

Theoretical perspectives of educational supervision

Sangeeta Kalita

Research Scholar, Department of Education, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam, India

Abstract

Theoretical perspective implies the underlying ideas contributing in the formation of a concept or a phenomenon. The concept of educational supervision has passed through several developmental phases and has now been conceived in a more democratic outlook. In the present era of Information technology (IT), which has now revolutionized the whole education process, supervision becomes a major instrument to ensure quality and to develop the standard of education. Presently, the scope of educational supervision is widened to comprehend the functions of an educational institution in toto, the role of supervisors also upgraded to a facilitator and so on. The purpose of this paper is to study the different theoretical aspects contributing to this modern concept of educational supervision. In this regard, the researcher has opted for qualitative technique of study and has undertaken a content analysis based on secondary sources of information. In this paper, the researcher discusses educational supervision with respect to its derivation, objectives, kinds, functions as well as its general historical background that will throw light on the theoretical perspectives of modern educational supervision.

Keywords: theoretical, perspective, education, modern, supervision

1. Introduction

Education is the process of refinement and polishing of inborn potentialities of individuals for making them original contributors of knowledge. Success of the whole process of education rests on the concerted efforts of various facets like students, teachers, parents, employees and the community as a whole. Supervision, as a process brings all these facets into a fruitful and harmonious whole, in order to ensure an optimum teaching- learning environment.

The wake of the era of knowledge explosion, rapid changes in information technologies inevitably brought fundamental changes in the field of education. Changes of this kind raise demand of effective management of resources of the educational institutions, strengthening leadership, developing skilful manpower in the educational institutions. All these call for comprehensive and continuous supervision services of educational institutions for ensuring professional development of the teachers as well as other employees of the educational institutions. Thus, supervision becomes a major instrument to ensure quality and to develop the standard of education. In this paper, an endeavour is made to discuss the theoretical perspectives underlying the modern concept of educational supervision.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Objective of the Study

1. To study the different theoretical aspects of educational supervision.

2.2 Method of the study

The researcher in this study has conducted a content analysis based on various secondary sources of information. The secondary sources include books on Educational Supervision,

different articles of research journals etc. that the researcher went through for developing insight and understanding on the topic under study.

2.3 Delimitations of the Study

The study is delimited to the theoretical aspects of supervision with respect to the concept, objectives, kinds, functions as well as general historical background of supervision only.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Concept of Supervision

Earlier the word 'Supervision' was invariably used as 'Inspection'. The primary purpose of inspection was though the improvement of teaching- learning process, yet the approach was different from that which is prevailing now-a-days around the world as supervision. Inspection implies critical examination of one or more aspects of the school and its programmes as per the rules and regulations prescribed by the Government from time to time. It was more directive, prescriptive and judgemental in nature. The role of Inspector was mostly like that of an administrator.

But, gradually the concept of Inspection has passed through its various phases of evolution and has now been conceived in a more democratic outlook around the world as Supervision. Supervision is a compound term, where 'Super' connotes 'Above' or 'Over' and 'Vision' implies 'To See'. Thus, supervision implies overseeing and directing the works of others. Thus, from general perspective, supervision of instruction may be defined as the efforts to stimulate, co-ordinate and guide the continuous development of teachers as well as other educational workers in an educational institution, both individually and collectively for improvement of all the functions of the institution. Thus, it involves human elements,

material elements as well as curriculum, methods of teaching, techniques of teaching etc. The human elements are the pupils, parents, teachers and other non-teaching staffs & the community as a whole. Again, the material elements include money, building, equipment, playgrounds etc.

Again, from a specific point of view, Supervision is to provide necessary leadership for making the teachers able to stimulate and inspire the continuous and best possible development of every pupil towards the formation of a rich and developed nation. It involves stimulating professional growth and development of teachers, selection and revision of educational objectives, materials of instruction, methods of teaching, evaluation of instruction etc.

3.2 Objectives of Supervision

There are general and specific objectives of supervision. The general objective of supervision is one and that is the improvement of the whole teaching- learning process by making maximum utilisation of resources of educational institutions. In this regard, Douglass, Bent and Boardman (1961)^[4] have remarked, "The whole purpose of supervision is the development of better education for youth." Again, the specific objectives of Supervision are multifarious that contributes to the fulfilment of the general objectives of supervision. The specific objectives of supervision can be summarised with the following points-

- To evaluate the school programme with respect to the growth of the child and the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.
- To provide professional leadership to all educational workers for guiding them in the right direction.
- To diagnose the weaknesses of the educational institutions as well as the problems faced by the teachers of the institution and to suggest suitable remedial measures to cope up with those limitations.
- To assist teachers to identify and analyze learning difficulties and other educational problems of pupils and to help them in planning suitable remedial instruction.
- To assist and encourage teachers in preparation of instructional materials like teaching- aids, workbooks, lesson- plans and the like.
- To promote professional growth of teachers through training programmes, demonstration, staff discussion, individual counseling, workshops/seminars etc.
- To maintain a cordial relationship with the local community.
- To act as a liaison between the Department of Education of the State and the educational institutions and thereby to keep the educational institutions vigilant about the latest developments of the Department of Education.

