

2012

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Recommended Citation

Kayaoglu, M. Naci (2012) "Dictating or Facilitating: The Supervisory Process for Language Teachers," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 37: Iss. 10, Article 7.

Available at: <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol37/iss10/7>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.

<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol37/iss10/7>

Dictating or Facilitating: The Supervisory Process for Language Teachers

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Abstract: This study is an attempt to explore the supervisory process from the standpoint of supervised English language teachers. The research, which has been going on for three years, aims to weigh the results in terms of teachers who were exposed to the supervision. More specifically, the research answers whether teachers are really helped in improving their teaching and finding solutions to their work related problems as part of in-service training. In support of diary reports taken from teachers, the questionnaire which involved 72 items about the supervisory process reveal that supervision appears to fail to live up to EFL teachers' expectations within the current practice. From most of the surveyed EFL teachers' points of view the current supervision is not of pedagogical or professional value and does not have a positive impact on teacher performance.

Introduction

One of the philosophical foundations of supervision appears to be based on the premise that all teachers need moral, technical and educational support. All teachers need to recognize problems that need immediate attention and therefore they need to be observed and communicated in terms of their performance, weaknesses and strength in the classroom. Given the fact that in particular, young teachers may not be well informed about new techniques, approaches in the complex characteristics of learning and teaching, supervision can serve as a training approach and support service for teachers by means of systematic cycles of planning, observation, and intensive analysis of actual teaching performances. Gebhard (1990) states "language teacher supervision is an ongoing process of the teacher's education in which the supervisor observes what goes on in the teacher's classroom with an eye toward the goal of improved instruction" (p. 107). In the same vein, Goldhammer, Anderson and Krajewski (1993) assign a pivotal role to supervision in improving instruction. Supervision is concerned with engaging teachers in instructional dialogue with the aim of improving teaching and helping students in order to boost learning (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). This somewhat idealistically portrayed mission assumes a professionally working relationship between teachers and supervisors. However, the hierarchical relationship between teachers and supervisors has even been called a "private cold war" (Blumberg, 1980, p. i) because of the fact that supervision in some sense refers to "unpleasant responsibilities such as providing negative feedback, ensuring that teachers adhere to program policy, and even firing employees if the need arises" (Bailey, 2006, p. 5), indicating a certain level of tension in the relationship between the two parties. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to explore the process from the teachers' points of view, on their genuine experience, if supervision is to be an integral part of teacher education for the professional development of

in particular, young teachers rather than a bureaucratic administrative school-based routine practice.

Supervision and its models

Defining supervision is quite a daunting task as some definitions seem to be incompatible with one another. Anderson (1982), for example, finds the terminology of supervision discomfiting because there are “many perplexing and challenging problems” (p. 181) in the field. Goldsberry (1988) views supervision as an organizational obligation associated with the assessment and refinement of current practices. Allan (1990) similarly defines the term as a set of duties with an aim to help teachers to develop themselves for professional fulfilments. Daresh (2001) uses the term in a broader educational context, referring to its dynamic process facilitating instructional improvement in the overall quality of education. Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (1998) defines the term as “the action, process, or occupation of supervising; especially, a critical watching and directing as of activities or a course of action” (p.1184). However, according to Sullivan and Glanz (2000) school supervision basically refers to a procedure in which an authority would examine a teacher’s classroom ‘looking for errors’ for the purpose of maintaining the prescribed standards of instruction in the context of the supervisor’s experience. According to Duke (1987), supervision ensures maintenance and improvement of standards.

