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Increasing Teacher Capacity and Student Achievement by Restructuring Formative Supervision

By

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Abstract

Teaching and learning have made a shift in the 21st century. The traditional models of schools and classrooms have moved toward more collaborative approaches in which schools facilitate and foster teacher collaboration and growth. Principals' leadership and formative supervision of teaching and learning are essential to student achievement, but how these skills can best be practiced has not been sufficiently explored. This study investigates how effective formative supervision and related procedures can build teachers' capacity to lead students to success. The interview questions were designed to understand how formative-supervision approaches and techniques affect teachers' efficacy with a focus on teachers' understanding of formative supervision and their past experiences with it. This study's findings highlight participants' lack of awareness of formal formative-supervision procedures and trust, and a thematic analysis offered solutions for further developing teachers' understanding of formative supervision. Themes that emerged from the data include communication, collaboration, and trust, and they constitute a framework for moving forward with formative supervision. Instructional leadership can take many forms and be distributed through means of supervision to promote teacher growth and efficacy. Supervision needs to be restructured to be viewed through a positive, encouraging, and supportive lens in which teachers and leaders can work collectively toward student achievement. Building teacher capacity should be at the center of the restructuring of supervision. Strengthening teachers' knowledge and expertise, through formative supervision skills, procedures and policies and building trust will have a positive impact on student achievement.

Table of Contents

Increasing Teacher Capacity and Student Achievement by

Restructuring Instructional Supervision

There is a correlation between quality teachers and student achievement and properly implemented instructional supervision should help teachers increase their overall capacity (Albright & Masturah, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Smith & Gorard, 2007). Principals can use formative supervision processes to monitor, assess, and systemically address teachers' performance to improve their overall practices (Glickman et al., 2018). Improving student academic achievement is the goal of school divisions; indeed, the intent is for every student to be successful. Often, the responsibility of student success is placed on principals, and school boards pay a great deal of attention to how principals plan to develop teachers.

Principals have policies in place to conduct summative evaluations of new staff or staff undergoing performance reviews (Glickman et al., 2018). Formative supervision varies, as there is a lack of understanding of what teacher supervision encompasses (Fuss, 2018). Different supervision techniques and procedures exist, and without policy documents in place to distinguish formative supervision from evaluation, teacher self-efficacy can be affected (Haddad & Ashqar, 2020).

Research Question

Teachers sometimes view the term "supervision" in a negative light. Instructional leadership with effective formative supervision procedures can provide useful feedback to teachers who want to improve their practices to better foster student achievement (Glickman et al, 2018). With the return of provincial achievement tests after COVID-19 and the increase of benchmarking assessments, student achievement is just as much in the hands of principals as it is teachers. This research was guided by the following question: how can an effective model of

instructional supervision help principals build teachers' capacity to lead to student to success, and how can this model hold both teachers and principals accountable for student achievements?

Significance of the Research

This study examined teachers' viewpoints on how supervision affects their self-efficacy while also examining supervision procedures and overall accountability. Capacity development involves elements of supervision, pedagogy, and collaboration. The Alberta government defines supervision as an assessment process (Alberta Education, 2020). Schools need to re-examine the ways supervision is conducted and communicated to positively impact teachers and their capacity. Future research can further examine renaming and restructuring supervision, as the name encourages people to associate the practice with assessing. A closer look at how schools can conduct a collaborative approach to supervision may take the pressure off principals to the benefit of all students.

Literature Review

Teacher supervision aims to improve teacher performance and provide direction (Ergun, 2020), and done correctly, supervision can be the glue of a successful school (Glickman et al., 2018). Effective supervision requires knowledge and interpersonal skills, and it allows principals to monitor teacher practice (Glickman et al., 2018). However, school leaders face challenges in the world of formative supervision. Many teachers still view formative supervision as summative or evaluative. Principals face hurdles to effective supervision, such as time constraints, and they often differ with school divisions regarding the overall direction supervision should take (April & Bouchamma, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Increasing teacher capacity should be a primary focus for principals. Assessing it includes an analysis of teachers' knowledge and skills as well as their responses to change and effectiveness in unpredictable situations, which was the case when the pandemic hit in 2020 (Albright & Masturah, 2006, as cited in Abdullah & Shafee, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic created an immediate change for many teachers, as they only had a handful of days to transition their practice from the physical classroom to online. Efforts to improve student achievement can be successful through building the capacity of teachers, but also by building the capacity of school systems to support teacher learning (Adams et al., 2018; Wei et al., 2009). Significant resources should be committed to capacity building as part of developing successful educational systems (Egbo, 2011).

Teacher capacity also refers to teacher knowledge, and knowledge needs to constantly increase over time to further broaden teacher capabilities and student learning (Albright & Masturah, 2006). For principals, increasing teacher capacity is more intricate than supporting or encouraging professional development, it is how principals and systems aim to enhance the quality of teacher learning (Desimone, 2011). Supervision can support teacher capacity by enhancing existing norms and practices within schools, revisiting policies and procedures and understanding supervision styles and skills (Albright & Masturah, 2006; Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2007).

