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ABSTRACT

This article introduces the concept of democratic supervision, a macro-approach of in-service supervision of instruction for helping teachers and supervisors work together to select an appropriate strategy for professional development. A case study from the International Trade Institute graduate school in Taiwan is presented that examines the application of this concept to improve an English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teacher's instruction technique. Democratic Supervision uses five principles. In the first, the supervisor serves as a resource for the teacher. In the second, negotiation between supervisor and teacher are stressed. The third principle states that supervisor and teacher should negotiate to select a specific supervisory approach and in-service instruction, while the fourth principle calls for the application of Clinical Supervision's eight-stage supervisory cycle. Finally, the fifth principle is that Democratic Supervision encourages professional growth toward more teacher self-reliance. The paper concludes by discussing implications of this study for supervisory theory, practice, and research. (Contains 31 references.) (Author/NAV)

Professional Development through Democratic Supervision

by

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Professional Development through Democratic Supervision

Introduction

When working with a teacher to improve instruction, which in-service supervisory approach should be used? Who should make this decision? How should the decision be made? And who should assess the effectiveness of the decision? The supervisor? The teacher? Neither? Both?

This article introduces Democratic Supervision, a macro-approach of in-service supervision of instruction that integrates other supervisory approaches into a practical model for helping teachers and supervisors to work together to select an appropriate strategy for the professional development of individual teachers. It then presents a case study that examines the application of Democratic Supervision to improve an EFL teacher's instruction. It concludes by discussing some implications of this study for supervisory theory, practice, and research.

An Overview of In-Service Supervision

Approaches of Supervision

There are currently several supervisory approaches available to provide in-service development of teachers. In Clinical Supervision, which was first developed by Morris Cogan, Robert Anderson, and Robert Goldhammer, the supervisor and the teacher cooperate as professionals of equal status in a trusting relationship to explore ways to empower teachers to improve instruction (Cogan, 1973). Although the supervisor may be more professionally experienced, this according to Cogan

does not give him or her the right to assume a superior position in the supervisory relationship, which should be based on trust and cooperation. To facilitate the process, Clinical Supervision has a continuous eight-stage cycle of interaction between teachers and supervisors. Cogan (1973) suggests that supervisors could skip some stages or "telescope" others to "realize certain economies in the cycle" (p. 12), but the process is meant to be thorough and thoughtful, a "continuation of a teacher's professional education" (p. 21). A summary of the eight stages of the cycle as articulated by Cogan (1973) are:

1. Establishing the teacher-supervisor relationship.
   Before the supervisor ever enters the teacher's classroom, they discuss the principles of Clinical Supervision and their roles within it.

2. Planning the lesson.
   They plan together for the teacher to present a future lesson.

3. Planning the observation.
   They cooperate to prepare for the supervisor's upcoming observation of the lesson.

4. Observing the instruction.
   The supervisor watches the teacher teach. Recording equipment may be used to assist recall of lesson events.

5. Analyzing the teaching-learning processes.
   As soon as the observation has been completed, the supervisor and the teacher reflect on the lesson events, either privately or together.

6. Planning the strategy of the conference.
   The supervisor determines how to conduct the conference, considering issues for discussion, strategies for implementation, etc.

7. Conducting the conference.
During the conference, the supervisor and the teacher "decide on the kinds of change to be sought in the teacher's classroom behavior" (Cogan, 1973, p. 12).

8. Renewing the planning.
At some point in the conference, they begin planning for the next lesson and discuss the improvements of instruction the teacher would like to apply.

Although the eight-stage cycle is fairly straightforward, the issue of when a supervisor should be directive or non-directive is a bit muddled. Cogan claims that having teachers dependent upon the advice of a supervisor is undesirable, yet he also acknowledges "one cannot dismiss the helping relationship completely in supervision" (1973, p. 66).

In contrast, Hunter (1980) encourages helping relationships between supervisors and teachers, with the supervisor in charge. She writes, "When administrators and supervisors work with teachers as teachers are expected to work with students, supervision will become a more highly skilled and respected function in our profession" (p. 412).

