THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Instructional Supervision of Social Studies Teachers in Public Junior High Schools in Ghana: Head Teachers' and Circuit Supervisors' Perspectives

Isaac Atta Kwenin
Lecturer, Department of Business and Social Sciences Education,
University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract:
The study investigated the supervision of Social Studies teachers in public JHSs in the Kumasi Metropolis. Qualitative data collection and analysis were used. The purposive sampling technique was used to select head teachers and circuit supervisors. Out of the 341 head teachers, I purposively selected nine who had attained second degrees in various fields of study. The rest had first degrees in their respective subject areas whiles others had long service in the teaching profession. On the part of the circuit supervisors, ten out of 30 were considered because they had served as head teachers before they were appointed as circuit supervisors. Also, 10 had second degree in various fields of study. A standardized open-ended (semi-structured) interview protocol was used to collect data. A cross-case analysis procedure was used to analyse the interview data after transcription.
In effect, supervisors do not stick to one particular practice of instructional supervision. Due to that teachers are exposed to a wide variety of experiences of supervision such as clinical, cognitive, mentoring, peer coaching, portfolio, professional growth and development supervision. However, one major experience that teachers are not usually exposed to is the situation where teachers are engaged in pre-observation and the post-observation stages of supervision. It is recommended that Circuit supervisors should ensure that teachers experience the pre-observation session which constitutes an essential component of collaborative instructional supervision.

Keywords: Circuit supervisor, clinical supervision, instructional supervision

1. Introduction

Instructional supervision, as part of school administration is not a recent development in schools in Ghana. In 1952, the Government of Ghana, after the enactment of the Accelerated Development Plan, appointed Assistant Education Officers as supervisors whose duties among others included assisting in training on the job, a large number of untrained teachers who had been employed by the government to augment human resource personnel in the education service. Again in 1963, the government appointed Principal Teachers from among the Senior Teachers, to visit Primary and Middle Schools to conduct in-service training for the teachers so that teaching and learning in elementary schools would be enhanced (Antwi, 1992). In 1990, the post of circuit supervisors was created in all District Education Offices (Cole, 1997). Again, the Ghana Education Act of 1995 (Act 506) established the District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC) to oversee proper functioning of education in the district, working hand-in-hand with School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs). This law was enacted to ensure good quality of education thereby increasing standard of education which was continually falling (Ayim, 2013). Instructional supervision in the modern era centres on the improvement of teaching and learning for the benefits of both teachers and learners, helps in the identification of areas of strength and weaknesses of teachers, and creates a cordial working atmosphere based on good human relations (Nakpodia, 2006).

In Junior High Schools in Ghana, two types of instructional supervisions are practiced. These are internal and external supervisions. Internal supervision is conducted by the headteachers within the schools. Headteachers are expected occasionally to observe how their teachers deliver their lessons. They are required to vet their teachers' lesson plans and supply them with teaching and learning materials. Moreover, Headteachers check class attendance registers to make sure that they are duly marked and closed. Generally, internal supervision seeks to monitor, inspect and attempt to improve upon the quality of academic and non-academic aspects of education delivery.

External supervision, on the other hand, is conducted by external supervisors, mostly, circuit supervisors and embraces those activities in the school which directly involve the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and appraisal of the school curriculum. It involves observation of teaching and learning, assisting teachers in their professional development, both in individual and group context, evaluation of teachers, research and revision of instruction (Yakubu,

2013). It is a type of instructional supervision that is carried out by personnel from outside the school such as the District Director of Education, Assistant Director in charge of supervision, circuit supervisors and sometimes other officers from the District, Municipal or Metropolitan Education Directorate (Kwenin, 2017). By Ghana Education Service standards, the circuit supervisors should be a graduate by qualification and of the rank of principal superintendent or above (Yakubu, 2013). The circuit supervisors conduct regular visits to their circuit schools. They are expected to visit each school at least once and at most three times in a term.

Depending on the type of instructional supervision one wishes to emphasise, the responsibilities of an instructional supervisor are varied and multi-faceted. An instructional supervisor must ensure that supervisory process goes through the key stages of instructional supervision which are the pre-observation stage, the observation stage, post-conference analysis, conferencing, and the feedback stage (Kwenin, 2017).

1.1. Problem Statement

In basic schools in Ghana, circuit supervisors and head teachers, who are internal supervisors, are appointed straight from the classroom without any prior training in instructional supervision. Instructional supervisors (both circuit supervisors and head teachers) are chosen because of several factors including long service in the teaching profession, higher qualification in different field, among other factors. They are therefore put into supervisory roles which can demand quite different skills. The perception is that competent teachers in the classroom tend to make good instructional supervisors, yet they should possess an array of skills that will make them effective instructional leaders. Such skills include technical, conceptual, human and diagnostic skills (Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon, 2007; Madziyire, 2013). In this regard, newly appointed instructional supervisors would be lacking requisite instructional supervisory experience meant to improve teaching and assessment of learners.

In the view of Ndebele (2006), it is perhaps in this context that most teachers are apprehensive about being supervised, and appear to be dissatisfied with supervisors' classroom observations and criticize it for being infrequent and unreliable; hence, their negative views towards instructional supervision. For many teachers, instructional supervision is a meaningless exercise that has little value other than completion of the required evaluation form for decision of their promotion and transfer. To some teachers, the instructional supervision process is a means of controlling or instructing staff, instead of a means of developing staff (Kwenin, 2017). Besides, instructional supervision practices are not properly planned. Supervisors just do it sporadically and then delay giving teachers feedback. They undermine the fact that immediate knowledge of results motivates teachers to work harder. This is corroborated by Madziyire (2013) who states that many teachers fear a visit by the supervisor often with good reason.

