

Teacher Supervision Support and Its Impact on Professional Development of Teachers in Primary Schools

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Abstract:- This paper discusses the finding of the study conducted to explore professional support strategies planned by the head teacher to assist the supervisors and teachers to carry out their instructional duties. The study employs qualitative research with the total of 14 participants including the head teacher, senior teachers and assistant teachers. The reason for using purposive sampling to select the research site was due to financial and time limitations. The findings show that supervisors were inadequately supported on supervision training and induction to equip them perform their supervisory duties effectively. As a result, conventional supervision strategies using observation checklist, conferencing and sectional in-service were the dominant supervision techniques employed to supervise teachers. In order for supervision to improve, the supervisors are of the view that supervision training and induction are necessary support strategies to equip the supervisors with necessary knowledge and skills to equip them execute their supervisory responsibilities. The study also found that supervision has a tremendous impact in improving teacher's instructional skills and fosters teacher motivation which contributes significantly to their continuous professional development.

Keywords:- *Teacher Supervision, Supervision Strategies, Conferencing, Supervisory Visits, Observation Checklist, In-Service.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Supervision plays a significant role in the enterprise of teaching and learning. Quality teaching occurs when the supervisor continuously interact with teachers and students to provide mediated assistance to improve instructional practices in the classroom. The supervisor guides, directs and provide leadership to ensure that teachers are performing their duties according to the organizational goals and aspiration of the school. As Rashid (2001) explains, teaching and supervision are bound together and mutually reflect and reinforce one another. In expounding this, Nolan & Hoor (2004 as cited in Burant, 2009) posit that when the supervision is strengthened in schools it builds a strong foundation of teacher growth and in turn improves student learning outcomes positively.

In his discussion paper, Kants (2008) however, pointed that lack of supervision and limited support in professional development of field teachers were among the many factors that caused the dramatic downfall of students' academic results in the mainstream schools in PNG. Teacher supervision is the immediate intervention that deals directly with the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. The supervisor potentially close the skill and knowledge gaps encountered in the teaching process. For effective teaching and learning to occur, supervisors need to be empowered with necessary professional support to enhance their supervisory skills to provide sound subjective assessment on teachers performance so that they can supervise and mentor the teachers well.

Instructional deficiencies creeps in when supervision is weak. Glickman, Gorden, and Ros-Gorden (1998) concurs that supervision hinges on teacher effectiveness that significantly contributes to the success of the school. When teacher supervision is not given attention in schools, with very little support to equip the supervisors to undertake their supervisory roles, the Governments attempt to provide quality education will remain to fail. Therefore, this research aims to find out what support strategies are inbuilt in schools to assist the senior teachers to carry out their supervisory responsibilities effectively.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the Governments attempt to invest much of its resources to support education, quality of education remains the biggest challenge for main stream schools in Papua New Guinea. Research evidence reveals that academic results in literacy and numeracy have been very poor in this current times. For example, comprehensive assessment study conducted by Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Madang, National Capital District and East New Britain in 2011 and 2012 found that student's progress to read unfamiliar text and comprehension level were slow because teachers lack language teaching skills and strategies to teach the students (Machuca-Sierra;De-Silva;William,2011). Consistent with this finding, Czuba Report (2013) affirms that low performance standard among other things is attributed to teaching quality. The teachers are the key players who facilitate teaching and learning. Behind the teachers are the supervisors whose prime function is to ensure that teachers are guided, mentored and directed adequately to deliver quality teaching and learning. Thus,

supervisors are part of the blame and solution to the critical issue of academic downfall.

Aina (1994) argues that the downfall of academic standard may critically be considered as a professional crisis and not necessarily undermining the capability of teachers to struggle in reaching the set standards. Teachers have the innate ability to do better but necessary assistance by the supervisor is crucial to enhance teacher's professional growth. In exemplifying this, Ajayi (1997) reveals in the discussion paper that students adversely suffer at the hands of teachers because supervision was weak in the school. Teachers could absent from instructional duties as supervisory support interventions were not in place. Fagbamiye (2004) concurred that lack of commitment from the supervisors is imminent in schools which undermine quality output from the teachers. The reasons for such a lack of supervision by the supervisors were given in the case Study conducted in Papua New Guinea with the total number of ten (10) participants by (Deruage, 2007) on beginning primary teachers induction and mentoring (supervising) found that supervisors resort to give minimal attention to supervision due to lack of supervisory skills and knowledge to execute their roles effectively. It was found that there was lack of training and induction for the supervisors in the school to better equip them and give them the courage and confidence to carry out the supervisory responsibility. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the phenomenon of how senior teachers are supported by the head teachers and explore strategies that are in place to support teacher professional growth in the supervision process.

