

Current Practices and Challenges of Instructional Supervision in Primary Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the current practices and challenges of instructional supervision in primary schools of Ethiopia. A descriptive survey method was employed to see the actual facts and practices in the existing situation and to forward possible suggestions. 17 primary schools were selected randomly, 160 teachers were selected using proportional stratified sampling, 17 principals, 10 vice principals and 12 supervisors were selected using comprehensive sampling. The main instrument used to collect data was self made questionnaire. One sample t-test was used to analyze the data collected through questionnaire. The results of the study revealed that the practice of supervision in the three domains and in helping teachers to plan, present, evaluate their lesson and class room management was not as expected. Moreover, the problems indicated as, view toward supervision and supervisors, supervisors competency, availability of resources, and communication problems between supervisors and supervisees were high. Based on the results, it is concluded that the supervisory practices in the selected primary schools were not up to expected level. Supervisors were not effective to assist teachers to plan, present, and evaluate classroom management.

KEYWORDS: Supervision, Instructional Supervision, Practices, Challenges, Primary Schools

Introduction

Education is one of the major factors which helps human beings to cope up with the demands of the rapidly changing world. Children can develop knowledge, skills and attitude through education and it is only through education that the advancement of science and technology are achieved. Therefore, in school where formal teaching learning process takes place, school supervisors play a significant role in guiding teachers as well as school principals to make children useful members of the society. Supervisors have their own responsibility to create conducive education climate that helps the teachers to improve the academic performance of the learners.

The word supervision itself has been modified by such words as collaborative, cooperative, democratic and consultative that indicates more co-operation and collaboration between supervisors and teachers than in the past which are not considered effective. This instructional supervision stresses services, co-operation and giving emphasis on instructional supervision and is conceived as any service to teachers both as individual and in-groups (Oliva and Pawlas, 1997).

Supporting this idea, Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) viewed that the current supervisory system is more democratic and professional process involving multiple skills and comprises peer clinical supervision, monitoring, action research, collective work, program evaluation etc. Therefore, supervision has far reaching importance of instructional and the development of teachers' initiative, responsibility, creativity, internal commitment and motivation. One of the most important components of

supervision is the improvement of instruction through facilitation of professional development, self-evaluation, fostering, curriculum development and action research which in return results for the achievement of students. Instructional supervision is concerned with improving schools by helping teachers to reflect on their practice to learn more about what they do through self-evaluation, through experience sharing with peer-groups what they know with others.

Through supervision, it is possible to assist and correct short-coming in teaching. The need to improve the quality of education is the main agenda in most countries of the world including Ethiopia. Obviously, as the task of the school becomes more complex and where various aspects of the whole problems associated with effective teaching and learning and the world societies have great interest of quality monitoring of education, needs school supervisory services. To overcome these complex tasks, the school administration needs help in guiding and coordinating instructional program at school level through supervision (Lucio and McNeil, 1979).

In line with this background, supervision and support practice is taken in to account in Ethiopian Educational Policy. Especially, in the practical application of theory and more students centered learning approach with application of continuous assessment, and demands for the instructional supervisory services. Thus, school supervisors appointed as an agent of change through introducing, disseminating and influencing the acceptance of new ideas and practices at school level by minimizing the challenges of resistance to change.

Supervision for Staff, Curriculum and Instructional Development

According to Oliva and Pawlas (1997), any school officials who assist teachers in improving curriculum and instruction and develop teachers' profession is a supervisor. Having these points as a beginning the three major domains of supervision are: staff, curriculum and instructional development.

Staff Development

Staff development connotes the training, the goal of which is improvement of the persons who make up the organization itself. Staff development is facilitating meaningful opportunities for professional growth. Teachers may undergo staff development within the instructional and curriculum development. As they do in instructional and curriculum development they can learn new pedagogical skills and become familiar with new programs.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum has different meanings to different people. To some, it consists of all the experiences undergone by children wherever they may be in school, at home or on the street. To others; curriculum is a set of subjects that children take. And also they defined, curriculum as "those experiences of a child that come under a supervision of the school". It includes all in school experiences, including classroom learning experiences, student activities, use of media center or library, or use of recourse centers, assemblies, use of the cafeteria and social function.