With the large number of teachers and schools to cover at every school, circuit supervisors also hardly find time to hold pre-observation and post-conference analysis with teachers. During the pre-observation conferences, the instructional supervisor is required to discuss with the teacher the preparations he/she (the teacher) has made towards teaching, discusses anticipated challenges during teaching, prepares the teacher physically, mentally, and psychologically while at the post-conference analysis, the supervisor discusses the outcome of the instructional supervision with the teacher and makes suggestions for improvement of instruction. However, the tight schedules of instructional supervisors often cause them to hop from one class to another, arriving in each class while the lesson is in progress, and without prior notice to teachers. As a result, instructional supervisors make sudden, unannounced appearance to supervise teachers in the various schools. In effect, only a portion of a teacher's professional duties (portions of lesson delivery) are supervised during instructional supervision (Kwenin, 2017). There is therefore the need to conduct this study and suggest possible measures to address the above problems.

1.2. Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following research questions:
- What practices do Social Studies teachers perceive to constitute instructional supervision in Social Studies in Junior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?
- How do Social Studies teachers experience instructional supervision in Junior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?
- What challenges confront the supervision of Social Studies teachers' instruction in Junior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?
- What measures could be put in place to improve instructional supervision in Social Studies in Junior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?

2. Methodology

2.1. Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach was chosen as the research method for this study. The process of research involves empirical work being carried out with the collection of data which can concur, refute or contest theories which in turn allows for understanding and clarification for different observations. A qualitative approach was considered more relevant to undertake

this research as it allowed greater capacity to gain more depth and meaning based on an individual's experiences of instructional supervision.

2.2. Population

The purposive sampling technique was used because the headteachers and the circuit supervisors in junior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. Out of the 341 head teachers, I purposively selected nine who had attained second degrees in their respective fields of study. The rest had first degrees in various subjects whiles others had long service in the teaching profession. On the part of the circuit supervisors, ten out of 30 were considered because they had served as head teachers before they were appointed as circuit supervisors. Also, the 10 had second degree in various fields of study. The importance of purposive sampling lies in the quality of knowledge and experience of the participants in the study but not the size of the sample (Patton, 1990). They were therefore typical or representative to be chosen from the population.

2.3. Interview

Semi-structured interviews were selected to carry out this research study. They allowed the participants to elaborate and with that provided more flexibility, range and therefore the capacity to elicit more information from the participant. Semi-structured interviews allowed scope for individuals to answer questions more on their own terms than the standardised interview permits, yet still provides a good structure for comparability over that of the focused interview. While the interview process is a valuable means of collecting rich and in-depth data, it can prove to be an expensive and time-consuming process. Interaction between the interviewer and the participant can differ as each interview is unique and the quality of the responses obtained from different interviews may vary significantly (Kumar, 2005). Furthermore, the quality of the data generated is affected by the experience, skills and commitment of the interviewer (Kumar, 2005). A risk of researcher bias can also exist. In addition, it can prove to be a difficult task to gain reliable data on the research subject if there are a small number of participants involved, unlike the quantitative approach which involves a higher number of participants and hence in certain circumstances can provide more far reaching and reliable data results.

2.4. Data Collection

I personally conducted face-to-face interviews with 10 headteachers and 10 circuit supervisors. Personally, conducting the interviews improves the reliability of the interview process since a consistent approach was adopted. The interview conducted for this study followed a uniform protocol to ensure that the interviews yielded data consistent with the study's goals. In the first place, participants were invited to the study by the researcher, and were informed of the risks involved. Secondly, in-depth (semi-structured) interviews were held with participants in their respective schools and offices. Thirdly, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed within a day of the interviews. Finally, follow up informal contact was initiated, and I played back the recorded conversation to the interviewees to make sure they agreed to what had been shared and also to ensure that the conversation was properly recorded. This was also done because of the difficulties in sending the transcripts back to the interviewees. Each participant was also given his or her respective transcript for member-checking, and to verify transcript content. The interviews with headteachers and the circuit supervisors lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. The interview times were short because the items were few (11) and also the open-ended questions were straight-forward but allowed for flexibility. Even though the interview questions were standardized open-ended items, I probed further for more detailed information when interviewees provided responses which I thought were incomplete.

2.5. Data Analysis

I analysed the interview responses from the two groups of interviewees (head teachers and circuit supervisors) after transcription. I used a cross-case analysis procedure (Patton, 1990) to analyse the interview data. In this approach, responses to a common question from all interviewees in each category were analysed together. Thus, each question was analysed separately for head teachers and the circuit supervisors. Common themes across respondents were then identified, analysed and interpreted item by item. The interview data for the two groups of respondents were analysed in a systematic manner. First, I replayed the audio recordings of each respondent and transcribed them by hand on paper. I transcribed sentences and phrases directly to avoid misinterpretation of the sense or meaning of information respondents provided. I read through the responses for each item across all the ten head teachers and the ten circuit supervisors separately and recorded the key ideas. Responses from each question were grouped together and analysed on central issues. If an interviewee provided a response to a particular question but this was found to answer a different question, I transferred the particular response to include it in the responses for the latter.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results from the questionnaire. The presentation of results covered issues such as: practices that constitute instructional supervision, how JHSs Social Studies teachers experience supervision of instruction, measures to improve instructional supervision.

3.1. Interview Responses on the Practices That Constitute Instructional Supervision
        This section presents the results from interviews with head teachers. The results are presented according to the interview questions asked.

3.2. Supervision of Instruction in Your School What Practices Constitute?

<u>3.2.1. Head Teachers' Views</u>
    The head teachers did not mention any specific practices that constitute instructional supervision in their schools. They however indicated that circuit supervisors are cooperative when they visit their schools. Some headteachers said that some circuit supervisors collaborate effectively with teachers, head teachers as well as students in an effective manner for effective supervision. One head teacher made it clear that instructional supervision does not follow a particular practice. This, he indicated by saying:

> In this school, I do not have any particular practice in mind when supervising instruction. But I go [to the classroom] and talk to the teachers on any issue at all: those that relate to teaching and non-teaching, check one or two things and off I leave. I make sure teaching is effectively carried out.