III. METHODOLOGY

To understand and explore the professional support interventions in the research site, the qualitative method was employed. The reason for using purposive sampling to select the research site was due to financial and time limitations. Semi-structured Interviews, document analysis and classroom observation were the data collection methods used to obtain data to answer the research questions pertaining to exploring the professional support strategies that are provided to assist the supervisors.

- What professional strategies are in place to support supervisors to execute their duties?
- What professional supervision strategies are used by the supervisors to observe teachers lessons ?
- What are the teachers perceived benefits of supervision?

The questions were used to generate data to inform the study on how supervisors dispense their role to provide professional support to teachers in the school site and how teacher supervision turn to impact professional growth of teachers.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To gain in-depth insight on the support strategies in place for the senior teachers, interview was conducted with the head teacher to find out what strategies were used to assist supervisors to perform their supervisory responsibilities. The research findings were presented below.

➤ *Supervision training*

Senior teachers play crucial role in providing leadership and guidance to subordinate's to ensure quality outcomes of teaching and learning are achieved. For this to happen, adequate support through the use of strategies is essential to prepare supervisors so that necessary assistance and guidance is offered to teachers to improve their practice. Supervision strategies in this context means ways or approaches head teacher use to assist senior teachers to understand and dispense their supervisory role effectively.

The head teacher was interviewed whether supervision training was planned and delivered to senior teachers to prepare them perform their responsibilities. It was found that there was no formal in-service in place to up-skill the supervisors to prepare them for their supervisory role. As a result, supervisory effectiveness had been hampered because senior teachers were inappropriately tooled to make supervision effective.

The supporting data were obtained from the head teacher and senior teachers during the semi-structured interview.

HT: *“This area Is overlooked in my yearly planner and not done in the school based in-service training programs”*

ST1 *There was no in-service training program in place in the school to acquire new skills and knowledge for us to improve our supervision skills.*

Another senior teacher admitted that there was no planned In-service program for the supervisors in the senior teacher's professional development. He further added “there was no discussion about supervision in our professional meeting and training”

Researcher: *I went to the head teachers office in which I was given the permission to check the displays in the office. I also asked him if I could view the in-service plan. There was no supervision training in-service plan and induction program in the head teacher's office. This clearly shows that in-service training was not planned to help the senior teachers.*

The data found that supervisors in the research site were inadequately trained to equip them with skills and knowledge on supervision. Research studies in other countries found that lack of training for supervisors was among the many reasons for ineffective supervision in primary school (Fagbamiye, 2004; Ekywa, 2014; Onum,

2016; Tesema, 2014). Such a lack is an obstacle to the supervisors (Merga, 2007) which adversely hampers the professional development of teachers.

As a consequence, Harris (1976) describes the struggle of supervisors with inadequacy of skills as ‘foundering, inundated by teacher competence, over-worked and over-extended’ (pg. 333).The supervisors continue to use the obsolete techniques of supervision that may negate the spirit of supervision in schools.

➤ *Induction*

Induction situation occurs when the most experience teacher is promoted to take up the new role and responsibility or when teachers move to a new work environment (Deruage, 2007). The head teacher and the newly appointed senior teacher were interviewed whether induction was in place to support new senior teachers who have been appointed to assume the role of supervisors. The finding shows that there was no induction carried out in the research site.

When the head teacher was asked on what professional interventions were applied to assist the newly appointed senior teacher, the head teacher further explains that the formal dialogue was held to brief the supervisor on the expectations and basic functions of supervision in the areas of familiarization visits, process of conferencing and use of observation checklist.

Induction is essential to help new senior teachers orient themselves with the supervision protocols and procedures. The newly appointed senior teacher pointed out;

ST I am promoted to senior teacher’s position this year. I have not attended any Induction session with the head teacher to get myself abreast of the use of new supervision documents and also procedures of supervision.

