Supervision as Value Development

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This author holds that supervision, rather than stressing behavior, should stress values. Suggested here are some aspects of value development supervision.

Regardless of its type or style, all supervision has the same basic purpose: to improve instruction. Management-by-objectives supervision, clinical supervision, human relations supervision, and peer supervision all share this purpose. Different types of supervision may, however, have different views of the nature of instructional improvement. Some, for example, may place considerable emphasis on student achievement gains as an indication of instructional improvement, while others focus only on changes in the teacher's methods or techniques. Also, some forms of supervision may have an additional goal of helping teachers to become self supervisors, to become proficient at analyzing and changing their classroom practices on their own.

To improve instruction, most types of supervision focus on teacher behavior. They stress what the teacher says and does in the classroom. That is, supervision is primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with how teachers give directions, how they ask questions, how they utilize materials, how they sequence subject matter, how they discipline students, how they evaluate student learning, and with similar behaviors.

This focus on teacher behavior in an effort to improve instruction is based on several assumptions:

1. Teacher behavior will influence student behavior
2. Teachers can control their behavior to influence student behavior
3. Knowledge about the ways various teacher behaviors influence student behavior exists.

The first assumption means that what the teacher says or does in the classroom will have an impact on what the student says or does. It means that teacher behavior will either facilitate or hinder student learning. The second assumption refers to the teacher's ability to consciously employ those behaviors that are appropriate for an individual student or for a group of students and to consciously avoid others. It means that teachers have or can acquire large repertoires of behavior and can use them with equal facility depending on

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the exigencies of the situation. The third assumption means that empirical research has identified effective ways of teaching. It means that teachers and supervisors can draw on a body of knowledge about effective teaching to determine which behaviors the teacher ought to use.

If these three assumptions are acceptable, it is reasonable to believe that teacher behavior should be the primary, or even exclusive, focus of supervision. A closer examination of the assumptions will reveal that the assumptions are not acceptable or are only acceptable under certain conditions, and therefore, teacher behavior cannot be the main or only focus of supervision.

It is proposed here that supervision, rather than stressing behavior, should stress values. A value can be thought of as a belief or conviction that something is good or desirable or preferable. If supervisors conceived of the development of teachers' values as part of their supervisory role, instruction might well be improved. But, why values? Let us return to the three assumptions.

**Why Stress Values?**

The first assumption is valid in part. Given the amount of time teachers and students spend together, teacher behavior probably will influence student behavior, and student behavior probably will influence teacher behavior. Implied in the assumption, however, is the notion that the teacher's behavior will influence in the direction of specified objectives. That is, teacher behavior will facilitate student learning of appropriate subject matter. For this type of influence to occur, the behaviors of the teacher cannot be random, contradictory behaviors. They need to be compatible, complementary behaviors. The set of behaviors that the teacher employs in the classroom needs to be a meaningful whole for maximum impact on students. To develop this whole, to create these consistent behaviors, it is essential that one turn to values. A value position will generate consistent behaviors and can be used to evaluate the consistency of existing behaviors.

The second assumption is also partially valid. Teachers undoubtedly can control their behavior; they can consciously and purposely use some behaviors and avoid others. But, can all teachers use all the behaviors that may be deemed good or effective behaviors? Can a teacher be a jack-of-all-trades and employ vast numbers of behaviors with success? Are teachers wondrous machines that have been programmed with a set of teaching behaviors and can flawlessly produce those behaviors that the situation demands? This competency regardless of conviction is a faulty belief. Teachers, obviously, are not quite as machine-like as many would like them to be. Teachers have convictions, preferences, beliefs, or, in short, values. They cannot employ all and any behaviors with the same success because they are more committed to some behaviors than to others. Those behaviors that the teacher values will be used with greater fervor and consequently with greater effectiveness.

Teachers can control their behavior, but they cannot control it in any productive way beyond the limits of their values. By examining and clarifying values, they will develop a better understanding of those behaviors that are appropriate for them and those that are inappropriate for them.

The third assumption is nearly totally invalid. The simple truth is that at present there is little or no knowledge about the effectiveness of various teacher behaviors on student learning. This is not because of lack of effort. Countless studies on teaching methods and, more recently, on the effectiveness of specific teacher behaviors have been conducted. An examination of the summaries of teacher effectiveness research by Dunkin and Biddle and by Rosenshine and Furst reveals only ambiguous and weak results. The studies are


usually correlational studies and the results are frequently contradictory. When positive correlations have been found, the teacher behaviors are invariably general qualities rather than specific behaviors. Teachers and supervisors cannot turn to empirical research evidence to select and justify teacher behaviors that bring about student learning.

In the absence of this knowledge, how can one teacher behavior be chosen over another? The answer is to formulate a value position and select behaviors consistent with it. Teachers could conceivably consult education experts, model successful teachers, or adopt a philosophical position in an effort to identify and justify teacher behaviors, but each of these sources is dependent on a personal value position. A value position is needed to choose the expert to follow or the philosophy to embrace. Such a position is, interestingly, also needed to choose the empirical research evidence to use, if reliable evidence were available. Values can effectively serve to identify and justify teacher behavior.

Values, then, play an important part in the three assumptions concerning teacher behavior. They bring consistency and commitment to teacher behavior, and they are the source of and support for teacher behavior. They are essential for the improvement of instruction.

Aspects of Value Development Supervision

In view of the importance of values, the proposal that supervisors should stress the development of values is not unreasonable. How supervisors should go about the process of helping teachers develop values is quite another matter. At present this type of supervision has not been thoroughly developed and used; however, it is possible to tentatively suggest some aspects of value development supervision.

First of all, value development supervision should focus on basic, fundamental elements of education. These might be the student, the subject matter, the teacher, and others. The supervisor’s tasks would be to help teachers clarify their beliefs or convictions about these elements. In relation to the student, for example, the supervisor could use conferences or group sessions to help teachers clarify beliefs about what motivates students, how responsible students are, if students can make decisions for themselves, and how students learn.

Secondly, supervisors need to clarify their own values and make their value position known to teachers. They could develop their own values prior to attempting value development supervision.

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Third, although the position of teacher behavior is changed in this type of supervision, teacher behavior is not ignored. In value development supervision, behavior is seen as an outgrowth of value development. The supervisor would be concerned with the relationship of values to behavior. He or she would try to help the teacher achieve consistency between values and behavior.

Value development supervision could take a variety of forms. Supervisors need to develop and try out different forms of this type of supervision in an attempt to find effective ways for dealing with teachers’ values. Instructional improvement rests on the effort.

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