

# How Do Teachers and Supervisors Value the Role of Elementary Supervision?

DON NASCA\*

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*"Implications for the educational change process are obvious. Classroom teachers view direct assistance in the form of demonstrations in their own setting and prescriptions around their own instructional problems as the most valued sources of assistance from elementary supervisors."*

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**I**N ORDER to mobilize our resources to institute change processes in area schools without the help of special funding, we undertook an examination of elementary supervisors and their role. We assumed that supervisors operate close to the classroom level and would therefore be in an excellent position to describe how their efforts influence classroom teaching behavior.

A search of the literature showed that although numerous studies of elementary supervisors have been completed, practical implications derived from the outcomes are surprisingly sparse. According to Parsons, supervisory behaviors as perceived by teachers and general behaviors of individuals in supervisory capacities account for 64 percent of a random sample of 100 studies on supervision.<sup>1</sup> Administrative roles and preservice supervisory roles account for another 20 per-

<sup>1</sup> G. Llewellyn Parsons. *Review of Related Research Literature on Educational Supervision*. St. John's, Newfoundland: Memorial University, October 1971.

cent with the remaining 16 percent classified as studies of specific supervisory roles. However, "specificity" as used by Parsons refers to the general nature of specific roles, for example, curriculum specialist, reading supervisor, or guidance counselor, rather than to specific tasks completed by supervisors.

Heald concludes that the problem of measuring supervisory influences is primarily a result of the inadequate measures of instructional improvement. The review of research completed by Heald fails to provide any clear direction for elementary supervisor roles in the educational change process.<sup>2</sup> His conclusions do support a finding of this study in that the need for multivariant approaches is indicated.

General literature on supervision adds little to clarifying the specific nature of supervisory roles. Interpersonal dynamics, the significance of goal setting, and sensitivity to internal and external pressures account for a major portion of prescriptive literature devoted to supervisory roles. Although there is no denying the importance of interpersonal

<sup>2</sup> James E. Heald. "Supervision." In: Robert L. Ebel, editor. *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*. Fourth edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1969.

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Category	Teacher X Score	Teacher Rank	Supervisor X Score	Supervisor Rank	X̄ Number of teachers reporting task actually performed
I Testing	2.15	3	2.13	2	22.75
II Curriculum	2.70	5	2.62	6	18.66
III Instruction	1.87	1	2.03	1	16.00
IV Classroom management	3.05	6	2.98	5	6.00
V Professional	2.04	2	2.40	3	10.20
VI Administration	2.27	4	2.47	4	16.00

Table 1. Mean Scores for Six Categories of Supervisory Responsibility

dynamics in supervisor-teacher relationships, an unanswered question appears to be "What do supervisors do and how are these tasks perceived by classroom teachers?"

## Method

Job descriptions for elementary supervisors from ten local school districts were examined and interviews with six supervisors were completed in the search for a definition of an elementary supervisor's role. A list of 23 tasks drawn from these two sources was then presented to six supervisors for examination as a description of the supervisor's role. Three task statements were added and several were modified based on this review by supervisors. Supervisor tasks appear to fall in six general categories including:

I. Testing (T): Administering, selecting, and interpreting

II. Curriculum (C): Designing, interpreting, evaluating, and suggesting ways to implement curriculum

III. Instruction (I): Identifying and demonstrating instructional techniques and identifying materials

IV. Classroom Management (CM): Observation and feedback

V. Professional (P): Information about and arranging for opportunities to engage in professional growth

VI. Administration (A): Maintaining a resource center and writing reports about curriculum.

The 27 supervisor tasks (see Appendix) were organized in two survey instruments; one for teachers and one for supervisors. Teachers were invited to use a five point scale to rate the degree of value each task had in terms of helping a teacher do his or her job (1-high to 5-low; a low score indicates high value and a high score indicates low value). Teachers were also invited to indicate whether or not each particular task was actually being performed by an elementary supervisor in his or her building.

Supervisors were invited to rank on a similar five point scale the frequency with which they performed specific tasks (1-often to 5-never; a low score indicates high frequency and vice versa).

Survey instruments were administered to 39 elementary teachers and 22 supervisors in four area school districts.

## Results

Mean scores for "perceived value" as determined by classroom teachers and "frequency of time engaged in supervisory responsibility" for the six categories are presented in Table 1.

Highest and lowest ranking supervisor tasks as perceived by teachers are presented in Table 2.

Pearson correlation between number of teachers stating supervisor task is actually performed and perceived value of task is  $-.67$  (high task value is indexed by numerically small values thereby producing a negative correlation).

Pearson correlation between number of teachers stating supervisor task is actually performed and supervisor indication of frequency of participation in task is  $-.61$ . (Low numerical value represents frequent participation thereby producing a negative correlation.)

