

ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION IN STRENGTHENING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Instructional supervision is an aspect of school administration that should not be taken for granted in schools. This is because when teachers are supervised in their teaching responsibilities, they tend to perform better than when left unsupervised. The supervisors consider teachers' level of knowledge, competence and experience which help to attest to their level of performance in their responsibilities in the school system. This paper is based on review of literature on the contribution of instructional supervision toward teaching and learning process. The paper clarified the terms, supervision and who is a supervisor and instructional supervision. The paper examines the concept of instructional supervision, the role of head master as a supervisor, qualities of a school supervisor, purpose of instructional supervision, problems of instructional supervision in the primary schools and finally, suggested solutions to the problems include: appointing experience and qualified supervisors, capacity building among major stakeholders and adequate funding.

keywords: Instructional supervision, supervisor, teaching, learning, head teacher

Introduction

Educational administration and supervision are now recognized as a comprehensive process that encompasses all responsibilities and functions necessary for the effective management of the education system. Increasing emphasis is placed on fostering good interpersonal relationships between headmasters and supervisors, supervisors and teachers, teachers and students, as well as institutional relationships between schools and the state, schools and the community, and within group dynamics.

Primary education refers to the stage of learning provided to children after pre-primary and before secondary education, usually between the ages of 6 and 12. Its major objectives are to prepare the individual for useful living in society and for progression to secondary education within the 6-3-3-4 system (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). For the education system to be effective, it must be reliable, and such reliability can only be strengthened through supervision, particularly effective instructional supervision. Ukeje in Ivagher, Gbough, and Mtile (2021) defined instruction as the interaction between people, materials, ideas, performances, and objects within a structured curriculum environment. It represents the activities between teacher and learner as part of the school system. Through these interactions, supervisors identify instructional challenges faced by teachers. Once such problems are identified and discussed, the supervisor recommends solutions.

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN, 2006) observed that supervision provides opportunities for teachers to be guided through the study of instructional practices and classroom interactions, enabling them to perform their teaching tasks according to professional codes of conduct. Inadequate supervision negatively affects students' learning outcomes and hinders the achievement of educational objectives. Therefore, qualified, skilled, and competent supervisors are required to ensure quality teaching and service delivery. Instructional supervision is the key to improving instruction, teacher competence, and the efficiency of the educational system. Headmasters, as catalysts, are expected to facilitate the implementation of instructional activities that will create an effective and vibrant educational system within the input–process–output

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framework. Without this, educational efforts may become unproductive (Archibong in Dangara, 2015).

Supervision of instruction is the process of promoting teachers' professional growth, improving the school curriculum, and enhancing classroom teaching methods through democratic interaction between teacher and supervisor (Okendu, 2012). It is a process in which supervisors guide and assist teachers to achieve set goals (Ivagher, Gbough, & Mtile, 2021). Instructional supervision therefore aims at strengthening relationships among educational stakeholders to achieve common objectives. It significantly improves students' academic performance by guiding teachers, encouraging professional growth, and fostering creativity, thereby enhancing the instructional process.

Concept of Supervision

The concept of supervision has been defined in various ways by different scholars. According to Moorer in Mahuta (2017), supervision involves a series of activities primarily directed toward studying and improving the conditions that support the learning and growth of pupils and teachers. The author further explains that it consists of activities designed to improve instruction across all levels of the school system. Supervision is essential in education to ensure uniformity and effectiveness in the implementation of educational programmes, as it promotes teaching and learning in schools. It includes processes such as checking, inquiry, fact-finding, monitoring, correction, prevention, inspiration, guidance, direction, diagnosis, and improvement (Olorode & Adeyemo, 2012).

Eya and Leonard (2012) describe supervision as a process of stimulating growth and assisting teachers in improving their instructional practices. In their view, supervision involves improving instruction by working collaboratively with teachers for the benefit of pupils. Anangahana (2020) emphasizes that supervision does not mean fault-finding but rather a process of providing guidance, support, and idea-sharing among all those involved in teaching and learning. It also involves creating a conducive environment, encouraging creativity, and ensuring continuous improvement.