3.3 Kinds of Supervision

There are different kinds of supervision. Burton and Brueckner have given the following kinds (Mohanty 2007, P 85-88)^[12].

▪ Inspection

Erstwhile, the supervision was merely confined to the inspection of activities of teachers. This implies the critical examination of the routine works of the teachers.

The person undertaking this responsibility was known as School Inspector. The inspection activities are mainly aimed to ascertain whether or not the teachers were performing their regular duties and responsibilities as per the norms laid down by the State authority. The nature of remedy always seemed to be that of displacing or replacing the unsuitable teachers with suitable ones.

▪ Laissez Faire

This kind of supervision allows complete freedom to the teachers in their work. Here, the teachers are free to teach as he or she pleases. Only little efforts are given to assist the teachers to improve instructional programmes.

▪ Coercion

Coercion is an authoritarian concept of supervision which is based on the authority of omniscience. Here, the teachers are visited by the supervisor while in teaching and the defects and the good points are pointed out to them. The teachers are coerced to follow the orders and instruction of the supervisor and thereby awarded prizes or increments based on personal judgement.

▪ Training and Guidance

Supervision, here, assumes the role of imparting in-service education and training to the teachers on the job. Teachers are motivated to do better and supervision becomes a process of teaching.

▪ Democratic Leadership

Co-operation of teachers and supervisors on the problems of improving instruction is the basic concept of democratic supervision. Here, the supervisor do not impose his will upon the teachers, rather provide his leadership and co-operation to the whole school community for improvement of the whole teaching-learning situation.

3.4 Functions of Supervision

The functions of supervision in an educational institution are as follows (Lovell, 1967)^[10]-

▪ Goal Development

The educational system is a sub-system of the society. Since society is in a constant process of change, so do the goal of education. The function of supervision is to facilitate the co- operative effort of teachers and supervisors in developing educational goals suitable to the need of the society.

▪ Programme Development and Actualization

The educational goals developed leads to the programme development and its actualization, the responsibility of which rests upon teachers. The function of supervision is to provide technological support to teachers in the form of consultations and services.

▪ Co-ordination

Any educational organisation is composed of variety of teaching and non- teaching units that contribute to the overall functioning of the institution. This demands co- ordination among the various units. The function of supervision is to provide and ensure this co- ordination of different resources and expertises for making the concerted effort a successful one.

▪ Motivation

It is only through a highly motivated faculty that an

educational institution can expect to facilitate students learning in the right direction. One important outcome of supervision is therefore assumed to be enhancement of motivation of both teachers and the supervisors through their interaction to work towards the achievement of the goals of education.

▪ **Problem Solving**

The facilitation of human problem solving is another function of supervision. Educational instructions require a constant process of examining for achieving the desired outcomes. Failure to achieve, demands new attempts with new ideas. It requires capacity of problem solving with regard to specification of goals, re-arranging the conditions for achieving goals, where supervision makes intervention for helping in this regard.

▪ **Professional Development**

The growing complexity of education and the developments in technology, behavioural sciences requires more specialization and skill on the part of the teachers. Another function of supervision is to provide teachers with necessary initiation, co-ordination and support in this regard.

▪ **Evaluation of Educational Outcomes**

The society specifies certain expectations that the educational institutions are supposed to meet. Supervision of educational institutions also acts as a process of external evaluation of educational outputs to see whether or not the needs of society are fulfilled through the educational outcomes.

3.5 General Historical Background of Supervision

The current literature on supervision advocates modern concept of supervision, which evolved, developed and is being practised to a large extent in America. The supervision in America was developed through a variety of educational institutions, where the initial supervisory concepts are characterised by external supervision, which is known as the “Period of Administrative Inspection”, during 1642-1875 (Bala, 2012) [1]. In 1635, in America, the responsibility of supervision was borne by the community members. Massachusetts School Law of 1647 also instructed community leaders to monitor the students’ progress in reading and in understanding religious principles (Thakral, 2015) [15]. Supervision, during this period denotes control, monitor, judgement and maintenance of schools. Afterwards, during later half of 19th century, professionalization of supervision developed in U.S.A. and responsibility of overall supervisory services of a school were gradually shifted from community leadership to a couple of authorities like local school superintendents, Head teachers, Principals, State Department of Education, state universities as well as regional colleges (Bala, 2012) [1], but the inspection as a method of supervision, still sustained.

