
An Investigation Into an Eclectic Approach to Classroom Supervision in the Mbare - Hatfield District in Harare, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate an eclectic approach to classroom supervision in ten selected schools in the Mbare – Hatfield district in Harare. This was done by establishing the supervision practices used during the different stages of classroom supervision. A total of 90 respondents took part in the study and these comprised of 60 teachers and 30 supervisors from the ten selected schools. The study which was quantitative used the descriptive survey method of research and respondents were asked to provide data through questionnaires. The study showed that during the different stages of classroom supervision, there was evidence of the use of the scientific/traditional model of supervision, the human relations model, the human resources model and the clinical model of supervision by the supervisors in the sampled schools. The study therefore concluded that there was an eclectic approach to classroom supervision in the ten selected schools in Mbare - Hatfield. The study recommended that supervisors should be made aware of the different supervision models so that they can use the different models to complement each other in improving teachers' instructional skills.

Keywords: *eclectic approach, classroom supervision, supervision models, supervisors*

INTRODUCTION

The study sought to investigate heads' supervision approaches they used to supervise primary school teacher's teaching and learning processes in their classrooms in ten selected schools in the Mbare – Hatfield district in Harare in Zimbabwe. Teaching and learning process are defined by Huitt (2003) as classroom processes which are made up of teacher instructional behaviour which guide student learning. This teacher behaviour needs to be checked by heads, who are their supervisors, to ensure that it is being done properly. Supervision according to Sullivan and Glanz (2009) is the process of engaging teachers in instructional dialogue for the purpose of improving teaching and increasing student achievement. Carroll (2007) agrees as he says supervision is a forum where supervisees review and reflect on their work in order to do it better. Lovell and Wiles (1975), Sergiovanni and Starratt (1983; 2007) and Nnabuo (2011) echo the same sentiments when they look at supervision as a process designed to help teachers and supervisors learn more about their practice, to better serve parents and pupils and make the schools more effective learning communities. These definitions imply that supervision is viewed as a school function carried out by supervisors to ensure that teachers improve their instructional skills in order to benefit learners. Supervision is thus a process whose major goal is to improve teachers' instructional skills, which will in turn improve pupils' learning.

Some models or theories of supervision have been put forward by various authorities and these models are supposed to assist supervisors in the way they carry out supervision on teachers. These models include the scientific or traditional model of supervision, the human relations model, the human resources model and the clinical model of supervision (Sullivan and Glanz, 2009).

The history of supervision in Zimbabwe according to De Grauwe (2001) and Nnabuo (2011) show that during the 1970's supervision was mainly based on the scientific/traditional model, which was best known as inspection. Inspectors from the Ministry of Education visited schools to inspect teachers' work with a view to find faults in teachers. Teachers therefore associated supervision with fault finding thus a negative attitude towards supervision was instilled in teachers. This type of supervision discouraged creativity by teachers in terms of methods of lesson delivery. With the attainment of independence in 1980, supervision practices in the Zimbabwean primary schools saw a shift from the scientific/traditional model of supervision to a more flexible type of supervision, which was supposed to promote professional growth and improve teachers' instructional skills (Nnabuo, 2011). As experienced teachers, who have been exposed to different types of supervision practices for more than two decades, the researchers also noticed that, like in other countries, supervision practices in Zimbabwe have also evolved over the years. Teachers have changed in line with pedagogical and technological advances which have been incorporated into the classroom. Classrooms have also evolved as they now have more diverse children. They also postulated that some of the supervisors in the Zimbabwean primary schools might not have the theoretical knowledge of these supervision models but might still base their supervision on one or a combination of these models. The researchers thus felt compelled to investigate the prevailing supervision practices in some primary schools in the Harare - Hatfield district.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are now grappling with larger classes with diverse populations of children and are required to offer quality teaching to them. Supervision as a way of ensuring quality instruction becomes paramount. What supervision models do supervisors use to supervise primary school teachers' instructional processes in their classrooms?

Research Questions

The study was guided by these two questions:

1. Which models do supervisors use when carrying out classroom supervision on teachers?
2. Do teachers find the supervision approaches used helpful in improving their instructional skills?

Significance of the Study

Through an eclectic approach to supervision, it is hoped that the study will make important contributions in assisting both supervisors and supervisees to achieve quality education.

Assumptions

It was assumed that the supervisors who were the heads of schools, the deputy heads and the teachers in charge (T.I.Cs) had professional qualifications with at least two years' experience as supervisors. It was also assumed that the targeted teachers would be qualified teachers with at least two years teaching experience. It was further assumed that supervision on teachers was being carried out in the Mbare – Hatfield district.