This means that although the head teacher conducts his supervisory role, he does not adopt a specific practice to carry out their mandate. This is also evident in the view of another head teacher who said:

> When I come to school, I check a number of things. For example, I check teachers' attendance, punctuality, work output, teaching and learning, and other school records. But all these don't follow specific pattern or schedule.

Some of the head teachers also indicated that

> I don't think there is any policy guideline for supervision of instruction in schools especially in basic schools in Ghana. What I know is you have to find out whether teachers are doing what they are expected to do. That is, whether they prepare their lesson plans and submit them on time, whether they come to school on time and leave at the right time, whether they are able to give a number of exercises, mark and return them to pupils. This is what I know.

When the head teachers were probed further whether their supervision was geared towards collaborative means or for the purpose of self-reflection, some of them were of the view that their supervision performs both functions. This is evident in the view of one head teacher who said that

> Oh, as for me, I collaborate a lot with the teachers, especially those who have just been posted to my school. You know, some of these teachers may be too young and new to teaching so if you don't draw them close and point out one or two things to them, they will find teaching more difficult since they will not find the system to be accommodating.

Another circuit supervisor also emphasized the fact that both collaborative and self-reflection practices are used for supervision of instruction in Junior High Schools in the Metropolis. In this regard she indicated that:

> After the classroom visits and observation, I hold meetings and conferences with teachers to discuss their weak and strong points, and identify opportunities for improvements and efforts are made to improve them as well. It is also important to note that I provide regular guidance to teachers through reports which contain suggestions for improved methods of teaching.

Another view which was also in line with both collaborative and self-reflection was given by another head teacher who said that:

> I use face-to-face interaction with my teachers though not frequent. The intention has always been double. One, for the purpose of improving instruction in the classroom, and two, for improving teachers' professional growth which is a form of staff development.

Another head teacher however indicated that his major priority is for the purpose of improving instruction and therefore he does not focus much on helping teachers to reflect on themselves. He said that:

> I'm mostly concerned with improving teaching. For the teachers, they have their own plans in life. At times they come and later they will inform you that they want to pursue further education. Others will not inform you and yet will be schooling without my knowledge, especially, distance education. So, when it comes to self-reflection, I leave that to the teachers themselves. But I make sure that I collaborate with them as well. It is only when you collaborate that they will bring their best out.

In the view of another head teacher, the major practice is broad and comprises activities that occur both within the classroom and outside the classroom. This is what one head teacher had to say:

> I supervise teaching, co-curricular activities programmes such as sporting activities, school environment, supervision of school records, supervision of pupil and supervision of financial management, and so on. So as for me, these constitute the major practices of instructional supervision in my school.

Another head teacher was also of the view that:

> I ensure that supervision takes place in a comfortable, non-threatening environment. Since the success of the supervision depends on the cordial relationship between you the head and the teacher, I welcome teachers' suggestions and I also point to them their weaknesses and the areas they need to improve upon their teaching. By so doing, I help them to reflect on their teaching and I think I am being collaborative enough or?

Finally, one head teacher limited the practices of instructional supervision to lesson plan evaluation and indicated that:

> To supervise every teacher's teaching is quite impossible so for practices towards instruction, I do not have anything in mind. But generally, I vet every teacher's lesson note and make suggestions that will help them improve teaching. I have been going round everyday to see if teachers are teaching but I don't sit in their class during teaching, I only stand through windows. But once a while, I enter their class.

The outcome clearly indicates that although head teachers perform their supervisory role, they don't adopt specific supervisory practice.

3.2.2. Circuit Supervisors' Views

The circuit supervisors on the other hand did not mention specific practices that constitute instruction supervision. However, what they mentioned can be aligned with both collaborative and self-reflection practices. For example, one supervisor said that:

> I don't specifically choose a particular practice. What I do is that I make sure I collaborate effectively with them [teachers] and through that I help them reflect upon their teaching and their professional development as well.

This was not different from the view of another circuit supervisor who mentioned that:

> That is my duty as a circuit supervisor. I have to encourage headteachers and teachers to improve on their respective roles. This I can achieve through effective collaboration.

In a related view another supervisor indicated that:

> Collaborating with teachers, headteachers and pupils help in every supervisory exercise. If they don't and if I don't collaborate, it can affect the whole exercise, including school management.

One other circuit was not aware of the practices that constitute supervision of instruction. He had this to say.

> Instructional supervision cannot be neatly categorized because classroom supervision continues to serve too many purposes. For the most part, supervision embraces a wide variety of activities and personnel directed toward a major goal: the improvement of instruction.

Another circuit supervisor rather linked the practices of instructional supervision to the visits supervisors make to the various schools and indicated that:

> School visits is the main practice of supervision. Visiting schools for pedagogical and administrative purpose is the task of instructional supervisors. The number of schools to visit and the number of times each school is to be visited are clearly specified. So, for me, visiting of schools and teachers is the most important practice of the actual instructional supervision.

Another circuit supervisor indicated that:

> Once I am in the school, I am responsible for two different tasks. One, I am responsible for monitoring the performance of teachers and making the corrections when necessary. Secondly, to identify and solve the problems that the teachers face before the problem deteriorate their performance.

In the view of another circuit supervisor

> I have done this work for quite a number of years. Mostly, teachers preferred I discussed with them about the lessons I observe. Through the discussion, I have found out that they want supervisors to be caring, understanding and helpful. They want a cordial relationship between teacher and supervisor rather than authoritarian.

