

## **Supervisory Functions of Secondary School Principals and Factors Competing With These Functions**

Osakwe, Regina N. (Ph.D.)

*Department Of Educational Administration And Policy Studies, Faculty Of Education, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria*

---

**Abstract:** *Educational supervision has passed through various phases in Nigeria. It is regarded as one of the essential functions which principals perform to achieve the objectives of the school system. This study focuses on issues related to the supervisory functions or secondary school principals and factors competing with them. It highlights the required skills and personal traits, the techniques of supervision and the basic principles for effective supervision by principals. Finally, the study drew conclusions and made recommendations that will improve the supervisory functions of principals despite the existence of competing factors.*

**Keywords:** *Supervision, Principals, Supervisory functions, Competing factors, Secondary schools, Delta State, Nigeria.*

---

### **I. Introduction**

Supervision of instruction in Nigeria has passed through various stages of evolution since colonial times. Instructional supervision is one of the indispensable functions necessary for effective operations of a good school system. It is for this reason that various tiers of government throughout history set up a special division under the ministry of education to perform this function thereby assisting school principals to supervise their schools.

Nwaham (2008) says supervision of instruction plays a vital role at assisting, guiding and stimulating the teachers to improve on their teaching skills and experience as well as enhance their professional growth. She sees supervision of instruction as an improvement of the teaching-learning process for the utmost benefit of students. Supervision, according to Retting (2007), provides opportunities for teachers to be groomed through a discursive critical study of classroom interaction. It helps them to carry out their teaching tasks in line with professional codes of conduct. Also, Osakwe (2010) sees supervision as the provision of professional assistance and guidance geared towards the achievement of effective teaching and learning to teachers and students in the school system. Therefore, the principals should adopt methods, principles and functions that are necessary to achieve educational goals.

Arinze (2004) opines that success of supervisory management often depends on insight into delicate and intangible issues; insight, which does not always come easily to the down-to-earth man. This is important because the secondary school principal is super-ordinate who should influence the beliefs and behaviour of teachers and also serve as watch dog to the educational systems through observation, modification, and correction of teachers. He is the chief resident supervisor of the school and the one who should aid teachers to be in a vantage position to function efficiently.

Most teachers in Nigeria secondary schools and in Delta State in particular need to be directed, controlled and threatened when the need arises so as to get them put adequate effort towards the realization of educational goals. This is because secondary school teachers of today no longer seem to take interest in performing their duties adequately. What matters most to teachers of this age is “mini business”, which put additional monies in their pockets. There are pathetic cases of teachers truancy, especially in rural secondary schools, where female teachers use lesson periods for breaking of melon or fetching of water and the male teachers use school hours for “turning round” “Okada riding”. Such teachers require close supervision by school principals to put them back on track. This study will focus on the following:

- Skills and traits needed by principals for effective supervision.
- Techniques of effective supervision.
- Basic principles for effective supervision by principals.
- Functions of the school principal as a supervisor.
- Factors competing with supervisory functions of principals.

### **II. Skills And Traits Needed By Principals For Effective Supervision.**

Beach and Judy (2000) referred to the skills needed by supervisors (principals) as “skill-mix”, consisting of technical, managerial, and human relations skills. On the identification of supervisory proficiencies, Pejak (2000) identified twelve domains, with relevant knowledge, attitude and skills as follows:

- Staff development: Developing and facilitating meaningful opportunities for professional growth; for example, seminars, workshops, and in-service training.
- Planning and change: Initiating and implementing, collaboratively, developed strategies for continuous improvement.
- Communication: Ensuring open and clear communication among individuals and groups through the school.
- Curriculum: Coordinating and integrating the process of curriculum development and implementation.
- Instructional programme: Supporting and coordinating efforts to improve instructional programme.
- Service to teachers: Providing materials, resources, and assistance to support teaching and learning.
- Observation and conferencing: Providing feedback to teachers based on classroom observation.
- Problem solving and decision making: Using a variety of strategies to clarify and analyze problems and to make decisions.
- Research and programme evaluation: Encouraging experimentation and assessing outcomes.
- Motivating and organizing: Helping people to develop shared vision and achieve collective aims.
- Personal development: Recognizing and reflecting upon one's personal and professional beliefs, abilities and actions.
- Community relations: Establishing and maintaining open and productive relations between the school and its community.