An attempt to identify areas in which

#### Teachers

Item No.	Rank	$\bar{X}$	
12	1	1.54	Identify instructional materials for specific problems.
15	2	1.61	Offer advice about kinds of instruction needed to meet specific instructional problems of teachers.
26	3	1.71	Organize curriculum and/or instructional materials in a resource center. (Ranked 13th by supervisor.)

#### Supervisors

Item No.	Rank	$\bar{X}$	
17	1	1.54	Gather instructional materials for use by a teacher. (Ranked 7th by teachers.)
12	2	1.68	Identify instructional materials for specific problems.
15	3	1.68	Offer advice about kinds of instruction needed to meet specific instructional problems of teachers.

#### Teachers

Item No.	Rank	$\bar{X}$	
6	27	3.30	Write curriculum guides.
10	26	3.18	Define and/or write objectives with teachers. (Ranked 24th by supervisors.)

#### Supervisors

Item No.	Rank	$\bar{X}$	
6	27	3.95	Write curriculum guides.
19	26	3.50	Provide feedback to individual teachers based on formal observations. (Ranked 25th by teachers.)

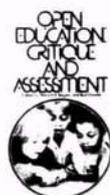
Differences of .5 or more between teachers and supervisors  $\bar{X}$  scores occurred on only two tasks:

Item No.	Tch. $\bar{X}$	Sup. $\bar{X}$
1	1.83	2.45
16	1.83	2.54

Table 2. Highest and Lowest Ranking Tasks

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Item	Perceived value rating (N = 39)	No. of teachers reporting task actually performed (N = 39)
C9	1.92	16
I14	2.20	11
I16	1.83	15
I17	1.84	18
P21	1.93	12
P22	2.03	8
P23	2.20	2
P24	1.91	16
P25	1.83	13

Table 3. High Valued Tasks Performed with Low Frequency

Item	Perceived value rating (N = 39)	No. of teachers reporting task actually performed
2	2.38	23

Table 4. Low Valued Tasks Performed with High Frequency

Item	Task frequency (N = 22)	No. of teachers reporting that task is actually performed (N = 39)
C5	1.85	11
C9	1.79	16
I13	2.13	5
I17	1.54	18
P21	2.22	12
P22	2.17	8
P25	1.87	13

Table 5. Tasks Defined by Supervisors as Being Performed Relatively Often

Supervisor identification of task as helpful to teacher /w/ Supervisor statement of frequency of performance	$r = -0.59$
Teacher perceived value /w/ Supervisors' preference	$r = -0.33$
Teacher perceived value /w/ Supervisor identification of task as helpful to teacher	$r = -0.44$
Teacher perceived value /w/ Supervisor statement indicating task specifically requested by administrator	$r = -0.09$

Table 6. Correlations for Relationships

perceived teacher value of supervisor's task is high relative to actual performance of task is made by identifying those tasks in which actual performance is indicated by less than 50 percent of the teachers and perceived value is greater than the  $\bar{X}$  value rating of 2.26. (The mean perceived value rating for all tasks was computed as 2.26.)

High valued tasks that are performed with relative low frequencies are presented in Table 3.

Low valued tasks (numerical rating > 2.26) performed with high frequency (teachers reporting task performed > 19.5) are presented in Table 4.

Tasks defined by supervisors as being performed relatively often (frequency  $\bar{X} < 2.37$ ) and reported by less than half of teachers as actually occurring are presented in Table 5.

Three additional questions asked of supervisors and results included:

Which responsibilities listed are:

	Results
1. Most satisfying to you personally?	(Items 13, 14, and 15)
2. Most helpful to classroom teachers?	(Items 4, 12, 13, 15, 17)
3. Requested by administrators?	(Items 1, 2, and 25)

Selected Pearson  $r$ 's for relationships are presented in Table 6.

## Conclusions

Results supported the following generalizations:

1. Supervisor tasks may be divided into six general areas of: testing, curriculum, instruction, classroom management, professional, and administration.

2. There is a moderate degree of relationship ( $r = .61$ ) between frequency of participation in specific supervisory responsibilities and teacher perceived value of supervisory responsibilities.

3. There is relatively high agreement around the frequency of participation in

***“Direct input into classroom instructional process constitutes the most frequently occurring set of responsibilities by supervisors and is also perceived by teachers as the most valuable source of assistance from supervisors.”***

supervisory responsibilities in the area of instruction and teacher perceived value of these responsibilities.

4. The greatest discrepancies between frequency of participation in supervisory responsibilities and teacher perceived value of responsibilities occurred in the area of professional development. Teachers' perceived value of tasks in this area was higher than frequency of supervisor participation. There is also some discrepancy between supervisor's rating of frequency of participation and teacher's perception of supervisor's frequency of participation. Supervisors tended to indicate more participation in the area of instruction than teachers attributed to them.

