

Supervisory Practices in an Autonomous National High School: Teachers' Cross-sectional Perspectives

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Abstract: *This study analyzed the Science teachers (ST) and non-science teachers' (NST) perceptions of supervisory practices in an autonomous national high school in the Division of Zambales during the School Year 2016-2017 in relations to curriculum and instruction, communication, staff development, evaluation, leadership; and classroom visits. It utilized descriptive cross-sectional design of research with the standardized instrument to measure the perceptions of the two groups of respondents on the supervisory practices within the specified time frame. The perceived supervisory practices in relations to the identified areas were analyzed per group of teacher using Weighted Mean and the comparative analysis on the level of agreement regarding the perceptions of the two groups of teachers, independent t-Test was used. Both the group of teachers registered the same level of agreement on the various aspects of supervisory practices. There was no significant difference between the perceptions of ST and NST on the supervisory practices in an autonomous national high school*

Keywords: *Science education, supervision, autonomous high school, descriptive cross-sectional design, department of education, Zambales*

1. Introduction

Supervision is a constant process that aims at improving teaching by providing needed services to the teachers. Improving teaching is a complex process in which many elements should interact. Teachers are in the center of this improvement process. Their acceptance of and interaction with the supervisory practice, the techniques, methods, models, or processes used by supervisors at schools, provide the catalyst for any supervisory success. The way teachers view the supervision that they are undergoing and think about it is very important in the outcomes of the supervision process. Supervision is an interactive process that depends on the source of supervision, the supervisor, and the teacher.

Therefore, knowing their opinions and expectations about the supervisory practices is important to implementing successful supervision.

For decades, the field of supervision has been suffering from unfriendly and unstable relations between teachers and supervisors (Blumberg, 2013; Pool, 2014; Sullivan & Glanz, 2010). Among the reasons is the different ways of seeing or perceiving things that take place at school as part of the supervisory activities. How supervisors should behave while working with teachers was the focus of most of the discussion about the field of supervision, and was a main drive for developing the different supervision models. Different models produced different practices. The aim was to reach for the best methods by which supervisors could best improve the teachers' performance and provide them with the needed assistance. To achieve this aim supervisors usually employ several supervisory practices.

The Department of Education only provides the framework for these practices, but the specifics are left to the supervisors to deal with. Typically, these practices, which mainly consist of the activities that supervisors do while meeting with teachers, are determined by the supervisors themselves. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of Science and non-science teachers in an autonomous national high school regarding the instructional supervisory practices implemented by supervisors.

The role of supervisor includes several tasks. According to Pajak (2012) there are various dimensions for school supervision. While working at schools, supervisors often utilize different supervisory activities to undertake these tasks. Typically, supervisors are expected to work as instructional leaders, staff developers, classroom mentors, evaluators, and curriculum and instruction developers. Also they have to properly and effectively communicate with teachers in a way that maximizes the good outcomes of these tasks.

Although teaching and supervision are theoretically distinct, they are, in fact, both bound together and mutually reflect and reinforce one another. There is a pressing need to know how supervisors view their performance while working with teachers.

Simultaneously, there is a similar need to know how teachers view their supervisors' performances (Firth, 2015). Comparing these two views and tracing the areas of agreement and the areas of disagreement is an essential step in the process of any improvement endeavor.

A considerable body of literature has resulted from exploring different aspects of the supervision process in Saudi Schools. Part of that literature reports investigations of the perceptions of supervisors about the supervisory practices (Adwani, 2011). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has been done to explore how teachers, who are the direct target of supervision, perceive the process of supervision they go through and how they view what this process ought to be.

Research has revealed that supervision suffers from several problems. Among these are lack of trust between teachers and supervisors, weakness in ways of communication, weak relationship between them, lack of cooperation, and mutual misunderstanding (Blumberg, 2013). These problems indicate that the field of supervision should go through a careful evaluation and examination to trace the roots of these problems.

Education in the Philippines is passing through a period of transition from the emphasis on quantity to emphasis on quality through the enhanced basic education program. This current movement demands that the process of instructional supervision undergo a movement of reform and renewal. In this movement it seems essential to take the teachers' and supervisors' perceptions of supervisory practices into account. Working in supervision reform without having this kind of information is a great deficiency that might misguide the efforts for improvement.

In the attempt to improve the education quality more focus should be put on teachers and the organizational aspects that affect their work at schools. This focus is based on the assumption that understanding the factors that influence the teachers' performances will increase our knowledge about how to improve schools (Wu & Short, 2012). Although, one can notice changes here and there, the more traditional ways of doing things still dominate the scene.

Fundamental and enduring improvements in quality come only with fundamental changes in the way an organization is structured in addition to the changes in the way people are viewed and managed (Duffy, 2010).

The present study investigated the perceptions of Science and non-science teachers on the supervisory practices in an autonomous national high school in the Division of Zambales. Thus, this study may help in identifying the degree of agreement between the two aspects within the same group. The level of agreement will be used to propose improvement in supervision and incongruence will help to identify areas for future study. The findings of this study will provide teachers and school heads in the division with a clearer picture of the real situation of supervision.

2. Objective Of The Study

The study aimed to present the perceptions of Science and non-science teachers on the supervisory practices in an autonomous national high school in the Division of Zambales. Specifically, it analyzed the degree of agreement between the supervisory aspects within the same group, which was used to propose improvement in supervision. The findings of this study provided teachers and school heads in the division with a clearer picture of the real situation of supervision.

3. Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive cross-sectional design of research. Bueno (2016) defines descriptive research to describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest, factually and accurately in a specific period of time. Descriptive research is the most common method of obtaining information with the use of questionnaire, unstructured interview and observation

The researchers considered a total of six (6) Science teachers and fifty-one (51) non-science teachers in an autonomous national high school in the Division of Zambales. Thus, a total of 57 teachers were considered for the purposes of the study. This is to gather quantitative data through a survey-questionnaire within a defined period of time (one year). Thus, there was no sampling technique employed in the study.

The standardized instrument was adopted from the study of Abdulkareem in 2011. The instrument contains various constructs on the supervisory practices in a secondary school. The supervisory practices only covered items on curriculum and instruction, communication, staff development, evaluation, leadership, and classroom visits. No major validation of the instrument was done because it is standardized instrument. Thus, only face validity of the instrument was conducted among selected teachers and school heads in the Division, professors in the graduate school and thesis adviser.

All quantitative data gathered through the instruments were tallied, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted accordingly using the following statistical tools: (1) Mean was used to determine the final weight of each item in the supervisory practices questionnaire checklist; and (2) t-Test was used to determine the degree of difference between the perceptions of Science and non-science teachers on supervisory practices.

4. Results And Discussion

The supervisory practices described in this study covered items on curriculum and instruction, communication, staff development, evaluation, leadership, and classroom visits.

Curriculum and Instruction. Both the group of teachers strongly agree that the supervisor assists them in lesson planning; developing instructional goals and objectives; selecting instructional materials; evaluating curricula and suggesting changes to meet the students' needs; using appropriate methods of teaching; evaluating student performance; and understanding new developments in teaching. Thus, the overall ratings are 4.02 (ST) and 3.99 (NST), which means "Agree". The data further reveals that the quality of instructional supervision within a school is presumed to have effects on the expertise, practice and job satisfaction of teachers, and by extension ultimately, on student outcomes such as achievement. The main objective of supervision is to improve teachers' instructional practices, which may in turn improve student learning. Researchers have mentioned several purposes of supervision of instruction, but the ultimate goal is to improve instruction and student learning. The findings further agree with the emphasis of Beach and Reinhartz (2009) that the focus of instructional supervision is to provide teachers with information about their teaching so as to develop instructional skills to improve performance. Also in Bolin and Panaritis' view (2001), supervision is primarily concerned with improving classroom practices for the benefit of students regardless of what may be entailed in the curriculum or staff development (Bays, 2001). Further, McQuarrie and Wood (2011) also state that "the primary purpose of supervision is to help and support teachers as they adapt and adopt, and refine the instructional practices they are trying to implement in their classrooms". Others believe the purpose of supervision is helping teachers to be aware of their teaching and its consequences for their learners (Glickman, Gordon, & Gordon, 2007; Nolan, 2007). Some researchers have also theorized that supervision is an act of encouraging human relations (Wiles & Bondi, 2006) and teacher motivation (Glickman, Gordon, & Gordon, 1998) and enabling teachers to try out new instructional techniques in a safe, supportive environment (Nolan, 2007). Supervision is believed to provide a mechanism for teachers and supervisors to increase their understanding of the teaching-learning process through collective inquiry with other professionals (Nolan & Francis, 2002). The purposes of supervision provided by these researchers can be grouped under the following

themes: improving instruction; fostering curriculum and staff development; encouraging human relations and motivation; and encouraging action research and supporting collaboration.

Communication. It appears that both the group of teachers strongly agree that supervisors are conducting meetings with them to review progress; communicating with them and to the higher authorities/ administrators about instructional concerns; sources of useful information. However, the teachers simply agree that they are treated with trust and respect, and the supervisor works with them in a collegial manner. The overall ratings are 4.24 (ST) and 4.21 (NST), which means “Strongly Agree”. Researchers conceptualize effective supervision not as an end result or product, but rather as the collection of knowledge and skills that supervisors possess. Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2004) posit that effective supervision requires well-trained personnel with knowledge, interpersonal skills, and technical skills who are prepared to provide the necessary and appropriate guidance and support to the teaching staff. According to Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2004), these personal attributes are applied through the supervisory roles of direct assistance to teachers, group development, professional development, curriculum development and action research. They believe that “this adhesive pulls together organizational goals and teacher needs and provides for improved learning”. Moreover, other researchers also share similar views as those upheld by Glickman and colleagues. Glanz, Shulman and Sullivan (2006) believe that an effective principal as instructional supervisor possesses the following characteristics: is situationally aware of details and undercuts in the school; has intellectual stimulation of current theories and practices; is a change agent; and, actively involves teachers in design and implementation of important decisions and policies. They also believe that effective principals provide effective supervision. To them, an effective principal creates a culture of shared belief and sense of cooperation, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of school practices, is resourceful and communicates and operates from strong ideas and beliefs about schooling. Blasé and Blasé (2009) propose a model of effective principal derived from findings which consists of two major themes: talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth. Thus, the findings of the present study agree with the other researchers believing that successful supervisors are those who link interpersonal skills with technical skills. Brennen (2008) notes an effective supervisor who links interpersonal with technical skills will be successful in improving instruction. He suggests that an effective supervisor should be able to build self-acceptance, moral, trust, and rapport between the two parties. He further suggests that the supervisor should not delve deeply into the role of a counselor. The focus is always on the teaching act, rather than matters affecting the teacher that are beyond the confines of the classroom. Objectivity, devoid of personal biases, should be the hallmark if supervision is to be effective, he asserts.

Staff Development. Both the group of teachers strongly agree that the supervisor encourages them for professional growth; conducts in-service programs to improve their performance; conducts orientation activities for new teachers; and promotes the exchange of ideas and materials among teachers. However, the teachers simply agree that the supervisor helps them improve and handle their job successfully; directs all supervisory activities for the teachers’ improvement; helps to facilitate teachers’ access to professional resources; promotes the exchange of ideas and materials among teachers. The overall ratings are 4.26 (ST) and 4.27 (NST), which means “Strongly Agree”. Burke & Krey (2005) define supervision as instructional leadership that relates perspectives to behavior, focus on processes, contributes to and supports organizational actions, coordinates interactions, provides for improvements and maintenance of instructional program, and assesses goal achievements. Moreover, Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2008) also define supervision as the school function that improves instruction through direct assistance to teachers, group development, professional development, curriculum development and action research. The findings of the study agree with Glickman, Gordon, and Ross- Gordon (2007) when they put forward that the long-term goal of developmental supervision is teacher development towards a point at which teachers, facilitated by supervisors, can assume full responsibility for instructional development. The emphasis provided by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) is similar to that of Glickman et al. above, but the latter emphasize respect, caring and support for teachers. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2003) note that supervisors and teachers working together can make the learning environment more user friendly, caring and respect for students, and supportive of a community of leaders. They

argue that this remains a primary intellectual and moral challenge of supervisory leadership. Thus, it is the responsibility of supervisors to provide teachers with in-service training sessions, as well as encourage them to attend workshops and conferences to bring them abreast with time in their instructional practices.

Evaluation. The teachers strongly agree that supervisors evaluate their performance as classroom teachers; emphasize continuous evaluation to look for teachers' strengths and weaknesses. However, they simply agree that supervisor uses evaluation as a means for development, and uses more than one source in evaluating teachers. The overall ratings as per their perceptions are 4.34 (ST) and 4.28 (NST), means "Strongly Agree". The findings correspond to the review of Wanzare and da Costa (2000) when they claim that supervision of instruction has unique focus and purpose such as custodial and humanistic. Citing Drake and Roe, Wanzare and da Costa (2000) note that the "custodial" supervision can mean general overseeing and controlling, managing, administering, evaluating, or any activity in which the principal is involved in the process of running the school, whereas according to Pfeiffer and Dunlap (Wanzare and da Costa, 2000) the "humanistic" viewpoint suggests that supervision of instruction is multifaceted, interpersonal process that deals with teaching behavior, curriculum, learning environments, grouping of students, teacher utilization and professional development as part of continuous evaluation. The researchers of the present study recognized that supervision of instruction as a process utilizes a wide array of strategies, methodologies, and approaches aimed at improving instruction and promoting educational leadership as well as change. Researchers (Glanz & Behar- Horenstein, 2000) note that the process of supervision and evaluation of instruction at the school level depends primarily on whether the principal functions as an instructional leader. Thus, Neagley and Evans (1980) propose some of the principal's functions as an instructional leader. They believe that "a successful instructional leader helps teachers to discover problems related to instruction and learning, assist them in finding procedures to solve these problems, and provides time and resources for creative solutions".

Leadership. Both group of teachers strongly agree that supervisor provides feedback and offer suggestions for instructional improvement; encourages them to assume full responsibility for carrying out their task; involves them in evaluating instructional activities; and helps them feel that they are valued. However, the teachers simply agree that they are involved in planning and developing curriculum and instruction, decision-making process; helped to understand educational goals, and motivated to set and achieve their professional goals. The overall ratings as per teachers' perceptions are 4.16 (ST) and 4.17 (NST) means "Agree". Sullivan and Glanz (2000) argued that supervision as inspection which found justification in the production-oriented, social efficiency era and bureaucratic supervision was no longer viable. The basis of supervision as leadership model was to remove itself from supervisory practices of the past. It means supervision as leadership focused on democracy and human relations. According to Sullivan and Glanz (2000), Leeper (2009) and other authors of the model maintain supervisors must extend "democracy in their relations with teachers". Thus, the advocates' proposal that those engaged in supervision should provide leadership by developing mutually acceptable goals, extending co-operative and democratic methods of supervision, improving classroom instruction, promoting research into educational problems, and promoting professional leadership by offering suggestions for instructional improvement, are reflective of the findings of the present study. Moreover, the proponents of clinical supervision such as Cogan and Goldhammer advise that supervisors should mutually plan lesson observation with teachers, rather than supervisors entering the classroom unexpectedly, and with pre-determined rating items. Furthermore, Blasé and Blasé (2004) suggest that supervisors should mutually decide with their teachers on what and how to observe before proceeding to the classroom to observe a lesson. In Pansiri's study (2008), 75 percent of his teacher participants indicated their supervisors planned class visits with them. The teachers accepted the supervisors as partners for instructional improvement, rather than viewed their visits as intrusion into their private instructional behavior. Ayse Bas" (2002) study of Turkish schools found, however, that the principal determined when visits would be conducted without consulting with teachers.

Classroom Visits. Both the group of teachers strongly agree supervisors visit them without notification in advance; discuss with them the data collected during the visit; and view classroom visit as an improvement