Delimitations of the study

The study was confined to ten selected primary schools in the Mbare – Hatfield district of the Harare only. The study did not involve education officers who supervise schools in the district.

Limitations

The researchers also faced geographical constraints of moving from school to school delivering and collecting the questionnaires since the schools in the area are not close together. This is the reason why only one district was used. Generalisation of findings will therefore only apply to parts of districts similar to this one only.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review focused on the different supervision models and their helpfulness to classroom instruction.

The supervision models supervisors use in classroom supervision of teachers

There is an association between the supervision models and the evolution of supervision practices as was observed by Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983; 2007) and De Grauwe (2001). They believe that supervisory practices are based on one or on a combination of the scientific/traditional model of supervision (Carey, 1986), the human relations model, the human resources model (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 1983) and the clinical model of supervision (Goldhammer, 1980).

Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983; 2007) described the scientific model of supervision as representing the classical autocratic philosophy of supervision in which teachers are viewed as appendages of management with the relationship between teachers and supervisors being that of boss and employee. A study by Mhlanga (1983) on supervision also revealed that in the Zimbabwean education system, the boss element still prevailed.

Sergiovanni and Starrat (1993) further state that the human relations model of supervision stresses on a comfortable relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. According to Smith (2010) the supervisors' role is to get along with teachers and show sympathy to their problems and needs with the view of gaining their co-operation and compliance to administrative directions. However, the human relations model has its own weaknesses. As Madziyire (1995) observed, when supervisory practices are based on this model, teachers tend to adopt a laissez-faire attitude that might lead to chaos in the schools.

The human resources model realises the need to integrate personal needs and organizational achievement at work with more value put on the person's ability to use his/her talents fully. The model also emphasises the need to fully utilize a person's capabilities for continued growth. Madziyire (1995) further state that the model encourages participatory decision-making, increased worker responsibility and gives teachers more autonomy with the supervisor's role being mainly to help teachers develop as total beings with individual talents and competencies. However, supervisory practices based on this approach are not sufficiently developed in the Zimbabwean school system.

Richard Weller, in Acheson and Gall (1987: 13) defines clinical supervision as, 'supervision focused upon the improvement of the instruction by means of the systematic cycle of planning, observation and intellectual analysis of actual performance in the interest of rational modification.' According to Acheson and Gall (1987) and Goldhammer (1980) clinical supervision is characterized by planning conferences, classroom observation and feedback conferences. They also indicate that research has shown that feedback has an effect on the learning process and further emphasise that in learning new skills as in clinical supervision, teachers need to know how they are performing and that good feedback techniques affect one's motivation to learn. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) says it improves classroom instruction and the teachers' professional growth.

The usefulness of supervision practices in improving teachers instructional skills

In order to understand the concept of supervision better it might be necessary to examine what different authorities view as the purpose of supervision. As already implied by the definitions of supervision the main purpose of supervision is to improve teacher's instruction skills (Harris, 1985; Burke and Krey, 2005). This is in agreement with Doll (1983:1) who states that, 'the fundamental purpose of supervision is to increase the confidence and improve the competence of teachers in schools.' The same view is echoed by Beach (1989) who looks at the purpose of supervision as that of promoting effective teaching in schools and Snow-Geron (2008) who include also the increase of the teacher's ability to supervise themselves.

Acheson and Gall (1987) go further and list principles governing the purpose of supervision, which include:

- a. Promotion of pupil growth, which eventually improves society as a whole.
- b. Improved methods of teaching and learning.
- c. Co-operation of all staff members in serving their own needs and the needs of learners as well as providing ample opportunity for professional growth.

The Zimbabwe Ministry of Education handbook on school administration for heads (1993) also views the purpose of supervision as that of ensuring that learning and teaching standards are maintained and that the Ministry policy is observed in all aspects. The major purposes of supervision are therefore to provide opportunities for professional growth, improve teachers' competencies and promote students' learning. This means that supervision is important to teachers.

Negative attitudes towards supervision could be associated to the style or model of supervision used on teachers by their supervisors. Acheson and Gall (1987) and Nnabuo (2011) contented that some teachers become hostile towards supervision and the hostility is

not directed to supervision but to the style of supervision received. It is apparent that teachers' attitudes towards supervision are important for the improvement of the teaching/learning process. Fraser (1980) believes that unless teachers perceive supervision as a process of promoting professional growth and student learning, the supervisory exercise would not have the desired effects. Several authors like Cogan(1973) have observed that most teachers do not like to be supervised even though it is a requirement of their profession. As Acheson and Gall (1987) observed, most teachers react defensively to supervision as they do not find it helpful.