5. Administrative directives for supervisory tasks correlates .09 with teacher perceived value of tasks. (This could be misleading. It may be assumed that the entire supervisory role is carried out in conjunction with administrative support.)

Direct input into classroom instructional process constitutes the most frequently occurring set of responsibilities by supervisors and is also perceived by teachers as the most valuable source of assistance from supervisors. It appears from this isolated finding that educational change strategies should focus at least some attention on direct input into classroom instructional processes.

A somewhat contradictory note is introduced with a low ranking on the classroom management category (objective classroom data gathering processes and feedback through use of systematic classroom observation). However, this could be explained by negative attitudes developed around use

of vague observation procedures attached to teacher evaluation strategies. We have found a high degree of enthusiasm from these same teachers for systematic classroom observation accompanied by direct feedback. Perhaps a non-threatening observation completed by an outsider is perceived with more positive attitudes than observations completed by an arm of administration.

Additional support for the relative value of direct input into instructional processes is gained from the relatively low ranking on the curriculum category. This category is defined primarily as a set of verbal planning and review tasks.

The testing category, also ranked relatively high by teachers, again includes tasks around specific instructional problems.

In general, it may be concluded that classroom instructionally oriented assistance around specific instructional issues is more highly valued by both teachers and supervisors than verbal oriented tasks.

Implications for the educational change process are obvious. Classroom teachers view direct assistance in the form of demonstrations in their own setting and prescriptions around their own instructional problems as the most valued sources of assistance from elementary supervisors. General assistance in the form of curriculum writing and planning is viewed as less helpful than assistance around specific problems encountered by teachers.

Implications for in-service teacher training programs include the following:

1. Solving the problems of individual teachers will probably have greater payoff than general problem solving sessions around broad topics.

2. Procedures for using a specific problems approach to increasing individual and group teaching skills should be examined.

3. Field oriented service for teachers with resource assistance applied directly in the classroom will probably have greater payoff than more general, out of classroom programs. □

(See Appendix on p. 518.)

**Appendix: Questionnaire Items and Rankings**

	Teacher Perceived Value of Item $\bar{X}$	Supervisors Indication of Frequency of Participa- tion $\bar{X}$	No. of Teachers Reporting Task Actually Performed $\bar{X}$
<b>Testing (T)</b>	2.15	2.13	23.75
1. Offering advice on tests designed to measure specific student characteristics	1.89	2.45	24
2. Administering tests	2.38	2.26	23
3. Interpreting tests	2.25	1.95	25
4. Offering advice based on interpretation of tests	2.08	1.86	23
<b>Curriculum (C)</b>	2.70	2.62	18.66
5. Review curricular needs with teachers (including informal reviews)	2.34	1.85	11
6. Write curriculum guides	3.30	3.95	4
7. Interpret curriculum guides for and with teachers	2.94	2.90	9
8. Evaluate curriculum and/or programs	2.54	2.40	11
9. Suggest curriculum ideas to teachers	1.92	1.79	16
10. Define and/or write objectives with teachers	3.18	2.85	5
<b>Instruction (I)</b>	1.87	2.03	16.0
11. Identify sources of information about instructional materials	1.76	1.85	21
12. Identify instructional materials for specific problems	1.54	1.68	22
13. Organize learning experiences for children	2.34	2.13	5
14. Carry on instructional activities with children	2.20	2.38	11
15. Offer advice about kinds of instruction needed to meet specific instructional problems for children	1.61	1.68	20
16. Demonstrate new instructional materials and/or strategies	1.83	2.54	15
17. Gather instructional materials for use by a teacher	1.84	1.54	18
<b>Classroom Management (CM)</b>	3.05	2.98	6.0
18. Provide feedback to individual teachers based on informal observation	2.94	2.68	7
19. Provide feedback to individual teachers based on formal observation	3.17	3.50	7
20. Recommend modification in classroom management based on conferences and/or observations	3.05	2.78	4
<b>Professional (P)</b>	2.04	2.40	10.20
21. Inform teachers of opportunities to gain professionally	1.93	2.22	12
22. Share professional developments with teachers	2.03	2.17	8
23. Report on professional developments	2.20	2.81	2
24. Organize opportunities for teachers to engage in professional meetings including in-service workshops	1.91	2.95	16
25. Participate in team, grade, or level meetings	1.83	1.87	13
<b>Administrative (A)</b>	2.27	2.47	16.0
26. Organize curriculum and/or instructional materials in a resource center	1.71	2.27	25
27. Prepare reports on curriculum and/or instructional programs	2.38	2.68	7
Grand $\bar{X}$	2.26	2.38	—

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