

Analyzing Educational Platforms: A Supervisory Strategy



Helping teachers look at "what they preach" and "what they practice" through videotaped sequences gives much promise as a technique in clinical supervision.

Clinical supervision is based on the assumption that enhancing professional effectiveness is contingent upon the integration of thought and action. Many professionals, however, remain unaware of the differences between "what they practice" and "what they preach." Lack of reflection about attitudes and assumptions leads to inconsistencies. What a professional espouses may not be perceived by others as consistent with action.

With the assistance of Thomas J. Sergiovanni and a group of professors from the University of Illinois, the author has developed a four-stage process of supervision using videotaping tech-

niques and a modification of the Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön (1974) model for increasing professional effectiveness.¹ Sergiovanni notes that this approach could be called a hybrid of clinical supervision in that clinical supervision is combined with assumptions that characterize naturalistic approaches.²

¹ Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön. *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing Company, 1974.

² The naturalistic approach to supervision "sees value in describing as opposed to measuring and in discovering as opposed to determining." See: Thomas J. Sergiovanni. "Changing Patterns of Supervision: Prophecy and Fact." Address, Maryland Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Baltimore, October 13, 1976.

* The supervisory strategy discussed in this article was presented as Action Lab 30 at the ASCD Annual Conference in Houston last March.

A Supervision Strategy

This strategy of supervision involves identification of a teacher's espoused platform and the construction of that teacher's platform-in-use from what has been observed in a videotaped classroom sequence. *Espoused platforms are what teachers say governs their behavior. Platforms-in-use are inferred from actual behavior.*

It is assumed that the integration of thought and action in professional practice depends on discovering and distinguishing between espoused educational platforms and platforms-in-use. An educational platform is a position from which a teacher justifies actions. Such platforms exist on different levels. An espoused platform is a set of assumptions and action patterns to which a professional publicly asserts allegiance and that he/she communicates to others. A platform-in-use is a construction of what takes place in that classroom based on observation of activities and analysis of classroom artifacts (that is, teacher-made materials, bulletin boards, classroom arrangement). Thus, a vocabulary is provided that focuses on intents and happenings.³

Stages of Supervisory Strategy for Analyzing Educational Platforms *

Stage	Components	Purposes
I	Videotaped interview	To record a teacher's views about a lesson and about teaching
II	Videotaped classroom sequence	To record actual student-teacher interactions To facilitate construction of the teacher's platform-in-use
III	Replay of tapes for supervisor	To allow careful note-taking in preparation for final videotaping session
	Videotaped supervisor comments	To construct teacher's espoused platform and platform-in-use
IV	Replay of tapes for teacher (with and/or without supervisor)	To facilitate instructional improvement by helping the teacher focus on his/her ideas, performance in the classroom, and another person's observation of and consistencies between thought and action
	Evaluation instrument, audiotaped and/or videotaped interview	To record teacher reactions (searching, denying) to the process To determine usefulness of the process with the teacher

* Alan E. Simon. "Videotapes Illustrating Concepts of the Argyris and Schön Model in Instructional Supervisory Situations." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1976.

A four-stage process uses videotaping techniques to analyze educational platforms and to determine whether this approach evokes search behavior in teachers. The first three stages of this process focus on identification of a teacher's educational platform and construction of his/her platform-in-use. The last stage involves teacher reactions to the process and determinations about the usefulness of the approach.

The process begins with a videotaped interview between teacher and supervisor about a teaching situation to follow immediately. During the interview, the teacher is asked two types of questions: General questions relating to beliefs and values about education, and specific questions relating to the teaching situation. The second stage documents the teaching situation that was discussed in the interview. The third stage involves a videotape of the supervisor's attempt to construct the teacher's platform-in-use and relate the espoused platform of the interview to actual practices.

The third stage is critical to the process. It is important that the construction of the teacher's platform-in-use attempts to fit the style of the teacher. The supervisor has a variety of options available to facilitate construction of platform-in-use. The supervisor can make a videotape or write an analysis, and the teacher could respond. A second option involves a cooperative effort. The supervisor and the teacher could construct the platform-in-use together as they watch the videotaped interview and classroom sequence. A third option has other teachers constructing educational platforms with or without the supervisor.

