

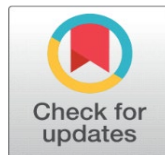
THE NATURE AND IMPACT OF THE SUPERVISORY BEHAVIOURS OF SCHOOL HEADS ON THE CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The study adopted the constructivist philosophical assumptions in examining the nature and impact of the supervisory behaviours of junior high school head teachers on the culture of teaching and learning within the Sagnarigu Municipality, Tamale, Ghana. A case study research design was employed along with the qualitative research approach. The study's population comprised all the junior high school head teachers and teachers under the Sagnarigu Municipality. The convenience sampling technique was used to select twenty (20) teachers and ten (10) head teachers, making a sample size of thirty (30) participants. Face-to-face in-depth individual interviews were conducted using open-ended questions. Ten (10) head teachers and twenty (20) teachers were chosen from ten (10) junior high schools in the Sagnarigu Municipality using a convenient sampling approach. The total sampling size was thirty (30) participants. Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Municipal Education Office. Data were collected through face-to-face in-depth individual interviews using the Pen-and-Paper Personal method. The collected data were analysed using a thematic analytical method.

Keywords: Supervisory Behaviours, Culture of Teaching and Learning, Collegial and Collaborative Supervision

1. INTRODUCTION

Supervision under the management task of directing has received attention both in scholarly and policy circles [Harris et al. \(2013\)](#), [Sun and Leithwood \(2015\)](#), [Al Khajeh \(2018\)](#). In everyday parlance, supervision refers to the act of providing

instructions and guiding people to carry out institutional goals set. In the context of management of an organisation, supervision refers to the process of instructing, guiding, counselling, motivating, and leading employees in the organisation to achieve its objectives [Adu et al. \(2014\)](#). [Ekyaw \(2014\)](#) defines instructional supervision as a cycle of actions between a teacher and a supervisor to improve instruction and students' academic performance.

Supervision is one of the key managerial functions and processes performed by every manager to provide effective instructional oversight, guidance, and direction to workers toward goal attainment [Mankoe \(2007\)](#). Educational supervision helps teachers to develop an open, skilful attitude and to connect their souls with their work as educators [Sergiovanni and Starratt \(2006\)](#). It becomes clear that supervision provides assistance and guidance when used to direct, coordinate, develop, guide, and regulate others in achieving the school's goals [Sergiovanni and Starratt \(2006\)](#).

According to [Mofareh \(2011\)](#), the school head provides the most crucial supervision, monitoring, and direction in the educational environment. Whether internal or external, educational supervision ought to be viewed as a deliberate effort meant to enhance the educational outcomes of every institution [Adu et al. \(2014\)](#). Educational supervisions are carried out by the school heads to give teachers one-on-one feedback to enhance their professional competence and instruction [Glickman et al. \(2014\)](#). This is why [Hunsaker \(2009\)](#), mentioned that the school head teacher ensures that school goals are reached and the teachers receive regular feedback and guidance on how to improve teaching and learning. According to [Gachoya \(2005\)](#), teacher effectiveness is strongly dependent on head teachers' constant supervision and execution of directory roles.

The substantial problems to many educational systems around the world posed by Global educational policies and programs (Such as Education for All (EFA), Universal Primary Education (UPE), and Universal Secondary Education (USE)) can be overcome through effective instructional supervision, monitoring and directing that have the power to ensuring the security, sustainability, and survival of education systems world-wide [Olssen \(2006\)](#)

School heads' supervisory roles in ensuring a culture of teaching and learning have been recognized across the globe [Oketcho et al. \(2019\)](#), [Adeyemi \(2013\)](#), [Mbon, \(2017\)](#). In education, previous studies have examined the supervision of teaching and learning as a management task [Gachoya \(2005\)](#), [Oketcho et al. \(2019\)](#), [Lesomo \(2013\)](#), [Adeyemi \(2013\)](#). Despite the global recognition of teacher supervision in schools, the quality of school heads' supervisory behaviours and activities geared toward achieving a culture of teaching and learning in schools is of concern to stakeholders. This is why [Gachoya \(2005\)](#) claimed that the school head, as a supervisor, should supervise curriculum activities, including staff development initiatives

In Ghana, studies have been conducted on the role of school heads in teacher supervision, but in the Sagnarigu Municipality, such studies are few. Given the importance of a school head's supervision of teaching and learning activities in schools, this study examined the nature and impact of the supervisory behaviours of school heads on the culture of teaching and learning in junior high schools within the Sagnarigu Municipality.