This data suggests that head teacher did not devote much time to support the newly appointed supervisor to assume the supervisory responsibilities. Vygotsky (1978) argues with his theory of proximal development that adults are also learners and their potential development is determined under the mediated assistance and guidance of the more capable peer. One to assume the instructional responsibility of a supervisor require necessary guidance, in this case the head teacher is the capable peer to provide induction on the process and approaches of supervision.

➤ *Views of senior teachers.*

Senior teachers were interviewed to seek their view on some ways they could suggest to improve their practice as supervisors. From the interviews, participants hold strong views that ongoing professional development is crucial to prepare the senior teachers. The particular mention of the needy areas are supervision training and induction seeing as vital tools for their professional growth. This is supported with the following excerpts from the participant’s interview.

ST 1: “I need supervision training to equip me to understand my role better in order to help teachers”

ST2: “As a new supervisor, I feel the need for in-service training or induction to improve my current practice.”

ST3: “supervision checklists given by the head teacher with brief explanation is not helpful. In- service is required to help me understand so that I can effectively implement it.

These views are supported with the document analysis which spells out the expectations and aspiration of NDoE with emphasis on training and induction training to be offered to senior teachers.

➤ *Documentary analysis;*

National Department of Education through the Standards and Inspections Division suggested needs based in-service as a supervision strategy to assist the teachers.

| Supervision strategy | Expected specific outcome |
|------------------------|--|
| Needs based in-service | In-service is tailored to address individual teachers need |
| | Senior staff draw up internal staff training plan |
| | Provide avenue for teacher to grow professionally |
| | Improve work output from all teachers |
| | Staff are proactive and well informed |

Fig 1:- Supervision and Management Reform Handout (NDOE, 2005)

This data suggests that training and induction were the preferred strategies head teacher will use to fit in the school annual plan. The document shown in figure 1 suggests that In-service and Induction plans designed for the senior teachers has to reflect senior teacher’s needs aimed at teacher growth. Priority areas for in-service will be documented and put on the yearly planner absorbed in the training plan. This plan has to be articulated to the senior teachers and

effectively implemented to strengthen supervision training and induction.

➤ *Supervision strategies in place to supervise teachers.*

Supervision strategies refer to ways, methods or techniques supervisors use to observe teachers performance in discharging their instructional duties. Supervisors were interviewed to explore types of strategies employed to help the classroom teachers to improve their instructional and

professional responsibilities. The identified strategies are discussed below;

➤ *Observation Checklist*

The research found that the dominant supervision strategy used by the supervisors to monitor and direct the performance of the teachers were the observation checklists. The performance of teachers are rated using a predetermine checklist. Supervisors find this supervision strategy liberating as it saves time and resources. This is supported in the Supervisors excerpts.

ST 1 “I give the checklist containing expectation to my supervisee to prepare prior to my visit. There is not much writing involved, I only rate the performance using the grades A, B, C, D “

The supervisor explains how the observation checklist was used to observe the teachers work.

S2 “The checklist contain set of competence with ratings using letters to determine teacher’s performance”

The supervisor added that the predetermined checklist containing the desired competencies is used to check against the teacher’s performance. The areas of weaknesses are identifies for the teacher to work towards improving the instructional gaps.

The supervisors were also interviewed on what course of actions taken to remedy to minimize the weak areas identified in teachers during supervision so that professional growth of teachers are ensued. The supervisor had to respond;

S2 “The use of the checklist is of great help to point out the identified hot spots and gaps in teachers practices and use them as the basis of sectional in-service”.

The data found that teachers still use the conventional way of supervising teachers by using the observation checklist to determine teacher’s performance. The data also suggest that supervisors use the results from the observation checklist to plan for sectional in-service to improve the instructional deficiencies identified in the supervision process.

➤ *Sectional in-service*

The finding shows that sectional in-service is another supervision strategy senior teacher used. The senior teacher describes the desirable steps involved in helping the teachers to improve their teaching and other aspects of their professional duties. It follows a routine from the observation checklist where teacher’s data is gathered and further translated into topics to be facilitated in the sectional in-service to improve in the instructional deficiencies of teachers. This finding is tied with Cogen (1973) suggestion

that the supervisor in collaboration with the teacher is expected to put a plan of possible action into a sectional in-service after the entire cycle of supervision.

