

SUPERVISORY BEHAVIOR IN EDUCATION

THIRD EDITION

BEN M. HARRIS

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PREFACE

This volume, like its predecessors published in 1963 and 1975, deals with the theory, research, and evolving concepts of supervision of instruction. This edition is concerned in some depth with strategies and practices for promoting instructional change as well as responding to the persistent issues surrounding public education in most countries. The research base for defining and guiding supervisory behavior is now substantial. The theory building of earlier years in human relations, organizations, communications, power and influence, leadership, and teaching now provide a skeleton on which modest, but useful, models for supervision can be built. This volume attempts to move supervision of instruction from the stage of a craft to that of a professional specialization.

The writer sees supervision as one of the essential functions of the school operation. The supervision function has assumed unprecedented importance in recent decades. A 30-year epoch of educational change has produced only modest results. Gradually it is coming to be seen that systems that are permitted to change themselves in unplanned or erratic ways spawn many unfortunate side effects. Human organizations require human agents of change. Complex school organizations require a cadre of highly skilled personnel designing and implementing sophisticated programs of instructional im-

provement. The part-time amateur supervisor is being replaced by demands for full-time expert change agent teams.

Part I (Chapters 1–8) is the heart and core of this book, as it attempts to view supervision of instruction as a major unique function of the school operation, defines terms, analyzes strategies, and presents alternative approaches. In each chapter the current literature is heavily drawn upon; but the intent is synthesis, not a cataloging of ideas. The writer has endeavored in these eight chapters to provide a comprehensive way of viewing, analyzing, and conceptualizing supervisory behavior in educational organizations.

Part II (Chapter 9–11) is supplementary as well as complementary to the basic presentations in earlier chapters. The case material in the final three chapters illustrates a variety of practices—some new, some old, some innovative, some routine. The reader may find the cases useful as aids in translating theory into practice.

This book was written with several kinds of readers in mind. Uppermost in the writer's consciousness was the instructional supervisor (of whatever job title or position). The book is also addressed to superintendents, deans, college presidents, and school principals. These administrators are all engaged in supervision of instruction in various ways. The administrators are addressed by this writer for still another reason. Their success in administering instructional organizations in these changing times will depend substantially on their understanding of the supervision function and their ability to facilitate the more dynamic forms of supervisory behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most of the substance of this book has been filtered from the writer's many experiences with administrators, supervisors, and teachers over the years. The extensive bibliographical listings cited are a bit misleading in suggesting the importance of the literature. The people and programs this writer has been involved with range from Bank Street College in New York to Punaho School, Hawaii; to Iran and Puerto Rico and Cordova, Spain, and Caracas, Venezuela; to schools in the Rio Grande Valley, to Houston, Corpus Christi, New Iberia, Enterprise, Montgomery, and Atlanta through the South; and, of course, to Lufkin, Temple, Dripping Springs, Post, Fort Worth, Baytown, and so many other exciting Texas schools. In each of these places and many more, the writer has been privileged to work with people, share ideas, and see programs for improving instruction in action. There is no practical way to acknowledge each of these individuals and institutions, but the debt is enormous nonetheless.

My many graduate students in seminar, laboratory, and internship are always a major source of ideas. Most of the case material in this volume in-

volves a student, past or present, as narrator, player, scriptwriter, or director. A few of the citations are based on student dissertations. Many student contributions to this book are given specific acknowledgment in the text; others are given the advantages of anonymity.

One's family always makes a contribution to the professional endeavors of an educator. Mine has been no exception. My wife, Mary Lee Harris, has served as both proofreader and critic of the manuscript for this book. My daughter's contributions have been both clerical and spirituelle. To my son, Kim, I owe a special debt as one who learned to balance that special burden of having a professor-father and still remain supportive.