In the 20th century, in the years following 1920, some significant trends of supervision emerge, as the improvement of instruction was recognised as a major function of supervision. Accordingly, scientific, creative and democratic supervision were developed primarily during the period from 1925 to 1950 (Bala, 2012) [1].

3.5.1 Scientific Supervision

The growth of scientific supervision paralleled the development of scientific methods of research in other areas of knowledge. According to Tracy (1995) [16], “Central to scientific supervision was the concept of measuring the methods of teaching to determine the most productive ones in relation to student outcomes.” Scientific supervision advocates research and scientific method as tools for improving teaching-learning situation, by using proper instruments to obtain pertinent data and supervision, then uses these data to improve teaching and learning (Bala, 2012) [1]. However, two major factors have challenged scientific supervision as most supervisors, teachers were not trained to use the method and the human factors that operate in teaching cannot be measured scientifically.

3.5.2 Democratic Educational Leadership

As against the shortcomings of scientific supervision, concept of Democratic Educational Leadership in supervision was developed. The successful supervisors have been described as a high type of educational leader, who makes use of co-operative techniques in a democratic manner. Besides, supervisors also work for improvement of the total teaching-learning process for attainment of the purposes of education in a democracy. The school Principals has now been identified as a supervisor of major stature, from this perspective (Bala, 2012) [1]. This phase is also referred to as “The Period of Emergence of Democratic Methods in Supervision” (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000) [14] or “The Human Relation Phase” (Tracy, 1995) [16].

3.5.3 Creative Supervision

The controversy between scientific supervision and democratic leadership gave rise to the concept of Creative Supervision, as a compromise between democratic and scientific supervision. Creative supervision passed through several shifts in emphasis. One from considering supervisor as the main creative individual to the teacher, as that person. Another was, from the idea of ‘creativity’ as learning to ‘discovering’ as learning. The third one was from the concept that a certain teaching method must be used by every teacher to the idea that different individual teachers use different methods effectively. Main allied concepts of creative supervision are as follows-

- Supervision through instructional teams.
- Supervision as guidance.
- Supervision as skill in human relations or group processes.
- Supervision as curriculum reorganization and improvement.

3.5.4 Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision is the latest among the different phases of evolution of educational supervision. Moris Cogan is considered as the originator of the term ‘clinical supervision’ (Tracy, 1995) [16]. Clinical supervision emerged to fill in the gap between scientific and democratic supervision. It is an attempt to combine the tools and techniques of the Scientific Phase with the supervisor/teacher team approach of the Human Relation Phase (Tracy, 1995) [16]. Clinical supervision

places emphasis on sustained teacher and supervisor interaction in order to solve classroom problems (Lovell & Wiles, 1983 as cited in Thakral, 2015) ^[11, 15]. This new trend in supervision didn't gain wide acceptance in schools yet.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that Educational Supervision is thus, an old concept with new meanings at each stage of its evolution, yet improvement of the educational programmes has always been the ultimate goal of Educational Supervision. The different theoretical aspects of supervision, discussed so far, clearly depicts the basic nature of modern supervision, presently prevailing around the world. Modern supervision has democratic outlook. It assumes a co-operative and comprehensive nature that encompasses the child, teachers, administrator, parents and all other concerned with the machinery of educational institutions, under its roof.

5. References

1. Bala R. Educational Supervision, Theories and Practices. New Delhi: Alfa Publications, 2012.
2. Best JW, Kahn JV. Research in Education. New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited, 2012.
3. Bhatt BD, Sharma SR. Educational Supervision: Theory and Practice. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishing House, 1992.
4. Boardman C, Douglas H, Bent R. Democratic Supervision in Secondary Schools. United States: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963.
5. Brigg TH, Justman J. Improving Instruction Through Supervision. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952.
6. Burton WH, Brueckner LJ. Supervision: A Social Process. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1955.
7. Douglass HR, Bent R, Boardman CW. Democratic Supervision in Secondary Schools. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1961.
8. Eye GG, Netzer LA, Krey RD. Supervision of Instruction. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
9. Koul L. Methodology of Educational Research. Noida: VIKAS Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 2014.
10. Lovell J. Supervision: Perspectives and Propositions. Washington DC. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1967.
11. Lovell JT, Wiles K. Supervision for Better Schools. Englewood Cliff, N. J.: Prantice Hall, Inc, 1983.
12. Mohanty B. School Administration and Supervision. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2007.
13. Mohanty J. Educational Management, Supervision and School Organisation. New Delhi: Neelkamal Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2012.
14. Sullivan S, Glanz J. Supervision that Improves Teaching: Strategies and Techniques. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press Inc, 2000.
15. Thakral S. The Historical Context of Modern Concept of Supervision. Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies. 2015; 6(1):79-88.
16. Tracy ST. How Historical Concepts of Supervision Relate to Supervisory Practices Today. The Clearing House, Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30189094> DoR. 1995-2016; 68(5):320-325.