Building relationships and increasing trust should be a norm practiced and continually enhanced and accomplished through means of formative supervision. Trust is not simply built by words, but also by actions (Glickman et al., 2018). A school's culture is a complex system of norms, practices, and relationships (Glickman et al., 2018). When principals build significant

levels of trust with fully developed intentions, they and their teachers are more inclined to take risks that positively alter school culture. In addition to building trust, principals can closely examine up to date supervision policies and procedures to increase teacher capacity. Teachers need to be provided with resources, training, and materials to teach effectively, and school systems often have existing policies in place to support teacher development. Principals also need to hold necessary skills to perform supervisory duties and recognize their own supervisory practices (Albright & Masturah, 2006).

There needs to be a revision of existing norms in schools through the lens of supervision and capacity building (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2007). I created a framework synthesising the constructs described above to examine how to build teacher capacity through formative supervision. This framework includes the elements of trust, policies and procedures, and supervision skills and styles (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Instructional Supervision Framework for Increasing Teacher Capacity
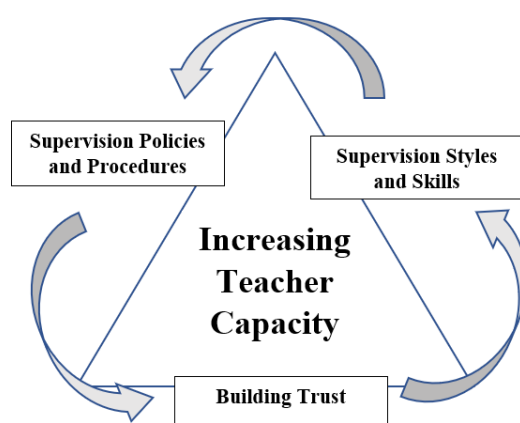
Formative Supervision Procedures

The definition of "supervision" is linked to words such as "direct," "watch over," and "oversee" (Glickman et al., 2018). Formative supervision is not intended to be controlling or restricting, as the word "supervision" implies. Within a school, formative supervision can take many shapes and include group development, professional development, curriculum development, action research, change facilitation, the addressing of diversity, and the building of community (Glickman et al., 2018). Some scholars use the term "instructional supervision" to describe a range of supportive practices, including coaching, critical inquiry, study groups, staff development, and action research, all of which are intended to promote teacher growth rather than evaluate teachers (Adams et al., 2018). Many of these practices and procedures take place daily within a school, and teachers may view them as operating procedures but not consider them supervision. Many teachers and principals are aware of more common supervision procedures, such as classroom walkthroughs and conferencing. Formative supervision procedures are vast and designed to promote growth in individual teachers and the school.

Teachers' professional growth has been guided by policy documents designed to support high-quality teaching (Adams et al., 2018). In Alberta, the two policy documents are the *Teaching Quality Standard* (TQS) and *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy* (TGSE; Alberta Education, 2020; Government of Alberta, 2015). The TQS outlines standards for all teachers to follow, and the TGSE links teaching and learning to teachers' application of their pedagogic knowledge and abilities (Adams et al., 2018). The Government of Alberta has mandated all teachers to complete an annual Teacher Professional Growth Plan. The TGSE highlights plans that will support and guide teacher growth, and school leaders are required to supervise teachers by observing the quality of their teaching (Government of Alberta, 2015). The

TGSE can be interpreted as an accountability tool or a tool that promotes growth (Adams et al., 2018).

The Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) applies to all school leaders in Alberta and lists standards for principals to follow to ensure high-quality teaching and student success (Alberta Education, 2020). There are LQS competencies that adhere to supervision and instructional leadership. For example, LQS #6(a–i) is listed as "Providing instructional leadership" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 4). The LQS compels principals and school leaders to implement professional growth, supervision, and evaluation processes to ensure all teachers meet the standards of the TQS (Alberta Education, 2020). Professional growth and evaluation processes are also listed in the TGSE and within school division administrative procedures. However, it is often up to school principals to implement supervision processes within their own schools to ensure teachers are meeting TQS standards. Years of experience and supervisory skills can impact how supervision processes are carried out in each school.

Trust

Increasing teachers' levels of trust in principals is a softer leadership goal. It may have positive effects on a school's climate but be a less direct way of improving classroom practice (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Some principals aim to increase levels of trust in the hopes of creating an overall positive impact on school climate—not specifically to affect teaching practices and achievement (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Time is a large contributor to trust, as it is difficult to achieve influence over classrooms in which principals rarely participate (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

Leaders and teachers are more inclined to take risks that positively alter a school culture when there is a significant amount of trust (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Principals can foster trust

by being supportive, and increased trust is linked to higher rates of shared leadership (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Teachers view support and supervision in many ways. Some may view increased supervision negatively, while others may see it as an opportunity to showcase and improve their practices.

It is beneficial to place the students and their learning at the centre of the supervision process (Ergun, 2020). Teaching can often be territorial in nature, and teachers wholeheartedly believe they are using the best teaching methods they know of for their unique classrooms. Increasing supervision should be seen as a constructive tool that builds trust; however, increased supervision may have an overall effect on teacher self-efficacy.