It is clear from the views of both the headteachers and the circuit supervisors that instructional supervision in Junior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis does not follow any particular practice. This may stem from the fact that there are no laid down guidelines or policy to supervisor instructions and so supervisors apply their own personal yardstick.

3.3. Interview Responses on How Teachers Experience Instructional Supervision

3.3.1. Headteachers' Views

When asked whether they take teachers engage teachers in the five stages of clinical supervision (pre-observation, classroom observation, analysis, conference, and post-conference), majority of the headteachers indicated that they do not usually engage teachers in all the stage but normally discuss few issues that relate to teachers' lesson plans and some activities teachers allow students to perform. One teacher indicated that:

> I mostly collect their lesson plans early Monday morning or latest Tuesday. Then I vet and return them to the teachers. I don't usually discuss with them issues relating to the lessons they will be teaching but I discuss with them the errors that I will see in their lesson plans. As for the actual lessons, the number of teachers and the time available will not permit me to do that. But I discuss with them certain things about their lessons that I think need improvement.

This means that this headteacher does not specifically engage teachers in all the stages of clinical supervision. The only discussion he engages teachers is the outcome of lesson plan evaluation. This is also evident in the view of another headteacher who expressed that:

> Since I don't sit in the classroom and supervise teachers' teaching, I don't think it is necessary to discuss the outcome of the lesson taught with them. What I do is that after vetting their lesson notes, I call them, especially when I see any mistakes in the lesson notes, and I discuss the mistakes with them so that next time they will not repeat those

mistakes.

Another head teacher however stated categorically that:

> In my school, the teachers are many and I can't go from class to class to discuss with teachers what they are about to teach. I only discuss the outcome of lesson plans that contain errors but not every teacher's lesson plan, but only those that contain errors.

In the view of one other head teacher, vetting lesson plans was the major means through which teachers experience supervision of instruction in her school, just as have been expressed above. This is what she had to say:

> The lesson plan is a reflection of the level of preparedness as well as the effort the teacher made in gathering information for the lesson. So, a poorly prepared lesson plan does not only indicate the quality of the teacher, but also the level of commitment to his primary task of teaching. On the other hand, a well-prepared lesson plan should tell you how effective that teacher will be when it comes to the delivery of the lesson plan he prepared. So, as the school head I critically examine the clarity and appropriateness of the objectives, the relevance and adequacy of the lesson notes, selection of appropriate teaching aids, and selection of appropriate evaluation techniques to determine the extent of realizing the objective effectively.

Another head teacher also indicated different ways in which supervision is experienced in her school and she had this to say:

> I have a checklist which I use for my supervision. I supervise teachers' attendance, punctuality, work output, I mean, number of exercises. But when I supervise a lesson, I only check for class control and lesson delivery.

Another head teacher gave a similar view when she said that:

> In the classroom I check teacher appearance, questioning skills, organization or lesson, use of teaching and learning materials, class control and assessment and I give report on these.

Asked whether she gives written report? This is what she had to say:

> Oh, for written report, I don't [give] but what I do is to discuss the outcome with the teacher involved.

She was further asked whether the report was comprehensive enough to cover every aspect of the teaching. She indicated that:

> The discussion which in one way or the other is the report covers only the areas I concentrate during supervision so that teacher will improve upon those areas.

One other teacher however indicated that she actually observes teachers' lesson in order to write report that will reflect the classroom situation. In her opinion:

> Teaching is said to be effective if the desired objectives are achieved. As the head, I am required to carefully pay attention to the introduction of the lesson and the teacher's ability to maintain students' attention throughout the duration of the lesson. I am also supposed to pay attention to the teacher's voice quality, speech, clarity of expression, intelligibility and appropriateness of language, effective use of learning materials such as audio-visual aids and chalkboard, teacher's knowledge of the subject matter in terms of structure and sequence, use of classroom management techniques including skills in affecting student's participation in class activities, etc.

Though very important in instructional supervision, teachers do not experience all the stages of clinical supervision. The only stage they seem to engage teachers is the conference stage. The implication is that the conference stage will not be effective since discussion at the conference stage usually emanates from the first three stages. Another implication is that teachers will not be prepared psychologically, mentally, emotionally prior to their instructions. This outcome also confirms the views of the teachers that supervisors hardly engage them in the pre-observation discussion.

3.3.2. Interview Response from Circuit Supervisors

The circuit supervisors were also asked whether the engage teachers in all the stages of clinical supervision. The outcome of the interview indicates that teachers are not engaged in all the stages but rather few. The conference and the post-conference stages were mostly considered by circuit supervisors. This is evident in the view of one circuit supervisor who had this to say:

> I only supervise every stage of teachers' instruction when they are due for promotion. In this case, I sit in the classroom of that particular teacher and observe every bit of his or her teaching. After that, I discuss the outcome with him or her and based on that, I write report for the promotion.

Similarly, another circuit supervisor indicated that

> I supervise instructions once a while, however, when they are going for promotion, I supervise them and write report.

When asked further whether they give comprehensive feedback to teachers, one circuit supervisor responded:

> For written reports, I hardly give, but orally, I discuss the outcome of supervision with teachers especially, when we want to see how they apply the skills they learnt during seminar or workshop.

In a similar view, another supervisor indicated that written reports are not give except for the purpose of promotion. This is what he had to say:

> I only supervise their teachings when there is the need for promotion or when we organize workshop and we teach them one or two things and later we want to see whether they can use what we taught them. Even with this, I don't supervise everything thing [stage]. I only check the key areas in lesson delivery to see if the teachers are applying the principles. Then, I discuss the outcome with them. Although in some situations, I write formal reports but those

reports are not meant for the teachers. They are rather meant for our office, either the director or deputy director. The headteacher is also given a copy of the report, either orally or written.

