

## Supervision for Quality implementation of School Curriculum blue print: The Case for Manicaland Province- Zimbabwe

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### Abstract:

*Supervision processes in education play a pivotal role in ensuring effective implementation of national educational blueprints that shape local public school curricula. In Zimbabwe, the implementation process of the recently amended curriculum that started in 2015 seems to be facing hitches at local school levels. Teachers who are the shop floor implementers seem to lack clear direction and indeed confidence in carrying out tasks expected of this amended curriculum. There seems to be a void in supervisory back up by school head teachers and other educational line managers. This study, therefore, seeks to identify supervisory strategies being used in the Zimbabwe school system and ascertain their appropriateness in guiding teachers in implementing this newly amended curriculum. Aiyepetu (1987) defines supervision as "Assessing the state of teaching and learning with the aim of improving education standards". In agreement, Chivore (1995) views supervision as involving the assessment of proper implementation of policy, correction of identified weaknesses, direction and redirection of defects for the attainment of stated aims, objectives and goals of an education system at a given level. That is to say supervisors operate in a field with set standards and their job is to monitor the observance of these standards and offer support so that the teachers can fully comply with the set standards. Giwa (2010) views supervision as "...a means of ascertaining how well assigned or assumed responsibilities are being carried out." Therefore, it is the function of supervision to stimulate, direct, guide, and encourage teachers to apply instructional procedures, techniques, principles, and devices to formulate tentative plans to improve instruction (Marie Fe Callao, 2015).*

### Models of supervision

Supervision is carried out in accordance to various models, with the classical model bearing the tradition.

#### Classical model

The supervision services in this model are entirely in the hands of the state. It is characterized by a solid bureaucratic hierarchy which runs down from the central government down to the school level. According to De Grauwe (2008), the aim of this model is to develop a homogeneous system'. It is a tool of standardising, enforcing and respecting national rules and regulations. The supervisor is tasked with the responsibility of monitoring compliance with set rules and regulations and at the same time providing support for the teachers. Such supervision is not driven by the actual needs of a particular group but based on the pre determined guidelines and procedures. As noted earlier it is more to check on compliance than to build the competence of teachers to discharge their duties well.

However, De Grauwe (2008) argues that while in principle the model puts focus on pedagogical supervision this is seldom the obtaining reality because of a myriad of challenges inherent within the model. In most African countries because the function of supervising is joined with inspection there is an emphasis on inspection at the expense of teacher motivation, support and development. The lack of resources and expansion of enrolment also limits the reach of this model.

This model is pervasive in many developing countries and some industrialized nations like France. De Grauwe (2008) argues that it is a colonial relic adopted by the independent states. Zimbabwe's supervision, besides some slight deviations like cluster model and insistence on the school site supervision by head, follows classical model in planning and structure.

According to De Grauwe (2008) inclusion of the public was seen as a means of breaking “internal complacency.” Hence quality assurance and improvement rest in the hands of local actors at the school level i.e the principal, teachers, school governing board and the parents association.

### **Close-to-school support model**

The third model according to (De Grauwe 2008) is the close-to-school support model. The model is based on the assumption that schools within one country are not a homogenous group who require a ‘one-size-fit all’ prescription from a bureaucratic supervisory service (De Grauwe, 2008). It is as a result of acknowledging diversity and local peculiarities under which schools thrive in. The thrust is to use supervision services as a means for assisting the weakest schools by offering advice and guidance on how to improve. It recommends ‘a flexible development-oriented support’.

The supervision services are located close to the schools. Supervision officers give intensive and development oriented advice to teachers. Each supervisor is assigned a small group of schools whom he/she will establish a relationship with. The tasks include classroom observation, workshops with teachers, discussion with all teachers and with the school and community. The supervisor takes time to relate to teachers and together with the staff develop a school improvement plan. This model allows for teachers to actively participate in their development as professionals as well as feel appreciated through their input in the overall school improvement plan. This process has been described by various authors as the very essence of supervision and teacher support (Clow 1920, Gennaro R. Piraino, Jr. 2006).

