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# Challenges of Instructional Supervision of Senior High Schools in the Techiman Municipality in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana

**Daniel Yelkpieri[1]** ✉ iD
**Matthew Kojo Namale [2]** iD

[1]Centre for Educational Policy Studies University of Education, Winneba
[2]Department of Psychology and Education Uuniversity of Education, Winneba
(✉ *Corresponding Author*)

## Abstract

This study sought to investigate the challenges of supervision of teaching and learning in public Senior High Schools in the Techiman Municipality of Brong-Ahafo Region. The descriptive survey was employed to collect data. Questionnaires and interviews were the main instruments used in data collection. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. One hundred and twenty respondents made up of 3 headmasters of SHSs, 116 teachers and 1 external supervisor was sampled. Random and purposive sampling techniques were used in selecting participants. The study found that continuing distance learning programmes offered by the University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba were the latest developments in formal training for instructional supervisors. Inadequate and irregular supplies of fuel for cars, as well as lack of payment of car maintenance allowances were among the challenges hindering effective instructional supervision in the Municipality. The study recommends among others things that the Ghana Education Service (GES) should provide headmasters with periodic in-service training programmes to keep them abreast with current trends and practices in instructional supervision.

## Contents

# 1. Introduction and Research Problem

Collaborated efforts by headmasters, teachers, circuit supervisors, Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) and government must ensure that the nation's dream of quality education delivery becomes a reality (Ghana Education Service, 2002). However, the desire for accomplishing quality education is in the hands of educational leaders who are duty bound to ensure that all members of the group live up to expectation in performing their professional duties. Adeel (2010) is of the view that supervision is the general leadership role and a coordinating role among all school activities concerned with learning.

Supervision involves mentoring what teachers do including all classroom activities. Supervision can only be said to be effective if it achieves its avowed objectives of quality instructional delivery. Effective supervision enables administrators to re-inforce and enhance teaching practices that improve student learning.

The situation is not different from Ghana since the success or failure of educational policy is a collaborative effort and one of the key players responsible for getting employees to carry out plans and policies of management is the supervisor (GES, 2002). Again any educational policy is judged on the outcome of the results produced by schools at the end of every examination year as its success or failure. Supervision of teaching and learning in the SHSs is also a responsibility of inspectors from the district education directorates. One limitation in discharging this responsibility emanates from the qualifications of supervisors from the district offices and teachers in the SHSs whose work is to be evaluated by the district supervisors who hold lower academic qualifications than the teachers of SHSs. In such cases the teachers may underrate the competence of the supervisors. This may explain why there is infrequent inspection of the SHS teachers by district office supervisors (Mankoe, 2007). As a result, there has been a public outcry in Ghana of abysmal performance of the Ghanaian students at the SHS level. These emanated as a result of inadequate administrative supervision in schools (Oduro, 2008).

Although the government of Ghana is focused on improving supervision of instruction in schools, much still needs to be done. Research findings suggest that poor pupil performance in public schools, in part, is the result of ineffective supervision of teachers (Opare, 1999; Oduro, 2008). The GES (2002) outlines policies to guide supervision of instruction in basic schools and secondary schools in Ghana which have been formulated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in partnership with the GES.

Glickman *et al.* (2004) also suggest that heads of institutions and any person entrusted with the responsibility to supervise instruction should possess certain knowledge and skills as plan, observe, assess and evaluate teaching and learning processes. Given these interventions, it is worrying to note that there are still challenges confronting effective supervision in public Senior High Schools (SHSs) in the Techiman Municipality of the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. Opare (1999) observed that despite extensive internal and external supervision, public schools are not adequately supervised.

It is in line with this that, the researcher decided to investigate into the challenges confronting effective supervision of instructions in public Senior High Schools in the Techiman Municipality.

## 1.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the challenges that confront effective supervision of instruction in the Techiman Municipality from the perspectives of headmasters and teachers. Research Questions
The following research questions were formulated for the study
1. What are the skills needed for the implementation of effective instructional supervision of school-based teacher supervisors in the Techiman Municipality?
2. To what extent are school heads equipped to implement modern models of teacher supervision?
3. What are the constraints faced by heads of institutions' in the performance of their supervisory roles in SHSs in Techiman Municipality?

