

## A Call To Action For E-Supervision In Schools: The Quality Assurance Benefits For School Supervisors

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**Abstract:** The various systems of the economy have all experienced various degrees of changes which have been considered a positive development and have tremendously enhanced the quality of service delivery through the emergence and adoption of world technological development. The educational sector is not left out in the adoption of new technologies in the delivery of quality educational services as the bedrock of national development. Supervision of instruction being an instrument for quality assurance in education has experienced tremendous changes, as various forms of technological gadgets has been introduced to ameliorate and ease the rigors of physical/face-to-face supervision, recognized worldwide as electronic supervision (e-supervision). The use of e-supervision helps in demystifying the process of supervision and bridging the gap between supervisors and supervisees, educational authorities and various schools and educational managers/administrators and staff in quality service delivery. However, to effectively benefit from such system, the needed electronic gadgets such as computers (laptops and desktop computers), internet service and the enabling environment and thriving atmosphere must be provided. This paper therefore begins with the concept of supervision and the general roles of supervisors and proceeds to discussion on e-supervision. It also takes a look at requirement for effective e-supervision, e-supervision methods and benefits of e-supervision. Finally, this paper concluded with e-supervision and quality assurance in the context of school administration.

**Keywords:** Supervision, e-supervision, quality assurance, e-supervision methods.

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### INTRODUCTION

Supervision is a cycle of activities between a supervisor and a teacher with the main aim of improving classroom performance (Patrick & Dawson, 1985). Adeniji (2002) opined that instructional supervision is a helping relationship whereby the supervisor guides and assists the teachers to meet the set targets. This definition described instructional supervision from the point of establishing the relationship with stakeholders in school system for the purpose of achieving the set objectives. Similarly, Olagboye (2004) described instructional supervision as a means to help, guide, stimulate and lead teachers through criticism, appraisal and practices in their education and procedures. This definition focuses much on teachers' attitudes over other vital elements that present themselves during the teaching and learning process. Instructional supervision is a service activity that exists to help teachers do their job better (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2001).

Furthermore, Ajani (2001) noted that instructional supervision is a set of activities which are carried out with the purpose of making the teaching and learning better for the learner. It has been observed that instructional supervision is an essential activity for the effective operation of a good school system. In addition, instructional supervision is a behaviour that is officially designed which directly affects teacher behaviour in such a way to facilitate student learning and achieve the goals of the school system. Through the effective supervision of instruction, supervisors can reinforce and enhance teaching practices that will contribute to improved student learning. The foregoing suggested that instructional supervision particularly in secondary schools is basically concerned with supporting and assisting teachers to improve instruction through their changing behaviour.

#### *Who is a Supervisor?:*

Supervisor, according to Hazi (2004), can be described as any certified individual assigned with the responsibility for the direction and guidance of the work of teaching staff members. This implies that supervisor has the role of assisting the teachers to do their work better through collaborative efforts. Pearson (2001) defined supervisor as the mediator between the people and the programme. He designs various methods in performing his function of supervision in order to achieve educational objectives of the institutions under his control. Also, Kiadese (2000) defined supervisor as a person by virtue of his functions, carry out duties, which deals with managing both human and material resources within the school system and how they can be best utilized. In other words, supervisor is expected to assist in the learning environment to maximize the available resources to achieve the set goals. In view of the functions of supervisors in instructional supervision, there is need to discuss the qualities of a good supervisor in a school system. Ogunsaju (1983) identified the following as qualities of a good supervisor, namely: He should be honest, objective, fair and firm; He has to be open and democratic; He

should be approachable; He has to be creative, imaginative and innovative; He has to be a good listener and observer; He should be friendly, courteous and consistent in his interactions with teachers and others; and He should be an educational facilitator. Similarly, Olorunfemi (2008) highlighted the following qualities of an instructional supervisor which include: He must have enough energy and good health; He must have good leadership style; He must possess ability to *get along* with people; He must possess sound knowledge and technical in his own area of specialization; He must develop positive attitude towards management; and He should have good communication skills.