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Supervision herefore assists both teachers and learners in realizing and applying their potential. It involves examining the learning environment, curriculum, school facilities, and instructional equipment to improve them in ways that facilitate learning. Ultimately, supervision enables teachers and students to apply their energies toward solving individual and collective problems and achieving educational goals effectively.

Who is a Supervisor?

According to Hazi (2004), a supervisor is any certified individual assigned with the responsibility of directing and guiding the work of teaching staff. This means that the supervisor assists teachers in performing better through collaborative efforts. Ogunsaju in Ekundayo, Oyerinde, and Kolawole (2013) described the supervisor as the mediator between the people and the programme, responsible for designing various methods of supervision to achieve the educational objectives of the institution. Similarly, Olele in Kiadese (2000) defined the supervisor as a person who manages both human and material resources within the school system for effective utilization. Eya and Leonard (2012) further explained that a supervisor is anyone whose role is to help teachers improve their instructional competencies. In essence, the supervisor is expected to support teachers in maximizing available resources to achieve school objectives.

Concept of Instructional Supervision

Instructional supervision is defined as the process of improving teaching and learning through cooperative activities and democratic relationships among all those involved in education (Mohammed, Yusuf & Sanni, 2014). According to Okendu (2012), supervision of instruction enhances learning by identifying and addressing instructional problems. Ekundayo, Oyerinde, and Kolawole (2013) view instructional supervision as a supportive relationship in which the supervisor guides teachers to achieve set targets, thereby fostering collaboration between supervisors and stakeholders to meet educational objectives. Similarly, Tesfaw and Hofman (2012) describe it as a process of guiding, stimulating, and assisting teachers through appraisal and professional practices.

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Instructional supervision is therefore a service activity designed to help teachers improve their performance (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001). It consists of activities aimed at enhancing teaching and learning for the benefit of students. Ekundayo, Oyerinde, and Kolawole (2013) also noted that it directly influences teacher behaviour in ways that improve student learning and promote the achievement of school goals. Through effective supervision, teaching practices are strengthened, leading to improved academic performance. Instructional supervision in secondary schools, in particular, is focused on supporting teachers to improve instruction by encouraging behavioural change and professional growth.

The Role of Headmaster as a Supervisor

According to Okendu (2012), the head teacher, as the overall supervisor of the school, performs the following functions:

1. Ensuring that every staff member carries out their assigned duties.
2. Organizing the timetable and daily routines to ensure the smooth running of educational activities.
3. Conducting regular classroom visits to observe and assist teachers where necessary.
4. Providing adequate instructional materials such as chalk and textbooks.
5. Maintaining good relationships with staff members in order to motivate them.
6. Promoting innovation within the school.
7. Identifying educational problems within the school and finding solutions to them.
8. Keeping proper school records, including admission registers, class registers, curricula, and syllabi.
9. Holding regular staff meetings to discuss important issues affecting the smooth flow of school activities.
10. Enforcing discipline among staff and students.
11. Enhancing student learning and ensuring that educational objectives are achieved.
12. Inspecting school facilities to ensure they are properly maintained and effectively utilized.

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Qualities of a School Supervisor

A professional school supervisor is expected to possess certain essential qualities. According to Mahuta (2017), these include:

1. **Experience and Seniority:** The supervisor should be a highly experienced teacher and educational administrator, not below Grade Level 13 and with at least 15 years of experience. This ensures respect for his authority and acceptance of his guidance by headmasters and teachers.
2. **Professional Training:** The supervisor must be a professionally trained teacher with appropriate qualifications such as B.Ed, M.Ed, or Ph.D. in Education. This provides both theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching and administration.
3. **Technical Skills:** He must be familiar with teaching methods and able to prepare comprehensive supervisory reports.
4. **Human Relations Skills:** The supervisor should be a good listener, capable of addressing others' concerns, and able to communicate logically, convincingly, and respectfully.
5. **Cognitive Skills:** He should demonstrate intelligence in problem-solving, critical analysis, integration of information, and decision-making.
6. **Knowledge of Specialization:** The supervisor must have sound knowledge of his area of specialization and be able to apply and demonstrate it effectively to others.
7. **Critical and Analytical Ability:** He should be able to critically analyze issues, synthesize information, and provide appropriate guidance.
8. **Leadership in School Climate:** He must help create a positive and effective school environment that motivates teachers, students, and other staff to perform at their best.
9. **Personal Qualities:** The supervisor should be tolerant, sympathetic, patient, approachable, flexible, and honest.

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Reasons for Instructional Supervision

The supervisor plays a vital role in enhancing teaching and learning. According to Mahuta (2017), the reasons of instructional supervision include the following:

1. **Monitoring Student Progress:** To determine students' progress and identify problems affecting their learning, so that effective strategies can be adopted to address them.
2. **Assessing Staff Performance:** To evaluate the performance of teachers, headmasters, and support staff, and to identify challenges that hinder their effectiveness. This helps in developing ways to motivate school personnel for greater efficiency.
3. **Evaluating School Facilities:** To assess the condition of school facilities in order to determine their adequacy, level of deterioration, and sustainability for effective teaching and learning.
4. **Ensuring Proper Record-Keeping:** To examine how school records are maintained, ensuring accuracy, decency, and accessibility for administrative purposes.
5. **Reviewing Teaching and Administrative Procedures:** To evaluate how teaching methods and administrative practices are applied for the successful running of school activities.
6. **Assessing Instructional Materials:** To determine the availability, adequacy, and sustainability of instructional resources, and to identify which teaching aids should be supplied, repaired, or replaced for continuous use.
7. **Enforcing Educational Policies:** To ensure compliance with state and national policies and regulations guiding educational activities in schools.
8. **Introducing Innovation:** To promote new changes and innovations in educational practices in line with modern trends.

Potential Implications of Poor or Zero Instructional Supervision on Teaching and Learning

1. **Decline in Teaching Quality:** Without effective supervision, teachers may continue using outdated or ineffective teaching strategies. Supervisors provide guidance on

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- instructional methods, and their absence allows poor practices to persist, reducing the quality of classroom delivery (Okendu, 2012).
2. **Lack of Professional Growth:** Supervision offers teachers opportunities for mentoring, feedback, and continuous improvement. In its absence, teachers are deprived of constructive criticism that enhances their professional competence (Akinfolarin & Ezeugo, 2019).
 3. **Low Student Achievement:** Poor instructional supervision negatively affects students' academic outcomes because ineffective teaching methods are left unchecked. This leads to a decline in learners' comprehension, participation, and performance (Ogunu, 2000).
 4. **Poor Classroom Management:** Supervisors help teachers develop effective classroom control techniques. Lack of supervision often results in weak discipline and poor student behavior, which disrupts the learning environment (Nwankwo, 2014).
 5. **Reduced Teacher Motivation:** Regular supervision motivates teachers to perform better. Without it, teachers may feel neglected and undervalued, leading to low morale and reduced commitment to their duties (Ijeoma & Onyekuru, 2015).
 6. **Stagnation in Innovation:** Supervisors introduce teachers to new pedagogical methods and technology. When supervision is absent, teachers may rely solely on traditional methods, limiting innovation in the classroom (Asiyai, 2020).
 7. **Widening Learning Gaps:** Students with special needs or learning difficulties often require targeted instructional approaches. Weak supervision results in these gaps being ignored, creating inequality in learning outcomes (Peretomode, 2012).
 8. **Poor Curriculum Implementation:** Instructional supervisors ensure that curriculum guidelines are followed. Without monitoring, teachers may deviate from prescribed content or skip vital components, leading to inconsistency in educational delivery (Akpan, 2014).
 9. **Erosion of Accountability:** Supervision enforces responsibility in teaching. Where there is no monitoring, teachers may become complacent, leading to absenteeism, incomplete lesson delivery, and negligence (Olorunsola, 2010).