### **The school-site supervision model**

The founding conviction of this model is that ‘teaching staff have the skills and professional conscience to participate in self and in peer-evaluation without being supervised from outside (De Grauwe 2008). It places focus on the school head as the supervisor on pedagogy and staff development. In this model the local community takes the responsibility of controlling the schools, ie, its management and financial matters (De Grauwe 2008). Its structure starts at the level of the board which looks at the management of the school.

It works best in areas where teachers are perceived to be professional & accountable and the system has unwavering confidence in its pre-service training. According to (De Grauwe 2008) the model liberates both the supervisor and the teacher to explore the best practices suited for their school climate. The cornerstone of supervisory service in this model is the school principal. The principal has to be a leader and practicing teacher to be able to appreciate the ever changing dynamics in the classroom. De Grauwe (2008) points out that the model gives greater autonomy to the schools while the responsibility of the government is limited to checking on the quality of education through examinations.

### **Clinical supervision**

Clinical supervision is in some way similar to school site supervision. However, clinical supervision provides a systematic cyclic structure for carrying out supervision programmes in schools. Essentially, clinical supervision involves a teacher receiving information from a supervisor who has observed the teacher in action. The supervisor provides feed back on the lesson observed, for the teacher to critically reflect on and provide opportunity to adjust their professional practice. In this supervision model, the school head as well as other teachers may supervise colleagues. The five stage cycle of supervision in which the teacher and supervisor engage is summarised below as proposed by Golhammer (1969) and presented in PajaK (2003). New versions of the cycle have come up but all seem to remain anchored on Goldhammer’s model. The model provides specific tasks for the teacher and supervisor, as well as critical questions they should ask to direct the process.

#### **Stage 1: The Pre-observation conference**

**Teacher's Task:** To mentally rehearse and orally describe the upcoming lesson, including the purpose and the content, what the teacher will do, and what students are expected to do and learn.

**Clinical Supervisor's Task:** To learn about and understand what the teacher has in mind for the lesson to be taught by asking, probing and clarifying questions.

**Questions to Consider:** What type of data will be recorded (e.g., teacher questions, student behaviours, movement patterns)? How will data be recorded (e.g., video or audio recording, verbatim transcript, anecdotal notes, checklist)? Who will do what in the subsequent stages?

## **Stage 2: Classroom Observation**

**Teacher's Task:** To teach the lesson as well as possible.

**Clinical Supervisor's Task:** To record events occurring during the lesson as accurately as possible.

## **Stage 3—Data Analysis and Strategy**

**Teacher's Task:** To help make sense of the data (if directly involved in this stage).

**Clinical Supervisor's Task:** To make some sense of the raw data and to develop a plan for the conference.

**Questions to Consider:** What patterns are evident in the data? Are any critical incidents or turning points obvious? What strengths did the teacher exhibit? Were any techniques especially successful? Are there any concerns about the lesson? Which patterns, events, and concerns are most important to address? Which patterns, events, and concerns can be addressed in the time available? How will the conference begin? How will the conference end?

## **Stage 4—Conference**

**Teacher's Task:** To critically examine his or her own teaching with an open mind and to tentatively plan for the next lesson.

**Clinical Supervisor's Task:** To help clarify and build upon the teacher's understanding of the behaviours and events that occurred in the classroom.

**Questions to Consider:** What patterns and critical incidents are evident in the data? What is the relationship between these events and student learning? Were any unanticipated or unintended outcomes evident? What will the teacher do differently for the next class meeting (e.g., new objectives, methods, content, materials, teacher behaviours, student activities, or assessments)?

## **Stage 5—Post conference Analysis**

**Teacher's Task:** To provide honest feedback to the clinical supervisor about how well the clinical supervision cycle went.

**Clinical Supervisor's Task:** To critically examine his or her own performance during the clinical supervision cycle.

**Questions to Consider:** Generally, how well did the clinical supervision cycle go? What worked well? What did not work well? If you could do it again, what would you do differently? What will you do differently during the next clinical supervision cycle?

