

Unit 3: Instructional Supervision

INTRODUCTION

Instructional supervision facilitates effective learning. Teachers spend most of their formal engagement time giving instruction to their pupils. Inspectors and other supervisors need to ensure that lessons are delivered as effectively as possible. It is the concern for effective lesson delivery that gives rise to instructional supervision.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- define instructional supervision
- explain why instructional supervision is necessary
- identify key aspects of the clinical approach to supervision
- apply the clinical approach to instructional supervision
- develop an instrument for assessing inputs in the teaching/learning environment.
- analyse the teaching and learning records in order to determine the instructional needs of both the learner and the teacher.

DEFINITION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION

Supervision is a developmental approach where a practitioner assists a client to carry out an assignment more easily and more effectively in order to achieve improved results. At school level, supervision concentrates on improving the quality of instruction. The supervisor has the responsibility to assist the teacher. The interactive process of helping the teacher to improve standards of teaching in a learning situation is referred to as instructional supervision.

Activity 3a

Write down common errors that teachers often make in lesson delivery.
Suggest supervision strategies to rectify the errors.

COMMENT

There is never perfection in the delivery of a lesson where a teacher deals with a group of learners who obviously are unique and different in many respects. Supervision as a deliberate approach to enhance and improve classroom instruction, promotes teachers' professional growth. The constant and continuous process of more personal guidance tends to focus on one or more aspects of learning/teaching during instructional delivery. Some common shortfalls include:

- poor questioning techniques
- gender insensitivity
- failure to reinforce correct responses
- illogical sequencing in lesson delivery
- poor introduction and conclusion
- poor management of mixed ability classes

THE KEY ASPECTS OF CLINICAL SUPERVISION

The clinical approach to supervision is similar to the doctor-patient situation in a clinic, where the patients are open in telling the doctors their problems. In the same way, the supervisor and supervisee should be open to each other. The supervision exercise is planned by both parties. Among the clinical supervision aspects to be considered are:

PRE-OBSERVATION MEETING

- The supervisor and teacher schedule time and place for supervision ensuring the headteacher's approval for the convenience of administrative procedures.
- The pre-observation meeting ensures that the supervisees (teachers) have the opportunity to state personal concerns, needs and aspirations. The following points should be borne in mind during the meeting:
 - (i) establish a rapport (climate setting) between the teacher and the supervisor
 - (ii) discuss the lesson plan and note the following:
 - lesson objective
 - relevance and appropriateness of content
 - availability and relevance of teaching aids
 - learning activities
 - time allocation
 - evaluation
 - (iii) Characteristics of learners:
 - knowledge
 - understanding
 - skills
 - needs
 - special needs
 - parental support
 - attendance
 - gender distribution
 - (iv) Teacher's needs:
 - strengths
 - intentions/ambitions
 - shortcomings/limitations
 - (v) Classroom environment:
 - space
 - furniture
 - seating arrangement etc.
 - (vi) Agree on the observation strategy

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

At this stage, the supervisor as a professional practitioner observes the teacher, based on areas agreed upon. The main emphasis during the exercise is to collect as much information as possible about the teaching and learning situation. The following should be noted at this stage:

- (i) the lesson plan should be available
- (ii) the supervisor should take objective notes of events as the lesson unfolds
- (iii) during lesson observation, attention should be paid to one of the following as agreed in the pre-observation meeting:

Introduction

- link with previous lesson
- the lesson objective
- pupil involvement

Development

- logical development of content
- display of mastery of content by teacher
- pupil involvement
- proper use of teaching/learning aids
- variety of teaching methods
- relationship between pupils and teachers
- discipline

Conclusion

- Summary of the main points of the lesson

Evaluation

- Assessment of whether the lesson objectives have been achieved

Other considerations:

- questioning techniques
- gender sensitivity
- voice projection
- interpersonal skills
- time management

NB “The supervisor should be as unobstructive as possible during the lesson. Discussion with the teacher should not take place during lesson time unless absolutely unavoidable. This does not preclude working with groups of children and talking with them about their work.” (Sussex County Council 1991)

This exercise is meant to collect as much information as possible about the teaching and learning situation.

3. POST-OBSERVATION MEETING

Supervisors and supervisees review the data collected, making sure both parties participate in the discussion. The supervisors encourage the supervisees to make their own observations about teaching effectiveness. It is also at this meeting where plans for follow-up visits can be arranged.