In spite of focus on professional development, to some teachers “even the mere mention of the term supervision is enough to evoke unpleasant feelings mixed with indignation at the disturbing condition” (Kayaoglu, 2007, p.15). Interestingly enough, complaints of not having been appreciated by the teachers for the supervisor’s positive contribution to the quality of instruction and stresses the feeling among teachers that “most teachers react defensively and hostilely towards supervision even though it is a standard part to most programs” (Stoller, 1996, p. 2). However, there is a bitter irony in Stoller’s following remarks “whether we supervise teachers for the purposes of retention, review, dismissal, promotion, reward, or reprimand, our efforts need not be viewed as negative or unproductive” (p. 2). Then, teachers are perfectly justified in their view to see supervision as a threat when interacting with their supervisors in a notably hierarchical context. The connotations of the term supervision in the related literature “cold war” (Blumberg, 1980, p. 2); “snoopervision” (Schön, 1983, p. 14); “ghost walk” (Black, 1993, p. 38); “assessment and evaluation” (Kayaoglu, 2007, p. 16) are so negative that even a new word is needed to denote the essential functions of supervision. This perhaps describes the prevailing effect of the type of traditional supervision characterized by the perfunctory visits of the supervisor in an authoritarian and directive rather than democratic, cooperative, and collaborative manner. These adversarial attitudes may possibly be related to the inherited ideas and terms incorporated from the historical development of supervision which has its roots in industry, business and production. The biggest problem perhaps stems from conceptualizing the role of the supervisor as there has been a constant conflict between the helping and evaluatory aspects of supervision.

It is important to note that teacher supervision has gone through a drastic change and supervisory practice also has evolved since the mid-twentieth century. The shift has been from maintaining the existing standards of instruction when it first appeared to directing efforts towards teachers’ improvement of instruction and providing professional growth. The strong emphasis on teacher growth is reflected in the sheer variety of supervision models and their respective development over time.

Models of supervision appear to be very much associated with supervisors’ roles in professional contexts in that “supervisors’ responsibilities have moved from being largely

judgemental and evaluative to being more developmental in focus” (Bailey, 2006, p. 6). For example, we have Abrell’s (1974) humanistic supervision which is characterized by the supervisor’s love, respect and concern for teachers. The humanistic concept of supervision includes teachers in the process of supervision as fellow workers rather than subjects with an emphasis on teachers’ pride, dignity, professional goals, and individual freedom. The supervisor is expected to function primarily as a resource person having democratic attitude and empathetic relationship when interacting with teachers, regardless of their education backgrounds.

On the other hand, Goldsberry (1988) comes up with three models of educational supervision outlined as (a) nominal (b) correcting and (c) reflective model. The primary goal of nominal supervision is to maintain status quo. This type of supervision is preferred when time is limited and when the supervisor is attempting to comply with standard legal requirements. The prescriptive model is geared toward diagnosing the problem and subsequently treating it. For this reason the supervisor is expected to possess diagnostic skills and considerably higher knowledge than the teacher being supervised, in order to maximize benefits of expertise. The final model of reflective supervision leads teachers to think about their teaching as much as their actual teaching behaviour. The reflective model “is based upon using and developing the expertise of the teacher to examine ideal purposes and procedures for teaching, and to refine present performance accordingly (Goldsberry, 1988, p. 7). Clark’s (1990) model is based on six different roles a supervisor may have. Specifically the roles are judgemental, non-judgemental, clerical, cooperative, responsive and clinical supervision. The current literature also suggests other supervisor-based categories of supervision such as mentor, consultant, counsellor, coach, cooperating teacher, inspector (Acheson & Gall, 1997), supervision as leadership. Freeman (1982) suggests three approaches to teacher supervision depending on the role of the supervisor: 1) the supervisor as an authority 2) the supervisor as a provider of alternative perspectives 3) the supervisor as non-directive figure. Gebhard (1984) appears to have expanded on Freeman’s model and comes up with five models of supervision: 1) directive, 2) alternative, 3) collaborative, 4) non-directive, and 5) creative.

In response to the adversarial attitudes towards supervision, the clinical supervision has gained recognition in many educational settings as it gives utmost importance to the improvement of instruction in the manner of a democratic and collaborative environment. Clinical supervision is characterized by being more interactive, democratic, teacher-centred, more concrete, objective and more focused. Acheson and Gall (1992) define clinical supervision as “the professional development of teachers, with an emphasis on improving teachers’ classroom performance” (p. 1). Bowers and Flinders (1990) see the rise of this model as “a desire to move away from past images that portrayed the supervisor as an ‘inspector, whose job was to maintain unilateral control over the transmission of a particular socio-political belief system” (p. 200). The new model is a partnership in inquiry jointly shared by the teacher and supervisor in a collaborative and-trust-developing atmosphere that involves the cultivation of positive attitude held by the teacher toward the process (Acheson & Gall, 1992; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; Stoller, 2006; Tracy & MacNaughton, 1989). According to Acheson and Gall (1997), the principal goal of clinical supervision is the development of the pre-service or in-service teacher, (a) providing teachers with objective feedback on the current state of instruction, (b) diagnosing and solving instructional problems (c), helping the teacher develop positive attitudes about continuous professional development.