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CONTENTS

List of Figures and Tables	xi
Preface	xv
 PART I	
The Nature of Instructional Supervision	1
 Chapter One	
THE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION FUNCTION	1
Defining the School Operation, 1	
Supervisory Operations, 10	
Supervision for Continuity and Change, 20	
Summary, 23	
Suggested Readings, 24	
 Chapter Two	
DYNAMICS OF SUPERVISORY BEHAVIOR	26
Improving Teaching, 27	
Interest, Leadership, and Implementation, 31	

Resistance to Educational Change, 35	
The Wisdom of Conservation, 40	
Summary, 41	
Suggested Readings, 41	

Chapter Three

SYSTEMS FOR OPERATIONALIZING SUPERVISION PROGRAMS

43

Systems Models, 44	
A System for Developmental Tasks of Supervision, 49	
Change Strategies, 52	
Diffusion of Innovations, 55	
Summary, 60	
Suggested Readings, 61	

Chapter Four

ACTIVITIES FOR SUPERVISION

63

A Review of Critical Tasks, 63	
Motivation for Change, 65	
Activities for Change, 68	
Distinctive Activities, 70	
Summary, 87	
Suggested Readings, 87	

Chapter Five

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

90

Strategies, 91	
Designing for Training, 92	
Basic Approaches, 98	
Other Strategies, 103	
Quality Control Circles, 104	
Summary, 107	
Suggested Reading, 107	

Chapter Six

ORGANIZING AND STAFFING FOR SUPERVISION

110

Current Staffing Patterns, 110	
Functional Criteria, 120	

Staffing Considerations, 124
Staffing by Competencies, 128
Numeral Adequacy of Staff, 130
Approaches to Team Supervision, 134
Summary, 144
Suggested Readings, 144

Chapter Seven

OBSERVING AND ANALYZING INSTRUCTION

146

The Uses of Observations, 147
Systematic Procedures, 152
Types of Instruments, 164
Analysis and Diagnosis, 176
Qualitative Analysis, 182
Summary, 185
Suggested Readings, 186

Chapter Eight

EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

189

The Nature of Evaluation, 190
Purposes to be Served, 191
Systems Analysis, 195
Multifactor Evaluation, 200
Summary, 209
Suggested Readings, 210

PART II

Reports on Supervisors in Action

213

Chapter Nine

SUPERVISORS AT WORK

213

Life and Problems as a New Supervisor, 214
Elementary Supervisor—A Typical Day, 217
Curriculum Planning in a Boom Town, 219
Visiting Consultant for Bilingual Education, 221
Job-Description Analysis:
 Director of Secondary Education, 223

Chapter Ten	
OBSERVATION APPLICATIONS	227
The Case of John Carroll, 228	
Contrasting Ways of Working, 234	
Observation Record—World History, 236	
Supervisory Strategy Case: A Matter of Values, 243	
Not-So-Eager Helen Beaver, 246	
A Survey for Curriculum Revision and In-service Planning, 252	
Suggestions for Dealing with the Unobservable, 257	
Passive Resistance? 258	
 Chapter Eleven	
PROGRAMS IN ACTION	262
Supervisor Interview with New Teacher, 263	
Disseminating Research on Classroom Management, 267	
The Consultant Task Force in Intensive Team Supervision, 269	
In-service Plan for Training in Reading Disability, 274	
Human Relations Workshop, 277	
Diagnostic Evaluation of a Staff Development Workshop, 279	
The Professional Development Center, 285	
 Appendix A	
COMPETENCY STATEMENTS FOR SUPERVISORY PERFORMANCE	289
A. Developing Curriculum, 289	
B. Providing Materials, 290	
C. Providing Staff for Instruction, 290	
D. Organizing for Instruction, 291	
E. Relating Special Pupil Services, 291	
F. Arranging for In-service Education, 292	
G. Developing Public Relations, 294	
H. Providing Facilities for Instruction, 294	
I. Evaluating Instruction, 295	
 Appendix B	
SPECIFIC PERFORMANCES BY COMPETENCY FOR THE IN-SERVICE TASK AREA	296
References	299
Index	216