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10. **Low School Standards:** A lack of supervision lowers overall institutional effectiveness. The reputation, academic standing, and public trust in schools decline as teaching and learning processes weaken (Ayeni, 2012).
11. **Negative Student Attitudes:** Poorly supervised teachers may fail to engage students effectively, making learners lose interest and motivation in education. This can result in truancy and poor attitudes towards school (Adepoju, 1998).
12. **Wasted Educational Resources:** Investment in training, infrastructure, and teaching materials becomes ineffective without supervision to ensure proper usage and implementation (Uche, 2011).
13. **Increased Teacher–Student Conflicts:** Lack of guidance may make teachers adopt harsh disciplinary measures or ineffective methods, which can cause tension and conflicts between teachers and learners (Nwagwu, 1976).
14. **Difficulty in Policy Implementation:** Supervisors act as a bridge between policy and classroom practice. Their absence hinders the implementation of new educational reforms and policies (Peretomode, 2012).
15. **Long-term Decline in Educational Outcomes:** Persistent poor supervision leads to systemic educational failure, producing poorly skilled graduates who cannot compete effectively in society (Ayeni, 2012).

Conclusion

Instructional supervision remains a cornerstone for achieving quality teaching and learning in schools. The absence or weakness of supervision creates a chain of negative effects, including poor teaching quality, reduced teacher motivation, weak curriculum implementation, and low student achievement. Over time, this not only undermines the professional growth of teachers but also widens learning gaps, erodes accountability, and lowers the overall standards of education. To prevent long-term decline in educational outcomes, it is imperative that school leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders strengthen supervisory practices and provide continuous professional support for teachers. Effective instructional supervision fosters innovation,

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accountability, and improved student learning experiences, thereby ensuring that education fulfills its role as a tool for national development.

Suggestions

In order to prevent the implications of the poor or zero instructional supervision in schools as discussed above, the following views should be considered and put into use.

1. **Strengthen Supervisory Structures:** Education authorities should establish well-defined supervisory frameworks at primary and secondary school levels to ensure regular monitoring and support for teachers.
2. **Capacity Building for Supervisors:** Supervisors should be trained in modern supervisory techniques, leadership, and mentoring skills to enable them provide constructive and supportive guidance rather than fault-finding.
3. **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Teachers:** Regular workshops, seminars, and in-service training should be organized to enhance teachers' instructional skills and keep them updated with innovative teaching strategies.
4. **Provision of Resources for Supervision:** Adequate funding, teaching materials, and logistical support (such as transport and ICT tools) should be provided to enable supervisors to perform their duties effectively.
5. **Collaborative Supervision Approach:** Supervision should be participatory, encouraging collaboration between supervisors and teachers, thereby fostering professional trust, motivation, and willingness to improve.
6. **Integration of ICT in Supervision:** Digital tools and platforms should be utilized for supervision to track teacher performance, provide virtual support, and ensure accountability, especially in remote areas.
7. **Policy Enforcement and Accountability:** Ministries of Education should enforce policies that make instructional supervision a compulsory and routine exercise, with clear accountability measures for both supervisors and teachers.

8. **Encouraging Peer Supervision:** Schools should adopt peer supervision models where teachers observe and provide feedback to one another, promoting teamwork and shared responsibility for instructional improvement.
9. **Motivation and Incentives for Teachers:** Teachers should be rewarded for improved performance and innovation in teaching, as recognition motivates them to maintain high standards in instructional delivery.
10. **Regular Evaluation of Supervision Practices:** Supervisory processes should be periodically evaluated to identify weaknesses and improve their effectiveness in promoting teaching and learning.

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