The clinical supervision model involves three essential elements. *The planning*, the first phase of supervision, refers to a meeting between supervisor and supervisee during which they clarify concerns, need, and aspirations and make decisions as colleagues about the focus of the forthcoming classroom visit and the method of data to be collected in class for later

analysis (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000; Stoller, 1996). The second stage involves a classroom visit during which the supervisor observes the teacher in terms of the implementation of the methods and objectives defined in the planning conference. According to Stoller (1996), general areas of concern at this stage are classroom management, classroom interaction, affective factors, use of resources, teaching techniques and methodology. Among commonly employed data collection techniques are Selective Verbatim (word for word written record of what is uttered), Seating Chart Observation Records (record of patterns of teacher-student interaction, verbal flow, student and/or teacher movement, and at-task behaviours using a seat chart, and Wide-Lens Techniques (Stoller, 1996).

The final step of clinical supervision is the *feedback conference* during which both the teacher and supervisor review the observational collected data with a view to diagnosing potential problems and subsequently offering solutions. Teachers are allowed to come to their own conclusions about the data and come up with some alternatives. Therefore, the feedback conference may turn into a planning conference with teacher and supervisor working cooperatively to collect further observational data. The supervisor's linguistic behaviour at this stage can be of great importance for the conference to be productive and successful if critical feedback is to be well received. Teachers may be affected by the type of supervisory communication. For example, in a descriptive study of supervisory discourse of Australian teacher educators by Wajnryb (1995), who interviewed ESL teachers-in-training in addition to completing a questionnaire, supervisors were concerned with their discourse while getting a pedagogic message across without hurting the teacher. This was observed to create a climate in which critical feedback might be well received by teachers.

It appears that each model has its own distinct approach to supervision with a wide choice of supervisory behaviours because "changes in language teacher supervisor 'roles do not occur at the same pace or move in the same direction everywhere" (Bailey, 2006, p. 6). Different models represent different ways of thinking about the supervision. For example, Copeland (1982) notes in his study on teacher attitudes to supervision that in some cultures being directive and prescriptive is considered a good act of supervision and teachers need to be prescribed what to do when they first begin to teach.

In spite of the different models of supervision developed over time and the wide range of different supervisory behaviours, the current literature provides sufficient arguments for the use of instructional supervision. Supervision is seen as a training approach and support service for teachers seeking development in their instruction, assuming working relationships between teachers and supervisors. Supervision is also used to evaluate the institutions in terms of their functions according to the regulative rules and programs, and to take corrective and improving measures. Supervision is all about education, instruction, and administration techniques. In language teachers' professional development supervision is regarded as a key concept stressed in several studies (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Knop, 1980). The main point of view towards supervision strongly emphasizes a process of working with teachers in instructional dialogue with the aim of improving teaching skills. Professional dialog and participating indecisions about collective instructional actions are seen to be essential ingredients of effective supervision

However, this dynamic and emotionally charged task poses many perplexing and challenging problems in particular, in a Turkish context. First, the majority of the current literature reviewed on supervision comes from mainly North America and European contexts, indicating that the status and the concept of supervision as a specific profession may show considerable differences. Secondly, there seems to be a lack of an agreed-upon set of professional skills in the discussion of the professional status of school supervision, meaning that what skills and qualifications are needed to become a supervisor have remained remarkably undefined. Similarly, little has been known about the process through which

mainly teachers or school heads are promoted to supervisor positions. More specifically, it remains a mystery whether they display leadership qualities or they are known to be effective teachers and subsequently serve as good models. Alfanso, Firth and Neville (1984) point out:

Every profession equips its members with a conceptual and intellectual base from which skills are derived and expressed in practice. The skills of instructional supervision, however, have remained remarkably undefined and random, partly because the theoretical base is so thin. Moreover, the skills that are used are generally acquired on the job, rather than during professional preparation and internship (p. 16).

