



Supervision of Instruction in Special Education in Two Schools in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

With the institutionalization of the establishment of Special Education (SPED) centers in every school districts in the country through the Department of Education Order No. 26 of 1997, the role of instructional supervisors has become more challenging. In addition to the supervision of the conduct of instruction in the regular schools, the supervisors now have to oversee the SPED instruction as well. This qualitative study utilized the key informant interview technique, using an interview guide consisting of four (4) open-ended questions. Results of the study showed that supervisors and SPED coordinators used classroom observation, walk through and random visitation as primary means of supervising the SPED instructions in their respective schools. While the respondents were aware of the different requirements needed for SPED supervision, they reported that there was no difference in the way they supervise SPED from the regular schools. Further, the respondents also reported that they are mostly challenged by their lack of knowledge and trainings on the proper conduct of SPED, constrained human and material resources, including the needed collaboration with the regular teachers and parents. For future development, the respondents reported that there is a need for professional growth and advancement as well as the development of supervision tools specific to SPED instruction. Thru these findings, the researcher proposes the CAST model for SPED instructional supervision i.e., Competency, Attitude, Structure and Tools. This indigenous instructional supervision model addresses the needs identified in order to advance as well as to enhance the supervision of instruction in SPED in Philippine schools.

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1. Introduction

The role of instructional supervisors and principals in the country has become more challenging. Not only will they supervise, evaluate and monitor the conduct of teaching and learning in the regular schools, but they will have to supervise the delivery of instruction in Special Education (SPED) for the students with diverse learning needs.

The institutionalization of SPED in the country through the Department of Education (DepEd) Order Number 26 Series of 1997 in support of the Republic Act 7277 (Magna Carta for Disabled Persons), made way to the establishment of SPED centers in different school districts all throughout the Philippines. To this day, DepEd reports that there are over 400 SPED centers catering to different exceptionalities. All these are being supervised by the district school principals under the regional director for SPED.

While the purpose of instructional supervision is to be able to identify and address the needs of teachers in order to provide effective instruction and improve student performance, teachers in the public schools seemed to be not fully reaping the benefits of instructional supervision especially among those handling SPED programs.

Hence, this study sought to explore the difference in the instructional supervision in SPED from the supervision given to the regular school program. This study is based on the premise that the differences in the kind of students being catered to requires different instructional intervention, thus

needing specially trained teachers and using different assistive technologies.

2. Objectives

This study aimed to describe the supervision of instruction in SPED in selected schools in Pampanga, with the following specific objectives: to describe the process of SPED supervision in the SPED centers and to generate an indigenous instructional supervision model which will serve as basis for the development of strategic initiatives.

3. Materials and Methods

This qualitative study utilized the key informant interview technique (KII), using an interview guide consisting of four (4) open-ended questions for data gathering. It was conducted in two elementary schools with SPED centers in Pampanga, Philippines. Both schools cater to children with Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Learning Disabilities and Multiple Disabilities and have at least fourteen (14) SPED teachers handling around 82 students. The SPED centers are headed by the school principal and the SPED coordinator.

Key Informant Interview (KII) was utilized and an interview guide consisting of four open-ended questions were asked. The data collected were subjected to qualitative analysis method i.e., identifying, analyzing, and extracting patterned responses within the data set. Thus, capturing the prevailing themes that would provide significant meaning in relation to the research questions.

4. Results

The purpose of this study is generate an indigenous instructional supervision theory that describes the supervision of Special Education in the selected SPED centers in Pampanga. The following questions served as guide in this research:

1. How do you describe the instructional supervision for SPED in your school?
2. Is there a difference in the instructional supervision for the regular program and for SPED program?
3. What challenges did you encounter in SPED instructional supervision?
4. If you can change or add anything to make the supervision of instruction better, what would it be?

Respondents were two (2) principals i.e., Respondents 01 and 02 and two (2) SPED coordinators i.e., Respondents 03 and 04. The interview yielded the following results:

The following are the respondents' response to the above questions:

Question No. 01:

How do you describe the instructional supervision for SPED in your school?