Cohen (2000) suggested that the principal as a supervisor is expected to possess the following traits, knowledge and skills:

- The successful supervisor is in constant contact with people and should possess the personal traits of warmth, friendliness, patience, and a sense of humor that are essential not only to supervision by also to teaching.
- As a service-oriented agent of improvement, the supervisor must be imbued with the spirit counsellors refer to as “the helping relationship”; that is, the desire to be of assistance to others.
- The supervisor needs the kind of persuasiveness and infectious enthusiasm that inspires teachers to want to make changes for the better.
- The supervisor should be an “ideal person”, one who leads people to think about new and improve ways of doing things. He or she needs to convey the attitude of valuing and seeking the idea of others while not appearing to have answers to all the problems teachers face.
- The supervisor should be able to effect a democratic environment in which the contributions of each participating member is valued.
- The supervisor needs to possess a predisposition to change and must constantly promote improvement.
- The supervisor, above all, must be able to live with change and help teachers adapt to the changing needs of society and of children and youth. To accomplish this mission, the supervisor should be able to work effectively in both one-to-one relationship and groups.

In order to perform effectively, Marczely (2001) says that the supervisor must possess a broad knowledge of both general and professional nature and be able to translate that knowledge into skilful practice. The broad knowledge include a sound general education programme, a thorough pre-service professional education programme, a major field of study, a solid graduate programme in supervision and three to five years of successful teaching in secondary school.

In pre-service and in-service training programmes, supervisors should develop a ground in learning theory and educational psychology, history of education (especially of curriculum and instruction development), the role of the school society, curriculum development, instructional design and methods, group dynamics, conferencing and counselling, and assessment of teachers performance.

### **III. Techniques Of Effective Supervision**

Egwunyenga (2006) opines that there are various techniques of supervisions, but that the most acceptable and commonly practiced of them are as follows:

#### **A. Classroom Visitation and Observation**

This is a supervisory technique that involves classroom observation. It should be remembered that classroom observation has been accepted as a good form of supervisory technique especially for new teachers since it gives the supervisor the opportunity to see the teacher in action. Onoyase (2007) observed that teachers view this method with mixed feelings because of the encounter with supervisors who bully and insult them, supervisors who are more interested in criticizing them and finding faults with their work instead of offering constructive or helpful suggestions. Modern supervisors are being urged to strive to identify the teachers

problems and help solve them. During classroom supervision, the supervisor may base his assessment of the teacher on the following areas:

**i. Planning and Preparation of Lesson**

The supervisor should concentrate on the following under planning and preparation.

- \* Clarity and appropriateness of teachers' objectives.
- \* The teachers' use of appropriate and suitable instructional materials and aids.
- \* The relevance and adequacy of lesson notes.
- \* An appropriate evaluation of both oral and/or written test to determine the extent to which the objectives are realized.

**ii. Lesson Presentation**

The supervisor should be particular in his observation about the introduction of lesson, the quality of the teachers' voice, appropriateness of language, effective use of teaching aids and the practical value from the beginning of the lesson to the closure, teacher's knowledge of subject matter and skill in effective participation.

**iii. Relationship with Students**

The supervisor should assess the teacher on the following:

- \* His concern and awareness to his students needs.
- \* His tolerance and perseverance in helping students out of difficult and, most especially, his ability to discipline and control the class.

**iv. Teacher's Personality**

The teacher is expected to serve as a model to the students. He should have self confidence, dignity and general enthusiasm. He should also be neat in appearance.