It is interesting to note, in relation to the professional preparation of supervisors that the available literature does not provide research pertaining to the training of supervisors. This strongly indicates that a great many supervisors carry out their supervisory responsibilities without receiving any formal training or preparation. Instead they simply rely on their automatically inherited qualities.

History of Supervision in Turkey

In Turkey instructional supervision in some form goes back to 1838 when the concept was first introduced with the intention of implementing it in Junior High Schools. It was in 1847 when supervisors (called *muin*) were given responsibility for inspecting schools and guiding teachers. The terms-supervision and supervisor- took their place in the official educational document of the year 1869, which formed the theoretical basis for the current supervision system (Kaya, 2006). However, the position, duties and responsibilities of supervisors were clearly defined in the official regulation issued in 1923. The current supervisory system was approved by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) on February 1993. Supervisors are divided into two categories: Primary School Supervisors that supervise 1-5 grades of all public and private schools and Ministry supervisors supervising 6-11 grades. The general goals stated in the 2001 Official Communiqué with the number 2521 are: to (a) obtain information about the teacher's performance, (b) define positive attitudes, (c) lead to do the job in the best way, (d) guide and assist the teacher for providing unity in education, (e) improve the methods and techniques teachers use, (f) provide educational materials and assist in their usages, (g) introduce scientific methods to measure students' success, (h) guide teachers in problem-solving, (i) improve and direct the teacher to help students who need special education, (j) determine the educational leadership of the teacher inside and outside of the classroom.

MoNE has clearly set seven ultimate aims of supervisory and evaluative practices in institutions. First, the supervision aims at guiding the school shareholders, including headmasters and teachers in line with the general aims and principles of Turkish National Education. Second, institutions are inspected and evaluated to see whether any remedial steps should be taken to ensure the quality of education and administration. Third, the supervisors are concerned with in-service training applications, in the sense that they attempt to portray whether the institutions have efficient educational activities for ongoing professional development. Furthermore, the supervision aims at promoting cooperation and coordination among staff in that the success of implementation of the school curricula depends on a collaborating school culture. Another aim of these practices is to give assistance to institutions in determining and solving their educational problems. In addition, the supervision attempts to promote good relations among all school shareholders including administrators, teachers, and parents. Last but not least, MoNE intends to motivate the staff to increase productivity and avoid the widely acknowledged teacher burnout.

In order to ensure an effective supervisory practice, the document above has determined a number of principles in its sixth Article. The supervisory activities should aim at realizing a virtuous circle of control, correction, and improvement. It is also regarded as a democratic process, highlighting the importance of cooperation among all parties rather than the authority of supervisors. This process involves the evaluation of education, instruction, and administration. Furthermore, collaboration in identifying problems, finding effective solutions and planning the whole process are emphasized in the practice. Supervision is also against monopolism in that it attaches sheer importance to sharing responsibilities and promoting good relations among the staff. It is concerned not only with the administration, but also in-service training. The ministry regards these practices as continuous and integral activities, rather than short-time applications. As clearly stated in the document, the supervisor is sensitive to individual differences and particular school environments. As well as promoting the quality of existing educational services, it encourages practitioners to improve their instructional methods and techniques. This, in turn, is believed to bring about developed professional competence. To these ends, the ministry bases all these attempts to improve institutions on scientific and objective criteria, and supports open and reliable supervisory practices in the sense that supervisors are supposed to share their observation and evaluation results with the teachers.

In relation to the official documents stated above, Kayaoğlu (2007) states “no matter how eloquently the official documents state the goal of supervision, it is the picture on the ground that tells us how much or to what extent the supervision is to be of pedagogical, professional value and positive impact on teacher performance” (p. 16). The document simply specifies the general purposes but fails to provide any means or a system to ensure whether the adopted goals are met in schools. What are outlined in the document as goals and tasks are far too ideal to achieve for a supervisor. It is also equally important to know what happens in classroom as a result of a supervisory visit from the teacher’s point of view. The teacher’s attitudes and experience about the supervision can be regarded as an indicator for the degree of professional development. Stoller (1996) points out the challenging issue “whatever approach we endorse, ...one of the greatest challenges we face is how to turn negative attitudes towards supervision around so that teachers (and our programs) can reap the rewards and benefits-in the form of professional development and improved instruction” (p. 1-2). Considering that supervision as an alternative model for instructional improvement is useful, and enhances the teacher’s performance, the teacher’s experience and reaction to supervision is vitally important for the quality of supervision received.