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1.1	Major Functions of the School Operation.	4
Figure 1.2	Major Functions Related to Teaching and Learning.	7
Table 1.1	Illustrative Series of Endeavors: Functional Relationships in Improving Materials Utilization.	8
Figure 1.3	Ten Task Areas of Instructional Supervision.	13
Table 1.2	Abbreviated List of Professional Supervisory Competencies: Developmental Supervisory Competency Assessment System.	18
Table 1.3	Illustrations of Specific Performances for Selected Competencies and Tasks.	19
Figure 1.4	Six Orientations to Supervision along a Tractive-Dynamic Continuum.	23
Figure 2.1	Planning Alternatives for Instructional Change.	29
Figure 2.2	Interest, Leadership, and Progress in Program Implementation.	32
Figure 3.1	Simple Illustration of Systems Diagram.	45
Figure 3.2	A Clinical Supervision Linkage System.	46
Figure 3.3	Planning Model for Illustrative In-service Education Problem.	47
Figure 3.4	The DeTEK Ten-Step Sequence.	48

Figure 3.5	A Model for Relating Instructional Operations and Development Systems.	50
Figure 3.6	A Three-stage Change Strategy.	58
Figure 4.1	Relating Objectives, Impact, and Group Size to Selected Activities.	69
Table 4.1	List of Activities of Supervision.	72
Table 5.1	Types of Training Designs in Current Practice.	95
Figure 5.1	A Three-loop Clinical Cycle for Changing Teaching Practices.	100
Table 6.1	An Illustration of a Supervisory Competency Profile.	130
Table 6.2	A Scale for Analyzing Number of Supervisors Needed for Adequacy.	132
Table 6.3	Estimates of Adequate Supervisor Staffs for Five School Districts.	133
Table 6.4	Characteristics of Amplified Project Teams and Requirements for Change.	137
Table 6.5	A Process Sequence to Guide Amplification of a Project Core Group.	140
Figure 7.1	Pupil Enthusiasm Inventory.	170
Figure 7.2	Performance Area # 2—Friendly.	173
Table 7.1	Illustration of a Ten Minute Classroom Sequence: Dual Focus.	174
Table 7.2	Illustration of Alternate Focus Effects.	176
Figure 7.3	Work Matrix.	178
Figure 7.4	Analytical Summary of Teacher Question-Pupil Response Inventory.	180
Figure 7.5	DeTEK Instrument V: Data Analysis Worksheet.	181
Table 8.1	Basic Data and Branching Analysis Diagram for Relating Process to Outcome.	201
Figure 8.1	Branching Diagram for 15 Elementary School Teachers, Relating Input, Process, and Outcome Measure.	202
Figure 8.2	Relationships between Departmentalization, Individualization, and Pupil Enthusiasm.	204
Table 8.2	Branching Diagram Analysis for Selected Relationships in an In-Service Training Program.	205
Table 8.3	A Simple Two-Product Branching Analysis.	206
Figure 8.3	DEA Efficiency Diagram for Third-grade Reading.	208
Figure 10.1	A DeTEK Instrument: Comprehensive Observation of Performance.	231
Figure 10.2	Work Matrix.	233
Figure 10.3	DeTEK Instrument I: Teacher Performance Screening Inventory.	249

Figure 10.4	A DeTEK Instrument: Comprehensive Observation of Performance.	250
Table 11.1	Distribution of Participants by Interest and Learning.	283
Table 11.2	Participant Positions by Interest-Learning Categories.	284
Table 11.3	Participant Task-Group Assignments by Interest-Learning Categories.	284
Table 11.4	Six Work Centers of the PDC.	288

CHAPTER ONE

THE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION FUNCTION

Supervision is one of the essential functions for the operation of good schools. This chapter defines instructional supervision in broad perspective. An effort is made to present a realistic yet theoretically sound structure for viewing the professional tasks of supervision. The place of instructional supervision within the larger framework of the total school operation is analyzed with emphasis upon functional interrelationships. Supervisory behavior is described as a special form of leadership, closely related to but distinct from administrative leadership. Further distinctions are made between supervision for change and supervision for maintenance. The roles of various school personnel in the supervision of instruction are differentiated.