Supervision Skills and Styles

To improve teachers' capacity through supervision, supervisors need to have the right skills (Abdullah & Shafee, 2018). Supervision is a commitment, and principals differ in their levels of abilities (Balu et al., 2010). Oplatka (2004) identified three stages principals move through: the induction stage, the establishment stage, and the renewal stage. New principals in their first three years are largely focused on managing and leading a school, making the task of formative supervision a challenge (Fuss, 2018; Oplatka, 2004). Once principals become more established, they can further develop in their roles and are better able to supervise teachers and their growth (Fuss, 2018). It is important for principals to recognize feelings of stagnation or unproductivity, which may occur later in their careers, and to recognize that they, too, should be creating goals and demonstrating growth (Fuss, 2018). In any stage of development, principals' skills further improve, and they quite often adopt leadership styles that complement their learning environments.

Glickman et al. (2018) listed the skills needed to be an effective supervisor, which include knowledge, interpersonal skills, and technical skills. Principals need to be knowledgeable about teaching methods and use their knowledge to help develop teachers (Abdullah & Shafee, 2018). They need to be aware of how their interpersonal behaviours affect teachers and how their behaviour can be used to promote positive relationships (Abdullah & Shafee, 2018). A supervisor's technical skills encompass goal setting, planning, observing, and evaluating (Oliva & Pawlas, 2001). However, as stated by Oliva and Pawlas (2001), principals' school training does not specifically cover these skills; rather, they are often obtained through on-the-job training.

Individual Teacher Supervision

April and Bouchamma (2015) indicated principals often prefer more individual supervision practices, particularly in-class observation, and post-observation meetings. April and Bouchamma (2015) also concluded pre-observation meetings are less practiced. Seen in its entirety, teacher supervision often entails three stages of observation: pre-class, during, and post-class. Historically, this is the most common type of formative supervision; it includes the supervisor and the teacher.

In their research on teacher observation, Glickman et. al (2018) noted that the practice can systematically help teachers improve their practices and outcomes. However, leaders need to have the confidence to carry out both the supervision and the feedback, especially if they are doing it alone. Formative supervision can impact the actions of teachers, and if it is viewed as a change agent, it will significantly alter their mindsets and, possibly, their overall self-efficacy.

Collective Teacher Supervision

School leaders need to establish processes and procedures that help empower teachers, create conditions that foster collaboration, and increase cohesion among staff (Hite & Donohoo, 2021). Indeed, "collective supervision can be distributed so designated supervisors, designated teacher leaders, and informal teacher leaders have different roles and responsibilities, but this does not in any way imply a three-tiered hierarchy" (Glickman et al., 2018, p. 12). School community members can have differentiated teaching and leadership responsibilities, with a collective vision of school goals (Glickman et al., 2019). Leaders need to inspire teachers to be a part of the success journey, where the principal is not understood as the sole change agent but rather the accountability of achievement is shared across many roles.

April and Bouchamma (2015) examined individual and collective supervisory practices. They concluded that leaders should be challenged to rethink their structure of pedagogical supervision from a one-on-one approach to a collective approach. Collaborative supervision practices can ensure a focused coordination, encourage professional exchange and reflection, enable time efficiencies, and ultimately improve student achievement (April & Bouchamma, 2015).

According to Hewson and Hewson (2022), "Leadership is responsible for ensuring structures for collaboration" (p. 7). The authors argued the most important goal for leaders is ensuring those working closest with students have the time and structures to collectively collaborate and respond to students' needs. As the educational landscape changes, leaders need to further examine how supervision is conducted, and how it can promote growth. Collaborative structures can be an opportunity for teachers to support each other; at the same time, they can also provide a unique arrangement that allows principals to get a more in-depth look at what

happens inside classrooms. Teachers are also more likely to share instructional strategies in collaborative settings than they are in one-on-one sessions with a supervisor, resulting in positive changes to their self-efficacy.

Methodology

This qualitative research drew upon phenomenological techniques to examine how formative supervision affects teachers' self-efficacy. I examined participants' experiences and perspectives regarding supervision. I was helped by the principles of phenomenological research to better understand participants' lived events, as supervision can be experienced in many ways. Most teachers experience supervision from their school leaders, who oversee teaching and learning, and the purpose of this research was to understand how formative-supervision approaches and techniques affect teachers' efficacy.

Respondent Group

Three participants were selected to participate in this study. As the research aimed to examine formative supervision, which occurs after summative evaluation and a continuous contract is granted, the participants needed to hold a continuous contract, and all three did. They also needed to have an array of supervision and supervisor experiences, so ideally, they would have been teaching for five or more years, which this study's participants did. All three respondents had taught under three or more supervisors and were able to compare their own experiences after a definition of "supervision" was communicated.

The possible respondent group was quite large, as our school division is diverse, and many teachers hold continuous contracts and have celebrated milestones in the division. I sourced participants by examining the staffing profiles of schools in our area and narrowed my focus to staff members who had been in education for several years. I contacted them by email

and telephone. Once three participants had been contacted and selected, they were given a letter of introduction. This letter contained a brief overview of the study and provided clarity to the participants, and there was an option to back out of the study if it became too personal or if they changed their minds for any other reason. They were also provided with the ethics approval from the University of Alberta and from Peace River School Division.