The paper is organised as follows: Section One deals with the theoretical framework. Section Two presents the research method and design employed, while the results and discussions are presented in Section Four. The last section, Section Five, presents the conclusion and recommendations.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Developmental Supervision Theory guided this study. Based on the Developmental Supervisory Theory, a supervisor's role shifts from an expert role to a facilitator role [Strieker, Adams, Cone, Hubbard, and Lim \(2016\)](#). In Developmental Supervision, the relationships between teachers and supervisors are collegial, cooperative, and nondirective [Zellermayer and Margolin \(2005\)](#). In Developmental Supervision, supervisors are more flexible in shifting their approaches to meet the professional and pedagogical needs of the teachers because they operate at varying levels of ability, effectiveness, and conceptual understanding [Strieker et al. \(2016\)](#). The theory advocates for school heads as supervisors to be listeners, non-judgmental, clarifiers, and encouragers of teacher decisions in the supervisory relations [Glickman \(1980\)](#). This is because some teachers will tend to function in a rigid, shallow, imitative way and then move from being beginner teachers to more competent, self-assured, and self-reliant teachers ([Stoltenberg, McNeil and Delworth \(1998\)](#)).

The theory emphasizes the need for supervisors to create a safe net where teachers can engage in establishing professional goals, self-improvement plans, and think critically about teaching and learning [Glickman et al. \(2014\)](#), [Siens and Ebmeier \(1996\)](#). The notion of Developmental Supervisory Theory is that teachers as individuals are continuously growing along the progressive stages of being beginner teachers, intermediate teachers, and advanced or expert teachers; as such, supervision should help to maximise and identify their growth needs for the future [Australian Institute of Professional Counselors \(2025\)](#), [Bernard and Goodyear \(1998\)](#), [Stoltenberg, and Delworth \(1987\)](#). School heads as supervisors, when employing the Developmental Supervisory Theory, should accurately identify the individual teacher's current stage of development for the provision of appropriate feedback and support [Australian Institute of Professional Counselors \(2025\)](#), [Stoltenberg, and Delworth \(1987\)](#).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the constructivist philosophical assumptions in examining the nature and impact of the supervisory behaviours of school heads on the culture of teaching and learning from the participants perspectives [Duffy and Dik \(2013\)](#). The qualitative research approach was applied [Maree \(2007\)](#), [Welman et al. \(2005\)](#), and the design used is the case study to describe the phenomena of interest [Denzin \(2008\)](#), [McLeod \(2008\)](#). The study's population comprised all the Junior High School head teachers and teachers under the Sagnarigu Municipality.

The convenience sampling technique was used to select twenty (20) teachers and ten (10) head teachers, making a sample size of thirty (30) participants. Face-to-face in-depth individual interviews were conducted using open-ended questions [Mohammed et al. \(2023\)](#), [Neuman \(2003\)](#). Participants' direct words and expressions were captured using the Pen-and-Paper Personal method. Rich information. Data were analysed using a thematic analytical method [Caulfield \(2022\)](#), [Mohammed et al. \(2023\)](#).

4. RESULTS

The results and discussions based on the study objective are (i) collegial and collaborative supervisory behaviours of school heads, (ii) supervisory actions that

impact positively on teaching and learning, (iii) frequent and consistent supervisory activities, (iv) benefits of continuous supervisory actions and (v) effects of a decline in supervisory activities

5. DISCUSSIONS

Discussions based on the results of the study are presented below:

1) Collegial and Collaborative Supervisory Behaviours of School Heads

The study revealed that school heads who are open-minded and act as supervisors have demonstrated adequate collegial supervisory relations with teachers. The school heads exhibit good relations with teachers when carrying out their supervisory activities, they are proactive in performing their supervisory roles, they are approachable, open-minded, friendly, kind, and sober to teachers as supervisees. A teacher mentioned that: *The attitude of school heads towards initiating supervisory actions is collaborative and collegial, which makes teachers want to work effectively.* To concur with these findings, [Glickman \(1980\)](#) explained that in collaborative supervision, school heads are more equal with teachers in areas of presenting, interacting, and contracting on mutually planned changes.

It was found that some school heads vet teachers' lesson notes professionally and collegially and visit teachers to supervise their lessons in class as colleagues and provide teachers with teaching aids where necessary. The school heads follow the Ghana Education Service laid down procedures of carrying out clinical and collegial supervision, which help encourage teachers to embrace supervisory activities and to work more effectively. A head teacher claimed that: *We the school heads, are professionals; we treat teachers as colleagues and cooperate with them in terms of initiating supervisory actions in schools.* The finding is in line with the study of [Sergiovanni and Starratt \(2006\)](#), and [Ekyaw \(2014\)](#), who indicated that supervision is a cycle of actions where school heads are more concerned with collaborating with teachers in supervising teaching and learning activities to improve students' academic achievement and total school functionality.