Instructional Development

Supervision of instructional development is one of the important aspects of supervision which directly focuses on teaching-learning process in the classroom. Supervision involves the assessment of teachers for the purpose of maintaining uniform standards of instruction and also for the professional growth of individual

teachers. Supervisory systems and procedures need to be rethought so that, they respond to quality issues in school education. This requires the continuous professional development of teachers and improving teaching and learning. School based instructional supervision by the head of the institution could provide an impetus to these indicators (Tyagi, 2010).

The Role Supervisors in Instructional Supervision

Supervisors should possess certain personal traits, knowledge and skills. Supervisors are expected to demonstrate a high degree of skill in human or interpersonal relations. They should exhibit human and humane traits like empathy, warmth, and sincerity. Although educational researches fail to identify notable traits of supervisors which separate successful from unsuccessful, some specialists in the field forwarded that traits like trustworthiness, loyalty, and helpfulness, friendly might lead to be success (Oliva and Pawlas, 1997).

Helping Teachers to Plan Their Lesson

Planning is an inherent and primary activity in the continuum of instruction, followed by implementation and evaluation. Teachers through their pre-service training learn basic techniques of planning and usually experience opportunities for demonstrating their plans and putting them into practice. They also learn how to plan during their actual task. However teachers might face problems related to planning and changing the plan to practice. Thus, the central belief to teachers and supervisors should be that all teachers, no matter how long they have taught can develop the new skills and improve the old ones. The more teachers know about planning the better they become to instruct. And hence, the supervisors' task needs to be assisting teachers to become familiar with newer approaches to instruction by developing and improving their instructional skills (Oliva and Pawlas, 1997).

Helping Teachers to Present Their Lesson

Teaching effectiveness depends on not only effective planning but also it needs effective presentation of the lesson. For this, studying the characteristics of effective teaching would help to understand what teachers presentation should comprise. As stated by Oliva and Pawlas (1997) effective school research has made clear that some long-held beliefs about effective teaching do, in deed, make a difference in school achievement. Though stated in different ways by different researchers the teacher need to set clear goals for the class, holding high expectations from students, focusing on academics, maintaining an orderly class room, using suitable materials for instruction monitoring student performance, and providing feedback using positive reinforcements for effective presentation of the effective instruction. To this end, supervisors should develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and approaches to help teachers during presentation of their lesson.

Helping Teachers to Evaluate Their Lesson

As Oliva and Pawlas (1997) stated the assessment of instruction can be pre-assessment, continuing, or through assessment. The pre-assessment takes place before the actual instruction with the purpose of knowing whether the students already mastered the skills and knowledge planned for presentation in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. It also helps the teacher to know whether students posses the necessary prerequisite skills and knowledge to begin the study of the material. The continuing assessment on the other hand focuses on assessing achievement of objectives of instruction by each learner who make up a class. Regarding this, they

stressed that evaluation should be thought of an integral part of instruction, not an activity that can be separated from instruction.

Supervisors should not consider that the only test is evaluation mechanisms but, oral questions, observation, survey and questionnaires, attitude inventories, evaluation conferences, actual performance of skills and self evaluation are all techniques of evaluation. Therefore supervisors should develop their skills to inform and train teachers accordingly.

Helping Teachers with Classroom Management

Hoy and Miskel, (1991), explained that as schools are service organizations that are committed to teaching and learning, they need to be safe and conducive for the teaching and learning process. A teacher not only teaches classes but also manages the learning environment in such a way that learning can occur. The skills that teachers employ for this are collectively called classroom management. These includes: classroom routines, prevention of misbehavior, and correction of behavior problems. The teachers' task in matters of discipline, control, and classroom management should not be minimized. These issues need to be constantly on the minds of most teachers, particularly new and inexperienced ones.