The three participants were all part of Peace River School Division and had experiences in both summative and formative supervision to reflect on. The pseudonyms of Abram, Helena, and Katharina have been used for confidentiality purposes. Helena had been teaching for 11 years and taught grades kindergarten through six. As instructional coach, her role also sometimes included elements of leadership. Most of Helena's experience was in a multi-grade and rural setting. Abram had been teaching for nine years and was primarily focused on upper elementary and junior and senior high school. His teaching assignments had been at both urban and rural schools. Katharina had been in education for six years, beginning her teaching career in a rural elementary school but recently transitioning to a junior high school in a more urban setting.

Data Collection

Interviews are conversations with purpose, and although semi-structured, they may come with a small amount of predictability (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). A single question can enlist a multitude of responses, feelings, or memories. I began by formulating a series of six structured interview questions, and all participants answered the same questions. I wanted to have questions that were structured but also allow participants to recall events. I relied on the types of questions suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). I formulated questions around opinion and value, experiences and behaviours, and knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009). I also developed questions to provoke senses and feelings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009).

Once the questions were formulated, they became my interview model, and I shared them with the participants (see Appendix A for the interview questions). All three participants were provided with the interview schedule prior to the meeting so they could have time to recall experiences and feelings and make any necessary notes. We also had conversations over the phone and via email before the interviews began, which allowed for a more comfortable atmosphere once they did. I was able to travel within the division to conduct each interview in person. Although the interviews were in person and I took notes, I still recorded them using Google meet so I could revisit them, transcribe them, and identify themes. Each interview was just over an hour. Participants were able to recall past events, interpret those events and their experiences, and use those experiences to recommend ideal supervision practices.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the collected data using open coding from which themes emerged inductively or were imposed deductively. I recorded the interviews on Google meet and used Microsoft Word's transcribe function to create transcripts of the interview. I had to relisten to the interviews and edit the transcripts to ensure the program correctly matched what respondents said. I used these transcripts to identify themes, and I searched for statements that related to overall efficacy. I used open coding followed by axial coding to develop categories and further pinpoint themes and findings. I was able to work with the transcripts, color code the themes, and copy and paste them into categories on a separate document. Key themes extracted from the data provided more evidence of how formative teacher supervision can be conducted in such a way as to have the least amount of impact on teachers' self-efficacy. Each participant added different elements of experience to the data, which ensured consistency and dependability. I confirmed that each of them had more than three supervisors and that the supervisors were not the same

people. Due to the different principals in the participants' schools and the experiences the participants resultingly had, the data cannot be repeated.

Trustworthiness

Credibility was held as interviews were recorded and transcribed, and participants were given the questions prior to the interview. This gave the participants time to reflect on their experiences prior to the interview. Member checks were completed, as each interview was summarized and shared to ensure I correctly understood their views. To include transferability in this study, the three participants had a range in their grade assignments, size of school and number of supervisors. The participants had experienced both summative and formative supervision in their teaching assignments and thick descriptions is used throughout, using quotes to make participants experiences and voices explicit.

To increase dependability in this study, research procedures were documented which allowed three outside editors to critique the research process. Although difficult, I made sure to allow participants to fully share their answers, feelings, and experiences during the interview, I recorded notes, and I did not spend more time talking than participants. My goal was to have my transcribed commentary constitute less then 20% of the transcripts, which I was able to accomplish to increase confirmability. Relationships are foundational within a school, and I was determined to seek data from teachers on how I could improve my own practice and make recommendations to share.

Findings and Discussion

There are variables and environments affecting teacher self-efficacy, and after I thoroughly examined the data, three such themes presented themselves: communication, collaboration, and trust. These data align with the literature on supervision. The participants

shared similar views on their current level of understanding regarding formative supervision. They understood that the principal was their supervisor and conducted walk-throughs, but they said they did not know of any formal procedures regarding what formative supervision truly looks like. Together, these themes constitute a framework for moving formative supervision forward.

Communication

Participants noted communication as an area of importance. Helena recalled past years of teaching when teachers seldomly shared teaching strategies or achievements. "[Teacher's] want to keep their [strategies] to themselves, and not share success and [I know] they all have really good things they are doing." Helena highlighted peer conversation and how she wanted to know what other teachers were doing in their classrooms, but teachers rarely engaged in these conversations voluntarily in her experience. Katharina recalled feedback from a learning team observing her class. "Feedback was helpful… it's nice to have strategies…[but] sometimes it felt like more was being added to my plate… and leads to a feeling of being burned out." Communicating strategies were a help to Katharina as she was aware that strategies and actions are elements of a successful school. Strategies from a learning team would be better received if given with intention as opposed to a long list of recommendations which would lead to a feeling of being overwhelmed.

In general, people who work in schools do not talk about their work with one another (Kohm & Nance, 2009; Morrison, 2013; Shuck et al., 2011, as cited in Glickman et al., 2018). In contrast, successful schools continually communicate with one another about problem-solving or action-oriented methods (David, 2009; Morrison, 2013; Shuck et al., 2011, as cited in Glickman et al., 2018). Communication can be generated through meetings, in-service workshops,

conferences, and informal occasions (Glickman et al., 2018). Glickman et al. further noted that teachers do talk socially but seldom communicate about teaching and learning.