## 1.2. Significance of the Study

It is envisaged that the findings of this study are important in that they have the potential to:
1. Help those entrusted with policy formulation and implementation to gain better insight into the state of supervision of instruction in public SHSs in Ghana;
2. Identify future training and skills needed for school-based supervisors in senior high schools;

# 2. Research Design

A descriptive survey that employs questionnaire and structured interview schedule was used in this study. This approach helped the researcher to involve more respondents in his data collection. It also enabled him to triangulate the data collected.

## 2.1. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population includes all SHS's teachers and headmasters as well as officials from the Techiman Municipal Education Office. The target population included all headmasters and teachers from Techiman Senior High School (TESS), Akumfi Ameyaw Senior High/Technical School (ASTEC), in the Municipality and officials from the Techiman Municipal education office. In all, 130 teachers including heads were sampled. The sample size was arrived at by dividing the teacher population of each school over the total teacher population of the schools multiplied by the required sample selected by the researcher. That is $\frac{Teacher\ Population\ of\ Each\ Case\ School}{Total\ Teacher\ Population\ of\ the\ Case\ Schools} \times 130$.

For example, this is the calculation for TESS; $\frac{85}{216} \times 130 = 51$. This same procedure was followed to calculate the other two SHSs.

**Table-1.** Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

| Names of SHS | Number of Teachers | SAMPLE SIZE |
|---|---|---|
| TESS | 85 | 51 |
| ASTEC | 85 | 51 |
| TSHTS | 46 | 28 |
| TOTAL | 216 | 130 |

Three headmasters were purposively selected and an officer from the Inspectorate Division of the GES in the Techiman Municipal Education Office for the interview because of their positions and in-depth knowledge about supervision in the service. With respect to teachers, the simple random sampling method was used to select the 127 respondents. The random sampling method gave all respondents equal opportunity of taking part in the study. At TESS "Yes" was written on 51 pieces of paper which were put in an empty box. Another 34 pieces were put together in the polythene box with "No" written on them. The pieces were thoroughly mixed up and the teachers were asked to pick a piece of paper from the box one after the other. When a teacher picked "Yes", he/she received a questionnaire to fill while those who picked "No" were excused. The same process was repeated at ASTEC and TSHTS. Convenience sampling was employed to invite the teachers to be interviewed. The reason is headmasters and teachers from the selected SHS were busy with WASSCE and those who agreed were invited for the interview. In all, 13 interviewees were involved, comprising 9 teachers, 3 heads, and 1 officer in charge of supervision.

# 3. Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used two sets of instruments, namely questionnaire and semi-structured interview schedule to collect the data for the study. The use of questionnaire made the work of the respondent easier since they answered them at their own convenient time without any interference of the researcher. A set of questionnaire was used for the teachers and headmasters. The instrument has four sections. Section "A" comprises the bio data of the respondents which involves age, sex, and level of education. Section "B" sought the respondents' opinion on the roles and responsibilities of supervisors; section "C" and "D" sought the respondents' opinion on the professional training in supervision and monitoring of supervisees, information on the influence of supervision on assessing the complementary role by the Municipal Education Directorate and also discussing challenges facing effective supervision of public SHSs. Questionnaire for teachers and heads solicited information about the influence of supervision on teaching and learning in the schools, the challenges facing them as teachers and heads, solutions to those problems and what should be done to improve teaching and learning in their schools.

Semi-structured interview schedule was designed to collect information from respondents. This allowed the researcher to probe into their responses for further information where necessary. The interview method allows greater depth than is the case with questionnaires, that is, there is direct interaction between the researcher and the respondents. The technique reduces the risk of misinterpretation by respondents, since the researcher will have the chance of explaining the purpose of the study and to clarify any queries raised during the interview. The interview data were used by the researcher as means to supplement data that have been earlier collected by the survey. The questions guiding the interview were developed from the same issues used to develop the questionnaires.