Other points to consider include:

- (i) ensuring that both the supervisors and teachers have a few minutes to themselves after the lesson observation, and before the meeting. This should be done so that they can reflect on the observed lesson and formulate their impressions.

However, a teacher may wish to have some feedback immediately the lesson ends. In such circumstances it is often best to acknowledge the positive features of the work seen, point out items which you will find out more about later, and hold more detailed reporting until feedback proper.

- (ii) The teachers should preferably be given a chance to give their own impression of the lesson before the supervisors give their views.
- (iii) The supervisors should present their observations of the lesson to the teachers based on objective points noted during the lesson.
- (iv) There has to be agreement between the supervisors and the supervisees about the areas that need improvement in order to facilitate follow-up.

Activity 3b

- (a) Explain briefly how the three phases of clinical supervision are related.
- (b) Identify circumstances where the clinical approach to supervision would be applied.

COMMENT

Instructional supervision is a systematic approach. It begins with setting the climate and the tone of the working relationship between the two parties. Development of supervision is based entirely on collegiality and on common viewpoints. The observer is a mirror to the observed.

Discussions during the last stage encourage the two to measure strengths and weaknesses and to further identify any gaps when measured against the ideal, particularly the needs of the learners and the teacher. While the clinical approach is a powerful instrument to all teachers, it is most effective with weak performers and newly appointed teachers who can be assisted to be more competent and confident.

MEASURING INSTRUMENT FOR ASSESSING INPUTS IN THE TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS

There should be a conducive teaching environment for quality instruction to occur. The elements which contribute to such an environment have to be assessed separately from the lesson observation. Such an assessment should be done on a sliding scale, refined according to the intended purpose of the inspectorate. It is therefore necessary for an inspector to be able to devise such an instrument if a standard one does not already exist.

The following points should be borne in mind while devising such an instrument:

- it should be confined to the learning environment
- the list of items should be exhaustive yet concise
- the measuring scale should have a finite number of well-defined levels
- there should be room for remarks or comments for any outstanding cases

Here is an example of such an instrument:

Key Information: Sample Check-list for the Trainers				
Physical materials that affect teaching/learning processes	Scale			
	1	2	3	Comment
<i>Stationery</i>				
pupils' stationery				
teacher's stationery				
<i>Instructional materials</i>				
pupils' text books				
teacher's guides				
audio equipment				
visual equipment				
science kits				
mathematics kits				
<i>Accommodation</i>				
size of classroom				
ventilation				
light/illumination				
furniture				
				Key
				1. not available
				2. inadequate
				3. adequate

Activity 3c

Following the guidelines given earlier, design an instrument of your own which would measure more accurately the instructional inputs in your area of inspection.

COMMENT

Individual circumstances will determine the format and the content of the instrument. As an inspector you need to identify all material inputs that have direct bearing on the teachers' work. You may classify the inputs or treat them separately. The scales of measurement are entirely dependent on your choice. However, it is of paramount importance that data collected should be easily interpreted. It should lead to an objective conclusion that spells out the impact of the inputs on teaching and learning.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Instructional supervision through the clinical approach does not give a complete picture of teachers' performance. Supervision has to also function to review factors that enable the system to measure quality and determine standards of work in the teaching/learning spheres.

Some of the records to be reviewed are:

- schemes and records of work
- prep book/lesson plan
- pupils' written work
- test/examination records
- test/examination question papers and marking schemes
- continuous assessment records
- timetables
- teaching aids records
- stock book/inventory

Activity 3d

Explain how the records listed in this section can be used to establish whether there has been effective learning/teaching.

COMMENT

After going through the process of examining available records, inspectors should be able to make a valid judgement on the standard of work reached in order to assist the teacher. They should also be able to trace content material from the syllabus through the scheme of work, lesson plans, pupils' exercise books, records of work and the test records.

SUMMARY

In this unit the concept of instructional supervision was explained. The clinical approach to instructional supervision was introduced and its key aspects identified. In recognition

of the fact that continuity and progression cannot be properly assessed from one lesson observation, the analysis of teaching/learning records was introduced as an additional activity. An instrument to measure inputs found within the learning environment that have an impact on the quality of instruction was suggested. Basic understanding of the above skills should put you in a good position to undertake instructional supervision.

REFERENCES

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- West Sussex County Council (1991) *Manual of Guidance for Monitoring Inspection*, UK