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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of the student teacher supervisory process can be improved through the use of a model based on current administrative and supervisory theory. A review of literature on the process indicates that a closer collaboration between supervisor and cooperating teacher is needed, cooperating teachers need training in supervision, and supervision requires an ability to adapt to meet the demands of individual situations with flexible techniques which respond to a diagnosis of the maturity level of the student teacher at each stage of development. The model for the process of supervising student teachers presumes that a close relationship exists between the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher. A course or workshop for both the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher should provide basic tenets of needs assessment, the clinical approach to supervision, and adaptibility of leadership style. A collegial agreement should be reached on expectations and goals, and the roles of each supervisor should be clarified. The cooperating teacher should diagnose the maturity level of the student teacher and an agreement should be reached with the college supervisor on the most effective supervisory style. Preferably, both supervisors would be present at observations. Pre- and post-observation conferences with the student teacher should be held for discussing specific teaching behaviors being observed at each session. (JD)

INCORPORATING EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE THEORY IN THE SUPERVISION OF STUDENT TEACHERS: A MODEL

by

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There is much debate today as to the effectiveness of college supervision of student teachers. Some educators believe the college supervisor to be a needed link in the chain which connects a pre-service teacher to the public school. Still, others, such as Bowman (1979) believe that the college supervisor ". . . represents a needless drain upon dwindling resources."[1]

It is interesting to note that the literature regarding the supervision of student teachers is nearly void of contributions from administrators or others having expertise in educational administration and supervision. This contribution is written from the viewpoint of a teacher educator with a background in administration and teacher supervision.

The ever-widening field of educational administration has much to offer teacher educators regarding the supervisory process. From that fact the paper will proceed to 1) discuss the current state of the student teacher supervisory process relative to its effectiveness, 2) a review of the current alternatives to the present supervisory process is presented, and finally 3) a model based on current, accepted administrative and supervisory theory is presented for review.

Currently, where are we in the field of supervising student teachers? Some evidence has suggested that college supervisors make little, if any, difference in the development of student teachers. The research done by Morris (1974) suggested that a student teacher would perform just as well with or without a college supervisor.[2] In effect, the cooperating classroom teacher really made the difference in the student teacher.

Bowman (1979) reviewed the literature and concluded that ". . . the most sensible thing to do would be to stop supervising."[3] Perhaps one reason for the conclusion is given by Horton and Harvey (1979): "In many universities, supervisors of student teachers rank at the bottom of the academic barrel. If they are willing, they don't recognize student need . . ."[4] Shawver (1970) was one of the first to state that position and then went on to say that the supervisor also has little impact on the college teacher education program.[5]

Regarding the supervisor's role in the total experience of student teaching, Wiles and Branch (1979) said: "Riddled with problems of control, supervisory skill training . . . and poor university-public school relationships, the field experience has been regarded as a chance proposition."[6]

How much research is enough to either justify or discredit the role of the college supervisor? Is the literature saying that the supervisor is ineffective or just not as effective as he or she ought to be? As is seen from the various researchers, the field of supervision in teacher education is in a state of flux.

Although much criticism is given to the field, several alternatives have also been suggested. I believe that whatever alternative is chosen by a supervisor, one thing remains clear and that is both the college supervisor and the classroom teacher need to learn how to supervise. Many alternatives suggest that theme, too. For too long, teacher educators have assumed that teaching credentials plus a checklist qualifies one to supervise student teachers. Yet, Drucker (1967) reported: "I have found that effectiveness can be learned, but also that it must be learned."[7]

Perhaps this is why Bowman's (1979) suggestion that one alternative to the present state would be to have the classroom teacher assume the main supervisory responsibility of the student teacher, makes a lot of sense.[8] The

classroom teacher may know how to effectively supervise either because he or she has been supervised effectfvely, or can supervise students in the classroom effectively. This could change a teacher-student teacher relationship into a teacher-pupil relationship which according to Cogan (1974) is not healthy for the person being supervised.[9]

Another alternative was suggested by Wiles and Branch (1979). It was suggested in their report that more collaboration between the college supervisor and the classroom teacher ought to take place. Coursework in the area of supervision would be one way to accomplish the goal.[10]

Cornish (1979) suggested that a graduate course in supervision be given to prospective cooperating teachers. Included would be a unit on generic supervisory skills as well as more directives for collaboration between the classroom teacher and the college supervisor.[11]