## **Research Method**

The study was carried out as a case study of school heads who were attending a two-day workshop organised by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. This case study design provided opportunity for the researcher to have interpersonal contact with practitioners who were directly involved in supervising implementation of the new amended curriculum (Stake, 1995; Babbie, 2010). Permission was granted from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, workshop organisers, and participants. Data were gathered through in-depth individual and group interviews held on the side lines of the workshop. More data were gathered through contributions from facilitators and participants during workshop sessions.

The in-depth individual interviews provided opportunity for getting in-depth data on supervision practices in schools (White, 2000). The group interviews were useful in having group-shaped opinion and reality on supervision issues in schools. Confidentiality of data was observed throughout the research process. The

data that were transcribed and coded together with written notes made during workshop sessions Kruger and Casey (2003) and Ritchie and Lewis (2003).

It is from the coded data that themes emerged revealing the supervision strategies in use in schools (Yin, 2003). The data collection process was guided by the following research questions:

- How is supervision being done in schools in Manicaland?
- What model of supervision is being used in the Zimbabwe education system?
- How effective is the supervision model in the implementation of the amended curriculum?
- What challenges are school based supervisors facing in supervising school personnel?
- How can these challenges be overcome?

## **Research Findings**

### **External supervision**

The research established that internal supervision was being implemented in schools. External supervision was provided by education inspectors from district education offices as well as from subject inspectors from provincial education directorate. The structure of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education was such that supervision services were controlled at the central level, in the department of Quality Assurance in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The Department was headed by a Principal Director at national level; subject Education inspectors at provincial level, District inspector at district level, and school head at school level (circular number 29 of 2009). These quality assurance officers focused on ensuring teachers were education policy compliant. Thus, the supervision process was basically inspection driven. Inspectors at the school, district, province, and Head office made use of centrally designed check lists as they visited schools and classrooms. Reports were prepared for individual teachers as well as for the whole school as a unit. The reports were distributed to respective teachers and schools. Follow up visits were made to ensure supervisor's recommendations were implemented.

At the time of the research, the district inspectors were expected to produce at least 30 inspection reports per school term. The inspectors indicated that they had time constraints and could not hold effective post inspection conference sessions with individual teachers.

### **The cluster system**

The study established that another form of external supervision that was implemented in the school system was the cluster system. This was a unique supervision support system that was similar to the “close to school” model. The cluster arrangements were to get schools to engage in some joint supervision and thereby provide each other with support and peer learning for school heads in the absence of the supervising officers. The cluster system is an arrangement where a number of schools for instance six in the case of primary schools come together and provide support. This support comes in the form of peer supervision and exchange visits. This system can strengthen the teaching and learning of a school which maybe weak, as clusters share knowledge, skills, and facilities. According to Dembele and Miaro (2003), the system helps deal with the gaps created by inspectors because of their lack of resources and load of too many schools to inspect. Schools would be coordinating their supervision programmes and because of the manageable size they can easily locate areas that need attention.

### **Internal Supervision**

The study established that internal supervision was planned and implemented by school heads, deputy school heads, heads of departments (HOD), and teachers in charge (TIC). At primary school level, the School head, deputy head, and TIC were involved in supervising the operations of teachers. In secondary schools, supervision was carried out by school heads, and HODs. Supervision was found to involve lesson observations, exercise book inspections, checking of teachers' schemes of work, lesson plans and record books. Teachers were seen delivering a lesson at least once per term. Schemes of work were checked at the beginning of each term and subsequently on a weekly basis for evaluation. In most cases, Exercise books for each subject were seen once per term by the supervisor. Reports were produced for supervision visits made

and exercise books checked. Brief post lesson observation conferences were made with teachers. The external and internal supervisors tended to follow the classical model of supervision. School heads and other school based supervisors seemed to have assumed the roles of inspectors of teachers in their schools.