Research

The aim of this research was to assess effectiveness of supervisory process in-service training for EFL teachers seeking development in their instruction. The participants were 135 teachers of English, 64.1 per cent of whom was female and 35.9 % male. 53.8 per cent of the participants came from primary schools and 46.2 per cent from high schools in fifteen different cities in Turkey. The convenient sampling model was used to select the participants who were based in 15 different cities in 5 different regions across Turkey. Table 1 below also provides further information about the participants’ years of experience in teaching profession.

Years of Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	42	31.6
6-10	52	39
11-15	12	9
16-20	18	13.5
20 and above	9	6.8

Table 1: EFL Teachers' Experience

On the basis of the previous research (Kayaoğlu, 2006), a structured questionnaire was developed and used to collect information about teachers' experience in relation to the three stages of supervisory process: prior to the supervision, during and after the supervision and finally their general approach and views.

Data Analysis

A 5-point Likert scale was used to collect data about different aspects of supervisory process from the teachers of English. The data was analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11. A chi-square test was applied to see whether there was a statistically significant difference between primary school and high school teachers with the first 30 items and Mann-Whitney U test with the items from 31 and 72 items each in the questionnaire. Interestingly enough, both tests resulted in no statistically significant difference, providing us confidence to combine the responses given by both groups to the questionnaire items. A descriptive analysis was found most appropriate for the type of data and 5-point likert scale (strongly agree, agree, no idea, disagree, strongly disagree) was reduced to 3-point scale (agree, disagree and no idea) with the hope of presenting data in a more manageable and suitable views. In addition to descriptive analysis of the quantitative data, comments and discussion were made where appropriate.

	Percentage		
	Agree	Disagree	No Idea
<u>The current supervision</u>			
is useful	36	56	8
is necessary	47	44	9
mostly for paperwork formalities and regulations	82	10	8

Table 2: General View of Supervision by EFL Teachers

Table 2 deals with general approach of EFL teachers towards the current supervision they were exposed to. An overall analysis of 5 items in the table strongly indicates that most of the EFL teachers appear to have developed negative attitudes towards the supervision. It is remarkable to note that 82 % of the EFL teachers consider the task of the current supervision inevitable clerical and administrative duties within the school bureaucracy. With this finding in mind, it is not surprising to find that most of the teachers found the current supervision not useful. Nevertheless, it is also equally important to note here, in spite of teachers' apparent negative feelings, that the plurality of the teachers (47 %) still believe in the necessity of supervision for professional development, indicating teachers have objection not to the idea of supervision but the way that it is currently handled.

	Percentage		
	Agree	Disagree	No Idea
<u>The current supervision</u>			
relies on scientific and objective criteria	15	58	27
evaluates and measures classroom activities objectively	17	64	9
defines the problems and helps in their solution	19	59	22

Table 3: Teachers' Views on Objectivity of Supervision

As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of the participants disagree that the supervision is based on scientific and objective criteria. When it comes to the evaluation of language activities during a classroom visit, there is more dissatisfaction with supervisors among teachers about the objectivity of the process. Nevertheless, openness and objectivity are clearly articulated in Article 6 of the Official Communiqué with the number 2521 (2001) by MoNE “supervision should be open and reliable; the supervisor defines the topics together with the teacher; and shares his/her views with the teacher after the observation” (Article 6) and “supervision is based on scientific and objective criteria (Item 13)”. This contradictory situation can be accounted for by the fact that most of the supervisors do not give teachers a detailed written report of their evaluation after the observation as explained in Table 8.

