

ISSN 2278 - 0211 (Online)

Instructional Supervision as a Catalyst for Promoting Quality Teaching and Learning of Visual Arts in Selected Ghanaian Senior High Schools

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Abstract:

The main purpose of this study is to investigate stakeholders' perception of instructional supervision and the approaches specifically designed and used for teaching and learning of Visual Arts in selected Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana. The qualitative research method was employed for the study which sought to describe data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. Under this method, descriptions of "who" as in the "categories of instructional supervisors"; "what", which is "the instructional supervision along with output of teaching and learning in the Visual Arts Departments in Senior High Schools"; and "where" as in the selected schools in Kumasi were vividly discussed. Description and interpretation of the nature of the existing instructional supervision strategies to Visual Arts students were made. In total, 50 participants took part in the study made up of heads of school, heads of visual art department, visual art teachers and students in five Senior High Schools selected from the Kumasi Metropolis. Interviews, observation and self-administered questionnaire were used to collect data. The major findings revealed respondents' views on the concepts of instructional supervision approaches. The study found out the following supervision practices: on the spot checks; vetting scheme of work and lesson plans of teachers; interviewing students about teachers' performance; and monitoring students' progress. Furthermore, the study established that heads of school were inadequately carrying out instructional supervision, thereby leaving teachers to employ ineffective practices. In conclusion, teachers' best practices are dependent on the manner in which they are supervised, other factors notwithstanding. Recommendations are that teachers and students should be privy to any instructional supervision approach being used by the head of school, and specifically the kind of instructional supervision approaches they use in the Visual Arts Department.

Keywords: Instruction, supervision, catalyst, quality teaching and learning, visual arts, senior high schools

1. Introduction

This paper looks at school leaders or heads using instructional supervision to improve teaching and learning by providing teachers with support and guidance. Public opinion and numerous research studies have questioned the effectiveness of the supervisory process in Ghanaian Senior High Schools in Visual Arts programme. In the Senior High School system, the headmaster or FTR headmistress is supposed to see to it that the supervision task is geared towards quality teaching and learning. According to Zepeda (2003), the first consideration is how the heads as organizers of instruction can improve the quality of instructional activities in individual courses, students and teachers and then the primary issue is how the Visual Arts Department can improve the quality of its instructional program which this article seeks to address. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the existing instructional supervision approaches that are specifically designed and used for teaching and learning of Visual Arts in selected Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana.

Instruction is vital for education, as it is the means for the transfer of learning from one person to another. Today it refers to the action of teaching and the job of a teacher. Effective instruction is presented in an orderly, structured manner with the purpose of helping people learn and the goal of instructional designers is to make learning easier, quicker, and more enjoyable (Sileo, 2011)

Adepoju (1998) views supervision as essential and a practice of monitoring the performance of school staff, noting the merits and demerits, whilst using befitting and amicable techniques to ameliorate the flaws and again improve on the merits, thereby increasing the standard of schools and achieving educational goals. If 'vision' implies seeing, the word 'supervision' can be read as over-seeing, looking over someone's shoulder to check on them; and also 'super' in the sense

of outstanding or special, helping someone to extend their professional skills and understanding. Supervision should therefore be more about quality control than formalities to ginger high performance (Kilminster and Jolly, 2000).

According to Frawley O' Dea and Sarnat (2001), the concept of supervision is often referred to as instructional supervision in order to reflect the content in which the supervision is undertaken. Yet, Daresh (2007) makes certain distinctions between Inspection and Supervision. Inspection belongs to the British tradition while supervision originated from the American tradition. Supervision is an assistance or hand of help given to a professional colleague or the teacher in the process of teaching. Supervision is a professional, continuous and cooperative exercise that covers all aspects of the life of a school. It is carried out by persons designated to do so and Sakyi (2009), supported that conductors of supervision are known by various names, both within and outside the school system which include supervisor, inspector, superintendent, principal, vice principal, headmaster/headmistress, head of department, etc.

