the benefits derived from educational supervision, there are challenges faced by supervisors in carrying out their supervisory activities in schools, for example, the education sector of Ghana like any other human institution is not without challenges. It was seen that one of the challenges that have been bemoaned in recent times is the inability of the Ghana Education Service to effectively supervise teachers. A similar situation occurred in Ethiopia, education in Ethiopia has passed through a period of transition from an emphasis on quantity to an emphasis on quality.

Another issue of concern is whether supervisors are given enough training to function in their field practice. Carron and De Grauwe (1997) explain that, little doubt that advisers, inspectors, and other such staff need training, but they seldom receive it. They believed that whatever pattern of the recruitment and promotion procedures, supervisors need regular training but they are seldom provided with pre-service or in-service training. They note that in the history of supervision, training of supervisors has been considered important.

In the absence of pre-service or in-service training, supervisors may be inclined to rely on their experiences with their previous supervisors over the years, as well as their existing knowledge in administration and pedagogy. In such situations, practices may differ from one supervisor to another in the same education system. There are the possibilities of stagnation in practice, instead of innovation and improvement. The practice of guides and manuals has the potential to improve supervision practices because they serve as reference materials for practice.

Experience and knowledge as the researcher suggested supervisors should possess some working knowledge and skills to be able to provide the necessary assistance, guidance, and support service to teachers for improved classroom practices (Glickman, Gordon& Rose-Gordon, 2004; Holland, 2004). Holland believed that supervisors must offer evidence that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to make important decisions about instruction, and credentials in the form of degrees and diplomas are a form of such evidence but acknowledges that credentials alone do not inspire trust.

On the notion of this, Oghuvbu, (2001), maintained that effective supervision involves adherence to a bureaucratic process to control and guide teachers. He identifies common determinants of effective supervision as: teachers and students working rigidly according to school timetable, following school regulations, neat and decent environment, etc. Bureaucratic procedures in supervision may be characteristics of some African and other developing countries.

Ghana Education Service regards academic qualifications such as the degree necessary for a supervisory position, but most junior high school headteachers (supervisors) hold lower qualifications than that. The minimum number of years required for promotion to headteacher or supervisor differs from country to country. In Ghana, longer years are preferred, but there is no minimum number of years (Ghana Education Service (GES) as cited in Sekyere, 2014). indicated that some challenges to effective supervision are characterized by absenteeism, lateness, and poor use of instructional time (Sekyere, 2014).

Furthermore, in Ghana, issues of lack of professional qualifications and lack of continuing training on supervisory skills are some of the challenges to achieving supervisory goals in schools (Ankoma-Sey & Marina, 2016). In Nigeria, Enaigbe (2009) and in Tanzania, Ngole and Mkulu, (2021), claimed the reasons for no realistic performance of supervision in schools include the heavy workload of school supervisors, routine administrative roles of supervisors and lessons assigned to supervisors to teach.

As Lilian (2007) claimed that the improvement of the teaching-learning process is dependent upon teacher attitudes towards supervision. Unless teachers perceive supervision as a process of promoting professional growth and student learning, the supervisory exercise will not have the desired effect.

Supervisors need continuous and sufficient training to carry out their responsibility and make them better equipped at doing their job. According to Lilian (2007), lack of training for supervisors, weak relationship between teachers and supervisors and lack of support for supervisors from higher offices affect the supervisors' practices in the school.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Kadushin's (2002) theory of Supervision. Alfred Kadushin's model of supervision talks about three supervisory areas, as discussed below:

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Administrative supervision: this model is use for the study to find out if school supervisors do promote and maintain good standards of teachers' work in schools, if school heads as supervisors do co-ordinate educational practices with policies in teacher supervision and whether school heads as supervisors do ensure efficient and effective governance and management of the schools or not (Kadushin 1992).

In administrative supervision, school supervisors have the authority to oversee the work of teachers in the implementation of effective curriculum and other educational policies, school heads are to assist supervisees to work to the best of their abilities to ensure high level of students' academic achievements and the maintenance of the good image of the schools (Smith, 2011).

Educational supervision: The study used this model through eliciting information on whether teachers are being helped professionally by their supervisors or whether through supervision, teachers are assisted to dispel ignorance while acquiring the necessary knowledge, attitude and skills in carrying out their teaching responsibilities (Kadushin, 2002; Hawkins & Shohet 2007).

Supportive supervision: This aspect is carried out because the study investigates the kinds of relations and support teachers receive from their supervisors in the education system. It is important to highlight here that, teachers daily are faced with numerous job-related stresses and burnout, as such, teachers need a high level of professional support from their supervisors. In supportive supervision, supervisors are expected to ensure harmonious working relationships with supervisees, a high level of teacher morale and job satisfaction, and the cultivation of esprit de corps in the schools (Kadushin 2002).