	Percentage		
	Agree	Disagree	No Idea
<u>The current supervision</u>			
is more or less “looking for errors”	67	14	9
is authoritative rather than democratic	76	11	13
includes sharing mutual responsibilities and participation between the teacher and the supervisor	31	46	23
is done with the aim of control, rather than improvement	84	10	6
is inspection rather than a collaborative process	75	15	10
creates fear and excitement in teachers	80	10	10
focuses mostly on the teacher	87	7	6

Table 4: Teachers' Perceptions of the Mode of Supervision

Responses given to the items in Table 4 provide us some clues to suggest some possible reasons for the language teachers' negative feelings about the supervision. From the teachers' point of view, the current supervisory practice is mostly characterised by inspection and evaluation. It is hard to talk about mutual understanding, participation and involvement where there is fear (80 %) and feeling of being controlled and penalized. For the majority of the teachers (75 %), supervision is an inspection rather than a collaborative process, indicating that the relationship between the two sides is based on a hierarchical structure in which the supervisor dominates the whole process and there is not an appropriate atmosphere for involvement and collaboration in real sense.

	Percentage		
	Agree	Disagree	No Idea
<u>The current supervision</u>			
provides the educational leadership	15	75	15
guides us in problem-solving	13	72	15
provides educational materials and assists in our courses	15	75	10
increases our motivation and morale	12	75	13
made contribution to my professional growth	16	66	18
increased my teaching skills and practice	14	67	19
helped me to discover my shortcomings	20	64	16
helped me to overcome instructional problems	18	66	16

Table 5: Teachers' Views about Contributions of Supervision to their Growth

As can be seen in Table 5, supervision fails to assist teachers in providing guidance in finding solutions to their problems in classroom. Supervision is far from providing leadership to teachers to be better able to improve their classroom performance. To our surprise, supervision which is supposed to be an important element of in-service training for the professional growth of teachers serves to decrease teachers' motivation (75 %).

	Percentage				
	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
<u>Before the observation (classroom visit)</u>					
I have a meeting session with the supervisor to state my personal concerns, expectations and problems	6	12	18	19	45
I discuss the characteristics of the classes and the lessons with the supervisor	6	14	14	22	44
The supervisor decides everything on his own	26	43	14	11	6

Table 6: Teachers' Views about the Process Prior to Supervision

Table 6 presents the relationship between supervisors and teachers. For the supervision to be effective and be of pedagogical value, the first meeting prior to the classroom visit is of utmost importance to ensure collaboration, participation, and mutual understanding. Surprisingly, the responses given to the last item in the table "*the supervisor decides everything on*" strongly indicate a perception by teachers in general that supervisors exercise their own power and authority over teachers. This obviously does not create a friendly atmosphere in which both sides discuss the issues in relation to the quality of instruction openly and fruitfully.

	Percentage				
	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
<u>During the observation (classroom visit)</u>					
I feel tense because of the existence of a person who is observing/evaluating me	14	40	23	15	8
The supervisor takes some notes	35	25	27	8	5
<u>After the observation (classroom visit)</u>					
The supervisor provides me with feedback using objective observational data	5	7	17	31	40
I get a written report of their evaluation	9	8	11	12	60

Table7: Teachers’ Views about the Process during and after Supervision

Table 7 deals with the period during and after the supervision. The findings suggest that a substantial number of teachers feel irritated and tense due to the presence of the supervisor. The data does not allow us to account for reasons. Nevertheless, the fact that a great number of teachers are well aware of supervisors’ taking notes while observing, may serve enough to alert the teachers. As in the pre-conference, the post-conference also appears to be lacking a systematic, well-planned session given the fact that 60 per cent of teachers stated not to have been given any written document concerning their supervision. This means that teachers do not know much about what to reflect on.

	Percentage				
	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
<u>The supervisors I have met so far</u>					
have guiding skills	3	14	28	42	13
know English well	2	6	10	22	60
are like a judge	32	43	16	5	4
are like a controller	32	43	16	5	4
have at least MA degree	1	10	12	28	49

Table 8: Teachers Views about Supervisors

Table 8 presents the specific issues supervised teachers took with their supervisors based on their academic credentials and ability to speak and use the language, English that was the topic of instruction in the classroom. On a similar note, there seemed to be an issue resulting from the degree status of the supervisor in comparison to that of the supervised teacher. Perhaps the most striking point is that most of the supervisors were reported not to know English, meaning that most teachers had low expectations for instructional improvement if their supervisor was unable to understand the language that they were teaching. If teachers do not have much respect for their supervisors and consequently the academic and pedagogic value of current supervision, it is totally meaningless to hope that instructional supervision may help teachers to develop their instructional skills. Similarly, another ironic situation is that the number of supervisors holding higher degrees such as MA is very few in number whereas there is a great tendency among young teachers to pursue higher degrees. To clarify the situation, 15 participants (teachers) were found to be doing an MA in Applied Linguistics in diary-interviews.