### ***General Roles of School Supervisors:***

The major function of the supervisor is to assist others to become efficient and effective in the performance of the assigned duties. Apart from this general function, supervisors also perform the following roles in the school system especially at the secondary school level.

- ***Instructional leadership:***

Instructional leadership is one of the most important roles of supervisor. Supervisor leads other teachers in instruction to make them as effective as possible. They also lead teachers in developing and implementing an effective plan of instruction. Supervisors have to adapt to meet the needs of the people and the particular environment rather than practice a normative kind of leadership. Instructional leaders improve the quality of instruction by furthering professional growth for all teachers. Supervisors should be flexible enough to deal with any situation and should maintain a good relationship with their staff.

- ***Assessing student progress:***

A supervisor assesses students' progress toward the established standards by the regulatory agencies, and also facilitates the planning of various types of instruction. Supervisors ensure that teachers are utilizing information from a variety of valid and appropriate sources before they begin the planning of lessons or teaching. Supervisors determine if teachers are using the numerous evaluation processes available to assist in planning meaningful instruction.

The Supervisors ensure that teachers are preparing and maintaining adequate and accurate records of student's progress. This will include the regular and systematic recording of meaningful data regarding students' progress on specific concepts and skills related to the standards for each subject for the grade level they are teaching. In addition, Kiadese (2000) identified the following roles of supervisor in the school system.

### ***Planning:***

The supervisor needs to apply the planning principles to the supervision from the beginning in order to ensure the aims of supervision are attained. The planning principles involve the articulation of objectives, selecting of the best strategies, mapping out of policies, programmes and procedures that would best help in achieving the stated objectives.

### ***Staffing:***

The supervisor is expected to identify through the process of supervision, staff vacancies in terms of grades and disciplines in accordance with the organization structure of the school.

### ***Coordination:***

The supervisor is expected by this function to co-ordinate the efforts of all participants and ensure that by so doing, decision making becomes a collective responsibility.

### ***Observation:***

The supervisor is expected to observe management, staff and students at work during a typical supervision session. Thus, in a bid to help improve observed habits and standards, the supervisor should through consultation, offer advice to the participants in the school system.

### ***Curriculum development:***

In view of the level of involvement of supervisors in the school activities, they can however through observations make useful suggestions which can help the process of curriculum development in the country.

Similarly, Kathleen (2006) summarized the roles of supervisor in this way:

- i. Monitoring or providing for mentoring of beginning teachers to facilitate a supportive induction into the profession.
- ii. Bringing individual teachers up to minimum standards of effective teaching (quality assurance and maintenance functions of supervision).
- iii. Improving individual teachers' competencies, no matter how proficient they are deemed to be.

- iv. Working with groups of teachers in a collaborative effort to improve student learning.
- v. Working with groups of teachers to adapt the local curriculum to the needs and ability of diverse groups of students, while at the same time bringing the local curriculum in line with state and national standards.
- vi. Relating teachers' efforts to improve their teaching to the larger goals of school-wide improvement in the service of quality learning for all students.

However, educational supervision is one of the most important supports upon which the educational process is based. It is the main nursery of this process with all its aspects and components, such as the student, teacher, principal, and educational supervisor, as all these are complementary one to the other. One of the most of these is the educational supervisor, who is the sponsor of the process. He is the educational leader, who grasps the objectives sought to be realized, and works toward improving the learning-teaching process as well as developing it, to keep up with the accelerating information and communication technology in the digital age. The concept of the educational supervision developed and is no longer limited to "inspect" the teachers' performance or "evaluate" their works. Rather, it grew into a technical process aiming at preparing conditions for the continual teachers' development. It further aims at improving the learning-teaching process; and it requires cooperative efforts and group work, shared by all those concerned in the educational process interest. This process became more depending on planning, organizing and evaluating.