Methodology

The qualitative research approach was employed alongside the case study as the design to conduct this study. The population of the study comprised all head teachers and teachers of junior high schools in Karachi Nchumuru. The sampling method used was convenience sampling. A convenient sampling technique was used to select seven schools based on the percentage obtained from (BECE) result analysis in three different years which indicates that, all these seven schools fell within the same bracket in the percentage wide. Based on this, seven head teachers were selected since they were the same heads who had been running these schools for five to six years but the problems of examination failure continued to perpetuate. Two teachers apart from the head teacher was selected based on the longevity of their services in these same schools even though the outcome of children continues to dwindle. The sample size for the study was twenty-one (21).

Face-to-face in-depth individual interviews were used to gather in-depth information from respondents. Data were collected using tape recording. The researcher established a report by first greeting and asking each interviewee and also by projecting a positive image of a sincere person engaged in a harmless but important task. Each interview lasted for 30 minutes. The thematic analytical method was used to analyze the collected data. Through the process of coding, the researcher places the raw data that were transcribed into logical, meaningful categories and holistically examines them. The next stage was re-examining the themes and categorised and then interpreting and syntheses the organized data into a general conclusion or understanding (White, 2005).

Results

The results of the study are (i) inadequate professional qualifications in supervision, (ii) Inadequate continuing training in supervisory skills, (iii) school heads' heavy workloads (iv) routine administrative roles of school heads as supervisors and (v) lessons assigned to school heads to teach and their effects on quality supervision.

Discussion

Inadequate Professional Qualifications in Supervision

The findings where that most school heads lack supervisory skills, they lack communication skills, there is no proper coaching, they lack critical thinking skills, they also lack management skills, and, problem-solving skills. It was also found that some heads are not even qualified to be heads but due to lack of teachers, they become heads. Some heads do not attend professional and leadership skills workshops or training. A teacher, the school improvement support officer (SISO) and a school head had the following to say: *Most school heads lack supervisory skills. They lack communication skills, no proper coaching, lack critical thinking skills. They also lack management skills and, problem-solving skills.* A teacher claimed that: *It is highly true because some heads are not even qualified to be heads but due to lack of teachers, they become heads. Some heads do not attend professional and leadership skills workshops or training.* Another teacher mentioned that: *School heads as supervisors lack professional qualifications in supervision because most heads do not attend workshops and also do not upgrade themselves.* To confirm these findings, Bouchamma and Basque (2012) mentioned that some school heads are not adequately trained in teacher supervision.

Inadequate Continuing Training in Supervisory Skills

The findings were that schools do lack training on supervisory skills, there is a lack of continuing training for heads in their supervisory work, there is a lack of workshops and in-service training for school heads on supervision, and some heads also do not read or learn to update their supervision skill, some heads are very lazy and also lack academic knowledge and workshops are hardly organized to train head teachers on how to carry out the headship duties effectively. A school head, SISO, and a teacher respectively mentioned the following: *Yes. Some school head teachers lack continuing training as they organize workshops and in-service training for their teachers. Heads are also computer illiterate which is also a barrier to their continuing training in supervision. Some heads also do not read or learn to update their supervision skills.*

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Yes, they lack continuing training because the district Education office did not call them for a workshop on how to know their duties or supervising roles. Yes. There should be continuing training for heads in their supervisory work. But most of the heads hardly get this training. Because of this, most heads are not on top of their job as supervisors.

To confirm these findings, Cranston (2009) explained that some school heads lack the skills and the time to properly carry out their supervisory activities with their teachers.

School Heads' Heavy Workloads

The findings were that since the heads are overloaded, they don't get ample time to supervise their teachers, most of the heads are subject teachers hence cannot leave the classroom to do their supervisory roles, because of the workload on headteachers they find it very difficult to supervise, they go for workshops at the district level and they also vet lesson notes and do not give attention to supervisory roles. A teacher, SISO and a school head respectively made the following comments: *Heads of schools should reduce their workload to enable them to play more instructional roles in instructional supervision. They must commit more time and resources for supervision than other workloads in their respective schools.*

The workload on heads is a challenge. Heads go for workshops at the district level as well as the circuit level. They also vet lesson notes and do not give attention to supervisory roles.

When there are many students, the teachers cannot perform his or her duties as expected. This is because heads teachers have to oversee many streams of classes therefore, this worsens workload and head teachers' instructional supervision. To corroborate these findings, Ndungu (2015) claimed several challenges are encountered by head teachers in their instructional supervision practice which includes the workload that the head teachers encounter on a daily basis.

Routine Administrative Roles of School Heads as Supervisors

The findings were that the administrative role of school head outside the school compound affects their supervisory role in the school and when a head does not delegate power to his/her teachers. It was found that the time a school head should have been supervising and monitoring teachers teaching their lessons, such heads will be doing other administrative work which will make supervision very poor and ineffective. It was also that the extent to which administrative roles affect their supervisory roles in schools is very large because, they do a lot of work as they mark register, mark and check pupils' attendance and settle issues in the school. The voices below came from a teacher, school improvement support officers and a school head:

When the head is to perform an administrative role outside the school compound, it will affect his/her supervisor role in the school. Also, when the head does not delegate power to his/her teachers.