The same negative attitudes towards supervision also seem to prevail in Zimbabwe. This was commented on by Kapfunde in the Teachers Forum (1990), a periodical for teachers published in Zimbabwe, that many Zimbabwean teachers resent or even fear to be supervised because of the history of supervision, which has always been heavily biased towards evaluation and inspection. Teachers become anxious when they know that they are being evaluated.

A number of supervisory models were reviewed and it was observed that the evolution of supervisory practices has a strong link to the supervision models which were discussed. Supervision is helpful in improving teachers' instructional skills. What type of supervision is important? This provides the basis for the study, which seeks to investigate the supervision approaches used during classroom teaching and learning.

METHODOLOGY

The study was quantitative in nature and used the descriptive survey design (Muijs, 2004). The respondents were asked to provide information on the prevailing supervisory practices in selected schools in the Mbare – Hatfield district. The descriptive survey design was chosen for its ability to provide the present status of the phenomena at a glance. The study used the questionnaire as it was the most appropriate data gathering instrument in a survey. The Mbare – Hatfield district comprised of twenty-seven primary schools of which twenty-five were grade one schools. The schools have at least fifteen teachers each, a head, a deputy head and a T.I.C. of the infants department. The researchers randomly selected ten schools from the district. The supervisors from the ten selected schools were identified and asked to respond to the questionnaire. The researchers also randomly selected six teachers from each of the ten selected schools and asked them to respond to the questionnaire. A total of 30 supervisors and 60 teachers took part in the study. The questions used were mostly structured questions, which solicited for quantitative data and required quantitative analysis. The researchers therefore analysed the data by comparing scores and percentages. The data collected on the prevailing supervisory practices were presented in tabular form. A pilot study was carried out to ascertain the worthiness of the items in the questionnaires. Ethical considerations were followed as the researchers got clearance from the relevant authorities and confidentiality was also guaranteed to all the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There was a hundred percent return of questionnaires. The collected data was presented in tabular form as indicated. The data from supervisors and teachers, which required similar information, was clustered on the same tables. The presented data was then analysed,

interpreted and discussed. There were more female respondents as compared to males as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents by Gender.

	Supervisors		Teachers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Female	18	60	49	81,7
Male	12	40	11	18,3
Total	30	100	60	100

The large number of female teachers in the sampled schools could be an explanation for the greater number of female supervisors as compared to male supervisors.

Table 2: Respondents' Professional Qualifications.

	Supervisors		Teachers	
	No.	%	No.	%
PTH/PTL	2	6,7	5	8,3
T3	3	10	8	13.3
C.E	7	23.3	22	36.3
D.E	6	20	18	30
BED	12	40	7	11.7
TOTAL	30	100	60	100

The teachers' qualifications shown on Table 2 also suggest that those teachers who were trained during different eras were exposed to different models of supervision. The exposure to the different models of supervision could have an effect on how these teachers react to the supervision approaches applied to them by their supervisors.

Q1: Which models do supervisors use when carrying out classroom supervision on teachers?

Supervision Practice during the Pre-observation Stage

Table 3: Supervision Practices during the Pre-observation Stage

	Supervisors						Teachers					
	Are teachers notified of class visits		Do supervisors Plan Lessons with teachers		Do teachers have choice on lessons to be observed		Are teachers notified of class visits		Do Supervisors Plan Lessons with teachers		Do teachers have choice on lessons to be observed	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Rarely	1	13.3	5	16.7	3	10	7	11.7	1	1.7	8	13.3
Sometimes	18	60	8	26.7	17	56.7	23	38.3	5	8.3	15	25
Often	2	6.7	-	0	1	3.3	2	3.3	-	0	1	1.7

Always	7	23.3	1	3.3	3	10	9	15	2	3.3	5	8.3
Never	2	6.6	16	53.3	6	20	19	31.7	52	86.7	31	51.7
Total	30	100	30	100	60	100	60	100	60	100	60	100

The data presented on Table 3 indicated that 31.7% of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire were never notified of pending class visits and 6.6% of the supervisors agreed with them. These results suggest that the scientific/traditional model of supervision was used on these teachers as one of its characteristics is to catch teachers unaware so as to detect faults on them. The data on Table 3 also showed that a significant number of teachers, 52 (85.7%) indicated that their supervisors never planned lessons with them. A substantive number of supervisors (53.3%) who responded to the questionnaire also agreed that they never planned lessons with their teachers. The results suggest the use of the scientific/traditional model of supervision, which is after detecting faults on teachers. This is in line with Sergiovanni and Starrat (1993) and Nnabuo's (2011) findings. If supervisors planned lessons with teachers, any failure to achieve anticipated results would result in a situation where both the teacher and the supervisor would be blamed for the failure. Those supervisors who were after fault finding would therefore not plan lessons with teachers as they would also have to take the blame for the detected faults.