Another circuit supervisor also gave a similar view in relation to the post-conference stage (that is the feedback stage). This is what the circuit supervisor said:

No written feedback is given unless for the purpose of promotion but something we log the report in the log book.

This was also similar to the view of another circuit supervisor who said that:

I log the feedback in the log book. It is the headteachers who are supposed to give the feedback to the teachers based on what I log in the log book.

Another circuit supervisor indicated that although supervision of instruction is carried out, it is not done on regular basis and even it is not every aspect of teachers' instruction that he supervises. On this, he said:

Supervision is not done every day. Normally, in the first term, I go round the schools to check records – lesson notebooks, books for students, and other materials. But the second term marks the beginning of the actual supervision. The actual supervision is done to ensure whether materials which were supplied during the first term are being used and are in good stage. The third term is only for evaluation of the effectiveness of the materials. During this term [third term], I make sure that teachers' hand over all materials in their possession to the school. This is done because some teachers are usually transferred from the school while others are given new class.

One circuit supervisor however gave a contrary view to the views expressed above. According to him, he engages teachers in every stage of the instructional supervisory process. He expressed that:

Although I don't supervise every teacher, but whenever I supervise any of them, I first interact with the heads before I interact with the teacher involved. You know, I do this in order to get a fair idea about the teacher before I supervise him or her.

He continued that:

After every lesson, I send the teacher outside for a discussion and make my recommendations. No written report is given but that is made part of the discussion after the teaching.

Another circuit supervisor also said that:

As for me, I believe in validation and accuracy so I prefer going to the field [classroom]. It doesn't mean that once headteachers are around and are ready to supervise teaching, the CS should relax, no!

The views of the supervisors clearly indicate that the clinical supervision is not readily employed by circuit supervisors during supervision of instruction in Junior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. The only aspect which seems to be followed is the post-observation discussion. The feedback which is sometimes provided is mostly in oral form. The views also show that the actual observation stage is only supervised for the purpose of promotion or for special reasons other than for the purpose of improving instruction.

3.5. Interview Responses on Challenges That Confront Instructional Supervision

3.5.1. Headteachers' Views

The headteachers were asked to indicate challenges they encounter when supervising instructions in their schools. Almost all the headteachers appeared to give similar responses which related to the workload of the nature of their work. For example, one headteacher indicated that:

The workload in this school does not allow me to supervisor everybody's teaching. At times you have to fill some forms, check whether all teachers have submitted their lesson notes, vet and give them back to the teachers, attend workshops and seminars. In fact, the whole day's activities are so packed that there is not enough time for this [supervision of instruction].

It must be pointed out that instructional supervisors, particularly, the school principal, are so weighed down by routine administrative burden that they hardly find time to visit the classrooms and observe how the teachers are teaching. In the process, they neglect their primary duty of overseeing instruction in the schools.

Another headteacher also pointed out that the large number of teachers does not allow him to supervision instruction.

In my school, the teachers are many so if I decide to supervise everybody, then I will not get time for other equally important things in this school. That is why the CS [Circuit Supervisors] come around. Even they are unable to supervise every teaching.

This situation surfaces due to the fact that two or more teachers are sometimes appointed to teach social studies in junior high schools in the Metropolis. This has become necessary due to the growing number of pupils in our schools triggered by government's policy of free basic education in Ghana.

Similarly, another headteacher also said that .To do proper supervision of teaching, it is not an easy task and looking at my workload, it virtually becomes impossible. I think we are not to supervise everybody's teaching but for their lesson notes, we vet and make suggestions.

Another headteacher also said that:

I spent a lot of time on administrative spending, capitation grant, school records, inventory from GES, NGOs, etc. There are a lot of difficulties and problems with this school setting.

This may be due to the fact that most supervisors, especially internal supervisors have dual responsibilities of being teachers and supervisors at the same time, especially in schools where teachers are inadequate. Their workload, therefore, will not permit them to have adequate time for supervision.

Another headteacher also indicate that:

> The classes are many. Even classes 1 to 6 somehow. So, I normally supervise once a term and gives report once a term.

Another headteacher indicated the late submission of lesson plans by teachers as a major challenge. He said:

> Some of the teachers do not submit their lesson notes for vetting at all while others submit their very late. I have found out that some teachers are not comfortable with the feedback that I give so in order to avoid those comments I make, they prefer not to submit their notes at all.

One headteacher had this to say with regard to the number of circuit supervisors.

> We lack external supervisors and inspectors. They are usually GES staff specially assigned to access the level of compliance of school instructional activities with approved GES standards. Unfortunately, this category of staff is usually in short supply due to the large number of government schools and teachers.

It must be pointed out that, the consequence of this shortage of supervisory personnel is that most of the time, a lot of unprofessional practices are carried out in our schools to the detriment of the children. According to Zepeda (2007), the number of professionally trained supervisors in our schools is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of an effective and efficient programme of supervision. The population of students in the school has so exceeded the stipulated teacher-pupils' ratio that all that most principals do in terms of instruction is to ensure that there are enough teachers to man the classes. Zepeda continued that external supervisors and inspectors are usually Ministry of Education or Education Board officers specially assigned to access the level of compliance of school instructional activities with approved government standards. Unfortunately, this category of staff is usually in short supply due to the large number of government schools and teachers.

Another head teacher mentioned that he lacks time to ensure effective supervision of instruction in his school. He indicated that

> As a head, I am so weighed down by routine administrative burden that I hardly find time to visit the classrooms and observe how the teachers are teaching. I give more time to correspondence with the GES, community affairs, parents and a host of other visitors and in the process find it difficult overseeing every instruction in the school.

Results from above indicate that large number of teachers and increase in workload are major challenges confronting supervision on the part of head teachers.