**B. Inter-School-Visitation Technique**

This is another good supervisory technique because of its valuable results. It gives opportunity to various categories of teachers to visit other teachers in the classroom. Thus, helping the beginner teachers to learn how to organize and manage students in the classroom and to plan effectively. The weak teacher can also be helped through observation of classroom management, good methods and effective utilization of resources in his field. Among some of the benefits the programme will generate are:

- i. It helps teachers to learn new methods and be aware of the importance and use new materials.
- ii. It gives opportunity to a beginning teacher to see a supervisor or experienced teacher in action.
- iii. It enlightens the teacher on how to use new teaching aids or equipment effectively in the classroom.
- iv. It gives the beginner teacher an insight into proper classroom management.
- v. It helps the weak teacher to improve his teaching skills.
- vi. It gives the experienced or master-teachers the opportunity to share ideas with experienced teachers and thus enrich their teaching experience.

**C. Workshop Technique**

According to Nakpodia (2006), workshop technique is another form of supervisory strategy through which the teaching-learning process can be improved. The workshop technique is resourceful to the participants for the following reasons:

- i. It is made up of groups of people working on a common problem and tries to find solution(s) to the problem using discussions under the close supervision of a resource person.
- ii. It is flexible and could be re-organized to meet a particular need at a particular time.

A common result expected from workshop is evidence of personal growth.

**D. Micro-Teaching**

Micro-teaching is a process that makes it possible for a teacher to participate in an actual teaching situation with immediate feedback available. It provides an opportunity for supervisors and teachers to identify, define, try out, describe, analyze and retry certain teaching skills without the risk of an actual teaching situation. It is the latest technological approach to school supervision. It is very expensive because of the equipment involved but is also very effective.

In micro-teaching, the supervisor follows the following steps:

- i. There should be a pre-conference between the supervisor and the teacher to be supervised.
- ii. There should be collection of audio and visual materials such as tapes, tape-recorders and television.
- iii. There should be a teaching exercise.

- iv. There should be a teaching observation.
- v. There should be a post conference.

During pre-conference, agreement should be reached between the supervisor and the teacher on what should be taught. The next step is the collection of necessary materials which should include tape recorders and television. The tapes will record the voice of the teacher during the teaching exercise while the television will record the physical movement of the teacher in action. The gadgets for recording should be positioned in a way that no voice or action of the teacher will be distorted. The actual teaching exercise should then follow and should be recorded. After the teaching process, the supervisor should have a post conference with the teacher and point out the strengths and weaknesses observed in his teaching. Finally, the supervisor should suggest to the teacher ways of improving his teaching skill. The above technique appears to be very useful because it gives the supervisor and the teacher the opportunity of going over the programme again to identify and re-identify the strengths and weaknesses involved in the teaching exercise. Secondly, it gives the teacher the opportunity to see himself in action and to be able to evaluate his performance of the exercise with the supervisor. Finally, it prevents the supervisor from wrongful accusation or being partial or unfair in his evaluation of the teacher concerned.

#### **IV. Basic Principles Of Effective Supervision By Principals**

The principles of effective supervision serve as guide to the activities which are designed to improve instruction and, consequently, facilitate the teaching-learning process of the school enterprise (Peretomode, 1995). There are guiding principles that govern the principal's operation of effective supervision. They include:

- i. **Healthy Atmosphere:** The environment should be made free of tension and emotional stress. Principals must avoid supervisory approaches which are likely to cause interpersonal tension and dissatisfaction among teachers. The atmosphere should be conducive for work.
- ii. **Staff orientation:** The quality and quantity of the work must be specified in clean clear terms. Teachers should be made to understand clearly what are or are not expected of them. New staff must be given the necessary orientation. They should have a schedule to know where to get information and materials to help them perform the work well.
- iii. **Guidance and Staff Training:** Teachers should be offered necessary guidance. They should be guided on how to carry out their assignments. Information should be for everybody and specific to individuals assigned to particular tasks. Techniques of how to do the task must be given at all times. The school must arrange and participate in staff training.
- iv. **Immediate Recognition of Good Work:** Good work should be recognized. This implies that the acknowledgement of any good work done must be immediate and made public to others which will then serve as incentive to others. Examples are incentives of merit, recommendation for promotion etc. This improves performance.
- v. **Constructive Criticisms:** Poor work done should be constructively criticized and such criticisms should be made private and with the mind free of bias.
- vi. **Opportunity for Improvement:** Teachers should be given opportunity to prove their worth and aspire higher. They should therefore be allowed to use their initiatives in performing their jobs and taking decisions. This will give them the motivation to work harder.
- vii. **Motivation and Encouragement:** Teachers should be motivated and encouraged to work to increase productivity. They should be encouraged to improve their ability to achieve efficiency in educational goals.

