

Instructional Supervision

William DeWitt

"Instructional supervision can only succeed as it becomes a part of, rather than apart from, the visible community which it must also serve."

The dilemma of instructional supervision is a self-created crisis caused by lack of definition, lack of exercise, and lack of a legitimate comprehension of the current social dissatisfaction with the schools and schooling.

Instructional supervision has been narrowly considered as the observation of a performer (teacher) by a generally-agreed-to-be-excellent performer (supervisor). The excellence of a supervisor rests upon having proven teaching ability and proven mastery of content.

The notion that a supervisor is to be more than a "helper," that indeed the supervisor has some role in making educational theory into educational programs and processes, is accepted by some progressive school systems. The concept that a supervisor must also translate community-generated goals and processes into programs is practically nonexistent. Herein lies the definition dilemma for community involvement in instructional supervision.

Supervisors, as described in contracts by systems that have collective bargaining agree-

ments, are those who must be involved in the "axing" process; that is, ousting teachers not performing satisfactorily. The disaster is not that a satisfactory rating is based on the supervisor's personal perception, but that an unsatisfactory rating does not allow for a supervisor being out of synchronization with community input. It is as though the schools are the exclusive province of educators and school boards, at least as far as the functionaries are concerned. Unless the supervisor has internalized community expectations of product/process, those teachers labeled as successes could be succeeding in the wrong processes in relation to the wrong educational goals.

Supervisors under the direction of a Central School System are more prone to operate as perpetrators of what was and is, rather than what is to be or should be. Indeed, supervisors are often those who have "earned their stripes" as teachers and/or second-level administrators. It is unheard of for the supervisor to be a newly trained, newly educated, or newly assigned specialist from the academic or professional "field."

Seldom is the supervisor selected or screened for community awareness and participation. Part of the requisite seems to be internal motivation, internal operation, and internal commitment. Secondary loyalties often are to those publishers of commercial materials and their representatives who make social and financial agreements for editing, promoting, using, and recommending their products, regardless of appropriateness and need-satisfying or cost-effective considerations. In short, both performance of Central Office supervision and content by way of materials and activities are likely to be prepackaged, predetermined, and prescribed.

Now, let us introduce new or intervening elements into a traditional system—a switch from a predominately white to a black population, a decentralized school system, a student boycott, a teacher strike, an outcry against illiterate or semi-literate graduates. What do supervisors do? What can they do?

The clients of the supervisors, that is, unsatisfactory or marginally satisfactory teachers, are not likely to race to the defense of the supervisor. The publishers are probably also under attack and will bypass the system until "things return to normal." Top administration is looking for a scapegoat group that doesn't lead to genocide, and the supervisory pool is expendable. Voila! The supervisor is the target, the victim, and the villain!

Given the case of the supervisor/translator, what differences would be operative?

First, if the supervisor had been personally and consistently involved with the visible community in agreement/retraining, definition/redefinition at the community level would have occurred. The supervisor, with teachers, would have developed programs, procedures, selected materials, developed internal teaching strategies, piloted activities, and given and received mutual encouragement and support. At this point, community goals become visible in the classroom. The community joins the supervisor and teacher in promotion and revision of the embryonic programs, and they all "buy-in" to a common product, a product that they understand.

The supervisor has, by the very act of being a supervisor/translator, developed an advocate group. In addition, the supervisor/translator has

established a credibility base with a group of clearly defined individuals: at the community level; the staff level; and, if published, the academic community. Now, given attack, the problem is not that person, but it is we—we are involved; we know; we understand; we resist and react. We can handle; we can change. As a first line of defense, the inclusion of community as codevelopers, monitors, and goal setters is a plus for the enlightened supervisor.

To avoid becoming too simplistic, there are many specific behaviors that the new supervisor must possess to achieve community effectiveness. At this point, I shall describe these activities and indicate the applicability to a case study of the role as it occurred in Region One of the Detroit Public Schools:

Project Activity:

Define the situation. Because of reduced enrollment, subject specialists in science, math, and reading were eliminated as self-contained organization was mandated.

Define the problem. How to help teachers gain content knowledge and strategy practice to deliver services similar to those of specialists.

Supervisor's Activities:

1. Compared all programs within the middle school constellation
2. Prepared and discussed a list of self-contained and platoon (Detroit plan) organizations
3. Prepared a description (teacher-by-teacher) of additional skills/competencies of staff not included in transcripts/records
4. Surveyed and presented student performance data fact sheet (tests, attendance, cocurricular activities)
5. Chaired a joint Community Council and staff meeting which established learning priorities based on perceived needs.