Glickman (1990) has offered some guidelines for supervisors in how to choose between directive and non-directive approaches in Clinical Supervision. Briefly, a supervisor should consider using a non-directive approach when the teacher probably has more knowledge, responsibility, and concern about an issue than the supervisor. In contrast, a directive control approach should be applied when the supervisor has more, or when an emergency situation requires prompt action. In most cases, Glickman recommends that

supervisors use a collaborative, middle-of-the-road approach. Nevertheless, the decision of which to apply in a specific situation is still largely a judgement call left to the supervisor.

How to apply best the various supervisory approaches has also challenged EFL/ESL scholars of in-service supervision. Freeman (1982) recommends supervisors to use more directive approaches with inexperienced teachers and more non-directive with the experienced. In all, he identifies the Supervisory Alternatives, and Non-Directive Approaches, which are similar in name and function to Glickman's Directive, Collaborative, and Non-directive Approaches, respectively.

For Gebhard (1984), a reverse strategy could also work, applying more non-directive approaches to inexperienced teachers, or even to "allow for a shift of supervisory responsibility from the supervisor to another source," such as peers or a resource center (p. 509). However, the decision of which supervisory behaviors to use is ultimately "left to the supervisor" (p. 512). In general, Gebhard builds on Freeman's three approaches of supervision by offering two additional ones. Under Collaborative Supervision, the supervisor actually works with the teacher in making decisions and together they examine specific classroom problems and propose hypotheses for solutions. In Creative Supervision, supervisors become eclectic, using combinations of other approaches that might be helpful in solving specific problems.

Fanselow (1988) appears to build an approach of supervision on the existentialism of the more non-directive supervision approaches of Freeman and Gebhard, arguing that the goal of supervision is not necessarily to "help" others, but to encourage "self-exploration--seeing one's own teaching differently" (p. 115). Teachers observe each other in a non-judgmental, non-directive way to explore different ways to teach.

In a very different light, Gaies and Bowers (1990) describe their perceived role of the EFL clinical supervisor in a directive role, operating as "the central link" between an educational ministry and the classroom.

Research of supervision does not point to one approach being clearly "better" than another. It appears that non-directive approaches help to promote greater reflection among teachers (Herbert & Tankersley, 1993; Nolan & Hillkirk, 1991), better communications between teachers and supervisors (Blumberg & Jonas, 1987; Reavis, 1977), better morale (Blumberg, 1980), and better interpersonal relationships (Blumberg & Jonas, 1987; Blumberg, 1980). Moreover, the establishment of collegial relationships and active teacher involvement appear to be important steps to having effective, reflective supervisory conferences (Grimmet & Crehan, 1990).

In contrast, these collegial relationships are often difficult to develop (Waite, 1992) and very time-consuming (Greene, 1992). Likewise, teachers often prefer directive

supervisory feedback during conferences, especially praise of strengths (Friend, 1986). More-directive approaches also appear to benefit less-experienced, less-professionally developed teachers (Gordon, 1990). However, in the views of some experienced supervisors, more-directive approaches are the most effective choices over all (Gordon, 1973).

What is currently needed is a new approach of in-service supervision of EFL/ESL instruction that could build upon the concepts presented by Cogan, Glickman, Freeman, Gebhard, Fanselow, and others, to integrate these approaches, and to lessen the need for the supervisor to make lone judgment calls in selecting a plan of action for a particular supervisory situation. It would be practical, having been developed and tested in the reality of in-service supervision.

Democratic Supervision

Democratic Supervision embraces five principles that collectively create a unique supervisory approach. The first principle is that the supervisor serves as a resource in the teacher's professional development. Because the teacher as a professional must accept ultimate responsibility for the quality of his or her teaching, the supervisor and the teacher work together from a position of equality to help the teacher to achieve his or her goals. Hence, under Democratic Supervision a teacher always has the right to seek or to refuse an instructional supervisor's professional assistance.

The importance of negotiation is the second principle. When a teacher and a supervisor agree to enter into a supervisory relationship, they must negotiate clearly the instructional improvement goals, their roles in working together to achieve these goals, and their preferred means of assessing how well goals are achieved. What is their definition of "good teaching?" Just trying to work through a definition of this short question is highly complex (Freeman & Richards, 1993; Glickman, 1990; Richards, 1987; Cogan, 1973). Nevertheless, the Democratic Approach calls for both the supervisor and the teacher to attempt to hammer out some mutually acceptable understandings. If they cannot reach an agreement, they should discontinue the supervisory relationship, as it would probably be a waste of their time to continue. The teacher would need to seek supervisory help from another source.