DEFINING THE SCHOOL OPERATION

Theoretical Perspectives

Supervision, like any complex part of an even more complex enterprise, can be viewed in various ways and inevitably is. The diversity of perceptions stems not only from organizational complexity but also from lack of information and absence of perspective. To provide perspective, at least, the total

school operation must be the point of departure for analyzing instructional supervision as a major function.

Certain theoretical frames of reference have been employed in various writings about instructional supervision. Social-psychological theory has been drawn upon quite heavily to form the "human relations" view of supervisory behavior as reflected in the work of Lovell and Wiles (1983). Social systems theory has been drawn upon to form the basis for a contrasting view (Feyereisen et al., 1970). Communication theory has offered still another way of viewing supervisory behavior, with emphasis on self-analysis and feedback techniques promoted by Flanders (1970). Psychiatric theories, especially those of Carl Rogers (1959), offer still other ways of thinking about instructional supervision. All of these frames of reference seem to offer promise for improving instruction through more efficient supervision. However, most views of supervision by theory-oriented writers are more prescriptive than descriptive (Sullivan, 1982) and tend to be narrow rather than broad-gauged.

The need for objective descriptions of complex human affairs in advance of schemes for change should be obvious. Current practice in supervision of instruction is at best vaguely understood in the absence of research in either depth or scope. Case studies are few and fragmentary. Even a simple history is yet to be written.

Without waiting for these many gaps to be filled, this book attempts to piece together from various sources a description of the instructional realities, analyze the current practice, project needs, and draw upon both research and theory to suggest new and better practices in supervision. At the very least, it is to be hoped, practitioners can abandon the naive notions still common in much that is being written about "supervision made simple" (Goldstein, 1982).

Supervision in the Total Operation

Supervision must be conceptualized as a set of reasonably distinctive endeavors within the total context of the school operation. Obviously, no realm of human behavior is entirely distinctive. To categorize certain endeavors as *supervisory*, however, requires that they have certain distinguishing characteristics.

There has been a tendency to label certain arrays of behaviors as *instructional supervision* without relating them to the whole educational system of which they are a part. Hence, stereotypes have developed that lead to confusion and conflict in thought. Properly conceptualized, instructional supervision is seen as one part of a total operation geared to producing certain outcomes. More specifically, we can think of the educational system as a learning-producing enterprise with instruction as the basic set of production techniques.

A view of instructional supervision as part of a total operation is given clarity by recognizing other "parts" and showing their relationship to super-

vision. But the nature of supervision of instruction must also be clearly understood.

A Two-Dimensional Framework

When one focuses on learning as product and instruction as productive process, the pupil becomes the obvious counterpart which might be termed "raw material." The two critical dimensions for viewing the educational operation at its central core are pupils and instruction.* Therefore, *instruction-relatedness* and *pupil-relatedness* can be regarded as major dimensions for analyzing the operation of the school and hence for distinguishing instructional supervision from other endeavors.

Figure 1.1 presents a grid with these two dimensions. Through use of such a grid five functional areas of the educational operation are defined and differentiated. Each major functional area is characterized by the degree to which endeavors are pupil-related and instruction-related.

Illustrative Endeavors

Any endeavor of one or more school personnel can be associated with a portion of the grid shown in Figure 1.1. By estimating the degree of pupil-relatedness and instruction-relatedness of any endeavor, a point on the grid is determined. Each point designating a given endeavor can be compared with other endeavors. Similarly, the array of endeavors of a staff member can be plotted to represent a graphic job description.

Endeavors that are characterized as directly instruction-related and also directly pupil-related include classroom presentations, educational counseling, and assisting children in selecting a library book. These are only illustrative, of course. The administration of achievement tests to pupils involves behaviors that are directly pupil-related but perhaps are not as directly instruction-related as is educational counseling involving the use of such test data.