Supervision in education as indicated by Bore, (2012) does not mean fault finding, rather it means guidance, assistance, sharing of ideas to all those involved in the process of teaching and learning. It also means the facilitation or the creation and continuous improvement of a conducive learning and teaching environment. Supervision involves curriculum development; it is communication; it is leadership and it is about helping the teacher and the learner to realize their full potential in their respective careers.

During the past several decades, instructional supervision has been identified as a vehicle to enhance the performance of teachers and students as mentioned byAjak, (2015). One of the most critical problems facing the teaching profession is how to improve the development of teachers and students through instructional supervision (Eya&Chukwu, 2012). The head of school should have the overall responsibility of supervising instruction in the Visual Art Department. There are numerous instructional supervisory roles performed by Ghanaian senior high school heads, which are supposed to be geared towards effective teaching and learning of the various disciplines in the schools including the Visual Arts programme. It seems the heads of school are not sufficiently sensitive to their instructional supervisory roles being employed in promoting effective teaching and learning of the Visual Arts programme which invariably give rise to low academic performance of students studying the programme. Reigeluth (2013) clarifies that since heads of school are responsible for the overall academic activities of the senior high schools, it is essential to assess the effectiveness of instructional supervision being offered by them in the programmes of the Ghanaian senior high schools of which Visual Arts are no exception.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted using the qualitative research design. In this method, data was sourced from only the sampled population in order to generalize the study findings on the entire target population within a shorter time and at a lower cost. This design was also considered suitable for the study because it gives the researchers the opportunity of obtaining the opinions of the sampled population to assume the opinions of the target population. Since the population is heterogeneous, stratified random sampling method was used for the study.

The total accessible population of the study was50,made up offive Heads of school, five heads of Visual Arts Department,10Visual Arts teachers and 30 students. These respondents were selected from five Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. Table 1 shows the composition of the accessible population.

Categories	Number
Heads of School	5
Heads of Department	5
Visual Arts teachers (Two teachers from each school)	10
Visual Arts students (Six students from each school)	30
Total Number	50

Table 1: Composition of the Accessible Population from Five Selected Senior High Schools

Flexibility is a key component of any qualitative research design. Therefore, the accessible population was maintained as the sample size categorizing the various strata (Fig. 1). This method was to represent the relevant stakeholders of the entire population as indicated by Leedy(2005). The sample size was large enough to leave with virtually nothing more to consider, so the researchers' choice in the sample population was just enough for data collected for the study.

Figure 1: Sample Size for the Study

2.1. Data Collection Instruments

According to Winkler and McCuen (2012), three data collection techniques that are commonly used by qualitative researchers are observation, interview and document analysis. The research instruments employed for gathering primary data for the study were observation and interview.

The study employed interview guide and observation checklist as tools forcollecting the data. These assisted in eliciting vital information for assemblage, analysis, interpretation, conclusions and recommendations. The criteria for admissibility of the data were the information confirmed by the Heads of school, Heads of Department, Visual Arts teachers and students of the selected schools used in the study.

The secondary data were also sourced from magazines, books, peer review articles, conference papers, both online and in hard copies.

3. Results

3.1. The Concept of Instruction

The respondents' understanding of the word instruction was elicited and their responses are presented in Table 2.

Topic	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Meaning of	Instruction offers directions	2	10.0
Instruction	Instruction is teaching	6	30.0
	Instruction implies coaching	2	10.0
	Instructions are rules and regulations	10	50.0
	Total	20	100%

Table 2: Meaning of Instruction as expressed by Heads of School, Heads of Visual Arts Department and teachers Heads of School, Heads of Visual Arts Department and Visual Arts Teachers (N=20)

From Table 2, 50% of the respondents explained instruction as "rules and regulations" that govern an activity. This is against 10% of the respondents who also see instruction as "giving directions". Thirty percent and 10% were also of the view that instruction is "teaching" and coaching respectively. In the study, instruction is the act of teaching and it is the job of a teacher.