Yoder and Arms (1981) concluded that the classroom teacher and student teacher both grew as teachers when they were involved in a workshop where conferencing techniques and instructional supervision techniques were stressed.[12]

A study conducted in Indiana and reported by Redburn (1980) found that specific supervisory skills needed attention regarding the role of the classroom teacher. As a result of the findings, the best cooperating teachers can be identified. Areas of supervisory weaknesses can also be identified and improved.[13]

The classroom teacher is not the only one who may need help in developing supervisory skills. Although not a great amount of research has been conducted in the area of development among college supervisors, Theis-Sprintall (1980) reported the results of a study. It was found that college supervisors who themselves were functioning at modest levels of development could provide student teachers with negative experiences. The report further suggested that the supervisor needed to be able to diagnose individual differences

in student teachers and then be able to evoke the correct supervisory techniques as needed.[14]

Zimpher, et al, (1980) reported that the results of a study conducted showed that even though the cooperating teachers critiqued lessons of the student teacher, they were careful not to mention negatively evaluated areas to the student teacher. The college supervisor was the only one making critical contributions. The same study reported that had there been no college supervisor then few requirements, evaluations or student teacher assessments needed by college personnel could have occurred. The supervisor was also a catalyst in the communication process between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher.[15] Perhaps it would be unwise to leave the supervision up to the classroom teacher even with some kind of training in supervision as has been suggested in many of the alternative approaches.

Sharing the supervisory responsibility was suggested by Shaplin (1961), who said: ". . . the school is best fitted to help . . . in the area of practical application and the college is best qualified to offer help in theoretical applications and background knowledge sufficient to allow the student teacher to grasp an understanding of the teaching-learning process."[16]

The several thoughts and alternatives regarding student teacher supervision so far discussed may be adequate for the goals settled for up to now in teacher education. Perhaps they are, or could be successful. Unfortunately, none have a full, solid foundation that may be found in current administrative-supervisory thought. Effective supervision is what is needed, not just successful supervision. By effective supervision I am referring to the position taken by Bass (1960). He explained that if a person performs a task that he is supposed to do, then he has been successful and his supervisor has been successful. But, if the same person not only performs the task but does it because he wants to and feels good about doing it, then he has been supervised effectively.[17]

How often have people successfully implemented ineffective ideas and programs? Therefore, one should not settle for success but, rather, strive for effectiveness in the supervision of student teachers.

If, as Drucker said, man can learn effectiveness, we ought to do so.

Two models which are currently regarded as accepted vehicles to accomplish effective supervision are clinical supervision and the Tri-Dimensional Leadership model as proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1977).

Normally, the clinical approach is thought of in regard to practicing teachers, but actually Cogan's work in the approach grew out of his association with student teachers in the M.A.T. program at Harvard. Although Cogan suggests eight steps in the clinical process, they can be consolidated into three: 1) a pre-observation conference, 2) the observation, and 3) a post-observation conference.

The approach is collegual in style and developmental in nature. Goal setting and systematic review of goal attainment is inherent to the process. That goal setting for teachers is becoming more the norm is evidenced by the number of approaches in use by principals today to help their faculty members set and meet goals.

McGreal (1980) suggested that more appropriate goals be set, then observed behaviors relating only to those goals are to be a part of the supervisory process.[18]

Cogan's point was that the supervisor's observation be guided by pre-set goals which were established as a joint effort by the supervisor and teacher. After the observation, a post-observation conference would be used as a vehicle by which the supervisor and teacher could determine what occurred in the classroom in comparison to what the goals had been for the observed lesson. New goals and a continuation of the original goals, if needed, would be set at this time.

The whole process would hopefully result in improvement of instruction. It is just as meaningful to expect improvement of instruction from a student teacher as it is to expect it from a practicing teacher. If the student teacher is viewed as a colleague on a continuum of teaching skills, then the better the chances are for actual improvement. The improvement during the student teaching experience could then lead to a teacher who is more safe to practice during the first year of "real" teaching.

The vehicle needed to deliver the modified clinical approach is the Tri Dimensional Leadership Model proposed by Hersey and Blanchard and explained in the book Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources.

The authors of the theory said that as a result of their research ". . . the evidence is clear. . . there is no single, all purpose leader behavior style that is effective in all situations."[19] All student teachers can not be supervised in the same way. Three things are crucial to the success of the model being a guide to effective supervision: 1) style range, 2) style adaptability, and 3) diagnosis of the situation, and the maturity level of the people involved.