This is supported in the senior teachers excerpt;

S2 Sectional In-service topics are based on the teachers weaknesses spotted during the classroom supervision. During in-service sessions supplementary handouts are provided to help the teacher improve in their practice.

The data suggests that sectional in-service is the appropriate strategy to assist the teachers following with the conferencing sessions. Ekywa as cited in (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 1998) stated that the needs of the teachers are identified through data gathered during supervision and further in-service them to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers. This promotes teacher-centered approach of supervision and not supervisor centered where the efforts of the teacher is self-directed with the autonomy to make reflective decision for improvement. The approach allow the teacher to reflect and take responsible actions to improve and make a lasting change in the instructional and professional practices.

➤ *Conferencing*

The research finding shows that conferencing technique was used to assist the teacher to improve on the weaknesses identified during supervision. This finding is in line with the discussion done by (Ekyaw, 2014) that effective supervision occurs when the supervision technique is appropriate to the instructional and professional needs of teachers. The data gathered from semi-structured interviews with the senior teacher reveals that the supervisor and the teacher established a formal dialogue to discuss the outcome of the classroom observation. The basis of discussion was drawn from the comments made in the advisory visit done by the supervisor. Possible suggestions for improvements were discussed during the conferencing session.

The assistant teacher was also interviewed to seek her view on the type of approach used by the supervisor to assist her. The teacher was happy with this approach because proper advice and direction was offered by the supervisor how to improve her filing system. And also she was given the opportunity by the supervisor to suggest possible ways or course of actions to improve her own mistakes. The teachers positive view of Conferencing is consistent with the discussion by Ekywa as cited in (Zepeda and Ponticell, 1998) affirms that teachers had positive view of supervision when the supervisor work side by side with the teacher to offer direct assistance and guidance.

From the semi-structured interview on the support interventions given by the field supervisors, supervision model framework is developed to assist the senior teachers in the supervision process.



Fig 1:- Cyclical supervision model
Source: Philemon Antonio

This model shows that supervision cycle begins with the classroom observation using the predetermined checklist to determine teacher competence. Conferencing is conducted where the supervisor enter into collaboration with the teacher to discuss the outcome of the supervision. Morris & Cogan, cited in (Acheson and Gall,1977) explain that basic premise is for the supervisor to work with the teachers in a good collegial manner to provide necessary skills, knowledge and values in order to 'direct the efforts of the teacher to align the instruction from what it is lacking, to what it should be attained and demonstrated . Gaps and hot spots identified are strategically put in the plan of action and further translated into topics for sectional in-service. In the process, the supervisor works with the teacher collectively to provide direction and support and direct the efforts of the teacher in an attempt to enhance professional growth of teachers in turn effect learning outcomes. It is suggested that supervisors should adopt the model as the process is cyclical than linear which means that supervision process does not end but continuous as a cycle. This model resonates well with the suggestions by (Richard, Sullivan, Jerry & Wircenski, 2016) for supervisors to have a paradigm shift to encourage appropriate approach of supervision that is interactive than directive, democratic rather than authoritarian, teacher centered rather than supervisor centered.

❖ *Impact of supervision on teacher's performance*

➤ *Teachers perceived benefits of supervision*

Teachers and supervisors were interviewed to ascertain how supervision contributes to the professional growth of teachers. Their perceptions were based on their interpretation using their professional experiences of how they view supervision in terms of professional development of teachers.

Three emerging themes are drawn from the semi-structured interviews and discussed respectively.

➤ *Supervision Improve teachers Instructional practices.*

It is generally known that supervision promotes teacher efficiency in all aspects of teaching and learning. The junior teacher was interviewed to find out how supervision contributes to his work performance. The qualitative data found that teacher supervision has enormous impact in improving teachers work performance in classroom administration, planning and programming, instructional skills and professionalism. This finding is supported with the interview excerpts;

AT 4 supervision conducted by the supervisor has helped me to organize the classroom records systematically, improved classroom organization and also improved my teaching skills in lesson presentation.

Researcher: *I conducted the first observation with the class teacher following with post conferencing to suggest areas for improvement in lesson observation and classroom organization. The follow-up visit was made to check the impact of the comments made during the first observation in lesson observation and classroom organization. Predetermined checklist was also used. From the observation, there were evidence of improvements in lesson presentation and class control. For example, she managed to apply appropriate strategies using eye contact, pausing to catch student with off-task behavior and also posing question to students who were making noise.*

The teacher also improved in her classroom organization compared with the previous observation. There was improvement in students corner with the design of learning stations. The teachers file was improved and systematically organized. Classroom routines such as discipline charts and class behavior guidelines were put up. Students hand out were made available prior to teaching. Dressing was descent with good professional outlook compared to the previous observation.

This data found that the outcome of supervision is the tremendous improvement over teacher's instructional practices in terms of improved teaching skills, classroom organisation, professional development. Similar study carried out by (Sule, Ameh, & Egbai, 2015) established the same finding that frequent supervision improves teachers performance in the classroom. Glickman (2001) concurred that supervision promotes teacher efficiency that leads to strong contribution to the professional growth of teachers.

➤ *Foster Teacher Motivation*

Teachers view supervision as a boost which contributes significantly to their continuous professional improvement. This is supported with the teacher's responses in the semi-structured interview;

AT 6 *“I feel motivated to work when the supervisor frequently comes for classroom observation”*

AT 7 *“ Yes, I would say that the supervision is good because when I know that the supervisor is coming I prepare the best I could “*

AT 8 *Supervisors comments in my work gives me sense of appreciation of my work and I also feel valued. Critical comments in my weaknesses are also helpful because it directs me to do the right thing*

On the contrary, when supervisors are not devoted for supervision, teachers feel demotivated to work. The teacher pointed out her dissatisfaction;

AT 9 *‘my supervisor does not come around to observe my lessons and I am not in the good mood of working’*. Another teacher had to say

AT 10 *“supervisor comes once in a term which is not good. I am not really motivated to work because no one is recognising my time and effort in what I put in my work.”*

This data suggest that regular supervision fosters teacher motivation to work hard with high expectation for success. When supervision is weak it hampers the teacher’s effectiveness and quality teaching and learning is compromised which largely affects students’ academic attainments.

Feedback with comments made by supervisors are beneficial because it encourages teachers to develop culture of good performance. This is consistent with Kolb (2000) in his discussion on the theory of Maslows Hiearchical need that self-actualisation need where supervision is situated is the highest degree of human motivational factor. It is the need that relates to helping teachers enhance their full potential to grow professionally through supervision. In the similar vein, constructive comments from the supervisors make teachers feel motivated and feel with sense of satisfaction in their work achievement.

One of the teacher made a comment;

AT10 *“I prefer my supervisor to work along with me to get tasks done because when I do something new in a creative way, I am commended on the spot thus motivates me try new skills”*.

Another teacher says;

“working together with my supervisor is enjoyable as we discover new ways of doing things which gives me the urge to work”

One of the teacher had to say;

“Working together with the supervisor is a good learning experience as I learn a lot and that gives me the courage to work extra mile”

Glickman (2001) affirm that teacher’s motivation for development is enhanced when there is close supervision. It stimulates teachers to engage in new activities and put forth that extra effort (Eugene, 1992). Frequent supervision make teachers work smarter and harder” (Leitwood, 1992). Kolb (2000) arguably stated that what matters to individual is the need to grow, develop skills and abilities and to achieve mastery. Supervision provides that platform to give the mediated assistance to develop teacher’s professional and instructional skills for improving teaching process.

V. CONCLUSION

The finding of the research answer the three question, what strategies are in place to support supervisors to execute their duties? What professional supervision strategies for teachers are in place? What are the teachers perceived benefits of supervision? The research finding show that the dominant supervision strategies were observation checklist, conferencing and sectional in-service. The supervisors hold strong views that supervision training and induction are necessary interventions as support strategies for the purpose of up-skilling supervisors with new knowledge and skills in supervision situations. It is generally known that supervision promotes teacher efficiency which is supported in this research finding that supervision improve teacher’s instructional skills and fosters teacher motivation which significantly improves professional growth. The proposed supervision framework on professional support intervention is developed to assist the onsite school based supervisors to improve their practice.

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