The third principle is that the supervisor and the teacher should negotiate to select a specific supervisory approach and in-service instruction from the variety already identified in the literature. Questions for consideration might include: (1) What are the different supervisory approaches? (2) Which approach appears best suited for the situation at hand? (3) Which other approaches might also work? As these questions suggest, supervisors who adhere to the principles of Democratic Supervision need to be proficient in implementing several supervisory approaches, ranging from

highly directive to non-directive, a big challenge, and one that depends on the needs of the teacher. Likewise, teachers need to become knowledgeable of their supervisory options and negotiate for what they want, not to just assume a passive role with the supervisor.

To help along interactions and negotiations between teachers and supervisors, Democratic Supervision's fourth principle calls for the application of Clinical Supervision's eight-stage supervisory cycle. By dividing the process of the supervisory relationship into Cogan's eight stages, the supervisor and the teacher can better implement a systematic, thorough program of instructional improvement that addresses the teacher's instructional needs (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1983; Cogan, 1973).

The fifth principle is that Democratic Supervision encourages professional growth among teachers to help them become more self-reliant, even to make the supervisor's job eventually obsolete. There are good reasons to desire this. Teachers are generally accustomed to working in classrooms independent of their colleagues and administrators. Having a supervisor become actively involved in a teacher's instructional improvement could be a highly stressful experience for a teacher (Pennington & Young, 1989; Gebhard, 1984; Master, 1983; Cogan, 1973). Blumberg (1980) has even coined the term "a private cold war" to refer to this uneasy relationship. Therefore, a prominent goal of Democratic

Supervision is to empower teachers to become effective and self-reliant in the classroom as soon as possible.

Taken together, the five principles of Democratic Supervision describe a process of interaction between a supervisor and a teacher based upon equality and negotiation. The specific supervisory approaches identified in the literature each become options--or micro-approaches--available for selection and implementation in this broader, encompassing macro-approach theory. To handle a supervisory situation using the macro-approach of Democratic Supervision, a supervisor and a teacher participate as *equal* players in the negotiation about, and the selection of, an appropriate micro-approach (Supervisory, Alternatives, Non-Directive, etc.) to be used along with the Clinical Supervision cycle.

Illustrating Democratic Supervision's potential effectiveness in in-service supervision of instruction is the focus of the case study.

Applying Democratic Supervision: A Case Study

Background of the Study

The study took place at the International Trade Institute (ITI), a graduate-level international business and language school of 200 full-time students in Taiwan. It offers its Chinese students an intensive studies program in small classes to prepare them for careers in international business.

I conducted the study for 9 months while working in the host institution as both an EFL teacher and one of two EFL

program coordinators (supervisors) of about 15 other EFL teachers. With the encouragement of the institute's higher administration, I focused on how to improve instruction using the principles of Democratic Supervision for colleagues identified by student term assessments as having some difficulty teaching.

The case study reported here recently investigated in an EFL setting the practicality and the effectiveness of applying Democratic Supervision to improve the instruction of an EFL colleague. Specifically, it focused on providing answers in an authentic field setting to the following research questions: (1) Can Democratic Supervision assume the function of a macro-approach by including the micro-approaches with the framework of Cogan's Clinical Supervision model? (2) Can a participating supervisor and teacher of Democratic Supervision successfully negotiate the selection of an appropriate micro-approach to be used with the Clinical Supervision model? (3) Is there any evidence to show that Democratic Supervision may contribute to the improvement of instruction of an EFL teacher?

The subject of the study was "Bill," an EFL/ESL teacher with about 10 years of full and part-time ESL experience. Although he was an experienced grammar teacher of beginning and intermediate-level ESL students, at the time of this study he was relatively new at teaching EFL speech and conversation courses to more advanced adult students. After the administration received several student complaints about his

courses, he agreed to cooperate with me in this study to develop a personal program of in-service development using the principles of Democratic Supervision.

