

Clinical supervision in today's essay



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Clinical Supervision in Today's Schools

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to present the definition of clinical supervision and some basic concepts that are currently being used in the clinical supervision of public schools today. By having a clearer understanding of these definitions and concepts, prospective supervisors in public education will be better equipped to do their jobs.

Problem Statement

A situation has occurred due to the ever-increasing demand for supervisors in public education today in which those entering supervisory positions may not be properly equipped to supervise. This is primarily due to the fact that they may not understand all that is expected of them. To use economic terminology, the “demand is exceeding the supply”. As a result, supervisors may be placed into supervisory positions without a clear understanding of some definitions and concepts which have come into the realm of education fairly recently. Supervisors cannot do their jobs effectively if they are not properly educated in the roles and responsibilities of the clinical supervisor. The following study may serve as a review of some current definitions and concepts.

Background Information

The earliest supervisors in America's schools were often nothing more than overly critical "snoops" whose main job was to find what a teacher was doing wrong and report it to the teacher's superiors. Today we refer to this type of supervisor as a "snoopervisor". It was more likely that a teacher would receive a reprimand or dismissal as a result of those supervisory visits.

The role of the school supervisor has changed drastically from the humble beginnings of America's schools. Our public school system has gone through many different stages of development. Likewise, our educational supervisors have evolved as well.

Need for the Study

Since our public school system has gone through so many changes, (and continues to do so), a clear understanding of the responsibilities of clinical supervision is needed in order to properly prepare those wishing to serve in that capacity. Today's supervisors must know what is expected of them and some of the more current methods and concepts being used in clinical supervision.

Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of this study the following questions will be examined:

? What is clinical supervision?

? What are some of the basic concepts currently being used in clinical supervision?

? How can clinical supervisors help their teachers become better educators?

Definitions of Terms

clinical supervisor – anyone in the public school system that directs and oversees the performance of teachers.

clinical supervision- guidance designed and given to improve a teacher’s classroom performance

coaching- a person who trains or gives instruction to another (teacher or educator)

school and school system policy – rules and regulations of the school system and the local school in which they teach

curriculum – the sum total of all experiences under the auspices of the school. (If the school endorses it, it is part of the curriculum.)

curriculum developer- one who is responsible for making the decisions concerning what curriculum is to be offered at a school

“ marginal” teacher- a teacher who is barely within a lower standard or limit of quality

stress -to be subjected to physical or mental pressure, tension, or strain

Limitation of the Study

The research information in this study is limited to the study of school supervisors in the public school system. This study focused on supervisors who oversee the grade levels of Kindergarten through the 12th grade of high school. This study does focus on supervisors of colleges or other secondary educational institutions although much of this information may apply in those areas as well.

Summary

It is, therefore, the primary goal of this study to collect, compile, and organize information that will help to prepare those wishing to serve as school supervisors so that they may better understand some of the terminology and concepts in clinical supervision.

CHAPTER TWO

RELATED REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

One of the more common roles of today's school supervisor is that of providing teachers with the support they need to become better teachers. Today's supervisor must be a coach or mentor, a "teacher's teacher", so to speak. Where supervisors once tore down teachers and criticized them, today they build up teachers and edify them.

The first use of the term "clinical supervision" was in 1961 when Morris Cogan used it in a proposal entitled Case Studies and Research in Clinical Supervision at Harvard University. Cogan defined clinical supervision in the following way:

“ Clinical supervision may therefore be defined as the rationale and practice designed to improve the teacher’s classroom performance. It takes its principal data from the events of the classroom. The analysis of these data and the relationship between teacher and supervisor form the basis of the program, procedures, and strategies designed to improve the student’s learning by improving the teacher’s classroom behavior.”

From Cogan’s definition of clinical supervision we can see that the emphasis is on improvement of the teacher’s performance. This makes the role of today’s supervisor more of a supportive role. With that definition in mind, how can supervisors help teachers to become better teachers? What can supervisors do to improve the educational system in which they work? In the following study are a few examples of contemporary practices and concepts being utilized today to answer those questions. First of all, supervisors are concerned with the quality of teachers they have in their school and school system.

It is the job of supervisors to make sure that the teachers working in their school system are the best teachers possible, and that they are working to the best of their ability. Once teachers have been selected and hired, they must know that the supervisor is there to support them and help them to improve their teaching skills. In an article in Educational Digest, Thomas Harvey and Larry Frase put it this way:

“ Coaching is not an option for school leaders but a basic function, along with counseling, mentoring, tutoring, confronting, and supporting. All of these will increase the commitment to quality and productivity.”