The final stage of the process relates to the usefulness of the approach as measured by the evoking of search behavior in teachers. Search behavior is defined as statements made by teachers that indicate that the teachers are scrutinizing their ideas and strategies of teaching as the result of the videotaping process. A variety of methods are being used to elicit teacher searching responses. Teacher reactions to the process are recorded on an instrument, videotaped, and/or audiotaped. Another method has the teacher and

³ See: Alan E. Simon. "Videotapes Illustrating Concepts of the Argyris and Schön Model in Instructional Supervisory Situations." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1976.



supervisor discussing issues and situations as they are presented on videotape. Sometimes an outside observer helps with the analysis.

The type or types of methods used should be geared to the individual style of the particular teacher and supervisor. It is hoped that teachers will scrutinize their ideas and strategies of implementation as they are confronted with comparisons and contrasts between espoused platforms and platforms-in-use. From time to time, however, conflict may develop when a teacher is confronted with the reality of his/her platform-in-use and finds that it conflicts with what was espoused. When that happens, it is the joint task of teacher and supervisor to deal with the dilemma that has surfaced. Argyris and Schön feel that this is the key to enhancing professional effectiveness: "Understanding how we diagnose and construct our experience, take action, and monitor our behavior while simultaneously achieving our goals is crucial to understanding and enhancing effectiveness."⁴

Analyzing Educational Platforms and Clinical Supervision

The assumptions behind the use of videotape as a self-evaluation device relate directly to the Morris Cogan (1973) model of clinical supervision.⁵ For example, video self-appraisal assumes that the teacher can become his/her own supervisor. It is assumed that the teacher is capable of changing his/her own behavior after supervisory analysis, an interchange of ideas, and experience in self-observation. In the case of video, professional training in self-examination can lead to professional growth. Paul M. Jense

points out that using videotape gives teachers opportunities to view themselves and to want to change certain types of behaviors.⁶ Thus, the goals in video self-appraisal and the clinical supervision scheme center around self-awareness and self-improvement.

The strategy of clinical supervision involves a relationship based on observation of teaching and dedicated to the welfare of the students. The focus of that relationship is on observing teacher strengths and the cultivation of teacher self-direction. Using the strategy of supervision described in this article within a clinical supervisory framework is one means of eliciting searching behavior in teachers with the focus on improving instruction. Thus, the goal is for the teachers to become their own supervisors by learning to observe themselves. Questioning one's activities in the teaching situation leads to improved technique.

The key to the integration of video illustrations of the concepts of espoused platform and platform-in-use with clinical supervision is the cultivation of the relationship between the teacher and the supervisor. Morris Cogan sees the purpose of clinical supervision as "the development of a professionally responsible teacher who is analytical of his own performance, open to help from others, and withal self-directing."⁷ Video

⁴ Argyris and Schön, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

⁵ Morris L. Cogan. *Clinical Supervision*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973.

⁶ Paul Jense. "A Study of Self-Evaluation Applied to In-Service Education." ERIC ED 023 642, September 1968.

⁷ Cogan, *op. cit.*, p. 12.



illustrations can facilitate the accomplishment of those purposes. The methods proposed in this strategy can facilitate cooperation and communication between teacher and supervisor if undertaken in the spirit of professional improvement.

Applications

This strategy of supervision could be used as an in-service training tool for supervisors since the process uses available technology to capture the situation as it unfolds. Many school districts and most universities own videotape machines and have competent personnel for operating the equipment. Supervisors, for example, could be instructed to use this technique in conjunction with other methods of teacher appraisal or as a means of inducing self-improvement in teachers who are relatively satisfied with their performance. Graduate students could be given a mini-course in the use of videotape equipment in the instructional supervisory situation. These graduate students could practice identifying espoused theories and constructing theories-in-use with other students, professors, student teachers, and teachers.

Other professional educational practices can be examined with videotaping using the concepts of espoused platforms and platforms-in-use. For example, the paradigm could be used to help superintendents and principals analyze meetings. A superintendent or principal could record his/her views on the need for meetings, their use, and the degree of board or faculty involvement necessary for a successful meeting. Videotaped sequences from actual meetings could provide the



Photos: From the videotape Designing a Middle School for Early Adolescents. ASCD, 1977.