Data Collection, Presentation, and Discussion

To gain a thorough understanding of a teaching situation, information about a teacher's classroom performance should be gathered from several sources (Pennington & Young, 1989; Aleamoni, 1987). With Bill's consent, I collected detailed comments from open-ended surveys completed by his 30 speech and discussion students near the beginning and end of the study. I also conducted personal interviews with his 30 students during the study, regularly met with him for at least 30 minutes each week of the study to discuss events in his classroom and progress in his teaching, and worked through 4 complete cycles of Clinical Supervision, including 4 one-hour observations and 4 one-hour conferences over the first 6 months of the 9-month study. On five other occasions between the Clinical Supervision cycles, I visited his classes at his invitation on an informal basis to observe his instruction for brief 15 to 20 minute periods. Given our heavy full-time teaching and other work responsibilities, we decided that this supervisory schedule was the best that we could do realistically.

Since Bill wanted to improve his teaching to satisfy the expectations of students, we decided in the beginning of the first supervisory cycle to collect detailed information about

what their perceptions of his teaching were and what recommendations they might offer. He and I decided to invite his students to write comments to an open-ended question: "What suggestions can you give to me to improve my teaching?" We chose the open-ended format because, as Nunan (1992) points out, "responses to open questions will more accurately reflect what the respondent wants to say" (p. 143).

To protect the anonymity of the respondents, names and student identification numbers were not used on the reply sheets. Moreover, all comments were typed by the students themselves. The completed sheets were then handed by student class leaders to a staff secretary who, in turn, handed them to Bill and me.

The student responses were numerous and explicit. Thirty students replied by writing 75 specific comments about his teaching. Using Nunan's (1992) keyword analysis, we grouped comments into five main categories. Twenty-four students claimed that he allowed few opportunities for students to speak in class, 15 that he appeared to avoid interaction with students in class, 13 that he neglected to carefully plan daily tasks, 13 that he sometimes used humor in an offensive (sarcastic) way, and 10 that his feedback on student performances was often unclear or possibly biased.

Many of the comments resembled this one:

> Repeated what's in the textbooks again and again and you didn't give us some other good materials and activities to practice our skills. The better way is to get the main points

across and give us useful materials to practice the skills we learn.

The next step was for me to prepare to observe his teaching so that another source of information could be available for later analysis during the Clinical Supervision conferences. We discussed the option of using video or audio equipment to observe and analyze his class (Fanselow, 1987; Fanselow, 1977), but Bill objected to this, replying, "C'mon, I'm not in graduate school anymore and this isn't *60 Minutes*." He explained that the presence of electronic recording equipment in class would make him especially nervous and ıder his teaching performance.

We decided instead that I would observe and record notes on paper. The instrument I used to systematically record observations every 3 to 5 seconds was the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) (Wallace, 1993; Flanders, 1970). We chose this because its 10 observational categories corresponded with the general concerns he had of his interactions with students in the classroom and student reactions to his teaching. Moreover, the instrument is fairly easy to use in classroom observations by practitioners and does not depend upon electronic recording equipment. I also wrote a summary of each lesson immediately after observation to record perceived critical incidents and patterns in his teaching that might otherwise be missed with the FIAC (Cogan, 1973).

In this early stage of the Clinical Supervision cycle, we decided on which supervisory micro-approach to use. He requested the Supervisory Approach, indicating that he wanted to quickly improve his teaching and that this would probably help him to achieve the fastest results. In preparation for my first observation of his classes we reviewed together his goals for the term, the objectives of the lesson to be observed, and his intended activities. I noticed that several activities planned for the next lesson were teacher-centered, such as lectures, drills, and modeling. I pointed out that although these activities have their place, their value in promoting fluency might be limited. In addition, most of our students had already been introduced to communicative teaching from other teachers at ITI and had come to expect it. Therefore, I advised him to target fluency as well as accuracy, to include more communicative tasks promoting student interaction and practice, such as debates, small-group discussions, information-gap activities, roleplays, and simulations (Brumfit, 1989; Nunan, 1989). When I offered to work with him to develop some goals and tasks for his next lesson that I was to observe, he said that he preferred to work on his own.