Respondent No. 01:

All teachers, regular and SPED, are scheduled to be observed twice a year. The first observation is announced. The teacher to be observed knows when and what time she will be observed. The second observation is unannounced. The principal conducts a surprise visit in the classroom during classes. During the observation, the principal may or may not request for the Lesson Plan or the Individualized Educational Plan of the teacher. During the formal announced observation, the principal uses the four-paged STAR Observation Tool (see Appendix 1) to rate the teacher's lesson preparation (10%), presentation of the lesson (70%), teacher's personality (5%) and classroom management (15%). Another observation tool that is being used alternately with the STAR is the Teaching –Learning Observation Guide (TLOG), (see Appendix 2). A one page observation tool which the principal reports that it is easier to use. With the TLOG, the principal only checks from the list of teacher's behavior and students' behavior did she observe whether the behaviors observed are beginning, emerging, transforming or no opportunity to observe. At the bottom of the TLOG, there is a space for remarks and comments as well as assistance given to the teacher. Whether the principal uses the STAR or the TLOG observation tool, the principal makes sure that feedback is given to the teacher observed. During the post-evaluation conference, the principal clarifies what transpired in the classroom that she does not fully understand.

Respondent No. 02

The supervision of instruction in SPED is conducted together with the SPED coordinator who is in better position to supervise the effective delivery of instruction because she herself is a SPED specialist. All teachers are scheduled for observation and based on the observation, teachers are given evaluation rating. SPED is a special field and so the SPED coordinator is engaged in the teacher evaluation process because she understands SPED more than the principal does. She also can offer assistance to the new teachers.

Respondent No. 03

The principal does the instructional supervision in the school. She observes the SPED classes at least twice a year. Sometimes the Division SPED Supervisor also comes to visit. After every visit, the principal or the supervisor would clarify about things that transpired in the classroom that he or she did

not understand, either on instruction or on student behavior. After that, the principal gives the evaluation rating.
Respondent No. 04

The principal gives the SPED coordinator the task of coordinating with all the other SPED teachers, visiting classrooms, offering suggestions and giving feedback to fellow teachers. The SPED coordinator approaches the experienced SPED teachers in a more collegial way. Together, they discuss issues about their students and share expertise. For new teachers, the approach used is more directive because they are young and are new in the SPED profession. They need more guidance. The SPED coordinator makes sure that all teachers follow the do's and don'ts in terms of the rules and regulations. Classroom observation and rating fellow teachers are done at least once a year but classroom visitations are regularly done using walk-through approach.

Question No. 02

Is there a difference in the instructional supervision for the regular program and for SPED program?

Respondent No. 01

There is no difference in the process of conducting observation to the regular and the SPED teachers. In SPED, the principal learns more from the SPED teachers. The SPED teachers explain the SPED instructional process to the principal. The style of supervision for SPED teachers is non-directive. The principal lets the SPED teachers take charge in the instruction of students with special needs since the teachers know SPED better.

Respondent No. 2

There is no difference between the supervision of instruction in the regular program and in SPED. But in terms of giving instructional help to teachers, it is difficult for the principal to give feedback and/or suggestions to the SPED teachers because of the lack of knowledge and expertise in that field. It is a lot easier for the principal to comment and give suggestions to the regular teachers. In SPED, the principal gives the SPED teachers the trust that they know what they are doing.

Respondent No. 3

The process of instructional supervision in SPED and in the regular school program is the same. Both the regular and the SPED teachers need to accomplish the Teacher's Monitoring and Evaluation (MandE) Report (see Appendix C), that show their classroom and curriculum management, as well as management of education resources and professional development. The teachers do this every quarter. But unlike the regular teachers, the SPED teachers are not required to do the Lesson Plan but depending on the level and kind of exceptionalities of students, they are asked to prepare the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).

Respondent No. 4

The SPED Coordinator reports that there is no difference in the process of instructional supervision in the regular and in the SPED program. But in terms of giving specific instructional, the concerns in the SPED program are more on classroom management, specific student behavior management, writing the IEP and collaborating with parents. Parents in the SPED program are requested to help the teacher in the classroom. The SPED coordinator collaborates with the Parents Teacher Association (PTA) and prepares the schedule for each parent to render assistance. Since the school does not have enough SPED teachers, and no teacher-assistants to help, parents in the classroom give the SPED teachers more time to focus on the instruction.