Challenges in Instructional Supervision

Whatever supervision has been made continuously in schools it might be meaningless unless observable changes are seen in the quality of education. The supervisor should actively participate with the teacher in any decisions that are made and should attempt to establish a shared relationship and responsibility. The teacher and the supervisor should work together in addressing and solving problems in the teachers' classroom teaching.

A study conducted on instructional supervision in three Asian countries by Sharma, Yusoff, and Kannan (2011), revealed that, the role of instructional supervision simply seems to display the completion of paper work and fault finding process. As the study indicated, teachers argued that supervisors did not consider instructional supervision as a platform to develop sense of ownership for teachers and their professional growth. Instead, it is done to punish, demoralize, and insult teachers and rather than to improve their performance.

Thus, this paper attempts to assess the supervisory practices in relation to the three basic domains of supervision: staff, curriculum and instructional development. Moreover, particular attention was given for supervisors' role in helping teachers to plan, present, evaluate and classroom management. Meanwhile, the challenges or problems which hinder the proper practices of supervision that are related to views of practitioners, competency level of supervisors, lack of resources, and communication problems between supervisors and supervisees were assessed.

Significance of the Study

The study may have the following significances:

- (a) Providing information for responsible bodies (in regional, zonal, district and schools education officials) about the current practices of instructional supervision and help them to know how much it was/was not effectively practiced in schools;
- (b) Providing pertinent and timely information to principals, teachers, and school based supervisors about the existing practice of instructional supervision and its role in improving the teaching and learning process;
- (c) Exploring the major challenges in

instructional supervision, incase, principals, teachers and supervisors of schools become aware of them and it will help them to

Objectives

1. To assess the current practices of instructional supervision in primary schools in the study area of Ethiopia.
2. To study the major challenges and problems that face during the implementation of instructional supervision in the study area.

Materials and Methods

Descriptive survey research design was employed to assess the practices, and challenges of instructional supervision which was raised as the main issues of this study.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted in East Gojjam Zone of Amhara region of Ethiopia particularly in government primary schools of Enebsie Sar Midir District. There are 68 primary schools in the District, 17 (25%) schools were selected as a sample of study randomly through lottery method. In these 17 primary schools, 160 (46%) teachers, 17 (100%) principals, 10 (100%) vice-principals, and 12 (100%) supervisors were selected as a representative sample of this study. Regarding the selection of the sample teachers, list of teachers were prepared under each selected sample schools. Proportion was made to take appropriate number of teachers based on number of teachers in each school and proportional stratified sampling followed by systematic random sampling method. On the other hand, all school principals, vise-principals and supervisors were taken as a sample using comprehensive sampling technique.

Data Gathering Instruments

In order to get appropriate information about the practices and challenges of instructional supervision, a questionnaire was developed by the investigator for each group of respondents: teachers, principals, vice-principals and supervisors. The focus of the questionnaire was made to target on instructional supervision practices and challenges particularly relating to staff, curriculum and instructional development. Moreover, it was made to contain the role of supervisors in teachers to plan, present, evaluate and classroom management and also, some selected problems that affect the practice of supervision were included. The questionnaire contains three parts. The first part is about practices of supervision in staff, curriculum and instructional development. The second part was focused on supervisors role to plan, present evaluate their lesson and classroom management. The last part was regarding selected problems and challenges of instructional supervision. The questionnaire is comprised of five point Likert scale items (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=undecided, 2=disagree, and 1= strongly disagree).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected through questionnaire were arranged under each part of the questionnaire and the raw data were calculated by one sample t-test for analysis and interpretation of results.