The lack of dialogue can become a normal part of teaching if communication is not planned, which may lead to isolation (Glickman et al., 2018).

> Faculty meetings are information giving, and when school concerns are raised, they are often deflected to noninstructional matters such as schedules, district policies, extracurricular responsibilities, and building maintenance. . . . The public school as a work institution is unique in that a collection of adults can be employed as professionals within the same physical setting, with a common responsibility for providing their particular services to the same group of clients (students) and not be frequently and intensively engaged with each other in discussions on how to improve (Glickman et al., 2018, p. 31).

Participants further summarized effective forms of communication in three subcategories: feedback, walk-throughs, and teacher fluency.

Feedback

Communication can influence teachers' self-efficacy, as more feedback and conversations smooth the landscape for further dialogue and ultimately boost teacher confidence. This form of open communication was expressed by Katharina, who understood the complexities of large schools. She suggested that if time allows, informal or formal discussions about what was observed, and any changes needed is beneficial. "I want to show my admin that I am putting effort in, and I'm doing so well on my plans and [I would] ask for feedback." The important piece for Katharina was connection and communication. Helena, meanwhile, recalled valuable written feedback from a supervisor after a classroom observation. "[one thing] that I really

enjoyed was immediate [written] feedback, thank you for inviting me into your classroom, here are the things I noticed." The feedback was presented to Helena on the school's letterhead, and it included classroom management strategies the principal noticed, observable teaching techniques, and suggestions for improvements. Helena cherished this written communication, used it in a teacher application package to her next school, and forwarded the artifact to be included in this study.

The teachers most satisfied with their jobs are those who receive regular classroom feedback (Saphier, 2011; Silva & Contreras, 2011, as cited in Glickman et al., 2018). Feedback is the critical element in supervision and can often get missed (Fuss, 2018). The overall objective of feedback in formative supervision is to offer suggestions to improve practices and teaching (Downey et al., 2004). Feedback can also be used to facilitate and promote professional growth.

Principals facilitate communication by providing feedback to teachers after formative supervision, which improves principal-teacher relationships (Fuss, 2018). Principals have multiple options under the realm of supervision and communication, including pre-conference observations, walk-throughs, analysis, critique, and post-conference dialogue (Glickman et al., 2018). Data can be accumulated, and feedback can be provided as an informal conversation, a formal post-conference meeting, or in writing. There is flexibility in providing feedback in formative supervision because there are no aspects of evaluation strictly reserved for summative supervision.

Although written feedback may increase the administrator's workload, it was clear how much it increased Helena's teaching efficacy. This is likely a universal effect. A study conducted by Adams et al. (2018) concluded that teachers desire to be provided with timely, useful, and generative feedback. This study also concluded that there needs to be a more comprehensive

approach to instructional supervision with a broader range of collective structures that support quality teaching (Adams et al., 2018). Data from this study highlights the need for feedback in many forms to promote teacher growth and instruction.

Walk-Throughs

Participants were familiar with formative supervision walkthroughs. Participants shared that they understood principals enter classrooms to observe teaching and learning. After the observation there was very little feedback about what was observed, and the overall goal of the walkthroughs became lost due to the lack of communication. Abram expressed these views, noting that supervisors were welcome into his classrooms at any point; however, he also felt that if visits are for an observatory purpose and principals intend to look for something, the teacher should know what that something is prior to the observation or walk-through. Abram said,

> [If walk-throughs were] specifically focused on a goal, if someone is coming in to observe me in a full capacity for an entire class, I'm focused on a lot of things besides the direct - my attention's very much divided, whereas if someone is in and they're monitoring a specific function of my room, it gives me a lot more direct and a lot more usable feedback.

Abram also shared that if a goal is set prior, then any feedback received would be better accepted, as it would be more focused, and any changes could be more immediate.

> [A] specific focus gives me very clear and concise feedback to one area of my teaching practice, which means I can also make far more immediate changes than if my entire teaching practices [are] being evaluated at the same time and I'm given a significant array of feedback options.

Walk-throughs can have noteworthy risks if the purpose is undefined and school staff confidence is low (Fuss, 2018). They can sometimes be seen as summative and punitive, which causes tension and sews distrust (Valli & Buese, 2007). Katharina summarized a sudden increase in classroom supervision thusly:

It could affect [me] in two different ways. A sudden increase in supervision, including walk-throughs and requests to see plans, could affect [my] overall confidence and [cause me to] second guess myself more. . . . Overall, you would want to know the reason behind the increased supervision, otherwise you feel as though [the principals] have lost trust that you can carry out your job effectively.

Walk-throughs provide insights into what is happening in classrooms. However, without communication between the principal and teacher, they can have a negative impact on the teacher's confidence. A lack of feedback can place additional pressures on teachers and affect their overall self-efficacy. While a principal may be able to report on the evidence of learning within classrooms to central office staff or elsewhere, communicating with classroom teachers is equally important.