The educational supervision is an integral part of the educational management, and is one of the important transactions in the educational system, especially in the learning and teaching processes. Even, it is deemed the cornerstone of developing the educational process of all its aspects, by assisting the teachers to improve their professional and personal growth through the use of various supervision methods. These methods include, for instance, classroom visits, educational workshops, study seminars, and training courses, in the light of the actual needs of the teachers. Educational management is in need for the educational supervision which serves as feedback to help in unveiling the errors, treating them, and developing the educational performance inside schools. Educational supervision is concerned in the student and the teacher equally, as well as in the method, in an ongoing interaction manner between the supervisor and the teacher, for the aim of improving the teaching and learning processes (Al-Saud, 2007). The importance of the educational supervision stems of the concrete need for a permanent development system of education, and activating it in an educational field, as predetermined by the planned educational objectives. This will be only realized through a successful principal or supervisor, since supervision is the joining circle between all the educational inputs. Therefore, it is inevitably perceived that this system should be developed so as the education will achieve its optimal goal that is building the human based on the important status of the supervision in the educational process (Al-Ghamidi, 2011).

Supervision importance further increases at this very time as a result of the accelerating changes the world experiencing in all life walks, as well as the information and technological developments in the education field. These developments were referred to by Safar (2008). This mandates many of the stakeholders in the supervision domain call for developing it from the old styles into information technology based styles, through an interaction process between the supervisor and the teacher, on one hand, and the supervisors themselves on the other. The aim is improving their performance to reach the ultimate goal, i.e. improving the educational process in which the student is the pivotal concern. The increasing social demand on education, and the speed of the changes and renovations introduced into the managerial systems, supervision process grew more complicated. This is because the renovation practices and leading today schools cannot be achieved through traditional methods which became contrary to the contemporary visions of the supervisors about the school role in a changing world. Thus, this managerial revolution, which is the offspring of the informational technology, created a state of administrative motion aiming at finding new alternatives to underline the difficulties that obstacle the supervision processes. It is inescapable to find new alternatives to deal with these difficulties and remove them, to ensure the school dynamicity in an age in which the constant variable is the change itself (Atallah, 2011).

#### ***E-Supervision:***

Supervision is defined as collection of the elements of direction, guidance, oversight and coordination of the activities of trainees. According to Jutta (2006), supervision can be defined as a process of advice, information and learning for social work. Learning means applied learning as well as cognitive learning. Normally the process takes place face to face. On the other hand e-Supervision offers a way of a person's supervisor to supervise that person at geographically distant sites. E-supervision can also be considered as virtual supervision as supervisors are connected to the wide spread organizations virtually. Samuel (2006) presented about the virtual supervision of engineering graduate students. Particularly in education it also provides an opportunity for enhanced collaboration between the supervisors, teachers, students and their schools.

In addition, Jutta (2006) described e-supervision as a process of learning, cognition and understanding. It gives new perspectives for acting as a professional. It is training on professional behavior and personality development, to find the role, to develop self-consciousness and enforcement. E-supervision involves the

utilization of videoconferencing technology in delivery of real-time clinical supervision. The e-supervisor is physically housed in a location that is different from the supervisee's. The videoconferencing technology allows the e-supervisor to observe a variety of professional activities. During these observations, the e-supervisor has the ability to see, hear, and evaluate the supervisees' performance during the delivery of interventions, assessments, and other professional activities.

E-Supervision system, in its simplifying version, is a web-based system using multi-agents technologies with client/server approach to access and receive information from databases to help supervisors and supervisees in their activities. It will facilitate with many issues such as reduce visiting to schools, increase time to do administrative works, easy access all information about the teachers & their working. In addition, it will increase the communications with the teachers on any issue.

Supervision today can be undertaken through two major ways; traditional face to face and e-supervision. In many respects today both supervision ways have been utilized to increase on the chances of providing effective guidance. However e-supervision has been increasingly adopted within higher institutions of learning for several purposes. It is been adopted due to the increasing large numbers of students, increased number of distant collaborations, availability of technology and appreciation of technology by the educational society. In order to have e-supervision effectively adopted, there is need of full commitment from all stakeholders concerned. This commitment can only be offered when the stakeholders are aware of what needs to be undertaken. In many occasions e-supervision is carried out unknowingly hence not receiving the expected and required commitment.