It affects it highly, in the sense that, the time a school head should have been supervising and monitoring teachers teach their lessons, such heads will be doing other administrative work which will make supervision very poor and ineffective as compared to headteachers that has only the supervision as their role in the school administrative work.

The extent to which administrative roles affect their supervisory roles in schools is very large because, heads do a lot of work as they mark register, mark and check pupils' attendance and settle issues in the school. To corroborate these findings, DuFour and Eaker (2004), lament that some school heads are more focused on administrative duties and have no time for supervisory activities.

Lessons Assigned to School Heads to Teach and their Effects on Quality Supervision

The findings were that as the heads teach, they will have to supervise or observe other teachers' lessons and to do proper mentorship and coaching, there will not be time to supervise their teachers since their teaching will be crushing with supervision. A teacher, school improvement support officer said the following:

Lessons assigned to heads are very much and that affects their time of supervision. Heads cannot teach and also do supervision as well; it will affect him/her.

If school heads are actively involved in teaching, it may reduce the time they can dedicate to overseeing and supporting other teachers. It can affect their time of supervision when the lesson time clashes with the time, he/she should have used to monitor his/her staff.

Conclusion

The general challenges faced by school heads in carrying out their supervisory duties are: lack of continuing training, heavy workload, lack of tools and materials for effective teaching and learning, lack of teachers, school culture and environment, resistance and limited resources. Many school heads lack formal training and qualifications in supervision. This deficiency results in a lack of essential supervisory skills such as communication, critical thinking, management, and problem-solving. There is a notable absence of ongoing training opportunities for school heads to enhance their supervisory skills.

Furthermore, workshops, in-service training, and professional development programs are lacking, further exacerbating the issue. School heads are burdened with heavy administrative duties and teaching responsibilities, leaving them with insufficient time to effectively supervise teachers. The workload often overshadows supervisory responsibilities, leading to inadequate support for teachers. Administrative tasks outside the school compound and the failure to delegate authority to teachers contribute to the erosion of supervisory roles. School heads find themselves preoccupied with administrative work, compromising their ability to monitor teaching effectively. When school heads are assigned teaching responsibilities, it diminishes the time available for supervisory activities.

Teaching commitments clash with supervisory responsibilities, hindering their ability to oversee and support other teachers adequately. Other overarching challenges identified include lack of tools and materials for effective teaching and learning, a shortage of teachers, school culture and environment, staff resistance to supervision, and limited resources. The study highlights a range of obstacles that impede the effective supervision of teaching and learning by school heads. These challenges underscore the need for ongoing training, workload management, delegation of responsibilities, and organizational support to enhance the supervisory process and ultimately improve educational outcomes.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the study presents the following recommendations:

To address the deficiency in formal training and qualifications among school heads supervision, the Ghana Education Service must establish Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs tailored specifically for school heads' supervisory skills acquisition. These programs should focus on developing essential supervisory skills such as communication, critical thinking, management, and problem-solving.

The Ghana Education Service should contract experts in supervision to develop a comprehensive curriculum that covers the core competencies required for effective supervision in schools. This curriculum should be designed in collaboration with education experts and should align with the specific needs and challenges faced by school heads.

The Ghana Education Service should organize regular training workshops where school heads can participate in interactive sessions, case studies, and practical exercises aimed at enhancing their supervisory skills. These workshops should be facilitated by experienced educators and professionals in relevant fields.

To alleviate the burden of heavy administrative duties and teaching responsibilities on school heads, the Ghana Education Service needs to redefine administrative tasks and implement effective time management strategies. This will ensure that school heads have adequate time to fulfil their supervisory responsibilities and provide essential support to teachers. School heads should establish clear guidelines for delegating administrative tasks to other qualified staff members within the school. Identify non-essential responsibilities that can be delegated, allowing school heads to focus more on their supervisory roles.

All school heads must be trained by the employer on how to prioritize their responsibilities, emphasizing the importance of supervisory duties in supporting teacher development and improving educational outcomes. This may involve restructuring schedules and reallocating time to ensure that supervisory activities receive adequate attention.

Given the multitude of challenges identified, it is crucial to implement comprehensive support initiatives aimed at equipping school heads with the necessary tools, resources, and strategies to overcome obstacles and enhance the supervisory process. The Ghana Education Service should ensure adequate provision of tools, materials, and resources necessary for effective teaching and learning. This includes providing access to teaching aids, technology, textbooks, and other instructional materials. Additionally, allocate sufficient funds and resources to address infrastructure needs and create a conducive learning environment.

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