According to my first 1-hour observation using the FIAC, Bill spent 51% of his class time lecturing, 15% criticizing student behavior or justifying his own authority, 8% giving directions, orders, or commands, and 3% acknowledging feelings

or attitudes expressed by students. In contrast, little time was spent praising or encouraging students, accepting or using student ideas in a lesson, or interacting with students in activities in a spontaneous way. Likewise, students responded to the teacher for only 4% of the class time and initiated actions in class on their own only 2% of the time.

In the first 1-hour Clinical Supervision conference, we continued to apply the Supervisory Approach as we discussed the first observation's data. I suggested that a good measure of the student dissatisfaction might be linked with his heavy reliance on traditional, teacher-centered activities more suitable to lecturing about grammar rules than in promoting language fluency. I also pointed out that students might respond by rebelling, causing him to try to maintain control by using commands, directives, and more teacher-centered activities, which would probably exacerbate the problem. This, in turn, might make it difficult to present lessons in class, possibly causing awkward situations and the appearance of a disorganized course. He indicated that he, too, had thought about this, but finally expressed discomfort and inexperience in using communicative tasks. Although he said that he was familiar with communicative teaching methodology in a general way, in the past he had taught successfully with predominantly grammar and reading classes, which he believed were well suited to his lectures, drills, and teacher-fronted discussions.

At his request, I recommended some literature for him to read about communicative task development and implementation, and advised him to visit some other teachers' classes, including my own, to see for himself how they might be teaching differently. I also arranged for the two of us to meet at least once each week to discuss the literature he would be reading and any questions or concerns he might have. As we began planning for the next Clinical Supervision cycle, he requested that we delay the next observation for about a month, to give him some time to reflect on, and to experiment with, implementing changes in his teaching on his own.

It was Bill's request that we continue using the Supervisory Approach in the second Clinical Supervision cycle. In the last two cycles he requested that we shift to the Collaborative Approach (Gebhard, 1984; Freeman, 1982). This change probably reflected his greater confidence in, and enthusiasm for, using communicative tasks in the speech and discussion course.

The table presents the results of the four observations of Bill's speech and discussion classes.

FIAC Summary Table of 4 Classroom Observations
(% of time spent in class)

Category	1st Observation	2nd	3rd	4th
Accept feelings of students	3.4	6.1	7.8	8.1
Praise students	0.2	4.3	3.9	3.2
Accept students' ideas	0.0	5.2	7.3	8.6
Interact with students	0.3	3.9	7.2	6.8
Lecture	50.5	41.3	24.6	25.0
Give directions,commands	7.7	6.9	7.2	7.8
Justify authority	15.1	8.3	6.4	5.6
Students' responding	4.2	7.8	11.3	21.4
Students' initiating	1.7	2.2	8.9	7.6
Silence, confusion	16.8	14.0	15.3	5.7
Total	99.9%	100%	99.9%	99.8%

As the FIAC summary data suggest, Bill's observed teaching demonstrated important changes during the course of the study. He focused less on teacher-centered activities and more on communicative ones. The amount of time he spent lecturing, giving directions and justifying authority steadily declined from 73.3% of class time in the first observation to 38.4% in the fourth observation. In addition, the classroom appeared to become a more supportive environment for learning. The amount of time he spent accepting the feelings and ideas of students, praising them, and interacting with them

increased from 3.9% in the first observation to 26.7% in the fourth.

Possibly as a result of these changes in his teaching, the students appeared to become more involved in the class. Student responses and initiated actions rose from 5.9% to 29.0%.

There is also an important change in the data about the amount of silence and confusion observed in his class. The first observation recorded 16.8%, a level which remained fairly steady through the second and the third observations, then declined rapidly in the fourth, suggesting that lesson management and presentation skills appeared to be problematic for him prior to and during his initial adjustment from more teacher-centered to more communicative language teaching. However, by the fourth observation, his lesson management skills appeared to greatly improve, along with the cooperation he received from his students. This is reflected in the drop of observed silence and confusion in class to only 5.7%.