Diaries

As in many different surveys the diary-interview was used as a method of data collection in addition to the use of questionnaire in this study. Fifteen (35) informants were asked to record (write down) the following supervision that would occur in their schools. Six (6) of the participants were my students doing an MA in the program where I was teaching certain courses. This situation created a very appropriate opportunity to use a retrospection data collection procedure. Retrospective data collection procedures are characterized by the two dimensions; (a) immediate retrospection when information is still assumed to be in short term memory and (b) delayed retrospection, which can be exemplified in subjects' diaries or statements of experiences for a period of a few hours, days or weeks after the event (Ericson & Simon, 1987).

Delayed retrospection was used in the form of interview with the informants. To this end, the teachers were encouraged to record the supervision they received immediately after the supervision was done. Very few examples from the samples were given below to characterize the commonly-shared views among teachers as follows:

Most of the participants took the position that the existing supervisory and evaluative practices were not of any help to teachers' professional development and improvement of classroom instruction. In some contexts the type of supervision can be detrimental to the extent that teachers develop very negative attitude towards the concept of supervision itself. For example, the second informant expressed her/his uneasiness resulting from the fact that supervisors who did not have a substantial background in the field were supposed to evaluate her/his classroom practices only by observing their settings once a year, as s/he put it:

I have been an English teacher for five years. I've never been guided by supervisors. I investigated everything I need. In fact I don't believe there is any benefit from supervision as I meet supervisors only one day in a year. How can a supervisor evaluate me by watching me only one time, only one day? And the most funny (!) one I'm an English teacher but my supervisors don't know English. Will they evaluate me by watching, looking at my gestures. I think a supervisor who doesn't know English can't criticize me objectively (Informant 2).

It is interesting to note that when reporting their ideas in relation to their supervision experiences, the teachers used the terminology very much associated with assessment, evaluation and correction. The informant's report above clearly indicates that the supervisor lacked the preparation and supervisory skills to do the job in such a way as to be appreciated by the teacher.

In addition to the numerous examples of negative comments about the existing supervisory practices, there were some teachers who were positive about the supervisor though very few and rare, as given below:

This year I have had supervision. So all of my negative ideas about supervisors (I have) have changed. The supervisor that observed my class was very friendly. At the very beginning I felt nervous but after five minutes everything got excellent (Informant 3).

It is, however, remarkable to observe that the informant's (3) content resulted not from the mode of supervision but from the supervisor's "being nice" since there were no references to the professional development or the teacher's classroom performance in the rest of the account by Informant 3.

The following excerpt taken from the diary of the fifth respondent reflects an unsatisfying portrayal of the existing supervisory practices, a topic which was commonly highlighted by most of the participants in the present study:

I've never been supervised for about 10 years. I got only one supervisor, but the other ones were terribly poor. They weren't aware of the new methods, approaches and techniques. I think the current supervision is not useful. The Ministry of Education should change the format of supervision as soon as possible. One more thing teachers must be supervised more often (Informant 5).

In the excerpt above, the fifth informant complained about the frequency of the supervision in that s/he was observed and evaluated once in her/his ten-year-teaching experience, indicating that the supervisor was overloaded and therefore did not have adequate time to do the job properly. S/he suggested that the ministry should hold these evaluative practices much more frequently rather than adopting a one-time improvement policy in the institutions because the supervisor saw only a tiny fraction of teaching time. S/he also criticized the qualities of the supervisors in the sense that they had no idea about current teaching techniques and methods. The existing inefficient supervisory practices in Turkey were further elaborated by the sixth respondent, who explained her/his first frustrating supervision experience in detail. It is clear from the informant's account that s/he had high expectations of the supervisors at the very beginning; however, in the end, s/he was left alone without any clear and convincing explanation about the observation.