Question No. 03:

What challenges did you encounter in SPED instructional supervision?

Respondent No. 01

The principal admits that she is not an expert in the field of SPED. She bases the success or failure of SPED instruction based on whether the students respond positively to what the teacher is doing during the classroom observation. With situations that are confusing to the principal, she asks for clarifications during the post-evaluation conference.

Respondent No. 02

There are instructional practices in SPED that the principal is not fully familiar with. In such situations, he asks for explanations from the teachers.

Another challenge that the principal encounters is on how to provide for additional rooms and teachers for the students with special needs. The principal says the enrolment in SPED is increasing and yet the number of items for teaching positions in SPED is not. There are not enough rooms to provide for each SPED class as well. In some instances, two SPED classes share one room.

Respondent No. 03

SPED teachers are assigned to classes with exceptionalities that they can best handle. Every SPED teacher is an expert in the field. As a SPED coordinator, her job is to coordinate and collaborate with fellow teachers. During meetings, SPED teachers discuss among themselves whatever problems in instruction they encounter and try to suggest some intervention techniques or strategies.

Teaching children with special needs need specialized teachers and instructional materials and equipment. The students with Visual Impairment (VI) are lucky. Since 2015, the school has been a recipient of Australian Aid (AusAid) research study. The research team provides the school with instructional materials, as well equipment to produce reading materials in Braille. They also provides parents and teachers trainings which are very beneficial and much needed in teaching and assisting the students with VI. The team also come every 6 months to monitor the progress of the students and they provide feedback and suggestions on how teachers can improve instruction so that the performance of the students will likewise improve.

Respondent No. 04

The SPED Coordinator said that they lack classrooms, materials and equipment that can be used in teaching children with diverse learning needs but teachers try to remediate and find ways to do their jobs despite the limitations in resources.

Question No. 04:

If you can change or add anything to make the supervision of instruction better, what would it be?

Respondent No. 01

The principal says she is taking advantage of the seminars offered by the DEPED regional office on SPED so that she gets knowledge on the basics of SPED as well as get updates on the best practices in Special Education. More seminars on supervision of instruction in SPED will help them become better instructional supervisors. As well, the principal mentioned that there are many things that she attends to and because of that she spends less time in the supervision of instruction. Sometimes spending ten (10) minutes in every observation is even hard to keep. The principal is willing to learn and hopes that she can allot more time to really attend to instructional supervision in SPED.

Respondent No. 02

The principal mentions that it would be best if there is an item for SPED coordinator. At the moment, the SPED coordinator is also a SPED teacher. On top of being a SPED teacher, the coordinator does her additional duties and responsibilities in instructional supervision. If there is an item for SPED coordinator, then he or she can focus on helping the teachers improve their instructional practices. The coordinator can do other functions that will help improve the SPED program of the school.

Respondent No. 03

The Teacher's MandE form is made to be accomplished by the regular school teachers who handle classes with the same grade level. For example, under Curriculum Coverage the first column says Subject/Grade Level Handled; the second column says Number of Competencies to cover and actual covered; and the last column is the percentage covered. This is not applicable to SPED since SPED teachers handle all subjects in one class and at times, they handle multi-grade or non-graded classes. Suggestions have already been made to the principal and even to the SPED supervisor but SPED teachers are still awaiting their response.

Respondent No. 04

When asked this question, the SPED coordinator said there is nothing she can add. The current set-up is fine. The evaluation process as well as the forms used are okay because she understands them and knows how to use them without encountering any difficulties. It is also easy for her to assist the teachers because she is also a SPED teacher.

5. Discussion

Common responses emerged from the interview with the respondents. In Question No.1, the respondents report that part of the supervision of instruction in SPED is classroom observation which include the pre-observation consultation, actual observation and the post-evaluation conference. During observation, the supervisors use observation tools and requires lesson plan and /or IEP. The post-conference is for clarifications and for informing the teachers of their evaluation rating. The principals use the non-directive approach in instructional supervision, while the SPED coordinators use collegial approach for experienced SPED teachers and directive for new teachers. Continuous monitoring is done through walk-throughs and visitations.