Results and Discussion

Practices of Supervision of Staff, Curriculum and Instructional Development in Primary Schools

Table 1: One Sample t-test for Practices of Supervision in Staff, Curriculum and Instructional Development

<i>Test value = 3</i>						
<i>Practices (variables)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-critical</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Staff development	199	2.48	0.2991	24.171	198	<0.05
Curriculum development	199	2.52	0.2790	24.451	198	<0.05
Instructional development	199	2.47	0.3010	24.545	198	<0.05

Practices of Staff Development

As indicated in table 1, the one sample test value of the practice of staff development mean score is significantly lower than the mean test value ($t=-24.171$, $df=198$, $p<0.05$). This shows that the school supervisory activities in relation to staff development were not practiced well and as expected. However, the result revealed that the supervisory activities facilitate participation of teachers in continuous professional development, the availability of capacity building mechanisms, mentorship activities to assist teachers, participations of teachers in research activities and the way of strengthening the relationship among staff members were found below the expected level of performances. In consistent to this result, Amlaku (2011), found in his study that, teachers were not encouraged to improve the professional development by supervision program and staff development supervisory practices was not implemented successfully.

Practices of Curriculum Development

As shown in same table 1, the one sample test value of the practice of curriculum development mean score is significantly lower than the mean test value ($t=-24.451$, $df = 198$, $p = <0.05$). This shows that the practice of the curriculum development was at low level. In line with this result, Million (2011), found that supervisors were failed to assist teachers, in implementing the new curriculum and in evaluating the existing curriculum so as to take corrective measures.

Supervision need to focus on developing teachers' knowledge on their fields. It should enhance teachers' interest to evaluate curriculum materials and the teaching learning process. It should also assist teachers to have sufficient curricular activities, and also it should make teachers to engage in research activities and the like. As it was tested in the study, the result revealed that all this activities were not well done. This indicates the ineffective practice of curriculum development in the sample schools.

Practices of Instructional Development

In the table 1 shown above the one sample test value for the practice of instructional development mean score is significantly lower than the mean test value ($t=-24.545$, $df=198$, $p<0.05$). This shows that the practice of instructional development was not performed at the appropriate level. For items indicated to test the practices of instructional supervision, that are, the school supervisory practice to assist teachers to improve their instructional skills, usage of updated methods of instruction during supervision, increment of group effectiveness and peer supervision were not well done in the schools.

In consistent with this findings, Sintayehu (2011), showed in his study that, school

based supervision didn't focus on and facilitates instruction, did not provide teachers with up to date methods of enhancing their classroom instruction, didn't make teachers to be capable of identifying and solving instructional problems by undergoing preventive and corrective measures.

Practices of Instructional Development in Relation to Helping Teacher in Planning, Presenting, Evaluating Their Lesson and Classroom Management in Primary Schools

Table 2: One Sample t-test for Practices of Instructional Development in Relation to Helping Teacher in Planning, Presenting, Evaluating Their Lesson and Classroom Management

<i>Test value = 3</i>						
<i>Practices (variables)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-critical</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Helping teachers to plan their lesson	199	2.51	0.3237	21.092	198	<0.05
Helping teachers to present their lesson	199	2.54	0.3004	21.155	198	<0.05
Helping teachers to evaluate their lesson	199	2.58	0.3427	17.166	198	<0.05
Helping teachers in classroom management	199	2.48	0.2991	24.171	198	<0.05

Helping Teachers to Plan Their Lesson

As indicated in table 2, the results of one sample t-test shows that the practice of supervisors in helping teachers to plan their lesson mean score is significantly lower than the mean test value ($t=-21.092$, $df=198$, $p<0.05$). This indicates that supervisors practice in helping teachers to plan their lesson was not upto the level of expected performance.

The provision of assistance to teachers to plan their lesson was found below the expected performance. Supervisors were not competent to help teachers to plan their lesson and also, supervisors and teachers were not working together during planning. In addition to this, supervisors did not create model lesson plans and assist teachers to use it. Teachers were not also volunteer to meet supervisors to get help during planning. Similarly supervisors were not engaged in helping teachers during planning and also they didn't check the practicality of the lesson planned. Supporting this, Luel (2009), indicated in his study that, usage of appropriate instructional materials, checking student teacher relationships, advice giving to teacher and checking proper usage of time was found ineffective.

Helping Teachers to Present Their Lesson

As shown in table 2, the result of one sample t-test value indicates that supervisors practice in relation to helping teachers to present their lesson, mean score is significantly lower than the mean test value ($t=-21.155$, $df=198$, $p<0.05$). This shows that the practical performance of supervisors to help teachers to plan their lesson found low.