Principals need to understand what is being taught and assessed inside classrooms. Walk-throughs offer a type of formative supervision in which principals can better understand teacher practice, collect data, and provide feedback (Fuss, 2018). Key elements that often get missed are communication and feedback before or after a walk-through. Formative walk-throughs can be planned or unannounced, and principals should enter classrooms with the purpose of identifying strategies to improve student achievement. If feedback is not provided, the purpose behind a walk-through becomes lost. Indeed, "when it comes to systematic observation and analysis needed to help teachers reflect deeply on their teaching and grow in teaching expertise,

administrative walkthroughs have little to offer" (Glickman et al., 2018, p. 217). Glickman et al. further concluded that even though objective observation holds little value, we can construct knowledge by interacting with the environment and with others through means of communication.

Teacher Fluency

The province of Alberta and individual school jurisdictions have supervision policies in place. Teachers are subject to policies, which include turning in lesson plans, unit plans, and assessments. To better understand teacher fluency, principals have the authority to request planning or assessment documentation for review. Teachers have an obligation to share documents upon request, however, teachers view their work as private. Teachers may become protective of their short- and long-term plans, as those plans are, in most cases, just working documents. Abram shared views on submitting plans prior to a walk-through:

> I think I'd be much more pressured into delivering exactly how I have it written out in the plan with as little deviation as possible . . . which for me would be something of a struggle, as I tend to look for the stuff on the outside, [such as] student engagement. . . . The classroom is such a dynamic environment to begin with, submitting a plan a month ahead of time really ends up being quite inaccurate. . . . [It's always] changing, so submitting a plan a month or two prior can prove to have inaccuracies.

As did Abram, teachers may hesitate when asked to submit artifacts in a formative setting. Having a grasp on teaching and learning within a school may require a gentler approach, supporting instruction and growth through communication.

Helena remarked that an open dialogue would have less of a negative impact on her overall teaching efficacy: "I'd rather sit down . . . and go through them with [the principal]."

There are clear guidelines for communication under summative evaluations and performance reviews, and they include pre- and post-lesson meetings, written feedback, and summaries. Principals have a better understanding of teacher fluency through the summative evaluation process. Principals should observe and request teachers planning documentation to better understand the quality of teaching and support teacher growth. Participants shared viewpoints on how an increase in supervision and requests to provide documentation may increase anxiety if not effectively communicated. Adams et al., (2018) highlights professional growth of teachers, linking teaching and learning through pedagogic knowledge and abilities. Principals should communicate and provide feedback to teachers after reviewing planning and assessment documents, for teachers to reflect on their pedagogic knowledge and professional growth goals.

Collaboration

Collaboration is key to student success and achievement. Participants reflected on their past and current learning communities. Katharina recalled engaging in collaborative team meetings. "Sometimes it's hard to brainstorm on the spot… but if we come up with ideas together [it can] generate a lot of great conversation." There are organized structures in place that allowed Katharina to come prepared to discuss student achievement strategies including collaborative team meetings, professional learning communities and school team meetings.

Teaching is diverse and has developed over time from traditional models to collaborative cultures. As Buffum et al. (2012) summarized,

> we know one thing for certain; we are never going to get there doing what we have
> always done. Our traditional school system was created in a time when the typical
> educator worked in a one-room schoolhouse and served as the only teacher for an entire

town. Today it is virtually impossible for a single teacher to possess all the skills and

knowledge necessary to meet the unique needs of every child in the classroom (p. 1).

Viewing classrooms as private places contrasts with research on the improvement of

schools (Glickman et al., 2018). When educators work in the collaborative culture of a learning

community, higher levels of student achievement are fostered (DuFour, 2011). In my study, key

subcategories of communication included the significance of group discussions, peer feedback,

and peer observation, which are explored individually below.

Group Discussions

Participants highlighted the importance of conversations and discussions. They viewed

group discussions as formal with procedures in place. Abram suggested a group-share format,

which would additionally provide peer-to-peer feedback to guide practice or, at the very least,

enhance something teachers are already successful with. He stated that

> [group discussions] provide you with lots of peer-to-peer feedback [with] . . . your
>
> learning team. [They give] you opportunities for significant peer to peer feedback . . . to
>
> guide your practice or . . . enhance something could be used that way. . . . [Group
>
> discussions also] provide the opportunity for . . . peers to maybe suggest strategies that
>
> work for students.

The participants noted that having a focus point or topic as well as the opportunity to

collaborate with peers would not greatly hinder their efficacy.

Additionally, there are more formal structures in place for collaboration. For example,

Peace River School Division has embedded time for staff to engage in collaborative response

(Hewson & Hewson, 2022). The collaborative time is often student focused, has a clear agenda,

and is rigid in its timeline because it is conducted during school hours. Katharina suggested the

use of professional-development days for group discussions, as they cover both professional development and collaboration. "An option could be to share plans," she said, "or differentiation strategies with staff at a PD-day, as long as this is shared in advance with time to prepare."

Glickman et al. (2018) described characteristics of effective groups and found that they are collegial, collaborative, cohesive, and effective at problem-solving. If group discussions have a focus (i.e., differentiated assessment), then other group members can be better prepared and bring artifacts or suggestions to share. The discussion becomes a learning experience for all staff—a time to share—and it provides administrators with an understanding of differentiated-assessment fluency within a group.