#### **V. Functions Of The School Principal As A Supervisor**

School administration involves managing and administering the curriculum and teaching, pastoral care, discipline, assessment, evaluation and examination, resource allocation, costing and forward planning, staff appraisal, relationship with the community, use of practical skills necessary for surviving the policies of organization such as decision-making, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict handling, running meetings and so on (Ojo, 1999). All these tasks can be reduced to the following: planning, organization, directing, supervising and evaluating the school system. The school principal must ensure these activities are directed towards efficient and effective teaching and learning.

By implication, the principal of a school is a planner, director, controller, coordinator, organizer, counselor, adviser and a problem solver. He is the person on whose shoulders rest the entire administration, success or failure of the school. He identifies and set the goals and objectives of the school which, of course, must be in line with the national objectives, analyses tasks and share responsibilities of staff according to specialization and expertise (Uyanga, 2007). The following are the duties of the principal at ensuring that the

multi-faceted problems facing the secondary school system do not hinder efficient service delivery toward achieving quality output.

- **Management of School Finance:** The principal is the chief executive and accounting officer who is entrusted with the responsibility of controlling the school finances and ensuring a judicious utilization of PTA levy. In other to raise fund to complement the efforts of the government, the principal can establish a very good rapport with the parent teacher association, board of governors, old students association and non-governmental organizations for fund raising activities.
- **Provision and Maintenance of Physical Facilities:** Principals must be fully concerned with the physical environment and other facilities around the school. Dilapidated buildings, leaking roofs, abandoned projects, over-grown trees and lawns, dark buildings, etc. have demoralizing effects on people, especially adolescents (Obidoa, 2006). As a result, principals have the responsibility of ensuring that these facilities are in good shape. Even with the meager resources at their disposal, they have the responsibility of providing teachers and other instructional staff with necessary resources for effective teaching (Babayemi, 2006).
- **The Principal as a Motivator:** Babayemi (2006) opined that a school principal must not only be trained in the act of administration but must be well-acquainted with the principles that guide and control administrative processes. As a chief executive, the principal owes it as a duty to modify the attitudes of staff and motivate them to put in their best at achieving educational goals through an effective teaching-learning process. Motivation enhances job performance (Ajayi and Oguntoye, 2003).
- **The Principal as a Curriculum and Instructional Supervisor:** The functions of the school principal as a supervisor include; obtaining and making available for teachers all educational information, visiting classrooms often to observe teachers teaching, inspecting teachers' lesson notes and class registers, diaries and teaching aids and offering professional advice for their improvement.
- **The Principal as a Change Facilitator:** When it comes to efforts to improve the quality of the school, the principal should be the person to look up to. According to Uyanga (2008), since a school is known to be an instrument of change and reforms in the society, the principals is said to be the pivot of such reforms and changes. This responsibility is very obligatory and principals are expected to deploy managerial skills in adapting to that can bring about this change in the school system. The principal is the key-supporting agent for change. Therefore, secondary schools can only be productive if there is effective and efficient management of human and materials resources in the system by the principal.