3.6. Responses from Circuit Supervisors

The responses of the circuit supervisors were not different from those of the headteachers. Majority of the circuit supervisors were of the view that the workload on supervisors affected their duties. This is what one circuit supervisor has to say:

> The growing number of schools in the Metropolis virtually makes supervising every aspect of a teacher's instruction impossible. It also makes supervising every component of a teacher's teaching virtually impossible. But for me, we are doing a great job.

In a related view, another circuit supervisor said that

> You know the school structure is so big that supervising every teaching is a challenge. Supervising both classroom and out-of-class activities are a challenging task. In fact, if I supervise everything in order to get a fair idea about everything in the school, then job becomes loaded for me.

Other challenges that confront supervision of instruction that were pointed out by the circuit supervisors are in the area of logistics. In this respect, one circuit supervisor had this to say:

> The magnitude of the job requires a lot of logistics. Although we have some but others although we get them later, they are not sufficient.

This was similar to the view of another circuit supervisor who mentioned inadequate teaching and learning materials, large classes, inadequate furniture, and delay in capitation grant as some of the challenges that affect instructional supervision in Junior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. In line with this view, Inyega (1997), observes that the resources and facilities that supervisors would need for the achievement of the supervisory duties are, support staff, physical facilities, textbooks, furniture, stores and enough playgrounds, and these are unavailable for effective supervision.

Another circuit supervisor also mentioned that:

> Most schools lack even the basic materials and equipment for teaching. Apart from such cases of nothing to supervise, there are others where the problems are lack of facilities and materials for the supervisor to use. External supervisors for example, often do not have transport facilities to carry out their inspectoral duties.

With respect to inadequate materials, Grauwe (2007) asserted that in many countries school visits are insufficient because of various problems such as lack funds, and lack of transport.

Another circuit supervisor also indicated that

> Admittedly, supervising every bit of teachers' lesson has not been an easy task looking at the number of teachers and the stream of class and schools we have in this Metropolis. If it had been in small districts where there are few schools and few teachers, even that wouldn't be easy but I hope it could be managed, but ours, it is impossible. Writing reports

for every school you visit is time consuming, coupled with other extra-curricular activities such as sporting and games.

Another one responded with respect to training and orientation for supervisors. He indicated that:

There can be no effective supervision of instruction without adequate training and orientation in instructional supervision. Many newly appointed CS are not given the necessary training and orientation to equip them with the skills they need to carry out their instructional supervisory functions. They manage through for years without understanding what instructional supervision entails and how to do it.

In relation to this view, Danielson and McGreal (2000) stated that limited supervisors' experience and lack of skills are major problems in teacher supervision. They further reported that most supervisors do not have enough training in providing constructive feedback while maintaining relationships. This also supports the view of Abdulkareem (2001) who identified lack of frequent training for supervisors, weak relationship between teachers and supervisors and lack of support for supervisors from higher offices as some challenges confronting the supervisory practice in the school. In line with this, Merga (2007) pointed out that lack of continuous training system for supervisors to up-date their educational knowledge and skills is obstacle of the practice of supervision. In a related view, Hazi (2004), asserted that lack of adequate training and orientation in instructional supervision poses greater challenge to instructional supervisors. He explained further that many newly appointed supervisors are not given the necessary training and orientation to equip them with the requisite skills they need to carry out their instructional supervisory functions. They manage through for years without understanding what instructional supervision entails and how to do it.

Another circuit supervisor was of the view that:

Many visits take place unplanned and unscheduled and I think it can be a major challenge to the teachers and the school as a whole. Irregular and bad planning of visits, not enough time spent in the classrooms add up to the problem. The system works such that you can't call every teacher or every head and tell them that we want to come to your school for supervision. They should expect our presence anytime but to me this can divert their [head teachers] attention from whatever they will be doing to the supervisor.

The views of the circuit supervisors concerning the challenges that confront supervision of instruction were not different from those of the head teachers. This confirms the views of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Ghana (2000) that inspection visits to school are poorly planned and lack clear objectives. They further indicate that plans to visit the schools are over ambitious and are seldom carried out. This can result in mistrust on the part of teachers towards supervisors since most of the exercise is fault finders.

Large class size, increase in the number of schools and teachers as well as tight schedules or increase in their workload were some of the challenges that confront supervision of instruction, according to the circuit supervisors.

3.7. Interview Responses on How Instructional Supervision Can Be Improved

3.7. 1. Head Teachers' Views

When the head teachers were asked to indicate how instructional supervision in their schools can be improved, most of them indicated that the workload should be reduced so that they can get enough time to supervise instruction.

I think reduction of our workload will be a great relief. This will give me plenty of time to do that [supervise instruction]. I also think that supervising instruction should be the sole responsibility of the CS [circuit supervisor].

Another head teachers also indicated the fact that circuit supervisors should rather be equipped with the necessary skills and given the needed logistics in order to facilitate supervision in schools. To this end, one head teacher said that:

One way is that they [supervisors] must be given the requisite skills and training in the area of instructional supervision, especially, modern trends in supervision. This will help them a lot to discharge their duties as required by GES.

This was similar to the view of another head teacher who also had this to say:

In addition to specific training and workshop in instructional supervision, I think they [supervisors] should be provided with the needed materials and equipment. This will help them develop much interest and carry out their functions effectively.

Another head teacher also indicated that

Identifying the skill gap and giving the capacity building training for heads and teachers will help them at different levels. So, we must first identify the kind of skills they [heads and teachers] have and the skills they need. This will help to provide the necessary training and capacity to bridge the gap.

Another head teacher rather preferred supervisors being made to teach in order to identify the problems in the classrooms for amicable solutions to be provided. This was what he had to say:

I think the best way to deal with some of these challenges is for the supervisor to participate in the classroom teaching. To me this will help expose him or her to the actual situations on the ground so that possible solutions could be provided to bring improvement in instructional supervision. However, this will not work since they are already overloaded.

