

Unit 2: Supervision

INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces the key concepts in supervision and aims at helping inspectors develop a deeper understanding of the concepts in order that you can effectively contribute to improved quality of instruction and management in schools.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define 'supervision'
- explain and justify the purpose of supervision
- identify and use appropriate types of supervision
- decide on what aspects of the school and which staff are to be supervised
- undertake school supervision
- define and select different types of feedback to teachers and school managers
- decide on appropriate follow-up activities after the completion of the supervision process.

DEFINITION OF SUPERVISION

"...a constant and continuous process of more personal guidance based on frequent visits, when attention is focused on one or more aspects of the educational institution and its organisation." (*Handbook for Inspectors*, Malawi, 1982)

Professional guidance would involve:

- School management issues:
 - improving quality of learners' achievement
 - financial management
 - resource management
 - gender awareness
 - school-community relations
 - maintenance of discipline
- Classroom instruction
 - syllabus interpretation, scheming and lesson planning
 - selection of teaching methods
 - selection and designing of teaching-learning materials
 - lesson delivery
 - classroom management
 - assessment and evaluation

The professional guidance requires that you, as an inspector, develop and maintain long term relationships with schools under your charge. This therefore means that you should keep casual and drop-in inspection visits to the barest minimum.

Activity 2a

- (a) Define the term 'supervision'.
- (b) List the differences between supervision and inspection.

COMMENT

Your definition of supervision should include the process of working with teachers and school managers to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

In comparing supervision to inspection, the following characteristics should stand out for each:

- Supervision
 - it is collaborative and collegial
 - it aims at giving professional guidance
 - the supervisor takes on the role of mentor and facilitator

- Inspection

Because of the negative conduct of some inspectors, some supervisees have wrongly come to understand inspection to have the following qualities:

- hard and strict accountability
- authoritarian and directive role
- passive role
- fault-finding
- all knowing

However, you are being encouraged to assume more the role of a supervisor. This will require that you use a much more positive approach. This approach will have the following qualities:

- objectivity
- based on evidence gathered
- judgement is based on evidence
- balanced feedback
- user-friendly language in the inspection report

PURPOSE OF SUPERVISION

Before setting out on a supervision mission, you as an inspector must decide on the purpose of the mission.

Activity 2b

Reflect on your experiences as an inspector, and list ten possible purposes for conducting school supervision.

COMMENT

There are many reasons inspectors might have for undertaking supervision. Some of those you might come up with could include:

- problem solving
- ensuring implementation of educational policies
- identification of the needs of schools
- evaluation of the performance of teachers and school managers
- monitoring instruction to enhance the quality of learner achievement
- collecting data to facilitate planning and decision making
- promoting change and development in the light of curricular innovations

- creation of opportunities for staff development among teachers, headteachers and inspectors
- capacity building for headteachers to enable them to undertake in-school or school based supervision
- quality assurance.

TYPES OF SUPERVISION

There is a range of types of supervision with, on the one hand, the critical friendship type and, on the other, the hard accountability type. Between these two extremes you find other types of supervision including mentoring, advisory, monitoring and clinical supervision.

Below are explanations of some of the types of supervision:

- Critical friendship type
 - supervisor acts as a friend in guiding the supervisor
- Mentoring type
 - supervisor acts as a role model or example
 - asking the supervisees to reflect on problems and come up with their own conclusions and recommendations
- Monitoring
 - supervisor checks on progress, problems, and advises on solutions
- Advisory
 - supervisor assumes a relatively superior position in knowledge and skills
- Clinical supervisor
 - supervisor and supervisee engage in face-to-face interaction mainly based on observation of performance and the emphasis is on collegueship
- Hard accountability type
 - supervisor performs traditional inspector's role demanding strict accountability from supervisee.

Activity 2c

Situation 1

One of the schools under your charge is highly successful. It is well led with full enrolment, well resourced, with high standards, but is seeking assistance in raising standards even further.

Situation 2

You now have a school which is highly ineffective, terribly over-enrolled, under-resourced, under-staffed, and therefore has a demotivated staff.

Select and justify the appropriate type of supervision you can use to assist the headteachers in the two situations described above.

COMMENT

Each different situation will demand a different and appropriate type from among those cited above. You, as an inspector, will have to make informed decisions on which type of supervision to employ in given situations.