#### ***E-Supervision Users:***

The users include supervisor and supervisee who are continuously interacting with each other in several forms. These two types of people initiate a form of agreed upon interaction that they use during the supervision process. The supervisor has the role of initiating most of the interaction methods that could be used during the supervision process. Many times the supervisor contacts the supervisee with suggestions on how the supervision process could be carried out (Pearson & Brew, 2002). The supervisor has the role of formulating and maintaining the supervisory bond, creating an orientation to the supervision process, resolve conflicts and support the supervisee in any way. The supervisee has the role of making sure that the interactions within the supervision process are effective at all times, learning without resistance, create Collaboration Avenue, monitor progress and publish research findings (Vespia, Heckman-Stone & Delworth, 2002). The supervisee oversees the supervision schedule so that they take more responsibility of the process. With the different roles undertaken supervision can be enhanced through the existing prior factors.

#### ***Requirements For An Effective E-Supervision:***

According to Lubega and Niyitegeka (2010), in order to have an effective e-supervision there is need for prior planning that involves setting up a technological infrastructure, social atmosphere, communication, solidarity, time schedule, prompt of response and respect for members.

#### ***Technological infrastructure:***

This refers to the hardware and software that are necessary for the e-supervision to occur. Before e-supervision can take place both the supervisor and supervisee should have access to a computer fully connected to the internet and containing an appropriate operating system such Microsoft Windows. Sometimes all stakeholders may utilize specific application software such as Microsoft Office, Adobe Editor for making additions, deletions to the documents.

#### ***Social Atmosphere:***

This refers to the acceptance of use of technology for learning within the community where e-supervision is being introduced. In many societies use of technology to enhance learning has not yet been appreciated for fear of replacing the traditional teachers. Therefore for e-supervision to effectively occur the society should have good feelings about its contribution to education. Technology appreciation by the educational society can be demonstrated through its adequate adoption for both teaching and learning.

#### ***Solidarity:***

This refers to the harmony that has been created between the supervisor and supervisee on the entire process of e-supervision. There is need of harmonizing the entire supervision activities, virtual meeting schedules, response format plus other guidelines. Without a shared vision on how to achieve the stipulated research goals, both supervisor and supervisee can hardly embark on this challenging process of supervision. Therefore it is very important for them to have a work plan that will be adhered to during e-supervision.

***Prompt Response:***

This refers to replying to your counterpart in the shortest time possible when contacted. Many times communication between people at a distance fails due to late replies. During e-supervision communication between the supervisor and supervisee has to be immediate to avoid being misunderstood. When communication is not done on time, participants lose trust in the entire process.

***Time Schedule:***

This refers to the routine like forms of planned supervision meeting that are agreed upon by both supervisor and supervisee. Before e-supervision can be effectively undertaken by both the supervisor and supervisee, the need to plan when and at what time they will meet for the supervision is a critical success factor. If any of the members abuses this time schedule or violates its existence, the implications are loss of trust and commitment.

***E-supervision Methods:***

There are several methods that have been identified to help in the e-supervision process and can be categorized under synchronous and asynchronous.

***Synchronous category:***

This includes all methods where both the supervisor and supervisee interact in real-time during the e-supervision. There is immediate contact and response between the supervisor and supervisee. This category has methods such as chat room and online telephone (e.g. Skype). Chatrooms are electronic tools for real-time communication where by two or more people interactively write to each other and receive immediate response. These tools have restrictive content editors that allow a specific number of lines to be typed at a time and never store the content after the chat. Online Telephone is an online communication that involves two participating members talking to each other through online tools such as skype. This is a cheap form of communication through the internet and requires participating members to share user ids for identification.

***Asynchronous category:***

This is one that involves the supervisor and supervisee communicating to each other and do not receive immediate reply. Such communication faces challenges of slowness to respond, ignoring of communication as well as members being impatient. This method has categories such as e-mails, wikis/blogs, discussion boards, forums and e-research groups. The aim of this method is for the members to contribute to the e-supervision and receive a reply at a later stage. This method is very common today and is thought to be effective especially when both supervisor and supervisee are distant apart. A blend of the components within the model contributes to a successful e-supervision process and can effectively influence research performance. With many students today undertaking ICT related modules, it is quite easy to utilize the form of e-supervision.