Supervisors, teachers and principals can help each other to improve the school instructional process. Teachers' good way of planning their lesson might not lead to effective presentation, unless teachers develop their presentation skills. Hence, helping teachers to present what they have planned become important. Helping

teachers during presentation of their lesson follows procedures. Supporting this, Nakpodia (2011) reported as in discharging the supervisory roles principals can help teachers for better task performances in the areas like: preparation of lesson plans and lesson notes before going for lessons; good use of instructional methods and teaching aids; keeping and maintaining of school records.

Helping Teachers to Evaluate Their Lesson

As shown in table 2 , the result of a one sample t-test shows that the practice of supervisors in helping teachers to evaluate their lesson, mean score is significantly lower than the mean test value ($t=-17.166$, $df=198$, $p<0.05$). This indicates that the supervisors practice to help teachers in evaluating their lesson was not at the expected levels of performance.

The results of this study showed that, supervisors didn't help teachers to evaluate their lesson, they didn't check the evaluation techniques used by teachers, and they didn't organize training programs to assist teachers' ways of evaluating their students. Moreover they were not able to create safe classroom as well as school environment during evaluation times and also they are not able to study problems related to evaluation. In line with this, Luel (2009) indicated in his study that supervisors and teacher ability of doing action research to solve school problems was found to be low. Organizing and arranging teachers, principals and community to improve school problems was ineffective.

Helping Teachers in Classroom Management

As shown in table 2 above, the result of one sample t-test shows that the mean score of practice of supervisors in helping teachers in classroom management is significantly lower than mean test value ($t= -21.195$, $df=198$, $p= 0,000$). This shows as supervisors practice in helping teachers to classroom management was not at the expected level of performance.

As results of the study indicated, supervisors were not able to play a role of identifying causes of behavior problems, didn't work to solve disciplinary problems, didn't engage teachers to participate in research activities to solve behavior problems, relationship between teachers and students was not to be motherly and fatherly through frequent supervision and they fail to be competent in maintaining safe school environment and classroom conditions. All these low performance were indicators of low practice of supervisors to help teachers in classroom management. Supporting this, Hoy and Miskel (2008), explained as schools are service organizations that are committed to teaching and learning, they need to be safe and conducive for the teaching learning process. A teacher not only teaches students but also manages the learning environment in such a way that learning occurs.

Problems or Challenges in Practicing Instructional Supervision in Primary Schools

Table 3: One sample t-test for Problems or Challenges in Practicing Instructional Supervision

No	Factors	Test value = 3					
		N	Mean	SD	t-critical	df	Sig.
1	Problems Related to Supervision and Supervisors	199	2.70	1.13	3.75	198	0.015
2	Problems Related to Competency Level of Supervisors	199	2.39	1.28	9.62	198	0.005

3	Problems Related to Availability of Resources	199	2.42	1.37	9.24	198	0.078
4	Communication Problems between Supervisors and Supervisees	199	2.21	1.14	6.01	198	0.033

As indicated in table 3, from the responses of teachers, principals and supervisors on the problems related to supervision and supervisors, competency level of supervisors, available of resources and communication problem between supervisors and supervisees were collected. The mean values of all the factors are lower than the mean test value (3) indicating that these problems were high.

As results revealed, supervision was viewed as fault finding rather than supporting mechanism on the average. It was not considered as a means to promote teachers profession, it was viewed as necessary and important for only new teachers, and as it was left as a task of the assigned supervisors and at the same time supervisors were considered as evaluator rather than supporters.

The results related to competence level of supervisors showed as supervisors were not competent, well trained, equipped with supervisory knowledge, and they were unable to arrange workshops, seminars and related trainings which will have a power of improving the instructional process.

In relation to availability of resources results revealed adequate budget was not allocated as needed. Supervisors were engaged on other tasks than the instructional tasks which limit them to use their full effort, lack of sufficient time to help all teachers as needed and inability of supervisors to use senior teachers as resource persons to help the supervisory tasks were observed problems. In addition to these problems the help of higher officials to school supervisors was almost none; it was focused on controlling rather than improving the performances.