TARGET AREAS/GROUPS FOR SUPERVISION

In undertaking a supervision mission, you as an inspector, should decide on what aspects of the school and which officers are to be supervised.

The aspects of the school to be supervised could include:

- School management
 - standards of learner achievement
 - financial management
 - resource management
 - public relations
 - school documentation
 - staff development
- Classroom instruction
 - scheming
 - lesson planning
 - preparation and use of teaching and learning materials
 - lesson delivery including choice and use of teaching methods
 - assessment and evaluation

Activity 2d

Assuming you have decided to focus your supervision on the management style of the headteacher, decide on who should be seen and what should be looked at in the school.

COMMENT

In negotiating this activity, you will need to see not only the headteacher, but also teachers, support staff and parents. You will also need to look at appropriate school documents such as examination results, minutes of meetings, registers, and the school environment.

CONDUCT OF SUPERVISION

Having decided on the purpose, type of supervision, the aspects of the school and officers to be supervised, it is now time for you as an inspector to undertake a supervision tour. For your tour to be successful you have to plan carefully the supervision programme for each school you intend to visit.

The supervision programme you prepare should highlight who to see, what to look at, and where to go in the school within the time allocated for each activity.

Here are some details for you to note:

- Who to see
 - headteachers, teachers, learners and support staff, board of governors and Parents' Teachers' Associations (PTA).
- What to see and where to go

For checking on standards you may focus on:

 - classroom observation
 - lesson preparation

- schemes and records of work
- pupils' work
- classroom inventory e.g. attendance register, time-table, furniture, displays

For checking on subject departments you may focus on:

- teaching-learning materials
- records of meetings
- management style
- academic records
- staffing levels and qualifications
- availability of syllabuses

For checking on school organisation and management you may look at:

- admission registers
- staff and pupil files
- school mission statement and/or objectives
- school development plan
- monitoring of standards
- school inventory
- display boards
- examination records
- availability of statutory regulations and procedures
- financial records
- specialist rooms
- school routine and assemblies
- school climate and ethos
- on-going projects
- school-community relations
- physical environment of the school i.e. cleanliness, sanitation and grounds

Activity 2e

Develop a supervision programme for one of the schools under your charge.

COMMENT

Your programme should clearly show who to see, what to look at, and where to go in the school, with time allocation.

FEEDBACK ON SUPERVISION

For your supervision exercise to achieve the desired outcome, you should provide immediate and clear feedback to the school. This is supported by Ofsted (1995:35) when they say that, "The quality of feedback is an important factor in influencing how the school responds to the inspection findings, particularly in drawing up its action plan, to improve any areas of weakness."

Feedback can take different forms such as:

- oral briefing
- lesson observation reports
- completed appraisal forms
- checklists
- written reports

Activity 2f

- (a) Give examples of the types of feedback which you have used in your experience as an inspector.
- (b) Reflect on types of feedback which you have used and not used, in your experience as an inspector, and reasons for doing so.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

After every supervision exercise, you as an inspector should plan for appropriate follow-up activities to either reward good performance or improve on poor performance. It is important that the planned follow-up activities are implemented without delay in order to maximise the impact and sustain motivation amongst the supervised.

Activity 2g

Refer to situation 1 in Activity 2c and propose the appropriate follow-up activities to meet the school's request.

COMMENT

Possible follow-up activities in this situation may include:

- staff development
- reviewing school development plan
- recognition and celebration of success e.g. prize-giving
- encouraging competition

You may think of many more examples.

SUMMARY

Having worked through this unit, it is expected that you as inspector will have developed a number of skills necessary for supervision, including:

- planning
- decision making
- communication
- analysis
- lesson observation
- management
- advising

For these skills to be successfully developed, you might need to acquire further underpinning knowledge.

REFLECTION

Reflect on how you have supervised school managers in the past, and develop strategies by which you would improve through studying this unit.

REFERENCES

Beach, M.D. and Reinhartz, J. (1989) *Supervision Focus on Instruction*, Harper & Row, New York

Ministry of Education (1982) *Handbook for Inspector*, Ministry of Education, Malawi

Ofsted (1995) *Guidance on the Inspection of Nursery and Primary Schools*, HMSO, London