activity that is not limited to evaluation. Moreover, the teachers agree that supervisors plan in advance for the classroom visit, and listen to their justification or interpretation of their classroom behavior. However, they moderately agree that the supervisors use a standard instrument and process for gathering data during the visit. Thus, the overall ratings as per teachers' perceptions are 3.99 (ST) and 3.97 (NST) means "Agree". It is believed that clinical supervision is based on the premise that teaching would be improved by a prescribed, formal process of collaboration between the teacher and supervisor. The principal advocates (Goldhammer and Cogan) believe the focus of clinical supervision is a face-to-face interaction between teacher and supervisor with the intent to improve instruction and increase professional growth (Acheson & Gall, 2000). Cogan conceives that the purpose of supervisors working collaboratively with teachers is to provide expert direct assistance to them (teachers) with the view of improving instruction. The findings of the present study agree with the advocates of clinical supervision and to believe that the focus is on collection of descriptive data from detailed observation of the teaching process to guide practice. The data includes what teachers and students do in the classroom during teaching learning process. These are supplemented by information about teachers' and students' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge relevant to the instruction (Cogan, 2003). The findings are consistent to Cogan belief that supervision to be effective, both the supervisor and teacher involved should collaboratively use the data collected in the classroom to plan programs, procedures and strategies to improve the teacher's classroom behavior, including instructional techniques. However, Cogan emphasized the use of standardized instrument and processes for gathering data during the visit.

Difference Between the Perceptions of Science and Non-science Teachers. The data indicate that there are no significant differences between the perceptions of ST and NST on the supervisory practices in an autonomous national high school. This can be traced from the computed t-value per variable and the P-value. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the perception of ST and NST on the supervisory practices in terms of curriculum and instruction, communication, staff development, evaluation, leadership and classroom visits. This findings suggest that both the group of teachers is at the same level of agreement that supervisory practices in an autonomous national high school may include mentoring new teachers in the teaching profession; guiding teachers up to a minimum standard of effective teaching; improving individual teacher's competencies by providing them with necessary resources for effective teaching; working with groups of teachers in a collaborative effort to improve student learning; relating teacher's efforts to improvement in their teaching; monitoring to assess the level of performance with a view to finding out how far set objectives are being met; and evaluation, used to see how the system can be assisted to improve on its present level of performance based on available data (Ogunu & Momoh, 2011). Moreover, the data are in agreement with the previous studies where in the instructional supervisor assessment of teacher effectiveness help to determine whether there is improvement in the teaching learning process. Such an evaluation and assessment might find that there is need to plan and organize more efficiently for improvement in the future (Odor, 2005). According to him, even when classroom instruction is satisfactory, there is always room for improvement. So the guarantee for continuous instructional improvement is through supervision for evaluation of teacher effectiveness in instruction. Thus, supervisors according to Odor (2005) are to develop the teachers' method of influencing the students learning and to impart some knowledge of instructional organization to teachers. To do this effectively, instructional supervisors should work with teachers to develop instructional goals and objectives consistent with the various directive of the Department of Education; provide teachers with necessary resources for effective teaching; obtain and provide relevant educational information for teachers; stimulate, encourage, support and facilitate all activities designed to improve instruction; visit classrooms to observe how teachers are teaching; hold individual and group conferences; evaluate and develop curriculum materials, including a well-stocked library and instructional resource center in the school; inspect teachers' lesson notes, class records and offering professional advice for their improvement (Ogunu & Momoh, 2011).

5. Conclusions And Recommendations

Effective supervisory practices can be characterized through its contribution to curriculum and instruction, communication, staff development, evaluation, leadership, and classroom visits. Both the group of teachers registered the same level of agreement on the various aspects of supervisory practices. There was no significant difference between the perceptions of ST and NST on the supervisory practices in an autonomous national high school. The findings imply that there is always room for improvement as regards to effective and efficient instructional supervision in an autonomous national high school.

Thus, there is need for school heads to improve their instructional supervision techniques in order to offer necessary suggestions on the improvement of curriculum and instruction. Instructional supervisors should know where the teacher is in his work and what he is doing by treating them with trust and respect, and working with them in collegial manner. School heads should regularly help teachers improve and handle their teaching job and activities successfully through efficient access to professional resources. Instructional supervisors should use evaluation as a means for development from various sources of data and information in evaluating teachers. School heads should involve teachers in decision-making process, planning and developing curriculum and instruction to help them understand and motivate them to achieve their professional goals. School heads should plan in advance with teachers, explore the use of standard instrument and process for gathering data during the classroom visit, and listen to teachers' justification or interpretation of their classroom behavior during post-conference. There should be training and re-training programs for school heads and teachers in the form of workshop to inform and guide them about current methods in their field to ensure effective supervision of instruction.

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