Meaning of Instruction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rules	5	16.7%
Task from superiors to subordinates	2	6.7%
Orders and commands	9	30.0%
Teaching and directions	8	26.7%
Guide or path	6	20.0%
Total	30	100%

Table 3: Students View on the Meaning of Instruction

Similarly, five respondents out of 30 representing 16.7% of the students agree to the fact that instructions are "rules" (Table 3). This is against 2 out of the 30 respondents representing 6.7% of the respondents who define instruction as "a task from superiors to subordinates. Other explanations to what instruction means are stated as follows: Instructions are: "Orders and Commands that is 9 out of the 30 respondents, representing 30.0% as against 8 out of 30 respondents representing 26.7% for Teaching and Direction and then 6 out of 30 respondents representing 20.0% also view instruction as Guide or Path".

In the context of the study, instruction means procedures and principles that should guide and inform the head of school in his/her supervisory duties and training. As indicated by Mankoe (2002), it is also true to say that even though

instruction is sensitive it should be the ultimate aim, values and policies of education. For supervision to be successful, instruction must be sufficiently used to maintain the supervisory quality.

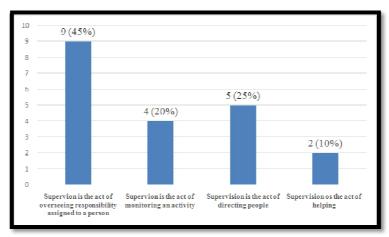


Figure 2: Meaning of Supervision as Expressed by Heads of School, Heads of Department and Teachers

Heads of School, Heads of Visual Arts Department and Visual Arts Teachers defined supervision as overseeing responsibilities assigned to a person (representing 45.0% of the respondents) whilst 20.0% of respondents considered supervision as monitoring an activity. Again, 25% emphasized that supervision is the act of directing people to do something. One other response that was low in the responses was that "supervision is meant to help teachers instead of reporting them". This makes up 10 % (Fig. 2)

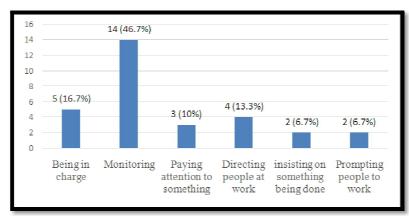


Figure 3: Meaning o Supervision as Expressed by Students

With regards to students' meaning of supervision, five out of the 30 students representing 16.7% explained supervision as "being in charge", while 14 (46.7%) defined supervision as "Monitoring". Others saw supervision as "paying attention to something" (10%). To 13.3% of the total student respondents, supervision is explained as "directing people at work", 6.7% indicated insisting on something being done and 6.7% agreeing that supervision is "prompting people to work" (Fig.3).

As a working definition, supervision is basically a service, which aims at improving factors that ensure growth and development in the teaching and learning process. It could also mean that supervision is the service provided for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. As expressed by Dzinyela (2004), he maintains that modern supervision should not be considered as mere classroom visits, individual teacher conferences, rating of teachers and writing of reports, but it should include other factors such as curriculum materials for instruction, school community and other administrative factors. For them, supervisory functions should cover curriculum organisation, policies on students' progress, method of student assessment and reporting to parents, allocation of funds for materials, tools and equipment and morale of staff. This is because other factors affect effective teaching and learning and cannot be separated from supervision.

3.2. Concept of Instructional Supervision

This section discusses the respondents' views and experience with instructional supervision as practised in their schools; the person(s) in charge of instructional supervision of the Visual Arts; the general level of satisfaction with instructional supervision and respondents' level of satisfaction with how selected supervisory practices or approaches were implemented in their schools.

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This analysis of the data obtained from interview with Visual Arts teachers, heads of school and heads of the Visual Arts department revealed mixed understanding of what instructional supervision entails. The responses are shown in Table 4.