In my first supervision with the supervisor, our head teacher wanted me to come to his office and introduced me to the supervisor and left the room. The supervisor simply asked some questions about my background. We did not talk anything about our language teaching problem. I was trying to get a professional dialogue with him. It was useless. He wanted to see my lesson plans which I already made ready as I was told by my colleagues to do. He found fault with me in a polite manner. For him it was a mistake to use English words while stating the purpose of the lesson. The only English word was "the present perfect tense" which was the topic of the lesson. I felt there is much more power and authority around so, we went to class together without talking anything else. He pointed out with his finger that I could start my lesson. At least it was my understanding. I feared he might interfere with my class so I was very careful with everything. He kindly sat at back during his observation and took some notes. My students were very helpful and much more active and cooperative than usual. I guess they were trying to make things easy for me as they felt I was being evaluated and inspected. Meanwhile I was at a loss to decide whether I should use first language or foreign language or how much I should mix them. I felt strange because I found myself striving to meet the supervisor's expectations. When the lesson was over I was very excited to hear from him concerning my weak and strong points. The only thing he said to me "you should develop your classroom management skills". This did not make any sense to me at all because the students were so cooperative that I did not need to use management skills. He thanked me and left me in dark (Informant 6).

As seen above, there were no professional working relationships between the teacher and the supervisor who declined to engage in a professional dialogue with the inexperienced

practitioner. Perhaps the supervisor was so engrossed in the evaluative aspects of the supervision that s/he did not feel any need to mitigate his/her linguistic behaviour and use any interpersonal and communication skills although the teacher was quite receptive to suggestions and positive about the role that the supervisor would play in his/her instructional performance. Yet, s/he suffered from the traditional model of supervision characterized by authoritarian orientation and power exercised by the supervisor, who apparently did not feel any need to establish a trust-based working relationship. It is meaningful to observe that there were no jointly identified objectives, concerns and plans and therefore there was not any strategy for the observation of the class. So, supervisory process was “lip-service supervision” rather than a useful educational in-service training for the teacher seeking development in his/her instruction

Conclusion

Supervision is considered to be a deliberate intervention into the instructional process with the aim of improving instruction assuming a professional working relationship between teachers and supervisors. As an important element of in-service training, it is believed to bring about positive changes among teachers in improving and enriching the quality of school teaching. Consistent with this belief, most efforts are directed towards providing leadership primarily for teachers to be better able to improve their classroom performance and make the school a more effective learning community through continual growth. Basically, supervision consists of all the activities leading to the improvement of instruction, activities related to morale, improving human relations, in-service education and curriculum development.

It is self-evident that the current supervision that teachers of English receive does not lead to the growth of teachers and to the improvement of instruction. From quantitative and qualitative findings, most of the EFL teachers were found to be pessimistic, depicting the current supervision as a negative experience and supervisors as bureaucratic administrators. Unfortunately, its impact has, in some instances, been detrimental to the extent that it would rather be forgotten, causing teachers to lose their respect for the supervision and the supervisor. Some of the negative attitude towards the supervision results from the fact that most of the supervisors supervising EFL teachers have no expertise in the field, and fail to diagnose problems specific to the field and recognise the complex characteristics of learning and teaching a foreign language.

It would not be fair to blame supervisors for all the misfortunes and the negative-loaded atmosphere. Given the fact that supervisors do not receive much professional training to be a supervisor, they inherently act on the traditional old conception of supervision which can be summarized as positional authority. This situation poses a very big threat to the meaningful involvement of teachers, mutual trust, professional respect and a sense of constructive dialogue to grow. Therefore, clinical supervision appears to have potential for creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and assisting teachers in improving their instructional performance as clinical supervision is characterized by its own focus on democratic and teacher-centered features (Stoller, 1996). Stressing the developmental aspect of clinical supervision and likening teachers to learners, Acheson and Gall (1997) point out the potential use of clinical supervision for teacher development as “the content they need to learn is the profession of teaching. At various points in their professional development they need the skilful assistance of a clinical supervisor if they are to make progress” (p.8).

Regardless of the model, the concept of supervision is to be questioned with all respects. Much effort should be given to the conception of the roles that the supervisor should play. In order for the supervision to be of a pedagogic value, there should be a very strong

commitment to democratic involvement when working with teachers in the sense that collaborative-decision making and professional working relationship between the two sides should be ensured. This should not be something done for or to teachers but with the teachers, necessitating a very well planned pre and post conference to be based on objective data.

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