However, 60% of the supervisors in the sampled schools as shown on Table 3 sometimes notified their teachers of pending class visits with 23.3% always notifying their teachers of pending class visits. The use of the human relations model of supervision is evident as it emphasises on comfortable relations between the supervisors and supervisees. This is in agreement with Smith's (2010) finding. The 23.3% of the supervisors who indicated that they always notified their teachers of pending visits could have used the clinical model of supervision. Teachers feel more comfortable with a supervisor who notifies them of pending class visits as compared to a supervisor who comes unexpectedly.

More than half 56.7% of the supervisors in the sampled schools sometimes gave their teachers a choice on lessons to be observed with 10% of the supervisors always letting their teachers choose lessons they wished to be observed in. The use of the human relations and human resources models of supervision was evident during this phase. These models demonstrate concern for individual interests and emphasise on full utilization of a person's capabilities and talents. Those supervisors who allowed their teachers to have a choice on lessons to be observed gave these teachers a chance to bring out their individual talents and capabilities.

The data on Table 3 therefore suggests that during the pre-observation stage, the scientific/traditional model of supervision, the human relations model, the human resources model and the clinical model of supervision were in different ways used by the supervisors as they carried out classroom supervision on teachers. This indicated an eclectic approach to classroom supervision during the pre-observation stage in the sampled schools.

Supervision Practices during the Lesson Observation Stage

Table 4: Supervision Practices during the Lesson Observation Stage

	Supervisors				Teachers			
	Do supervisors Participate in lessons they observe		Are teachers allowed to be flexible with their Time-Tables		Do supervisors participate in lessons they observe		Are teachers allowed to be flexible with their time-tables	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Rarely	1	3.3	5	16.7	6	10	2	3.3
Sometimes	16	53.3	16	53.3	18	30	37	61.7
Often	3	10	3	10	4	6.7	5	8.3
Always	5	16.7	4	13.3	2	3.3	4	6.7
Never	5	16.7	2	6.7	30	50	12	20
Total	30	100	30	100	60	100	60	100

The results presented on Table 4 show that 50% of the teachers in the study indicated that their supervisors never participated in lessons that they observed and 16.7% of the supervisors who responded to the questionnaire agreed with the teachers. The explanation for not participating in the lessons they observed could be that those supervisors wanted to show a boss and employee relationship which is an element of the scientific/traditional model of supervision. This model believes in the teacher doing the work and the supervisor checking if the teacher has got it right.

It is however, noted that the results on Table 4 indicated that 53.3% of the supervisors in the study sometimes participated in lessons that they observed with 16.7% indicating that they always participated in lessons that they observed. The reasons for participating in lessons that they observed could be that these supervisors wanted to establish collegueship between themselves and their teachers. This therefore suggested the use of the clinical model of supervision by these supervisors as establishment of collegueship is a characteristic of the clinical model of supervision. This echoes Acheson and Gall's (1987) suggestions on the clinical supervision model of supervision.

It was indicated on Table 4 that 53.3% of the supervisors in the study sometimes allowed their teachers to be flexible with their timetables and 61.7% of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire agreed with the supervisors. Table 4 also indicated that 13.3% of the supervisors always allowed their teachers to be flexible with their timetables. These results showed an element of the human relations model of supervision which emphasises on comfortable relations between the supervisor and the teacher. This therefore suggested that some supervisors used the human relations model of supervision during the lesson-observation stage.

On the whole data presented on Table 4 suggested that supervisors in the study followed an eclectic approach to classroom supervision. Aspects of the scientific/traditional model of supervision, the human relations model, the clinical model of supervision were evident during the lesson observation stage.