Another head teacher focused more on the feedback given to teachers after every supervision session and indicated that:

The need for discussing the lesson observed with the teacher is also seen as vital. Classroom observation appears to work best if feedback is given to the teacher, hence there is the need for the supervisor and supervisee to work hand-in-hand before and even after the observation process. In doing all these, teachers must feel that the supervisor is there to serve them and to help them become more effective.

Another related view with regard to feedback was given by another headteacher who said that:

The supervisor should incorporate teachers' suggestions as this builds the teacher's confidence hence enhancing the learning process. He or she should recognize and provide alternative approaches and application of variety of skills as this will strengthen the teacher's pedagogical skills. The supervisor should provide an immediate feedback after observation which should be comprehensive and should cover everything he or she supervised.

3.7.2. Responses from Circuit Supervisors

The circuit supervisors were also interviewed to state measures that can be put in place to address the challenges that confront supervision of instruction in their circuits. The following were the views of the circuit supervisors. One circuit supervisor indicated that:

The number of supervisors should rather be increased. In this circuit, I'm the only supervisor and look at the number of schools in this circuit. How do you expect me to go and supervise over hundred teachers in the circuit? And the children also keep on increasing which also increases my responsibilities.

A similar response was given by another circuit supervisor who also talked about large number of teachers. This is what he had to say:

In fact, the number of teachers is increasing while the number of circuit supervisors remains the same. We can only supervise key areas in the schools. For that one, we do it effectively. But I also think the teachers are also teaching well. Although they need to be supervised, I don't think it is every teaching that we need to supervise.

It must be noted that the inadequate number of supervisors can retard effective supervision of instruction in schools. According to Madziyire (2013) quotes (Marks, 2008), due to shortage of trained teachers, inexperienced teachers have been placed in supervisory roles. Supervisors require conceptual skills in supervision in order to ensure that they fully understand what their roles and tasks are as supervisors. Lack of such supervisory skills may result in conflict between teachers and supervisors especially teachers may feel they have been treated unfairly treated (Madziyire, 2013).

Another circuit supervisor also indicated that head teachers should rather take the centre-stage when it comes to instructional supervision in order to enhance effective supervision. He indicated that:

The head teachers should play key role in supervision, which I think they do. But they should also identify teachers who need guidance and help them in that direction. By so doing, the work of the circuit supervisor will be minimized.

In a related view another circuit supervisor supported the above view by when he indicated that:

Due to the large size of the Metropolis, [instructional] supervision should be brought to the heads, apart from their duties as heads, they should supervise [instruction] and report to the CS who also later should crosscheck.

Another circuit supervisor was also of the view that the appropriate measures to deal with the challenges that confront instructional was that:

To me, the measures should be specific. If you supervise a lesson and you identify any problem through the supervision, then you apply solutions that will deal with the problem. For example, if the problem relates to inadequate training on the part of the teacher, then, quickly, in-service training is organized by the headteacher. Or if possible, some experts or resource persons from outside can be invited.

Another supervisor commented on the need for adequate training for circuit supervisors. According to him, training helps to improve the supervisor's performance that will enable him teach teachers the basic knowledge and technique needed to teach. He further explained that training helps to develop the supervisor's capacity to fulfill new responsibilities arising from technical and other changes which might affect his job. This is what he had to say:

To me, I think regular and adequate training and orientation should be given to newly appointed supervisors. This will enable them do their best as supervisors, or else, they will work with the little experience they have, which to me will not help. They wouldn't be able to bring the best out of them. Even some of us who are already on the field need more training because when old and obsolete techniques are used in supervision, it negates the spirit of the supervision in basic schools.

In support of this, another supervisor indicated that:

Supervisors need continuous and sufficient training to carry out their responsibility effectively. Training programs of supervisors aimed at providing necessary skills for supervisors and make them better equipped at doing their job.

Another circuit supervisor was of the view that the qualification of the supervisors should rather be higher. In this regard, he indicated that:

Appointment of supervisors with higher educational qualifications will do. To me, supervisors with higher qualifications are more likely to perform better in supervision than those with lower qualification.

This view is however in support of Okoro's (2004) view that, education personnel with higher qualifications display more confidence in their workplace. In addition, they are more accessible to quality information, and adapt to changing occupational conditions than their counterparts with lower qualification, who are usually more indisposed and ill-equipped in adapting to

modern changes. In a similar view, Bernard and Goodyear (1998) stated that a supervisor will not be able to carry out instructional evaluation effectively if he/she is not well qualified and trained in techniques of evaluation; a sound update knowledge of the subject matter, a good organizing skill, and ready to accept teacher's idea and interest.

Following appropriate laid down procedures was the view of another circuit supervisor. According to him, supervision should be guided by plans which will make it more effective. This is evident in what he stated.

> For supervision to be more effective, then we need to have a well laid down plan and schedule for school visit. This will do away with the problem of unannounced visits which usually throw the schools' activities overboard.

It should be noted that it is only when the supervision exercise is well planned that teachers can claim ownership of the whole exercise. Teachers should be informed earlier of supervisor's intentions of visiting and supervising them so that the necessary preparation could be made to ensure effective supervision.

In the view of another circuit supervisor:

> Supervisors are expected to provide accurate and timely information for the director and at the same time give clear direction to the teachers. They should effectively serve as a linkage between teachers and GES. For me, this linkage is supposed to be two-sided. They should provide information for the GES or its representatives at the district or Metropolis level regarding the needs and realities in the school and inform schools about the norms and rules set from the top. Secondly, they should identify and spread new ideas to the schools and facilitate interactions among schools.