## 3.1. Content and face Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The validity of the instruments was established by giving copies of the instruments to colleague Research Fellows to evaluate them and make comments for the improvement of the research instruments. The comments were considered by the researcher to improve the quality of the items. The questionnaire was tested for reliability to guarantee that the instruments used were unbiased to changes of the investigator, the respondents or the study situation. The questionnaire was pre-tested in Tanoso SHS. The aim was to allow the researcher to identify and appreciate budding problems in the proposed study and if need be, to modify the data collection approaches before commencing fieldwork. The original questionnaire items were 35 questions; however, these were reduced to 32 after the removal of all ambiguous items. The interview schedules were personally pilot-tested and the responses were similar in each case. This implies that the schedules were reliable.

# 4. Results and Discussions of Findings

The field data were checked and edited for consistency and accuracy. The data was coded and keyed into a Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) Soft-Ware version 16.0 and analysed to derive descriptive statistics for the study. The quantitative method made use of tables, percentages, means and frequencies. Data collected qualitatively were analysed thematically using the open code method. The data were organised and common statements by subjects were written down and emerging themes noted. The Municipal Education Officer's, teachers' and headmasters' responses were compared. The results of the findings from the questionnaire and interview data are presented and interpreted in line with the research objectives.

## 4.1. Skills Needed by School-Based Supervisors in Senior High Schools
## 4.1.1. Training of School-Based Supervisors

When the Municipal officer in charge of supervision was interviewed he indicated that he had not received any formal training in teacher supervision, however, various leadership courses have been provided for a number of years. Although he agreed that some form of supervisory training is essential, he seemed unprepared to take any practical steps in this direction. When he was asked about the kind of experience upon which supervisors based their work on, the officer indicated that "most supervisors learn their job by doing it". He observed that "they learn from their mistakes and as they keep correcting them they become used to the nitty-gritties of their jobs as supervisors". He also stressed that practical experiences are supplemented by formal training. He, however, noted that usually it is

the heads of institutions who are the beneficiaries of those courses to equip them for their tasks. This supports the assertion that about 80% of teacher supervision is undertaken by school heads in Ghana (Mankoe, 2006). The teachers reported that "they needed a supervisor who is more experienced in teaching to coach them". The SHSs are organized and administered in such a way that each department has its own role to play, with the head playing the most significant supervisory role. The headmaster, who is the school based supervisor, is entrusted with both administrative and supervisory duties to perform in order to achieve goals (Yelkpieri and Seidu, 2007). In order to ensure better administration, heads involved their deputies as well as heads of departments to get things done properly and efficiently, while they co-ordinate the activities and make final decisions. The study found that it is the school heads, their deputies and heads of departments who were considered as teacher supervisors.

## 4.2. In-Service Training

In-Service training is one of the major components of professional development as it improves pedagogical supervisory skills. The study sought to find out whether In-Service Training had ever been provided in the study area.

The data show that 2(66.7%) headmasters and 57(47.5%) teachers were of the view that supervisors sometimes provided in-service workshops for teachers to develop their skills. This is in line with Yelkpieri and Seidu (2007) when they stressed that heads of school have the responsibility of organizing in-service-training for teachers and orientation courses for newly posted teachers to schools. However, 63(52.5%) of the teachers indicated they had never had any form of in-service workshop to develop their skills, which was supported by 1(33.3%) of the headmasters. The research further noted that heads of the SHSs had been sponsoring their teachers to attend annual workshops and conferences organised by their Subject Associations. This suggests that headmasters sponsor Heads of Departments only to such workshops and conferences. This finding agrees with the notion that it is the responsibility of supervisors to provide teachers with in-service training sessions, as well as encourage them to attend workshops and conferences to bring them abreast with time in their instructional practices (Yelkpieri and Seidu, 2007).

The Municipal officer in charge of supervision, the heads of institutions as well as teachers interviewed identified the following latest developments in formal training for supervisors:
• Continuing Distance Learning Programmes offered by the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and University of Education, Winneba (UEW)
• Diploma in Business Leadership – A situational approach offered by the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA);
• The Master of Education in Educational Administration and Management offered by the University of Education; and
• Sandwich release /Part-Time courses offered by some Ghanaian Universities.