Peer Feedback and Peer Observation

Participants mentioned peer observations and peer-to-peer feedback as collaborative structures. Helena referenced how isolated teachers can get in their classrooms, with little opportunity to enter or observe another teacher's class. "We can get closed off in our own little classrooms, especially if we're not teaching [similar] grades, and we don't get to see a variety of different [teaching strategies]." Helena and Katharina both suggested it would be less stressful for a peer to observe a classroom and provide feedback than for a supervisor or principal to do it.

Abram suggested a variety of pedagogical guidance might give teachers more confidence because they can see an issue from many perspectives, ensuring their lesson delivery is effective as it can be.

> If I know that I'm having [my teaching] looked at from other perspectives, that I'm not
>
> missing things, it helps me feel confident that what I'm delivering is effective, and it
>
> will be helpful in the long run. . . . by doing that, I gain . . . more confidence. . . . I think

it helps efficacy in that it gives [the teacher] confidence to know that what [they're]

doing is effective and correct. There's no guesswork to it, more respect.

Principals can grow collective efficacy within a school through peer observation and

peer feedback. According to Bandura (1977), "observing one perform activities which meet

success does, indeed, produce greater behavioural improvements than witnessing the same

performances modeled without any evident consequences" (p. 197). Teachers naturally turn to

each other for help more often than their principals, and the use of teachers helping teachers

through clinical supervision can often be labelled "peer coaching" (Glickman et al., 2018).

Peer coaching is focused on reflective decision-making and requires more planning,

including preparing, scheduling, and troubleshooting (Glickman et al., 2018). The purpose of

peer coaching can also be to acquaint teachers with each other's teaching strategies and assist

them with action plans for instructional improvement (Glickman et al., 2018). The respondents

emphasized the importance of peer collaboration and observation, and there is evidence teachers

would be willing to participate in the many forms of peer coaching described by Glickman et al.

to help improve their overall practice.

Trust

Participants had points of reflection around the theme of trust. They are aware of their

teaching abilities; however, they shared if they were suddenly provoked for teaching and

planning artifacts it would affect trust. Additionally, a sudden increase in formative supervision

would have the participants feeling as though they have broken a level of trust in their teaching

autonomy. Helena referenced her early-career experiences with summative evaluations, which

were marked by so much supervision and evaluation that she became more private. "It became

very anxiety provoking. [It] felt like a lack of trust or being judged. . . . [Some teachers] want to

keep [plans] to themselves . . . because you always feel like you're doing something wrong." Helena said that when she was asked to submit plans to a supervisor in a formative setting, especially if the request came without warning, she felt that she was under attack and that there was a lack of trust. Trust was directly linked to self-efficacy for Helena, and negative supervision experiences impacted her levels of trust.

DuFour (2011) concluded that some teachers prefer privacy and personal autonomy, and their teaching is not a subject for collective discussion. For the most part, teachers do have room for creative freedom. Trusting teachers to do their best in classrooms and supervising them as they do is a delicate balance, as described by Abram. Early in his teaching career, his supervision felt very mechanical, and some aspects of it hindered his lesson delivery. He simply did not feel the same level of trust he went on to have in his current administrator. "I still feel a level of creative freedom and . . . professional discretion. . . . Creativity is great, but creativity can also go a little too far, and supervision . . . help(s) to reign in some of that." Indeed, trust is a critical component to teacher self-efficacy and, ultimately, student success. Adams et al. (2019) concluded, "developing an environment where leaders trust staff, and staff trust leaders, is crucial" (p. 33). Trust can lead teachers to feel confident in their abilities and to try new ways of positively impacting students' learning (Adams et al., 2019).

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a need to revisit the supervision model in order to separate formative supervision from evaluation (Adams et al., 2018). Formative supervision has less structure than summative supervision and evaluation, but it still presents itself to teachers in a summative form. Principals need to not only be aware of learning in classrooms but to provide instructional leadership that enables growth and change. Accepting aged methods of instruction, deliberate

refusals to collaborate, and teacher isolation only hinders students' achievements in the long run. We get what we tolerate; there is no spontaneous recovery from incompetence (Scott, 2009). Principals who are actively engaged in formative supervision, feedback, and collaboration and who are present in classrooms will have a good understanding of the teaching and learning (Glickman et al., 2018).

Walk-throughs and observation cannot provide a clear enough representation of teaching and learning in classrooms (Glickman et al., 2018). Themes emerging from the study were: (a) communication, which included walkthroughs; (b) feedback and teacher fluency; (c) collaboration; (d) group discussions; (e) peer feedback; (f) observations; and (g) trust. Participants said they felt encouraged to share what was happening in their classrooms under the following conditions: (a) communication has to be clear and provide a landscape for open dialogue; (b) teaching and learning experiences have to be shared in a collaborative environment rather than a one-one-one situation; and (c) the principal has to have made efforts to develop feelings of trust in teachers, as trust ultimately leads to teacher efficacy and confidence. According to participants, unclear communication, top-down leadership, a lack of trust, and requests for teaching artifacts all have negative effects on teacher efficacy and potentially lead to teacher burnout. Adams et al. (2018), summarized "supervision is closely connected to professional learning and development, which promotes teachers' lifelong learning and growth mindsets" (p. 11).