It would seem as if the supervision programme in Zimbabwe was grounded in the classical model basing on its' structure and hierarchical nature. However, there is evidence that it has evolved to include the close to school site supervision as shown by the cluster approach, and the school site supervision as evidenced by the inclusion of parents through the school development committee. Head teachers are also tasked with the responsibility of supervising teaching and learning at the school, a feature which is akin to the school site supervision model.

### **Challenges impacting supervision**

The study found out that school based supervisors were facing several challenges in carrying out their supervision task.

#### **Workload**

The study established that school heads, Deputy Heads, Heads of Departments, and Teachers in Charge were overwhelmed with administrative tasks. Many of the school based supervisors double up as administrative officers and full-time class teachers. Also, school heads' additional tasks seem to emerge from decentralisation processes in the education system as a whole. Masuku (2010) notes that the responsibilities of the school head prior to the implementation of decentralisation policy were not reduced to make way for new roles. De Grauwe (2001) also noted that, since the inception of this policy in August 1999, these principals have worked under stressful conditions. As the school heads are at the centre of policy implementation, they are overloaded, a situation that may affect the quality of supervision that is sought in implementing the amended curriculum.

#### **Supervision skills**

The study found out that some of the education supervisors did not have sufficient skills for supervising teachers effectively. In agreement, UNICEF (1996) noted that the school heads for both primary and secondary schools did not possess the necessary capacity to offer developmental or instructional supervision (UNICEF 1996). In agreement, Chikoko (2009) noted that school heads did not seem to have sufficient competence to be instructional leaders. The inspectors and school heads fail to communicate, inspire, motivate and provide leadership to the teachers.

#### **Lack of collegial relationship**

The study found out that there was a strict respect for the education system ranking of administrative positions. This structural respect for officers' ranks seemed to restrain relationship among supervisors (school heads) and supervisees (teachers). As a result there appeared to be a limited level of collegiality between school heads and teachers on one side and inspectors on the other. The relationship between the inspectors, school heads and teachers is hierarchical. It would seem as if teachers were seen as subordinates to be instructed not colleagues' to be mentored, encouraged and motivated. In their casual interaction with teachers, school heads and education inspectors were referred to as 'chef', a term denoting boss.

#### **Inadequate Resources**

The most critical resource that seemed to affect supervision in Zimbabwean schools seemed to be TIME. Time for supervision was so limited that supervision programmes developed by both school based, close to school, and external supervisors rarely saw the light of day. Instead routine rounds to schools and classrooms for quick "dip-stick" assessments and recommendations seem to be the norm. In addition, education inspectors did not seem to have adequate transport and other outreach facilities and resources for sustained supervisory programmes in the schools they were in charge of. In an in-depth interview one education inspector summarised:



The shortages of basic facilities such as transport and financial resources have resulted in us inspectors undertaking team inspection visits to say 2 schools in one day. This has resulted in hurried assessments and little time being devoted to coaching. You see, the pre supervision conference becomes more of a quick highlight of the inspectors' check lists..... not an interactive discussion.... setting the tone for the supervision process....the post inspection review meeting takes the form of us the inspecting team narrating our findings and giving immediate recommendations to be implemented within specified time lines.... A purposeful engagement process is lacking in the post supervision conference with the teachers... we don't have time to spend with individual teachers.....

## Recommendations

- This study recommends that the Zimbabwean school education system seriously considers adopting hybrids of both traditional and current models of supervision. The classical external supervision provides the essential policy compliance and system- wide thrust on school site supervision. The close to school-cluster system provides the necessary wider technical base from other institutions and support from parent communities. Current models that emphasize school site supervision provide opportunity for using supervision strategies such as clinical and learning communities. These models would bring on board teachers and school heads as supervisors of peers in their various expertise domains in classroom practice. The education inspectors would then focus more on providing policy direction and creating the all important supportive education-district wide supervision culture.
- It is also recommended that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education initiates capacity building programmes that focus on retooling school leaders with collegial leadership techniques and teachers with professional teacher collaboration etiquette.
- Lastly, the study recommends that community participation in non professional-expertise areas such as planning, implementing, resourcing, monitoring and evaluation be encouraged.

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