To corroborate the observation data, I administered a final written survey to Bill's students, following the same administration, collection, and analysis procedures as with the first. The open-ended question was also the same. Thirty students responded, having written 64 comments about his teaching. Using keyword analysis, we grouped the comments into seven main categories. Nineteen students expressed appreciation for his overall improvement of instruction, 12

for more student-centered discussion activities, 8 for the more relaxed classroom atmosphere, and 5 for the improved classroom activities. However, 9 remarked that still fewer lectures should be given, 6 that there should be better organization of class activities, and 5 that students should be given more freedom to work independently of the teacher in class.

Many of the comments resembled this:

> I liked last two terms more. At least we don't waste time listening to many many lectures.

Throughout the study, I conducted informal interviews about Bill's teaching with all 30 of his students. Each interview lasted between 10 to 30 minutes, depending upon how much a student wanted to say. Fifteen of the students interviewed in the first 5 months of the study were reluctant to talk with me directly about Bill's teaching, possibly because of an unwillingness to criticize their teacher in front of another who also worked as program coordinator. In contrast, in the last 4 months of the study, the remaining 15 were more open; perhaps this was because there were more positive things happening in Bill's classes near the end of the study to report, so they felt comfortable about sharing these with me directly. In any case, the 15 who spoke more freely emphasized the steady improvement Bill had made in his teaching over the past few weeks. Six claimed that he seemed more organized, 5 that he was more relaxed, 3 that his class

was more interesting, and 1 that students had more opportunities to practice their speaking skills.

Conclusions

Because this was a case study involving one supervisor working with one teacher, an important limitation is the ability to generalize about other in-service supervisory situations. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence here to form conclusions about answers to the three research questions in relation to this EFL teaching situation and others resembling it.

First, Democratic Supervision did assume in practice the function of a macro-approach by including the two micro-approaches of Supervisory Approach and Collaborative Approach with the eight stages of Cogan's Clinical Supervision model. At the beginning of the study, Bill and I openly discussed the various micro-approach options within the framework of Clinical Supervision, later selecting what we both thought would be the best micro-approach to use. We were free to choose any micro-approach that we wanted. Bill's preference for the supervisory micro-approach in the first two cycles indicates that even experienced teachers may, on occasion, prefer and benefit from appropriate directive supervision. His decision to switch later from the Supervisory Approach to the Collaborative Approach indicates that changes in micro-approaches can be made between supervisory cycles without much difficulty.

Second, the study indicates that a participating supervisor and teacher of Democratic Supervision can successfully negotiate in practice the selection of an appropriate micro-approach to be used within the Clinical Supervision model. To accomplish this, Bill and I discussed the supervisory situation from his perspective. Once it became clear that he preferred to use the Supervisory Micro-Approach initially to receive immediate and clear feedback, we implemented it. Later, he opted for the Collaborative Micro-Approach, indicating that he wanted more equality and voice in the supervision process. I obliged. Since the purpose of Democratic Supervision is to benefit the teacher's instruction and professional development, the teacher--not the supervisor--should have the final say about which micro-approach to use. This is also in keeping with Clinical Supervision's philosophy of empowering teachers to accept responsibility for their professional development (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1983; Cogan, 1973).

Third, evidence collected in the case study from classroom observations of Bill's teaching, students' written comments on open-ended surveys, and informal interviews with students suggest that Democratic Supervision probably did contribute to the improvement of his instruction. Although it could be argued that Bill's instruction may have improved without the supervisory intervention, the evidence collected in this study suggests that he learned from the supervisory

conferences the need to begin making the transition from traditional to communicative language teaching. His ability to achieve this transition rapidly was undoubtedly also the result of his own determination to improve and his lengthy teaching experience.

Further Research

In-service supervision is a potentially important tool for colleagues and program administrators to improve EFL/ESL instruction, even for experienced teachers. Although several micro-approaches are already available in the literature for possible application, more case studies in different teaching situations would help to show how practitioners address different supervisory needs. Quantitative studies could be developed to see how both teachers and supervisors view using these different micro-approaches within the framework of Democratic Supervision.

Much more could be done to try to investigate the relationship between EFL/ESL in-service supervision of instruction and student learning. An implied goal of each of the theories of in-service supervision is that these various approaches might improve the quality of teaching and, ultimately, the amount of student language learning. Carefully crafted experimental studies might begin to explore the possible impact of in-service supervisory approaches on EFL/ESL language learning outcomes.

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