

**EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION AS A CHALLENGE IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION DELIVERY: ENSURING QUALITY TEACHING/ LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT AND FEEDBACK MECHANISM.**

BY

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Introduction

It is believed that education is an instrument for National development, to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education. The Federal Government of Nigeria is conscious of the importance of education for personal and national economic development that in section 12: 107 (c) of the National Policy on Education (2004) set out as one of her objectives, to ensure quality control through regular and continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services. The issue at hand now is to investigate if the supervision of teaching is effectively carried out. A critical issue that has frequently confronted educational supervisors is how to better prepare teachers to face the challenges of the classroom.

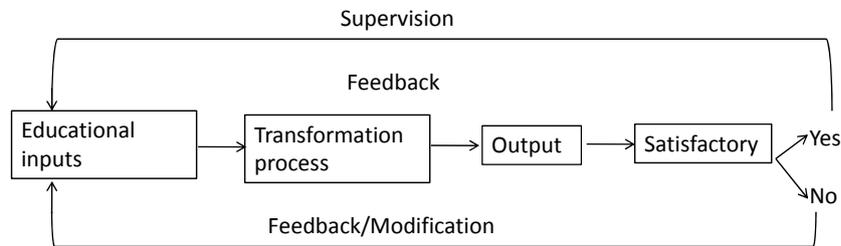
Effective supervision is therefore a crucial issue in the delivery of Technical and Vocational Education as it is the main avenue through which technological and entrepreneurial exploits could be ensured for sustainable economic development.

The goals of technical and vocational education as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004: pp30-31) are:

- a. *Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels;*
- b. *Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial economic development; and*
- c. *Give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.*

Teachers are expected to be equipped with the necessary skills to enable them succeed and to develop effective instructional strategies in classroom. The process-product approach to instruction helps supervisors to guide teachers to discover those instructional activities that are known to be effective in the classroom.

Fig 1: Education Process Model



Pivotal to such program is the underlying theoretical and practical assumption that teachers'

- a. repertoire of strategies and instructional activities are an important factor in classroom teaching practices.
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- b. ability to translate theories into practical classroom teaching strategies is an integral part of instructional effectiveness and
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- c. differences in instructional strategies do contribute to variations in achievement scores of learners. (Johnson, 1995)
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Part of the supervisors' tasks, therefore, is to help teachers to develop specific instructional activities that are suitable to learners and context of learning.

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Gimbert and Nolan (2003) argue that the role of the supervisor is shrouded with ambiguity. However, supervisors are appointed based on their training in education and classroom teaching experience. They are, therefore in a unique position, not only to systematically assist teachers in understanding and practicing the skills involved in the teaching-learning complex that goes on in the classroom, but also to help them develop a set of principles of effective instructional activities through their experience of "what works" and "what does not." Thus, it takes skilled and trained eyes to perceive, understand and observe the teaching-learning activities in the classroom. This is why supervisors are relied upon to intervene in, confirm, and/or redirect the teacher's classroom activities.

Supervisor's Responsibilities:

- a. provide support through pre-observation consultation and post-observation conferences
- b. assist teachers with issues regarding their portfolio
- c. assess teachers performances during teaching.
- d. Communicate assessment grade to teachers.

Critique

- a. teachers may resent the idea of being told what to do and what not to do by supervisors
- b. that there is no one known "best" way of teaching
- c. that teachers may not be totally held responsible for the teaching-learning environments as other factors come to play, such as, furniture, books, funding, remunerations, teachers and students welfare; and
- d. that supervisors cannot reduce teaching to a technical act that can be measured by a set of prescribed criteria.

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The Concept: Supervision

Supervision entails the activity carried out by supervisors to watch over the work or tasks of people who report directly to them. That is, assisting those who may lack full knowledge of the concept at hand. In the same vein, the term **supervisor** is often misunderstood, as the person who oversees the productivity and development of entry-level workers. A supervisor basically is one's immediate superior in the workplace.

