

## *Supervision case study*

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Education is the most essential part of our lives where we learn to grow and learn to stand up after falling. Education in primary schools is particularly important as it builds the basis of fundamentals of education. However, what makes the schooling successful and how important is the role of supervisors in that success? I believe among many other factors such as curriculum, administration, teachers and facilities, the most crucial factor is the role of supervisors. If supervisors have traditional approach, attempting to control teachers' instructional behaviors, then that school will not be among successful ones. The researchers suggest that time has come to shift from conventional supervision to collegial supervision, where focus will be on teacher growth rather than teacher compliance (Glickman, 2010).

In this paper, my intent is to analyze a case study of supervision in an international school in Dubai, in KG level. In September of 2013, I joined this school as a KG 2 teacher. Our supervisor, Ms. Malika, was the one who interviewed me and observed my demo lesson. Although I had never taught KG level in my life, somehow I managed to pass the demo day, probably due to my 12-year experience as a teacher of English language. Obviously, as a new comer to early childhood education, I needed guidance and supervision in handling small kids, aged 4-5. My main concern was how to handle the discipline of those kids while keeping their interest and motivation high, and making sure that they were learning, not just playing or singing.

Ms. Malika was hired as a supervisor for KG section just before me, who possessed good knowledge and experience in teaching KG students in Canada. Moreover, she was known for her innovative approach to observing and evaluating these kids. The problem started to raise when other KG teachers began showing their resistance in complying with her instructions. One reason for showing resistance to Ms. Malika was that a former KG supervisor had very high respect among KG teachers, who had built very strong relationship through her trust,

supervision and collaboration. Another reason was that it was obvious that teachers used to have less work before Ms. Malika came into picture. The resistance and dissatisfaction of teachers remained till the end of that academic year, though our supervisor was so kind, cooperative, and supportive person, who used to bring gifts to teachers to show the recognition of their hard work. Personally, I never had a problem with our supervisor, on the contrary, I felt that I was blessed with the way she treated me and the consistent support she gave. However, I found that some of her demands for filling in the observation forms for 26 children in a weekly basis was exhausting work which usually took my weekends. Therefore, I completely understood why other teachers were not satisfied from her way of supervision, causing extra work for home.

If we analyze the case from Glickman's point of view, a good supervisor should be able to recognize the teachers' developmental stages. For example, as a new comer, I was at the early stage of teacher's growth, where the emphasis was more egocentric and is called 'self-adequacy'. At this stage, a teacher wants to be shown 'a bag of tricks' for survival, which means she needs direct guidance of assistance rather than letting her alone to explore. A successful supervisor would recognize or will be able to match an appropriate model of supervision to the needs of the teacher and the stage of teacher's growth. Ms. Malika in our case, could match her way of supervision to my needs, where directive model of supervision took place by being the determiner and enforcer of the standards of teacher behavior through modeling, directing, and measuring proficiency levels. However, Ms. Malika did not realize that this model was solely beneficial to me, not to all other teachers. She blindly used the same way of supervision to all existing KG teachers, who were more experienced than me.

Mrs. Naima was an old teacher who had been working in that school as a KG 1 teacher for almost 14 years. She was treated and instructed in a similar way to me, which caused problems. Per Glickman's model, such teachers need non-directive model of supervision, where the supervisor is a listener, non-judgmental clarifier, and encourager of teacher decisions. Obviously, in our case Mrs. Naima felt disrespected towards her long experience and for not being acknowledged as an outstanding teacher. Our supervisor was supposed to encourage her to take a team lead role among KG 1 teachers who could take decisions and help the curriculum to shape. At the end of the day, most of the curriculum design was still done by Mrs. Naima. She was already at the third stage of teacher development, having other students and teachers concern, which is an altruistic thinking stage, where she would be a perfect person to ask for collaboration and leadership of certain projects.

Ms. May and Ms. Safa were KG 2 teachers like me, but at the second stage of teacher development, having more classroom concern, yet with some inclination to the concern of students as well, not including other teachers concern. Ms. Malika as a supervisor was supposed

to use a collaborative model with these two teachers, showing herself as an equal teacher with them by presenting, interacting and contracting on mutually planned changes. If this kind of approach was practiced with these teachers, there would be no space for complain or dissatisfaction among teachers. Moreover, such attitude towards other teachers would build trust to the supervisor, subsequently leading for a stronger relationship.

Having analyzed that, the following recommendations could improve the supervision and facilitation of a such collective instructional improvement that would directly affect student learning as well as teacher development in our case study:

1. Clearly understanding what the problem was, whether it is related to the supervisor or to the school system itself. In our case, as one of three prerequisites for supervision – knowledge base was in existence. Ms. Malika had an understanding the exception – what teachers and schools can be – in contrast to the norm – what teachers and schools typically are. She had a good vision that was in line with the school's vision. Ms. Malika mastered an interpersonal skills base, a second prerequisite, which was not a problem in our case. However, she lacked the third prerequisite – technical skills, which are in observing, planning, assessing, and evaluating instructional improvement.
2. Matching the appropriate supervision model to the stage of teacher development. As we discussed above, Ms. Malika did well with the directive model, appropriate to the beginner's stage by clearly stating the purpose and modeling the instructions when needed. However, she failed to maneuver other models which was again part of technical skills. She applied the same model to all, like one size fits all, which is contrary to collegial supervision.
3. The best choice to apply as a developmental model in our case would probably be one of the four supervisory approaches – collaborative behaviors, which would match to our group characteristics. It is used for the group functioning at moderate or mixed levels of development, the supervisor and group have the same degree of expertise concerning the problem, and both are committed to solving the problem. The supervisor would clarify the perceptions of the problem by asking the members; listen to group perceptions; reflect by verifying group perceptions. Then the supervisor would present by adding her perception; problem to be solved by exchanging suggested solutions. She also encourages by accepting conflict and negotiates a mutually acceptable solution. Finally, the supervisor would reflect by summarizing the collaborative plan which they agreed upon together.

In conclusion, I believe, once all teachers agreed on a solution to existing problem with su-

pervisor's collaboration, the implementation stage will be impacted immensely as each teacher would feel the ownership of the plan and share the victory of it with pride along with other teachers and students. This kind of supervision will not only impact the change or problem solving, but also it encourages professional development that addresses individual learning of professionals. By this way, two targets would be met by achieving a school or community goal and an individual goal of the teachers, which means the main outcome will be improved - student learning.

## References

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