

Attitudes of Teachers towards School Based Supervision of Instruction in Mutare Rural District Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The main objective of this study was to investigate the attitudes of teachers towards school-based supervision in Mutare Rural District Secondary Schools using the quantitative methodology. The population comprised of all secondary teachers in the district and the sample was made up of 96 teachers arrived at using random sampling. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and data was collected through a questionnaire. The study revealed that the preferences for the frequency of supervision of instruction, types of supervisors and purposes of supervision all point to the fact that teachers perceive instructional supervision in a positive way. However, findings revealed that in spite of their positive attitudes towards supervision of instruction, teachers were critical of the way it was being undertaken in their schools. The study recommends that school-based supervisors should be staff developed in order to carry out their supervision tasks professionally and effectively.

Keywords: Supervision, school-based, instruction, attitudes, secondary school, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Learning is central to the functions of a school and it is important that instruction which is used as a basic tool to promote learning is perfected [1]. Madziyire [2] argues that, it is generally believed that if teachers are left to themselves they may not try to develop their teaching skills and this then underlines the significance of instructional supervision. Harris [3] postulates that, there is a general belief that teachers tend to associate instructional supervision with fault-finding and as a result, most teachers tend to become anxious and resentful of the process of instructional supervision. In Zimbabwe, supervision of teachers by heads, deputy heads and education inspectors is a common practice [4]. It should be noted that school based supervisors are supposed to carry-out effective supervision for the benefit of both the teacher and the child since supervision is a dimension of teaching profession which is concerned with improving instructional effectiveness [5]. Therefore, instructional effectiveness cannot prevail on its own but is enhanced through school-based supervisors' support services which improve staff member performance [6]. As Madziyire [2] postulates, supervision which was practiced in Zimbabwe before independence was restricted to inspection and witch hunting on the part of the supervisor. This is because colonial education during this era was meant to ostensibly promote

Christianity and white supremacy and therefore had to conform to the goals of the government of the day [7]. In view of today's aims of education, school-based supervisors are expected to be more democratic in their approach. As a result of the large number of schools that have mushroomed all over the country, it means that Provincial and District Education Inspectors can not visit every teacher in all the schools, and thus the system now relies on school based supervisors [2]. It is on account of the information above that this study set out to investigate teachers' perceptions about current supervisory practices in their schools.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Supervision is a process of facilitating the growth of teachers primarily by giving them feedback on classroom instruction and helping the teacher to make use of the feedback so as to make teaching more effective [8]. The supervisor should be a person who is concerned about pupils but is equally concerned about teacher delivery of quality instruction [9]. According to Beach [6] instruction involves tasks such as telling, explaining and defining, providing examples, stressing critical attributes, modeling and demonstrating. What is important to the instructional supervisor is the extent to which the instructor successfully accomplishes the instructional tasks [2]. Chikoko [10] states that the instructional supervisor should be able to guide the staff

to achieve these tasks in order to ensure learning goes on and more than that the supervisor should be conversant with what constitutes effective teaching / instruction and be able to detect the absence of such effective instruction / teaching behaviours.

A lot of teachers have often expressed mixed feelings about being supervised. As Acheson and Gal [11] argue, the supervisor's visit is usually an unpleasant once a year affair and the supervisor himself/herself has not been a successful classroom practitioner. Teachers as professional need professional autonomy and some form of responsibility such as decision making [12]. Preedy [13] argues that effectiveness of supervision in a school as an organization is achieved when members of staff are given powers to manage their own situation and hence the effective leader would delegate responsibility.

In a study of supervisory behaviour and teacher satisfaction, Glatthorn [14] found that the improvement of the teacher-learning process was dependent upon teacher attitudes towards supervision. Unless teachers view supervision as a process of promoting professional growth and student learning, the supervisory process would not have the desired effect [14]. Glatthorn's study came up with several findings about teachers' preferences regarding supervisory activities. Many teachers indicated that they preferred to be supervised by people with more than fifteen years of teaching experience. Teachers also preferred immediate discussions with their supervisors about the lessons observed and they also expected the supervisor to be caring, understanding and helpful [14].

According to Neville [15], the supervisor we need is a skillful diagnostician of the "matter" of his/her position; and the matter in mind here is the teaching act. It is generally assumed that the supervisor, among other things is a master teacher [15]. He is perceptive to the interaction of variables as they operate within a given class or school. As the process is viewed by the supervisor he/she sees the teacher as a pivotal factor; his strengths and abilities are being applied to the presentation of ideas; the students are engaged in building their conceptual power and hopefully testing and constructing value patterns which have meaning for them [15].

To improve teaching as Kapfunde [1] states the supervisors must have an intrinsic grasp of the dynamics of teaching and a number of methods for analyzing the process. Does effective teaching behavior have certain logical qualities; is teaching best studied as problem solving or coping behavior; how do teachers having particular characteristics, properties or behaviours, affect the behavior of pupils [1] Neville [15] summarizes the reactions of teachers concerning

supervision from a study reported on the Indiana ASCD supervision study as follows:

They tended to want to avoid being the object of supervision. Some of them considered supervision an attack upon them personally. Others thought of supervision as a program dealing with materials, ideas and schedules rather than with the teaching-learning situation as it affects personal relationships.

Since the teacher demand for guidance and support from supervisors has increased over time, some countries changed the term preferring "supervisor" to "inspector" [16]. As Grauwe [16] further postulates, some countries have recently developed more specific terminologies: Malawi uses "education methods advisor", and Uganda "teacher development advisor". In line with this trend, school supervision has been changing in its practice from a control mechanism which inspects and restricts teachers for not having them make errors; to a practice which allows schools, especially at present, to have its members supervise themselves in collaboration and group dynamics [17]. According to Grauwe [16], this suggests there is a paradigm shift from the concept and practice of general school supervision (external inspection) to instructional (in-school supervision in various countries).

Statement of the problem

The improvement of the teacher-learning process was dependent upon teacher attitudes towards supervision; and unless teachers view supervision as a process of promoting professional growth and student learning, the supervisory process would not have the desired effect.

Purpose of the study

The study attempted to identify and establish the views of teachers about school-based instructional supervision. Thus, it sought to expose teachers' feelings towards current supervision practices in their schools so as to come up with suggestions that might help bring about positive attitudes towards school-based instructional supervision.

Research objectives

The study had two major objectives. It intended to:

- To identify teachers' attitudes towards instructional supervision, and
- To proffer suggestions on how supervision can be conducted to promote positive attitudes by teacher.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Do teachers see instructional supervision as a helpful exercise or they see it as one of those routines that interfere with their work?

- How can school-based supervisors carry-out supervision activities in schools to promote positive attitudes towards the practice by teachers?

Significance of the study

Supervision of instruction is very important in the development of our education system, and low teachers perceived it is equally important. It was also hoped that the findings of the study would help school-based supervisors realize the feelings of teachers towards the phenomenon of instructional supervision so that they properly guide them in their lesson delivery. The study also hoped to help teachers realize the positive role played by instructional supervision towards their professional development.

Limitations of the study

The major limitation relates to the descriptive method that was employed in this study. As Cohen and Manion [18] observe, the descriptive model lacks “predictive power”, the research may discover and describe “what is” but is unable to predict “what be”. The respondents may also give false responses thereby affecting the validity of the findings [19]. This was mitigated by triangulation within the method. It has to be pointed out also that feelings about an issue are essentially subjective, and cannot be measured accurately. In other words, feelings have no universally recognized and accepted scales of measurement and measures that were used in this study cannot be considered very accurate.

Delimitation of the study

The study delimited the investigation to establishing the views of teachers towards school-based instructional supervision in Mutare Rural District Secondary Schools using a sample of 96 teachers. Perceptions from other stakeholders like heads, pupil or education inspectors were not sought by this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the quantitative methodology and made use of a survey research design. According to Leedy [20], the descriptive survey design looks with intense accuracy at the phenomenon of the moment and then describes precisely what the researcher sees. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for collecting data. Random sampling was used to come up with a sample of 96 teachers. The researcher distributed the questionnaires through the heads of schools and collected them after two weeks. Permission was first sought and granted by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education through the District Education Officer before the instruments were distributed. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to investigate teachers’ attitudes towards school-based instruction in Zimbabwean secondary schools. This part is presented in two parts; namely, data presentation and discussion thereof.

Table 1: Composition of respondents by sex (N=96)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	52	54
Female	44	46
Total	96	100

Table 1 above shows that there were more male respondents than female ones (54% males; and 46% females respectively). Madziyire [2] found that most qualified lady teachers shunned remote rural schools because of the conditions prevailing in those schools.

Table 2: Composition of respondents by qualifications (N=96)

Professional Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma in Education	45	47
Bachelor of Education	2	3
Bachelor of Arts	4	4
Non Teaching Degree	44	46
Totals	96	100

Most teachers had the Diploma in Education qualification (47%) followed by those who were in possession of non-teaching degrees (46%). Those who held the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees represented 4% and 3% of the respondents respectively.

Table 3: Composition of respondents by working experience (N=96)

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
0 – 5 years	40	42
6 – 10 years	34	35
11 – 15 years	12	13
16 years and above	10	10
Totals	96	100

Table 3 above shows that 42% of the respondents fell within the 0 – 5 years experience group; 35% has 6 – 10 years of working experience; 13% has 11-15 years of experience and 10% had served the education system for over 16 years.

Table 4: Composition of respondents by supervisor's highest professional qualifications (N=96)

Supervisors Professional Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma in Education	0	0
Subject Specific Degree	79	82
Management Degree	17	18
Non-Teaching Degree	0	0
Totals	96	100

Most respondents' supervisors (82%) were in possession of a degree in a teaching subject. Only 18% had a management degree.