## **VI. Factors Competing With Supervisory Functions Of Principals**

Supervision today is competing with a number of factors. They include:

### **a. Continuing Diversity of Conceptions of Supervision**

The term supervision itself is subject to many different interpretations, (Wiles and Bondi, 2000). Administrative supervision covers the territory of managerial responsibilities outside the fields of curriculum and instruction. General supervision is perceived by some as synonymous with educational supervision and by others as that type of supervision that takes place outside the classroom. Differentiating supervision allows teachers to choose the types of developmental activities in which they will engage, whereas educational supervision suggests responsibilities that encompass many aspects of schooling, including administration, curriculum and instruction, instructional supervision for the improvement of instruction. Clinical, consultative, collaborative, peer and developmental supervision are subsumed under instructional supervision.

Whether the supervisor perceives teaching as a science or as an art further colours the supervisor's role. The supervisor who follows a scientific approach believes that genetic teaching skills can be identified and that teachers at all levels should be able to demonstrate them. Such a supervisor believes that those skills can be described, observed, and analyzed. The supervisor who follows an artistic approach believes that teaching is a highly individualized activity that bears the stamp of the teacher's unique personality. This type of supervisor believes that the entire setting for instructing the person involved in the teaching act and the general atmosphere of the classroom must be considered.

### **b. Mandates from the State Level**

Over the years, there has been a call for sweeping reforms in public education. Many states have raised teachers salaries, mandated state testing of teachers, instituted on-the-job assessment, established students assessment programmes, prescribed aspects of the curriculum, and ordered annual evaluations of all school personnel (FME).

Increased direction from the state level has certainly reduced the flexibility of local school systems to make decisions based on their assessment of local needs and on their own philosophies of education. Local school

systems have had to give priority to state mandates. After meeting state requirements, they may and often do go beyond the state directives.

The principals' supervisory functions are heavily affected by state mandates: by state tests for both teachers and students, by state model instruments for evaluating teachers, by state-developed curriculum guides, and by state specification of teaching competencies. Supervisors who are in disagreement with the state reforms are faced with intra-role conflicts.

### **c. Tension between Teachers and Supervisors**

Robinson and Dessler, (2002) report that the public and the profession are expressing dissatisfaction with students achievement and incompetent teaching. Increased emphasis on students' achievement, accountability of teachers, and teacher competence has brought about increased pressure for evaluation of teacher performance. Consequently, evaluation of teaching has increased in recent years.

Teachers, especially through their organizations, have not wholeheartedly embraced current processes of evaluation. They have been raising valid questions concerning the competencies on which they are judged, who does the evaluation, how the evaluation is conducted, and what use is made of the results. Teachers question the reliability of the data collected on their performances and the competence of the supervisors for making assessments. Furthermore, they want to be involved in the creation of the evaluation process. Teachers, as a rule, welcome real supervisory help. Yet many of them view supervisors with contempt, feeling, sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly, that teachers are more capable than supervisors or that supervisors have nothing of value to offer them.

Blumberg (1980) portrayed the tension between supervisors and teachers as a "Private Cold War". To some extent, progress in empowerment of teachers, human relations skills, and principles of collegiality and collaboration has reduced conflicts between supervisors and teachers but has not completely eliminated them. Negative, fearful, or hostile attitudes are symptoms of the malaise brought on by uncertainties about the role, function, and effectiveness of the supervisory profession. There is great need to clarify duties and responsibilities of supervisors and to discover the most effective techniques and skills.

### **d. Differing Conceptions of Effective Teaching**

According to Sullivan and Glanz (2000), some specialists ascribe difficulty in defining supervision to a lack of understanding of the teaching process, impreciseness of the criteria for assessing teacher performance, and lack of agreement on what should be taught. Those who follow an interpretive or hermeneutic approach to supervision look at the unique characteristics of a particular learning situation and, with the teacher, seek to interpret the events that take place during a lesson. Some supervisors look at process; that is, the demonstration of teaching skills and some focus on product such as test scores of students. Others include the teacher's personal and professional attributes in their description of effective teaching. Certain supervisors are partial to particular models and styles of teaching. Some smile, for example, at discovery learning and frown at lecturing. Some favour direct instruction of entire group, some champion cooperative learning, and others advocate individualized instructional techniques. These differing conceptions of what constitutes effective teaching makes the supervisory process difficult for both the teacher and the supervisor.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This study examined the supervisory functions of principals and the factors competing with the functions. The essence of supervisory activities is to maintain the required standard of education and enhance professional growth of teachers. This study was aimed at helping principals to guide against factors that compete with their supervisory functions. Though political, economical and social problems might affect effective supervision by principals, yet a lot of efforts can be made to give supervision special attention.