Style range refers to the number of different supervisory behaviors the supervisor is capable of demonstrating. Style adaptability refers to the ability the supervisor has to adapt his repertoire of behaviors to meet the demands of the situation. Paramount to the effectiveness of either range or adaptability is the diagnostic process.

The supervisor must diagnose the maturity level the person or group being supervised has for the immediate task. A style can then be selected which matches the needs of the situation. Figure 1 graphically illustrates the four styles, the maturity level and the curve along which the supervisee is moved as maturity increases. It must be noted, however, that one person may function at various maturity levels at one time for different tasks.

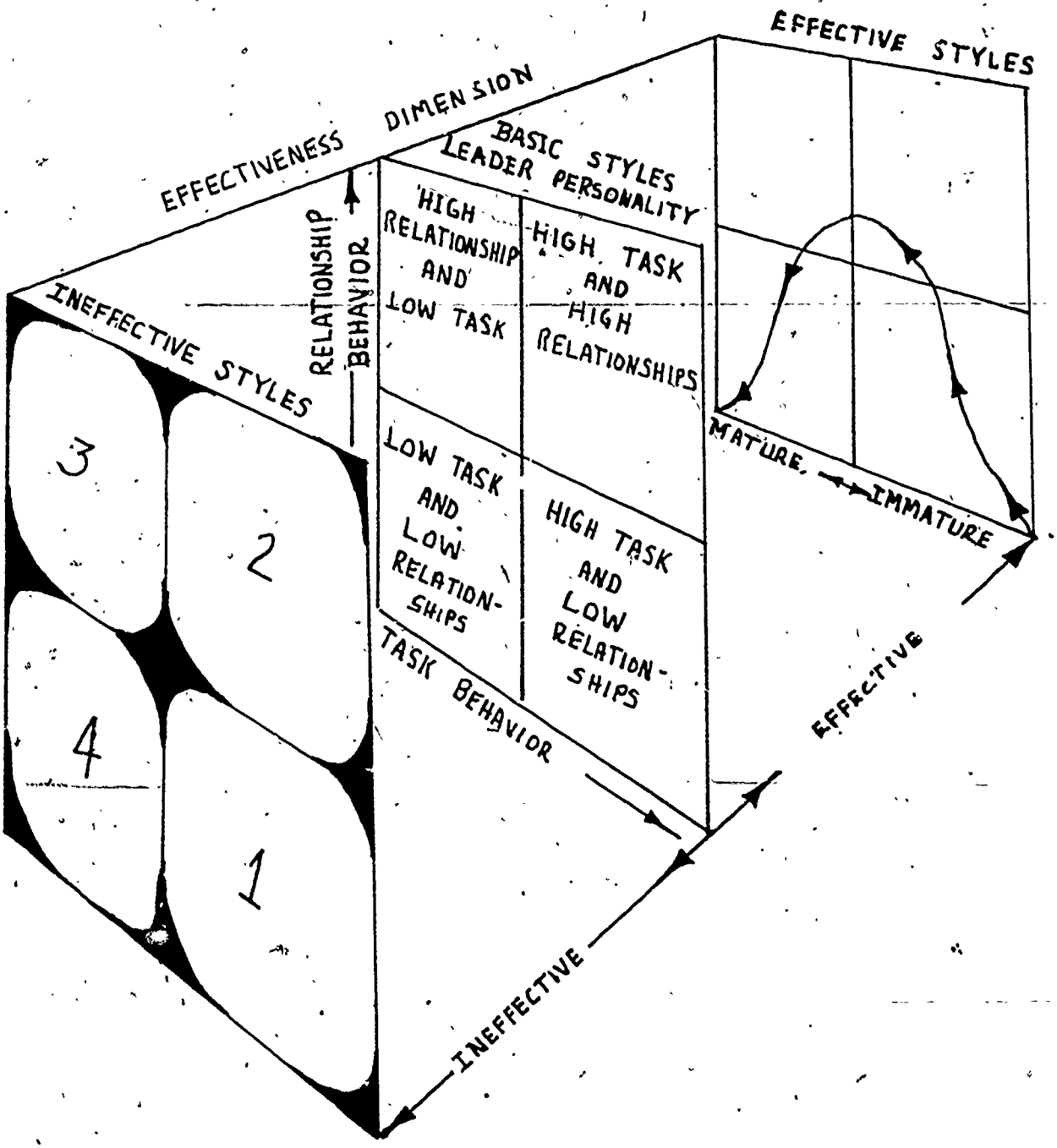

FIGURE 1 TRI-DIMENSIONAL MODEL

ADAPTED FROM:
MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR: UTILIZING HUMAN RESOURCES BY PAUL HERSEY AND KENNETH BLANCHARD (ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS: PRENTICE-HALL), 1977. P. 228.