For Question No.2, the respondents report that there are no difference in the process followed in supervision, but the requirements are different due to the condition of students. In place of lesson plan, IEP is used in SPED. Parents' help inside the SPED classroom to serve as teacher assistants. For Question No.3, the challenges are for school principals to get as much training in SPED so they can help their teachers, and to provide the material and human resources for more effective SPED instruction. For the coordinators, the challenge is collaboration, how to work together with the SPED teachers and parents. For Question No. 4, the principals report the need for self-development in SPED and in SPED instructional supervision and management. One SPED coordinator said there is a need to make observation tools and monitoring and evaluation forms for SPED use.

This study explored and described the instructional supervision of SPED instruction in two selected schools in Pampanga, from which significant insights from the perspective of the school management as well as the SPED Coordinators were appreciated. Primarily, there is a strong demand for SPED training both for the principals and the SPED coordinators.

This expressed need constitute a big concern that needs to be urgently addressed in order to deliver effectively the SPED programs.

An issue that needs to be addressed is the use of appropriate supervision tools which at the moment does not justify the current evaluation ratings of the teachers detailed in the SPED centers. This concern greatly affects the morale of the teachers in the SPED centers since the students they are handling have different needs and diverse intellectual capacities.

Another insight gained from this study is the need for adequate logistical and tactical support resources for both the supervisors and the SPED teachers. Great is the clamor for the availability of SPED professionals and institutions which can be readily tap for concerns in the management of students as well as for the effective delivery of SPED services and programs. Although the current state of the SPED instructional services seemed appropriately effective, there are other issues and concerns aside from the insights derived from this study that should be addressed.

6. Conclusion

This study explored and described the instructional supervision of SPED instruction in two selected schools in Pampanga, from which significant insights from the perspective of the school management as well as the SPED Coordinators were appreciated. Primarily, there is a strong demand for SPED training both for the principals and the SPED coordinators. This expressed need constitute a big concern that needs to be urgently addressed in order to deliver effectively the SPED programs.

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Although the current state of the SPED instructional services seemed appropriately effective, there are other issues and concerns aside from the insights derived from this study that should be addressed.

Based on the findings of this study, for SPED instructional supervision to be effective in both schools, instructional supervisors should have:

1. Expertise in the field of SPED to be able to give assistance to other teachers
2. Competence to guide in the instruction and curriculum development for SPED children
3. Innovative attitude to create new observation tools applicable for SPED
4. Collaborative skills to facilitate effective working relations of SPED teachers with fellow professionals

From this study, the researcher proposes the CAST Model for SPED Instructional Supervision. This model highlights the core elements that could determine the outcome of SPED programs and initiatives. Core elements of the CAST Model for SPED Instructional Supervision are the following: Competency, Attitude, Structure, and Tools.

Competency. For instructional supervision to be effective, both the supervisor and principal must have the fundamental competency on special education. This core element will provide the knowledgebase essential for mentoring as well as coaching of SPED teachers. Likewise, competency would strengthen the dynamic implementation of classroom observation, feedback mechanisms, instructional / professional assistance as well as in collaborating with other professional disciplines.

Attitude. With the diversity of the various methodologies, technologies as well as the complexities of the nature and management of SPED students, having the proper mindset towards lifelong learning is essential towards effective instructional supervision as well as for goal attainment.

Structure. With the ability to develop and establish structure for instructional supervision, the supervisor would be able to optimize the allocation and utilization of limited resources towards realization of program goals and objectives. Furthermore, with a well-grounded structure, all stakeholders would be able to maintain identity and security,

Tools. This element integrates all the other core elements through the development of appropriate and mission critical tools which would facilitate the measurement of the performance and implementation of effective instructional supervision in SPED. Thus, paving for the collection, and compilation of measures that would contribute to the development of evidence-based practice.

Though still on its developmental stage, the CAST Model for SPED Instructional Supervision will benefit particularly the respondents of this study by providing them a steppingstone that will harmonize and even synthesize their current SPED initiatives. Moreover, the model could also help streamline their current processes.

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