Finally, regarding the problem of communication between supervisors and supervisees, results of the study showed supervisors didn't create smooth communication mechanisms as expected. They didn't allow the staff to communicate freely in every aspect of improvement of instructional supervision; this leads to anxiety of teachers during class room observation. Moreover, there was no important net worked communication channel and clearly identified

Major Findings

1) The practices of supervision in staff development, the performance of supervisors and the implementation of supervisory activities were not as expected. The supervisory activities didn't focus on facilitating teachers' participation in continuous professional development programs.

2) The practices of supervision in curriculum development, results indicated as it was poorly practiced. The supervisory activities were not enhanced the teachers interest to evaluate the curriculum in practice, it was failed to assist teachers to have the necessary curricular materials, and also it was failed to help teachers to participate in curricular activities as expected.

3) The practices of supervision in instructional development showed the supervisory performances were not fair and the supervision held in schools did not assist teachers to improve their instructional skills, updated methods of teaching.

4) Practices of instructional supervision in helping teachers to plan their lesson

revealed that supervisors were not competent to assist teachers in planning their lesson. Supervisors and teachers were not able to work together to plan and to set standards of planning. Supervisors were not engaged in assisting teachers in planning as well as in providing feed backs.

5) The results regarding the practice of supervision in helping teachers to present their lesson showed as supervisors and teachers did not conduct pre-observation, post-observation conferences and observation of the actual class room satisfactorily. Supervisors did not facilitate peer supervision among teachers to enhance their collaboration; mentors were not helpful to assist teachers in presenting their lesson as well as in developing their skills of teaching.

6) In relation to the practice of instructional supervision in helping teachers to evaluate their lessons, supervisors did not help teachers to evaluate their lesson; they did not check the evaluation mechanisms used by teachers. Furthermore, supervisors were not able to study problems related to evaluation mechanisms and to take remedial actions to solve related problems.

7) As results revealed regarding the role of instructional supervision in relation to helping teachers to class room management was not as expected. Supervisors did not play valuable roles to identify the causes of behavior problems, to solve students disciplinary problems, to engage teachers to participate in research activities to solve disciplinary problems, to create safe school environment.

8) Results regarding problems related to practical views of teachers, principals, and supervisors to supervision and supervisors were found inappropriate. Supervision was viewed as fault finding rather than supporting mechanism on the average. It was viewed as necessary and important for only new teachers, and at the same time supervisors were considered as evaluator rather than supporters.

9) The results related to competence level of supervisors showed as supervisors were not competent, well trained, equipped with supervisory knowledge, and they were unable to arrange workshops, seminars and related trainings which will have a power of improving the instructional process.

10) In relation to availability of resources, adequate budget was not allocated as needed. Supervisors were engaged on other tasks than the instructional tasks which limit them to use their full effort, lack of sufficient time to help all teachers as needed and inability of supervisors to use senior teachers as resource persons to help the supervisory tasks were observed problems.

11) Finally, regarding the problem of communication between supervisors and supervisees, supervisors didn't create smooth communication mechanisms as expected. They didn't allow the staff to communicate freely in every aspect of improvement of instructional supervision; this leads to anxiety of teachers during class room observation.

Conclusion

The practices of supervision in relation to staff, curriculum and instructional development were below the expected performances. Unless the supervisory practices focus on these domains, it might not be helpful and work for the improvement of the educational activities. Moreover, the practices of supervisors in relation to helping teachers to plan, present, evaluate their lesson and class room management were very low. The main tasks of supervisors are assisting teachers to improve their teaching

skills. For this, planning, presenting, evaluating and managing skills of teachers should be improved. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that supervisors were not effective in assisting teachers as expected. In addition to this, the problems identified as views of teachers, principals, and supervisors to supervision, and supervisors; competency level of supervisors; shortage of resources and communication problems between supervisors and supervisees were found dominant and highly affect the supervisory practices.

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