It was also revealed that the heads of schools, in terms of supervision, are diplomatic and apply the persuasive engagement with staff, they engage teachers in discussing their strengths and weaknesses after supervision, and the way forward to achieving effective teaching and learning. A head teacher's voice was that: *As school heads, we try to be diplomatic when supervising our teachers' work so they feel welcomed and relaxed as colleagues.* [Mankoe \(2007\)](#) concurs with the findings when they mentioned that, as one of the key managerial functions and processes, school heads provide constructive and effective instructional supervision to teachers, guide and direct them toward school goal attainment.

The school head's interactions with teachers in supervisory activities are cordial, calm, accepting, focused, attentive, and collaborative. They cooperate with teachers in terms of initiating supervisory actions in schools, they relate well with teachers, and make their intentions known to the teachers. A teacher was found mentioning that: *The head has a very positive attitude in initiating supervisory actions that encourage teachers to work even when he is not around.* Concerning these findings, [Sergiovanni and Starratt \(2006\)](#) opined that school heads, when carrying out their supervisory activities, relate well with teachers, develop an open, skilful attitude with them, provide assistance and coordinate their activities in a friendly and professional manners in achieving the school's goals.

2) Supervisory Actions that Impact Positively on Teaching and Learning

The study revealed the following supervisory actions and behaviours of school heads as those that have positive impact on the culture of teaching and learning in schools. These actions and behaviours are: frequent checking of how teachers treat learners, monitoring of teachers' punctuality to school, their classroom engagement and use of instructional time, timely vetting of teachers' lesson plan, visiting and supervising of teachers' lessons in class, checking of pupils' attendance, exercises, notes and performance in class. A head teacher expressed that: *Some of our actions that can influence teaching and learning are monitoring activities in class including teaching, learners' performance and teacher behaviours towards learners.* This is why in Kenya, Jonyo and Jonyo (2019), and in Ghana, Abdulai et al. (2022) mentioned that supervisory activities are designed to assist school heads observe teaching and learning activities and to assist teachers develop professionally.

It was also revealed that school heads tendency of holding regular meetings with teachers, motivating them, treating them as professionals and colleagues, giving them words of encouragement, criticizing and appreciating where necessary and placing emphasis on pupil's academic achievements are some of the supervisory actions and behaviours of school heads that do have positive impact on the culture of teaching and learning in schools. A teacher indicated that *the supervisory behaviors by school heads that influence teaching and learning are motivating teachers, giving them words of encouragement, criticizing and appreciating their work where necessary.* This finding has been supported by Abdulai et al. (2022) that there would be improvement and teaching and learning when school supervisors check and vet teachers' lesson notes, monitor teachers' school attendance and punctuality, monitor classroom delivery, students' assessments and give constructive feedback to teachers.

3) Frequent and Consistent Supervisory Activities

The study also found head teachers' supervision of teaching and learning activities in schools to be consistent and continuous. It was revealed that some of the school heads do carry out routine and regular supervision that is either daily, weekly, termly, once-off activity in a year, or at any time the need arises. A teacher said the following words: *To influence your teachers to work effectively as a head teacher, your supervisory activities should be continuous and devoid of favoritism.* A head teacher also mentioned that: *I sometimes do carry out weekly and termly supervision of the teaching and learning activities in this school, but some heads do it termly.* This is why Abdulai et al. (2022) claimed regular teacher supervision impacts the culture of teaching and learning and how teachers reflect on how they teach.

4) Adequate Supervisory Skill Sets of School Heads

The study further revealed that some of the school heads possess adequate supervisory skill sets to enable them to carry out their supervisory duties effectively. It was revealed that the school heads have been excellent in the performance of their supervisory activities as a result of the skills they possessed. Such skills include good leadership, the ability to motivate teachers, listen to teachers, collaborate with teachers, being diplomatic, tactical, and a good communicator. A teacher opined that: *I will rank the head high for exhibiting his supervisory skills to keep the teachers on their toes, some heads are poor, others heads are very good and some are excellent, good, very skillful and tactical and some use good diplomacy while others employ autocracy, which does not work.* A head teacher claimed that: *We are experienced supervisors, we have a lot of skills that include*

leadership skills, listening skills, and how to work with teachers during supervision. Abdulai et al. (2022), Guthrie and Reed (1991) support this finding by stating that school heads should have the competency to ensure effective teaching and learning through effective supervision of teachers work, school heads should have adequate skills in terms of the content teachers teach and how to conduct class visitation and observation.

5) Benefits of Continuous Supervisory Actions

The study also found the following to be the benefits derived from effective school heads' supervision. These are: teacher and learner punctuality and attendance, ensures effective classroom management, effective scheduled of teaching activities, brings about daily writing of lesson notes and leads to teachers giving learners exercises in class after teaching, and also leads to prompt marking of exercises. What a teacher said was that: *It serves as a reminder to teachers and learners that the school head will visit classes and so they should attend school, teach and assess the learners, and mark their exercises.* A head teacher claimed that: *Effective supervision of teachers' work has the potential to make teachers attend school all the time, write their lesson notes, teach effectively, and assess learners.* To confirm this finding, Abdulai et al. (2022), and Kayıkçı et al. (2017) claimed teacher effective teacher supervision will put proper checks on teachers' work and commitment.