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Meaning of	Overseeing teaching and learning activities.	8	40.0
instructional	Regular monitoring of teachers' works.	6	30.0
supervision	A process of ensuring that students are actually taught by their teachers as expected by the syllabus of the Visual Arts.	3	15.0
	A process of checking how instruction is conducted in the classroom.	3	15.0
	Total	20	100

Table 4: Meaning of Instructional Supervision as Expressed by Heads of School, Heads of Department, and Visual Arts Teachers

The results in Table 4 revealed some variations regarding the meaning of instructional supervision. It was realized that 8 out of the 20 respondents (representing 40%) saw instructional supervision as overseeing teaching and learning activities while 30% of the respondents' defined instructional supervision as regular monitoring of teachers' works. Fifteen percent regarded instructional supervision in the Visual Arts as " a process of ensuring that students are actually taught practically and theoretically by teachers as expected by the syllabus of the Visual Arts given to schools by the Ghana Education Service". The rest of the respondents making 15% also defined instructional supervision as a process of checking how instruction is conducted in the classrooms.

The respondents regard that instructional supervision includes measures put in place by the school to monitor the teaching and learning process in the classroom for both practical or theory sessions and it is a way of checking other teachers' work to ensure quality of instruction for the benefit of the students.

Further to this, the 30 student respondents were asked what they regarded as instructional supervision. The responses are presented below:

It simply means checking the presence of a teacher in the classroom at all times using the school's timetable as a guide. Supporting the view shared above, another student stated:

Checking the punctuality and regular attendance of teachers during the practical session of the various Visual Arts programmes and to make sure lessons are delivered according to the lesson plan and scheme of work.

Finally, some students saw instructional supervision as a "kind of assessing the competence of teachers' responsibilities in classrooms"

Respondents agreed that instructional supervision is a broader strategy used by school authorities to monitor the teaching and learning process and it is a way of checking teaching to ensure that laid down regulations with regard to teaching methods and procedures are followed. Such strategies may include ensuring that teachers carry out the following major activities in the classrooms and at the working studios:

- Attending scheduled lessons.
- Assisting students in their practical works.
- Preparing the necessary notes for teaching such as schemes of work and lesson plan.
- Implementing instructions as stipulated in the syllabus of the Visual Arts.

Considering the various meanings of instructional supervision there may be no uniformity regarding the practice of school-based instructional supervision across the secondary educational institutions in the country.

Therefore, it is deduced that instructional supervision in the Senior High School might be seen as a strategy aimed at "policing" the work of teachers. Instructional supervision is an important area because it is closely linked to students' academic performance. According to Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002), the success of the instructional supervision programme depends on teachers' and supervisors' understanding of the meaning of supervision. It is only then that these professionals may have productive supervision.

3.3. Experiences with the Instructional Supervisory Process by Art Teachers

This section presents survey data on the number of times instructional supervisors supervised Art teachers, as well as data about the individual most frequently identified as supervisors. In Table 5, the average time or frequencies teachers are supervised during theory and practical sessions are summarized.

No of times	Teach	ers= (10) Students = (30)		HoDs = (5)		HoSs = (5)		
No or times	Freq	Percent.	Freq	Percent.	Freq	Percent.	Freq	Percent.
5 or more times per year.	5	50%	20	66.7	5	100%	5	100%
2 - 4 times per year	3	30%	6	20	-	-	-	-
Once per year	2	20%	4	13.3	-	-	-	-
Total	10	100%	30	100%	5	100%	5	100%

Table 5: Responses Citing the Number of Times Supervisees Are Supervised

The majority of respondents, (teachers, students, HODs) indicated they have seen the heads of school doing supervision 5 or more times per year (100%). While the heads of school also affirm this position of doing the practice of supervision in their various schools (100%), 30% of the teachers were supervised 2 - 4 times per year. These findings show that instructional supervision is not adequately carried out since the frequency of supervision is very low. This is supported by the notion that instructional supervision is one of the head of school's role which should be carried out every day (Wawira, 2012). The view is further supportedby Bore (2012) and Abdille (2012) who in similar studies found that instructional supervision was not carried out frequently.