Recommendations

Supervision needs to be revisited, to better ensure communication, encourage collaboration and build trust. Participants highlighted the need for improved communication in two areas: increased communication after an observation and the promotion of structured

environments for better open dialogue. Principals should share observations with teachers after a formative walkthrough in person, or participants were suggestive of written feedback that can be revisited. Principals should encourage and arrange for teachers to observe each others' classrooms and provide peer feedback. Timetables can be arranged to provide time for both peer observation and peer feedback and create landscapes for open dialogue among colleagues. Open dialogue creates a more comfortable environment for teachers, builds on their efficacy, and enables trust.

The subject of collaborative practices emerged frequently in this study. Teachers want to visit other classrooms and have colleagues visit theirs. A collaborative approach to sharing teaching artifacts was also a common theme, and additional data show walk-throughs alone do not provide a good enough understanding of teaching and learning in classrooms. School divisions and principals should encourage and support collaborative structures such as professional learning communities and collaborative team meetings through revisiting timetables, providing professional development, and establishing non-negotiables within.

Achieving influence with teachers takes time, and trust. (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Participants shared they are happy to have principals view their classrooms and review plans, so long as there is communication. Participants revealed that a sudden increase in supervision or the sudden need to submit plans, would affect their confidence and increase their anxiety. Increasing trust takes time and can be achieved through building relationships and being more present. Principals should place an emphasis on being present in classrooms, hallways, and school events, and follow up interactions with communication when possible. Teachers will feel confident and better supported once there is a foundation of trust, therefore increasing their self-efficacy.

Further research should focus on how structured environments can further support open dialogue and communication. Additional research should examine how peer observation and peer feedback promotes a collaborative environment through collective supervision. Trust can be researched further, to highlight strategies for principals on how to increase teacher self-efficacy and confidence.

Concluding Remarks

Fostering effective relationships was a focal point at the beginning of my principal journey five years ago (Alberta Education, 2020). As I shifted my attention toward effectively leading a learning community, I wanted to do so without affecting teacher's efficacy or trust and while supporting a school culture of evidence-informed teaching and learning (Alberta Education, 2020).

Qualitative research can take a lot of time. For example, it takes time to recruit participants, communicate the study, attain the ethics approval, and conduct the interviews. It also takes a substantial amount of time to analyze the data and examine emerging themes. This is part of qualitative research and cannot, unfortunately, be minimized, as rushing these procedures affects the credibility and dependability of the study.

I did not want my position to lead to participants withholding data, as I know some of their past and current principals. I fully explained the purpose of the study and the use of pseudonyms to ensure they felt comfortable prior to the interviews. I was also not able to verify the results of this research, as the questions were designed to provoke memories, experiences, and feelings. I followed up responses from the interviews to provoke participants to share examples and ensure confirmability, and the data are truly representative of the experiences of Abram, Helena, and Katharina.

I am thankful to have had the opportunity to interview Abram, Helena, and Katharina to better understand formative supervision and teacher efficacy and to partake in EDPS 509, Research Data Collection and Analysis with Dr. Jose da Costa. This study can better guide administrators seeking to understand teachers' perspectives in formative supervision and provide suggestions for moving forward.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule-Formative Supervision and Teacher Self Efficacy

Teachers are governed by the TQS, Teaching Quality Standard. Similarly, Administrators are also governed under the LQS, Leadership Quality Standard. The TQS outlines planning and assessment, among many other competencies.
Question #1- Can you describe to me what you know about formative supervision, and your current understanding on the role of the administrator as supervisor and are you aware of any policies that guide formative supervision of teachers in schools?

School divisions can have frameworks that guide assessment and instruction. For example, Peace River School Division has numeracy and literacy frameworks, our continuum of supports and division recommended interventions.
Question #2- Describe the positive and negative of prescribed programming, and how it has or would affect your teaching and planning.

Implementation and monitoring of student's goals, as outlined in Individual Program Plans's is part of the teacher's role, as well as the whole learning team.
Question #3- Would you say that generally the goals are monitored and implemented by the classroom teacher, or have you experienced pedagogical guidance from observations conducted by the learning team? Tell me about a time you received pedagogical feedback, how you responded and incorporated the feedback into your teaching. Was this a positive or negative experience?

Teachers need to have fluency in differentiated teaching, assessment, and data analysis to make informed decisions.
Question #4- Some administrators may feel that to have a grasp on teacher's differentiation and assessment methods, they may request that all unit plans and assessments be turned in, before teaching. How would you respond to this type of request, and how would it affect your teaching?

Question #5- Tell me about an experience you had with supervision, which can include your summative evaluations from a school you may have been at previously. What was it like for you, and could you sustain the amount or type of supervision again?

Question #6- Suppose you suddenly had an increase in supervision, which included daily classroom visits, requests to submit short range plans and an increase in one-on-one meetings. Walk me through how this would affect your teacher self efficacy, regarding teaching and planning, and in turn, how it may affect your students.