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Education

Supervision Systems And Their Functions

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A machinery for any organizational set up for education has invariably a provision for a system of supervision of education whether it is performed by the system itself or by its sub-system. The personnel of the system or subsystem are also varied in nomenclature such as; supervisors, advisers, inspectors, directors, deputy directors, assistant directors, education officers etc. The systems are varied and the designation of the incumbents of the systems are varied as well.

The system of supervisory machinery for education differs according to the differences in the political and administrative structure of a country's educational system. This variation will be reflected between a country having a strong centralized systems of control and a country having a substantial devolution of responsibility permitting a considerable measure of autonomy to local units of administration and thence to schools and to teachers in matters of curriculum and teaching methods.

Examples may be cited of variation of role of the supervisors of schools in USSR, UK and France. In the case of USSR, the purpose and function of the supervisory system is the transmittal of the ideas and policies of the party in the field of educational development.

In the case of the UK, where the administration of education is partnership between the central authority and the local education authority and where the head of the institutions and the teachers of individual schools possess a large amount of responsibility in respect of the academic organizations, curriculum and teaching methods used, Her Majesty's Inspector acts more as an adviser to the local education authority and the schools on the one hand and the Ministry of Education on the other hand.

In France, where the system is centralized, the inspector plays a most clearly defined management role with respect to the schools and particularly

in regard to the system of marking classroom performance, and the care of teachers.

The Commonwealth Education Conference, Kingston, Jamaica, held in June 1974 identified four models of supervision:

One, countries where formal supervision is regarded as an essential element of educational administration without which the quality of work undertaken in school would rapidly deteriorate. Two, countries wherein supervision of education are concerned less with individual school performance than with encouraging the spread of promising educational developments throughout the districts in which they operate. Three, countries where supervision of education were mainly concerned in converting their observations in the field into generalizations for the improvement of education on a national scale. Four, countries where the whole supervisory system was being questioned and alternative methods were being explored in which teachers themselves could take over the responsibility of setting and maintaining educational standards.

While the advanced countries possess the resources to employ different categories of people to perform the functions of supervision, of assessment and of offering advice, developing countries do not possess such resources and consequently the individual supervisor has to undertake a multiplicity of duties. These functions comprise assessment of teaching, policing the system, encouraging innovation catalysing activity and promoting good public relations.

Two alternative models of supervisory system were identified and considered in the Commonwealth Regional Seminar/Workshop on Educational Administration and Supervision Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in June 1975. The two alternative models are: the administrative supervisor and the advisory supervisor. The former, developed historically, is a "watchdog"

over government finance and is charged with such a variety of administrative functions that he is rarely effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The executive power of the inspector enables him to take administrative action to remedy the deficiencies which come to his notice.

The advisory inspector is freed more of the time for visiting schools but possesses less executive power to implement decisions. He is able to visit classrooms, to evaluate the work in progress, and advise the teacher accordingly. But the extent to which that advice is effective would depend on his personal leadership and professional influence. Outside the classroom his authority for action is limited whether in relation to development of physical facilities or organizational changes.

Raymond F. Lyons and Mervyn W. Pritchard in their study of four countries considered supervision as an instrument by which the administrative authorities maintain required contact with schools, teachers, pupils and community so as to ensure that the system is working satisfactorily, and efficiently. Taking from this standpoint, a national school supervisory system fulfils a controlling, co-ordinating and communicating role. The supervisor is the watchdog or the "eyes" and "ears" of the administration.

The educational administration in Bangladesh is guided by the policies laid down by the Ministry of Education with the Minister of Education as the political head, and a permanent secretary, recruited from the Civil Service as its administrative head. The Ministry is responsible to the President for formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies. Below the Ministry are the Directorates headed by the Director-Generals and responsible for implementing the policies formulated in the Ministry and supervision of educational institutions under their control.

These Directorates are assisted in the performance of their supervisory functions by successive officers one above the other at the divisions, districts, subdistricts and institutional level.

Since independence, the country witnessed various commissions and committees appointed by the Government to recommend measures for bringing about administrative and supervisory reforms in education. These Commissions and Committees found the supervisory system inadequate both quantitatively and qualitatively. They opined that the task of the Inspector should be to raise the quality of work in the classroom which he can do only by bringing in new ideas, encouraging initiative and directing the whole of his attention to the content rather than to the external machinery of education.

Notwithstanding the fact that different countries have different systems of supervision of education there appears to be a consensus among the social scientists with respect to the functions of supervision.

Wiles has identified the emerging role of supervision as supporting, assisting and sharing in place of directing. The authority of the supervisor should be utilized in promoting growth through assuming responsibility and creativity rather than through dependence and conformity.

Wiles has defined the functions of supervision in the following words: "The basic function of supervision is to improve the learning situation for children. If any person in a supervisory position is not contributing to more effective learning in the classroom, his existence in that position cannot be justified. Organization, equipment, staff relationships and teacher welfare are important only as devices for improving learning opportunities for children; supervision is a service activity that exists to help teachers do their job better". (To be continued)