This simply means that supervisors must engage the teachers (as well as themselves) in a never-ending process of improvement. That means keeping up with current changes in teaching styles and curriculum. Supervisors must be willing to set an example for teachers by showing that they are also willing to make changes in the way that they do things. Now that we are in a new millennium in education we see the education system in a state of constant change. Everything we do changes regularly. Teaching styles, the equipment that we use in schools, and even the schools themselves continuously go through new stages of development. It is no longer acceptable to simply achieve and maintain a status quo. Supervisors must recognize this and always be ready to lead their teachers into the future and new ways of educating students.

The first way supervisors must lead their teachers is to make sure that they are aware of the legal aspects of education. In a recent article in Education magazine the authors said, “First on the list of all things a beginning teacher must do is to learn the policies of the school system and local school. A teacher who is legally challenged by a parent will receive support from the board of education when the teacher’s actions follow policy”. For this reason, supervisors should tell their beginning teachers that board policies and the school handbook are required reading. Once this has been concluded, supervisors can move on to the matter of teacher evaluation.

One method being used by many supervisors to evaluate and support new teachers is the peer support method. This concept has been touted as a promising way to build a teacher’s sense of professionalism. Margaret Johnson and Lucy Brown described one study in which teachers in a large

elementary school with about 42 teachers were organized into collegial support teams (CSTs) to , "...supervise their teaching performance and promote their professional growth.". Many of the teachers involved in the study said that it created, "...a " safe zone" in which they could admit shortcomings and work to improve their practice.". This method follows the philosophy that the best people to evaluate the performance of teachers in a particular school system are other teachers in the same school system. This method is becoming very popular.

Sometimes the path into the future of a school system may not be clear and narrow. There may be many different directions the supervisor may have to choose from. While discussing teachers who pursue positions in administration, Roberta Bernstein writes:

" The position of curriculum developer requires working in teams and reporting to the central office. While following the directions of your superiors, you will also want to provide teachers with a curriculum that excites them. It's a balancing act."

Indeed, supervisors must often let their own preferences fall by the wayside in order to reach the compromise that is the best, overall solution for a situation. One driving motivator behind the decision-making process should always be " What is the best thing for the students?"

The same thing holds true when evaluating teachers. Unfortunately, sometimes supervisors realize that a teacher just isn't performing at the minimal level necessary to remain in the system. Even after working very hard to help a teacher come up to the required standard of teaching to

remain in their position, the supervisor asks “What is the best thing for the students?” and realizes that a replacement may be what is needed.

There are many different reasons for teachers becoming marginal. In an article in Education Digest Don L. Fuhr identifies three categories of teachers who become “marginal”:

“First is the helpless marginal teacher who doesn’t grasp the basic techniques of effective teaching. It may be because of poor training or of good training never absorbed. Second is the teacher with a pressing personal problem, the more common ones being serious illness of a loved one, marital problems, or financial difficulties. The third and most difficult type is the hardheaded marginal teacher who has developed ‘an attitude’.”

Regardless of the reason for a teacher becoming marginal, encouragement is the key to trying to help them improve. Supervisors must be willing to advise and help them. First, the teacher must be made aware of the specific problem. Then, a strategy can be developed for dealing with the problem.

Sometimes, the best time for strategies to be developed is after a classroom observation. According to C. H. Van der Linde, “The follow-up discussion sometimes provides the most important situation for the collection of further data, because the teachers are now in a situation where they are able to explain their behavior.” Van der Linde goes on to say, “The teacher should be encouraged to give attention to both strong points and deficiencies. Remedies that are realistic should be discussed and steps to promote continuing professional growth should be outlined.”

Some people, such as Francis Duffy, feel that we in education are going about staff development all wrong. Ms. Duffy says, "Even though we understand that school districts function essentially as systems, we persist in trying to improve schools one teacher at a time." According to Ms. Duffy's Knowledge Work Supervision model, teaching would be improved by focusing on the performance of the entire school system rather than just individual teachers.

One thing is certain, no matter what model of evaluation or development a supervisor uses, it is still inevitable to occasionally come across marginal teachers which fail to meet minimal standards no matter what the supervisor does to try to help them improve.