All the above programmes aim at improving the leadership skills of school administrators so as to enhance their supervisory capacity. Evidence provided through interview shows that it is not every headmaster, nor head of department who patronized some of these above listed programmes to improve their supervisory skills. Heads and teachers were asked to indicate the type of supervision emphasized in the Municipality, whether internal or external supervision or both and the results are as shown in Table 2.

**Table-2.** Kinds of Supervision

| Types of Supervision | | |
|---|---|---|
| | No. | % |
| Internal | 35 | 29.2 |
| External | 14 | 11.7 |
| Both | 71 | 59.1 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

Table 2 gives a summary of the responses of the various types of supervision provided in the Techiman Municipality. It can be seen that majority of the respondents 71(59.1%) indicated that both internal and external supervisions were emphasized in the SHSs in the Municipality. However 35(29.2%) of the respondents also suggested internal supervision, while, 14(11.7%) indicated external supervisions. It must be stressed that both internal and external supervision are essential to ensure that quality is not compromised. Headmasters and teachers shared similar views in an interview conducted in all the selected SHSs in the Municipality.

Some teachers were asked to express their opinion on the type of supervision they preferred in an interview, majority of the teachers who responded preferred internal supervision to that of external supervision. The reasons given are that:
• Teachers' problems were better known and understood by their heads than the external supervisors.
• External supervisors do not have sufficient time to give extensive advice to teachers individually and it is easy for schools to relax, as a result of the intermittent visits by the supervisors.
• The information the teacher has already received from his head of department, principals or headmasters may duplicate with that of the external supervisor.
• External supervisors are unlikely to have the same degree of understanding and sympathy for a teacher's problems as compared to internal supervisors who share the teacher's classroom experiences.

But it should be noted that both external and internal supervisions are given recognition in modern supervision. It is in this respect that Sergiovanni and Starratt (2009) regarded supervision as a co-operative venture in which supervisors and teachers engage in dialogue for the purpose of instructional improvement for the benefit of students learning.

In view of these considerations, supervision would appear to be most effective when carried out internally at the institutional level and through instructional leadership of headmasters and senior subject masters. However, some minority teachers also expressed the view in a similar interview at TESS that "external supervision compliment the internal supervision therefore both external and internal supervision work for the good of supervision". Few teachers at Tuobodom rather opted for external supervision; others did not express their preference at all. This situation observed during the survey could lead to playing down of the complementary role that external supervision plays in the promotion of teaching. Halpin (1956) sees external supervision as complementing the role and duties of the internal supervisor by providing professional advice and guidance to teachers.

## 4.3. Readiness of the Schools to Implement Modern Models of Teacher Supervision

There are a number of supervisory models that are usually used by supervisors and sometimes based on situational demands. By and large most educators use clinical supervision and formative supervision followed by inquiry based supervision. These kinds of supervision seem popular because "supervisors said they are developmental, non-judgmental and counseling oriented and are directed at improving teacher performance". The supervisors interviewed said that they did not often use spot check and random checks because these types of supervision do not use appointments and classroom visits are not announced. Table 3 shows the result.

**Table-3.** Respondents' Views on the Extent of Agreement on the Use of Supervision Model

| Item | WM | Std | I |
|------|----|-----|---|
| I like fault finding model | 2.69 | 1.03 | D |
| I like facilitating model | 3.34 | 1.11 | NAND |
| I like spot check model | 3.38 | 1.37 | NAND |
| I like consultative model | 4.06 | 1.11 | A |
| I like random checks model | 3.49 | 1.10 | NAND |

Mean of means=3.31      Standard deviation = 1.14
**Key to the Table:**
A=Agree, SA=strongly agree, NAND = Neither agree nor disagree, SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree WM= Weighted mean, SD= Standard deviation and I= Interpretation.