3.4. Instructional Supervisors in the SHS

Instructional supervision of Art teachers and heads of Visual Arts department was seen to be conducted by a variety of staff. Table 6 contains the information about individuals most frequently identified as instructional supervisors in observing teaching. Of these responses, eight—of the respondents (representing 53.3%) indicated that teachers were supervised by the Assistant Head (Academics) and this officer was being considered the Principal Instructional Supervisor in the School and seven (representing 46.7%) said the Head of School was responsible for the supervision.

In comparison, eight students, representing 26.7% of the respondents, reported that instructional supervision is done by the Head of School and 30% (nine students) said it is the Assistant Head, academic. Other individuals involved in instructional supervision according to the respondents include form tutors, teachers and heads of department.

Staff	HoDs + Tea	chers = 15	Students = 30		
Stair	Freq Percent		Freq	Percent	
Head of school	7	46.6%	8	26.7%	
Assistant head (Academic)	8	53.4%	9	30%	
Heads of Visual Arts department	-	-	5	16.7%	
Form Tutors	-	-	4	13.3%	
Teachers on duty	-	-	4	13.3%	

Table 6: Staff Most Frequently Identified as Instructional Supervisors

In addition to this, it is unfortunate that the assistant headmaster or headmistress academic who is the principal actor in instructional supervision in the school is not seen to be supervising the instruction during practical sessions of the Visual Arts which is the life line of the programme.

The limited role of assistant head, academic, indicates that although the instructional supervision functions in the Visual Arts department, it may not be effective because the supervisor just passes by the classroom to check if the teacher and students are present. During the practical session, the instructional supervisor (i.e. the head of school) does not even come around to supervise.

Some of the comments show why the existing instructional supervision of the Visual Arts programmes does not support quality teaching and learning. Some of the respondents were also concerned with the fact that supervision was sometimes conducted by individuals who are not specialists in the teacher's subject area. The following are voices of the respondents:

"My school head is a person with an educational background in science and not Visual Arts".

"My assistant head, academic, only comes to my classroom to check the presence of the teacher and students and not necessarily how the teaching is done".

From the information gathered, the supervisors are only interested in the theory aspects of the Visual Arts while ignoring the practical aspects. Some of the supervisors are really not keen on carrying out their roles and responsibilities.

3.5. Available Instructional Supervision Practices/Approaches for the Visual Arts Programme

In this section, the study discusses the available instructional supervision practices that exist for the Visual Arts programme. This section presents the analysis of results obtained through interview with Visual Arts teachers, heads of Visual Arts department (HoDs) and heads of school (HoSs).

Practice/approach	Visual Arts Teachers, HoDs and HoSs= 20 Frequency	Percentage (%)
On-the-spot checks	6	30.0
Vetting Scheme of work and lesson plans	5	25.0
Interviewing students about teachers' performance	5	25.0
Monitoring students' progress	4	20.0
Total	20	100

Table 7: Instructional Supervision Practices/Approaches for the Visual Arts

Results reveal that five respondents (25%) considered the instructional supervision approach that exist in the Visual Arts department as that of vetting teachers' scheme of work and lesson plans. Whereas six respondents (30%) said the instructional supervision practice is that of periodic on-the-spot check of teachers which takes only about two minutes and five respondents (25%) were also of the view that, supervision practice is that of interviewing students about the teachers' performance of the lesson. Four respondents (20%) only experienced supervision of the head of school in the form of monitoring students' progress (Table 7).

3.6. On-the-Spot Check Instructional Supervision Approach

The on-the-spot check consists of a series of frequent classroom visits where the observer is present to look for predetermined evidence of specific practices. The observations last anywhere from two to five minutes, and are intended to support the faculty in the delivery of instruction and curriculum. Gregory and Chapman (2012) are known for their early work in the development of the classroom walk-through model, however, there are several models available and some schools have created their own. The aim of the classroom walk-through is to provide direct and specific feedback to teachers based on the snapshot observed. The feedback can then be given to an individual or the observer may provide a report of patterns noted during the walk-through.

3.7. Vetting Teachers' Scheme of Work and Lesson Plans

In this practice, the head of school supervised teachers' work by inspecting records such as schemes of work, lesson plans and teacher attendance. With regards to the Visual Arts department, heads of school delegate these responsibilities to the heads of the Visual Arts department to be done at the beginning of each term.