One possible contributing factor to this situation is stress. Education, and particularly educational administration, are very high-stress professions. Clinical supervisors should encourage personal responsibility for stress management. Articulation of the expectation that individuals are to take the responsibility for control of their own stress levels also validates personal inclinations to do the same.

Louis J. Long, a Salt Lake City high school principal suggests the following:

? Encourage physical health. Exercise, plenty of sleep, and attention to nutrition contribute to an ability to tolerate tension.

? Encourage emotional health. Healthy relationships are buffers against stress. Opportunities to collaborate can bolster courage to confront the risks

necessary for progress. Humor can turn catastrophes into bonds. Optimism is linked to success.

? Encourage participation in outside pursuits. Energy and enthusiasm are part of a healthy lifestyle. Attention to hobbies and interests and even subject matter parallels progress.

? Do not dismiss the importance of quiet time. Daily time alone in quiet environments protects us from chaos and equips us to solve problems.

But how does the supervisor decide when it is time to face the fact that it just isn't working and the teacher must be replaced? The remediation and dismissal process never can be made easy or routine. Andrea R. Waintroob is an attorney in Chicago who has provided legal counsel to many school administrators and helped them through the remediation and dismissal processes. In her article in Education Digest she says the process will be easier if the administrator observes a few common sense rules:

? Remember that you're the boss, not a punching bag, a social worker, or a buddy.

? Never give tenure to a probationary teacher who has experienced significant performance problems; problem teachers who receive tenure usually get worse.

? Rate honestly; don't avoid telling a teacher about serious performance problems because you don't want to hurt the teacher's feelings or don't want the hassle that comes with labeling performance unsatisfactory.

? Act early. The longer you tolerate an unsatisfactory teacher on your staff, the harder it will be to justify a later discharge.

? Write evaluations that anyone can understand.

? Be fair

? Anticipate defenses. You know the teacher will claim that you failed to understand the teacher's techniques or missed some critical part of class. Anticipate this by having a number of pre-evaluation conferences with the teacher so the teacher can tell you what to look for and when to observe.

? Be smart: Recognize insubordination and other discipline problems that may provide an alternative or additional ground for dismissal.

? Persist. The attacks on your competency, judgment, and integrity are an inevitable, if unpleasant, part of the process.

CHAPTER THREE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

If any one thing stands out from this study, it is the fact that clinical supervision is a constantly changing area. As we have seen from the material presented in this study, there are numerous factors that must be considered as we contemplate how to properly supervise other educators.

Now that clear definitions of key terms and concepts have been presented, we must take this knowledge and apply it to our original questions.

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Findings

? What is clinical supervision?

Clinical supervision is the rationale and practice designed to improve the teacher's classroom performance. Principal data comes from the events of the classroom. The analysis of these data and the relationship between teacher and supervisor form the basis of the program, procedures, and strategies designed to improve the student's learning by improving the teacher's classroom behavior.

? What are some of the basic concepts currently being used in clinical supervision?

This study has explored and defined such concepts as what a clinical supervisor is and what they do. It is important to note in summary that clinical supervisors historically used to find teacher's shortcomings. However, today they must go further and try to help the teacher improve those shortcomings. We have seen how supervisors act as coaches in this respect to offer training and support to their teachers by using different methods of post-observation support.

We also have seen the importance of the proper development of curriculum as well as an awareness of school policies and legal aspects of education.

Finally, we saw what a marginal teacher is and what steps can be taken to help a marginal teacher improve in their performance. We also saw how stress and stress management can play an important role in this process.

? How can supervisors help teachers become better educators?

Supervisors must always be knowledgeable of past and current concepts that are used to help improve their staffs. As we have seen from the research in this study, these concepts are numerous. One advantage to the fact that there are so many concepts to choose from is the variety of choices. That is, if one concept or method fails to meet the need of supervisors, they may always try another until they find the right solution for their particular situation.

Recommendations

Clinical supervisors must make it a regular practice to stay abreast of current needs and developments within the public education system. They have the responsibility of always being prepared to support and guide their teachers through any challenge that may emerge.

Implications

The clinical supervisor must have a general understanding of all of the concepts in this paper and then some. It is an enormous job to keep up with all of the required knowledge, styles, philosophies, techniques, etc. that are continuously being developed. But if supervisors can't show their willingness to keep up with it all, how can they expect their teachers to?

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