Project Activity:

Develop a list of possible alternatives to provide the services needed.

Supervisor's activities:

1. Prepared for community staff a list of educationally sound practices from current literature, including (a) adopting open school concept; (b) staggering subject offerings on alternate se-

mester/year bases; (c) using curricular/cocurricular/extracurricular organizations to compensate for loss of specialists; and (d) using consultant corps from specialist rank to broaden self-contained staff competencies.

2. Discussed list with community staff.

Project activity:

Select discrete criteria that must be met.

Supervisor's activities:

1. With community leadership, developed the following criteria for process selection: (a) retain language arts and computational mastery as highest priority; (b) maintain or improve activities in self-awareness/self-respect; (c) select the method that could best be monitored/evaluated by community and professional staff; (d) promise widest base for external funding.

Project activity:

Select the alternative that met the criteria and showed promise of solving the problems.

Supervisor's activities:

1. In exploration sessions, developed a grid for collecting data. Results showed (a) open school neglected because of physical changes needed; (b) staggering schedule rejected because of lack of continuity and high mobility factor within the Region One community; (c) curricular/cocurricular option was rejected because of safety factors for post-school, a shortage of sponsors; (d) the consultant format was adopted.

Project activity:

Develop job description for personnel.

Supervisor's activities:

1. With community, developed a constellation curriculum committee representing all schools in middle school feeder patterns

2. With individual school administrators, developed a professional advisory committee

3. With both, agreed on personal and professional attributes required

4. With personnel administrator, developed format and schedule for advertising

5. Secured concurrence to staffing

6. Turned over selection process to personnel.

Project activity:

Provide preliminary training for personnel.

Supervisor's activities:

1. A Regionwide program for strategy renewal was in-classroom follow-up in these discrete categories: Developmental, Individualizing, Mastery, Challenge, Problem Solving. (This program was cosponsored by Region Curriculum Supervisor and Achievement Specialist.)

2. Regionwide demonstration teacher descriptions were shared with consultants, since consultant/demonstration teacher role was considered comparable. (For complete description, see dissertation abstract of "A Model of In-Service Education," by Helen Adams, Wayne State University, December 1974.)

Project activity:

Prepare and arrange schedule for in-school, out-of-school activities.

Supervisor's activities:

1. Worked with consultants to establish: (a) specific activities needed; (b) amount of lead time and nonclassroom activity time needed for "beginning" the program; (c) prepared a list of materials desired in addition to regular teacher supplies; (d) "role played" some known and anticipated human management processes.

Project activity:

Secure firm funding.

Supervisor's activities:

1. Helped constellation committees (community and professional) in writing a "Title I Proposal" with strategies for "selling" to Title I council, the governing committee for all Title I expenditures.

2. Related some other staff training programs to consultants for self-improvement, particularly (FAST) Federally Assisted Staff Training Program.

The committee succeeded in obtaining Title I funding.

Project activity:

Develop monitoring and evaluation design.

Supervisor's activities:

1. Based on the approved program description, built a product/process questionnaire, relat-

ing to the outcomes. In general, the Community Constellation Committee had product responsibilities. (A series of three additional designs has ensued since the original was developed. Product evaluation has increased since 1973.)

2. Assisted in first progress report preparation.

Project activity:

Pilot program.

Supervisor's activities:

1. Set-up and attended planning meeting for establishing pilot times and schedules. Assisted selected consultants in first series of activities.

2. Observed and reported to consultants, in writing and conferences, effectiveness as determined by Region Supervision checklist. Student and teacher perception of the consultant's performance was added to the individual conferences.

The competencies of a supervisor, as we have hopefully shown, are involved, broad, and, *most significantly*, brought into focus by and with community/professional interface. In the case study cited, the supervisor has maintained ongoing roles in the program. This was situational, and would not necessarily have to occur. Indeed, many of the functions described in the illustration were not major inputs by one supervisor. However, the flow, "the translation," from need to program was orchestrated, plotted, and continues with a mutual respect of community, consultant, and school staff.

If and as America moves toward community control of the education of its children, I propose that instructional supervision can only succeed as it becomes a part of, rather than apart from, the visible community which it must also serve. [FL]



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