Other circuit supervisors were also of the view that effective supervision could only take place with a relationship of trust and a nurturing work climate in the school. They indicated that it was important to create a climate of respect that favored open collaboration among teachers, head teachers and circuit supervisors. In this context, they believe that supervisors should act more as guides than as evaluators for being sensitive to the delicate nature of the supervision, specifically in terms of work relations which were composed of a hierarchical dimension due to the various roles played by each member of the school.

4. Conclusions

Based on the major findings of the study, a number of conclusions have been drawn. In effect, supervisors do not stick to one particular practice of instructional supervision. Due to that teachers are exposed to a wide variety of experiences of supervision such as clinical, cognitive, mentoring, peer coaching, portfolio, professional growth and development supervision. However, one major experience that teachers are not usually exposed to is the situation where teachers are engaged in pre-observation and the post-observation stages of supervision. Premium is only put on the actual classroom observation with little emphasis on the post-observation discussion and no pre-observation discussion is held. This means that not all aspects of teachers' professional development are assessed. At the pre-observation discussion, ideas are shared and help is given in order to improve the actual classroom observation while the post-conference section is the time when the instructional supervisor and the teacher meet alone to discuss the observation. Thus, if these two vital sections are left out, then, the overall picture of the teacher is not covered and properly reported. Although collaborative experience dominates, few self-reflective experiences such as professional development and professional growth supervisions are sometimes employed by supervisors.

Since circuit supervisors do not follow a particular practice when supervising instructions, variations will emanate from the supervisory practices and the way teachers experience supervision of instruction. Also, since the pre-observation and post-observation discussions are not given much attention, key features (such as self-reflective skills, developing skills to set personal and professional goals) in the development of the teacher will be left out in instructional supervision. This is because during the post-instructional supervision discussion the circuit supervisor discusses with the teacher the strengths and weaknesses of the actual instruction for the purpose of improving instruction. Feedback that is given to the teacher may not be comprehensive and will not be informed by what actually happens during the actual supervision of instruction.

Concerning measures to improve instructional supervision, conducting regular in-service training, seminars and workshops would give up-to-date information on types, strategies, techniques and principles on instructional supervision. According to Panigrahi (2012), when seminars, regular workshops and conferences are organised from time to time, it would update the instructional supervisory officials' knowledge in instructional supervision processes. Also, when immediate and regular feedback is given, it will encourage teachers to improve upon their methods of delivery. The teacher will be more likely to use the data to evaluate his or her teaching and improve his or her classroom performance. The teacher will thus be more satisfied with his or her teaching. Also, engaging teachers in post-observation discussion will help establish open and trust relationship between teachers and instructional supervisors. It can further be concluded that measures suggested by teachers for improving supervision are both collaborative and self-reflection in nature. It can be deduced from these measures that the application of varied practices towards instructional supervision would be of great importance to the development of teachers.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, a number of recommendations have been made.

- It is recommended that the frequent visits made by Circuit Supervisors to the public JHSs in the Kumasi Metropolis should be intensified since it improves teachers' time-on-task. Since the study revealed that supervisors do not discuss with teachers how to plan for lesson observation, it is being recommended that supervisors should plan lesson observations with teachers. They should guide the teachers to plan the various components of lesson observation and the relevance of each component to the professional development of the teacher. Also, supervisors should develop

with teachers' possible strategies for initiating improvement of instruction. Opportunities should also be given for teachers to analyse and reflect on their teaching performance. Thus, both collaborative and self-reflection supervisions should be encouraged.

- On how teachers experience instructional supervision in Social Studies, it is recommended that Circuit supervisors should ensure that teachers experience the pre-observation session which constitutes an essential component of collaborative instructional supervision. It is being recommended that supervision of instruction should be scheduled, well-planned and frequently executed such that supervisors will find time to hold a pre-observation conference with every teacher they supervise. Also, the post-observation conference must be a two-way-communication process between the teacher and the instructional supervisor. The teacher must be made to realise that the post-observation conference is not intended for open criticism, but is for the constructive development of the teachers' teaching skills. In a fair manner, the final evaluation of teachers should be made after the observation, not during the observation, and should be arrived at as an outcome of the observation. To achieve maximum benefit, the post-observation conference must be held in a friendly atmosphere, and not rushed through.

- It also recommended that circuit supervisors should engage teachers actively in all the five stages of clinical supervision (pre-observation conference, classroom observation, data analysis and strategy, conference session, and the post-conference analysis) so that they will be in a better position to give adequate and comprehensive feedback. Engaging teachers actively in all these stages will also help identify the key areas of teachers' instruction that need improvement so that the GES can put in place proper measures to remedy the situation. Also, employment of supervisors with higher educational qualifications: Supervisors with higher qualifications are more likely to perform better in the field than those with lower qualification. This is because, supervisory personnel with higher qualifications display more confidence in their workplace. In addition, they are more accessible to quality information, and adapt to changing occupational conditions than their counterparts with lower qualification, who are usually more indisposed and ill-equipped in adapting to modern changes (Okoro, 2004).

- Also, the Ghana Education Service which is responsible for appointing instructional supervisors should identify and consider the training needs of the teachers and instructional supervisors and expose them to the desired aspects of contemporary instructional supervisory practices through pre-service and in-service training programmes. These aspects of contemporary instructional supervision could be incorporated into teacher and supervisory training programmes at all levels of education to equip teachers and instructional supervisors with diverse instructional supervisory practices. Both teachers and instructional supervisors could also be exposed to pre-service training in instructional supervision as part of their induction process. Also, periodic in-service training programmes about new developments in the education system could be provided to teachers and instructional supervisors to keep them abreast with current trends and practices of instructional supervision. This will enable them to be more conversant with the desired aspects of contemporary supervision, which may consequently improve instruction and pupils' learning.

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