At the other extreme are endeavors that are remotely pupil-related and only indirectly instruction-related. Such endeavors include auditing accounts, collecting taxes, and changing tires on the school bus. These are all important and even essential to the efficient operation of the educational system. They are characterized, however, by behaviors that are neither pupil-related nor instruction-related in direct ways.

Still other endeavors are directly instruction-related but *not* directly pupil-related. Such endeavors include observing in a classroom, selecting new instructional materials, and conducting an in-service session. All of these are directed toward influencing instruction in rather direct ways, but they are not carried on with pupils. Their impact on pupils is indirect.

*Obviously, this analogy is overly simple. It is a dangerous oversimplification if we forget the large differences among pupils *not* found in inert raw material, or if we fail to recognize the essentially human, interactive nature of the pupil as the object of instruction.

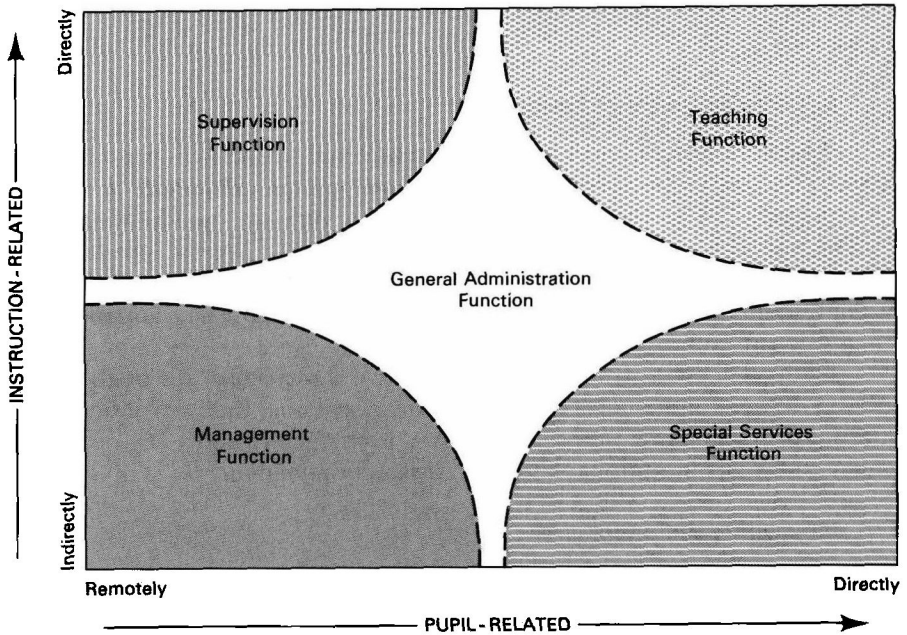


FIGURE 1.1 Major functions of the school operation.

Endeavors that are directly pupil-related but indirectly instruction-related are still different. The checking of pupil vision, tying shoelaces in kindergarten, and applying a bandage to a scraped knee are necessary and desirable endeavors that influence pupils' lives but relate only indirectly to instruction.

Many endeavors tend to be neither directly pupil-related nor directly instruction-related. The distribution of materials of instruction, conferences with parents, and rescheduling of classes are endeavors that have some relationship to pupils and to instruction but are not highly related. The materials, for instance, cannot influence pupils' lives or the instructional process until the teacher or the pupil puts them to use. Distributing such materials to classrooms has no such impact by itself. On the other hand, this endeavor is certainly *more* directly pupil-related and instruction-related than budgeting for such materials or purchasing them.

Any given endeavor, taken in isolation, can be located at some point on the school operations grid shown in Figure 1.1. As such, various endeavors can be systematically classified as falling into one functional area of the school operation rather than another. Ideally, of course, each endeavor is one of a series contributing to pupils' learning. Hence, the setting of a tax rate leads to the collection of funds, which may in turn lead to budget planning, purchasing of materials (for instance), delivery of materials, and revised lesson