As an example, if A is supervising B, then A would diagnose the maturity level of B for the task. A would then select the appropriate style I through IV which would best meet the need of the situation. A must be capable of exhibiting the appropriate style in order to be effective. A must then be able to adapt the behavior in the supervision of B.

There is no cut and dried formula to a successful diagnostic procedure. Drucker (1966) noted that logic is the strength of the computer but it is also it's weakness. Whereas man's strength lies in his perception.[20] The perception to diagnose can be learned and made into a strength. This is a crucial step in the model and to effective supervision.

Drawing from what I believe to be the strengths of the two theories presented, and applying them to the supervision of student teachers, I propose a model for the process of supervising student teachers.

Since the literature revealed a thrust of a closer relationship between the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher, the model pre-supposes such an arrangement is already in place. This relationship is not critical to the model, but would serve to be extremely advantageous. Other groundwork needed would include a course or workshop for both the cooperating teacher and the college supervisor which would ground them in the basic tenets of effectiveness, diagnosing, the clinical approach to supervision, style range, and style adaptability. Brief updates would be needed periodically, but new supervisors from the college and from the school would need this process before entering the program of supervision.

Secondly, the student teacher, the supervisor, and the classroom teacher would meet and begin to establish a colleagual relationship of trust rather than the traditional teacher-student relationship prevalent today. General teaching strategies and goals would be discussed in light of the classroom situation(s). Actual expectations of the student teacher by the supervisors

would be identified as well as identification of the roles each will play and the expectations attached to each one. In this way, the material and the actual experience itself could become more real to the student, and he or she would feel a part of the professional triad.

Thirdly, after the plans were laid for what the student teacher would be trying to accomplish in the class, dates for observations and conferences would be set. During the time that the student teacher is with the classroom teacher, the classroom teacher could begin to form a diagnosis of the maturity level of the student teacher regarding the classes. Now would be the time for the cooperating classroom teacher and the college supervisor to select the supervisory style to be used initially.

Fourthly, the triad would plan for the observation in a pre-observation conference. Specific goals and objectives along with expected outcomes would be identified. All three people involved would know what was going to be evaluated. There would be no surprises or secrets.

Fifthly, the observation would take place with, preferably, both supervisors present.

Sixthly, the post-observation conference would take place. Both supervisors would meet with the student teacher after the analyzation of the class observed had been accomplished. The goals, objectives and expected outcomes would be discussed. Suggestions for improvement and also comments about positive aspects would be discussed among the members of the triad. At this time continuation of goals, if needed, would be set along with new goals to be accomplished.

It is important to remember here what Drucker's opinion was regarding concentration on behaviors. His theory was to concentrate on only a few behaviors making sure the behaviors are the ones that can produce outstanding results. In the short time there is to work with the student teacher during

the experience, I believe this is sound advice. The behaviors which could be concentrated on may include communication skills, discussion skills, questioning skills and classroom management skills.

The model, as presented, is generic and skeletal. Obviously more may be added to the framework to suit the situation.

No doubt many obstacles have come to the mind of the reader along with the many options involved. Probably the main obstacle in many, but not all situations, would be the time factor. Ideally it can be said "let's make sure our priorities are straight", but, realistically we can have our priorities straight and still lack time. One option would be to initiate the program, then have the college supervisor become a consultant to the classroom teacher who would carry on the clinical approach. The college supervisor would then become involved in only the extreme cases. This is not ideal and it is not the purpose of this paper to espouse to this idea but I believe it would be better than methods we now use.

Drucker (1966) put it well when he said ". . . any organization . . . needs a commitment to values . . . as a human body needs vitamins . . . or else it will degenerate into . . . confusion and paralysis."[21]

It is past time that we in teacher education get our values structured and then get committed to them. We then need to have the professionals there who share the commitment and get on with the task of providing our nation's youth with effective classroom teachers.

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