The findings show that instructional supervision, which is to be done by the head of Visual Arts department, is pushed to the head of school with much concentration on the theoretical aspects and ignoring others such as the practical coverage. This ignorance may be attributed to the fact that it is easier and quicker for the head of school with an educational background in other areas rather than in the Visual Arts to just go through the teachers' records. The difficulty in analysing the practical matter stems from the lack of understanding of the Visual Arts subject by the heads of school.

The findings are therefore in agreement with Mogire (2010) who found those checking teachers' schemes of work, lesson plans and attendance that they were used by instructional supervisors to a large extent. The findings are also in agreement with Kiamba (2011) who states that, 50% of heads of school who supervise instruction always check only teachers' scheme of work as well as their lesson notes.

3.8. Interviewing Students about Teachers' Performance

Interviewing students about teachers' performance has to do with how well a teacher goes about his work. This will make it easier for the heads of school to manage their teachers and ensure that they are performing to the best of their abilities. The system will therefore expose weak teachers or underperforming ones. It will also help the head of school to make better and more informed decisions when recruiting new teachers. For far too long, the Visual Arts department is tangled up in complex red tape when dealing with teachers who are struggling, putting pressure on other teachers and undermining students' progress. A subject such as General Knowledge in Art (GKA) involves all subject areas under the Visual Arts discipline. The GKA teacher is therefore supposed to have sufficient knowledge in all the Art sections but the specialized nature of Art teaching profession becomes a limitation. The GKA teachers are only competent in their areas of specialization. Great teacher performance is a right, not only for students, but also for the teaching staff. Everyone deserves to know how they are doing and how they can develop. Gove (2012) welcomes teacher appraisal and capability model policy for schools. One of the strengths of the policy is to clarify the role of lesson observation with responsibility for high teaching standards and to evaluate the standards of teaching and also check that high standards of professional performance are established and maintained.

3.9. Monitoring Students' Progress

In today's educational climate, school success is defined as ensuring achievement for every student. To reach this goal, educators need tools to help them identify students who are at risk academically and adjust instructional approaches to better meet these students' needs. Students' progress monitoring is a practice that helps teachers use student performance data to continually evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and make more informed instructional decisions. To implement student progress monitoring in the Visual Arts department, the teacher determines a student's current performance level of skills, identifies achievement goals and establishes the rate of progress the student must make to meet those goals. To track student progress, the teacher graphs a line between the student's initial levels of performance on a specific skill. According to Deno (2003), research has demonstrated that when teachers use students' progress monitoring, students learn more, teachers' decision making improves and students become more aware of their own performance. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) show that when teachers use systematic progress monitoring to track their students' progress, they are better able to identify students in need of additional or different forms of instruction and therefore design stronger instructional programs for better student achievement.

A teacher's classroom instructional supervision practice is perhaps one of the most important, yet the least understood factor contributing to teacher effectiveness. A teacher has more impact on student learning than any other factor controlled by school systems, including class size, school size and the quality of after school programs.

4. Conclusions

For supervision to be successful, instruction must be sufficiently used to maintain the supervisory quality. Effective supervision goes beyond mere classroom visits, individual teacher conferences, rating of teachers and writing of reports. Instructional supervision of the Visual Arts might be seen as a strategy aimed at "policing" the work of teachers. Understanding of the meaning of supervision is a key to productive supervision. Low frequency of instructional supervision of Visual Arts does not contribute to effective teaching and learning. The mode of supervising only the theoretical aspect such as the scheme of work and lesson plan of the Visual Arts can deter the promotion of the practical segments of the programme. The role of the heads of school and heads of department as instructional supervisors is therefore critical to the issue of instructional improvement towards effective learning of the Visual Arts. Finally, instructional supervision in the Visual Arts departments of Senior High Schools will improve only when instructional supervisors are provided with the needed resources and support that will facilitate the performance of their supervisory roles.

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