Table 5: responses to the statement: "Supervision of instruction is important for teacher professional development (N=96)

Category of Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	45	47
Agree	22	23
Disagree	13	14
Strongly Disagree	11	11
Not sure	5	5
Totals	96	100

Table 5 above reveals that 70% of the respondents agreed with the statement that instructional supervision promoted that professional growth of teachers. Those who disagreed with the statement constituted 25% of the respondents; and 5% were not sure about the statement.

Table 6: Responses to the question: Who would you prefer to supervise you? (N=96)

Preferred Supervisor	Frequency	Percentage
Head of Department	27	28
Deputy Head	6	6
Head of School	61	64
Education Inspector	2	2
Total	96	100

Most respondents preferred to be supervised by the head of school (64%); followed by the head of department (28%); deputy head (6%) and education inspector (2%).

Table 7: responses to the question: "Would you like to be given prior notice of a class visit or you do not mind?" (N=96)

Prefer Notice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	84	88
No	12	12
Total	96	100

Most respondents indicated that they wanted to be given prior notice of a pending supervisor's class visit; and those who did not mind a visit without a notice were 12% of the respondents.

Table 8: Responses to the question: "Would you accept to plan a lesson for observation with your supervisor?" (N=96)

Accept planning with supervisor	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	71	74
No	25	26
Total	96	100

Table 8 shows that 74% of the respondents welcomed the idea of planning lessons jointly observe the lesson. Those who were not comfortable with this arrangement constituted 26% of the respondents.

Table 9: Responses to the question: "School-based supervisors are helping you in your professional growth?" (N=96)

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	26
No	71	74
Total	96	100

The bulk of the respondents (74%) as reflected on Table 9 indicated that their school-based professional teachers. Those who were benefiting from the supervision of their supervisors constituted 26% of the respondents.

DISCUSSION

Most teachers had the Diploma in Education professional qualification, followed by those with non-teaching degrees. The implications of this information are that the majority of teachers are relatively new in the field of teaching and that some of them have no teaching skills and thus require heads of schools and other school based supervisors who are experts in the field of supervision. However, qualification of supervisors reveals that most of them are subject specialists and not managers. They hold subject related degrees instead of education administration degrees. They are good in content of one or two related subjects and not good at management. As Madziyire [25] argues supervision is a scientific process which requires personnel who are well trained in this science.

Evidence gathered from the study shows that most teachers are aware that supervision promotes professional growth if properly done. It was also revealed by the study that most teachers preferred to be supervised by heads of schools. This confirms observations by Glatthorn [14] and Neville [15] who

stated that teachers prefer to be supervised by the head of school over other supervisors because they associate the head with authority and legitimacy. They also view the head as their experienced colleague who should supervise them in order to guide and advise them. A significant number of teachers also preferred to be supervised by the head of department (HOD). HODs are senior teachers who are in charge of subject area departments for example languages, sciences or humanities. As Chikoko [10] argues, teachers view HODs as subject specialists who can guide them particularly on content of the various subjects under their departments.

Most of the teachers preferred to be notified of a pending lesson observation well in advance in order to organize their activities. Teachers also wanted to be assisted by heads or other school based supervisors when planning for lessons to be observed. This finding tallies with Preedy [13] argument that it is important to create conditions that will make the teacher comfortable during the supervision process. This is because, where the supervisor and the supervisee have cordial relations, there are high chances of the teacher feeling comfortable during the supervision process.

In spite of the positive attitudes that teachers in the study exhibited about school-based supervision, that is its aims and importance they nonetheless indicated that they were not benefitting from the current supervision practices at their schools. In the open-ended sections of the questionnaire, they indicated that their supervisors did not plan the supervision activities; they ambushed the teachers without any prior notification; feedback came after a long time or never came; the heads did not understand some of the current trends in the various subject areas and the sometimes supervision was used as witch hunt exercise.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the above findings, the study makes some conclusions:

- Most teachers are relatively new in the field of teaching; and thus inexperienced and require consistent supervision.
- Teachers are very clear about the utility of instructional supervision and its aims and therefore will participate for their professional development.
- Teachers want to be supervised by supervisors who have the authority and legitimacy to supervise them.
- Most teachers preferred to be notified well in advance of a pending supervision exercise instead of being ambushed. They equally wanted immediate feedback.
- The way how supervision was going on in the schools did not help the teachers. They expected

more assistance from their supervisors than was the case currently.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusions, the research puts forth the following recommendations:

- There must be well planned programmes of supervision of instruction which would promote the professional development of teachers.
- Heads of schools and HODs should be staff developed so that they effectively carry out supervision in the schools.
- Supervisors ought to give teachers prior notification and also partake in preparation of the lesson to be delivered with the teacher if teachers are to believe that the exercise is meant to assist the teacher grow and not to find faults from his/her operations.

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