Supervision Practices after the Lesson Observation Stage

Table 5: Supervision Practices during the Post-observation Stage

	Supervisors								Teachers			
	Do teachers get post-observation feedback		Do teachers give their views during post-observation feedback		Are follow-up lessons made after feedback		Do teachers get post-observation feedback		Do teachers give their views during Post-observation feedback		Are follow-up lessons made after feedback	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Rarely	0	0	0	0	1	3.3	2	3.3	2	3.3	6	10
Sometimes	0	0	4	13.3	12	40	6	10	12	20	24	40
Often	1	3.3	2	6.7	6	20	4	6.7	3	5	4	6.7
Always	29	96.7	24	80	11	36.7	45	75	36	60	12	20
Never	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	7	11.7	14	23.3
Total	30	100	30	100	30	100	60	100	60	100	60	100

The data presented on Table 5 indicated that almost all supervisors in the study, 96.7%, gave post-observation feedback to their teachers and 75% of the teachers agree with the supervisors. The results further show that 80% of the supervisors did not only give feedback to their teachers on observed lessons but also gave teachers a chance to give their opinions about the observed lessons. This was in agreement with 60% of the teachers who responded as they indicated that they were allowed to participate in post-observation feedback. The results suggested the use of the clinical model of supervision which according to Acheson and Gall (1987) emphasises on eliciting the teachers' inferences, opinions and feeling about observed lessons.

The data presented on Table 5 also indicated that 40% of the supervisors in the study sometimes made follow-up lesson observations with 36.7% indicating that they always made follow-up lesson observations. The use of the clinical model of supervision was evident as it aims at changing negative behaviours, which would have been identified during the lesson-observation stage. During the post-observation stage an eclectic approach to classroom supervision was used as evidenced by the results on Table 5.

Q2: Do teachers find the supervision practices used helpful in improving their instructional skills?

The data presented on Table 6 indicated that most respondents in the study perceive a supervisor as an advisor 66.7% of the supervisors and 56.7% of the teachers. The explanation for this outcome could be that the respondents were aware of the supervisor's

role as the professional qualifications of most of the respondents in the study shown on Table 2 could have exposed them to theories which spelt out the supervisor's role.

Table 6: Respondents Perception of the Supervisor's Role

	Supervisors		Teachers	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Advisor	20	66.7	34	56.7
Inspector	4	13	6	10
Colleague	1	3.3	5	8
Evaluator	3	10	7	11.7
Resource person	2	6.7	6	10
Fault Finder	0	0	2	3.3
Total	30	100	60	100

These results suggested that these respondents believed in the use of the clinical model of supervision which states that during the supervision process the teacher and the supervisor must work together as colleagues. This is affirmed by Sergiovanni and Starrat's (1993) sentiments.

The data presented on Table 6 however indicated that a few respondents perceived a supervisor as an inspector, evaluator and fault finder. These results were also in agreement with a study by Mhlanga (1983) which revealed that inspection still prevailed in the Zimbabwean education system.

Table 7: Respondents' Perception of the Purpose of Supervision

	Supervisors		Teachers	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Evaluation	4	13.3	6	10
Fault Finding	0	0	0	0
To improve instruction	26	86.7	51	85
For Routine	0	0	3	5
Total	30	100	60	100

In order to find out if the respondents found supervision as helpful to improving their instructional skills, Table 7 presented data on their perception of the purpose of supervision. The majority of the respondents' 86% of the supervisors and 85% of the teachers as shown perceived the purpose of supervision as that of improving teachers' instructional skills. The explanation for this outcome could be that the professional qualifications of most respondents in the study which are C.E, D.E and B.Ed. as shown on Table 2 exposed them to theories of supervision which spelt out the major purpose of supervision. This is in line with Beach (1989) and Snow-Gerono's (2008) views on the purpose of supervision.

A few respondents had the notion that supervision is for evaluation purposes. Although evaluation is essential for decision making purposes like teacher promotion and advancement, teachers tend to resent supervision if they know that they are being evaluated on. This is in

agreement with a study by Acheson and Gall (1987) which revealed that teachers become anxious and tend to resent supervision if they know they are being evaluated. Through their training, the few respondents who believed that supervision was mainly for evaluation purposes could have been exposed to models like the scientific/traditional model of supervision which believed that supervision is there to put value on the performance of teachers. It was interesting to note that none of the respondents in the study perceived supervision as a fault finding mission. This suggested that because of the evolution of supervision practices, inspection, which was after faultfinding could be phasing out in the sampled schools.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that teacher supervision in the sampled schools is eclectic. Aspects of the scientific/traditional model of supervision, the human relations model, the human resources model and the clinical model of supervision were evident throughout the different stages in the supervision process.

The study further concluded that the supervisor was perceived as an advisor and that most respondents were aware of the main purpose of supervision, which is that of improving teachers' instructional skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that:

- Heads and teachers be staff developed in the different supervision models so that they use them effectively.
- Teachers colleges and Universities to formally include supervision models in their curriculum so that teachers are aware of their purpose and importance.
- Further research be made on how the different models of supervision could be used to complement each other on bringing about improvement of classroom instruction.

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