

SCHOOL BASED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION PROCESS: ISSUES ENCOUNTERED BY SUPERVISORS AND TEACHERS.

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INTRODUCTION

Schools in Sri Lanka face significant problems related to the twin concepts of poor classroom instruction and low student achievement. As an example, when we considered student achievement in our national examinations, it provides us important proof. As mentioned by the Examinations Department of Sri Lanka a considerably higher number of students do not reach the expected mastery level at the GCE O/L examination. In 2011, a higher percentage of students had failed even compulsory subjects like Mathematics (47.29%) Science (40.21%), Sinhala (15.17%) and English (57.23%) in the GCE (O/L) examination. Therefore, in order to ensure the effectiveness of the classroom teaching-learning process and the quality of education in our general education system more attention should be paid to these aspects.

In this particular context, instructional supervision process has become an integral component and process in the functioning of every school (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998). Various authors have defined instructional supervision in different ways. Glickman (1992) views instructional supervision as the actions that enable teachers to improve the quality instructions for students and as an act that improves relationships and meets both personal and organizational needs. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002:6) describe instructional supervision as the opportunities provided for teachers to develop their capacities to contribute for students' academic success. Therefore, instructional supervision process is important because, the merits of a proper instructional supervision process could influence the improvement of the pupils' performance and ultimately, the teacher's professional development.

According to Glanz (2010), school teachers have a common challenge in providing high quality education to their students. Those challenges can be linked to instructional supervision, teaching behavior and low learner performance of students. Therefore, it has been identified that the primary purpose of instructional supervision process is to support and sustain all teachers in their goal of professional development, which ultimately results in quality instruction. Such growth and development rely on a system that is built on trust and is supportive of teachers' efforts to be more effective in their classrooms (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000).

Contemporary educational research studies have identified instructional supervision as completion of paper work and a fault finding mechanism rather than a process which will improve teacher performances. According to that, many researchers have identified various issues encountered by those who are engaged in the instructional supervision process. Accordingly, this study focused on the issues encountered by supervisors and teachers in the instructional supervision process of the schools.

The following specific research questions were formulated in line with the main objective of the research study.

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1. What are the problems faced by principals in conducting the instructional supervision process of the school?
2. What are the problems faced by other supervisors who take part in the instructional supervision process of the school?
3. What are the problems faced by teachers in line with the instructional supervision process of the school?

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design and the descriptive research approach were selected to carry out this study. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques have been used for data collection which included questionnaires and interviews. Simple statistical methods were used for data analysis. The school population of this study includes all (46) the 1AB, 1C, Type ii & Type iii schools in the Dehiattakandiya Educational Zone of the Ampara District. Accordingly, 10 schools were selected in order to maintain a meaningful representation of the school population. Thus the total sample included 10 principals, 18 vice-principals, 28 section heads, 24 subject heads and 120 teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The problems faced by Principals in conducting the instructional supervision process of the school.

Table 1: Principals' responses on the problems

No	Statements	Number Responded	Percentage (%)	Number not Responded	Percentage (%)	Total	
						Number	Percentage (%)
1	Lack of experienced and competent supervisors in the school	08	80.0	02	20.0	10	100.0
2	Negative attitudes and unhappiness concerning supervision of teachers	05	50.0	05	50.0	10	100.0
3	Lack of pedagogical knowledge concerning instructional supervision.	04	40.0	06	60.0	10	100.0
4	Lack of formal training opportunities concerning instructional supervision.	04	40.0	06	60.0	10	100.0
5	Time allocation problem for instructional supervision process.	06	60.0	04	40.0	10	100.0
6	Obstacles to establishing of sound supervisory culture in the school	03	30.0	07	70.0	10	100.0

According to Table 1, the majority (80%) of principals faced the problem of lack of experienced and competent supervisors in the school as a highly important issue regarding the instructional supervision process. On the other hand, during the interviews they pointed out that due to lack of experienced senior teachers they were unable to establish an effective supervisory team in the school. It has been identified that nearly 60% of principals had difficulty in allocating time for instructional supervision process as a second important issue. Table 1, further revealed that negative attitudes and unhappiness of teachers concerning instructional supervision was another important issue faced by principals (50%).

2. Supervision process of the school.

According to the Table 2, nearly 46.1 % of Vice Principals and 30.4% of section heads faced the problem of other administrative workloads, lack of formal training for supervisors, negative attitudes concerning supervision of teachers and absenteeism of teachers during supervision. Nearly 47.0 % of subject heads had faced problems such as absence of teachers at the point of supervision, lack of resources (learning materials, classroom facility, etc....), not given sufficient time for the instructional supervision process (40.7%) and lack of pedagogical knowledge on instructional supervision (41.2%) in line with the instructional supervision process.