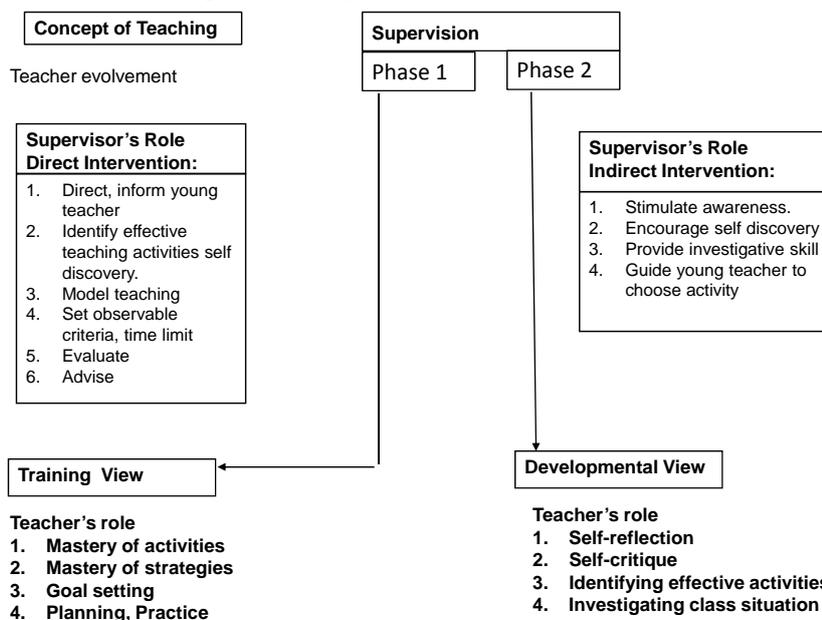
Thus, instructional supervision is a process of regular meetings between the supervisor and the teacher with support for the benefit of the teacher. It allows the demonstration of strengths and revealing of difficulties so that they could be solved. It should be confidential and designed to help the teacher to progress and promote feedback on his performance in order to enhance his educational, personal and professional development. That is, it is a formative (developmental), continuous process and not summative (one time) assessment.

Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria

Technical and Vocational Education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Technical and Vocational Education is further understood to be:

- (a) an integral part of general education
- (b) a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work.
- (c) an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- (d) an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;
- (e) a method of alleviating poverty

Fig. 2 Model of Supervision of Teachers



Adapted from Ajayi & Lee (2005) p267

Hindrances to Effective Supervision

- There are no laid down guidelines or policy to determine who a “good teacher” is and so supervisors apply their own personal yardstick.
- Supervision is not regularly conducted as supervisor can only observe classroom teaching for only a few periods in the school year, which is an unsatisfactory proportion.
- The supervisors also have dual responsibilities of being teachers and supervisors. Their workload, therefore, will not permit them to have adequate time for supervision.
- Supervisors do not carry out pre- and post-observation conferences with the teachers, thus, discussions and feedback mechanism may not be effective.
- Feedback could result in tension and stress as teachers may interpret appraisals as indictment of their competences.

Techniques of Supervision

- a. Direct supervision: where the role of the supervisor is to direct and inform the teacher, model appropriate teaching behaviours and act as evaluator
- b. Non-directive supervision: where the supervisor acts as understander and allows the teacher to come up with their solutions to classroom dilemmas.
- c. Alternative supervision: where the supervisor suggests a number of limited alternative actions to the teacher to which he is free to choose
- d. Creative supervision: where the supervisor uses any combination or uses insights from other fields.
- e. Collaborative supervision: where the teacher and the supervisor work together to solve problems encountered in the classroom
- f. Self-help-explorative supervision: where the teacher, based on his practical experience in the classroom, reflects critically about himself as a teacher. The teacher here is self-observer. Gebhard (1984) and Wallance (1991).
- g. Classroom visitation and observation: where the supervisor visits the classroom while teaching is going on and observes and evaluates the teacher
- h. Inter- school visitation : where teachers of a particular school visits teachers in another school in order to interact with more experienced teachers
- i. Workshop, seminar and conference :where teachers and supervisors interact, provide information and data for efficient decision making and feedback

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- j. Micro-teaching : where the teacher participates in an actual teaching situation with a small group with audio/visual equipment, projectors, and other teaching gadgets in order to play back the teaching exercise.

Role of Effective Communication in Feedback Mechanism

Communication should be two-way in both pre-and-post teaching conferences, the supervisor must listen also to what the teacher has to say.

Despite the many barriers to effective communication, listening is a very important technique to minimize inaccuracies in the process. The receiver must develop the skill to listen attentively to the information being transmitted and the sender must also listen to the receiver's feedback.

The following **ten** rules have been proposed to improve effective listening:

When a teacher comes to the supervisor for counselling, the counselor should:

1. Stop talking
2. Put the teacher at ease
3. Show the teacher that he wants to listen
4. Remove distractions
5. Empathize with the teacher
6. Be patient
7. Hold his temper
8. Go easy on arguments and criticisms
9. Ask questions
10. Stop talking

- The importance of listening is highlighted by the first and last rules, which say “stop talking” because one has to stop talking to be able to listen.
- Communication is said to be effective when the receiver decodes the information and appropriate action or reaction is taken.
- That is sender encodes the idea, instruction, suggestions, feeling, observations, and transmits to receiver through the most appropriate channel.
- Hence, the role of effective communication in ensuring appropriate feedback mechanism cannot be over-emphasized if required educational quality is to be attained.

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Statement of the Problem

Educational consumers are getting more conscious of the type and quality of knowledge being provided for them. The role of the supervisor in ensuring conducive teaching/learning environment can therefore, not be trivialize. Moreover, the dismal performances of students in both internal and external examinations have given cause for concern.

Methodology

Simple descriptive survey method was used for the study to investigate the perception of both supervisors and teachers on the effectiveness of the function of supervision.

The population consisted of all teachers in the Technical and Vocational Colleges in Edo State, Nigeria which were one-hundred and twenty-five and twenty supervisors. Supervisors were regarded as the principals, vice-principals, heads and senior teachers, since, the population was small, the sample consisted of all the school personnel.

Two questionnaires were designed, the first titled: Teachers Perception of Supervisor's Effectiveness Questionnaire (TPSEQ) and the second titled Supervisory Effect on Teaching/Learning Questionnaire (SETEQ).

The instruments were duly validated and found reliable for the purpose of the study, the data collected were analysed using frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviation, Z-test, Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the difference, if any, which could be related to demographic features. All tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

The results of the analysed data revealed the following:

- That supervisors rarely provided support for their supervisees through pre-observation consultation. That is, only 26.3% often had consultations with the teachers.
- That only 10.5% often had post-observation conferences with the teachers.
- That supervisors do not assess teacher's teaching performances regularly – that is only 10.5% did.
- Supervisors supervised teachers at various degrees. 31.6% carried out this responsibility daily; 47.4% weekly; 15.8% monthly; while 5.3% never did.
- 36.9% never communicated assessment grade to teachers; 52.6% did sometimes; while only 10.5% did regularly.
- 5.3% never assisted teachers to improve teaching and learning environment; 73.7% did sometimes; while only 21% carried out this responsibility.
- When asked how receptive teachers were to corrections, 94.7% stated that teachers were receptive, while 5.3% said teachers were very resentful.
- Demographic variables had no significant effect on the perceptions of both teachers and supervisors.
- Table 7 shows the responses from the teachers on their expectations from the supervisors. Majority of the respondents agreed that the responsibilities of the supervisors if carried out appropriately will create a conducive teaching/learning environment for quality education.

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Conclusions

This study has examined the challenges of supervisory effectiveness and their implications on teaching/learning environment. The perceptions of both supervisors and teachers point to the fact that collaborative efforts are required.

It is apparent that supervisors are saddled with additional responsibilities of assisting beginning or young teachers to develop their potentials and have effective control of their class. To ensure effective feedback mechanism, the role of effective communication must be realized.

Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2005.9) state that "when supervisors listen to the teachers, clarify what the teacher says, encourage the teacher to speak more of their concern, and reflect by verifying the teachers' perception the teacher is in "control" and call this a non-directive/collaborative interpersonal approach.

The challenge, therefore, is to facilitate a "paradigm shift" to collaborative activities that will encourage the attainment of educational goals and effective supervision that will be the "helping force" it should be in our nation's Technical and Vocational Colleges.

Recommendations

- Supervisors should hold pre-and post-conferences with teachers regularly
- Bureaucratic expectations must be transformed from rigid to flexible
- Decision making must be collaborative
- Teaching/learning environment must be supportive of innovations
- Supervisors need to appreciate the critical role of communication. It must be at least 2-way, assessment should be regular and feedback provided
- There is the need to understand and utilize both interpersonal and technical skills to ensure supervisory effectiveness
- The traditional rigid, stern, judgmental supervisory positions should give way to a more challenging environment that creates opportunity to explore.

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