In Tennessee, the ASCD affiliate studied the status of instructional supervision. Results were both enlightening and disturbing for the professional concerned with improving classroom instruction.

In the fall of 1974, the Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (TASCD) appointed a special task force to study the practice of instructional supervision in Tennessee. This action resulted from general concern that the program of supervision was not meeting adequately the needs of teachers. However, no hard data existed that would either substantiate the general concern or indicate specific areas of need. The Task Force consisted of supervisors, a principal, teachers, State Department of Education personnel, a superintendent, two assistant superintendents for curriculum and instruction, and higher education personnel.

Following a thorough review of related literature and periodic discussion among the Task Force members, a set of assumptions concerning an ideal model of supervision was developed. These assumptions were expanded into a rationale that served as a basis for data collection.

To collect data describing the practice of supervision in Tennessee during the 1974-75 school year, a set of questionnaires was developed. The objectives of the questionnaires were:

1. To determine the number and length of classroom observations and instructional conferences in Tennessee schools;
2. To determine which professional staff members participated in observations and conferences;
3. To determine the perceptions of teachers, principals, and supervisors regarding conferences and observations; and
4. To determine the perceptions of teachers, principals, and supervisors regarding the availability of supervisory services and their desire for increased services.

Following a pilot study to refine the instruments, the questionnaires were distributed in May 1975 to a random sample of teachers and principals and to the population of instructional supervisors as listed by the State Department of Education. A 59 percent return was received. Responses were computer tabulated and cross-tabulated by various demographic indicators. Data printouts were analyzed by individual members of the Task Force. Major findings and the conclusions and recommendations of the Task Force were compiled for publication in May 1975. The resulting monograph was distributed to educators across the state.

Findings

Quantity of Observations and Conferences. Teachers reported that the principal was the primary source of observations and conferences. Seventy-three percent reported having one or more observations by the principal, and eighty-two percent reported one or more conferences with the principal about the instructional program. Interestingly, more than 80 percent of the

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1 The findings reported here are based on findings reported in an earlier publication by the authors: John T. Lovell and Margaret S. Phelps. *Supervision in Tennessee: A Study of the Perceptions of Teachers, Principals and Supervisors.* Published by the Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, July 1976.
teachers reported no observations by or conferences with a general or special supervisor.

Principals and supervisors also reported numerous observations and conferences. Seventy-six percent of the principals said they had personal contact with each teacher concerning the instructional program 11 or more times. The majority of supervisors (69 percent) reported contacts with teachers five or more times. Principals and supervisors reported frequent contacts with each other relative to instructional problems.

Principals and teachers reported that the overwhelming majority of the conferences and observations lasted less than 30 minutes. Many were less than 10 minutes in length.

Characteristics of Observations and Conferences. In general, the perceptions of teachers, principals, and supervisors differed regarding the nature of observations and conferences. More than 50 percent of the teachers responded that observations were not usually scheduled in advance, not requested, not preceded by a conference, and not followed by a conference or a written report. Most teachers felt confident while being observed and reported that observations were not disruptive to the class. However, only 44 percent of the teachers found that observations were usually helpful.

Conversely, the majority of principals and supervisors reported that observations were usually scheduled in advance, preceded by a conference, and followed by a conference and written report. The principals said that observations were helpful to the teachers, were usually for evaluation purposes, and were long enough to include an entire lesson. Supervisors responded that observations were not usually for evaluation purposes.

Principals and supervisors agreed with teachers that observations were usually not disruptive to the class, and that teachers were confident while being observed.

Supervisory Services. More than 50 percent of the teachers responded that the following services were not usually provided when needed; 70 percent or more indicated a desire for an increase in each:

1. Involving teachers in districtwide instructional programs
2. Assisting in developing effective disciplinary techniques
3. Planning in-service activities
4. Providing teaching demonstrations
5. Consulting with teachers on instructional problems
6. Serving as a two-way communications link with the central office
7. Helping describe and analyze instructional objectives
8. Helping define instructional objectives
9. Helping select appropriate instructional activities
10. Helping choose methods for evaluating student progress
11. Aiding in development of curricula
12. Conducting or directing research
13. Acting as a change agent
14. Providing psychological support
15. Suggesting new ideas and approaches for instruction
16. Assisting in classroom organization and arrangement.

Most supervisors and principals perceived that they usually provided the services listed above to teachers when needed with few exceptions. For example, only 33 percent of the principals and 39 percent of the supervisors said that they provided teaching demonstrations. An equally small number reported conducting research.

An overwhelming majority of principals, supervisors, and teachers indicated a desire to increase all services.

Conclusions

Principals were perceived by teachers to be the major source of instructional supervisory support. Conferences were usually short and not based on observations. Observations tended to be uncontrolled, unplanned, and haphazard and were perceived by the teachers not to be helpful. It was concluded that teachers were receiving inadequate instructional support through the processes of classroom observations and conferences.
Teachers, principals, and supervisors reported that teachers felt confident while being observed and that observations were not disruptive to the class. The conclusion was that observations could be an important source of support for teachers if implemented effectively.

Teachers did not normally observe and confer with each other. Therefore, the potential use of teachers as instructional resources to each other was not being utilized. Group conferences and observations were not being used to involve teachers in assisting each other.

Teachers felt they were usually provided instructional materials, informed of professional growth activities, and evaluated for personnel decisions. But, they also perceived inadequate provision of services such as direct support for planning, implementing instruction, demonstration teaching, conducting research, and services that involved the teachers in crucial decision making and change efforts. It was concluded that instructional personnel needed to become more intimately involved in instructional support at the school and classroom level.

Teachers had serious disagreements with principals and supervisors on the quantity and nature of conferences and observations and other instructional services. It was concluded that there is a strong need for teachers, supervisors, and principals to make an effort to communicate in a more open and cooperative way in order to achieve mutual understanding and support for the program of instructional services for teachers.

Principals, supervisors, and teachers agreed that conferences were not normally requested by teachers. This condition could be an indication that teachers did not perceive them as helpful, perceived them as threatening, or perceived them as an administrative process imposed upon them. There is a need to determine why teachers are not requesting conferences and take action to solve the problem.

Most principals and supervisors perceived themselves as providing the instructional services that teachers needed with the exception of teaching demonstrations and research. Therefore, it appeared that they were attempting to provide services. But, teachers did not perceive that they were receiving the services they needed. In general, the evidence indicated that principals were less inclined to provide services in areas directly related to classroom teaching than in ones related to administrative services. The evidence was strong that principals placed greater priority on their administrative role than on their role as an instructional leader.

Summary

The TASCD Study was an effort on the part of a professional association to make a significant contribution to the improvement of the practice of instructional supervision in Tennessee. A Task Force of TASCD developed a scientific description of instructional supervision as it existed in Tennessee during the 1974-75 school year. The practice of supervision as defined by the study was analyzed in relation to a set of assumptions about what constitutes a desirable program of instructional supervision.

Conclusions were drawn and the Task Force developed a set of recommendations for improving supervision in Tennessee. A monograph which included a description of the study, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations was published by TASCD in order to make the results of the study available to educators throughout the State. The results of the study have been presented to the State Commissioner of Education, the TASCD Convention, the State Supervisors Study Council, and the State Principals Study Council. TASCD plans to continue the analysis of the data and attempt to initiate a program for improving instructional supervision in Tennessee.