It was also found that teacher supervision can result to putting teachers on their toes, promotes teachers' commitment and hard work, increases outcomes of teaching and learning, ensure teachers teach the right content, and improve teacher and learner participation in extra-curricular activities. The voice of a head teacher was: *Teachers are closely monitored, which brings them on their toes, and we also ensure full teacher participation in lesson delivery, which leads to high learning outcomes.* Baffour (2011), and Kholid and Rohmatika (2019) have confirmed the above findings when they highlighted that realistic supervision of teaching and learning activities improves teachers' classroom practices and a high level of students' academic performance.

Again, expressions from a teacher were that: I think the school head's supervision of our work has made some of us committed, follow the syllabi when teaching, and also participate in some school extra-curricular activities. To corroborate this finding, Goldhaber (2006), Glanz et al. (2007), Kageha (2008), and Abdulai et al. (2022) explained that school heads' supervision of teaching and learning activities should lead to teacher motivation, improve on their pedagogical competence and students' academic success.

6) Effects of a Decline in Supervisory Activities

Last but not least, the following were also found to be the effects and repercussions of a weak and a declined supervisory activity in schools: Teachers become reluctant to carry out teaching activities, learners' performance drops, there is lack of effective teaching and learning, there is absenteeism, lateness and irregular school attendance by both teachers and learners, lack of discipline, poor teacher and learner motivation. A teacher mentioned that: *Ineffective school heads' supervision makes teachers lazy and ineffective, there is lateness and absence from school by teachers leading to inefficiency in lesson delivery, a decline in attitude results in a lukewarm attitude by staff.* An opinion from a school head was: *If a school head does not do proper supervision, the results include poor academic performance of the learners, educational policies are wrongly implemented and teaching and learning are affected, and some co-curricular activities will not be carried out.* To concur this finding, Abdulai et al. (2022), and Kassahun (2014) warned that weak and irregular

supervisory practices create a school system where there is low level of teacher moral, high level of absenteeism, lateness and teacher deviations from what should be taught, which subsequently impact negatively on students' academic success.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, junior high school head teachers within the Sagnarigu Municipality, Tamale, Ghana, foster collegial and corroborative supervision by being approachable, open-minded, and professional in their interactions with teachers. These professional interactions enhance teachers' motivation and effectiveness. Some of the supervisory actions carried out by the school heads include monitoring of punctuality, vetting of lesson notes, observing class lessons, and monitoring students' performance, which positively help to shape the culture of teaching and learning; thus, ensuring instructional quality and students' academic achievement in schools. The daily, termly, and ongoing supervision of teaching and learning activities plays a crucial role in maintaining accountability and instructional effectiveness, promotes teacher commitment, content accuracy, creates a culture of continuous improvement, and ultimately benefits students.

School heads with adequate supervisory skills set that include strong leadership, good communication good interpersonal skills are better able to perform their supervisory duties effectively and diplomatically. Last but not least, a decline in supervisory activities in schools result in teacher laxity, poor classroom delivery, decline in students' performance, a weakening in the general school discipline, impacts on motivation and attendance negatively, and the overall quality of education.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ghana Education Service should work with leadership experts to train all school heads on how to implement collegial and collaborative supervision, and they should also be made to understand the significance of collegial and collaborative supervision in the education system. Experienced supervisors in the education system should also be contacted by the GES to help train all school heads on how to monitor teachers' punctuality, classroom engagement, use of instructional time, vetting of lesson notes, visiting and observing lessons in class.

It is also recommended that school heads, as supervisors, should carry out routine and regular supervision and cultivate the habit of holding regular meetings with teachers, motivating them, treating them as professionals and colleagues, giving them words of encouragement, criticizing and appreciating where necessary, and placing emphasis on students' academic achievements.

The GES should also conduct an in-service training to equip school heads with adequate supervisory skill sets, such as good leadership, the ability to motivate teachers, communicate, listen to teachers, collaborate with teachers, be diplomatic, and be tactical in carrying out all supervisory activities in schools. Last but not the least, the Ghana Education Service should conduct awareness creation workshop for all school heads to draw their attentions to the dire consequences and repercussions of a declined teacher supervision that include teacher reluctance to carry out teaching activities, drop in learners' performance, lack of effective teaching and learning, absenteeism, lateness and irregular school attendance by both teachers and learners, lack of discipline, and poor teacher and learner motivation.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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