## 4.4. Interpretation of Weighted Means

5= strongly agree, 4.0-4.9= Agree, 3.0-3.9, Uncertain, 2.0-2.9=Disagree, 1.0-1.9=strongly disagree

Table 3 shows that respondents agreed that consultative model supervision was more useful to them as teachers. This is evidenced by a weighted mean of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 1.11. This means that teachers generally agree or like to be heard when they are supervised and not only to be given instructions by supervisors. This type of supervision fosters co-operation and mutual respect between the two parties. This type of supervision is often referred to as clinical supervision (Asiedu-Akrofi, 1978; Wiles and Bondi, 1986; Bame, 1991; Bernard and Goodyear, 1998).

The study further reveals that respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that facilitating model of supervision was useful and needs to be encouraged. This is supported by a weighted mean of 3.38 and a standard deviation of 1.37. Some supervisees responded positively to models that are interactive and negatively to models that are directive. This suggests that teacher supervision can be democratic, where the full use of the experiences of teachers are realized or autocratic, where the experiences of supervisors are used. Generally, it came to light that all the respondents on the whole, were in favour of models that were interactive as against models that were directive. This is supported by a mean of means of 3.31 and standard deviation of 1.14.

## 4.5. Challenges of Supervisors in Public Senior High Schools

The extent to which the supervisors' role ensures effective supervision in the SHSs in the Techiman Municipality is hampered by some challenges. All the four heads' and the teachers affirmed that the scope of supervision is limited by the fact that supervisors face some challenges in executing their supervisory roles. The summary is depicted in Table 4.

**Table-4**. Challenges of Supervision in SHSs

| Item | Responses | |
|------|-----------|---|
|  | No | % |
| Supervisees Consider Supervisors as Interfering | 19 | 15.8 |
| Inadequate Teacher Motivation | 12 | 10.0 |
| Inadequate Logistics | 27 | 22.5 |
| Combining Supervision with Community Functions | 38 | 31.7 |
| Lack of Budget Line for Supervision | 24 | 20.0 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |

Nineteen (15.8%) out of the 120 respondents identified supervisors as interfering in their work whiles 38(29.7) agreed that combining supervision with community functions by heads was the major challenge confronting them. In probing further, it came to light that "some heads were community leaders and by virtue of that they were mostly called upon to attend meetings even when it was within school hours". Again 24 (20.0%) teachers reported that there was lack of budget line for supervision. In an interview, it came to light that "most of the teachers were not staying on the school campuses therefore involving them for the evening supervision had always proved futile". The official vehicles which were supporting "teachers' movement had all broken down and even where such vehicles were available, fueling them was another headache". Similar sentiments were expressed by the Municipal inspectorate

division. These challenges ran from poor incentives through lack of official vehicle to carry out supervision in the Municipality.

In such a situation, it was realised that supervisors sometimes use their pocket money for public transport which were never refunded to them. It could be realized that most District Directors of Education consider their official vehicles as their "bonafide" property and releasing them was always a problem. This challenge among others accounted for infrequent supervisions. Hence, on the average, supervision is carried out annually and where supervision had been frequent, "it was not more than once a term" as the study captured. This finding agrees with Mankoe (2007) when he said that supervisors have to rely on public means of transport as a result of lack of official vehicles to carry out their supervisory task.

## 4.6. Suggestions to Challenges to Effective Supervision

When the respondents were given the chance to suggest measures to be put in place to ensure that teacher supervision is made effective in the Techiman Municipality, the following suggestions were made in Table 5.

**Table-5.** Suggested Solutions to the Problems

| Suggestions | | |
|---|---|---|
| | No. | % |
| Discuss Findings with Supervisees | 36 | 30.0 |
| Regular Supervision | 38 | 31.7 |
| Planning Lesson with Supervisees | 32 | 26.7 |
| Provision of Logistics | 14 | 11.6 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |

Out of those who responded, 36(30%) respondents suggested that supervisors should be able to discuss findings with supervisees, whiles 32(26.7%) suggested that internal supervisors should plan lessons with supervisees. The issue of logistics still remains a headache, hence the remaining respondents called for provision of adequate logistics to ensure regular supervision. When the same issues were put forward in an interview, on how the issue of lack of cooperation between supervisors and supervisees could be tackled, the same suggestions were replicated. Three out of 4 heads proposed that supervisors should be able to discuss findings with supervisees, 5 out of 8 teachers suggested regular supervision while the remaining respondents suggested involving lesson planning with supervisees as well as provision of logistics. Again when the researcher called for measures to address the issue of inadequate logistics in an interview, all the heads proposed regular supervision so that external supervisors could actually know what is on the ground. Provision of incentive schemes to heads, motivating both heads and teachers were among other things which were suggested in the interviews. With respect to lack of budget line to streamline supervision, all the heads endorsed "making enough budgetary allocations for schools to intensify their internal supervisory roles to compliment that of external supervisors".

An interview with the Municipal GES officer in charge of supervision revealed that the inspectorate division has put in place several measures in ensuring that supervision in schools was effectively conducted. These include "signing of daily attendance registers to ensure regularity and punctuality among teachers". The heads have been given "power to lay embargo on teachers' salaries", etc. Others include providing the necessary human, material and financial assistance to SHSs teachers, ensuring a flexible, minimum educational programme in the public SHSs in the Municipality as well as sponsoring conferences and coordinating activities among schools interested in curriculum innovation. The heads on their part also indicated that, "attending form meetings, random checking of students' exercises as well as assigning teachers on morning devotional preaching plans were measures being implemented to ensure regularity and punctuality among teachers".

## 5. Conclusions and Implications

Based on the findings of this study some conclusions have been made.

It was evident that most teachers prefer to be supervised by the head of the department. The head of department is a subject specialist and a colleague, so this is why he/she is popular with teachers and most of the teachers will want to deal with him. Teachers also welcome supervision if it is done in the right spirit and with the aim of improving the learning process and promoting teacher growth. This suggests that headmasters of SHSs should encourage internal supervision to ensure quality delivery of instruction.

All these support the idea that supervision is a team effort aimed at improving teaching and learning in schools. Therefore, all teachers and supervisors, both internal and external should see their collaborative efforts as important steps to achieve quality education goal. Without this understanding and team work, it will be difficult to achieve this goal.

Teachers needed a supervisor who is more experienced in teaching to coach them develop their full potentials as well as learning new teaching methodology to keep them abreast with new developments in the teaching field. It is therefore necessary that capacity building which takes the form of in-service-training, workshops are frequently organized by school headmasters. Continuing Distance Learning Programmes offered by the UCC and UEW and Sandwich release /Part-Time courses offered by some Ghanaian Universities are other latest developments in formal training for which supervisors could encourage their staff to take advantage of.

This suggests that capacity building either on the job or through further education is very essential for the development of technical skills which are critical for successful implementation of educational curriculum.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The training institutions such as UCC and UEW and GES through pre-service and in-service training programmes must organize regular workshops for both teachers and headmasters to desired aspects of modern-day instructional supervision. Again, since supervision is a process but not a product, some aspects of modern-day instructional supervision could be incorporated into the teacher training programmes at the diploma, degree and masters' levels to sensitize teachers' about modern-day instructional supervision practices.

2. GES must take steps to provide training for Headmasters and Heads of Departments in instructional supervision as part of their induction process after their appointments. In addition, new developments in the education system could be provided to headmasters through periodic in-service-training to keep them abreast with current trends and practices.

3. The challenges of supervisors should be addressed by the Municipal Director of Education and the Ministry of Education. These challenges include supply of cars to the inspectorate division of the Municipal Directorate of Education by the Ministry of Education to enhance their mobility and also serve as incentive. The Municipal Director of Education should ensure regular supply of fuel to enable supervisors regularly visit their respective schools.

4. All stakeholders of education must put their shoulders to the wheel to ensure that they provide the necessary support to the SHSs. For example, accommodation should be provided to teachers on campus by the government, PTA and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) so that they could be punctual and regular at school.

5. Car maintenance allowances should be paid to supervisors regularly by the Ministry of Education.

6. Supervisors should share findings of their supervision with supervisees and also take steps to know what motivates them as individual teachers and at the same time creating opportunities for staff to share personal accomplishments.

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