### **Recommendations**

Supervision is regarded as one of the major functions which the principal should carry out in order to achieve the objectives of the school and to enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process. In order to perform this effectively, the following recommendations are made to principals as supervisors of instruction.

- Principals should be trained to improve their supervisory skills through intensified workshops and seminars.
- The relationship between principals as supervisors and teachers should not be that of servant and master but a learning situation where both parties contribute to the success of the teaching-learning process.
- The principals should be imbued with the spirit counsellors refer to as "the helping relationship"; that is the desire to be of assistance to others.
- The successful supervisor should possess personal traits of warmth, friendliness, patience, and a sense of humour.

- He should possess a broad knowledge of both general and professional nature and be able to translate that knowledge into skilful practice.
- Supervision should be a continuous process by principals in accordance with education policies, edicts and laws to avoid disagreements between the state board of education and principals.
- He should be sympathetic but frank in their constructive criticism and should give advice and suggestions.

### References

- [1]. Arinze, B.J. (2004). *The school supervision: A Monograph*, Department of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- [2]. Babayemi, A. (2006). *Principal-ship educational management: Thoughts and practice*. Ibadan: Codat Publications.
- [3]. Beach, D.M. and Judy, R. (2000). *Supervisory leadership: Focus on instruction*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon Publishers.
- [4]. Cohen, M. (2000). *Functional approach to school administration*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- [5]. Egwunyenga, E.J. (2006). *Essentials of school administration*. Benin City: Justice-Jeco Publishers.
- [6]. Marczely, B. (2001). *Supervision of education: A differentiated approach with legal perspectives*. Gaithersburg, Md: Aspen Publishers.
- [7]. Nwaham C.O. (2008). *School administration and supervision of instruction*. Agbor: Krisbee Publishers.
- [8]. Nakpodia, D. (2006). *Educational Administration: A New Approach*, Warri Jonokase Nig. Co.
- [9]. Obidoa, M. (2006). Enhancing the instructional supervisory skills of principals of secondary schools. Principals year book. *A Publication of All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPS)*. Nsukka, Nigeria: Moke Social Publishers.
- [10]. Ojo, K. (1999). *Administration and management of secondary education in Ekiti State-Our experiences and anxieties. Effective management of secondary schools: The Principal's Challenge*. Ibadan: Adeose Publications.
- [11]. Onoyase, D. (2007). *Theory and practice of educational administration* 2nd Edition. Warri: Johnny Co.
- [12]. Osakwe, R.N. (2010). The relationship between principals' supervisory strategies and teachers' instructional performance in Delta North Senatorial District, Nigeria. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 7(6), 437-440. Medwell Journals 2010.
- [13]. Pajak, E. (1989). *The central office supervisor of curriculum and instruction: Setting the stage for success*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon Publishers.
- [14]. Peretomode, V.F. (1995). *Introduction to educational administration planning and supervision*. Ikeja: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd.
- [15]. Rettig, P.R. (2007). Leslie's lament: How can I make teacher supervision meaningful? *Educational Horizons*, 79:31-37.
- [16]. Sullivan, S. and Glanz, J. (2000). *Supervision that improves teaching: Strategies and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- [17]. Uyanga, R.E. (2008). The principal and education reform agenda of the Nigerian economic empowerment development strategy (NEEDS) and the millennium development goals (MDGs). The principal and education reforms in Nigeria. *A publication of the mandatory continuing professional training (MCT) programme of the All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS)*.
- [18]. Wiles, J. and Bondi, J. (2000). *Supervision: A guide to practice*. 5th Edition. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill.