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 reviewing 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 organizations 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 instructional 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 Sergiovanni 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. Sergiovanni 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:

1 American 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.

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"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 recommended 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 the learning opportunities for students. Consultative instructional supervisors would not be expected to have fiscal, administrative, or evaluation-for-promotion responsibilities.

**References**


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