***Expertise Required for Effective E-supervision:***

E-supervision in online perspective requires several expertise. Gary (1998) described the requirements of effective online supervision in perspective of supervisor and supervisee as follows:

- Have skill in navigating online.
- Have basic typing and spelling skills.
- Be able to express self in the written word.
- Be able to express concepts/ideas without the use of non-verbal cues.
- Have excellent communication skills.

***Benefits of E-Supervision:***

Using e-Supervision can provide several benefits such as using technical resources, coordination between the supervisors and supervisees, and better management. Gary (1998) stated that with the ability to supervise from his or her office, the supervisor can make efficient use of the time when he or she is not directly supervising. It is easier for supervisors, teachers, and other employees to check on multiple information at the click of a button (Olga, 2003). E-Supervision facilities speed up supervision cycle and increase the efficiency of these processes, as large variety of information management (Olga, 2003). According to Jutta (2006), everybody takes as much time as necessary to work out the questions, to write about problems and to give or to reflect feedback.

***E-Supervision and Quality Assurance:***

Quality according to Gatewood et al. (1995) is the degree to which a good service meets the standards and requirements of the market place. It means excellence, value and reliability. In educational sense, it means conformity with specification, it is meeting and / or exceeding parents and students expectations; and it is

satisfying and delighting parents and pupils students. The focus is on nothing less than optimum quality as perceived by parents and students (Ojo, 2003).

Babalola (2004) stated that quality of education is the worth of education (with reference to its input, the teaching- learning process and the output/ outcome). It is measured against set standards and could either be seen as below, exactly or as above a given standard. Babalola went further to explain that, the quality could be poor, just as expected, excellent or exceptional. When it is exactly as it ought to be, we say it is an expected quality. Above the standard, we say it is either excellent or exceptional. Quality of input refers to the worth of teachers, trainees, textbooks, technology of delivery, and tasks or curriculum. Quality of the process deals with the worth of teaching learning process that involves lesson plans, delivery methods, classroom organization and control, student-teacher inter actions, pupils' participation, assessment and evaluation, marking etc. Quality of outcome and output involves the academic achievement and attainment, value added through education, results of internal and external examinations, etc. Quality of environment involves the work of all environmental factors and sanitation etc. Since education is seen and regarded as service to the society and as such a predominant force in our society. The services it renders must be good and qualitative. Good service does not just happen by chance; it must be planned and managed, from the design to the delivery, from maintaining efficient operations to ensuring that the quality is both high and insistent quality assurance therefore deals with the proactive means of ensuring quality inputs, quality through outputs, quality outcome, quality academic achievements of pupils and the environment before things get out of hands (Babalola, 2004). It aims at preventing quality problems and ensuring that only conforming products reach the customers. This is in contrast to quality control which aims at remediating an existing or recouping problem within the system. Quality Assurance in Education therefore involves in a broad sense the prevention of quality problems through planned and systematic activities. This prevention strategy concentrates all the attention on the front end of the process—the inputs-and changes emphasis to making sure that the inputs are capable of meeting the requirements of the process. Quality Assurance therefore provides a set of rules which if followed, can provide for more effective ways of operating a viable educational enterprise; it will permit eradication of the demanding nuisance or idiot view of customers, which is pervasive in many other organizations.

#### **Conclusion:**

The management of supervisee's activities and students projects and dissertations is time consuming and many faceted, and it is difficult to ensure that the student experience is of a uniform high standard. An e-supervision system will no doubt immensely help supervisors and administrators check supervisee/students' progress each year. All communication between supervisees/students and their supervisor is included in the e-supervision system, including uploads, details of meetings and student/supervisee blogs. A dashboard for supervisors shows progress of their supervisee, with easy access to all communication between them and their supervisee, and a dashboard for administrators shows the progress of all supervisee. This system for monitoring activities has had many benefits for both staff and students, and is part of the e-supervision monitoring environment. The transparency of the system, whereby all staff can view the progress of all supervisee, will develop a sense of community between supervisor involved in the supervision and the supervisees, and will give quality assurance benefits.

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