Table 2: Supervisors' responses about issues faced in the instructional supervision process (Vice Principals, Section Heads & Subject Heads)

Statement	Vice Principals		Section Heads		Subject Heads		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. Not having sufficient time for the Instructional Supervision process.	04	30.8	06	26.1	08	40.7	18	34.0
2. Other administrative workloads.	06	46.1	07	30.4	05	29.4	18	34.0
3. Lack of pedagogical knowledge concerning instructional supervision.	04	30.8	06	26.1	07	41.2	17	32.0
4. Lack of formal training for supervisors	06	46.1	07	30.4	06	35.3	19	35.8
5. Negative attitudes concerning supervision of teachers.	06	46.1	07	30.4	06	35.3	19	35.8
6. Not allocating supervision responsibilities in writing.	03	23.1	03	13.0	06	35.3	12	22.6
7. Absence of teachers on the date of supervision.	06	46.1	10	43.4	08	47.0	24	45.2
8. Barriers for our own teaching-learning process.	0	0.0	05	21.7	07	41.1	12	22.6
9. Lack of resources (learning materials, classroom facility, etc....)	02	15.4	06	26.1	08	47.0	16	30.1
Not responded	05	38.5	05	21.7	07	41.2	17	32.0

3 . The problems faced by teachers in line with the instructional supervision process of the school (Table 3 based on responses given by teachers for open ended questions of the teachers' questionnaire)

Table 3: Teachers' responses on issues encountered in the instructional supervision process

Statement	Teachers Responses	
	Number	%
Not appointing subject specialists for instructional supervision process.	67/120	55.8
Lack of pedagogical knowledge of supervisors concerning instructional supervision.	73/120	60.8
Supervision process had not been planned, implemented and supervised properly.	57/120	47.5
Not maintaining supervisory work plan.	37/120	30.8
Not maintaining supervision reports systematically.	39/120	32.5
Some supervisors are the authoritarian type and unable to maintain a friendly relationship with teachers when supervising teaching- learning process	29/120	24.1

According to Table 3, nearly 61. % of teachers faced problems relating to lack of pedagogical knowledge of supervisor and nearly 55.8. % of teachers faced problems with the fact of not appointing subject specialists for instructional supervision process.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The effectiveness of the class room teaching-learning process depends on many factors. In order to ensure an optimum teaching-learning environment in the classroom, the instructional supervision process should be implemented regularly and systematically. In this context, it is very important to identify issues encountered by supervisors and teachers in line with the school based instructional supervision process. It has been identified that instructional supervision process is a good mechanism to up-grade the performance of teaching-learning process and promote teachers' professional development. The study revealed that the majority of principals faced lack of experienced and competent supervisors in the school, time allocation problems for the supervision process and negative attitudes and unhappiness of teachers concerning supervision as problems in the instructional supervision process.

It can be concluded that, the majority of other supervisors (vice principals, section heads and subject heads) have major issues, the administrative workloads, deficiencies in formal training of supervisors, negative attitudes concerning supervision of teachers, absenteeism of teachers and lack of pedagogical knowledge concerning instructional supervision, with regard to the instructional supervision process. The fact that the planning, implementing and monitoring stages of the supervision process were not carried out according to schedule also became a major issue for the teachers.

Accordingly, some recommendations could be made as follows:

1. Principals should give priority to improve instructional supervision process and instructional supervision should be carried out continuously in the school.
2. All the supervisors should use effective methods of instructional supervision and be committed to the long term process of staff development.
3. Supervisors' administrative workload should be reduced or decentralized to provide sufficient time to participate effectively in their instructional supervisory roles.
4. Supervisors should have high professional qualifications and a superior knowledge about curriculum and instructional supervision so as to be better role models and to provide expert leadership in all areas of the school programme to their teachers and pupils.

5. All the supervisory staff must be constantly refreshed with quality & appropriate supervision training.
6. All supervisors require conceptual skills in supervision in its broadest sense in order to ensure that they fully understand what their roles and tasks as supervisors of schools are.to promote effective instructional supervision, in making the supervisory process more effective.
7. All the supervisory staff should develop positive attitudes towards supervision of teachers.
8. All the supervisory staff should maintain and use instructional supervision reports to improve the teaching-learning process and professional development of teachers.
9. Supervisors should create a conducive and facilitating environment for instructional supervision process in the school.
10. The government should provide more funds to schools to expand physical facilities and human resources which will in turn improve supervision.

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