National Curriculum Study Institutes



Summer 1977

Implementing Humanistic Education in Schools

June 20-21, Louisville, Kentucky (Galt House Hotel)

Reduced budgets and educational trends toward pragmatic skill development or calls for a return to the "basics" will increasingly have a significant impact upon schools' commitment to humanistic education. This institute will focus on explicating the concepts of humanistic education, identifying strategies for creating more humane classroom climates, and techniques for implementing humanistic education in schools through curriculum design, teacher preparation, and instructional programs.

Consultants: *David Aspy*, House of Representatives' Education Committee, Washington, D.C.; *Doris Brown*, University of Missouri, St. Louis; *Arthur Cosia*, Sacramento State University, Sacramento, California; *Alan Dahms*, Metropolitan State College, Denver, Colorado; *William Maynard*, Seattle Public Schools, Washington.

Optional background material packet at special price—\$20

Registration must reach ASCD by June 10.

Staff Development for Effective Middle School Education

July 11-12, Minneapolis, Minnesota (Radisson Hotel Downtown)

The psychological and physiological development of pre- and early adolescents has profound implications for the education of middle school age students. This institute will concentrate on identifying competencies middle school educators need, exploring alternative ways of planning and conducting middle school inservice programs, and examining different techniques for improving teacher effectiveness with middle school students.

Consultants: *Mary Compton*, University of Georgia, Athens; *Paul George*, University of Florida, Gainesville; *Billie Jacobs*, Daniel Boone Elementary School, University City, Missouri; *Elizabeth Krebs*, Sunnyside Unified School District, Tucson, Arizona; *Robert Malinka*, National Middle School Resource Center, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Optional background material packet at special price—\$5

Registration must reach ASCD by June 30.

Instructional Leadership: The Key to Effective Reading Programs

July 21-22, West Village, Colorado (Aspen area) (Stonebridge Inn)

This institute will provide a synthesis of the research which has accumulated about how the instructional program must be organized to teach reading effectively and what seems to make the difference between good and bad programs. Consultants will review recent finding on what reading achievement levels are in the United States and how schools must organize instruction to help each child reach his or her potential.

Consultants: *Loran Anderson*, University of South Carolina, Columbia; *Jim Daniels*, Park Hill Elementary School, Denver, Colorado; *Roger Farr*, Indiana University, Bloomington; *Mahanna Hartfelder*, Emerson Elementary School, Tulsa, Oklahoma; *Mildred Middleton*, Cedar Rapids Community Schools, Iowa; *Sam Weintraub*, SUNY at Buffalo, Amherst; *Gita Wilder*, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey.

Registration must reach ASCD by July 7.

For registration form, see page 507.

documentation to help the superintendent or principal plan future meetings to accomplish objectives.

Business people could adapt and adopt this supervisory strategy to enhance professional effectiveness. For example, a salesperson's espoused philosophy of sales, views of the customers, and attitude toward the product could be recorded. Then a portable camera could be used to document the actual sales contact. The salesperson and his/her supervisors could identify the espoused theory of sales and compare that to the actual sales situation to ascertain the effectiveness of the sales promotion.

Using videotape in the clinical supervisory situation provides the teacher and supervisor with immediate, accurate, and concrete feedback. Playback of the videotape can be scheduled at the convenience of the viewer(s) and a particular sequence can be shown over and over. Videotape shows things as they are, which can be a problem as well as an asset. Unlike a subjective evaluation, the videotape itself cannot be discredited. It is an objective record of events. Only when there is an analysis of those events can there be disputes. Thoughtful analysis and a strategy of supervision are the keys to successful use of video self-appraisal using the concept of educational platforms.

Videotaping and this strategy of supervision, however, should not be the only means used in the process of supervision. The videotape only records what it sees, and there is much that it cannot see. One or even multiple cameras could not hope to capture everything that goes on in a classroom. Because a videotape of a classroom sequence is not a complete documentation of events, the logical use of video equipment for instructional improvement is in conjunction with other tools of observation and analysis focusing on teacher self-improvement. [E]



Alan E. Simon is Principal, Green Bay Road School, Highland Park, Illinois.

Copyright © 1977 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.