



Photo: Michael Sexton, Texas A&M University.

Photo: Michael Sexton, Texas A&M University.

Instructional Supervisors: A Dichotomy

A. W. Sturges*

An ASCD working group recommends distinguishing between two types of supervisors: administrative and consultative.

Almost every school district has instructional supervisors. There is little agreement on what they do or what they should do, yet 92 universities (NCATE, 1978) are preparing them at the doctoral level. The problem of knowing what instructional supervisors should do is not of recent vintage; authors have been addressing the problem for over 30 years. But we are getting closer to an answer.

A working group of ASCD has tried to define the roles of instructional supervisors by re-

viewing more than 100 research reports, texts and articles, standards of regional accrediting agencies, current certification requirements, and

* This is a summary of a report by an ASCD working group that examined the roles and responsibilities of supervisors, submitted to ASCD October 1, 1978. Members of the working group are A. W. Sturges (chairperson), R. J. Krajewski, J. T. Lovell, E. McNeill, and M. G. Ness. Lovell had primary responsibility for the literature review; Krajewski was primarily responsible for the survey results and the review of existing programs.

current views of one senior official and one member from each of several professional organizations representing those who prepare, employ, and work with instructional supervisors. From these data, definitions of the roles of instructional supervisors were developed that indicated that there are—or should be—two distinct positions: the *administrative* instructional supervisor and the *consultative* instructional supervisor.

Survey

The executive director and one representative member from each of seven professional organizations¹ were contacted by telephone and asked to respond to five questions. The questions and a summary of the responses are:

1. *What are the objectives of instructional supervision?* According to principals and professors, the main objective is to help teachers with classroom methodology and management. Districtwide administrators said the most important objectives are to help teachers in curriculum development and to assist them in developing needed teaching competencies. None of the groups said evaluation of teachers for promotion and/or tenure is a major objective.

2. *What are the activities of instructional supervisors?* Districtwide administrators, principals, and professors agreed that a major activity is the improvement of teaching competencies that requires communication skills and problem-solving skills, as well as diagnostic techniques.

3. *What are the expected results from instructional supervision?* Respondents agreed that effective instructional supervision should result in a better learning climate by helping teachers develop a commitment to improvement and by reducing teacher frustrations caused by classroom discipline problems.

4. *What is the organizational structure for instructional supervision?* The organizational structure preferred by a majority of respondents is to have the instructional supervisor housed in the same building where teachers to be assisted are housed.

5. *What is the preparation for instructional supervision?* The majority of professors and instructional supervisors thought preparation should

emphasize learning and human development theory. Districtwide administrators, principals, teachers, and national organization executives recommended preparation in the use of diagnostic skills in teaching children. There was general agreement among respondents that teaching experience should be required and that clinical supervision should be a part of the preparation program.

Literature Review

A review was conducted to answer three questions: (1) What are the purposes of instruc-

"Our study reveals a conflict: teachers want direct assistance to improve the learning opportunities of children, but they see supervisors in administrative roles not directly related to improving instruction."

tional supervision? (2) What are the roles and responsibilities of instructional supervisors? and (3) What are the activities of instructional supervisors?

Most of the reviewed authors saw instructional supervision as a process intended to improve learning opportunities for students.

Lucio and McNeil (1969, p. 45) and Sergio-vanni and Starratt (1971, p. 10) believe the purpose is to achieve specified goals.

The literature does not yield a definitive role description for instructional supervisors. What they are expected to do varies according to the positions they hold and the districts they work in. Sergio-vanni and Starratt (1971) suggest that all persons who participate in supervision—regardless of their title or their other duties—are supervisors. Burnham (1976, pp. 301-05) concurs:

¹American Association of School Administrators (AASA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision (COPIS), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Education Association (NEA), and Professors of Curriculum.

"Supervision today is not the province of a particular person or a particular position—." Wiles and Lovell (1975, pp. 19-20) and Olivia (1976, p. 7) differentiate the kinds of roles found in a school system; there are those such as principals, department heads, and assistant superintendents who serve a supervisory function, but who have other duties not directly or immediately related to working with teachers. And there are supervisors who are expected, as their primary responsibility, to work directly with teachers.

Administrators sometimes place instructional supervisors in an administrative role that includes preparation of proposals for federal grants, evaluating teachers for tenure and/or salary increments, and the administration of instructional budgets. Puckett (1963) reports that teachers want classroom visits, criticism, and helpful suggestions from instructional supervisors. Colbert (1967) reports similar information. Esposito, Smith, and Burbach (1975) suggest it is possible to separate the roles of instructional supervisors into two general categories: helping roles and administrative roles.

Preparation Programs

A summary of existing certification requirements indicates that 22 states do not have a specific certificate for supervisors, but treat them as administrators for certification purposes. Seventeen states that offer a supervisor's certificate specify the number of credit hours required in supervision and/or administration. The majority of states combine supervision hours with administration hours, or do not specify a certain number of hours. Two states require completion of an approved program.

In a 1977 study by Krajewski (1978, pp. 60-66), 45 of 48 universities responded to questions regarding their graduate programs for instructional supervisors. Twenty-seven universities indicated the program was offered by the administration department; 28 universities reported that 30-36 semester hours were required to complete the degree, and the four more frequently required courses were in curriculum development, administration and supervision, practices in educational supervision, and educational psychology. An internship is required or recom-

mended in 25 of the 45 universities responding to the questionnaire.

Summary

Our study reveals a conflict: teachers want direct assistance to improve the learning opportunities of children, but they see supervisors in administrative roles not directly related to improving instruction. Professors of supervision believe instructional supervisors should be "people-oriented" consultants to teachers, but the majority of state certification programs include a heavy proportion of courses in administration.

There seem to be two types of supervisory positions: *administrative* instructional supervisors and *consultative* instructional supervisors. Duties of administrative supervisors may include being responsible for federal programs, evaluating teachers for tenure and salary increments, and quality control at the district level. Some positions of this type are principal, department head, and assistant superintendent. Consultative instructional supervisors are more directly involved with helping teachers improve their methodology. Their evaluation of teacher performance is from a diagnostic point of view aimed at helping teachers improve the learning opportunities of children.

If this is the case, it would seem appropriate to have different certification requirements and different preparation programs for the two types of instructional supervisors. In addition, a clearer distinction between role types at the district level would enhance the success potential of both types. For example, administrative instructional supervisors would not be expected to be particularly effective on a one-to-one basis helping teachers improve learning opportunities for students. Consultative instructional supervisors would not be expected to have fiscal, administrative, or evaluation-for-promotion responsibilities.

References

- R. J. Alfonso, G. R. Firth, and R. F. Neville, *Instructional Supervision: A Behavior System*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1975.
- A. Blumberg, *Supervisors and Teachers: A Private Cold War*. Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Co., 1974.

Reba M. Burnham. "Instructional Supervision: Past, Present and Future Perspectives." *Theory Into Practice* 15(4):301-05; October 1976.

Marvin Christiansen and Harold Turner. "The Roles and Preparation of Instructional Supervisors." In: Allan W. Sturges, editor. *Certificating the Curriculum Leader and the Instructional Supervisor*. Unpublished report from the ASCD Working Group on the Role, Preparation and Certification of Curriculum Leaders and Supervisors, 1977.

James E. Colbert. "A Study of Effective and Ineffective Supervisory Behavior." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 27(7):2306; January 1967.

James P. Esposito, Gary E. Smith, and Harold J. Burbach. "A Delineation of the Supervisory Role." *Education* 96(1):63-67; Fall 1975.

Ben M. Harris. *Supervisory Behavior in Education*, Second edition. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975.

R. Krajewski. "Existing Programs for Preparation of Instructional Supervisors." In: Allan W. Sturges, editor. *The Roles and Responsibilities of Instructional Supervisors*. Unpublished report from the ASCD Working Group on the Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisors, October 1, 1978.

W. H. Lucio and J. D. McNeil. *Supervision: A Synthesis of Thought and Action*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969.

National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. *Directory of Member Institutions*. Washington, D.C., 1978.

P. F. Olivia. *Supervision for Today's Schools*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1976.

Daniel W. Puckett. "The Status and Function of the General School Supervisor in Selected Arkansas Schools." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 23(7):2758; January 1963.

Thomas J. Sergiovanni and R. J. Starratt. *Emerging Patterns of Supervision: Human Perspectives*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971.

Kimball Wiles and John T. Lovell. *Supervision for Better Schools*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975.



A.W. Sturges is Professor of Education, University of Missouri—Columbia.

Healthy hearts do it better

A healthy heart can help you enjoy your life to its fullest, and longest. People with healthy hearts can look better, feel better and do more than those with heart disease.

Help your heart give you a healthy life. Don't start smoking, or, if you already do, give it up. Eat a well-balanced diet and watch your intake of fatty, fried and high-cholesterol foods. Exercise regularly, and have your blood pressure checked. If it's high, follow your doctor's orders for treatment.

We want you to get the most out of life, and do it with a healthy heart.

Please give generously to the American Heart Association 

WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE

Copyright © 1979 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.